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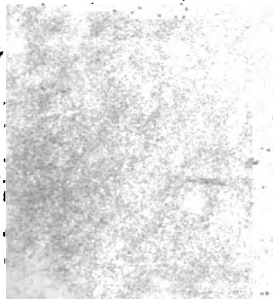
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PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

A
PRACTICAL APPLICATION
OF THE
FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES,
ADAPTED TO
Young Persons.

BY
MRS. J. S. HENSLOW.

Search the Scriptures. *Johs v. 39.*

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable
for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in
righteousness. *2 Tim. iii. 16.*

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E. ROGERS. SHENLEY.

PREFACE.

IN the present age, when so many religious books are daily issuing from the press, I should scarcely have ventured to add another to the list, had it not been for the persuasion that if we would "train up our children in the way they should go," we must not only impress them with early habits of piety, but must be careful that the great truths of God's Holy Word be laid before them in such a way, that they may not rest contented with the outward form of religion only, but be enabled to grasp the substance also.

Young persons are too apt to consider the Old and New Testaments as distinct books. Whilst they acknowledge the contents of the New to be especially addressed to them as Christians, they look upon most of the events

recorded in the Old, as merely incidents in an historical narrative which they read indeed with interest, but without sufficiently reflecting how they may be made practically applicable to themselves.

It has been my object in this little volume to shew how the various incidents related of the earliest period of man's history may be turned to our profit as Christians—proving St. Paul's assertion that " whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning , " " upon whom the ends of the world " are come."

In regard to the history of the Jews in particular, (more especially that portion of it, to which this book is limited,) whether we view it with reference to God's dealings towards his sinful creatures, or to the many trials and difficulties under which they laboured, it is impossible to read it with attention, without deriving much that must tend to our own advancement in spiritual knowledge.

I have endeavoured to point out how beau-

tifully the different parts of scripture harmonize with each other, by selecting such texts, (from the New Testament especially) as bear upon a variety of passages in the Old. By this means the young reader becomes familiarized with many important texts, which are thereby more firmly impressed upon the mind in their true meaning.

I have likewise attempted to elucidate many obscure passages by consulting different religious works, more especially Scott's Commentary, and D'Oyly and Mant, but although I have occasionally adopted their sentiments, I have generally clothed them in language which I considered best adapted to the comprehension of my youthful readers.

It may be scarcely necessary to add, that I have not presumed to offer any opinions, which are not sanctioned by these or other divines of established reputation, but where such have fallen in with my own views, I have not hesitated to adopt them, even though they may be at variance with many expositions of the same text.

I have only to add that if this little volume should be the humble means of leading one individual to give more attention than he may hitherto have done, to the word of God, if it may have advanced him one step in the only road to holiness, then will my end be fully answered, my fondest hope be realized.

INTRODUCTION.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS.

THERE is no book like the Holy Scriptures. They contain every thing to make us good and wise in this world, and eternally happy in the next. No one can expect to go to Heaven who neglects the truths in the Bible. "Strait is the gate, and narrow "is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be "that find it;" (Matt. vii. 14.) and how can we expect to have the door of Heaven opened unto us, if we refuse to ask admission? It is the word of God which alone points the way to salvation, and if we would attain unto the one, we must not neglect the other.

We read in the Bible, that he that believeth in Jesus Christ shall be saved: that is, saved from the punishment due to his sins; but what does believing in Jesus Christ mean? It does not surely mean believing only that he lived once upon earth, and that he was crucified by the Jews; many people believe that, calling themselves Christians, and yet in their general conduct towards each other appear very little actuated by a real spirit of Christianity.

No, it means a great deal more than this: we must not only believe that he died upon the Cross for our sakes,— we must also believe every thing else he has told us, and he tells us, that unless we repent of our sins, we cannot be saved.

Now repenting of our sins, is not only being very sorry for them, but striving to conquer them, and to do what is right, which will prove we are really in earnest. Nevertheless we must remember that we can do nothing of ourselves; God's Holy spirit can alone direct our minds and cleanse our hearts from sin: and we are not only commanded in our Bibles to ask for his assistance, but have even the encouraging assurance held out to us, that "if we knock, it shall be opened unto us, if we seek, we shall find." (Matt. vii. 7.)

In every page of Scripture we may find texts adapted to all our wants, promises held out to us, strength to assist us, and encouragement to support us under all the trials of this life. I would especially recommend the book of Psalms as the source from which we may derive the greatest assistance in our devotions, but even in those portions of the Bible which relate more particularly to the Jewish religion, we may gather much instruction from the histories they contain of different nations and individuals, applying practically to our own conduct such rules, and injunctions as have been delivered "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Heb. i. 1.) through the inspiration of the holy Spirit, often by the voice of God himself.

It is with the hope of explaining some passages which may be difficult for you to understand, and thereby

rendering you better acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and also with the wish to excite an interest in the perusal of them, that I now address this volume to you.

I should recommend each chapter to be read previously in the bible, and that the texts referred to be sought for likewise, which will impress them more fully on the memory from studying them in connexion with their contexts.

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CHAPTER I.

Creation—Fall of man—Death of Abel—Flood—Tower of Babel.

GENESIS I—III.

THE first chapter of Genesis you will think is very easy to be understood, being merely the history of every thing that God has made. Very true, it is easy to understand the sense of it, but does it teach us nothing else? may it not lead us to reflect on the kindness and goodness of God? Can we view any of the works of the Creator without being at the same time struck with his infinite power and wisdom, and without exclaiming with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."^a

And for whom did the Almighty create all these things? That we are told in the Revelations, "For Thy pleasure they are, and were created."^b God is a being infinitely happy, and it was his pleasure not only to create a world in which that happiness might be diffused, but even to form man after his own image, pure and innocent, who was to have dominion over every living thing.

^a Ps. civ. 24.

^b Rev. iv. 11.

Who could have supposed that God would so soon meet with such an ungrateful return for all this kindness !

Adam and Eve we are told were created in the image of God ; they were perfectly good and happy, placed in a situation where they had every thing they could possibly want, and only commanded not to eat of *one* tree—a simple command, which, we might suppose, would have been very easy to obey. And yet we find they not only disobeyed God by doing this very thing they were told not to do, but even endeavoured to conceal it by a falsehood. We read that Eve was tempted by the devil, who appeared to her in the form of a serpent. God does not now suffer the devil to appear to us in any visible form, but though we do not see him, he still endeavours to lead us astray, or as St. Peter tells us, “as a roaring lion, he walketh about seeking “whom he may devour,”^a and whenever you feel inclined to do wrong, you may be sure he is tempting you just as he did Eve ; but if you look into your Bible and see what St. James says, you will read that God has said, “Resist “the devil and he will flee from you,”^b that is, if you try to conquer your evil disposition, and do what is right, praying to God for his Holy Spirit to direct you, Satan can have no power over you.

Eve, on the contrary, lent a willing ear to his wicked suggestion, and was thus not only induced to take the fruit, but she also tempted Adam to do so likewise. And what were the consequences ? They knew they had done wrong, and felt ashamed, but instead of confessing their sin, and asking forgiveness of God, they went and hid themselves, as if they thought it possible they could be concealed from the Almighty, from whom “there is nothing hid that shall “not be known.”^c

You see here the sad effects of giving way to sin ; when once a person is tempted to do wrong, there is no saying what he may be led to do. The consequences of Adam’s sin were dreadful indeed : He was now driven out of Paradise, he had to labour with his own hands for his food, and

^a Pet. v. 8.

^b Jam. iv. 7.

^c Mat. x. 26.

instead of living for ever in that happy place, was told he should die, and his body return to the dust from whence it was taken.

Adam and Eve had now lost that purity and innocence in which, after the image of their Maker, they had been created, and would have forfeited for ever God's favour and mercy, were he not a Being infinitely good and kind, as well as just. In his anger he was nevertheless merciful; and even while he was denouncing judgement upon them, promised that the time should come when the power of the devil would be crushed by the seed of the woman; an expression, which as you are doubtless aware of, implied our Saviour, who by suffering death for us, was finally to restore us to God's favour, and lead us to everlasting life. This would be effectually bruising the head of the devil, who can have no power over us in Heaven.

Four Thousand years were to elapse before this event was to take place, but you will observe as we proceed, how constantly the Jews, whose history forms the chief part of the Old Testament, were reminded of it by circumstances, which having always a reference, and often a great similarity to many which happened to our Saviour, were called *types*. These I shall point out and explain to you as they occur.

GEN. IV.

FROM the history of Adam and Eve, we now proceed to that of Cain and Abel, in which the consequences of Adam's sin are again seen. Had the first pair obeyed God's commands, their children would, like themselves, have been for ever happy in Paradise, but from the moment Adam and Eve sinned, their whole nature was changed: "The heart "of man had become deceitful, and desperately wicked," and "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil."^d

^c Jer. xvii. 9.

^d Chap. vi. 5.

In this state the whole race of man has continued ever since. Our natural inclinations will ever incline us to do wrong, and it is only by the grace of God, who can put “a new spirit within us, taking the stony heart out of our flesh, and giving us a heart of flesh,”^a that we can become fit for the Kingdom of Christ. St. Paul, quoting the Psalms, tells us that “there is none righteous, no not one,”^b for that “the carnal mind is enmity against God,”^c meaning the mind in its natural state, before it has been renewed by the spirit of God.

Thus are we constantly reminded of the state into which we are all fallen in consequence of Adam’s sin, and in which we must for ever have remained, had it not pleased God in his infinite goodness to send his beloved Son into the world to be sacrificed for our sins, and who by his precepts and example during his abode on earth, has directed us in the only path which leads to true happiness.

We must now return to Cain and Abel. These two brothers, we are told, both offered a sacrifice to God. You are aware that until our Saviour appeared on earth, it pleased God that men should offer up their prayers and thanksgivings in the form of a sacrifice. Thus Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought one of his flock, and offered it to God.

Now we read that God “had respect unto Abel, and to his offering, but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect,” that is, he approved of the one, and disapproved of the other. We may be sure therefore that Cain’s sacrifice was not what it ought to have been. In St. Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews, it is written, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.”^d

Some people suppose that Abel’s faith referred to God’s promise respecting our Saviour, and that he showed it by offering a sacrifice, which in its nature prefigured that of Christ, while Cain only offered the fruits of the earth. If this be true, the sacrifice of animals must have been a com-

^a Ezek. xi. 19.^b Rom. iii. 10.^c viii. 7.^d Heb. xi. 4.

mand of God from the beginning, but as there is nothing expressly said on this subject, it can only be a matter of conjecture. But of this we may be sure, that Cain's sacrifice was not offered in a proper spirit, from the evil disposition which he manifested towards his brother. St. John says, "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "Read also what our Saviour says, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." "

"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." "

His proud heart would not suffer him to see his brother preferred before him. Be assured, that *pride* will generally be found to be the cause of most sinful actions. There is indeed no sin against which we ought more to strive; it lurks at the bottom of our hearts, and influences us when we are least aware of it. It is written in the Proverbs, "by pride cometh contention," "and again, "Pride goeth before destruction." "How fully were these texts exemplified in the case of Cain! His pride first rendered him jealous of his brother; he then quarrelled with him, and at length slew him.

This we may conclude was done in secret, but we know that nothing can be concealed from God, who suffered not the wicked action to go unpunished. May this sad event be a warning to us all of the danger of giving way to the least feeling of envy or unkindness towards any one, for when once we allow our tempers and passions to get the better of us, we know not what we may be led to do. It is difficult for some persons who are naturally of an irritable disposition to restrain their tempers on all occasions,

^a 1 John. iv. 20. ^b Matt. v. 23. ^c 1 John: iii. 11, 12. ^d Prov. xiii. 10. ^e xvi. 18

but they must ever remember that "with God all things are possible," * and that they may be sure of obtaining his assistance, if they only ask for it in a proper spirit.

GEN. VI. VII.

NEARLY two thousand years had now elapsed since the creation of the world, during which period many generations had succeeded each other; yet in all that time there are but three persons, Abel, Enoch, and Noah, whose piety has been recorded. Of Enoch we know nothing, but that it is said he "walked with God, and he was not, for God took him," that is, he was taken up to heaven without undergoing the usual penalty of death.

Walking with God, or before God, are expressions implying that he who does so, endeavours at all times to please God, and submits to His will in every thing, never forgetting that the Almighty is constantly present, sees all he does, and knows all his thoughts, and he is very careful never to offend Him. Now this, we may be sure was the case with Enoch, and blessed indeed was his reward.

Noah we are told, "was a just man," and that he likewise "walked with God, being the most perfect man in his generations."

And now, as it is written, "men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and the sons of God took wives of the daughters of men."

The sons of God, are generally supposed to be the posterity of Seth, who were worshippers of the true God; the children of men being the descendants of the ungodly race of Cain. Thus by intermarrying with each other, the true followers of God could be no longer kept distinct from the rest of the world, and this we may therefore imagine, to have been one great cause of that depravity, which had now increased to such a degree, that God saw fit to destroy the whole world.

* Matt. xix. 26.

“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

“And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”

When we meet with expressions such as these, applied to the Almighty, we must ever bear in mind that in speaking of the dealings of God with mankind, such terms only can be used, as are adapted to the comprehension of mortal beings, and therefore when we read of God's *repenting*, it is only because there is no other word which could express what to our finite ideas, appears an alteration of mind.

“God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”*

Noah and his family were the only persons whom God was pleased to save from the general destruction which now ensued from the deluge. Dreadful indeed must have been the state of every one at that time, to have rendered it expedient for the whole world to be destroyed in this manner. And yet we may conclude, though we are not exactly told so in the Bible, that God enabled Noah by his spirit, to foretell the event and to warn the people of it, for in 2 *Pet.* ii. 5. he is called a “preacher of righteousness,” from which we are led to believe he preached to the world concerning the punishment that awaited them, if they did not repent, but it appears they would not listen to him, and therefore the consequences which they might have foreseen, ensued, and they were all destroyed.

Now is there nothing in this chapter which we may apply to ourselves? Are we more perfect in our generation than they were in theirs? Do we listen to our preachers of righteousness, and believe that destruction will likewise come upon every one of us who heeds not all the instruction he receives, and repents not of his sins? The time will as surely come to us as it did to them; and in fact it is

* Numb. xliii. 19.

already come to many, for it must be the same thing to die in the midst of our sins, as to be found alive in that state when the Son of Man shall come in his glory to judge the world. We have all an ark of refuge in our Saviour. It is he alone who can save us, and believe me, he will most surely do so, if we turn to him with our whole hearts. As every one on the earth perished who was not in the ark, so is every soul lost, which refuses to seek salvation through Jesus Christ. Probably many would have been glad to have been admitted into the ark when they saw Noah and his family really in it, and themselves about to be overwhelmed by the waters of destruction; even so will it be at the end of the world; many then will be seeking at the last hour, for admittance into the Kingdom of Heaven, when they will find the door closed, and the gates of Hell alone open to receive them.

Turn to *Matt.* xxiv. 37, 38, 39. and see what our Saviour foretells concerning the world when he shall appear at the last day—"As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Let us then take care that we are not of that number, who will be found by him passing away their time in an unprofitable manner, and seeking anything rather than their eternal salvation.

GEN. VIII. IX.

"AND God remembered Noah, and every living thing." Now let us pause, and consider the blessing and comfort we may receive from this verse. Our Saviour tells us that not a sparrow is forgotten before God, and "ye are of more value than many sparrows"; may we not thence infer that

* *Luke.* xii. 6, 7:

we are equally remembered before God ? and that when he set his bow in the clouds as a token that there should never be another deluge, the promise was made to us as well as to Noah ? He says, " it shall be for a token of a covenant " between me and the earth," that is, it is not only to you and your family that I make this promise, but likewise to all who shall live upon the earth, after you are departed hence.

Now we are assured that " all the promises of God in him are Yea," which means that we may be quite sure he will perform all He says ; it is therefore surely impossible to read of Noah's sacrifice of thanksgiving without feeling overwhelmed with gratitude at the unbounded mercy of the Almighty towards his sinful creatures. This we are too prone to forget, though constantly reminded of this blessed Covenant or promise, by the sight of that glorious Bow in the heavens, which so frequently appears before our eyes.

And here I would gladly close the history of Noah, without alluding to a circumstance which casts such a shade over the latter days of this righteous man, but that I am unwilling to pass it over, without impressing upon your minds the instruction you may derive, from the difference in the conduct of his two sons. Ham exposed his father's sin, and was cursed : his brothers tried not even to look upon it, and one especially was blessed.

Children may see many things to condemn both in their parents or others which it may not become them to notice ; they must ever remember that their duty is to " honor their " father and mother," ^b and " to obey their parents in the " Lord, for this is right ;" ^c that is, they are to obey them in all things that are not contrary to the commands of God, for we are also told that " we ought to obey God rather " than man." ^d

What we see amiss in the conduct of those around us, ought to lead us to think, " who maketh us to differ from " another," ^e and that God permits our seeing such, not as

^a 2 Cor. i. 20. ^b Ex. xx. 12. ^c Eph. vi. 1. ^d Acts. v. 29. ^e 1 Cor. iv. 7.

a cause for censure, but as a subject of prayer for the offender, and a warning to ourselves.

“ If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.” *

The true Christian will be ever ready to overlook the failings of another, for he knows that he must “ cast out first the beam from his own eye, before he can “ see clearly to pull out the mote that is in his brother’s eye.” †

“ What ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” ‡

GEN. XI.

THE next event we read of is the building of the tower of Babel, of which no particulars are given. The only reason assigned for it is, “ lest they should be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” God had told Noah to be fruitful and replenish the earth. Now it is very probable they conceived this command to imply, (what indeed we may suppose it did,) that they were to disperse over the world, that the earth might be peopled in all parts, and so they might fancy that by being thus separated from each other, and scattered about, they might never be heard of again, and they might therefore think, that by building this high tower as a monument of their labour, their names would be handed down to posterity. But God saw the imagination of their hearts : he saw doubtless that it was their pride which led them to do this, and thought fit to defeat their scheme. It is written “ a man’s pride shall bring him low,” § and so it turned out with these people ; God confounded their language in such a way, that they could not understand one another ; it was impossible therefore for them to proceed with their work, and they were obliged to do the very thing they had endeavoured to avoid by building the tower. “ The Lord scattered them upon the face of the earth.” Thus you see it is of no use for

* Gal. vi. 1. † Luke. vi. 42. ‡ Matt. vii. 12. § Prov. xxix. 23.

man to attempt to oppose the will of God in any thing. Whatever He decrees, must come to pass, and all we have to do, is to submit implicitly and cheerfully to all his commands, knowing that all is ordered for our good.

CHAPTER II.

Abraham's departure—Isaac promised—Institution of circumcision—Abraham entertains two angels—Lot's wife—Abraham goes to Gezar—Birth of Isaac—Hagar in the wilderness.

GEN. XII. XVII.

WE are now arrived at the history of Abraham, and delightful indeed it is, after all the wickedness of which we have been reading, to meet with one individual whose faith and obedience proved how sincerely he loved God, and how in all his actions, he was ever influenced by a wish to please Him, and to conform to His will in all things.

It may seem strange that so little should be told us of all those people who lived before Abraham; but we may be sure that if their histories could in any way have benefitted us, they would not have been withheld. St Paul in his epistle to Timothy, tells him that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," the meaning of which text is, first, that God enabled Moses and other men by his holy spirit to write all that is in the Bible, which they could not have known by any other means; and secondly, that it was all written for our good, to correct our faults, to make us good and righteous, and to teach us what is requisite for us to know, as also to lead us to a right knowledge of our Saviour, or as St Paul says, to become "perfect." We know that no one can really attain perfection while he is on earth, but if we do not make it the object of our endeavours,

we shall indeed be very far from what we ought to be, and from what with the assistance of the Spirit we may become. Our Saviour says "be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect," thereby shewing what ought to be our aim, though at the same time to convince us that we must not expect ever to attain to real perfection in this world, he adds "There is none good but one, that is God." *

The very best men have their failings, nor was Abraham himself exempted from them, and his were doubtless recounted to us to excite us to the greater watchfulness over ourselves, since a man in all other respects so righteous was, as we shall find hereafter, in two instances tempted to sin.

The first lesson we learn from the history of Abraham, is his implicit obedience to the will of God, who without assigning any reason for the command, desired him to leave the country in which he had been born, and go into another land some hundred miles off. Now we may suppose that nothing could have been more repugnant to his inclinations than suddenly to be called upon to quit a spot where he had not only lived all his life, and to which he was therefore doubtless much attached, but where he had in all probability a great many friends, whom he might now never expect to see again; yet he did not hesitate one moment in doing what he was ordered, but "departed, as "the Lord had spoken unto him," fully relying on God's word for the fulfilment of the promise He had made to him and his descendants.

Nothing could be a greater proof of his faith than this; faith being that implicit trust or confidence in God, which causes us to rely with certainty on the fulfilment of His promises, and to believe not only that every thing which He has decreed must come to pass, but that all is ordered for the best and wisest purposes. It was Abraham's faith then, that led him fully to believe that his descendants would possess the land of Canaan, although in all human

* Matt. xix. 17.

probability, nothing at that time could be more unlikely; the country was full of inhabitants, and though Abraham lived for a hundred years after he arrived in Canaan, yet he never obtained possession of any part of it, "no, not so much as to set his foot on," "nevertheless he did not doubt but that God would sooner or later fulfil his promise, which we know He did, though not till nearly four hundred years after his death.

What an example does this afford to us all, and what encouragement to trust to God in every thing! we may be quite sure that such faith will certainly meet with its reward not only in the world to come, but even in this, for what greater blessing can we possess than a peaceful contented mind, which will always accompany true faith and resignation to the will of God? Abraham we are assured is now among the blessed, and how was he favoured when on earth! even by a vision from the Lord, promising blessings on his descendants, and comfort and protection to himself. "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," be not afraid of all the trials and troubles you may meet with in this world, for I shall ever be near to protect you from all danger, and reward you in the end.

What could be more delightful to Abraham than to be told this! And are *we* not told the same? Do we not read in the Psalms that, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them,"^a and again, "many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord mercy shall compass him about."^b Be assured, the Lord, is equally our "strength, and our shield,"^c if we only trust in him, and believe that "what he has promised he is able also to perform."^d Then shall we rest satisfied that every event is overruled by a wise God, who can in his providence bring all things to pass, however impossible they may appear.

Nothing in the common course of human events, was less likely to take place, than that Abraham should have a child

^a Acts. vii. 5. ^b Ps. xxxiv. 7. ^c xxxii. 10. ^d xxviii. 7. ^e Rom. iv. 21.

in his old age, for which however he was so anxious as to make it a subject of prayer to God. We are told that he "was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold;" it was therefore natural for him to wish to leave all his wealth to a son of his own, rather than to a stranger. And what was the answer he received from God? That his seed should be more in number than the stars! "And he believed "in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness." It was nothing he had done, no work that he had performed, but his faith alone which rendered him righteous in the sight of God.

"And he said unto Abraham, know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve him; and they shall afflict them four hundred years."

"And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge, and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

"And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age."

"But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again."

We know that all this prophecy was exactly fulfilled; that his descendants were strangers in Egypt, and served the Egyptians for four hundred years; that the Egyptians were "judged by the ten plagues," the Israelites returning afterwards to the land of Canaan, of which the possession had been promised them so long before.

Abraham may possibly have conceived that Ishmael was to be the father of all these people, as he was born some years before Isaac, and as God had promised Hagar that her seed should be many; and was surprised at hearing that Sarah herself who was now very old was really to have a son.

"Then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed, and said "in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah that is ninety years old, bear?"

Yet if at the first intimation of such an unlooked for

event, any doubt did arise in his heart, his faith overcame the feeling, and even “against hope, he believed in hope, “that he might become the father of many nations” : “he “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, “but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being “fully persuaded,” (which I mentioned above as being the test of true faith) that, “what he had promised he was able also to perform.”^a

In the full conviction therefore, that this event would take place, he ventured to offer up a prayer for Ishmael, that that he might still enjoy the favour of the Almighty, or as it is expressed in the bible, that he might “live before “Thee.” This prayer was likewise answered in the same gracious manner ; he was told that though it was the descendants of Isaac who were to enjoy all the promised blessings, yet that Ishmael was nevertheless not forgotten, “As “for Ishmael, I have heard thee : Behold, I have blessed “him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him “exceedingly, twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make “him a great nation.”

The next event mentioned, is Abraham’s circumcising all his household in obedience to the command of God, who had instituted this ordinance as a token of the covenant he had made with him and his descendants, an ordinance which was to be kept until the birth of our Saviour, when it was superseded by that of Baptism, which is now the essential rite by which we are made members of Christ’s Church.

GEN. XVIII. XIX.—to v. 30.

THE circumstances related in this chapter, place the character of Abraham in a new light, which may afford us much instruction. We have hitherto been struck with his great faith and obedience : we shall now observe the warmth and friendliness of his disposition, which are conspicuous throughout this chapter ; the first instance of which is shewn in the manner in which he received and entertained three

^a Rom. iv. 18.

^d Rom. iv. 20, 21.

persons, entire strangers to him. He knew not who they were, or whence they came, but no doubt considered them to be travellers, and probably weary, and he hesitated not a moment in asking them to rest themselves, bringing them refreshment, and water for their feet.

This last circumstance, from being so unlike the customs of our own country, strikes us as somewhat strange, but it is a practice prevalent in the East, and one which is alluded to more than once in the New Testament. See *Luke* vii, 38. where the woman washed our Saviour's feet with her tears : and again in *John* xiii, 5. where our Saviour himself washed the feet of his disciples.

Little did Abraham think who the persons were, to whom he was shewing this hospitality, and he was doubtless surprised when they repeated the promise which God had before made to him, that Sarah should have a son ; then of course he was aware they could only be angels sent from God. This example should teach us never to neglect any opportunity of shewing kindness or civility to any one, even though he be a stranger, as St. Paul says in allusion to this very circumstance, " Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, " for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."^a

There was also another event which the angels were directed to reveal to Abraham, an event which to one of his kind disposition, must have caused him great distress ; being no less than the destruction of two cities. We may indeed, form some idea of his feelings, by the anxiety he shewed to save them, and we cannot but be struck with God's extreme condescension in allowing him to intercede for them in the way he did.

Two important lessons may be learnt from these circumstances ; first, we may be assured that God ever listens to our prayers if properly directed ; secondly, that he approves of our interceding for others. You have no doubt been taught to offer up in private your daily prayers to God, but did it ever occur to you to pray for others as well as for yourselves ? If you see a fellow creature doing wrong,

^a Heb. 13. 2.

whom it may not become you to reprove, you can at least pray to God to forgive him, and send his Holy Spirit to lead him in the right way. We are even commanded to do this by St. James, who orders us to "pray one for another,"* adding in the same verse, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." God was graciously pleased to listen to Abraham's intercession, and promised to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, if there were but ten righteous men to be found in them; from which circumstance we may learn, that God is merciful as well as just, and ever reluctant to punish sinners, "waiting to be gracious," "he willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live."

It is melancholy to think that there should actually not have been found ten righteous men in these cities. What must have been Abraham's feelings when he saw them overthrown and burnt to the ground! Yet how thankful he must have felt that his nephew Lot with his two daughters, had escaped.

In reading of their preservation it is impossible not to be struck with the conduct of Lot's wife. Who could have supposed after such a signal mercy and deliverance she should have been so soon guilty of an act of disobedience? No sooner was she safe from danger, than every sense of gratitude passed from her mind; she did the very thing she was told not to do, and an awful punishment ensued.

GEN. XX.

"And Abraham journeyed from thence towards the south country, and dwelled between Kedesh and Shur and sojournd in Gezar."

"And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister, and Abimelech king of Gezar sent and took Sarah."

What a sad instance is this, of the natural proneness of man to step aside from the path of virtue! This is the

* Jam. v. 16.

† Isa. xxx. 18.

second time we read of Abraham's having departed from that rectitude of conduct, for which in all other instances, his character is so conspicuous, and what appears still more extraordinary, on an occasion similar to the former, when he went down into Egypt, on account of the famine mentioned in the xii. Chapter.

It is true that Abraham defended himself by saying Sarah was his sister, for that she was the daughter of his father, though not of his mother ; such marriages being permitted in those days ; yet this was no excuse for his conduct, the slightest equivocation, where there is an intention to deceive, being equally sinful as a direct falsehood.

But God would not suffer Abimelech, who appears to have been a righteous man, to be led into temptation ; he knew that it was "in the integrity of his heart" that he had taken Sarah, and graciously withheld him from committing such a sin, but appeared to him in a dream, saying unto him, "Behold, thou art but a dead man for the women which thou hast taken, for she is a man's wife."

"Now therefore restore the man his wife, for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live."

This is the first mention of the word "Prophet ;" the meaning of which, in this instance (as in many others) is not confined to the usual signification of the term "prophecy," but any one especially appointed to declare the will of God was called a prophet. In the times of the Apostles, they were termed Prophets, whose office it was to *expound* or explain the Scriptures to the people.

"He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

By comparing the third verse with the seventh, we may understand that the sentence of death passed upon Abimelech was only in case he did not restore Abraham his wife. Such expressions are not unfrequent in Scripture ; for instance we read in Ezekiel. "When I say unto the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die : if he turn from his sin, and do that

* 1. Cor. xiv. 3.

“ which is lawful and right ; if the wicked restore the pledge
 “ without committing iniquity : he shall surely live, he shall
 “ not die.”*

Thus if the sinner be terrified by the repeated judgments denounced upon the guilty, so on the other hand, may he draw consolation from the many assurances given him, that if he sincerely repent of his sins, he will be forgiven. “ As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn
 “ from his way, and live.”^b

We must not be hasty in passing censure on Abraham. From the circumstance of his being commanded to pray for Abimelech, we may infer that his conduct was not regarded by God in such a sinful light as it may appear to us. The Almighty alone knows the “ issues of the heart
 “ of man,”^c and the motives by which his thoughts and feelings are influenced, and we may at least be sure of this, that though we cannot justify Abraham’s conduct in this instance, yet the sincerity of his repentance was sufficiently attested by his subsequent integrity and uprightness.

GEN. XXI.

THE time was now arrived when God’s promise was to be fulfilled in the birth of Isaac, and we may well imagine the pleasure this event must have caused Abraham. We cannot however in reading this chapter avoid feeling grieved at Sarah’s apparent unkindness towards Hagar and her son ; nor can we wonder at the distress which Abraham felt at the thought either of disobliging his wife, or, by complying with her request, of being under the necessity of acting so harshly towards his handmaid and his son Ishmael. No doubt in his grief he sought in prayer assistance from God, which is what we should all do when we are in trouble. We are sure that He will ever listen to our prayers if offered up in faith, and that he will send his Holy Spirit into our hearts to comfort and direct us. When

* Ezek. xxxiii. 14, 15.

^bEzek. xxxiii. 11.

^cProv. iv. 23.

are led to suppose this was the case with Abraham, for in the next verse we read that God desired him to do what Sarah had requested, consoling him however by the assurances he had already given him with regard both to Isaac, and Ishmael.

This was another trial of his faith. His son Ishmael was now fifteen years old; and as Abraham for so many years had had no other child, he was doubtless much attached to him. What then would be more distressing to his feelings than to be obliged to turn him with his mother out of doors into a wilderness, with so little provisions that there was every prospect of their being in a short time starved to death. Yet when he found that this was God's command, he hesitated not a moment; he knew it must be for the best, and felt confident God would provide for them in some way.

Our Saviour says, "Take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

This does not imply that we are never to think of these things, for there is a proper degree of attention which it is necessary we should bestow upon them, but that they are not completely to engross our thoughts, and especially when like Hagar we are placed in any situation where we are quite unable to procure any assistance of ourselves, we are then to dismiss all anxiety from our minds, and rest assured that God will provide for us, as he did for Hagar.

Yet, in drawing this instruction from the story of Hagar, we must not lose sight of another point of view in which it is to be regarded, and which St. Paul explains in his Epistle to the Galatians, where he tells them it is a type of Judaism; "Agar is mount Sinai, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children."^b "While we, as Isaac was, are the children of promise,"^c and are made free through Christ, from the bondage of sin, in which, had it not been for the atone-

^a Matt. vi. 31, 32. ^b Gal. iv. 25.—^c 28.

ment of our Saviour, the Jews, as well as the rest of the world, must ever have remained.

GEN. XXII.

WE are now come to the most interesting event in Abraham's life, one in which his faith and obedience were put to the severest test.

“ It came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, (or try him, to prove his faith,) and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold here I am.”

“ And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Can we imagine any thing more agonizing to a parent's feelings, than to be thus called upon not merely to part with a beloved child, but even to slay him with his own hand. But says St. Paul, “ who art thou that repliest against God?” “ All his commandments are holy, just and good.” Abraham was well aware of this. He knew that the same Almighty power which had created Isaac, could restore him to life, and that he fully believed he would do so, we have every reason to suppose. It was but a short time before, that God had said to him, “ In Isaac shall thy seed be called;” how could this promise be realized, if that son were now suddenly to be taken away? Therefore as it is written in St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, “ By faith Abraham offered up Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead;” and accordingly without any hesitation he set off early the next morning to perform this act of obedience to God.

And now, my dear young friends, let us pause for a moment, and consider what an example is set before us in this conduct of Abraham. There is little chance of your being placed in a similar situation, but are you not even

* Rom. ix. 20.

† vii. 12.

• Heb. xi 17, 19.

now often called upon to do things contrary to your inclinations? And how do you behave on such occasions? Do you always submit without a murmur, without a remonstrance? Yours are small trials indeed compared to those of Abraham's, or to many others you will meet with, if you live, yet to young people they are trials, and sent them in order to prove their faith and obedience, and it is by accustoming yourselves in all these things to yield implicit obedience to your earthly parents, that your minds will become habituated to that ready submission to the Divine will, which will support you under greater trials, whenever your Heavenly Father may think fit to send them.

Nor is it the mere act of obedience which is required of you; these things must be done cheerfully, not only from the fear of punishment, but because you know it to be your duty, and because you know you cannot perform your duty to God without obeying your parents in all things.

Thus did Abraham set off directly to obey God's command, concealing the anguish which, notwithstanding his faith in God, he must have felt at the thought of inflicting such a stroke. He even betrayed no emotion when his son, little imagining he himself was to be the victim, asked him saying, "My father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" "My son," replied Abraham, "God will provide himself a Lamb for a burnt offering." He dared not tell him the truth, yet he had doubtless suffered too much from having in two instances deviated from it, to think now of deceiving Isaac.

Little indeed did he foresee how literally his words would be fulfilled, and that a substitute was really to be offered up in the place of his son. He had no sooner stretched forth his hand to perform the deed, than an angel was sent to stop him, and to assure him that God had only suffered him to be thus tried, in order to prove his faith.

With what feelings of delight must Abraham have received this message from Heaven! He might indeed be truly said to enjoy that "peace of mind which passeth all

“understanding.” He felt that he had done his duty ; his conscience could not reproach him for having given way to his feelings, or for having entertained any doubts of God’s promises. He knew the Lord to be a God of mercy, as well as justice ; that he never suffered his creatures to be tried, excepting for their good ; and that he could bring things to pass, which to mortal beings appear impossible. These feelings had supported him through all his trials, and he received his reward in the approbation bestowed upon him by his Heavenly Father.

There is one other circumstance connected with this event, to which I wish to call your attention. You will remember my saying, that you would read of many occurrences which though apparently the natural result of the circumstances out of which they arose, yet often contained a hidden reference to our Saviour, and were thence called *types*. Now the event of which you have just been reading, is one of the most striking and remarkable of these types, being no less than that of the sacrifice of our Saviour. Isaac was therefore a type of Jesus Christ.

You know it was through him, that all “ nations were “to be blessed,” and the Israelites to have possession of the land of Canaan ; so is it through our Saviour that we have obtained all the blessings of Christianity, and are promised possession of the heavenly Canaan. On Mount Moriah did Abraham, in obedience to God’s command, offer up his only son, and in the same place, did Christ in obedience to his Father’s will, offer up himself a sacrifice for our sins.

(It is with reference to this event that this Chapter is always read on Good Friday.)

• Phil. iv. 7.

CHAPTER III.

Abraham sends to Laban—Isaac goes to Gezar—Jacob obtains Isaac's blessing—Jacob's vow in going to Padar-aran—Marries Leah and Rachel—Returns home—His prayer to God—His meeting with Esau—Wrestles with the Angel—God's Church—Joseph's dreams—Joseph carried to Egypt.

GEN. XXIV.

ABRAHAM was now growing old, and having lost his wife, whose death and burial formed the subject of the last chapter, he began probably to look forward to the time of his own departure from this world, as an event which might not be very far distant; and how calm and peaceful must his latter days have passed, under the consciousness of having, with two exceptions only (and of those doubtless he had deeply repented) "set the Lord "always before him": that is, he had lived constantly under a sense of his presence, knowing He was "about "his path, and about his bed," and that nothing he ever did or thought, was concealed from His knowledge; thus was he ever watchful of himself, doing all things to the glory of God, and in obedience to His holy will.

Nothing but the consciousness of having lived righteously—of having endeavoured to do so on all occasions, with a full reliance on our Saviour for pardon and reconciliation, can afford us any peace or comfort, as we approach our latter end, and feel the time to be near at hand, when we must appear before God to be judged according to the works "done in the body," or during our life time.

* Ps. xvi. 8.—cxxxix. 3.

† 2 Cor. v. 10.

Young people, although they are constantly hearing of the death of those of their own age, are nevertheless too apt to consider their's, as an event not likely to take place for many years ; but does Abraham appear to have been actuated by such feelings? though *he* might have looked forward to remaining a much longer period on earth, than any of us can do, as it pleased God in those days to lengthen the age of man to a term far beyond that to which any one ever attains now. Abraham, we are told, lived more than an hundred and seventy years, and his obedience to the commands of God is striking even to the last. He was naturally anxious to see his son Isaac married, but you will remember he was now living in the land of Canaan, where the people all worshipped idols instead of serving the true God. He was therefore desirous that his son should take a wife from his own country, where he had left many friends and relations, and for this purpose desired his servant to go into that country, and bring back a wife for him.

“And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land, must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?”

This was a natural apprehension on the part of the servant ; it appeared indeed very improbable that he should chance to meet with a woman who would be willing to return with him, and live in a strange country at a distance from all her friends, to become the wife of a man she had never seen ; but Abraham knew it was his only step to prevent his son from marrying one of the idolaters of the land in which he was now living : his duty therefore was plainly pointed out, and he knew, in performing it, that he might rely upon God's assistance in removing such obstacles as he would naturally have anticipated.

“And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again.”

“The Lord God of Heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and

“which spake unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.”

The servant accordingly set out, and went to the city where Nahor, Abraham's brother had dwelt, and where his nephew Bethuel now lived. And what was the first thing he did when he arrived there? even to pray to God for His assistance, which (as I said before) we should always do when we are under any difficulty; for though God knows all our wants, yet He has commanded us to pray to him on all occasions, and very thankful we should feel at being allowed this privilege of holding communion with Him. St. Paul says, “Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”^a the meaning of which is, Do not make yourself anxious concerning what is to befall you, but make known your wants and wishes to God in prayer, seeking his guidance and assistance in all things, and you will then enjoy that peace and tranquillity of mind which surpasses all other blessings, but which no one but a true Christian can understand.

Abraham's servant, who had probably lived many years with his master, could not have failed to have observed the righteousness which had marked his conduct in all he did, and was no doubt influenced by his good example: we even read that God had foretold this; “For I know that he will command his children, and his household after him,” (that is he will lead them to follow his steps) “and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice, and judgement.”^b

Thus did the servant make known his wants to God in prayer, and that it was offered in true faith and humility we cannot doubt, for even before he had done speaking, his prayer was granted; the first person he met with,

^a Phil. iv. 6.

^b Chap. xviii. 19.

proved the very one who returned with him, and became Isaac's wife, Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew.

GEN. XXVI.

VERY few incidents are recorded of Isaac's life, yet it is singular that among those few, an event should have befallen him so similar in all its circumstances to that which happened to his father, Abraham. That he should have been driven out of his country by a famine,—that he should have resorted to the same spot, and practised the same deception on Abimelech as his father had done, are indeed striking coincidences. It appears that he remained some time in the country of the Philistines, for it is said, "he waxed great," and had "possessions of herds, and great store of servants; and the Philistines envied him." From the circumstance of their having stopped up the wells which Abraham had made, there is reason to suppose they were not very well disposed towards him, and were therefore little inclined that his son should take up his abode in their country; especially when they perceived him increasing in wealth and power.

"And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we."

Yet notwithstanding these bitter feelings, and the disputes which ensued with respect to the wells, they were evidently aware that Isaac was a person highly favoured by God, and they would not let him finally depart until they had entered into a covenant of peace with him.

God had promised to bless Isaac for his father Abraham's sake, and we may therefore suppose he met with fewer troubles and anxieties during his life, than fall to the lot of most men. One circumstance however occurred which must have deeply distressed him: God had blessed him with two sons, Esau and Jacob. Now we are told in the preceeding chapter that Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob; we may suppose therefore, that Esau was

more especially the object of his father's affection, and can imagine "the grief of mind," which it is said Isaac and Rebekah experienced at his marrying one of the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan.

GEN. XXVII. XXVIII.

THE marriage of Esau was not the only affliction which Isaac experienced. The time was now drawing near, when his death could not be far distant, and he was desirous of bestowing his blessing upon his eldest and favourite son before he died; and we read in this chapter in what way he was deceived by Rebekah and Jacob, and how the latter obtained it instead.

Nothing can justify Rebekah's conduct in this affair; and indeed we cannot but feel inclined even to blame Jacob also; but in reading this portion of Scripture, we must bear in mind the whole circumstances of the case, and not hastily judge him for an action, which in these times might justly be censured, but which must be differently regarded, when we consider the ignorant state of mankind at that period.

Jacob had doubtless been informed of all the promises made to the posterity of Isaac, that in his seed all nations were to be blessed, and that moreover the elder was to serve the younger;* and Esau having sold his birthright to him, (thus consigning over to him the privileges which as eldest son, he might have enjoyed, and being now married to one of the Hittites,) had forfeited all right to that distinction. Jacob might fairly therefore consider himself as the one, who was to be more especially favoured by heaven, and it was doubtless his strong faith which induced him to do evil, that good might come; a species of conduct not to be approved of now, but overlooked by God himself in those days of ignorance, in consideration of the faith which prompted it.

Isaac was of course doubly anxious that his son Jacob

* Chap. xiv. 23.—

should not follow the example of his brother in marrying one of the Canaanites, and accordingly pursuing the same course his father had done with regard to himself, he sent Jacob to seek for a wife among his relations ; and an interesting account is given us of his journey, in which we see the beginning of the fulfilment of those promises God had made to Abraham. We see him watching over Jacob with the tenderness of a kind father, even appearing to him in a vision, and promising to be with him wherever he went, to keep him from all danger, and finally to bring him back in safety to the land of Canaan.

“And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace ; then shall the Lord be my God.”

And here I would call your attention to the humility in which this vow is offered. Jacob asked not for wealth, or honour, or power ; all that he desired was the presence of the Almighty, with a sense of his favour and love, together with a supply of such wants as he would necessarily require for the sustenance of life.

Would it not be well if we were all to confine *our* wants and wishes within these limits ? “Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me ;”^a was the request of Agur, and when in the words taught by our Saviour we pray for “our daily bread,”^b in that petition is contained all that is necessary for us.

“Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.”^c

GEN. XXXI. XXXIII.

IN the twenty-ninth Chapter we read of the deception practised upon Jacob by his uncle Laban, in substituting his eldest daughter, Leah, in the place of Rachel whom Jacob preferred, and for whom he was obliged to remain

^a Prov. xxx. 8.

^b Matt. vi. 11.

^c 1 Tim. vi. 8.

and serve yet seven years longer ; (God permitting people in those days to have more wives than one.)

Jacob appears to have received much unkindness from Laban during this period, and would no doubt gladly have returned sooner to his own country, could he have done so without breaking his promise to his uncle. We may suppose therefore that he was not sorry when God commanded him to return to the land of his fathers, adding, as he had done before, that He would be with him. He accordingly took his departure with all his family, which was very numerous, and pursued his journey homewards, when he began to feel some apprehension with regard to his brother Esau, recollecting how they had quarrelled about their father's blessing, and that Esau had threatened to kill him ; and though he hoped that in the time which had elapsed since they parted, he might have repented of this wicked intention, yet he thought it best to ascertain what were his brother's feelings, and accordingly sent some messengers on before, to conciliate him.

What must have been his dismay, when they returned and told him that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men ! "Then," it is said, "Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed."

Now observe Jacob's conduct, and how he acted on this trying occasion. He first took all necessary precautions for the safety of his family, and then in the full confidence that God would protect him from all danger, sought his assistance in prayer ; and a beautiful prayer he offered up ; confessing how unworthy he was of all the mercies he had received at the hand of the Almighty, recalling the time when he left his home with only his staff in his hand, and acknowledging that he was now returning surrounded by blessings ; at the same time he humbly reminded Him of his promises, and trusted to him for the safety of his wife and children : and then, in order that Esau might be aware of his friendly dispositions towards him, he sent him a present.

Great must have been his delight to find that all his

fears were groundless ; he was indeed little prepared to meet with such a kind reception from Esau, who, we read "fell on his neck and kissed him: and they both wept." It was truly a happy meeting. The two brothers had not met for twenty years, and all their former enmity was forgotten in the pleasure they felt in seeing each other again.

One circumstance is mentioned as having taken place during Jacob's journey, which I am unwilling altogether to omit noticing, though at the same time, it is not very easy to comprehend. I allude to Jacob's wrestling with the angel ; for what purpose he was permitted to do so, or what end he gained by it, is not clear to us, but the instruction we are to draw from it, is, that as Jacob persevered in wrestling with him, so are we to persevere in praying to God. The angel said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," was Jacob's reply, and that God approved of it is certain, from the blessing he bestowed upon him, at the same time changing his name from Jacob to Israel : his descendants being ever after called Israelites.

GEN. XXXV.

JACOB had now arrived safely in the land of Canaan, under the especial guidance and protection of God, and having greatly increased his possessions.

And now surely his first thought must have been to return thanks to the Almighty for his great mercy towards him, and accordingly we find him building an altar at Bethel where God had commanded him to dwell, and there assembling all his family in prayer, having first ordered them to "put away their strange gods."

You may perhaps be at a loss to know what is meant by the "strange gods," here alluded to, nor is there any very *explicit* account given to us of them ; but they were doubtless the same which we are told in Ch. xxxi. Rachel brought away from her father's house, and which both she

and her family had been in the habit of worshipping. That Abraham's family had been all partial idolaters, we are told in Joshua ; where it is distinctly stated that "they served other gods ;" and it is probable such practices had continued to exist among them, after Abraham's departure from Haran.

It is a great proof of Jacob's faith, and of God's mercy towards him, that he was enabled to resist all temptation to mix with the idolatrous nations by whom he was now surrounded.

He and his family were at that time the only people whose religion was pure. Esau, you know, had taken wives of the daughters of Canaan, and his worship was doubtless blended with the idolatrous practices of those with whom he now associated.

It has always been God's pleasure to keep his Church holy and apart from the rest of the world. By the word "Church," I do not here mean that building in which you are accustomed to assemble every Sabbath day, but those families in which true religion has been preserved from the commencement of the world, beginning with Adam and Eve, and descending through Noah and Abraham down to the Israelites, or Jews as they were afterwards called ; and though many of these were led astray to follow the wicked practices of those around them, thus deserting the worship of the true God, yet was his Church still preserved among a few, until our Saviour appeared ; when the Israelites refusing to acknowledge him, were cast off, and the Gentiles called in, that is, other nations were converted from their idolatry, and became Christians, or members of the Church of Christ.

Jacob and his family were now the only representatives of God's Church, and it appears that they were considered by the people who inhabited the neighbouring cities, to be under his especial favour and protection, for it is written, "the terrors of the Lord were upon the cities round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of

• Josh. xxiv. 2.

“Jacob;” suffering them peaceably to come and settle among them, without offering them any molestation.

It is only surprising, that with such feelings, they were not influenced by their good example, but we must recollect the circumstances under which they were placed. We have been blessed with Christ’s presence on earth, and our minds are enlightened by God’s holy Spirit, which enables us to view things in a very different light from those, whose understandings were darkened, and whom for wise and good reasons, it pleased the Almighty to destroy from off the earth, rather than they should “be converted and healed.”^a

God’s ways are not our ways; it is vain for us to attempt to fathom the counsels of the Almighty, whose “ways are past finding out.” We must read our Bibles in an humble and teachable spirit, knowing “that all things work together for good to those who love God,”^d and put their trust in him.

GEN. XXXVII.

WE are told that Jacob had twelve sons whose names are recorded at the conclusion of the chapter we have just been reading. They are often called the twelve Patriarchs, (the word *patriarch* being derived from a Greek word signifying father-chief,) as from them descended the twelve tribes of Israel.

It is said that Jacob “loved Joseph more than all his children,” in consequence of which Joseph was an object of hatred to his brothers, who were all envious and jealous of him, perhaps the more so, from the circumstance mentioned of Joseph’s bringing to his father “their evil report;” this was not acting kindly towards his brothers; “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that re-peateth a matter separateth friends.”^e They were consequently little disposed to listen to his dreams by which it appeared he was to be exalted to a station so high

^a Isa. vi. 10. ^c Rom. xi. 33. ^d Rom. viii. 28. ^e Prov. xvii. 9.

above them all. Dreams in those days were so often made the medium of communication between God and man, that they were probably led to attach some importance to them, though they little foresaw how literally these would be fulfilled, and that they would really one day "bow down their heads before him." In fact, they took such steps as they imagined would offer an effectual obstacle to such an event: for their enmity was raised to such a pitch, that they conspired against Joseph to slay him, and would doubtless have done so, had it not been for Reuben, who, it appears, was of a more kindly disposition than the rest, and interceded for him. It was well for them that they yielded to his intercession, and were thus preserved from committing such a dreadful crime. They contented themselves with selling him as a slave to some Ishmaelites who were on their way to Egypt, under the expectation that he would thereby be removed out of their sight, and that they should never hear of him again.

Vain thought! Who can resist the will of the Almighty? "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps." He maketh good to come out of evil, and overruleth all the actions of man. The very means these wicked brothers employed to prevent the fulfilment of the event predicted in his dreams, proved (as we shall see hereafter) the very means to bring it about. He was taken to Egypt, and there sold to the Captain of the Guard.

Melancholy as his feelings must have been, at being thus separated from all his friends, and especially his beloved parent, yet must his heart have overflowed with gratitude to God, for such an unlooked-for deliverance from that death, which had appeared so near. His poor father, fully believing he was no more, was overwhelmed with grief, and bitterly would he have repented the partiality he had shewn towards him, had he been aware of the sinful conduct of Joseph's brothers, and how cruelly they had deceived him.

CHAPTER IV.

Joseph in prison—He interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's servants—Pharaoh's dreams—Joseph promoted—He provides for the famine—His brethren come into Egypt—Simeon detained—Arrival of Benjamin—Cup found in his sack—Joseph discovers himself—Jacob's sacrifice at Beersheba—Goes to Egypt—Appears before Pharaoh—His death—Joseph a type of Christ.

GEN. XXXIX. XL. XLI.

JOSEPH was now living in the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, as comfortable as he could be under the circumstances in which he was placed. He was a good and virtuous man, submitting with resignation to his fate, and doing his duty to his Master; and "the Lord was with Joseph," that is, God blessed him, watched over him, and "made all things to prosper in his hands."

This did not escape his Master's observation, for though he was doubtless one of those who knew not what it was to worship the true God, to love him, fear him, and put his trust in him, yet he could not but be struck with Joseph's piety and good conduct; and consequently we find him placing the utmost confidence in all he did, entrusting every thing to his care. And here he might have remained for some time longer, had it not been for the wickedness of Potiphar's wife, who falsely accused him of having behaved ill to her.

This was a fresh trial to Joseph, for his Master not doubting the truth of her accusation, instantly cast him

into prison. Joseph however was conscious of having acted rightly, and trusted that God would in his own good time deliver him, and that his innocence would be proved.

There is nothing so distressing to our feelings as being accused unjustly, yet ought it to occasion us no anxiety, for we are sure that God sees our hearts, and will one day reward the innocent, although he may see fit for a time "to hide his face from us," in order to try our faith; "For what glory is it, if when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." And He did not desert Joseph in prison, for we are told that "the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison." He so disposed his heart towards Joseph, as to induce him to consign to his charge all the other prisoners.

God orders every thing in such a manner, as may best suit his purposes, and how many striking instances we meet with in the Bible, which prove that He can always cause good to come out of evil. Had Potiphar not listened to the evil suggestions of his wife, and kept Joseph in his house, the latter might never have attained that high station to which he afterwards rose, and which enabled him to be of so much use, in foretelling and providing against the famine which took place.

Joseph's confinement in prison not only furnished him with a fresh occasion for shewing his faith, but enabled him to glorify God in an especial manner by the opportunity afforded him of exhibiting the power of the Almighty in the interpretation he was enabled to give to the dreams of Pharaoh's chief butler and baker. This circumstance led him to hope for his own deliverance from prison, for he could not but suppose that the butler would feel desirous of shewing his gratitude by conferring a favor upon him, and would intercede for him with the King; but alas! how apt we all are to forget the blessings we

* Ps. xxx. 7.

* 1 Pet. ii. 20.

receive ! The Butler thought no more of Joseph, until Pharoah's dream recalled him to his mind, and then how sorely grieved he must have felt at the recollection of his unkindness towards him, suffering him to remain for two years confined in prison without making a single effort to effect his release.

He no doubt rejoiced in the opportunity now afforded him of repairing his fault, and instantly acquainted Pharoah with the circumstances of his own dream. The result must have gratified him greatly. Pharoah lost no time in sending for Joseph, who accordingly interpreted his dreams, as he had previously done those of his servants.

We can scarcely imagine what Pharoah's feelings must have been, at meeting with a person, and he an obscure individual, who had been confined in prison for many years, and a stranger too, endowed with the power he had in vain sought among the wise men of his kingdom. Like the rest of the inhabitants of his country, he was an idolater, yet that he was not wholly without a knowledge of the true God, appears by his saying to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is ?"

Thus he was fully aware this power could only have been given him from above, and therefore felt convinced that Joseph must be a person especially favoured by God, and that all that he did, "the Lord made it to prosper." He therefore determined not only to place him at the head of his household, but to make him "ruler over all the land of Egypt," in order that he might provide against the distress which was likely to ensue from the predicted famine.

He accordingly "took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand ;" such rings in those days having seals upon them, by which orders and covenants were signed, and things of value secured or consigned over from one person to another. We may judge therefore from this circumstance, of the great power with which Joseph was now invested.

GEN. XLII.

OUR Saviour says, "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,"* and surely this was exemplified in the case of Joseph, who was now fully rewarded for the patience and resignation he had shewn, under the severe trials with which it had pleased the Almighty to visit him. He was now exalted to the second station in the Kingdom of Egypt, and invested with almost Sovereign authority ; "without him no man was even to lift his hand or foot," implying that nothing was to be done without his consent.

Surely his prosperity must have been even more trying to him than the state of adversity from which he had been so unexpectedly delivered. Temptations of all kinds now surrounded him, yet did he remain firm and uncorrupted among them, nor do we read of his being once led astray by the idolatrous habits of those around him. His trust in God was unshaken, and he only thought of fulfilling the arduous duties of that station in which he was now placed. His first care was to provide for the wants of the nation, by laying up such a stock of corn from the superfluity of the first seven years of plenty, that when the famine arose, there was not only enough to supply the demands of the Egyptians, but sufficient to serve the nations round them, and accordingly we read that "all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn."

How strikingly does the overruling providence of God appear in the events which resulted from this circumstance. The famine extended even to the land of Canaan, where Jacob and his family suffered with the rest of the inhabitants from the effects of it. It was natural therefore for him to send his sons into Egypt to obtain that supply they could procure no where else, and thus by second causes, does God work his purposes, overruling and directing them in such a way as to bring about those

* Luke. xiv. 2.

events which He in his infinite wisdom has predetermined should take place. Little did these brothers imagine that in simply obeying the commands of their father, by going to Egypt for a supply of corn, they were actually themselves fulfilling that very prophecy, which had so greatly excited their wrath against Joseph. "They bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth."

What must have been Joseph's feelings on beholding his brethren? Nearly twenty years having elapsed since he had seen any of his family, or even one of his own countrymen. The sight of them instantly recalled to his mind all the circumstances connected with his two dreams, thus bringing to light the hidden mysteries of God's providence in the singular events which had taken place since he had been banished from his Father's house.

His first impulse was doubtless to embrace them, and make them acquainted with all the circumstances by which he had been placed in the high station in which they found him. He was however, quite ignorant how they might now feel with regard to him; they might have repented of their wickedness, and be rejoiced to see him in safety, and raised to such a state of prosperity, or they might still entertain the same unkind feelings towards him, and be doubly irritated at finding all their evil intentions counteracted. He therefore thought it most prudent to dissemble, until he had fully ascertained their dispositions towards him; he even "made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them," probably the better to conceal the truth until the moment arrived when he might think proper to discover himself, and also, it afforded him an excuse for questioning them, especially concerning his father and his youngest brother Benjamin, who he observed was not with them, and of whom he was of course very anxious to hear some tidings. He therefore accused them of being spies, no doubt hoping that in their defence they would mention the circumstances of their coming, and the family they had left behind.

The result answered his expectations ; he was now informed that his father was still alive, and his brother Benjamin left at home with him. His next wish was to see this favourite brother, to effect which he had recourse to the only means in his power, without at once discovering himself to them.

And here again we see the hand of God directing even this slight circumstance to such a blessed end ; for now were these brothers for the first time led to reflect on the sinfulness of their conduct, and openly to acknowledge their fault. " We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us."

They little thought that brother was listening to all they were saying, for they supposed Joseph to be an Egyptian, and ignorant of their language. But he did hear them, and when he found how deeply they repented of their sins, he was so much affected, he could not restrain his tears, and turned away from them, that they might not see him weep.

The brothers, being now provided with corn, took their departure from Egypt, leaving Simeon in prison as a pledge of their return, and of bringing Benjamin with them. We are told nothing of Simeon during his confinement, but we may be quite sure from Joseph's affection for his brothers, that he was kindly treated.

How sad must have been the feelings of the brethren during their journey home ! they were well aware of their father's affection for their brother Benjamin, and the little probability there was of his suffering him to accompany them back ; and to be the cause of his losing another son, must have added to the deep sorrow their repentant hearts now experienced. They had also the mortification of thinking they would incur the imputation of having stolen the money, which to their great surprise, they found within their sacks. With sorrowful hearts they arrived at their father's house, and related to him all that had passed,

earnestly beseeching him to let Benjamin return with them, but their intreaties were unavailing : Jacob had suffered too much from the loss of Joseph, to bear the thought of parting with Benjamin ; and he refused to grant their request.

GEN. XLIII. XLIV. XLV.

THE famine still continued in the land of Canaan, and the supply of corn which the Israelites had procured from Egypt being now exhausted, the only resource was again to resort to that country. But how could they hope to obtain a second supply ; for Joseph had expressly told them they should not see his face again, unless they brought their brother Benjamin with them. Jacob was therefore reduced to the alternative either of consenting to part with him, or seeing his family deprived of all sustenance. He therefore, though with reluctance, yielded to the intreaties of Judah, and they set off once more for Egypt, accompanied now by their brother Benjamin.

With fear and trembling they appeared a second time before Joseph, for they expected him to accuse them of having taken the money, and that perhaps he would put them all in prison. How relieved they must have felt therefore, at the kind reception he gave them, and at having their brother Simeon restored to them in safety. Joseph's interview with Benjamin is very touching. That beloved brother whom he had not seen for so many years, was now before him, "and his bowels did yearn upon his brother ;" he felt greatly affected, and was obliged to leave the room to give vent to his feelings in tears, not wishing at that moment to discover himself to them.

When he was sufficiently composed to return, he ordered bread to be set on, (a common expression in those days, signifying any meal.) We read in the New Testament of the Pharisees asking our Saviour, why his disciples "eat bread with unwashed hands,"* meaning not

* Mark. vii. 5.

simply eating bread, but sitting down to any meal without first washing their hands, a ceremony which the Pharisees, who made a great point of such trifling matters, never failed to perform. Also in Luke, xiv. 1, our Saviour is mentioned as "eating bread" with his disciples, when the same meal in v. 15, is signified by the expression, "sitting at meat with him."

And now it might naturally have been expected that Joseph would no longer have delayed discovering himself to his brothers, but it appears he was desirous of still further trying them, before he imparted what he might well suppose, would create extreme astonishment. It is possible he may have been anxious to ascertain their sentiments towards their brother Benjamin, and for this purpose adopted the means he did, in order to have an excuse for retaining him. Had they entertained any feelings of envy or dislike towards him, they would have discovered them; the cup being found upon Benjamin, would have afforded them a plausible excuse for leaving him behind. But they were no longer actuated by such feelings. They were overwhelmed with distress, and "rent their clothes," an Eastern custom of shewing intense sorrow. We may therefore judge from this, how deeply they were grieved.

"And they fell down before Joseph." They did not attempt to defend themselves: they knew it must be unavailing; every circumstance was so strongly against them; but what must have been their affliction, when they were told their brother Benjamin must be left behind—that brother whom Judah had pledged himself to bring back in safety to his father; and we consequently find him foremost in devising a scheme for his release, requesting to be allowed to remain even as a slave, that Benjamin might return to his disconsolate father.

Joseph could now restrain himself no longer: Judah's disinterested conduct touched him deeply; and desiring to be left alone with his brethren, he said, "I am Joseph, doth my father yet live"? His brothers, as might be

expected, were too much overcome to utter a word. Their astonishment at finding that the man of whom they stood in such dread, and one before whom they had been "bowing themselves down to the earth," and to whom they had even been indebted for their daily food, was their brother Joseph, combined with the joy they felt at finding he had escaped the perils to which they had exposed him, so entirely overpowered them, as to deprive them of all utterance.

Joseph saw their distress, and felt for them, and with his usual kindness, called them to come near unto him, saying, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt; now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." What could be more consoling to these repentant brothers than to meet with such a return from one, whom they had so deeply injured,—to be not only at once forgiven, but even reminded of God's dealings with mankind, and how he had overruled all events for their good.

What an important lesson on the duty of forgiveness does this incident convey to us; a duty often inculcated by our Saviour. When Peter "came to him and said, Lord, 'how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?' Jesus saith unto him, I say not 'unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven.'" Nothing can justify your resentment against him; however great his crime may be, it is not for you to judge him.

Joseph having now discovered himself to his brothers, felt naturally a great desire to see his father again, he must therefore have been greatly rejoiced to find Pharaoh, who had been informed of all that had taken place, entering so fully into his feelings, as to offer support and sustenance to all his family if they would come and settle in Egypt. He accordingly lost no time in sending his brothers home to impart the joyful tidings of his being alive and well,

* Matt. xviii. 21.

and to endeavour to persuade him to accompany them back to Egypt.

“And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the “land of Canaan unto Jacob their father;” but when they told him Joseph was “yet alive, and governour over all “the land of Egypt,” his “heart fainted, for he believed “them not.” What could more improbable than that the son whom he had supposed to have been dead for twenty years, should be ruling over a large country! Yet when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, “his “spirit revived,” he could no longer doubt the fact. “It “is enough,” he said, I want no other proof, “Joseph my “son *is* yet alive : I will go and see him before I die.”

GEN. XLVI.

“AND Israel took his journey with all that he had, and “came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God “of his father Isaac.”

The step which Jacob was now about to take, was one of great importance. Hitherto he had acted under God’s peculiar guidance, and in his journey to his uncle Laban, and on his return home, he had been especially favoured with the counsel and assistance of the Almighty, often immediately directing him how to act, and promising support and protection under any difficulties he might meet with. He was now again leaving his home, that land which he knew had been promised to himself and his children, and this he was doing, not in obedience to any command of God, but as it might appear to him, merely for the sake of indulging his paternal feelings, and gratifying the wish of his favourite son. Yet he was not ignorant of the prediction made to Abraham, that before his seed should enter into the full possession of Canaan, they were to be for four hundred years “strangers in a land that was not “theirs.” He, probably therefore, hesitated less than he

would otherwise have done, in consenting at once to remove with his family to Egypt; still we must suppose he had some doubts as to how far he might be acting according to the will of God, by the assurance he received in answer to his prayers; the Almighty vouchsafing himself to speak to him in a vision, and quieting at once all his fears and doubts by repeating to him the promises he had already made to himself and his family.

“And he said, I am GOD, the God of thy fathers; fear not to go down to Egypt: for I will there make of thee a great nation.”

Consoled by these assurances, Jacob now pursued his journey with all his family, amounting, it is said, to seventy souls. Two hundred and fifteen years had now elapsed since God had told Abraham that his seed should be more in number than the stars, “and yet the posterity of Isaac, on whom the promise was entailed, was as yet increased only to twenty. Could there be a more striking proof of the great power of the Almighty than thus causing these few to multiply in the way they did: for we know what a large nation they afterwards became. “A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation, I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time.” The accomplishment of God’s promises may appear slow, yet is it always sure. “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

Jacob’s first step on arriving in Egypt was to send Judah before him to prepare Joseph for his reception; who, it is said, “made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him, and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.”

What can be more affecting than this interview between Jacob and his son? to be thus restored to each other after a separation of so many years, neither of them ever expecting to see the other again.

Joseph’s next care was to acquaint Pharoah with the

* Chap. xv. 5.

† Is. lx. 22.

• 2 Pet. iii. 8.

arrival of his family ; and here we may observe the prudence he shewed in his anxiety for the welfare of his brethren and their families : in all his dealings with them, not only practising that Christian virtue of doing to others as we would they should do unto us, but even returning good for evil. We may suppose that holding the high station he did in Pharaoh's court, he might through his interest with the king, have obtained for them some of the first situations in the kingdom, but he knew very well the temptations to which they would thus be exposed, amongst a people who worshipped not the true God, and who might by their example at least, if not by persuasion, induce his brethren to do the same. He might suppose that nothing but entire separation from the Egyptians could secure them from being led astray by their idolatrous practices, and therefore wisely suggested to them the occupation of shepherds, in order to secure to them a land in which they might dwell apart from the rest of the nation ; for every shepherd was held in abomination by the Egyptians, the land of Egypt having once been invaded and subdued by a tribe of shepherds from the land of Cush, who enslaved the whole country, and though after a period of some years the Egyptians rebelled against them, and forced them to quit it, yet the remembrance of their tyranny had never been effaced from their minds.

GEN. XLVII.

SUCH was the estimation in which Joseph was held by Pharaoh, that he had no difficulty in obtaining his permission for the Israelites to dwell in the land of Goshen. His request was not only granted, but Pharaoh even offered to provide them with employment, proposing that they should have charge of his cattle.

The next incident related to us is Jacob's interview with Pharaoh, which is very interesting.

“ And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.”

“ And Pharoah said unto Jacob, how old art thou ? ”
“ And Jacob said unto Pharoah, The days of the years of
“ my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years : few
“ and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and
“ have not attained unto the days of the years of the life
“ of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.”

You will observe he calls his life a pilgrimage, not considering this world as his home ; he looked upon himself as a pilgrim journeying towards another and a better country. Although he had now lived one hundred and thirty years, yet they appeared to him few and evil days, compared to eternity.

He knew that evil was the portion of man in this world ;
“ man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of
“ trouble.”* If Jacob’s days then appeared few to him, what must be the present life of man, which seldom exceeds, and often even scarcely extends to, the age of fourscore ? Should we not always bear in mind that we are likewise pilgrims on earth, and “ that here have we no
“ continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

Surely this reflection should incline us to submit patiently to all the troubles and trials we may here meet with, knowing they can be but of short duration, and that “ henceforth there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give at
“ that day to all those who love his appearing,”[†] that is, to those, whose faith in their Saviour, leads them to look forward with pleasure to the time, when he shall again appear on earth to judge the world.

Joseph having established his family in the land of Goshen, again turned his thoughts towards the discharge of that duty which had been imposed upon him by Pharoah ; and a detail is given us of the prudent measures he took to alleviate the universal distress arising from the famine, which still prevailed in the kingdom.

The two following chapters contain an account of the blessings bestowed by Israel upon Joseph’s two children ;

* Job. xiv. 1.

† Heb. xiii. 14.

2 Tim. iv. 8.

Ephraim and Manassah, and also upon his own sons, concluding with his death.

GEN. L.

JACOB had now finished his earthly career, having lived seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, and we may remark the respect and esteem with which he had evidently been regarded by the Egyptians, since they not only mourned for him seventy days, but even the elders of the land of Egypt, it is said, accompanied Joseph when he went to bury his father in the land of Canaan.

The name of "elder" was in those days a title given to the principal domestic in a family; thus we read in the xxiv. Chapter, verse 2. that Abraham called "the eldest servant" "of his house to him," implying not the eldest in point of age, but the chief servant of his household.

On arriving in the land of Canaan, it is said, "they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation." It is the custom in the East even at this present time, when the head of a family dies, for the rest instantly to set up a furious cry, which continues for some time, then ceases all at once, beginning again suddenly at day break. This kind of mourning continues for forty days, diminishing daily in violence.

Joseph had no sooner returned to Egypt after his father's funeral, than his brothers began to feel some apprehensions lest he might now be induced to alter his conduct towards them. They felt they had not yet received the punishment due to their sin, and no doubt imagined he might hitherto have restrained his feelings out of consideration for his father, and that he being now removed, the time might be come when Joseph would return them the evil they had rendered him. Little however, did they know the true character of their brother, Joseph feared God, and not man; "he knew him that hath said, Ven-geance belongeth unto me, I will repay it, saith the Lord."

“Fear not,” he said, “for am I in the place of God?” It is not for me to judge you for your sins. “And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them,” and “nourished them and their little ones,” foretelling when he was near his death, that God would bring them out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which he had promised to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. “So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old.”

I cannot conclude the life of Joseph without calling your attention to some circumstances attending it, which I think may very possibly have escaped your observation. You may have read it through with much interest, and I hope instruction, and yet without remarking many points in his life and character, which strikingly resemble those of our Saviour. In fact Joseph is a type of Jesus Christ.

Let us recapitulate some of the principal events of his life, in which the analogy, (or resemblance) is most striking, and we will afterwards draw a similar comparison between his character and that of our Lord.

First, let us consider his early history; the unkind feeling of his brothers towards him, and their cruel treatment of him. See what is written in John, i. 2. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not”; neither would they receive him as their brother, but cast him into a pit, and delivered him to the Egyptians; and why? This we are told in Acts vii. 9: “The Patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt”; now compare this with Matt. xxvii. 18, where it is said of our Saviour, “for envy they delivered him,” even as the Jews delivered Christ over to the Gentiles to be crucified, selling him for thirty pieces of silver, so did these brothers deliver Joseph to the Ishmaelites, selling him for twenty pieces of silver, no more expecting they should ever see him again, than the Jews expected that our Saviour would rise from the dead. They thought, when they had nailed him to the cross, they had effectually prevented the fulfilment of all his predictions, precisely as Joseph’s brethren thought they had prevented his, when they cast him into the pit.

“We shall see,” said they, “what will become of his “dreams.”” But our Saviour did rise from the dead, and was seen and known of his brethren, and Joseph did rise from the pit into which he was thrown, and was seen and known of his brethren.

There is a still closer similarity between these circumstances, from the word “pit” being frequently made use of in Scripture to denote the grave, as in Psalm xxv. 3, “O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave ; “thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to “the pit.”

Joseph rose to a station in which all things were placed in his hands : “according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled,” were Pharaoh’s words to Joseph. Thus when Christ was raised from the dead, did God “set him “at his own right hand in the heavenly places,” “and hath “put all things under his feet.”

You see how clearly these events in Joseph’s life typified the death and resurrection of our Saviour ; and your attention being once called to this fact, you will naturally be led to perceive other points of resemblance in their characters : for instance, when we read of his being falsely accused and thrown into prison, does it not remind us of Him who “suffered, being tempted”^a yet without sin : who was persecuted without a cause, who was brought as a “lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers “is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.”

We find Joseph afterwards dealing out sustenance to all the nations round, and all people flocking to him as their only resource, during the famine which prevailed everywhere.

And is there not in these days a *spiritual* famine on the earth ? How many souls are perishing daily for want of that “bread of life,”^b that spiritual food, which can alone sustain us unto everlasting life, and which is only to be

^a Ch. xxxvii. 20.

^b ch. xii. 40.

^c Eph. i. 22.

^d Heb. ii. 18.

^e Isa. liii. 7.

^f John. vi. 35.

obtained from Him who has promised to satisfy every hungry soul "without money, and without price."

But as this is only granted to the true Christian, who "asks in faith, nothing wavering," so it was the Israelites (who, as I mentioned before, represented the true Church of God) who alone received their corn "without money, and without price."

Another striking, and interesting resemblance may be observed in the conduct of Joseph towards his brethren. They no sooner appeared before him, than he instantly recognized in them the same individuals, who had not only treated him with great unkindness, but had even plotted his destruction; and how was he to act towards them? He might at first appear harsh, but this was only to lead them more fully to a state of repentance; as God may at times seem to "hide his face," from us, to try our faith, and bring us, in the end nearer to him. And as Christ, by his holy Spirit cleanseth our hearts, and renders us fit to receive his doctrines, and dwell with him, so did Joseph provide his brethren with all things necessary for them, to come and take up their abode with him, pardoning and forgiving them all their sins, even as our Saviour looked down from the cross with pity upon his enemies, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

We may learn from this, that there is no sin so great, but if duly repented of and forsaken, (which is the only test of true repentance,) will be forgiven.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

• Is. lv. 1.

• James, i. 6.

• Ps. xxx. 7.

• Luke. xxiii. 34.

• Is. i. 18.

CHAPTER V.

Afflictions of the Israelites—Birth of Moses—He kills an Egyptian—The Burning Bush—Doubts and fears of Moses—Returns to Egypt—Pharaoh refuses to let Israel go.

EXODUS. I. II.

WE are now arrived at a new era in the history of the Israelites. Joseph and his brethren, and all that generation were dead, and we are told, their posterity "increased abundantly, and multiplied," "and the land was filled with them," thus realizing the promise made to Abraham, that God would "make of him a great nation,"* and that his "seed should be a stranger in a land that was not theirs, and should serve them, and they should afflict them four hundred years."

This affliction they now began to experience, for "there arose up a King over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." We may suppose that those who had known him, might for his sake have shewed kindness to his family, but afterwards they were only regarded as a large nation settled in the kingdom, which had increased so rapidly, as to become "more and mightier" than the Egyptians themselves, and the King began to feel some apprehensions lest, in the event of a war, they might be induced to join his enemies.

This fear was natural in a heathen king, who was quite ignorant of all the predictions and promises which had been delivered respecting the Israelites. And now we see what this ignorance led him to do: perhaps no more than what might be expected from one, who instead of serving the Almighty, bowed down in worship before idols, and was never influenced by the fear or love of God. In all

* Gen. xii. 2.—

• xv. 13.

his actions, his sole motive was doubtless the mere gratification of his own will, and we may conclude that this instigated him to the cruel treatment which he now inflicted upon the Israelites. Had he used them kindly, he might have gained their affection and good will, and their very number which caused him so much apprehension, might in that case have added to the strength and security of his kingdom ; but God had ordered it otherwise, and in furtherance of his scheme, suffered the kings of Egypt thus to tyrannize over the Israelites, in order that he might lead them more sensibly to acknowledge the signal mercies which he afterwards shewed towards them, in their deliverance from this state of bondage.

“Therefore they did set over them task masters to afflict them with their burdens.”

“But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.”

It is in vain for man to attempt to resist the will of the Almighty. “The word which I have spoken, shall be done, saith the Lord God.”*

Pharaoh's next step was to order all the new-born sons of the Israelites to be destroyed, and here we may observe a similarity between the infancy of Moses and that of our Saviour ; both being equally exposed to persecution, and both being saved by the interposition of the Almighty ; Joseph in the one instance being directed to flee with the child into Egypt for safety ; and in the other, the heart of Pharaoh's daughter being so kindly disposed towards Moses, as to be the means of preserving his life ; and we may especially notice the leading of Providence in so ordering events, that his own mother should have been selected as his nurse. Thus was he brought up in the court of Pharaoh, until the time arrived when he was to deliver the Israelites from their state of bondage, and bring them in safety to the promised land of Canaan : even as our Saviour was spared to deliver us from our bondage of sin, and to

* Ezek. xii. 28.

guide us in the path leading to our heavenly Canaan, even to life everlasting.

In fact, you will find, as you proceed with the history of Moses, that, like Joseph, he was a type of our Saviour, perhaps one of the most remarkable of any; he was a type of him, as a prophet, a Saviour, a lawgiver, and a mediator: he was even a type of him in his personal qualifications. "He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;"* as it is said of Christ, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

For forty years did he dwell in the court of Pharaoh, being brought up by his daughter as her son, and there he might probably have remained in affluence and prosperity, for the rest of his life, but it is said, "by faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward;" that is, he chose rather to suffer adversity, and meet any trials for Christ's sake, than to partake of the sinful pleasures of an idolatrous court.

But perhaps you will say, how was he actuated by a love of Christ, who had not yet appeared on earth? This was the great proof of his faith. *We* know that Jesus Christ did come into the world, because we read it in the Scriptures, which we know to be the word of God, and therefore to be true; but it is only by the assistance of his Holy Spirit, that we are enabled to arrive at this truth, and to believe, not only that our Saviour really lived on earth, but that he also rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. St. Paul, speaking of the holy men of old, says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For

* Acts. vii. 22.

John. vii. 15.

* Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26.

“they that say such things declare plainly that they seek
“a country.”^a

Thus the believers under the dispensation of the old Testament, had the same Faith we have in the Saviour. The Gospel was equally preached to them by the spirit of God, as it is to us by Christ and his Apostles, with this difference only that they believed he *would* come, and we believe that he has been on earth.

Our Saviour says, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to
“see my day: and was glad;”^b and that Job was convinced
of this great truth cannot be doubted, for he says, “I
“know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand
“at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my
“skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see
“God.”^c

When Moses “was full forty years old, it came into his
“heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.”^d

He was well acquainted with the history of the Israelites, of their having quitted the land of Canaan to settle in Egypt, and of God’s promises to them respecting their return to that country which was to be given to them and their descendants; and when he “looked on their burdens,” when he saw how they were suffering under the tyranny of Pharaoh, and spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, he slew him, probably to shew his brethren how ready he was to defend them, if they would unite in resisting the cruel treatment they were made to undergo, “for
“he supposed his brethren would have understood how
“that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.”^e

They were so far from drawing the inference he had anticipated, that the next day, when he would have reproved them gently for their conduct towards each other, one of them retorted upon him, saying, “who made thee a prince
“and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me as thou
“killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said,

^a Heb. xi. 13. ^b John. viii. 56. ^c Job. xix. 25, 26. ^d Acts. viii. 23.

^e Acts. viii. 25.

“surely this thing is known.” He saw now there was no longer any safety for him in Egypt, for “when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses.” He therefore “fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the “land of Midian.”

Midian is a part of Arabia, on the eastern coast of the Red Sea, near mount Horeb, or Sinai, as it is also called. Here Moses passed the next forty years of his life with Jethro the priest of Midian, whom he served as shepherd after having married his daughter.

And now the time had arrived when he was no longer to remain in this quiet seclusion, but was to come forth as the great Saviour of his people, by delivering them from the state of bondage, in which they were still kept, notwithstanding a new king had now succeeded to the throne : but it appears that he was not of a more compassionate disposition than his predecessor : in fact we may even conclude he treated them more harshly, for we are told that in the anguish of their hearts they “sighed and groaned,” “offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying “and tears unto him that was able to save ;” “and God “heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant “with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.”

“God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children “of men.” We may be quite sure therefore that in suffering the Israelites to be thus afflicted, he had some good end in view unknown to us, in furtherance of the vast scheme laid down, when he originally imparted to Abraham that “his seed should be afflicted for four hundred years in a land that was not theirs.”

From what we read in Ezekiel, it appears as if they had not entirely kept themselves pure from the idolatrous worship of the Egyptians, for it is written “they did not “every man cast away the abomination of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt ; then I said, I “will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.”

* Heb. v. 7.

† Lam. iii. 33.

* Gen. xv. 13.

† Ezek. xx. 8.

These afflictions may therefore have been intended as a chastisement, or God may have permitted such calamities to befall his people, the more to exercise their resignation to the Divine will, as also to prevent any further intercourse with the Egyptians. They would also be the better prepared to quit the country when God should command them to depart.

That period was now arrived, when by signal mercies, and most stupendous miracles, the power of the Almighty was to be magnified in the sight of all Israel, and his vengeance poured forth upon a nation, whose hearts were hardened, and who "glorified him not as God."

EXODUS. III. IV.

ABOVE two hundred years had now elapsed since the Lord appeared to Jacob in a vision at Beersheba. From that time to the period at which we are now arrived, we find no mention of any direct communication between God and man. Moses was therefore probably astonished at hearing himself addressed by his name, seeing no one near him. He had been contemplating with awe and wonder the singular circumstance of a bush burning in a flame of fire, without being consumed, when a voice suddenly called to him, "Moses, Moses; and he said, here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

It was customary in those days to take off the shoes as a mark of reverence and respect. Moses was then doubtless prepared for some awful communication, and when God informed him who He was, he "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God," who said to him, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

If Moses was thus terrified at finding himself suddenly

in the immediate presence of the Almighty, talking with him "face to face," we can imagine the feelings with which he shrunk from the awful duty which was now to be imposed upon him : that he, an obscure individual, should be enabled to release his whole nation from captivity, appeared to him in all human probability utterly impossible. His faith had not yet taught him that with God, all things are possible : that his "grace is sufficient for us, and his strength "made perfect in our weakness;" which means, that in proportion to the weakness of man, is the power of the Almighty manifested, by the strength which He imparts to us on occasions when we most require it, and when we can least rely upon our own, for support.

"And Moses said unto God, who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

We cannot but admire here the extreme goodness of the Almighty, who instead of reproving Moses for his doubts and fears, condescended at once to quiet them, by assuring him, as He had done the holy Patriarchs of old, that He would be with him, and even further vouchsafed a token of the same. One might have supposed this would at once have removed all apprehensions on the part of Moses, yet we find him still hesitating,—still doubtful of the reception he would meet with from his brethren, and requesting to be told what to say in answer to the question he expected them to put.

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Tell them, the God of your fathers hath sent you to bring them up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, "and they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the King of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us": that is, we have received an especial command from the Eternal God, whom we and our forefathers worship,

• Ex. xxxiii. 2

• 2 Cor xii. 9.

“and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God”: And though I know that the King of Egypt will not let you go, yet will I “stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.”

“And I will give the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall borrow of her neighbour.”

To understand the meaning which this expression is here intended to convey, you must know that the Hebrew word does not really signify to borrow, but to ask for a thing. The custom of giving, receiving, or even asking for presents is very common in the East even now, and is not considered as any mark of disrespect. Thus we read that King Solomon gave unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty.”

Supported by such assurances, we can scarcely enter into the feelings of Moses, at shewing such extreme reluctance to undertake this commission, an awful and important one no doubt: and had he ventured on it of his own accord, he might have been justified in the fears he expressed, but acting as he did under the immediate command of Heaven, he ought to have obeyed instantly, trusting, (as his forefathers had done before him) in the full confidence of God’s protection, and in the fulfilment of His promises. Nevertheless, we find him expressing his fears lest his brethren should not listen to him; and again does the Almighty vouchsafe to obviate even this difficulty by promising to enable him to perform a miracle, in order to satisfy them that his commission was from above; but still this did not remove the apprehensions of Moses, who now pleaded want of eloquence as likely to hinder him from prevailing with his brethren.

“And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing or the blind? have not I, the Lord?”

“Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”

It is surprising after all these gracious promises, that Moses should have continued to remonstrate in the way he did. No sooner was one difficulty removed, than he started another, nor can we wonder, after such repeated manifestations of distrust, that “the anger of the Lord” should have been “kindled against him.” Rather are we struck with the extreme forbearance and long-suffering of the Almighty; but thus he deals with all of us, bearing with our infirmities, “waiting to be gracious unto us,” “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

If we feel inclined to censure Moses for his mistrust of God’s providence, let us ask ourselves, if we are not often guilty of the same fault? Do we never murmur when called upon to perform certain duties? Have we not God’s word ever before us, to which we may refer on all occasions, and which will assist us in all our fears and difficulties, and support us under all trials; and do we make that the constant guide of all our actions, words, and thoughts? if not, believe me, we are equally guilty of rebelling against God’s commands, of mistrusting His providence, as if He had spoken to us, as He did to Moses out of the burning bush.

Notwithstanding that God was thus displeased with Moses, yet did He condescend even to humour his weakness by permitting his brother to accompany him as his “spokesman,” “he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God”: that is, he shall supply your want of eloquence, while you direct him what to say, even as I shall teach you.

Moses could not be insensible to such repeated demonstrations of lovingkindness; he no longer hesitated to obey

⁴ Isa. xxx. 18.

• 2 Pet. iii. 9.

God's command, but set out immediately on his high commission with his confidence no doubt greatly restored, not only by the promises and assurances he had received, but by the appearance of his brother, whom the Lord had foretold he would meet by the way. And he must have derived yet further encouragement from the reception he met with from his brethren when he arrived in Egypt. "The people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads, and worshipped."

EXODUS. V. VI.

ONE of the great difficulties Moses had anticipated on his return to Egypt, was now removed. The Israelites had not only hearkened to him, but were fully convinced he was sent by God to restore them to their own country.

His next step was to proceed to the court of Pharaoh, accompanied by his brother Aaron, to inform the King of the message he had received from his God, requesting he would allow the Israelites to go into the desert to perform their sacrifice to the Lord.

Pharaoh's reply was such as might be expected; "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" He acknowledged no power from on high, no other God than the idols formed by his own hands, and he considered this demand of the Israelites merely as an excuse to be released from their burdens, which he now redoubled with still greater cruelty than before.

This was a fresh trial for the people of God. Their hopes had been raised by the tidings they had received from Moses, and to have them thus suddenly crushed by this new infliction, roused their indignation against Moses and Aaron, whom they now considered as the cause of their misfortunes. "And they said unto them, the Lord look upon you, and judge, because ye have made our

“ savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.” May the Lord requite you as you deserve, because you have rendered us odious in the sight of Pharaoh, and given him occasion for destroying our whole nation.

Moses was keenly touched by this unjust accusation. Notwithstanding all the promises of support he had received from God, who had even forewarned him of the reception he would encounter from Pharaoh, yet was his faith now shaken, and his spirits cast down by this sudden disappointment of all his hopes; and he said unto the Lord, “ wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.”

After such repeated murmurings on the part of Moses, we could not have felt surprised, had God rejected him altogether from the high office he had called upon him to fill. But it has pleased the Lord to choose “ the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” Again did He condescend to repeat to Moses assurances of his power, by reminding him that He was the same Lord who had appeared to his forefathers, promising to them the land of Canaan, and that he would now fulfil his promise of giving it, “ for an heritage” to the children of Israel, and would bring them out “ from under the burdens of the Egyptians :” adding, “ I am JEHOVAH, and have sent thee to make known this great name, that is, Myself, who am constant to my word, and will faithfully perform all my promises.”^d

Surely it might have satisfied the Israelites to know, that however their deliverance might be stayed by the obstinacy of Pharaoh, and however it might please God to afflict them for a time, the greater to prove their faith and resignation, yet that he would surely, sooner or later, perform his promises; and that all that was required of them

^c 1 Cor. i, 27.

^d Bish. Patrick.

was to submit patiently to the trials with which they were now afflicted.

“Aud Moses spake so unto the children of Israel : but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.”

They refused even to listen to these words of consolation ; they were like “ the deaf adder which stoppeth her ears ; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.” Alas ! how many there are even at this day, who choose to give way to discontent and repining, rather than listen to the consolations afforded to them by the Gospel.

“ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land ; and Moses spake before the Lord, saying ; Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me ; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips.

The expression “ uncircumcised ” is used in scripture “ to express any kind of unsuitableness which there may be in any thing to answer its proper purpose ; ” as it is said in Jer. vi. 10. “ Behold their ear is uncircumcised and they cannot hearken,” as also in Acts viii. 51. “ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : ” meaning that their hearts were not duly prepared by the reception of the Holy Spirit to listen to the doctrines of the Gospel. Moses alluded here to the deficiency of eloquence he had before pleaded ; his heart failed within him, notwithstanding the assistance God so graciously permitted him through his brother Aaron, and of which, we shall find He again reminded him in the next chapter, repeating His promises that He would assuredly bring forth the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, after He had “ stretched forth his hand upon them,” in the judgements which were now to be inflicted on that rebellious nation.

^d Pa. lviii, 4, 5.

. Scott Com.

CHAPTER VI.

Ten plagues—Passover instituted—Departure of the Israelites from Egypt—
First born sanctified—Israelites pursued by Pharaoh—Cross the Red Sea—
Egyptians drowned—

EXODUS. VII.

SUCH reiterated promises as Moses had now received from above, could not fail at length to have the desired effect. His fears and apprehensions were quieted, his faith strengthened, and no longer relying on his own arm, but in that Power who promised to be “a shield unto them that put their trust in Him,”^a he went boldly unto Pharaoh, and in his presence, and in the sight of all his attendants, shewed forth the power of the living God, in the miracle which he was now enabled to perform.

“Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.”

Then did Pharaoh, in defiance of the supreme power of the Almighty, call for the “wise men and the sorcerers: now the Magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.”

What these Magicians were, or how far they were permitted by God to work upon the credulity of man by their deceptive arts, we are not told, but that such people did exist in those days, possessing the power of working upon the imagination, by practising deceptions on the ignorant

^a Prov. xxx. 5.

minds of those who witnessed them, is evident from several passages in Scripture. We read in the Acts xvi, 16. of a woman so skilled in this art, that her masters made their fortune by her, yet her mind was no sooner enlightened by the new doctrines she received from St. Paul, than she instantly perceived the folly of such practices, and renounced them accordingly.

Indeed the frequency of these practices was such, that a command is even laid down in Leviticus, enjoining the Israelites to avoid such people, and keep themselves apart from them. "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards to be defiled by them: I am the Lord thy God." The Jews are here reminded that they were God's own people, and that with their knowledge of His superior power and wisdom, which they had witnessed in so many instances, it was not for them to lend an ear to such credulities.

It seems surprising that Pharaoh did not at once acknowledge the power of the Almighty, when he saw the rods of the magicians instantly devoured by Aaron's: but the extraordinary degree to which Pharaoh's heart was suffered to be hardened baffles all our comprehension. But the ways of God are inscrutable, and even were it permitted us to fathom the counsels of the Almighty, and to know each hidden spring which moves the vast machine, or in other words, to be made acquainted with all the different means He uses, to bring about His several purposes, what would it avail us? The result of such knowledge would only be, (what is in the power of every one now to obtain,) the conviction that all events are ordered for the best and wisest purposes; "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." If God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with "much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," it was only in furtherance of the one grand scheme, which commenced

* Lev. xix. 31.

† Prov. xvi. 4.

‡ Rom. ix. 22.

when the world was created, and will only end when "time shall be no longer."

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, "Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood."

This was the first of these awful plagues with which the Egyptians were now to be visited through the hand of Moses, and we cannot but remark on the peculiar nature of this one especially, as being so particularly calculated to strike terror into the minds of this idolatrous nation.

The river Nile had ever been held in reverence by the Egyptians: they even worshipped it as a deity. What therefore could tend more to exalt their ideas of a true God, than thus witnessing His power over their sacred stream? Nor could it fail likewise to impart a useful lesson to the Israelites, who, if they had not themselves assisted at this idolatrous rite, had at least been witnesses of the same; and this instance of God's miraculous power, must have fully impressed them with the folly and wickedness of such practices.

EXODUS. VIII.

SEVEN days were suffered to elapse, before the obstinacy of Pharaoh again called down the vengeance of Heaven. He remained unreasonable; "therefore was the anger of the Lord kindled against him," and again "he stretched forth his hand against him," "and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt; and the Magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt."

"Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Intreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me."

* Rev. x. 10.

* Is. v. 25.

For the first time, Pharaoh acknowledged the power of the Almighty ; for the first time he offered up a petition to God for mercy !

Whatever may have been the real nature of the enchantments his Magicians were enabled to effect, it is evident from this circumstance, that Pharaoh himself must have been struck with their vast inferiority to the miracles performed by Moses. At any rate, the fact that in no degree did they partake of a divine nature was conclusive, from the inability of the Magicians to remove the plague, which we may conclude, Pharaoh would naturally call upon them to do.

“And the Lord did according to the word of Moses, “and the frogs died !”

No sooner does the repentant sinner offer up supplications at the throne of grace, than God is ready to listen to him, and receive him back into his fold, even though He foresee how soon he will go astray again.

“When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them”; even as God had foretold to Moses would be the case.

Accordingly the whole nation was now visited by a plague, which to the Egyptians must have appeared even more awful than the two preceding ones, the power of the Magicians being completely baffled : they attempted to bring forth lice, “but they could not;” and even *they* were now forced to acknowledge the superior power of Him in whom alone “we live, and move, and have our being.”^a

“This,” they exclaimed, is the finger of God.”

Yet was Pharaoh insensible even to this striking circumstance, and his heart was still hardened, though under the expectation of a similar judgement.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, lo, he cometh forth to the water ; and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, “let my people go, that they may serve me.” “Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send

^a Acts. xvii. 28.

“swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses : and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.”

“And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there ; to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth.”

And who but the Lord God omnipotent could have effected such a miracle as this ? The land of Goshen lies between Upper and Lower Egypt. Nothing therefore but the miraculous interposition of the Almighty could have prevented His people from suffering equally with the Egyptians.

May we not derive much consolation from this circumstance ? God is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

“The Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”

He is equally able and willing to save His people now as He was then, and in the hour of danger, “when we call upon him, he will answer us.”

We need not fear “for the pestilence that walketh in darkness ; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon day.”

“A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.”

“Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.”

“And there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into all the land of Egypt.”

“And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.”

• Job. xiii. 8

• Is. lix. 1.

• Ps. xci. 15.—46—10.

Moses having in the first instance pleaded as a reason for the Israelites being allowed to quit Egypt, that they might serve their God in the wilderness, it is possible Pharaoh may have supposed that by granting them permission to perform their sacrifices, he might thus appease the wrath of God, without consenting to their final departure; but God is not to be served thus: if we would "find him," we "must seek him with our whole heart," and obey his Holy will in all points.

Even if it had not been God's express command that they were to go into the wilderness for this purpose, yet Moses was well aware of the detestation with which the Egyptians regarded all their sacrifices and that it was therefore very improbable they would be allowed to perform them peaceably. This he represented to Pharaoh, "Shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?" Pharaoh was apparently convinced by the force of this argument, and accordingly consented to let them go.

We find however, as in the former instance, that the plague was no sooner removed, than he recalled the permission he had given them, and remained as obdurate as ever.

EXODUS. IX.

THE next plague mentioned, the destruction of the cattle, is one, which at first, might strike us as less calculated to work an effect on the heart of Pharaoh, than those we have been reading of in the preceding chapters, as it occasioned him no personal suffering; but if, as it has generally been supposed, the Egyptians were in the habit of worshipping these animals, then must this judgement have been peculiarly adapted to strike terror into the heart of these idolaters, and place before them the vanity of their religious notions.

† Ps. cxix. 2.

It is said they had a peculiar reverence for bulls and oxen, and this opinion is strongly supported by the fact we shall read hereafter, of the Israelites worshipping a golden calf, in imitation no doubt, of the idolatries which they had witnessed in Egypt.

The Magicians disheartened by the failure they had met with, no longer attempted to exert their skill; they were satisfied these wonders proceeded from the hand of a superior Being, and that it was useless for them to contend against them, more especially as they were themselves made to partake of the dreadful sufferings caused by the next plague.

“The boil was upon the Magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.”

Six times had the Egyptians now been visited by judgments more awful, more terrible in their nature than any that had ever been experienced by mankind, and yet we are told that Pharaoh’s heart was still “hardened.”

Nevertheless we must not infer that all these plagues were sent merely as a punishment to him. We must ever look upon them as part of those mysterious dispensations of Providence which are beyond our comprehension. We know that God is not the author of evil, and why He permits it to exist in the world, when by a single breath of His word, we might all have been created pure and holy as the Spirits in Heaven, will be ever unknown to us till “this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality.” Then shall we no longer see through a glass darkly,^a but “these hidden things will be brought to light,”^b and the beautiful arrangements of Providence shine forth “clearer than the noon day.”^c

In the mean time let us remember that God is the disposer of all events, and that we are His creatures; “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto

^a 1 Cor. xv. 54.— ^b xiii. 12.— ^c iv. 5. ^d Job. xi. 17.

“honour, and another unto dishonour?”* It is not for man to say, why hast Thou done this? neither does it become us to pass judgement on Pharaoh, when God himself says, “For this purpose have I raised thee up for to shew “in thee my power; and that my Name may be declared “throughout all the earth.” “Therefore hath he mercy on “whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he harden-
“eth.””

We cannot suppose that all who shared in the sufferings occasioned by these plagues, were equally sinful or that they were all doomed to destruction: on the contrary we may feel assured of the reverse, by the destruction made between those who feared God, and those who did not. “He “that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of “Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the “houses, and he that regarded not the word of the Lord “left his servants and his cattle in the field.”

“And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt, “all that was in the field, both man and beast.”

This plague must have been likewise singularly striking to the inhabitants of Egypt, where rain was very unusual, the land being supplied with moisture from the dews on the ground, and from the overflowing of the Nile which took place regularly every year.

“And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron and “said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is “righteous, and I and my people are wicked: intreat the “Lord that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail, “and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.”

“And Moses said unto him, “I will spread abroad “my hands unto the Lord:” (an ancient posture of supplication in all nations;) He promised to intercede with God for his forgiveness, even though he foresaw how little real sincerity there was in his confession.

Thus does our Saviour ever intercede for us, when we draw near in humble supplication to the throne of grace, praying in His name for pardon, saying, “Father, I have

* Rom. ix. 20, 21.—

ix. 16.

“sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son..” *

Yet let the sinner beware lest when he “draweth nigh unto God with his mouth, and honoureth Him with his lips, his heart be far from Him.” † “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to the fruit of his doings,” ‡

The prayer “that goeth out of feigned lips,” § will the Lord not hear, and though he may bear for a time with the hypocrisy and deceit of man, yet will the day surely overtake him, when like the Egyptians who were overwhelmed in the waters of the sea, his soul shall be cut off and consigned to everlasting destruction.

EXODUS. X.

“AND the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him.” Although I know the nature of his heart to be such, that none of these plagues will effect any change in him, yet do I work all these signs and wonders, that My power may be magnified on the earth, that your children and your children’s children may hear of them, and know that I am the Lord.

“And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, how long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go that they may serve me. Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast; and they shall cover the face of the earth,” † “and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field. And they shall fill thy houses and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians.” ‡

“And he turned himself and went out from Pharaoh.”

* Luke, xv, 18, 19. † Matt, xv, 8. ‡ Jer, xvii, 10. § Ps, xvii, 1.

Moses did not wait for any reply. He knew he was hopeless to argue with Pharaoh on his sinfulness and folly in thus attempting to resist the will of the Almighty, and that still greater judgements were pending over him which must be fulfilled, before the Israelites would be enabled to quit the land of Egypt.

Yet however indifferent Pharaoh may have felt at this fresh denunciation, his servants were seized with consternation at the prospect of another plague, one too which threatened such utter destruction to all the produce of their land : "And they said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us ?" How long will you suffer these people to be the cause of so much misery in the kingdom ? "Let the men go, that they may serve their God."

Moses and Aaron were accordingly again summoned before Pharaoh, and a second time received permission to go but only on condition that they left their little ones behind. "He said unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones ; look to it ; for evil is before you." Go, and no doubt the Lord in whom you trust, will be with you ; and take your little ones, but remember it will be at your peril if you do.

His object in wishing to keep back the children was doubtless in order to have a pledge for their return.

"And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence."

And now a terrible swarm of locusts, such as had never been seen before, swept over the whole country, till it was completely darkened by them, and they devoured "every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left."

Pharaoh was alive to the dreadful nature of this plague, and foresaw that a famine must inevitably ensue if it continued. In haste and terror he called for Moses and Aaron ; and in greater humility than he had ever shewn before, confessed his sins, intreating forgiveness of the Lord, and that he would save him from the death which he saw awaited him from this terrible scourge.

But of what avail is a repentance extorted merely by the fear of death? This plague was only removed to give place for another, which if it was in some respects less insupportable, as neither affecting their lives, or even their personal sufferings, yet was of a nature peculiarly awful to these superstitious people. "There was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt!" a darkness which could even be "felt!" For three whole days "they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place!"

What fitter judgement could be inflicted on a people whose understandings were darkened, and who had refused the light of God's word offered them through Moses; while the children of Israel we are told "had light in their dwellings;" typical of that spiritual light which God will ever vouchsafe to his chosen people.

Again does Pharaoh give permission for the departure of the Israelites, but with a stipulation which he might have foreseen would be rejected by Moses, who replied, "Our cattle also shall go with us, there shall not an hoof be left behind, for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God."

Pharaoh's wrath was again kindled at this reply, and he now refused to see him any more. "And Moses said, 'Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.'"

EXODUS. XI.

"AND the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence."

One more judgement yet remained to be inflicted on this rebellious King,—one, more to be dreaded than any that had preceded it, threatening no less than the death of the firstborn in each family. And yet it appears that Pharaoh listened even to this threat with the same unconcern he had before shewn, although we should have imagined that

experience would have taught him the certainty with which he might have anticipated its fulfilment.

He was moreover told that this judgement would produce such an effect on his servants, that they would be brought to acknowledge the favour with which God looked upon his people; that they would even "bow down" before them, and offer no further obstacle to their departure; and after that they would go out.

"And Moses went out from Pharaoh in a great anger." Even his wrath was kindled at such utter insensibility, such hardened opposition to the will of God.

EXODUS. XII.

WE are now arrived at one of the most remarkable and interesting periods in the whole history of the Jews; when in the most miraculous manner they were to be delivered from the bondage in which they had so long been held by the Egyptians, and when the promise made to Abraham four hundred years before, that his seed should possess the land of Canaan, was to be fulfilled. Nor was this all; that sacred rite of the Passover was now instituted, which was not only to be perpetuated by the Jews as a remembrance of a period when the mercies of God were so signally manifested towards them, but was also a most remarkable type of the sufferings and death of our Saviour, who, as you have probably remarked is often designated in Scripture as the Lamb of God.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*

From the peculiar gentleness and meekness of its nature our Saviour is indeed fitly represented as a lamb, as it is written in Isaiah, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet He opened not his mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."†

* John. i. 29.

† Is. liii. 7.

St. Peter also speaks of him "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Thus was the lamb which the Israelites were ordered to kill, to be without blemish, as a type of the purity of our Saviour, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth";¹ implying that not even a sinful word ever escaped Him.

The Israelites were to eat the lamb whole. Thus are we to receive Christ into our hearts, wholly and entirely, not sometimes doing God's will, and at others, leaving it undone, but keeping all His commandments: "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."²

Not a bone of the lamb was to be broken; and how fully this was realized in the Crucifixion of our Saviour, as it is detailed by St. John: "When they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs," "that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."³

A particular description is likewise given us of the manner in which the Israelites were to eat it: "With their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand": to intimate that they were to be ready to depart the moment they were summoned to start on their journey.

You are aware that it was not customary in Eastern nations to wear shoes except during long journeys, which were mostly performed on foot. It was likewise the custom for such travellers to gather up their garments which were very long and loose, and fasten them with a girdle, as being more convenient for walking. These particulars are detailed to remind us of our pilgrimage on earth; that we are travelling towards *our* Heavenly Canaan, and must be careful to have our "loins girded about, and our lights burning," or in other words, be fully prepared to meet the Lord Jesus Christ, when He shall come at the last day, to take us to a better country.

¹ 1 Pet, i, 9.—² ii, 22. ³ 1 John, ii, 4. ⁴ John, xix, 33, 36. ⁵ Lu, xii, 35.

“Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out now and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason, and none of you shall go out of his house until the morning.”

“For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.”

“And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.”

The Jews were to keep this feast annually as a memorial of their deliverance; yet we must not take the expression “for ever” in its literal sense, as we know that all these rites and ceremonies of the Jews, which were only types and shadows of Christ and His religion, were to cease as soon as He should appear on earth. The sacrifice of the real lamb, as I said above was a type of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and as the Israelites, the chosen people of God, were saved from death by the angel of the Lord passing over their houses which were marked with the blood of the lamb, so will His chosen people, those “whose robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb,” that is, true Christians who believe in their hearts that “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us,” even so will they be saved from eternal death, Christ having passed over the gates of Hell, and opened to them the door of everlasting life.

The term “for ever,” is frequently made use of in Scripture to express any long period, and does not always imply that the circumstance alluded to is never to have an end. Without bearing this in mind, we might have great difficulty in reconciling many passages in the Bible which would otherwise be at variance. For instance, we read

in Ecclesiastes i. 4, that "the earth abideth for ever," while St Peter tells us that at the last day, "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

St. Paul says, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;" this shews that the letter does not always convey the full meaning of a text, which we can only obtain by prayer to God to enlighten our understanding by His holy spirit, and, as St Paul likewise tell us, by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," that is, comparing one part of Scripture with another. If you are perplexed by the obscurity of one text, you may generally by searching find another bearing on the same point, which may at least throw some light on the passage, if it does not, as is often the case, fully explain it. Thus St Paul, speaking of the heathen world says, "Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

Now this verse taken by itself is difficult to comprehend, but if we turn to the nineteenth Psalm, from which it is quoted, we there find it relates to the glory of God being so manifestly shewn forth by his works, that His power may be fully know and acknowledged by every one.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work."

To return to the Israelites. The time had now arrived when Pharaoh no longer offered any opposition to their departure, for "at midnight the Lord smote all the first born in the land of Egypt."—"And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt: for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

"And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel, and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said."

The Egyptians were now seized with terror, and as

• 2 Pet. iii. 10.

2 Cor. iii. 13.—

• 1 ii. 13.

• Rom. x. 18.

• Ps. xix. 1.

urgent in hastening the departure of the Israelites, as they had hitherto been in preventing it.

“And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required.”

What a striking instance of God's goodness towards his people, thus disposing the hearts of the Egyptians towards them at a time when they stood in need of so much assistance in providing against the many wants and requisites necessarily attendant on so long a journey. Surely this should be a lesson to us not to be over anxious with regard to the future. When we are called upon to perform any duty, however difficult it may appear, we may be sure that God will enable us to get through it, and often in a manner we least expect.

And now at length the children of Israel took their final departure out of the land of Egypt after a “sojourning” as we are told, of “four hundred and thirty years.” We are not to infer from this that they had been in Egypt all that time, but that it was four hundred and thirty years since Abraham had left his country to go into the land of Canaan, during the whole of which period, his descendants had been dwelling “in a land that was not theirs.”

EXODUS. XIII.

“AND the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn.”

In remembrance of the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt, and of the preservation of the Israelites, their deliverance out of bondage, by means of that judgement, the firstborn of the male of the Israelites were to be solemnly dedicated to the Lord, that is, set apart for His service.

Here we have another type given us of our Saviour, who, as the firstborn of God was offered to him as a sacrifice for us. We find him alluded to under that appellation in

^d Gen. xv. 13.

St Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, where he tells them that they are come, "to the general assembly and Church of "the firstborn," meaning they had become members of Christ's church.

Afterwards, when God chose that His priests should be chosen from the tribe of Levi, He accepted them instead of the firstborn, and if there were more firstborn than there were Levites, they were to be redeemed by paying a price, as it is written in Numbers iii, 46, 47, "For those that "are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore "and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, "which are more than the Levites, thou shalt even take "five shekels apiece by the poll."

Is not this likewise typical of that atonement which was in due time to be made for our sins, through the ransom paid by the blood of our Saviour? as St Paul says, in his epistle to the Corinthians, "Ye are bought with a price."

"And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day "in which ye came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out "from this place." Moses here reminds the Israelites that it was not by their own power they were thus released; it was the Lord who had "done marvellous things, his own "right hand, and his holy arm, had gotten him the "victory." Neither by our own power can *we* be released from the bondage of sin in which we are held, "for by "grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of your- "selves, it is the gift of God."

In order that this event might be the more fully impressed upon the minds of the Israelites, they were not only to keep the Passover in remembrance of it, but for seven days after, they were to eat their bread without leaven, in commemoration of the manner in which they had been obliged to eat it on leaving Egypt, having, as we were told in the last chapter, quitted it in such haste, that they had not time to prepare their food.

So strict were the Jews in their obedience to this

• Heb, xii, 23. • 1 Cor, vi, 20. • Ps, xcvi, 1. • Eph, ii, 8.

command, that before the feast of the passover they were always careful to get rid of all their bread that was leavened; they either burnt it, or buried it, or sometimes brake it into small pieces and scattered it in the wind.

Even this slight circumstance, furnishes us with a type which I think very likely to have escaped your notice; the word "leaven" being frequently made use of in the New Testament to signify the sinful nature of man. Our Saviour tells his disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which," he adds, "is hypocrisy:"^a and St. Paul, speaking of the manner in which we are to keep our Passover, (the Sacrament of the Lord's supper,) says "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump": "Let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness: but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"^d; that is, put away from you all sin and wickedness, and sincerely and truly repent of your sins before you venture to partake of the holy Sacrament.

In order to ensure the continuance of this ordinance, the Israelites were especially enjoined to acquaint their children with all the circumstances connected with it. "Thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying; This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt, and it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes."

It was not unusual for people in those days to wear ornaments between their eyes, and as the Jews fulfilled to the letter all their laws and commandments, it is possible they might really have them written on some ornament suspended from their foreheads.

"And it came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; But God led the people

^a Luke. xii. 1.

^d 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

“about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea, § and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the “land of Egypt;” arranged orderly, probably in so many different ranks.

God’s ways are not our ways ; had the Israelites been left to their own guidance, they would doubtless have chosen the shortest road to the land of Canaan, which would only have been a few days’ journey ; but God foresaw the difficulties and trials to which they would be exposed in passing through the land of the Philistines, and that rather than encounter the danger of a war, they might be inclined to return to Egypt.

“God does not suffer us to be tempted above that we “are able, but will with the temptation also make a way “to escape.”^a Thus did he lead them by a circuitous rout, not only protecting them from danger, but even condescending himself to direct their way. He “went before “them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the “way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light ; “to go by day and night : He took not away the pillar of “the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from “before the people.”

Now is there not much here that we may apply to ourselves ? Are there not two roads open before us in our passage to our Heavenly Canaan ; is there not “a broad “way which leadeth to destruction,” and a “narrow way “which leadeth unto life ?”^b And which of these roads think you, should we choose, if we were left to our own guidance ? What does our Saviour say ? “Strait is the “gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and “few there be that find it.”

Numbers there are who, though they call themselves Christians, and hope to be admitted in at the gate at the last day, yet “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and “going about to establish their own righteousness, have

§ The Red Sea was so called, because it joined the land of Edom, or of Esau, which in Hebrew signifies red. *Bishop Tomline.*

^a 1 Cor. x. 13.

^b Matt. vii. 13, 14.

“not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God;”^a that is, self righteous persons will not acknowledge their own inability to do any thing of themselves, but trusting to their own merits for salvation, refuse to seek that aid and assistance through Christ, by which alone we can hope to inherit eternal life.

If the way is narrow, and the path is strait, yet no sincere Christian can miss it, who seeks assistance from God. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”^b He will direct us in the right way even as he did the Israelites of old : and although he does not now manifest his presence in the same visible manner he did to the Israelites, yet we may be assured he is ever watching over us, and keeping us in the straight path, if we commit ourselves entirely to his guidance ; as it is written in the Psalms, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go ; I will guide thee with mine eye.”^c “His word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto our path.”^d

EXODUS XIV.

THIS chapter opens with a fresh direction to Moses respecting the route the Israelites were to take, which of itself might have sufficed to awaken in their minds a sense of the mercy of Providence, and ought at once to have convinced them, that though they were led by a more circuitous route than the one they would have chosen themselves, yet it being so visibly pointed out to them by God they might be assured that by no other way could they hope to arrive with safety in the land of Canaan. Nevertheless did the Almighty in his infinite goodness even condescend to explain his reason for so doing. “For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, they are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that he shall follow after

^aRom. i. 3.—^d 13.

^c Ps. xxxii. 8.—^d cxix. 105.

“them, and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.”

Thus did God lead them round by the way of the sea in order that Pharaoh and his host, those “vessels of wrath” which “to make his power known” he had “endured with so much long suffering” might now by their signal destruction, shew forth “the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy;” that is, that while his vengeance would be shewn forth in the destruction of his enemies, his mercy and goodness might be magnified in the salvation of his chosen people.

“And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh King of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel, and the children of Israel went out with an high hand:” implying that they were under the especial guidance and protection of God. And yet how insensible they appear to have been to this signal mercy: they no sooner perceived the Egyptians pursuing after them, than “they were sore afraid, and cried out unto the Lord.”

Notwithstanding the direct manifestations of his presence vouchsafed to them in the pillar of fire, and the cloud, yet had they now lost all their confidence in their Heavenly Guide, and even reproached Moses with having enticed them from the land of Egypt, only that they might die in the wilderness! “They understood not the wonders the Lord had done in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of his mercies, but provoked him at the Sea, even at the Red Sea.”

The meekness of temper displayed by Moses on this trying occasion is very striking. Not a word of reproach escapes him; he does not even expostulate with them, as he might have done, on the ingratitude of their conduct, but on the contrary, pours the balm of consolation into their hearts, by exhorting them to fear nothing, but only to “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” “The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

*Rom. ix. 22, 23.

*Ps. cvi. 7.

They were not called upon for any exertion of their own ; not a hand was to be raised in their self-defence ; all they had to do was to stand still,—to fear nothing, but to put their whole trust and confidence in God : “ who saved them “ for his name sake, that he might make his mighty power “ to be known.”^a

Truly might the Israelites have now exclaimed in the words of the holy Psalmist, “ If it had not been the Lord “ who was on our side, when men rose up against us : then “ they had swallowed us up quick, when they were so “ wrathfully displeased at us. Then the waters had over- “ whelmed us, and the stream had gone over our soul.”^b But when the Almighty vouchsafes to stretch out His arm in defence of His creatures, then is it in vain for man to offer resistance. Even the Egyptians were brought to acknowledge this. With all the boastful power of the Magicians they knew how incapable they were of working such a miracle, and when they saw the waters divided, the Israelites passing over in safety, and the danger that awaited themselves, then were they as ready to fly from the face of Israel, as they had been eager to overtake them, for, said they, “ the Lord fighteth for them.”

But they were not to escape so easily. The power of the Almighty was not only to be signalized in the safety of His people, but also in the destruction of His enemies.

“ And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and “ the sea returned to his strength when the morning ap- “ peared ; and the Egyptians fled against it ; and the Lord “ overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.”

“ The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and “ of great kindness” :^c yet may the sinner rest assured that the day will surely come, when “ the Lord will take venge- “ ance upon His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for “ His enemies.”^d

There is another point of view in which this may event be considered, for St. Paul tells us that our fathers “ were “ all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea”

^aPs. cvi, 8. ^b—cxxiv, 2, 3. ^cJoel ii, 13. ^dNahum i, 2. ^e1 Cor x 2.

Thus as God had ordained that the Israelites should all pass through the waters of the sea, before they reached the land of Canaan, and that the waters were at the same time to destroy their enemies, so, before we can enter into the kingdom of God, must we pass through the waters of Baptism, by which we are cleansed from sin, which, as our spiritual enemy is equally destroyed or washed away. You will find it even alluded to in the Service, as "there-
"by figuring Baptism," or "the mystical washing away
"of sin."^a

"And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did
"upon the Egyptians : and the people feared the Lord, and
"believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

It was impossible for them not to see and acknowledge that the hand of God could alone have brought such "mighty things to pass,"^c and that He was to be feared, for His power was infinite : and now that they had witnessed the fulfilment of His promises, in their deliverance through the hand of His servant Moses, how could they do otherwise than believe in Him ? But what does our Saviour say ? "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast be-
"lieved : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have
"believed."^d It is when no human aid is near, that we are to shew our faith and trust in God, and believe in His power to rescue us from danger. "The salvation of the
"righteous is of the Lord ; he is their strength in time of
"trouble." "And the Lord shall help them, and deliver
"them : he shall deliver them from the wicked and save
"them, because they trust in Him."^e

^aBaptismal Service. ^cPs. cxviii, 16. ^dJohn xx, 29.

^ePs. xxxvii, 39, 40.

CHAPTER VII.

Moses' song—Waters of Marah—Manna—Institution of the sabbath—Moses obtains water from the rock—Defeat of the Amalekites—Jethro's sacrifice—The ten commandments—The Law.

EXODUS XV.

THE Israelites now needed no further proof to convince them that the Lord was nigh to help them : they could no longer doubt the truth of His word. He had brought them in safety out of the land of Egypt. He had rebuked "the Red sea, and it was dried up." "And the waters covered their enemies : there was not one of them left."

"Then believed they his words ; they sang his praise."

In the fulness of their hearts they hastened to offer up their thanksgivings for His unbounded mercies towards them.

This song of Moses is the first of the kind we meet with in the Bible, and the most antient hymn now extant. It is one of those practical compositions, (perhaps the most perfect of any) so peculiar to the style of the Hebrew writings. We shall find as we proceed in the history of the Jews, that it was their general custom on occasions of great prosperity in their undertakings, or success in war, to offer up public thanks to God, in songs of triumph.

The spirit which dictated the sublime sentiments of this song, of course could only proceed from above, and if you compare it with some other parts of scripture, you may find the same expressions often clothed in the very same words: as for instance in Ps. cxviii, 14, and Isaiah xii, 2, where we have repetition of part of the second verse.

From the fourteenth verse to the sixteenth, a prophetic allusion is made to the judgments which were about to be inflicted on the countries through which the Israelites

had to pass in their way to Canaan, while the seventeenth, "thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance," though it may seem to apply to the establishment of the Israelites, yet evidently refers also to a still later period, and is prophetic of the Christian dispensation, a similar expression being made use of by Isaiah, when, speaking of the coming of Christ's Kingdom and the conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian religion, he says, "It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days out into the wilderness, and found no water."

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'"

The same people who only three days before, had been raising their voices in grateful astonishment to God for His mercy and goodness towards them, whose Divine presence was still visible in the cloud over their heads, had now lost all their confidence, all their faith: and were murmuring because for three days only they had been deprived of one of those luxuries, which, it is extremely probable, had never during its continuance, called forth one expression of gratitude, one word of thanksgiving: so true is it that we know not the extent of our daily blessings, until by the removal of them we become sensible of their real value, and are awakened to a sense of those we still possess.

What was this small trial to the Israelites compared to the dangers from which they had so recently been delivered by the hand of God? and was it likely after so many proofs of His mercy and goodness, that He should have brought them into the wilderness only to die of thirst? But this is only one of many instances we shall meet with during the wanderings of the Israelites, where a sense of

the presence of an Almighty being, ever ready to succour them in time of need, seems utterly to have forsaken them; instead of offering up prayers to God for His assistance and support, they only murmured against Moses, apparently with the idea, that as he had undertaken to escort them back to their country, so it was for him to remove all the difficulties and trials they might have to encounter. But Moses well knew that he was only an humble instrument in the hands of that Almighty power, who alone is able to rescue His creatures in the hour of danger. Nevertheless, he doubtless had compassion on the ignorance and weakness of his brethren, and instead of expostulating with them on their unreasonable behaviour, immediately turned to the Lord, and offered up a petition for relief in this distress, from which he suffered equally with the rest.

His prayer was answered: and though it was God's pleasure that through his means their sufferings should be relieved, yet the nature of the miracle was such, that it was impossible for them not to acknowledge the Divine power by which it was effected.

We must not however suppose that while God showers down His blessings on man, the only return He expects from him is a contented heart, and acknowledgment of the gift in words: be assured there are other duties which we are all called upon to perform, and to Christians these are so clearly pointed out in the word of God, that "he may run that readeth it;"^d but with the Israelites the case was very different; no Saviour had yet appeared on earth to teach to man the various duties required of him—to tell him that he must love and obey Him in return, that he is to love his neighbour as himself, and do unto others as he would wish others to do unto him. Such doctrines as these were at that time little understood in the world, nor had the Israelites even yet received that code of laws which was hereafter for a time to regulate all their actions

^dHabakuk ii, 2.

and all their dealings towards God and their fellow-creatures.

You cannot fail to have remarked how peculiarly favoured by Heaven the whole nation of the Israelites had been, ever since the time Abraham in obedience to God's command had quitted his own country to settle in the land of Canaan. Without being called upon to fulfil any duties beyond the rest of mankind,—without any peculiar laws laid down for their observance, they had ever been the objects of God's especial favour. This state of things however, was to continue no longer, and for the first time, the Israelites were now, (by a direct communication from God himself,) informed, that if they hoped for the continuance of His protection and support, they must on their part obey His laws, and fulfil His commandments. “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will bring none of these diseases on thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that healeth thee.”

This verse is one to which I would more particularly wish to call your attention, for though it is peculiarly addressed to the Israelites, yet it is no less applicable to ourselves; as I said above we have all our respective duties to perform, and if we neglect them we can no more expect God's blessing and protection than the Israelites.

If you read with attention our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, you will perceive that there is no precept laid down, without a blessing annexed to the performance of it. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”^a And if the Israelites by the observance of their laws, were to be preserved from the diseases of their enemies the Egyptians, so may we under the same circumstances, look up with confidence to the great Physician of our souls, even Christ our Saviour, “who forgiveth all our iniquities, who healeth all our diseases.”^a

^aMatthew v, 7, 8.

^aPsalms ciii, 3.

EXODUS. XVI.

THE goodness and long-suffering of the Almighty is no where more striking than in this portion of the Scriptures, while the ungrateful and rebellious disposition of the Israelites would fill us with astonishment, were we not told that "The carnal mind is enmity against God," "that man is by nature born in sin, and "the child of wrath,"^b prone to do evil, and naturally averse to that which is good. How else could we account for the conduct of the Israelites under circumstances which one might have supposed, would have called forth such very different feelings. A short time only had elapsed since they had in a signal manner experienced the mercy and goodness of God in listening to their cries, and relieving their distress, when we find them again pouring forth their complaints against Moses and Aaron because they were called upon to undergo a few privations, which must have been slight compared with the sufferings they had experienced in Egypt. But "the Lord is full of compassion"^c towards His fallen creatures; "for he knoweth whereof we are made, he remembereth that we are but dust."^d He did not even as before, wait to be entreated by Moses, but instantly supplied their wants with miraculous food from Heaven, and even ceased not to continue that supply during the forty years that elapsed before they entered into an inhabited land.

There is much in this Chapter worthy our consideration. As I mentioned to you before, the temporal circumstances of the Israelites were in many points figurative of the spiritual condition of the Christian Church. The passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and their subsequent abode in the wilderness, together with all the different circumstances and events which occurred during that period are all typical of the Christian's state here on earth; from the hour when by Baptism he has been admitted

^aRomans viii. 7.^bEph. ii. 3.^cPsalms ciii. 8—^d14.

within the pale of Christ's Church, to the day when he shall enter into his rest in the kingdom of God. Every sincere Christian knows the conflicts and trials he is daily called upon to sustain with his carnal nature, which must be subdued before he can fully enter into that rest which (St. Paul tells us) it is in the power of the true believer to obtain even in this world. "We which have believed, do "enter into rest,"^a and we all know that the only way to be freed from our spiritual enemies is to pray to God for the assistance of His holy Spirit, which is that spiritual food, that "bread of life," (John vi. 48.) promised by our Saviour to all who believe in him. "I am the living bread which "came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, "he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is "my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."^d

In the trials and difficulties encountered by the Israelites in the desert and in the wilderness, there is a great similitude to the struggles of remaining sin in the heart of the Christian believer. "Through much tribulation we "must enter into the kingdom of Heaven,"^c and in reading this portion of Scripture, let us not forget, that it is only by constant and daily prayer to God, that we can hope to get free from these internal conflicts, or obtain our heavenly manna, which, as I said above, is promised to all true believers. "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he "that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall "be opened." (Matt. vii. 8.)

The Israelites were now daily supplied with food; there was however one command attending it, which on no account they were to disregard: they were to leave none of it till the morning.

What a simple command, and how easy to be obeyed, is the first thought that strikes us; and like Moses we feel our indignation roused against the Israelites at their sinfulness in so soon transgressing it. But while we are so ready to blame others, let us take care that they may have no cause to reproach us for doing the same thing. After

^a Heb. iv. 3.^c John vi. 51.^d Acts xiv. 22.

offering up our prayers to God for his assistance and support, and (perhaps with great sincerity at the time) confessing to him our faults and asking his forgiveness, are we not frequently guilty of a similar transgression in disobeying some simple command that has equally been given to us? and in so doing let us remember that we in our enlightened state, are far more worthy of condemnation than they were; "for unto whom much is given, of him shall be much required." (Luke xii. 48.)

"And it came to pass, that on the sixth day, they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord."

This is the first mention made of the Sabbath day. It is true we read in the second chapter of Genesis that "God rested on the seventh day, and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work," but there was no particular command given to man to keep it holy: hence some suppose it was now instituted for the first time: but there seems more reason to suppose the Jews had received some previous intimation on the subject, as Moses seems rather to allude to it as a fact with which they were already acquainted, than as if he were now for the first time establishing it as a law; speaking of it as that which the Lord had spoken of at some former period; "This is that which the Lord hath said."

The Jews who were required to fulfil to the letter all the laws and ordinances imposed upon them, observed the Sabbath with the greatest strictness; which gave occasion to the Pharisees to find fault with our Saviour for allowing his disciples to pluck the ears of corn on the Sabbath, saying unto him, "Why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?"

Their dull understandings were not sufficiently enlightened to comprehend the spiritual nature of the Christian

religion, and that though their laws were still to remain in force, yet that they were henceforth to be obeyed in the spirit, and not according to the letter. Our Saviour tells them that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark ii.27.) : it was no longer to be kept with that strictness hitherto enjoined by their laws, but was now only to be regarded as a day of rest, set apart for the especial observance of Christian worship ; but as this subject will fall more properly under consideration in treating of the fourth commandment, I shall reserve any further observations until then.

EXODUS XVII.

If the event recorded in the last chapter was peculiarly typical of the spiritual condition of the Christian, so may we draw the same application in this, from the miracles performed by Moses, for the purpose of relieving for the second time the sufferings of the Israelites from the privation of water, which in that hot country must have been very great.

It seems a matter of surprise, after the signal miracles they had so lately witnessed, that they should still have persisted in murmuring against Moses, instead of offering up their prayers at once to that Gracious power who had shewn himself so ready to listen to their petitions, and relieve their wants ; but in reflecting on the typical nature of the miracles themselves, we must not lose sight of that which affected Moses himself in his character of Mediator. You will remember I told you before, that he was a type of our Saviour, and the repeated mention of the murmurings of the Israelites, is intended to convey to us that it is only through the intercession of our Mediator that our prayers are rendered acceptable unto God.

"And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me:
"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people;
"and take with thee of the elders of Israel ; and the rod

“ wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

Now turn to 1 Cor. x. 1—4, and see what St Paul saith :

“ Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat: And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.

This at once establishes the nature of the type and the instruction it is intended to convey to us. For if the Israelites thirsted in the wilderness, and cried aloud for drink, that their bodies might be refreshed and not die: how much more does the Christian need that Spiritual drink, “ which shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life”^a and to whom should he apply for this Spiritual drink but to his Saviour, who is “ his Rock, his fortress, and his deliverer,”^b and who has himself said that whosoever driuketh of the water that he shall give him shall never thirst.^c

“ Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.”

This is the first occasion on which we read of the Israelites going to war. They were now approaching the confines of Canaan, and before they could enter that land were under the necessity of passing through countries, the inhabitants of which were all hostile to them, and resisted their approach, little knowing how vain it was to oppose their strength against a people, who were fighting under the banners of the Almighty. “ If the Lord be on our side, we need not fear what man can do unto us.”^d

“ And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand,

^aJohn iv. 14.

^bPsalms xviii. 3.

^cJohn iv. 14.

^dPsalms xvi. 1. 6.

“ that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, “ Amalek prevailed.”

We may learn from this circumstance, that prayer without any effort on our part, will avail us nothing. We know that God in his infinite power could at once have delivered the Israelites from their enemies, but we know also, that he chooses different means of effecting his purpose, and he might intend by this miracle, to impress upon the minds of his people, (and this instruction equally applies to us) that if they hoped for his protection and assistance, they must likewise exert themselves. They were no longer to stand still, while the Lord fought their battles, but were to put forth all their own strength, and do their utmost to defend themselves, as much as if their safety depended wholly on their own exertions. And it is on such conditions alone, that we may ever hope for God's assistance in our undertakings.

EXODUS XVIII.

THE Israelites were now entering Midian, where Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was still residing. He had heard of all that God had done for his people, how he had delivered them by the hand of Moses from their state of bondage, and overthrown their enemies, the Egyptians; and we may imagine the satisfaction he must have felt in seeing him again. He no sooner heard of his approach, than he came forth to meet him, accompanied by Zipporah, Moses' wife, whom he had sent back to her father. How thankful she must have felt at seeing her husband restored to her in safety, after all the trials and dangers he had been called upon to undergo: and Jethro, it is said, “ rejoiced “ for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel.” He immediately offered up a burnt offering and sacrifices; thus fulfilling that which God had promised as a token to Moses, when he first appeared to him in the burning bush, saying unto him, “ when thou hast brought forth the people “ out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this Mountain.”

The Mountain is called indiscriminately in Scripture, Horeb and Sinai. They form but one at the lower part, but higher up are divided into two summits, the highest of which is called Sinai.

Jethro, having offered up his sacrifice of thanksgiving proceeds to give advice to Moses respecting his method of "Judging the people," who, it appears were in the habit of going to him to settle their disputes, as also to obtain any information they might chance to require respecting the laws of God; thus at once recognizing his authority as a Mediator between them and the Almighty. "And "Moses' father-in-law said unto him, Hearken now unto "my voice: I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with "thee. Be thou for the people Godward, that thou may- "est bring the cause unto God:" that is, when the people bring unto you any matter too hard for them to determine, do you lay it before God in prayer, that he may order you what to do; "but every small matter they shall "judge."

In pursuance of this advice, Moses selected some of the principal persons among the Israelites, making them rulers over the rest, to whom they might appeal in cases of small moment, reserving to himself the decision of all matters of importance, as well as the office of teaching them such laws and precepts as were to regulate their general conduct.

EXODUS XIX.

THE children of Israel were now encamped before that same mountain where the Almighty had appeared to Moses, previous to his return to Egypt, and where he was again summoned before him as mediator between the Lord and his people, who were now to receive through his hands the laws and ordinances which were to distinguish them as God's own people, chosen out of all other nations, not on account of their own righteousness, for as St Paul tells us, "both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin;" but that they

•Romans iii. 9.

might as a nation represent the true Church of God, and in the observance of these laws, keep alive His holy worship and religion until the coming of our Saviour, when the external rites and ceremonies, which were now going to be enforced, were to be superseded by that inward purity and spiritual change, which the Christian religion was to work in the heart of man, and which is so beautifully expressed in Ezekiel, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.)

"And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."

This metaphor peculiarly denotes the tenderness of God's care over His people, as we gather from the application of a similar passage in Deuteronomy: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him." (Deut. xxxii. 11.)

God reminds the Israelites of all that he had done for them: of his loving-kindness and mercy in bringing them in safety out of Egypt, and how by the many miracles they had witnessed, they had been brought to a true knowledge of his power and goodness. He then renews the promises he had before made to them of his favour and protection, provided that they, on their part, would keep his covenant and obey his laws.

"And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

With one accord, and doubtless with perfect sincerity of heart, they all promised obedience, but alas! how much easier it is to form good intentions than to keep them. We shall see as we proceed how soon their resolutions were forgotten, and how grievously they sinned in the sight

of the Lord. They were doubtless deeply impressed by the awfulness of the communication, and the solemn manner in which it had been imparted to them by Moses, and were ready to acquiesce in every thing required of them, acknowledging the authority with which Moses was invested from on high, by conforming in all points to the rules and injunctions laid down by him, preparatory to their receiving those laws and commandments, which he was now about to deliver to them.

EXODUS. XX.

“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.’

“Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.”

In reading this first commandment, we are naturally led in the first instance to consider it as more particularly addressed to the Israelites. They had not only been passing their lives in a country where idolatry was the besetting sin, but they were now on their journey towards another, where the worship of the true God was equally unknown; and where they would be in constant danger of being led astray by the example of those around them. This commandment would therefore impress more fully upon their minds, and keep alive the important truth, that there was but one true God, the same who had so mercifully delivered them from their state of bondage, and “Him only they were to serve.” (Matt. iv. 10.)

The second commandment enlarges more particularly on the sinful nature of idolatry, threatening judgment not only those who committed this sin themselves, but even extending the punishment to their children, and their children's children, at the same time promising blessings on those who shewed their love to God by keeping his commandments.

Yet let us ever bear in mind that although the eternal observance of these laws refers more particularly to the

condition of the Jews, they are nevertheless equally binding upon every one of us, with this difference only, that while the Jews were required to obey them strictly and outwardly, fulfilling to the letter every commandment, we as Christians, are to obey them in the spirit, "doing the will of God from the heart," (Eph. vi. 6.) serving Him "in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom. vii. 6.)

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make "a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the "house of Judah," "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." (Jer. xxxi. 31. 33.) "What says our Saviour? Thou shalt love the Lord thy "God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with "all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy "neighbour as thyself?" On these two commandments "hang all the law and the Prophets." (Matt. xxii. 38.) That is, they contain all that the law and the prophets require with regard to our duty to God and man; the four first of the ten commandments (commonly called the first table,) referring more especially to the former.

Now let us examine ourselves, and see how far we as Christians fall short of this duty. Do we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength? do we never suffer the things of this world to engross that share of our affections which ought to be placed entirely upon him, and "set on things above." (Col. iii. 2.)

St Paul tells the Corinthians to "flee from idolatry," and St John in his Epistle likewise says, "little children, "keep yourselves from idols," (John. v. 21.) "little children" in this sense meaning young Christians. Now though there may be little danger of our worshipping graven images, yet we may be assured that if we love any one thing in this world better than our Creator, or if we follow our own inclinations in opposition to the will of God, it is as much an idol set up in our hearts, as the

golden image before which Nebuchadnezzar commanded every one to fall down, and we are equally guilty of breaking the second commandment.

God is a Jealous God, and we must "serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind," (Chron. xxviii. 9.) "No man can serve two Masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." (Matt. vi. 24.)

We will now proceed to the third commandment, and see how our Saviour enforces our obedience to this one even to the strict letter of the law.

"I say unto you, Swear not at all. But let your communication be Yea, yea, Nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." (Matt. v. 34. 37.)

Nor is the transgression of this commandment confined merely to the utterance of such profane sayings as usually come under the denomination of swearing. If in prayer to God our heart does not accompany the words we utter with our mouth, if we call upon him with our lips, when our thoughts are wandering far off, or if we speak of his holy name without that reverence which is due to him from all his fallen creatures, then may we be assured we are taking the Lord's Name in vain, and the Lord will not hold us guiltless.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in Heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.)

The fourth commandment relating to the observance of the Sabbath has already come under our notice in a former Chapter, wherein I stated that although Christians are not required to keep it with the strictness of a Jew, yet that we are to obey this law even as the others, in the spirit; and I wish now to point out to you more particularly the duty of a Christian with regard to the observance of the Sabbath, and how far he may be guilty of breaking this commandment.

We all know that it is the service of the heart which

God requires from a Christian. "Behold thou desireth truth in the inward parts ; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." (Psalm li. 6.) As was said above, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart." Now if we do love Him with all our hearts, shall we not take pleasure in serving him, and be thankful that we are allowed to set apart one day in seven for this particular purpose? Turn to Isaiah lviii. 13, 14, where you will see the blessings awaiting those who avail themselves with gladness of such a privilege. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thy own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." So in the eighth chapter of Amos we read of the judgements denounced upon those, who instead of expressing their thankfulness for a day of holy rest, when they may enjoy communion with their God, only regard it as an interruption to their worldly occupations, saying, "When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn ? and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat?" (Amos viii. 5.) And though the Prophets are here more particularly addressing the Jews, yet the spiritual application equally applies to all Christians. And if the Jews were punished for doing those things on the Sabbath day, which they were ordered not to do, assuredly will the Christian be judged at the last day, if he enter not cheerfully and willingly into the service of the Lord.

When we consider the many different pursuits and occupations, which, if we perform our duties in this world, must more or less devolve upon us all, and which must necessarily tend to distract our thoughts from higher concerns, surely it is a matter of thankfulness that there should be stated periods, when laying aside all worldly

employments, we may have an opportunity of meeting our fellow creatures in the house of God, and offering up our united prayers and thanksgivings.

St Paul expressly tells us "to consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works : not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." (Heb. x. 24.)

To the man "who goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening," (Ps. civ. 23.) the Sabbath is the only day on which he has an opportunity of hearing the word of God, and if by the example of those, who ought by their own conduct to direct him in the paths of righteousness, he be led to neglect the duties of that sacred day, surely they will have to answer for the same, and his soul will be required at their hands.

We are now come to the Second table of the commandments, beginning with the fifth, which is so peculiarly addressed to young people, that I cannot pass it over without calling your attention to its particular duties, which indeed are wholly compressed in the injunction laid down in the Church catechism, with which you are of course well acquainted ; where you are told, to love, honor, and obey your parents. It is the first and only duty a child has to perform, for in so doing he equally performs his duty to God. If you love your parents, you will naturally be inclined to obey them, and to pay that deference and respect to their superior wisdom and experience, which will at all times lead you to listen to their counsels and follow their advice. Yet you are not to suppose your duty to your parents ceases with your youth. You are to honor and respect them even to the last day of their lives, repaying them in their old age for the cares and attention they bestowed upon you when you were young. Our Saviour especially reproves the Jews for their neglect of this duty ; "Ye say, if a man shall say to his father or mother, it is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me ; he shall be free, and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or or his mother ; making the word of God of none effect

“through your tradition, which ye have delivered.” (Mark. vii. 11. 12. 13.) the meaning of which passage is this; the Jews were in the habit of offering sacrifices, which were denominated consecrated or holy gifts, and which were called by the name of Corban, and they frequently pleaded as an excuse for not assisting their parents, that the gift they would have bestowed upon them, being consecrated to God, they could not dispose of it elsewhere, which called forth the rebuke of our Saviour, telling them that they made the word of God of none effect through their traditions; that is, they paid more attention to the traditions which had been handed down to them by their fathers, than to the commandments they had received from God.

St. Paul says, “Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” (Eph. vi. 2) To the Jews, the promise was very likely literally fulfilled, their rewards and punishments being all temporal, and according as they obeyed or neglected God’s laws, they were either visited with severe chastisements or rewarded with peculiar blessings: but as I have before remarked, it is only the spiritual application we are to draw from such passages as these, and if length of days in this life, was the promise annexed to the Jewish performance of this duty, so we as Christians may look for our reward in that eternal life which is to come.

Of all the commandments there is none, which, in its spiritual application admits of more extended signification than the Sixth. It is likely that many young persons considering this commandment with reference only to a crime, the bare mention of which would fill their minds with horror, pass it over as one in no wise applying to themselves. If there be such among my readers, let them turn to the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, and read what our Saviour says on the subject, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother

“without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment :” (a name given by the Jews to a court of judicature “among them,) and whosoever shall say to his brother, “Raca, shall be in danger of the council ; but whosoever “ shall say Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Matt, v. 21.) Thus we see that whoever entertains in his heart any feelings of ill will towards his neighbour is guilty of breaking this commandment, and when viewed in this light, there are few, I fear, whose consciences can entirely acquit them of having broken it. It is not sufficient even to avoid any outward expression of such feelings ; we are told that out of the heart of men proceed “ evil thoughts, murders.” (Mark vii.21.) “ Whosoever “ hateth his brother is a murderer.”(1 John iii. 15.)

He therefore who only suffers an angry thought to rise in his bosom, is guilty spiritually of breaking this commandment.

The application of the four last is too obvious to require any comment. I trust I have said sufficient to prove to you that the spiritual observance of these laws extends to all Christians ; let us therefore offer up our daily prayers to God that he will incline our hearts to keep them, ever remembering that we can never hope to do so, if we do not make it our constant rule in all things to love our neighbour as ourselves, and do unto others as we would they should do unto us.

EXODUS XXI.

THE laws thus delivered by God himself with a solemnity which must have impressed the Israelites with awe, were of three sorts ; Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil. The Moral law, which is contained in the Ten commandments, comprises the duty of man both to God and his fellowcreatures, consisting of such injunctions, as should regulate both his external conduct, and the internal government of his heart. It is founded on the relation subsisting between man and his Creator, and as I have before mentioned, is equally ad-

dressed to every one. It is essentially the same as the law of nature, to which St. Paul alludes in his Epistle to the Romans, when he says "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." the meaning of which passage is, that a knowledge of right and wrong is implanted in the heart of man, and if this consciousness leads him to perform the same moral duties, that a Jew does in obedience to the written law, he makes a law unto himself: that is, his own conscience, by which he judges between good and evil, is the same moral rule to him, as the written law is to the Jew, and St. Paul tells us he will be judged accordingly. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law," (Rom. ii. 12) being convicted by the law of nature, they will according to that law, receive judgement for their sins.

In consequence however of the fall of Adam, by which the heart of man became depraved, and his understanding darkened, it pleased God from time to time, to renew the impression of the general law of nature, by occasional communications of His will, and He now more especially thought fit to explain it by an express revelation, which He commanded to be recorded in writing, for the use of all future ages.

The Ceremonial law, so called, as comprising the ceremonies of the Jewish religion, relates to the Priests, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and other religious rites and services.

God commanded that those, who were to be employed about the tabernacle, or in the offices of public worship, should be of the posterity of Levi; whence this law is sometimes called the Levitical law, but the Priesthood itself was to be confined to Aaron and his descendants. The principal objects of the Ceremonial law were to pre-

serve the Jews from idolatry, to which all the neighbouring nations were addicted, and to keep up in their minds a necessity of an atonement for sin.

The Civil law relates to the civil government of the Israelites: to punishments, marriages, estates and possessions. The Ceremonial and Civil law are intermixed with each other, and (being adapted to the particular purpose of separating from the rest of the world one nation among whom the knowledge of the true God, and the promise of a Redeemer, might be preserved,) were designed for the sole use of the Israelites, and were to be binding upon them, till the coming of the Messiah; as it is written in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions," (that is given to man on account of his many sins) "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made, and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator;" (Gal. iii. 19.) which mediator was Moses, as Stephen reminded the Jews in his defence, saying, "This is that Moses," "that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us." (Acts vii. 37.)

As both this Chapter and the two following contain little else but these laws, we will omit them, and pass on to the twenty-fourth.

CHAPTER. VIII.

God's covenant —the Tabernacle— golden calf— Moses' atonement —The Tables renewed—Jewish feasts—Moses' veil.

EXODUS XXIV.

MOSES was now again summoned by God to the top of the mountain to receive those laws, which were to be transmitted through him to the Israelites, as the terms of the national covenant which the Almighty condescended to make with His people; and in order to impress it more seriously on their minds, it was to be solemnly ratified by a sacrifice of blood, which Moses sprinkled on the people, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."

Moses here appears to us in the twofold character of lawgiver and Priest, both of them typical of our Saviour. As Moses gave to the Jews the judicial and ceremonial law, so by Christ has the Gospel, with all the Christian ordinances been given to us, and if the Israelites could only receive this covenant from Moses through the sprinkling of blood, how much more does the Christian require to be purified by the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," before he become fit to receive the truths and doctrines delivered by him who "washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. i. 5.)

"Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel."

This of course must not be taken literally, as we are expressly told by St John that "no man hath seen God at any time," (John. i. 18.) we can only therefore suppose that he was pleased to manifest his presence in an unusual manner, by some visible display of his glory.

A few only of the Israelites were permitted to behold this awful spectacle, and even they were not allowed to accompany Moses into the cloud, which he was commanded by the Lord to enter, and where he remained concealed from them all, for forty days and forty nights, thus furnishing another type of our Saviour who, when he was "led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil, (Matt. iv.1.) remained there likewise forty days and forty nights.

EXODUS XXVI.

THE Moral, and Civil or judicial law having been delivered to Moses, (the former being contained in the Ten commandments, the latter consisting of those laws which are given at length in the three preceeding chapters,) he was now called upon to receive instructions respecting those rites and sacrifices, which were to constitute the Ceremonial law, or religious worship of the Israelites, and which from its peculiar nature was to be the great mark of distinction between the Jewish religion and that of all other nations: as it was also intended in its different ordinances and ceremonies to shadow forth those spiritual mysteries of Christ's kingdom, by which they were to be superseded under the Gospel dispensation.

We read at the conclusion of the twentieth Chapter, of the particular kind of altar the Israelites were to erect for their burnt offerings. They were to make it of earth, and particularly desired not to build it of hewn stone, or to use any tool in constructing it: as long as they were journeying from place to place, it was desirable they should have no other altars than such as should serve for temporary use. Afterwards, when they were entering the land of Canaan, where they were to take up their abode, they were expressly told that they were to build it of stone, as it is written in the book of Deuteronomy "Thou shalt build
"the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones: and thou
"shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord thy

“God.” The prohibition however with regard to their using a tool, was still to remain in force, we are not told why, but possibly with the view of removing any temptation to carve them into the form of images.

Their worship however was no longer to be confined to these occasional burnt offerings and sacrifices. It pleased God that they should now have a house or tabernacle, so constructed that they might be able to convey it wheresoever they went, in which their religious rites were to be performed, and wherein, by a visible display of His glory, the Divine presence was to be peculiarly manifested.

A very particular description is given of the form and construction of this tabernacle, which was to be divided into two compartments, the outer one or holy place to be separated from the inner one (termed the most holy place) by a curtain or vail, within which the ark of the testimony was to be kept, the ark being a chest containing the tables on which the commandments were written, and which is called a testimony, the written law being a testimony against the Israelites if they transgressed it.

Into this holy place the high priest alone was to enter, and that only once a year, to make atonement for the sins of the people by the sacrifice of a goat, which was to be slain in the outer court, the blood of which was brought within by the high priest and sprinkled on the mercy seat which was placed over the ark, and where the Almighty was pleased more especially to signify his presence by a cloud, and to communicate with his people.

“Thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark : and
“in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give
“thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune
“with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the
“two cherubims, which are upon the ark of the testimony
“of all things which I will give thee in commandment
“unto the children of Israel.

From this it appears that though Aaron and his successors were to enter into the inner part (or Holy of Holies as it is also called) only once a year, yet that God per-

mitted Moses to go into it, as often as he had occasion to consult the Divine Majesty.

The remainder of this chapter with the two following ones, contain all the particulars relating to the furniture of the tabernacle, as to its form and construction.

The twenty eighth chapter opens with the first appointment of a regular priesthood; Aaron and his sons being selected for that office which was to continue in their family. A minute description of the priest's dress, together with the sacrifices and ceremonies attending his consecration, with directions for the construction of the different altars, occupy that and the three following chapters.

EXODUS. XXXII.

“AND when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Make us Gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt; we wot not what is become of him.”

A lamentable instance is here offered us of the depravity of human nature when left to follow its own dictates, and the natural proneness of man to deviate from the right path, when not under that restraint imposed upon him, by a sense of love and duty to his Creator. The same people who only a short time before, had been brought as it were into immediate contact with the Divine presence, and had so solemnly ratified their covenant with God, were now giving way to every sinful passion, and in utter forgetfulness of all the mercies they had received, were breaking those very commandments they had so faithfully promised to obey. Not even Aaron himself was proof against this temptation.

When Moses ascended into the Mount, he left Aaron and Hur in charge of all the people during his absence. If they had any matters to arrange, they were to appeal to them. (see ch. xxiv. 14.) Aaron was thus for a time ex-

alted to a station above his brethren, and that they acknowledged his authority appears, in their appealing to him to countenance their evil intentions. Under their circumstances he ought to have been more especially on his guard, and by strictly confirming all the laws they had received, have set an example of obedience to the rest.

It is thus that people in a elevated situation have it in their power to do so much good to others. They are naturally looked up to by their inferiors, and many there are who though they turn a deaf ear to precept or remonstrance, are nevertheless often known to yield to the influence of those better feelings, and virtuous habits, which actuate the conduct of those around them.

“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt v. 16.)

Instead however of remonstrating with his brethren, and representing to them the sinfulness of their conduct, we find Aaron encouraging them in their wickedness, and even lending his assistance. Could they suppose, after the severe judgments they had seen inflicted on the idolatrous Egyptians, that such an act of ingratitude and disobedience on their part would escape the wrath of the Almighty? Might they not rather have expected, after the multiplied proofs of kindness they had received at his hands, that he would visit such a crime with double severity?

“And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiffnecked people,” that is, I am well aware of the obstinacy of their hearts.

“Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.”

“And Moses besought the Lord his God.”

Moses again appears in the character of a mediator, appealing to the Almighty in behalf of his weak brethren, and imploring his mercy, reminding him at the same time of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

“And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought
“to do unto his people.”

He listened to the prayers of his servant Moses, and withheld his arm from inflicting that vengeance they had so deservedly incurred.

It was doubtless with feelings of great indignation against his brethren, that Moses heard of their iniquitous proceedings during his absence. Still he foresaw the terrible results which would inevitably ensue were they to receive the punishment so justly due to their sins, and the whole nation to be destroyed from off the face of the earth. Not only would the Egyptians triumph over such an event, but there would be an end at once to the fulfilment of all the promises made to his forefathers. Nevertheless when he descended from the mount with the tables of testimony in his hands, and with his own eyes saw his brethren, the Israelites, the chosen people of God, who, by their holiness and purity of conduct, ought to have shewn themselves “a pattern of good works” (Titus ii. 7) to the rest of the world, when he saw them in the very act of breaking one of those commandments he held in his hand, and celebrating their religious rites before a golden image, then “did his anger wax hot,” and to testify his utter abhorrence of such conduct, “he cast the tables
“out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.”

“And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt
“it in the fire, and ground it into powder, and strawed
“it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink
“of it.”

His next step was to appeal to Aaron to know what the people had done to him, that could have compelled him to unite with them in such a sinful act. He did not for a moment imagine that Aaron could have lent a willing ear to their suggestions; he well knew the difficulty he might have encountered in opposing his single authority against the voice of the multitude, and was willing to attribute his conduct to the compulsion he had met with,

rather than suppose he had followed the inclinations of his own heart.

“And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.”

We cannot but remark here, Aaron's respectful manner towards his brother, acquiescing in the authority with which he was invested, and even treating him with the deference due to a superior. In the present case indeed, he felt there was but too just cause for him to humble himself before him. There was doubtless great allowance to be made for him under the circumstances in which he had been placed. The people were “set on mischief,” and had probably compelled him to do that which his judgment must have told him was wrong; yet it does not appear that he made any attempt to argue or expostulate with them on the heinous nature of their sin, and we cannot tell how far they might have yielded to such arguments, or been influenced by his example, had he only had the moral courage to withstand their entreaties, and by his own behaviour, proved his deep abhorrence of such a crime.

“When a mans' ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” (Prov. xvi. 7.)

Although the Israelites were apparently all united in this idolatrous act, yet we may suppose there were among them those who had some inward misgivings respecting their conduct, as we read that the tribe of Levi were all ready when called upon to declare themselves on the side of the Lord, and were consequently deputed to execute vengeance on their sinful brethren. For though the Almighty, in his infinite mercy, at the instigation of Moses, had “spared them from destroying them” (Ezek. xx. 17.) altogether, yet such a crime was not suffered to pass without a more signal chastisement than that which Moses had inflicted, “and there fell of the people that day, about three thousand men.” Although judgment had been thus inflicted on so many, yet did Moses think

right to remind the rest, that because they had escaped this great destruction, they were not therefore to consider themselves guiltless. They had "sinned a great sin," one which was to be atoned for in an especial way. We find him consequently, appealing again to God's mercy in behalf of his sinful brethren, and with a jealous anxiety for their salvation even offering to renounce himself all the privileges of a chosen servant of God, rather than that they should not be forgiven.

We meet with a similar passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, where he says, "I could wish that myself "were accursed from Christ for my brethren," (Rom. ix. 3) meaning, he would gladly forego himself the privileges of Christianity, if by such means he could effect the conversion of his brethren. It is scarcely necessary to remind you of the type which is presented to us in this willingness on the part of Moses to offer himself as an atonement for the sins of his brethren. It will surely recall to your mind the great atonement offered for the sins of the whole world by our Saviour, 'who gave himself for our sins.' (Gal. i. 4.)

EXODUS XXXIII.

THE Israelites had now proved themselves utterly unworthy of God's favour. They had not only, by repeated murmurings and discontent, evinced their distrust of his power and goodness: they had even gone so far as to renounce him altogether as their Deity, and fall down in worship before an idol formed by their own hands. Yet would not the Lord utterly cast them off; "Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." (Lam. iii. 32.)

We are told at the conclusion of the last chapter, that "the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf."

In what manner he did so, is not related, but we are led to suppose he visited their sin in such a way, as to bring them to a sense of their guilt; and it was doubtless in consequence of the repentance they shewed, that God

was pleased to renew his promises to them relating to their possession of the land of Canaan, though at the same time on account of the obstinacy of their hearts, they were to be debarred from the privilege of enjoying the token of his Divine presence among them.

“ I will not go up in the midst of thee ; for thou art a stiffnecked people : lest I consume thee in the way.”

“ And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned” : their eyes were opened to the sad consequences of the wickedness they had committed, “ and no man did put on him his ornaments. For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people : I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee : therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.”

They were to do this in token of sorrow and shame for their past conduct, that God who knoweth the hearts of all men, might judge by the readiness with which they obeyed this command how far he might trust to the sincerity of their repentance.

“ And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.”

Thus did they humble themselves before the Lord ; the judgment inflicted on their brethren, together with the interposition of Moses in their behalf, had doubtless worked upon their hearts, and placed their sin before them in its true light, yet after such a proof of indifference and contempt for the mercies they had received, they could not expect to be so soon reinstated in God’s favour, and he now thought proper to “ hide his face” (Ps xxx. 7.) from them for a time, causing the tabernacle in which his presence was more peculiarly manifested to be removed to a distance.

“ And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the Congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto

“the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without
“the camp.”

“And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the
“tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every
“man at his tent door,” in token of their respect for
him, at once acknowledging his superiority, and their
entire dependance upon his mediation.

It appears indeed Moses was daily in close communion
with God, “speaking unto him face to face as a man
“speaketh unto his friend”; the highest privilege granted
to any one, and indicating the familiar manner in which
God was pleased to communicate his will to Moses.

“And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest
“unto me, Bring up this people, and thou hast not let
“me know whom thou wilt send with me: yet thou hast
“said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found
“grace in my sight.”

“Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in
“thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee.”

Moses was well aware how weak and unavailing his ef-
forts would be, unaided by the counsel and assistance of
God, and ventures to remind the Almighty, not only of the
favor he had hitherto manifested towards him, but that it
was only by his especial protection over the whole nation
of the Israelites, that they would be considered as the
chosen people of God, or kept separate from the rest of
the world. He requests him therefore to shew him his
way that he might know him, in other words to point
out to him so clearly the path he ought to pursue,
that he might *know*—and therefore be able to perform
his will in all things, and be thereby assured of his gra-
cious approbation.

There is a similar expression in Ps. xxv. 4. where David
requests the Lord to “shew him his ways, and teach him
his paths,” a petition which should be offered daily by
every true Christian, who sincerely wishes to perform his
duty to God.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing

“also that thou hast spoken : for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.” that is, I have searched thee thoroughly, and am well acquainted with thy thoughts, and with thy heart (Ps. cxxxix. 23)

“ My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee “rest.” Thus encouraged, Moses ventures to extend his request still farther, and beseeches God to manifest to him his glory, in its full majesty and splendour, unveiled by a cloud. But this, he was told, was more than mortal eye could stand. “Thou canst not see my face ; for there “shall no man see me, and live.”

Yet did the Lord so far condescend to gratify his wishes as to make all his goodness pass before him, and proclaim before him the name of the Lord : the “name of “the Lord” signifying those attributes which are as it were the character of the Divine nature, as we read in the next chapter ; “the Lord whose name is Jealous, is a “jealous God”: and these attributes in a remarkable, though perhaps to our minds, somewhat incomprehensible manner, did he vouchsafe to make known unto Moses, reminding him at the same time that it was his will and pleasure which ordered all events. “I will be gracious to “whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom “I will shew mercy.”

EXODUS XXXIV.

MOSES having by his intercession for his brethren, restored them in some degree to God’s favour, the Almighty was now pleased to renew the covenant he had so graciously entered into with his people, and ordered Moses to make new tables of stone, and bring them up early in the morning, to the top of the mount, where he again remained for forty days, writing upon the tables the words of the covenant or the ten commandments, and receiving fresh instructions and directions, together with a repetition of some of those laws already mentioned.

“And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.”

Again does Moses avail himself of the condescension of the Almighty, in this open manifestation of his goodness and mercy, to repeat his entreaties that he would forgive the sins of his people, and receive them again under his heavenly protection. Nor were his prayers unavailing; the Lord was graciously pleased at once to quiet his apprehensions, by assuring him of the marvellous works he would perform in behalf of his people: that he would drive out from before them the inhabitants of the land whither they were going, or in other words, that he would fight for them again, even as he had done before in their encounter with the Amalekites. But they were to remember, that if he performed this great work for them, they on their parts were to obey the laws he had laid down for their observance. They were on no account to enter into any treaty with their enemies, but “to destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves,” the places usually selected by the heathens for their idolatrous rites, probably on account of the shelter they afforded from the heat of the sun. It was on this account, that they were afterwards specially enjoined not to plant a grove of trees near unto their altars, lest it might lead the people into idolatry.

The Israelites were again commanded to keep the Passover, or feast of unleavened bread as it is here called, and were also desired to observe the feast of weeks, which being an offering to God of the first fruits of wheat harvest, was also designated the “feast of harvest.” (Ch. xxiii. 16.) This feast was the same as that called in the New Testament the feast of Pentecost; the word Pentecost signifying in Greek “fiftieth,” it being always kept fifty days after the Passover.

Three times in the year, were all the males of the nation to appear before the Lord, to celebrate the feast of unleavened bread or the Passover, the feast of weeks mentioned above, and the “ingathering” of their fruits, which

is also called the "feast of tabernacles," from their being commanded to dwell in tabernacles or booths, during its celebration, the object of which was to remind them of their journey through the wilderness, when for forty years they dwelt only in tents : as it is written in Leviticus, "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israel-ites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Lev. xxiii. 42. 43.)

The particulars respecting the observance of these ceremonies, referred to their future celebration in the land of Canaan, where they were all to assemble at Jerusalem for the purpose, during which time their several lands, being left defenceless by the absence of all the male inhabitants would naturally have fallen an easy prey to their enemies, had it not been for the overruling providence of God, who promised that no man should even desire their land during the time.

What consolation may we not draw from even this slight circumstance. Does it not teach us never to give way to apprehensions with regard to any future event? When we are once convinced of the necessity of a duty, we are to perform it regardless of any consequence we may think likely to ensue from it. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord." (Gen xviii. 14.) The same Almighty power who "shut the lion's mouths" (Dan. vi. 22.) "who turneth rivers to a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground," (Ps. cxii. 33.) He can surely keep the storm from bursting over our heads, and avert the blow we think so near at hand.

"And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand: when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone, while he talked with him."

It appears by this that God must have imparted to him a portion of his glory, which had such a visible effect

on his whole countenance, that even Aaron, as well as all the rest of the Israelites, were struck with awe; they were even afraid to speak to him until he had covered his face with a vail.

It seems possible that God may have permitted this in order to impress the people with a deeper sense of his superiority, that they might be the more willing to submit to his authority, and be directed by his orders. There is however yet another signification conveyed by it which is explained by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians, where in allusion to this circumstance, he speaks of the spiritual blindness of their hearts. Their eyes were not only too dim to look at Moses without a vail, "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old Testament, which vail is done away in Christ." "But even unto this day when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart." (Cor iii. 14. 15.) "Because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." (Matt xiii. 13.)

May we none of us partake of this spiritual blindness! Having our eyes opened to the great truths of salvation, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness"? (2 Pet. iii. 2.)

EXODUS. XXXV.

MOSES having now received all his instructions respecting those laws and ordinances which as we mentioned before, were to distinguish the Jewish worship from all others, proceeded to assemble all the children of Israel, and after enforcing upon them a strict observance of the sabbath, his next step was to put in execution all the orders he had received from the Lord respecting the building of the tabernacle, and for this purpose, summoned all those of his brethren who were willing to come forward and assist in the mighty work: and after the rebellious disposition they had so lately shewn, he was doubtless

gratified by the readiness with which they now offered their assistance.

The remaining chapters of this book contain for the most part, a repetition of all those particular directions which had been given to Moses on the mount, respecting the workmanship of the tabernacle, and which are described with a minuteness which in any other case, we might be inclined to think superfluous; but we must remember that "every word proceedeth out of the mouth of God," (Matt iv. 4.) and that though it may seem to profit little to dwell on such details, we may be assured they were to answer some wise end, and must at all events tend to exalt our admiration of the goodness and condescension of the Almighty, in vouchsafing to enter into such minute particulars as were suited to the ignorance of the Israelites at that period.

The rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion were most of them "shadows of things to come," (Col. ii. 17.) that is, they referred to something more fully to be developed under the Gospel dispensation, and even the Temple itself partook of the same typical nature. The inner temple, or Holy of Holies which I alluded to before, and into which the High Priest alone entered, was a type of Heaven, which Christ by his death has opened to us, bursting asunder the veil, which concealed it from the sight of the people; signifying the concealment of the mysteries of the Gospel during the continuance of the Temple worship.

St. Paul speaking of the tabernacle explains how it "was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation."

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building,

“neither by the blood of goats, and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Heb ix. 9. 12.)

To the Jews the prophetic nature of these ceremonies was involved in obscurity. Their minds were not sufficiently enlightened to enable them fully to comprehend the nature of that peculiar mode of worship which formed the basis of their religion, and though no doubt there were some, whose faith taught them to “look for better things,” (Heb xi. 40.) and to believe that all their carnal ordinances were only “patterns of those better sacrifices” (Heb ix. 23.) God had prepared for them, yet the greater number regarded them only as duties imposed upon them by the Almighty in order to prove their love and obedience, the fulfilment of which was sufficient to render them acceptable in the sight of God, and procure for them his favor and protection. They might be compared to children from whom an implicit obedience to the will of their superiors is all that is demanded of them, until they attain that age when their own judgement is sufficiently matured to enable them to follow its dictates and act for themselves; thus were the Jews only required strictly to conform to the law of God, which was in every point so admirably calculated to prepare their minds for that period, when the darkness in which their minds had been so long enthralled was to be dispelled by the light of the Gospel, or as St. Paul aptly expresses it, “the law was their schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ.” (Gal. iii. 24.)

CHAPTER IX.

**Jewish laws.—Rites,—Sacrifices—offerings —Consecration of Priests—
Aaron's blessing—Nadab and Abihu—Feasts of expiation.**

LEVITICUS. I—II.

THE book of Leviticus is so called from comprising principally a detail of all the sacrifices and services of the Tabernacle, with all the particulars relating to the office of the priests, who as I mentioned before, were to be chosen from the tribe of Levi.

The two chief objects of the Jewish law appear to have been to maintain the purity of God's holy religion, in opposition to the idolatry and false worship, which at that period so universally prevailed, as also to prefigure the spiritual religion of Jesus Christ, the promised Saviour.

It was one great proof of God's tender mercy over his chosen people, that in all the laws and regulations laid down for their observance, they were never left to their own inventions, or in ignorance respecting his will on any point. As in the case of the tabernacle, so with regard to all their rites and ceremonies, the most minute particulars were laid down, any disregard of which was visited with severe punishment. An awful instance of this occurred in the judgment of Nadab and Abihu, which is related in the tenth chapter, as also in the fifteenth chapter of Numbers, where we read of a man being instantly stoned to death for gathering sticks on the sabbath day.

The religious services of the Jews prescribed in this book consisted of three kinds.

First, Sacrifices of different sorts, which, though they were mere outward rites, yet had a reference to the grand scheme of redemption, shadowing forth in their several particulars the great atonement made by the death of our Saviour for the sins of all mankind.

Secondly, Purifications from legal uncleannesses.

The strict observance of this part of the Jewish law, formed a prominent feature in their religion. The main object of them appears to have been to keep alive in the minds of the Israelites a constant sense of that purity and reverence due to all things pertaining to the worship of God, as well as to represent that inward purity of heart which was afterwards to distinguish the true followers of Jesus, being cleansed by his blood, and sanctified by his holy spirit.

Thirdly, Various festivals. Some of these we have already noticed. They were for the most part thankful commemorations of signal national mercies and deliverances conferred upon the Jews, and the constant attendance of every one on their solemnities at stated periods of the year, and at one fixed place of national worship, tended greatly to preserve unity and peace among them, as also to mark them as a distinct and separate people from the rest of the world.

As it is not my purpose to enter into all the minute details of the rites and ceremonies which comprize the greatest portion of this book, I shall confine myself to the selection of such chapters alone, as may afford matter for instruction and interest, or which contain the most striking analogies in their typical nature to the sufferings and death of Christ.

The first things mentioned are the regulations laid down respecting burnt offerings.

This kind of sacrifice had been a form of worship approved by God from the earliest times. They appear in general to have been offered as tokens of thankfulness for some particular mercy, as in the case of Noah, whose sacrifice of thanksgiving on quitting the ark, we read of in

the eighth chapter of Genesis, but until the period at which we are now arrived, no particular regulations are recorded respecting them. Now however, we find direct laws laid down with regard to their observance, every minute particular of which was to be duly attended to, nor was the object of them henceforth to be confined solely to thanksgivings. It was likewise to include atonement, reconciliation, and remission of sins, though it was still to be a "voluntary offering, and without blemish," "an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord," that is, rendered acceptable to God from the willingness with which it was offered, even as our Saviour gave himself for us, "holy and without blemish, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." (Eph. v. 2.)

That the victim should be of clean beasts, had been a rule pertaining to all sacrifices, a distinction particularly mentioned in the Seventh chapter of Genesis: the term "clean" being given to all those animals set apart for the peculiar use of sacrifices.

The meat-offering mentioned in the second chapter, is a term applied indiscriminately to all offerings made to God either of animals, or fruits of the earth, the latter being generally brought by those who were too poor to offer the sacrifice mentioned in the first chapter; the word in Hebrew, signifying any gift either to God or man.

The two principal injunctions delivered respecting these offerings consisted in the prohibition of leaven, and the use of salt. We have before had occasion to mention the metaphorical use of the word *leaven* in Scripture, when we were speaking of the Passover, as representing the corruption of our nature. As the least portion of leaven alters the character of the substance into which it is introduced, so is our nature changed by the contamination of sin. "A little leaven leaveth the whole lump." (1 Cor. v. 16.)

The use of honey was also forbidden, the reason of which is not assigned, but as in ancient times the heathens had been in the habit of offering it to their deities,

that may have been a sufficient reason why it should have been prohibited to the Israelites.

The command with respect to the use of salt, is perhaps easier to be accounted for. It was always considered by the ancients as an emblem of friendship and fidelity, and is also alluded to in Scripture to express any thing durable, and incorruptible; hence we find it often referred to as applying to any covenant between God and man; as in Numbers xviii, 19. "It is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord unto thee"; and again in 2 Chron. xiii, 5, "Ought ye not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt."

We also meet with the same expression in the new Testament, where it signifies that purity of speech required in the true believer, as opposed to the evil conversation of the world. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt." (Col. iv. 6.) "Have salt in yourselves." (Mark. ix. 50.)

Thus we may gather from these analogies that the use of it was enjoined not only to remind the Israelites that the sacrifice was the medium of a solemn covenant with God, but also to signify the purity, and holiness of disposition with which it was to be offered.

LEVITICUS. IV—VII.

BESIDES the meat offering, and the peace offering, there were likewise sin offerings enjoined of various sorts, which more peculiarly distinguished the Jewish religion from all others.

The natural propensity of man to go astray, and to commit sin, we all know has been inherent in our nature ever since the fall of our first parents, and we all likewise know that God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil." that if it had not been for the redemption of our Saviour, no atonement we could make, could reconcile us to him. It pleased God however, that during the period which should

elapse before this great event was to take place, such laws and ordinances were to be observed, and from their external nature were more adapted to the carnal dispositions of men, who though their minds were as yet unenlightened by the spirit of Christ's religion, yet as St. Paul observes "were without excuse;" "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them." (Rom. i. 19. 20.)

"Being filled with all unrighteousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity," yet, "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." (Rom. 29. 32.)

One great end therefore of the ordinances of the Jewish religion, was to keep alive this natural sense of sin, and accordingly we find three Chapters of this book devoted exclusively to the several kinds of sacrifices, which under the form of offerings, were to atone for sins, all of which are most minutely specified; none were suffered to escape: even those committed in ignorance, were equally to be atoned for.

These sin-offerings consisted of various things, such as sheep, goats, fowls, &c. to meet the circumstances of the people, and to shew that while, of him to whom less was given, less was required, yet that no poverty or lowness of station, could exempt him in the sight of God. Without an atonement of some kind, he could not be forgiven.

Thus are the services of the Christian accepted according "to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

Nevertheless we are told that "the iniquities" of man "are more than the hairs of his head," (Ps. xl. 12.) and that, "the very thought of foolishness is sin." (Prov. xxiv. 9.)

There existed consequently, numberless transgressions which it would have been endless to have atoned for separately: one day in the year therefore, was set apart for a general expiation by the High priest, for all such offences, the peculiar ceremonies of which are more minutely detailed in the Sixteenth chapter.

LEV. VIII. IX.

THE tabernacle being now prepared, and all the laws delivered respecting the sacrifices, the next thing we read of is the consecration of Aaron and his sons. This was performed by washing them, arraying them in the holy garments, anointing them with oil, and sanctifying them with the blood of the animal slain.

They were washed in water to signify that they were to be purified from all unholiness, as also to prefigure the baptism of our Saviour.

In order to render themselves fit to enter into the office of priests, their own sins were to be atoned for by the sacrifice of a bullock, the blood of which, "Moses sprinkled upon the altar round about," and of the ram which was likewise slain on the occasion, he "put of the blood" upon Aaron and his sons. This was done to impress upon the minds of the people that the victim was offered to God as a ransom for that of the sinner, and that "without shedding of blood, is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.)

The consecration, which was to last seven days, being ended, Aaron and his sons were summoned by Moses to commence the duties which they were now called upon to perform.

These being the first offerings of the Levitical priesthood, a detail is given of all the particulars attending them. We find Moses directing them in all things, at the same time reminding them that all his orders were given in conformity with the commands he had received from Heaven.

"And Moses said, This is the thing which the Lord commanded that ye should do: and the glory of the Lord shall appear unto you."—The presence and favor of God will be manifested to you in a visible sign from Heaven.

When all was over, Aaron "lifted up his hand towards the people and blessed them." This was one peculiar office of the priests, the form of the blessing being particularly expressed in Numb. vi. 22—27. where it is written as follows, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

"And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people."

"And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."

The blessing being pronounced by the priests on their coming out of the tabernacle, the people were now favoured by that visible token foretold by Moses, which, notwithstanding they had been led to expect it, nevertheless filled them with awe and astonishment; "they shouted, and fell on their faces,"—bowing in token of grateful acknowledgement to God, for having thus so graciously testified his acceptance of all that they had done.

LEVITICUS X.

"AND Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.—And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

I have before alluded to this awful event. The crime of Nadab and Abihu consisted in burning their incense with other fire than that which God had commanded to be used for the service of his sanctuary. Nadab and

Abihu having been invested with the high dignity of the priesthood, ought to have been more particularly circumspect with regard to the observance of God's commands, and it was therefore just and requisite that a signal punishment should be inflicted upon them, in order to deter others from committing a similar crime.

"Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified"; that is, I will be revered by my priests in a special manner, and my power shall be magnified before all the people by the awful judgement I have caused to be inflicted on these sinful men.

"And Aaron held his peace."—Though his heart must have been filled with anguish, yet did he fully acknowledge the justice of the Lord, and received the stroke with silent resignation.

"And Moses said unto Aaron and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled."

As consecrated priests of the Lord, officiating in his holy tabernacle, as also to shew they acquiesced in the judgment of the Almighty, they were forbidden to display the tokens of grief customary on such occasions. For the same reason they were not allowed even to go out from the "door of the tabernacle;" they were solemnly devoted to the service of God, which was not to be neglected on any account whatsoever.

They were then ordered to proceed with the sacrifice, when Moses had occasion to notice a second instance of disobedience in Aaron's other sons Eleazar and Ithamar, who burnt that portion of the sacrifice set apart expressly for the priests, instead of eating it, which they had been particularly enjoined to do. (See ch. vi. 26.)

"Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar

and Ithamar; saying, Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord."

The priest by eating the sin offering was thereby supposed "to bear the iniquities" of the people, thus furnishing another type of our Saviour, who was "to bear our iniquities." (Is. liii. 11.)

It appears however that Moses was satisfied by Aaron's excuse, the fault not being committed designedly, but through human frailty. Aaron was aware of the disgrace his family had incurred by the sinful crime committed by Nadab and Abihu, and dared not hope under such circumstances that his services would be approved by God.

"If I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?"

"And when Moses heard that, he was content."

The five following chapters being devoted exclusively to enumerations of such laws as applied only to the Jews, we will pass them over, and proceed to the Sixteenth.

LEVITICUS XVI.

THIS chapter contains a minute description of all the ceremonies attending the feast of expiation, or the great day of atonement, which was to take place once a year only when the priest was to enter into "the holy place" within the vail, to make atonement for the sins of the "people" as well as for his own.

Of all the Jewish ceremonies, this was the most perfect shadow of the great work of redemption; the high priest prefiguring in all he did, that which Christ, in the fulness of time, was ordained to do.

The priest being arrayed in the proper garments, and having purified himself by the ablution alluded to in a former chapter, was first to make atonement for himself, as being the "shadow, and not the body," (Col. ii. 17.) a

priest, "taken from among men," (Heb. v. i.) partaking of their infirmities, and requiring daily sacrifices, "for his own sins," (Heb. vii. 27.) before he was able to atone for those of the people.

The sin offerings for this day were distinct from every other; for the priest, a bullock was to be sacrificed, while two goats were to be offered for the sins of the people; one of which was to be slain, the other bearing the name of the *scape-goat* was to be presented alive before the Lord and afterwards let loose into the wilderness.

The blood of the bullock, as well as of the slain goat was to be sprinkled on the mercy seat, signifying the blood of our Saviour which was shed for us, in order that we may be enabled to enter the gate of Heaven.

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. ix. 24.)

The two goats represented the two natures of Christ; the Humanity which suffered death, and the Divinity which could not die. The slain goat was Jesus put to death for our offences, the scape goat was the same Jesus raised to life for our justification.

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hands of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities, unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness, implying he was never to return or be seen again, even as God has promised to forgive our iniquities, and to remember our sins no more, (Jer xxxi. 34.) for the sake of him who took our infirmities upon him, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." (Is. liii. 5.)

Another striking analogy may be observed between this type and the substance it so minutely shadowed forth.

The people were accustomed to insult over the scape goat, to curse him, to spit upon him, to pluck off his hair, and in short to use him as an accursed thing: and was not our blessed Saviour treated in a similar manner? "They spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on "the head." (Matt. xxvii. 30.)

Neither was this the only point of resemblance in the two circumstances. After the animals were slain, and their blood carried within the veil, their bodies were to be burnt without the camp, prefiguring even in this slight instance the death of our Saviour, who when he offered himself as a sacrifice in order that he might "sanctify the people "with his own blood, suffered without the gate," (Heb. xiii. 12.) Mount Calvary where his crucifixion took place, being situated a short distance from Jerusalem.

We have now discussed the most useful and interesting portions of this book, the remaining chapters containing little besides details of several particular laws, as also a repetition of others we have already noticed, with the exception of the twenty sixth, which may in fact be termed the conclusion of the Levitical law, containing a general enforcement of them all, with promises of reward in case of obedience on the one hand, and on the other, threats of punishment if they were disobedient.

It is scarcely possible to imagine greater encouragement than was held out to the Israelites to perform their duty and obey God's commands. Every blessing awaited them as long as they continued to walk in his statutes, and keep his commandments, while on the contrary any act of disobedience was to be followed by immediate punishment.

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them: Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit."

"And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid—And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the

“sword.—Five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight.”

What could have been more cheering to the Israelites than promises like these? They were going to take possession of a country filled with inhabitants all hostile to them, and from the disproportion of their numbers, without any human prospect of being able to conquer them; but all such difficulties were smoothed by these assurances of support from Heaven.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. viii. 31.)

“But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments”;

“I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.”

“And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.”

“And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.”

“Seven” is frequently mentioned in Scripture, for an unlimited number. In proportion to the magnitude of the offence, was to be the punishment inflicted; and awful indeed were the judgments denounced upon such as should persist, after such warnings, in rebelling against the Lord and disobeying his commands.

It is impossible to close this book without feelings of thankfulness that it has been granted to us to see the fulfilment of all these types and ordinances, and to live under a dispensation when such burdensome rites and ceremonies, which St. Paul tells us, “neither our fathers,” nor they “were able to bear,” (Acts xv. 10.) have given place to that service of freedom which it is the blessing of every Christian to enjoy.

“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to

“every one that believeth.” (Rom. x, 4.) “His yoke is easy and his burden is light.” (Matt. xi. 30.)

The object of the ceremonial law was fulfilled when Christ appeared on earth, and enabled his followers to obtain that righteousness, which the law never could effect, for being only “a shadow of good things to come, and not the very “image of the things,” it could “never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make “the comers thereunto perfect.” “For it is not possible “that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away “sins.” (Heb. x. 1.)

“God hath no pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifice.” (Heb. x. 4, 6,) “To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam. xv. 22.)

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Rom. x. 9.)

May we therefore, who are enabled to “enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an high priest over the house of God ; may we draw near with a true heart full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Heb. x. 19. 22.)

CHAPTER X.

Numbering of the tribes—Levites,—Nazarites—Dedication of the tabernacle—Passover kept— Seventy elders appointed.— Quails sent—Sedition of Miriam—Leprosy—

NUMBERS I.—VIII.

THIS book is called Numbers, from its containing the several enumerations or numberings of the people.

It was desirable that a distinction should be made of different tribes or families of the Israelites, that every one might know and transmit to posterity a distinct account of his genealogy, in order to prove the particular tribe from which the Messiah was to spring.

The tribe of Levi alone was to be excluded in the numbering, being set apart for the service of the Lord, received by him instead of the first born who, as was mentioned before, were dedicated to him at the Institution of the Passover.(Ex. xiii. 2.) They were to have the charge of all things pertaining to the tabernacle: they were “to bear it, to minister unto it, and to encamp round about it.”

“And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down; And when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.”

The “stranger” meaning here, any Israelite not of the tribe of Levi.

The Israelites being all numbered and formed into companies, the next order given was respecting their encamp-

ments and their marches. It may easily be supposed that great order and method was requisite to arrange so vast a multitude in such a way as to cause no confusion in their march. Accordingly each tribe was to be distinguished by a particular standard; and in this manner they proceeded, blessed by a visible token of God's presence, protected by his omnipotent arm, and receiving their daily sustenance direct from Heaven.

Several precepts are delivered in these chapters, some of which are merely repetitions or explanations of the foregoing institutions, while others relate to particular matters, such as the directions given to the tribe of Levi, and the law of the Nazarites. All those were called Nazarites, who voluntarily dedicated themselves by a vow to the service of the Lord. They were peculiarly distinguished from the rest by conforming to certain rules of abstinence laid down for that peculiar sect.

After specifying certain meats and drinks from which they were to abstain, it is said, "All the days of the vow of his separation, there shall no razor come upon his head; until the days be fulfilled in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow."

This separation, or "Nazariteship," as it is called in the margin, might last for a whole life, or only for a short period. Samson, we are told, was to be a "Nazarite unto God from the womb to the day of his death," (Judges xiii. 7.) while in the Acts we read of four men who having "a vow on themselves," accompanied St. Paul into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, (Acts xxi. 23, 26.) which lasted only seven days.

The dedication of the temple occupies the whole of the seventh chapter, in which are described the several offerings brought by the princes, in celebration of the event. These were probably the heads of the different tribes, they are elsewhere called "elders." We have had occasion before to allude to this title, when it was applied to the chief domestic of a family; here it implies those who as chiefs

of each tribe had authority over the rest, an arrangement which had existed for some time previous to the delivery of the law, as you may remember reading in the fourth Chapter of Exodus, when it is said "Moses gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel"; in the New Testament the word has more extended signification, sometimes implying the chief magistrates, as in Matt. xxi, 23; at others, the pastors or Bishops of the church, as in Acts xiv, 23. and Titus i, 5, 7.

The ceremony of the dedication was succeeded by the consecration of the Levites, Moses receiving particular directions on the subject, from the voice of God himself.

NUMBERS IX.

A year having now elapsed since the Israelites had quitted Egypt, the appointed season was arrived, when the celebration of the passover was to take place. Among the laws detailed in Leviticus, there were several laid down respecting those obstacles, which would render a man unclean, and thus prevent him from joining in the ceremonies enjoined. One of these obstacles now occurred. There were certain men who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that is, they had come in contact with it, having probably assisted at the funeral rites. They were by this circumstance rendered unclean for seven days, and consequently prevented from partaking of the feast. They therefore appealed to Moses to be instructed respecting the manner in which they were to keep it, being unwilling to suppose that for such a reason they were to neglect it altogether.

"And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you."

He did not venture of his own accord to settle such an important business, but as was his usual custom in such matters, he sought assistance from God, who accordingly gave him full directions how to act. None were to be excluded altogether from the feast; but those who were pre-

vented by such causes from attending it, were to keep it by themselves, after they had purified themselves from their uncleanness.

Now let us reflect on this circumstance, and see if there is nothing in it which we may apply to ourselves.

Are there no circumstances which may prevent our partaking of our passover, the Lord's supper? He whose mind is defiled by sin, is he not equally unfit to hold communion with Christ and partake of his holy Sacrament, till his heart is purified, and he is cleansed by faith and true repentance?

When our Saviour instituted his Sacrament, he addressed himself equally to all Christians. "He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it"; he excluded none, he made no distinction; and every sincere Christian will consider it his bounden duty to obey this command. I say, sincere, for of course those who may choose to attend it, yet continuing in their sins without compunction or sorrow of the same, are only making a mockery of holy things, and will be judged accordingly.

"Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. vi. 7.)

If we therefore would partake of this holy Sacrament in a proper spirit we must "diligently examine ourselves, and repent us truly for our sins past:" we must "have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour, we must amend our lives, and be in perfect charity with all men;" then, and then only, shall we "be meet partakers of those holy mysteries."

NUMBERS X.

AND the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them; that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camp."

We have before had occasion to notice the extreme

minuteness with which every law and regulation was prescribed to the Israelites. As they were required to fulfil to the letter every ordinance imposed upon them, so was it necessary they should have such directions given them as should render the will of God so clear and explicit, that no excuse would be afforded them for disobeying it: not only was the very form of these trumpets prescribed to them, but even the manner in which they were to be sounded.

“And the children of Israel took their journey out of the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.”

They now quitted that memorable spot, where the lovingkindness and condescension of the Almighty had been so wonderfully displayed, before them, and secure of his heavenly protection, set out on their march arranged in order according to their several tribes, and directed by that cloud which overshadowed them by day, and by the pillar of fire which illuminated their path by night.

“And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses’ father in law, We are journeying into the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.”

We can well suppose Moses would be desirous that his kinsman should accompany him to Canaan, and share the blessings promised to the children of Israel, and though from the following verse, it appears as if he declined it, yet from what we read in the first chapter of Judges v16, where the children of the Kenite Moses’ father in law are mentioned as being in the land of Canaan, we may infer that Moses did prevail with him.

NUMBERS XI.

THUS did the children of Israel continue their journey towards the land of Canaan, and had they all duly valued

the mercies they daily received at the hand of the Almighty, and obeyed his laws, they might soon have reached the promised land : but alas ! such was the stubborn nature of their hearts, that they had no sooner resumed their march than their rebellious spirit broke forth in fresh murmurs of discontent. "They obeyed not neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction." (Jer. xviii. 23.)

Can we wonder that the Lord was displeased, that his anger was kindled ? "Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of Heaven," yet "they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation": "therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth," (Ps. lxxviii. 21-24) and the fire of the Lord "consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp": those probably who were the most guilty.

"And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting."

You doubtless remember in the twelfth chapter of Exodus, v. 38. mention being made of the mixed multitude that accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt. The word in the Hebrew language means a large mixture, or great concourse of various persons : probably slaves and foreigners who had become attached to the Israelites during their long settlement in Egypt, and these may have encouraged the Israelites in their rebellion by reminding them of the luxuries they had enjoyed in Egypt, compared with the food on which they were now compelled to subsist ; "and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? we remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick :

"But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, beside this manna before our eyes."

"Thus did they tempt God in their heart by asking meat for their lust." (Ps. lxxviii. 18.)

“Then Moses heard the people weep throughout the families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.”

Nothing is more painful to the feelings of a righteous man than to witness daily the evil deeds of those whose hearts are not right with God.” (Ps. lxxviii. 37.)

We are told that “Moses was very meek,” (Ch. xii. 3.) and what patience and meekness did he not require to contend against the importunities of those, who even “tempted and provoked the most high God.” (Ps. lxxviii. 56.)

He had not forgotten the quails which on a former occasion, (see Ex. xvi. 13.) had been sent to gratify their desires, but the very discontinuance of that luxury convinced him, and might have satisfied them that it was God’s pleasure they should rest contented with the portion of manna, with which he had been pleased daily to supply them.

He knew that the Lord had answered his prayers in a case of need, and that under such circumstances, it is both our duty and privilege to offer up our petitions to the Almighty, but what does St. Paul say? “Be content with such things as ye have”; (Heb. xiii. 5.) and it was apparently with great regret, that Moses felt himself compelled “in his distress to call upon the Lord.” (Ps. cxviii. 5.) He seems scarcely to have anticipated a favourable answer to his prayers, giving vent to the anguish he experienced at being thus placed in such a responsible situation, even praying for death rather than that he should live “to see his wretchedness,” foreseeing doubtless how their indignation would be turned against him, should their request be denied.

But the Lord is “Merciful, and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth”: (Ex. xxxiv. 6.) He hath compassion on the weakness and infirmity of our nature, and it pleased him now to “incline his ear, unto Moses, and to listen to his petition, and not only promised to gratify the wishes of the people, but even

had compassion on the weakness of Moses, and vouchsafed to order that he should henceforth be assisted in the arduous task committed to him.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me “seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest “to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; “and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, “that they may stand there with thee.”

“And I will come down and talk with thee there: and “I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put “it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the “people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone;” that is, I will endow them with a portion of that same spirit, which I have bestowed upon you, in order to render them fit for such a charge.

“And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves “against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh,” the word “sanctify” probably merely implying they were to cease their murmurs, and prepare to receive the food they were so desirous of obtaining.

“And Moses said, The people among whom I am are “six hundred thousand footmen, and thou hast said. I will “give them flesh that they may eat a whole month: Shall “the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice “them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together “for them to suffice them”?

How forcibly does this remark recall to us the circumstance of our Saviour feeding the multitude with the loaves and fishes, when his disciples doubting his power, exclaimed. What are they among so many?” (John vi. 9.)

But God is the same yesterday and to day,” (Heb. xiii, 8.) “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” He who could “dry up the sea, and make the rivers a wilderness,” (Is. l. 2.) can surely relieve the wants of his creatures at any time, and by any means he may choose.

“And Moses went out and told the people the words “of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders “of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

“And it came to pass, that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied.”

You will remember my observing on a former occasion that the word “prophecy” does not always imply the gift of foretelling events, and in this instance we may suppose it only meant the power by which they were now enabled to declare to the people the will of God.

“But there remained two of the men in the camp,—and the Spirit rested upon them, and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle, and they prophesied in the camp.”

“And there ran a young man, and told Moses. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My Lord Moses, forbid them.”

A circumstance somewhat similar to this, is related in St. Luke’s Gospel, where a man being accused by John of casting out devils in the name of Christ, Jesus said unto him, “Forbid him not : for he that is not against us is for us.”(Luke ix. 50.)

“A man can receive nothing except it be given him from Heaven.”(John iii. 27.) Moses knew that though there might be an apparent irregularity in his proceeding, yet that the power which they possessed proved they were sanctioned by God.

“And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Is it out of consideration for me that you are led by a feeling of jealousy towards them, thus to notice their conduct? Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!”

It was a similar feeling of love and charity towards his brethren, that led St. Paul to exclaim “I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied.”(1 Cor. xiv. 5.)

“And there went forth a wind from the Lord and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp.”

The request of the Israelites was granted, yet they had little cause to rejoice, for "while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague ; so true is it, that God knoweth best what is good for man !

May this awful event teach us to be contented with the portion allotted to each of us in this world, and not to distrust the power of the Almighty to provide us with all that may be necessary.

When our Saviour commanded us to pray for our daily bread, he also commanded us to add "Thy will be done." Let us "therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat ? or what shall we drink ? but let us "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto us." (Matt. vi. 31. 33.)

NUMBERS XII.

IN reading this portion of Scripture where so many instances are related in which the rebellious spirit of the Israelites broke forth against their leader, it is impossible not to be struck with the forbearance and firmness which Moses displayed on the most trying occasions, never yielding to their importunities until he had laid his petition before the Lord, and sought assistance from the only quarter whence he knew he could obtain it. The time however was now come, when his feelings were put to a severer test than on any previous occasion, his own brother and sister regardless of all sense of duty and propriety, availing themselves of the pretext of his having married a woman not of his own nation, to find fault with him. Forty years having elapsed since that event had taken place without their having ever noticed it, we may be sure it was not the true cause of their complaint, which in reality arose from their jealousy towards Moses on account of the authority he possessed over them. Miriam, you may remember, was called a prophetess, (see Ex. xv. 20.)

and doubtless on that account, considered herself as peculiarly exalted above the rest of the children of Israel; and Aaron probably entertained the same sentiments with regard to the station he filled as high priest.

“And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it.”

“Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased.” (Luke xiv. 11.)

The Lord God did not now as heretofore wait to be entreated of Moses. He saw his chosen servant falsely accused and reviled by those who ought to have been foremost in his defence; and condescended to “come down” himself, and expostulate with his sinful creatures; appealing to their own consciences to convince them of the magnitude of their sin, and confirming his servant Moses in the authority with which he had invested him, thus proving to them that he was no common prophet.

“And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.”

“My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?”

“And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them.”

“The Lord lifteth up the meek; he casteth the wicked down to the ground.” (Ps. cxvii. 6.)

Awful and instantaneous was the punishment inflicted upon Miriam. “The cloud departed from off the tabernacle,” a signal token of God’s displeasure, “and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow.” The leprosy was one of the most dreadful diseases to which in those days man was ever subject, both with regard to the nature of the complaint and the consequences it entailed upon the sufferer, who being thereby looked upon as

unclean (see Lev. xiii. 3.) was not only excluded from all participation in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion, but even obliged to live by himself, avoiding all communication with other men. Hence it was a disease held in especial abhorrence by the Jews, and more than one instance occurs in their history, when it was inflicted upon them as a judgment.

No mention being made of Aaron's suffering any punishment, we may conclude either that "God unto whom "all hearts are open," saw that his conduct was less sinful than Miriam's, or that he forgave him on account of the penitence and humility he shewed in his subsequent conduct towards Moses.

We cannot read this chapter, in which the meekness of Moses is so conspicuous, without observing the striking similarity of this feature in his character, to that of our Saviour, who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Pet. ii. 23.) Nor let us forget the important lesson it teaches us, to bear patiently the injuries inflicted on us by others, and to "pray for them, which despitefully use, and "persecute us." (Matt. v. 44.)

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and shall "say all manner of evil against you falsely for my "sake."

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in Heaven : for so persecuted they the Prophets "which were before you."

CHAPTER XI.

Spies sent into Canaan—Their false report—Remonstrance of Joshua and Caleb—Intercession of Moses—The Israelites turn back—are defeated by the Amalekites—Rebellion of Korah—Aaron's intercession—Aaron's rod.

NUMBERS XIII.

THE Israelites were now approaching that land which had so long been the object of all their hopes and fears.

With "a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm" and with great terribleness, and signs, and with wonders," (Deut. xxvi. 8.) had the Lord brought them forth out of the land of bondage, and though from their rebellious conduct many had forfeited the privilege of entering the land of Canaan, yet did God "remember his holy promise, and Abraham his servant," (Ps. cv. 42.) and the assurance he had given him that he would put his seed in possession of the land.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel."

It has been supposed by some, from what is said in Deut. i. 22. that the Israelites distrusting the power of God to protect them against their enemies, took upon themselves to send the spies to search the land of Canaan: but even if we had not been told the contrary in this chapter, we can hardly suppose Moses would have expressed the satisfaction he did in the following verse, where it is written "the saying pleased me well." He was no doubt gratified by their prompt obedience to this command of God, which need occasion us no surprise, for as

I have elsewhere remarked, it has always been the will of God, that while he condescends to take pity on the weakness of his fallen creatures, and to grant them that assistance without which their own endeavours would avail them nothing, yet does he require them to exert themselves as much as if the result depended on their own efforts alone.

Had it pleased the Almighty, the waters of the Red sea might as soon have parted, and the stream have flowed from the rock at the single breath of his word, as through the intervention of the rod of Moses, but God would rather that his power should be magnified by the successful result with which he is pleased to crown our labours, than that they should be superseded by his miraculous interference.

Thus did he command that the Israelites should send persons to ascertain the nature of the country and its inhabitants, in order that they might then take the safest means to encounter such enemies as might oppose them; at the same time strengthening their faith by those cheering words, "Fear not, neither be discouraged." (Deut. i. 21.)

And to whom were these words addressed? To men, who though they had so repeatedly had occasion to acknowledge the efficacy of God's power in sustaining them under all trials, yet were so void of that true faith which refers all events to the overruling providence of God, that they heeded not these consoling assurances, but with a cowardly fear magnifying the dangers and difficulties to which they conceived they were exposing themselves, endeavoured to dissuade their brethren from attempting to enter the country.

"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses."

The uprightness and integrity of this individual would not suffer him to remain silent, foreseeing as he did, the consequences which would ensue, if the Israelites believed the false report which they had received, and he boldly came forward to vindicate the truth, and to encourage them in the performance of their duty,

It was true they had to encounter "walled cities," and "strong enemies," but Caleb had not forgotten how the Lord had fought for them on a previous occasion; he knew that "his arm was not shortened," (Is. lix.1.) and that both the walled cities, and the strong enemies would fall before them, if only the Lord was on their side; (Ps. cxxiv.1.) and with a full confidence in this hope, fearlessly exclaimed, "Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it."

Is there not much instruction to be derived from this chapter—much that may be spiritually applied to our own condition? may we not compare our state to that of the Israelites, who being on the borders of that temporal kingdom so long promised to them for their inheritance, now were desired to take possession of it, to fear nothing, but only to put their trust in that Almighty power, who would as surely guide them into the land of Canaan, as he had brought them in safety, "out of the house of bondage." (Ex. xx. 1.) Are not *we* equally on the borders of our heavenly Canaan, trembling under the difficulties which cross our path, instead of casting ourselves upon that Saviour, who has promised to "guide us into all truth," (John xvi.13.) and lead us unto life everlasting?

"Wherefore, my beloved, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12.)

You have both the will and power given you to work it out; tremble therefore lest by any slackness on your part you forfeit the assistance of that holy Spirit, by whose aid alone you can hope to enter into the kingdom of God.

NUMBERS XIV.

"AND all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night."

In vain had Caleb attempted to quiet the apprehensions of the Israelites. "They despised the pleasant land;

“they believed not his word : But murmured in their tents
“and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord.” (Ps.
cvi. 24. 25.]

“They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he
“delivered them from the enemy.” (Ps. lxxviii. 42.) but
lending a willing ear to the evil report that was brought
them, gave themselves up to despair, and not only
openly vented their anger against Moses and Aaron, but
even declared themselves ready to return to their state of
servitude in Egypt, rather than encounter the dangers
which were thus set before them.

“And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of
“Jephunnah, which were of them that searched the land,
“rent their clothes.”

We can imagine the anguish these good men must have
felt at seeing such a tumult excited, and the hopelessness
of any further attempt on their part to quell it.

In vain did they assure them the land was “an exceed-
“ing good land,” “flowing with milk and honey”; in vain
did they urge them to dismiss all unnecessary fears, re-
presenting to them how surely they might depend on
God’s assistance to bring them in if they rebelled not
against him; “they would none of their counsel: they
“despised all their reproof, for that they hated knowledge
“and did not choose the fear of the Lord.” (Prov. i. 29, 30.

It is thus that the true servant of the Lord will ever
be forward to defend his master’s cause, and proclaim the
truth, fearless of all consequences. These faithful men
were not to be deterred from doing their duty, even
though their lives were to be sacrificed. Nothing but
their death could satisfy the exasperated multitude, and
“all the congregation bade stone them with stones.”

What could now have saved them, if it had not been
for the interference of that Almighty power who “disap-
“pointeth the devices of the crafty, so that they cannot
“perform their enterprise.” (Job v. 12.)

In his infinite goodness and mercy, he was pleased to
interpose in behalf of his chosen servants, as also to pass

judgment on these rebellious sinners, threatening not only to deprive them of their promised inheritance, but even to sweep them off from the face of the earth.

“He said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.” (Ps. cvi. 23.)

Again does Moses come forward to intercede in their behalf, earnestly entreating forgiveness for them.

He does not attempt to justify his brethren, or offer any excuse for their sin, nor does he in any way allude to the sentence as inconsistent with Divine truth or justice, but only pleads the construction which would be put on it by the Egyptians, as well as the inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

And here let us pause to consider how we may apply even this circumstance to ourselves. May we not compare Joshua and Caleb to the ministers of the Gospel, preaching in vain to those worldly men who turning a deaf ear to all their remonstrances, choose rather to follow the imaginations of their own hearts, and give themselves up to the pomps and vanities of this world, than, by heeding the instruction given them, to be led into the true path of righteousness?

We may carry the comparison still further, for as it was only through the intercession of Moses, that God was pleased to revoke the sentence he had passed upon the Israelites, so we know that it is only through our heavenly intercessor, “who is the propitiation for our sins,” that we can hope for forgiveness. “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” (John xvi. 23.)

Thus did the great intercessor of the children of Israel prevail with that merciful Creator who is “gracious and full of compassion” (Ps. cxi. 4.) towards all his fallen creatures.

“And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word.” “It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways”. (Ps. xcv. 10.) Yet surely “they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it.”

“But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.”—Although my promises with regard to this generation be not fulfilled, yet shall I be justified in my proceedings against them, and my glory be magnified before all the world : as it is written in Hab. ii. 14, “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.”

Awful indeed was the judgment now denounced upon this rebellious nation.

Arrived on the borders of that promised land to which they had so long been looking forward, they were now forever excluded from entering into it. —“I swear in my wrath,” saith the Lord, “they shall not enter into my rest.” [Heb. iii. 11.]

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering,—not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Nevertheless, we may be assured of this, that “though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged,” [Ecc. viii. 12.] yet will the hour surely arrive, when God will judge the righteous and the wicked, and award to each according to his work. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. xii. 13, 14.)

We may remark here, that while eternal punishment is held out to Christians for retribution of their sins in this world, the Jews were visited by temporal judgments; and thus though God in his infinite mercy, and in compassion to the ignorance and infirmities of his sinful people, was pleased to pardon their sin, yet, that his truth and justice might be displayed before all the world, he saw fit to inflict a temporal judgment upon the whole nation—a judgment, which with their own mouths, they had pronounced upon themselves.

“Would God we had died in this wilderness,” Little

did they imagine this wish would be actually fulfilled ; that the wilderness was henceforward to be their only home ; there they were to live, and there they were to die. Like the foolish virgins in the parable, they might in vain cry, "Lord, open to us"; (Matt. xxv.1.) the door was now shut, and instead of entering the land of Canaan, they were ordered to turn back.

"And the people mourned greatly." Their eyes were now opened to the sinfulness and folly of their conduct, and in sorrow and dismay they exclaimed, "We will go up into the place which the Lord hath promised ; for we have sinned."

They doubtless remembered how often on former occasions, their contrition had restored them to the Divine favor, and it is probable they hoped it might be now followed by the same result.

But no ! they had despised the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, and did they think "they would escape the judgment of God"? (Rom. ii.3.4.)

Yet "the Lord would not cast off his people, neither would he forsake his inheritance"; (Ps. xciv, 14.) and it was in compassion to their weakness, that they were now commanded to turn away from those enemies who were lying in wait for them, in order that they might escape the fate which must have inevitably befallen them, the arm of the Almighty being no longer stretched out in their defence. "And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you, that ye be not smitten before your enemies."

This people, who but a short time before had despaired of conquering the country, though assured of assistance from Heaven, now imagined that of themselves they were sufficient to drive out the inhabitants, and take possession of the land ; and turning a deaf ear to this gracious warning, and with a self-confidence (which, had it been founded on a proper trust in God, might in the

first instance have enabled them to surmount all difficulties,) they now rashly undertook their own defence.

The result was such as they might have anticipated.

“The Amalekites and the Canaanites came down and smote them.”

And the Israelites “returned and wept before the Lord, but the Lord would not hearken to their voice, nor give ear unto them.” (Deut. i. 45.) “They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the Lord, but he answered them not.” (Ps. xviii. 41.)

Let us ever remember that it is God only “who makest us dwell in safety.” (Ps. iv. 8.) “Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” (P s. cxxvii. 1.)

NUMBERS XVI, XVII.

THIS Chapter opens with a fresh instance of the ingratitude of the Israelites towards their leader, whose faith and patience were again tried by the jealousy and envy of one, who having been selected by the Lord to assist in the sacred offices of his tabernacle, ought more especially to have set an example to his brethren, in yielding that ready deference to the authority of Moses, which was due to him, as the chosen servant of the Lord.

The event related in this chapter is so often alluded to in Scripture as the rebellion of Korah, that we are led to suppose he was at the head of it, more especially as he was of the tribe of Levi, and had therefore his peculiar office assigned to him in the tabernacle, which brought him into more immediate contact with Moses and Aaron.

His station however, was inferior to theirs, as it is written in chap. iii. 6—9. where “the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.”

“And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.

“And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.”

Korah it seems was displeased at being thus placed in subordination to Aaron, and angry with Moses, to whom, as we have often observed, the Israelites referred all their complaints, looking upon him as the author of all their troubles.

Availing himself of the discontented spirit of the people, Korah gathered together the chief princes of the congregation, and induced them to unite in open rebellion against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of having taken upon themselves undue authority, arguing that they were not oliver t; an the rest; that the Lord dwelt equally among hem all.

“And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face.”

He felt grieved at thus being so undeservedly censured for doing that which his conscience told him was right.

With truth might this holy man have exclaimed with David “False witnesses did rise up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not.” (Ps. xxxv. 11.) Yet he resented not this unkind behaviour. He attempted no defence, but again committing himself to that merciful Judge who “pleadeth the cause of his people,” (Is. i. 22.) and who had before on a similar occasion, vouchsafed to defend him against the false accusations of his enemies, quietly told them that by a visible sign from Heaven, the Almighty would make it appear who were those chosen by him to govern and minister in his holy tabernacle. “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” (Tim. ii. 19.) They were accordingly ordered to bring censers of incense and offer them after the manner of the priests, (the office to which they pretended themselves entitled) and the result would prove whether they were accepted by the Lord.

This was a moment of great importance to the whole

congregation of Israel ; it would now plainly appear, who were the true servants of the Lord, whom he chose should be invested with the holy dignity of priesthood. Yet how little the result was anticipated, we may infer from the readiness with which they brought their censers, and gathered all the people around them to witness the event.

We can scarcely imagine any thing more awful than the scene which ensued. The congregation was no sooner assembled, and the incense laid on the censers, than the Lord suddenly appeared in that symbol of glory, by which he was accustomed to manifest his presence to the children of Israel. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they would have been all swept from off the earth, had not Moses again interposed in behalf of those who had erred from ignorance rather than from premeditated sin.

These were spared—but the sinner's doom had gone forth, and the awful judgment which ensued, signalized at once, the truth and justice, as well as the omnipotence of the Almighty.

Now were the Israelites truly alarmed, and fled lest they should be included in the same fate : many of them, as we read above, having joined in the rebellion and therefore felt conscious they equally deserved punishment : nor were they long kept in suspense. "There came out " a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and " fifty men that offered incense."

Like the sons of Aaron, they had profaned the service of the Lord, and a similar judgment awaited their crime. The very censers having been improperly used were no longer to serve for the purpose of incense, although from their having been once consecrated for the service of the holy tabernacle, they were considered as hallowed things, and therefore not to be destroyed. They were to be converted into a covering for the altar, there to remain as " a " memorial unto the children of Israel," that the Lord would only accept offerings from such as were of the " seed of Aaron."

One might have supposed that such a signal event

would have silenced the Israelites, and convinced them at once of the folly of attempting to resist the will of God. "But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction." (Jer. xvii. 23.)

The spiritual blindness of the Israelites, before alluded to, (see Page 121) was never more apparent than at this period. They refused to acknowledge the hand of the Almighty, and instead of humbling themselves at the throne of grace, persisted in their accusation against Moses and Aaron, charging them now with having caused the death of these sinners.

Well might the Almighty say, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face." (Isa. lxv. 2, 3.)

The patience and forbearance of God had been tried to the utmost, and even Moses no longer ventured to intercede for his sinful brethren.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

What would now have been their fate if it had not been for the atonement made by Aaron? "He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed!"

The punishment of Korah with his two associates Dathan and Abiram, is one of the most striking instances of the divine power. That it should have failed to have made that impression on the Israelites which might have been expected, can only be attributed to the natural stubbornness of the heart of man, before it has been softened by the grace of God, and only serves the more strongly to convince us, how essential that grace is to the renewing of our minds, and to the effecting that change in our hearts, which alone can render us fit to enter the kingdom of God.

Let us not therefore suppose, that because these men "suffered such things," they were sinners above all men: "I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 2, 3.)

"If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy,— "of how much sorer punishment shall we be thought "worthy, if we sin wilfully after that we have received the "knowledge of the truth." (Heb. x. 26, 28, 29.)

"There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. iii. 10.) We are all guilty in the sight of God, and we may rest assured that it is only through the intercession of our High Priest, who stands now between the living and the dead, that we can hope to obtain mercy of God who "is of purer "eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." (Hab. i. 13.)

In order the more effectually to put a stop to the rebellious murmurings of the Israelites, and to silence all disputes respecting the priesthood, the Almighty was pleased to work another miracle which should convince them that it was a divine institution, and to be confined to the family of Aaron.

That this might be borne in mind by future generations the rod of Aaron was to be laid up as a token of the same in the tabernacle of witness, so called from the ark being kept in it, which contained the witness or testimony of God's will delivered in the ten commandments: (See page 110.) and in order to give still greater weight to Aaron's authority, a detail is again given of all the minute directions respecting the Priesthood, being for the most part a repetition of what had been said before, with an express command that no other person was to perform the office, or interfere in any way.

CHAPTER XII.

Moses strikes the rock—Death of Aaron—Israel defeated at Hormah—The Brazen Serpent.

NUMBERS XX.

AN interval of nearly twenty years had now elapsed, without any account being transmitted to us respecting the Israelites.

That they were, during the whole of that period, wandering to and fro in the wilderness, under the immediate controul of God's providence, we may be assured, from their making no attempt, or if they did, failing in their endeavours, either to return back to Egypt, or advance towards the land of Canaan.

How this was effected, it is impossible for us to say, but that the omnipotence of the Deity was displayed in a most signal manner, is certain from the simple fact mentioned by Moses in Deut. viii, 4. where he says; "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years.

From the silence in which Moses passes over this long period, we must infer that nothing occurred which it concerns us to know. All these events St. Paul tells us "are written for our admonition"; "wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 11, 12.)

The Apostle in these words, plainly points out to us the lesson they are intended to convey, —that extreme watchfulness which every Christian ought to maintain over his own conduct, if he would acquire that spiritual-mindedness befitting a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

For this reason, even the failings of the best men are imparted to us, in order the more strongly to impress upon our minds, what I have said before, “There is none that doeth good.” (1’s. xvi. 1.) We all “like sheep have gone astray.” (Is. liii.6.) The leaven of Adam’s sin tainted the whole creation, and we shall perceive from the incident related in this chapter, that Moses himself, whom we have hitherto regarded as such a model of patience and meekness, even he was not exempt from those passions inherent in the nature of man.

The Israelites were again suffering from the privation of water, and with the same forgetfulness they had so repeatedly shewn, of the mercies they had received at the hand of God, and the readiness with which he had ever listened to their prayers when offered in a proper spirit, they again appealed to Moses to relieve their wants, and as they had done on previous occasions, accused him of being the cause of their distress.

“And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them:” the expression, “falling on their faces,” meaning, the act of prostrating themselves in an humble attitude of prayer.

We have no reason to doubt the faith with which Moses offered up his petition to the Almighty. He had ever received a gracious answer to his prayer, and it is therefore probable he equally anticipated a favorable result on the present occasion. Yet his meekness seems in this instance to have forsaken him, and though the Lord “hearkned to him at that time also,” [Deut. ix. 19.] furnishing him with a fresh opportunity of glorifying his name, and magnifying his power before the children of

Israel, yet did he choose to take the glory to himself, saying, "Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water "out of this rock?"

Truly he smote the rock, and the water came out abundantly; the Lord was gracious to his people as heretofore. "He regarded their affliction, when he heard their "cry;" but "it went ill with Moses for their sakes: "Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." (Ps. cvi. 34.)

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because "ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the "children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

It appears from this, that Aaron was equally guilty in the eyes of Him who "knoweth the thoughts of man." (Ps. xciv. 11.)

To those who read this chapter without giving it that attention, with which the Scriptures must be studied by all who would duly understand the word of God, the judgment passed upon Moses may appear severe. But let them remember, that to "whomsoever much is given "of him shall be much required:" "The servant which "knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither "did according to his will, shall be beaten with many "stripes." (Luke xii. 47. 48.)

We know that Moses had been appointed by God to act as mediator between him and the Israelites, and as such he was the chosen instrument to shew forth the Lord's power, and to proclaim his glory before the people of Israel. This glory he now took to himself, thus confirming the Israelites in the sin to which they had been so peculiarly addicted,—that of considering their wants to have been supplied by his hands rather than by the miraculous power of the Almighty.

From the supernatural assistance by which he had been enabled to effect so many miracles, the Israelites had been accustomed to look up to him as a person peculiarly favoured by God, and consequently greatly exalted above

them all. Ought he not therefore to have been the more watchful lest he "entered into temptation?" To the Israelites, he was as "a light that shineth in a dark place." (2 Pet. i. 19.) What then must they have thought, when they saw that even he had incurred the displeasure of the Almighty? that the Lord had withdrawn "the light of his countenance" (Ps. iv, 6.) from him, and had inflicted upon him the same punishment which had been awarded them for their disobedience.

That Moses felt it deeply, we may infer from what he says in Deut. iii. 23. where in allusion to this circumstance, he tells them that "he besought the Lord" that he might "see the good land."

In like manner did St. Paul beseech the Lord to remove the thorn in his flesh, (which was probably some mental or bodily infirmity with which it had pleased God for some wise reasons to afflict him.) "My grace is sufficient for thee," was the consoling reply given to St. Paul, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2. Cor. xii. 8. 9.) When we pray to God to remove our trials, we may rest assured that our prayers are equally granted if we only receive support under them. St. Paul was fully satisfied with this assurance, and we may be sure Moses equally acquiesced in the sentence passed upon him, when the Lord answered him saying "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter." (Deut. iii. 26.)

Although it was fit that the Lord should be "sanctified" that while his mercy was extended to the Israelites in the relief he granted to them, his justice should at the same time be displayed in the punishment of Moses—yet, we may believe not only that this chosen servant was again received into favor, but that his latter end was especially blessed; for though it is said in Deut. xxxiv. 5. that he "died," it is nevertheless probable that like the prophet Elijah, he was taken away from this earth in his bodily form. This we may gather from two reasons: first, from the fact of his burial place being unknown to every one. (see Deut. xxxiv. 6.) Secondly, from his re-appearance on

the mount at the transfiguration of our Saviour. (see Matt. xvii. 3.)

Thus even did his latter end prefigure that of our Saviour, inasmuch as his body underwent no corruption: a fact, distinctly foretold by David of Jesus Christ.

“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy one to see corruption.” (Ps. xvi. 10.)

Before we proceed in our history, I am desirous of pointing out to you the practical application which may be drawn from the circumstance we have just noticed.

In these days, it is not probable we should any of us be called upon like Moses to work a miracle, but we are so far similarly circumstanced that, as I have elsewhere remarked, we know we can do nothing without the assistance of God's holy spirit, and if by his grace we have been enabled to perform any good, or resist any evil, to Him be all the praise. If instead of giving the glory where alone it is due, we take credit to ourselves for these things, be assured we are committing the same sin Moses did, and shall have to answer for it at the day of judgment.

“Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. x. 31.)

And now the time was drawing near, when after forty years wandering in the wilderness, a new generation having succeeded to those whose misconduct had forfeited the promised inheritance, the Israelites were at length to take possession of the land of Canaan.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain” (mount Seir) “long enough; turn you northward. And command thou the people saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir, and they shall be afraid of you; take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore; meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth,

“because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.” (Deut. ii. 3.—5.)

The Edomites were all descended from Esau the twin brother of Jacob, and for that reason were to be exempted from the general destruction; as it is written in Deut. xxiii. 7. “thou shalt not abhor an Edomite: for he is thy brother.”

Notwithstanding however the pacific disposition they shewed towards them, the Edomites nevertheless refused to let them pass through their country: “wherefore Israel turned away and came unto Mount Hor;” the spot where it was ordained by God that Aaron should end his days. Accordingly he died there, “and Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son;” in pursuance of the command delivered to Moses in Exod. xxix. 29. “and the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons’ after him.”

NUMBERS XXI.

A fresh trial now awaited the Israelites. They were not only brought to face those enemies whom they had so greatly dreaded, but it pleased God to suffer they should be defeated, in order no doubt, to make them feel the more strongly their dependance on him for succour in all their future battles with the Canannites. Thus does our Heavenly Father try our faith by affliction, only that we may in the end be brought nearer to him: as David says, “I found trouble and sorrow: then called I upon the name of the Lord.” (Ps. cxvi. 3. 4.)

No sooner did the Israelites find themselves in the power of their enemies than they felt how incompetent they were to defend themselves without assistance from above.

“And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, “If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.”

Thus does the sinner, when smitten by the hand of God,

look back with contrition on all his evil ways, and pray that his life may be spared in order that he may have opportunity for retrieving the past, and returning to the path from which he has so grievously strayed.

“And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities.”

“He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them.” (Ps. cxlv. 19.)

By the hand of the Almighty were the Israelites delivered from the hands of their enemies, yet alas! like the sinful wretch who is no sooner restored to health, than forgetful of all the mercies he has received he returns with fresh vigour to his evil course,—“they forgot his works, and the wonders that he had shewed them.” (Ps. lxxviii. 18.) The remembrance of this signal deliverance was soon effaced from their minds; they turned unto their evil ways, and again “provoked the Holy One of Israel.” (Isai. i. 4.)

They “spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.”

Instead of marching boldly forward to take possession of the land “flowing with milk and honey,” they again broke forth into lamentations because the daily supply of food with which the Lord had been so graciously pleased to provide them, was not exactly what they would themselves have chosen. Such ingratitude was no longer to be overlooked, and a fearful judgment now awaited them—

“The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.”

This had the desired effect.—“When he slew them then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.” (Ps. lxxviii. 34.)

They acknowledged the justice of the Almighty, and

made an humble confession of their sins, praying that the judgment might be removed.

And now I would earnestly call your attention to the manner in which this was effected. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;" (Ps. xxxiii. 6.) and had the Lord spoken but a single word, the sufferings of the Israelites might have been as easily removed, but it pleased the Almighty to provide a remedy which from its peculiar nature, was to be a standing type of that spiritual cure sent by the grace of God for, "the healing of the nations." (Rev. xxii. 2.)

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live."

Thus does the Almighty ever temper his judgments with mercy. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." (Ps. ciii. 10.) Although in his infinite wisdom he saw fit by this dreadful scourge to rouse the Israelites from their sinful state, yet did he at the same time provide a means by which they might escape the danger, and be awakened to a sense of his mercy and loving kindness.

Now let us compare our state with that of the Israelites. Are we not all sufferers from the bite of "that old serpent called the devil"? (Rev. xii. 9.) And what is the cure "which God in his sovereign mercy has prepared for us?"

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else," were the prophetic words uttered by Isaiah, in allusion to that Saviour who was to come into the world, and who, when he was come, told his disciples himself that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 14.)

Neither does the comparison end here; the brazen serpent was fashioned after the real one, but without sting

or venom: even so, did "God send his own son, made in the likeness of men," (Rom. viii. 3.) yet "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (2 Pet. ii. 22.)

What could be more improbable in the eyes of the Israelites, than that the mere sight of the image would remove their sufferings? and was not the crucifixion of our Saviour "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." (2 Cor. i. 23.) "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life," (John v. 40.) were the emphatic words of our Saviour to his unbelieving hearers, and how many there are even in these days, who refusing to "look unto Jesus," (Heb. xii. 2.) like Demas, "having loved this present world," (Tim. iv. 10.) continue their evil course, knowing that "the end of those things is death." (Rom. vi. 21. 23.)

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

May we then never read this chapter as a mere narrative in which we have no concern. It applies spiritually to every one of us, and of all the circumstances relating to the Israelites, it is perhaps the one, from which we may derive the most instruction. Christ is still lifted up in the sight of all men, by those ministers of the Gospel who duly preach the word of God. Let us then not fail to give heed to their doctrines, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. xii. 2.) and be assured that even as he stretched out his hand to save his faithless disciple, (Matt. xiv. 21.) so will it also be extended to all those who 'with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him.'

A period of thirty eight years had now elapsed since the Israelites had turned back into the wilderness, and "all the generation of the men of war were wasted from among the host, as the Lord swore unto them," (the men of war meaning probably such as were grown up.) "For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed. So it came to pass when all the men of war were

“consumed and dead from among the people,” (Deu. ii 14.) that the children of Israel set forward again on their journey to the land of Canaan : and we may observe that the Lord continued to direct them in their course, for though it is here mentioned that they pitched in the valley of Zared, yet if we compare this passage with Deut. ii. 13. we shall find it was at the express command of God ; for there it is written, “ Rise up, and get you over “the brook Zered,” or *valley* as it expressed in the margin.

We read also in the same chapter, that not only the Edomites, but the children of Ammon and the Moabites being descendants of the righteous Lot, (see Gen. xix. 37. 38.) were likewise to be spared in the general destruction which awaited the Canaanites : for the time was now at hand for the fulfilment of that prophecy, contained in the song of Moses,

“The people shall hear, and be afraid : sorrow shall “take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.”

“Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed ; the mighty “men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them ; all “the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.”

“Fear and dread shall fall upon them ; by the great- “ness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone, till “thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, “which thou hast purchased.” (Ex. xv. 14. 16.)

Now compare this with Deut. ii. 25. “This day will I “begin to put the dread of thee, and the fear of thee upon “the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall “hear report of thee, and shall tremble and be in anguish “because of thee.”

“Fear not, I am thy shield,” (Gen. xv. 1.) was the con- soling assurance given to Abraham, and the same promise of protection was now extended to his posterity.

“Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord “your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, “according to all that he did for you in Egypt before “your eyes.” (Deut. i. 29, 30.)

In like manner may the faithful Christian console himself with the conviction, that in all his conflicts with his spiritual enemies the arm of the Almighty is equally stretched forth in his defence, and that even as the Lord hardened the spirit of Sihon king of Heshbon, that he might deliver him into the hands of the Israelites, (see Deut. ii. 30.) so will he "bruise Satan under his feet," (Rom. xvi. 20.) and thus secure his entrance into the promised land, purchased for him by the blood of his Saviour.

CHAPTER XIII.

Israel in Moab—Balak and Balaam—Balaam's Parable—Idolatry of the Israelites—Phinehas.

NUMBERS XXII.

THE several journeys of the Israelites being now ended, they took up their station in the plains of Moab, where they remained until after the death of Moses.

“And Moab was sore afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.”

Balak king of Moab, could not behold with unconcern this vast multitude established in his country,—a people of whom he had doubtless heard such marvellous doings, as could leave no doubt of their being under the protection of a superior Being.

He “saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites,” and though they shewed no hostile intention towards himself, yet in number they were “many,” and in strength they were “mighty,” and he might feel if any provocations should arise between them, how vain it would be to oppose human strength, against a people who were evidently fighting under the banners of an invisible power, and by whom so many had already been subdued.

He resolved therefore to adopt other means of ridding himself of the children of Israel,—means, which at once betrayed the weakness of his mind, and his disbelief of a true God.

He sent for Balaam a “soothsayer,” (Josh. xiii. 22.) to curse the people; thinking to oppose the voice of man against the omnipotence of the Almighty!

It was a superstitious ceremony among the heathens to utter curses against their enemies, under the idea that their Gods enabled them by this means to devote them to destruction, and Balaam being a prophet of note, it was doubtless thought that his imprecations would therefore have the greater effect.

But “woe to them that devise iniquity.” (Mic. ii. 1.) “A man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps;” (Prov. xvi. 9.) and we shall see how the Lord, by the words which he put into the mouth of his prophet, brought “the counsel of the heathen to nought,” and rendered his “device of none effect.” (Ps. xxxiii. 10.)

Balaam though a heathen was nevertheless as I observed above, a true prophet, and though his religion was blended with the superstitions of the idolaters around him, yet that he worshipped the true God is evident, by his calling the Lord his God, and seeking counsel of him in prayer. But though he spake with his lips, yet his “heart was not right with God.” (Ps. lxxviii. 37.) He sought counsel, but he heeded it not, and he could not withstand the temptations held out to him.

“Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed,” was the answer he received from Heaven. Nevertheless, he not only listened to the messengers of Balak, but even induced them to stay, in hopes that a second application might be more favorably received. But with God there “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;” (James i. 17.) and though he permitted him to go, it was doubtless in order to bring him back to a sense of his duty, as well as to magnify his own power in the sight of the Heathen.

That Balaam went in direct opposition to the will of God, is evident, since it is said in the next verse, that "God's anger was kindled because he went." He had provoked the Lord by his importunities, and had incurred his displeasure; "and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him." The Almighty works out his purposes by various ends, and adopts various ways of reclaiming his sinful creatures, and it pleased him now by a miracle, to open Balaam's eyes to the sinfulness of his conduct. He sent an angel to withstand him, "because his way was perverse before him." (see v. 32.) Thus was Balaam "rebuked for his iniquity, the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet." (2 Pet. ii. 16.)

"And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned."

He was now brought to an open acknowledgment of his fault, and expressed his readiness to return back, if such was the will of God.

But no—God's purpose was not yet fulfilled. The heathen king had yet to learn that there was a God above who could frustrate the evil intentions of the wicked: who could "turn the curse into a blessing." (Deut. xxiii. 5.)

Before we close this chapter, let us reflect upon the character of Balaam, and we shall find that the sin which caused him to go astray and act in disobedience to God's commands, was covetousness. He knew what was his duty, for God had expressly told him he was not to go; he could not therefore plead ignorance as his excuse, but listened to the evil suggestions of a selfish passion, and thus suffered himself to be led astray from the path he ought to have pursued.

May his example teach us to guard especially against this sin. "Take heed and beware of covetousness," says our Saviour, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke xii. 15.) And St. Peter in still stronger language speaks of those who "exercise their heart with covetous practices" as

“cursed children, which have forsaken the right way, and
“are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of
“Bozor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.” (2 Pet.
ii. 14, 15.)

NUMBERS. XXIII. XXIV.

BALAK satisfied by the arrival of Balaam, that he had listened to his request, and that his wishes were about to be gratified, lost no time in making preparations for the solemn event, which he imagined would effectually crush the power of Israel. He built his altars, and got ready his sacrifices, and “he went to an high place,” the usual resort among the heathens for the celebration of their idolatrous rites; and probably selected especially on this occasion, as commanding a view of the Israelites “abiding
“in their tents.

And now we may imagine the anxiety with which he listened for the words which should fall from the mouth of Balaam, who after again praying to God for the guidance of his holy spirit, “took up his parable.”}

It may be well to remark here on the different significations of the word “parable” which, in this instance as well as in some others, bears a different interpretation from the one with which perhaps we are most familiar, from the frequency with which it occurs in the Gospels, where it signifies a fictitious narrative, conveying instruction from its connexion with any point or fact which it may be intended to illustrate.

In the Seventy-eight Psalm, where it is written, “I
“will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark say-
“ings of old;” it implies merely a narrative of an historical fact, while here the term is used to express the elevated and poetic language in which Balaam poured forth his strain of prophecy, and truly sublime was the “parable” he uttered.

We can scarcely be surprised that “Balak’s anger was
“kindled against Balaam,” at finding his expectations frus-

trated, his curses turned to blessings, and the children of Israel thus openly acknowledged as a people peculiarly favoured by the Almighty ; while, at the same time the wrath of Heaven was denounced on the surrounding countries, and that destruction foretold which was accomplished in the days of Saul and David. (see 1 Sam. xv. and 2 Sam. viii.) The prophecy with regard to the "sceptre" was also literally fulfilled in David, though we may consider that, as well as the "Star," as pointing to a later period : applying spiritually to the Messiah, to whom David alludes when he says, The Lord is king for "ever and ever : the "heathen are perished out of his land." (Ps. x. 16.)

Our Saviour himself is often spiritually alluded to in the Prophecies under the name of David, as in Ezekiel, xxxiv. 23. where the Almighty speaking of Christ, says, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed "them, even my servant David."

The "star" we know appeared at the birth of our Saviour, and it was probably this prophecy which led the Jews to look for it, and also gave rise to their expectations of a temporal king.

Balak made no further attempt to detain Balaam. He was fully satisfied that the words he had uttered were dictated by a superior Being, over whom he had no controul, and this he openly acknowledged to Balaam, by saying to him, "I thought to promote thee unto great honor ; but lo ! the Lord hath kept thee back from "honor."

It might surprise us, that convinced as he must now have been of the existence of an omnipotent Deity, he should not at once have renounced his idols, and worshipped Him ; but if we wonder at him, how much greater cause have we to be astonished at those persons, who having been baptized in the faith of Christ, call themselves Christians, and yet by their outward conduct shew themselves utterly unworthy of the name.

It is such as these of whom St Paul is speaking, when he says, "It is impossible for those who were once en-

“lightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance ; seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” (Heb. vi. 4—6)

“ If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” (John. xiii. 7.)

NUMBERS. XXV.

AMONG the commands delivered to the Israelites, the one most peremptorily enforced, and oftenest repeated, was that against idolatry.

“ Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, and do sacrifice unto their Gods, and one call thee, and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons ; ” (Ex. xxxiv 12, 15, 16.) was the strict injunction of One who knew the weakness and infirmities of his creatures, and foresaw the temptations to which they would be exposed, when settled in a country where the worship of the true God was unknown. That period was now arrived. They had not remained long in the country of Moab, before they gave proof of the depravity of their hearts in suffering themselves to be led astray by the evil example of those around them.

They partook of the sacrifices of the idolaters ! they bowed down to their Gods—Israel joined himself to “ Baal-peor. ” !

That nation whom God had “ chosen out of the world ” (John xv. 19.) to uphold his worship, and to represent his holy Church on earth, were now falling down before idols of stone ! The second commandment was broken !

“ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against “ Israel. ” We do not even find Moses interceding for them. They had committed an heinous crime, one which

demanded the utmost vengeance of the Almighty ; and the same punishment which had been denounced on their forefathers for worshipping the golden calf, was now inflicted upon them.

“Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.”

Although the leaven of idolatry had so fearfully spread among the congregation, and tainted so many of its members, yet were there some, who not only escaped the pollution, but came forward with a zealous indignation to support the cause of the Almighty. Among these was Phinehas the son of the high priest, whose zeal for God led him to take upon himself the execution of judgment on two of the sinners, and that he was justified in so doing we know, by the blessing bestowed upon him for it.

“Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment : and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.” (Ps. cvi. 30. 31.)

“The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.”

“Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace, and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.”

The Priesthood continued in his family, till the end of the Jewish dispensation, when it was perfected in the eternal Priesthood of Christ “who is consecrated for evermore.” (Heb. vii. 28.)

From this summary punishment inflicted on the Israelites, we may judge of the magnitude of the crime they had committed, and that however great the temptation which had been thrown in their way, it offered no excuse for them in the sight of God.

It appears that not only the Moabites, but the Midianites also, had been guilty of enticing Israel into the commission of this sin; the women of that country being expressly mentioned by Moses in Chap. xxxi. 16. as having "through the counsel of Balaam, caused the children of Israel to commit trespass against the Lord."

No particulars relating to this circumstance are specified in the history of Balaam, yet it is not only alluded to as above mentioned, but also in the Revelations, (Chap. ii. 14.) where the displeasure of God is denounced against such as "hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols." We may therefore conclude, that when he pronounced that there was neither "iniquity" nor "perverseness" in Israel,—that "the Lord his God was with him," he led Balak to infer that if by throwing temptations in their way, he might induce them to do that which would draw down upon them the wrath of Heaven, they would thus be deprived of God's favor and protection, and he would be able to subdue them.

But "the counsel of man cometh to nought." (see Acts. v. 38.)

"The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."

"The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." (Ps. ix. 15. 16.)

These words may truly be applied to the Moabites who were completely subdued by David; all, whose lives were spared, "becoming his servants." (see 2 Sam. viii. 2.)

We may learn two things from this chapter. First, the severity with which God will visit those, who either by counsel or example may lead their brethren to do that which they know to be wrong.

Secondly: That being tempted by others, is no excuse for our sins.

If you turn to St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians (Chap. viii. 9.) you will observe how he bids them take

heed, lest by any means, their liberty should become a stumbling block to them that were weak. He is there alluding to the religious scruples of the Jews, which he observes it would be better for them to comply with, rather than through their knowledge "a weak brother should perish, for whom Christ died." But the application we are to draw from it is this, that we ought to abstain even from things innocent in themselves, if in partaking of them, we cause another to do what he thinks wrong; "wherefore" St. Paul adds, "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (1 Cor. viii. 13.)

At the same time let us remember that the example of others will never justify us in the commission of any crime. The Israelites did not escape punishment because they were tempted by Balak, and when Adam pleaded as an excuse for his sin that Eve "had given him of the tree," what was the answer he received? "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake." (Gen. iii. 17.)

There is no temptation, which by the grace of God, we may not withstand, if we only implore the aid of his Holy Spirit.

"For we have not an High-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,"—(Heb. vii. 15.) "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. ii. 18.)

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for "when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." (James i. 12.)

There is little to remark on the remaining chapters of this book which with the exception of the destruction of the Midianites, and death of Balaam, for the most part contain only regulations regarding the inheritance of those

lands which were to be divided among the Israelites, with a repetition of some laws which have been already noticed.

CHAPTER XIII. .

DEUTERONOMY.

THE book of Deuteronomy contains principally repetitions both of the history of the Israelites from the time of their departure from Horeb, and also of their laws and commandments.

It may readily be imagined that situated as the Israelites had been for so many years, moving from place to place, they were destitute of means of performing all the sacrifices and ceremonies of their religion, with that strictness required by the law. It is even probable they had been wholly disregarded, no mention being made to the contrary during the forty years wandering in the wilderness. A new generation likewise had now arisen, who, having only received these laws from their fathers, without even witnessing their observance, might scarcely be expected to attach that importance to them, which they might have done, had they received them direct from the hand of God. They were now however approaching that country where they were to take up their abode, and where, in order to preserve the true worship of God, and set an example to the nations around them, these laws and ordinances were to be observed with religious strictness, and adhered to in every point.

It was necessary therefore that their importance should be impressed upon the Israelites, for which purpose they

were now repeated, and enlarged upon, and also some particular precepts added to them.

Moses was not only well acquainted with the rebellious dispositions of the Israelites, but as a prophet of God, foresaw how fearfully these laws would be disregarded after his death, when they would be thrown in the way of so many temptations. Accordingly, he now laid before them such instructions as would take away from them all plea of ignorance with regard to the manner in which they were in future to act.

The Jewish religion, as I have elsewhere observed, was in all points a type of Christianity.

One grand distinction however between them, was that while the latter pointed to a future state of retribution when we shall be rewarded or punished according to the spirit in which we perform our duties in this world, the former rested in the outward obedience to every tittle of the law, and according to the performance or neglect of such laws were the Jews either rewarded by temporal blessings, or visited by those national judgments, detailed at length in the twenty eighth Chapter. Nor were these to be confined to that generation; as it was spoken by the Lord in the second commandment, "the iniquity of the fathers was to be visited upon their children," (see Ex. xx. 5.) and we all know how fearfully these judgments were fulfilled in the events alluded to in the fifty-third verse, which took place not only in the siege of Samaria, an account of which is related in the second book of Kings, (chap. vi. 28. 29.) but also at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans after the death of our Saviour.

Thus did the Israelites receive every encouragement from the Lord "to walk in his laws, and to keep his statutes." (Ps. cxix. i. 5.)

Their duties were all explained to them, promises and blessings were held out to them, and if they were commanded to "smite their enemies, and utterly destroy them," (Chap. vii. 2.) they were at the same time strengthened by the consoling assurance that "they were

“neither to fear nor tremble, for God would fight for them
“against their enemies.” (Ps. xx. 3. 4.)

Lest however they should be exalted in their own eyes because “the Lord their God had chosen them to be a
“special people unto himself above all people that were
“upon the face of the earth,” (Ps. vii. 6.) Moses did not fail to impress upon their minds that it was not on account of “their righteousness, or for the uprightness of
“their hearts,” they were favoured above other nations, for
“they were a stiffnecked people,” bidding them at the same time remember how they had “provoked the Lord
“their God in the wilderness.” (Ps. ix. 7.)

They were only instruments in the hands of a righteous Providence for manifesting his power in miracles, and executing judgment on those impenitent nations whose fate had been revealed to Abraham four hundred years before, and whose “iniquity was now full.” (see Gen. xv. 16.)

In the perusal of this book we may find much that is profitable to us all. I would particularly suggest for your consideration those chapters containing an exhortation to obedience as being more peculiarly applicable to our own condition. We may indeed look upon them as being equally adressed to every one of us. When Moses in the fourth chapter reminds the Israelites of the mercies they had received, ought it not to recall to our minds the blessings we have received and thus remind us of the debt of gratitude we owe to the Almighty for all his mercies towards us?

For “what nation is there so great, that hath statutes
“and judgments so righteous” (Chap. iv. 8.) as our own?

Born in a Christian country, and blessed with every opportunity of hearing and studying the word of God, may we not consider ourselves like them peculiarly favoured by Heaven? If the Lord “spake unto them out of the
“midst of the fire,” (Chap. iv. 12.) does he not speak unto us at this present time by his holy ministers, and if he declared unto them his covenant, “even ten command-
“ments, and wrote them upon two tables of stone,” did

he not send His beloved Son, not only to declare unto his holy will, but to teach us how to perform it, and to promise us in the world to come "a crown of glory, that fadeth not away." (1 Pet. v. 4.)

Blessed indeed is the encouragement given to us all, to walk in God's ways and to keep his commandments. We are assured by St. Paul that "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

"For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. viii. 1. 2.)

Let us remember that we are all approaching our heavenly Canaan, and that if we would obtain eternal rest within it we must utterly destroy our spiritual enemies. We must enter into no covenant with them, but putting on "the whole armour of God," (Eph. vi. 11.) we must wage war against "the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh." And if we are enabled by God's grace to resist the attacks of Satan, let us not attribute it to any merit of our own, but "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." (Luke, xvii. 10.)

THE END.

