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# LECTURES

ON

# BIBLICAL HISTORY

COMPRISING THE LEADING FACTS

FROM THE

CREATION TO THE DEATH OF JOSHUA.

DESIGNED

TO PROMOTE AND FACILITATE THE CAREFUL READING OF THE SACRED  
SCRIPTURES, AND ADAPTED TO THE USE OF FAMILIES, BIBLE  
CLASSES, AND YOUNG PEOPLE GENERALLY.

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BY WILLIAM NEILL, D. D.  
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WILLIAM S. MARTIEN,

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## PREFACE.



THE substance of these Lectures formed a part of the instructions given to a Bible Class, which the author had the pleasure of conducting, when minister of the sixth Presbyterian church, Philadelphia, of which the Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Jones is now pastor. They were favourably received, at the time, and deemed by some, worthy of preservation in a form more permanent and convenient, than that of manuscript. Nor were they, altogether, without effect. The class increased in number; the meetings were anticipated with interest; and an unusual desire was manifested, to become intimately acquainted with the facts and doctrines of the *inspired volume*. These notes, with some modification, were subsequently used, also, in a course of Sabbath evening exercises, delivered to the students of Dickinson College, when the author was connected with that institution. After lying by for several years, in danger of becoming waste-paper,

they are now published, in the humble hope that they may be acceptable and useful to those who search the Scriptures, that they may become wise unto salvation, through faith in Him, of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote. In preparing the matter embodied in this little volume, there has been no attempt at anything elaborate or novel. The sole object has been, to present the truth in simplicity and plainness, so that the reader will find no difficulty in getting at the meaning. The aim, throughout, has been, to combine exposition with the suggestion of practical lessons; to elucidate, where explanation seemed necessary, with as little expansion as possible; not to comment on every thing that occurs, but to explain and vindicate a few of the most remarkable facts and doctrines exhibited in the sacred text; to trace the early and brief history of the Church; to bring into view her form of government and rites of worship; to notice the changes made therein, from time to time; and, particularly, to show the faithfulness of God, in fulfilling to her his promises, in protecting her, and in augmenting her advantages, increasing her numbers, and extending her influence through successive generations, for the accomplishment of his great and gracious designs respecting our guilty race.

The biography of the Patriarchs have not

been given, except, in so far as was deemed necessary to unfold the divine providence, as carrying into effect the stipulations of the covenant with Abraham respecting the kingdom of our Lord, the SEED, in which all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Some incidental marks of the divine origin and authority of the Bible, have been pointed out, in passing; but for the most part, the critical or fastidious reader will find little here to attract his attention. We have written, mainly, for the serious inquirer, who is in good earnest, seeking the way of life, that he may walk therein, and find peace and acceptance with God.

The work is put forth with no lofty pretensions, or sanguine expectations, but as an humble contribution to the cause of revealed religion; as the author's honest testimony to the truth and excellence of the Bible. It is designed, chiefly, for young readers, who are beginning to ask, *what is truth, and where shall we find it?* It is intended to direct their attention to that blessed Book, in which they will find the maxims of unerring wisdom, and the words of eternal life. From the moderate size of the volume, as well as from the variety of its contents, it may be deemed a convenient manual for family use. In meetings for social worship, in the absence of ministers, a lecture

may be read, as a part of the religious services. And in the Bible Class, *that most important institution in its bearing on the future prospects of the Church*, it is hoped, that one of these short lectures may be read to advantage when deemed appropriate, without interfering with the appointed and usual exercises.

In this age of light reading, and when books are made, in many instances, more for *attraction*, than for the advancement of truth and good morals, it seems important that the minds of our children and youth should be well imbued with the principles of true religion, and put on their guard against the seductive influence of that trashy and licentious literature, that is constantly issuing from the press, and soliciting their favourable regard. That this humble volume may contribute, in some small measure, to so great and desirable an object, is the fond hope and earnest prayer of the author.

PHILADELPHIA, *April*, 1846.



# LECTURES ON BIBLICAL HISTORY.

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## LECTURE I.

### THE CREATION.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

GENESIS i. 1.

THIS portion of holy writ is called Genesis, because it contains an account of the origin of men and things. It stands first in the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses; which he wrote towards the close of his life, under the guidance of the Providence and Spirit of God.

When the sacred writings were collected into one volume, or roll, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, Ezra, or some other inspired writer, probably, added some small matters to what Moses had written; but that Moses was the author of these first five books of the Bible, we have, at least, as much evidence, as can be produced that Homer wrote the far famed Iliad and Odyssey, or that Cicero was the author of those eloquent orations, and other admired productions, which have long been attributed to him. The history comprised in the book of Genesis, stretches through a period of about 2360 years. Hence, it is evident, its historical notices must be very concise, and that many events are passed over in silence, as not essential to complete the design of the historian. This dense and comprehensive bre-

vity, which characterizes the whole of the inspired oracles, is a wise appointment of Providence, as it keeps the Bible from swelling into an inconvenient size, and renders the possessing of it more easy to persons in the humblest walks of life.

The first and greatest event recorded in the book of Genesis, is the creation of this world, with its inhabitants, and those heavenly bodies connected with our earth, and, together forming what is called the solar system. An evil spirit, or a fallen angel, tempted our first parents to sin; and in the book of Job it is said, "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy, when the foundations of the earth were laid." Hence we may conclude, that angels existed before this world was created; and that the Mosaic account of creation relates only to this earth and those planets with which it is closely connected.

The inspired penman, as might be expected, refers us to God Almighty, as the creator and disposer of all things. "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." And this divine work of creation, was progressive. One part succeeded another in beautiful order, till the whole was completed. The rough materials were, at first, intermixed. The original elements, *fire, air, earth* and *water*, lay in a confused state—called, by some philosophers, a state of chaos. This may be what Moses intends by the expression, "and the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep."

On the first day of the creation week, the Spirit of God moved, or, as the place may be rendered, brooded on the face of the waters, or confused mass, and the first effect was the production of light, to such a degree, probably, as to render objects visible. The ease with which this effect was produced, by the Divine Architect, is expressed in language, as *sublime* as it is *concise*: "God said let there be light, and there was light." The light was called *day*, and the darkness *night*.

On the second day, a firmament was constituted:



By this is meant, probably what is now called atmosphere—that elastic fluid, which encompasses the earth, extends from its surface some thirty or forty miles, and which is of sufficient strength to sustain vapour and clouds; those waters, in the vapour form, which are said to be above the firmament, or expanse, whence the rain distils to refresh the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

On the third day, the waters on the surface of the earth were drained off, and confined within their destined limits. Hence originated the numerous seas, rivers, and rivulets, which diversify the face of the globe, and conduce largely to the comfort and convenience of both man and beast. The land, thus prepared, was stocked with grass, trees, and fruits; and we must suppose these were produced at once, in a state of maturity, otherwise the animal race, which were brought into being within a short space of time, would have been destitute of food.

On the fourth day, lights were planted in the firmament, or expanse. Two great lights are spoken of, differing, however, in size and splendour. By the greater of the two, which was destined to rule the day, the sun is supposed to be intended; and by the less, the empress of night, the moon, is doubtless meant. Astronomy teaches us that the moon is an opaque body, or only a reflector of the sun's light; and it has been more than insinuated, that the sacred historian speaks incorrectly, when he calls her a light. Moses undoubtedly had some knowledge of astronomy, for he was well versed in the learning of Egypt; but as he was writing a plain narrative, intended for the use of mankind generally, he deemed it proper to represent things of this sort according to their appearance, and to adapt his style to the capacity of the illiterate, leaving the learned to make their own comment on his *simple, unvarnished* text. And in so doing, we think he did wisely. All that is said of the other heavenly bodies is expressed in three words, "The stars also!" Another instance of unrivalled sublimity in sentiment, where a stupendous effect is

produced with a facility which bespeaks Omnipotence, as the efficient cause. By the stars are probably meant, not only the fixed stars, which are innumerable, and of immense magnitude, but, also, the primary planets with their respective satellites. It is not affirmed, in the Mosaic history, that these great and numerous bodies were made merely for the accommodation of this earth. They may have been created simultaneously with our globe, may be connected with it, and prove a convenience to it, in more ways than one, and yet be inhabited by intelligent beings, and answer ends in the kingdom of Jehovah, far above our conceptions.

On the fifth day, fowls and fishes were made;—“the great whales, with every living thing, that inhabits the water, and every winged fowl and its kind.” It is remarkable that the short narrative of Moses leads us to think that these two kinds of animals were formed of the same sort of matter. And this opinion is rendered highly probable, by the striking similarity observable in their flesh, and particularly in their corporeal organs and mode of travelling in their respective elements.

On the sixth day, land animals, and the human species were created. Of inferior animals, three classes are mentioned, viz., beasts, cattle, and creeping thing, i. e. wild and intractable creatures of the forest;—domestic creatures which subserve the interests and convenience of the human race; and all manner of serpents and reptiles. And last of all, man was formed, and introduced into the world as a prince into a palace richly furnished for his reception. “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let him have dominion,” &c. Three things are noticeable in this passage, as conveying an exalted idea of the dignity and superiority of the human kind over all other orders of animated nature. First, the language is that of consultation: “*Let us make man:*” indicating the importance of the work, or of the creature to be formed. But with whom does the Creator consult on this occasion? With the angels,

say the modern Jewish rabbis. Not so, we think. Creation is a divine work; the exclusive work of Jehovah alone. And to suppose him to ask the counsel or aid of any of his creatures, is a reflection on the majesty of his character, and the self-sufficiency of his power. Besides this notion does not accord well with what follows: "So God created man in his *own* image," not in imitation of an original, compounded of the divine and the angelic natures, but, "in the image of God alone, created he him." Some critics say this language is employed in compliance with the usual style of earthly potentates, who, in their public edicts, are wont to use the plural, *we, us, and our*, instead of the singular. But it should be recollected that, as yet there were no earthly princes in existence, and therefore the phraseology cannot have been borrowed from any human usage. From these and the like considerations, most Christian expositors suppose that the expression "let us make man in our image," implies and indicates a *plurality* of persons in the divine essence or adorable Godhead; and that it is intended to teach us that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost cooperated in man's creation, as each executes his appropriate office and concurrent part in the scheme of our redemption. And this opinion is, we think, correct; though the doctrine of the Trinity does not depend on this, or on the many similar passages to be found in the Old Testament; for it is taught by the Saviour and his apostles, in the clearest manner, and in the most express terms that language can supply.

Secondly, the superiority of man above other animals, is taught by the right given him by the Creator, to exercise dominion over them. Man is qualified, by the endowment of reason, to subdue, or govern the ferocious and the strong of the animal tribes. But the fear of him is impressed on the instinctive principle of every living thing. Hence it is, that a boy can drive the horned ox, and govern the war-horse. Hence it is, too, that the human "face sublime," strikes terror to the heart of the *lion*, the *tiger*, and the *bear*. There is, in fact, no tribe in the animal

kingdom, however fierce and powerful, that man cannot extirpate or subjugate to his use and pleasure. But, thirdly, that which gave man the pre-eminence in this lower world, was the image of his Maker, which he bore in his original state. As God is a spirit without parts or bodily shape, it is plain this image must have been of a moral nature. It is to be found in the qualities and character of his mind, which were depraved by the fall, and which it is the grand aim of the Christian religion to restore and secure to him by an immutable covenant, through Christ Jesus the Mediator. Two short verses in the writings of Paul the apostle, shows us what these qualities are: "That ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in *righteousness* and *true holiness*:" and, again, "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in *knowledge*, after the image of Him that created him." Ephes. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. Here we learn that the leading and prominent features of the new man, in Christ, are *knowledge*, *righteousness*, and *true holiness*. And in these, *chiefly*, consisted the image and likeness of God, in which Adam came from the hand of his Creator. His knowledge was intuitive, rather than the result of the deductions of reasoning; he was made a philosopher, both natural and moral—the law of God was impressed on his heart—he understood his duty, and acknowledged his obligations to the Father of spirits—his judgment was sound—his will submissive to the rule of duty—and his affections pure, ardent, and elevated, as an angel of light. And thus constituted, he must have enjoyed as large a share of happiness as his nature, in that stage of his existence, would permit.

In this short account of man's creation, the *female* sex is doubtless included.

The *circumstances* of the woman's formation are detailed in the 2d chapter at the 21st verse. And from not being introduced in form, as a part of the work of the sixth day of the creation week, some have conjectured that Eve was not made till some time after Adam. But let it be observed, that Moses, in this

first chapter gives a succinct account of a great and extensive work. In the next chapter he resumes the subject, mingling a few explanatory remarks with other original matter. Hence we are told in the 2d chapter 7th verse, that "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul;" and again, at the 21st verse, after several intervening subjects, we have the particulars of the woman's creation. But the fact of her creation on the sixth day, is expressly stated in the 27th verse of the first chapter: "*Male and female* created he them." They were both endued with the same intellectual powers—formed alike in the image of God, and destined to the same high and holy ends in the great kingdom of Jehovah. Thus the woman was an help *meet*, or suitable companion for the man; and he was taught by the circumstances of her formation, to regard her with tenderness and respect, as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. And in this state of holy wedlock, God blessed them, giving them dominion over the creatures, and the free use of the vegetable produce of the earth; but there is no evidence that they were allowed the use of animal food. "And God saw every thing that he had made; and, behold, it was very good: and the evening and the morning was the sixth day."

Such is the account which the Bible gives of the origin of this world, with its inhabitants, its diversified beauties, and rich accommodations for man and beast. How indubitable the claims of this sacred book to be treated with reverence, and to be studied with care! Besides, that it sets before us the law of our duty, and reveals the only way of salvation for fallen man, its *historical matter* is more extensive, and more interesting than that of any other record in existence. Here we learn, that the earth and its fulness came from the hand of an Almighty Creator, whose holy providence governs the creatures of his power, and causes them all to praise him. The Bible is, in fact, the only authentic source, from which we

can derive an acquaintance with the principles of true religion, the elements of ancient history, the immortal destination of the human species, and the immense consequences of the part which we act, and the character we form during our stay in the present life. Of what vast importance it is, then, that we search the Scriptures! “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether: more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter, also, than honey, and the honeycomb.”



## LECTURE II.

### THE GARDEN OF EDEN—COVENANT OF WORKS, &c.

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.—GEN. ii. 15-17.

IN a preceding lecture, our attention was directed to the creation of the world, with its inhabitants and various productions. We have seen our own species eminently distinguished in the scale of creatures—made but a little lower than the angels—formed after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness—united, male and female, by the tender ties of conjugal affection, and invested with dominion over the numerous tribes of inferior creatures that inhabit the land, the sea, and the air. We will now contemplate this happy couple, as the objects of heaven’s special regard, as the primitive parents of man-

kind, and as constituting one of the parties to the covenant which God condescended to form with the human family, then existing in, and represented by them.

Our readers will recollect what was stated in our first lecture—that Eve was made on the same day with Adam, i. e. on the sixth day of the creation week, (as is evident, chap. i. 17, “male and female created he them,) though the particular circumstances of her creation, for reasons already mentioned, are not to be met with in the narrative of Moses, earlier than the twenty-first verse of this second chapter. They are both, therefore, to be considered as present, and equally concerned, in the main transactions, related in that portion of sacred history which we are now going to examine.

The critics have been exceedingly puzzled to find the place, assigned as the original residence of our first parents. This is a topic on which fancy has been indulged to an unwarrantable extent. And some, weary of the search, and not being able to fix on any definite spot, bearing all the geographical marks of the earthly paradise mentioned by Moses, have been tempted to conclude, that, by the garden of Eden is meant, in Scripture, the whole field of nature, every part of which must have been a paradise, or place of delight to man, while he retained his innocence, and held fast his integrity. But the scriptural account seems, obviously, intended to convey the idea of locality. No person, perhaps, ever read the account seriously without receiving that impression; and, in regard to the most important facts and doctrines of the Bible, our first impressions are very likely to be correct, especially if we read with an honest desire to know the truth, and not with a view to find support for a preconceived opinion, or a favourite hypothesis. The place is supposed to have been selected on the third day of the creation week, when the water was drained off, and the land was prepared for vegetation. The description of it by Moses, begins at the 8th verse, and ends at the 14th, inclusive, chapter 2d.

“And the Lord God planted (or, as the place may be rendered, *had plunted*,) a garden, eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.” This land of Eden was a province in Asia; and it is said to have lain eastward, in regard to the place where Moses was when he wrote his history. Dr. Shuckford, and other respectable writers, believe it to have been a country of considerable extent, and that it lay north of the Gulf of Persia, some twelve or fifteen degrees east of Jerusalem. “We are of opinion,” says Calmet, in his *Critical Dictionary of the Bible*, “that the country of Eden extended into Armenia, and included the sources of the Euphrates, Tigris, Phosis and Araxes.” And a country, by this name, is several times mentioned, by inspired writers, in after ages; so that we cannot doubt its existence, whatever difficulty we may find in ascertaining its relative position. See Isaiah xxxvii. 12; 2 Kings xix. 12, 13; Ezekiel xxvii. 23. Out of this land of Eden, Moses informs us, there went a river to water the garden; and from thence it, i. e. the river was parted, and became into four heads; and he gives us the names by which these four heads or streams were distinguished in his time: viz. Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. The first is said to have compassed Havila, a region of country abounding in gold and precious stones; obviously a province in Arabia, known in modern geography by another name. The second river is said to have compassed or touched upon the land of Ethiopia, or, more properly, the land of Cush—a tract of country east of the Arabian Gulf, or Red Sea. The third, generally allowed to be the Tigris, touched on the east of Assyria. The Euphrates is well known—and it is often mentioned, in Scripture, as the great river. The fact appears to be this. The Tigris and Euphrates have their sources in or near the mountains of Armenia. They run southward, in distinct streams, to within no great distance of the once famous city of Babylon, where they form a junction, flowing on, for several leagues, in one channel; then they separate, and empty into the Per-



sian Gulf, by two mouths, known, in Moses' time, by the names Pison and Gihon. The river of Eden was the union of these waters; and, of the four heads or streams into which it was parted, two lay north, and the other two south of the garden, which was, probably, situated east of the great channel, and not far from a town now called Bassora.

This garden appears to have been well supplied with a rich variety of shrubbery, and such fruits as were wholesome and palatable. "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." Two trees are particularly mentioned, viz. the *tree of life*, and the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*; which will fall under our notice again, in their proper place and connexion. Suffice it to remark here, that the former seems to have been so called, because it was an instituted sign or emblem of that life and felicity which man was to enjoy so long as he continued faithful and obedient to his Creator; and the latter received its name from its being appointed as a test of his reverence for the will and authority of heaven.

Thus much for the local situation of this first and finest plantation that ever adorned the face of nature. Its climate was a charming medium between the extremes of heat and cold; its air bland; its soil fertile; its waters perennial, and its fruits abundant and delicious. Milton, in his "Paradise Lost," gives us the following inimitable picture of its natural beauties.

"A happy rural seat of various view;  
 Groves, whose rich trees wept od'rous gums and balm;  
 Others, whose fruit, burnish'd with golden rind,  
 Hung amiable; (Hesperian fables true,  
 If true, here only) and of delicious taste.  
 Betwixt them, lawns, or level downs, and flocks,  
 Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd;  
 Or palmy hillock, or the flowry lap  
 Of some irriguous valley spread her store.  
 Flow'rs of all hue, and without thorn the rose.  
 Another side, unbrageous grotts and caves  
 Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine  
 Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps  
 Luxuriant. Meanwhile, murm'ring waters fall

Down the slope hills, dispers'd, or in a lake  
 (That to the fringed bank, with myrtle crown'd,  
 Her crystal mirror holds,) unite their streams.  
 The birds their choir apply.   Airs, vernal airs,  
 Breathing the smell of fields, and groves, attune  
 The trembling leaves, while universal Pan,  
 Knit with the Graces, and the Hours in dance,  
 Lead on the eternal Spring."

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it." Even in a state of innocence, and amid the richest profusion of the bounties of heaven, it was not good for man to be idle. Here, says the bounteous Lord of the soil to the first man, here is a field well adapted to produce a plentiful increase; take possession, cultivate it, take care of its fruits, and enjoy them. What useful lessons, relating to both worlds, are to be met with in the Bible! It is profitable for instruction and correction in all things. Man is endowed with active powers, to the end that they may be exercised. And the diligent exertion of these powers is essential to our happiness, due to our species, and required by the law of nature. Activity marks, alike, the character of the bee, the ant, and the angel: nor can any of the human family, possessing capacity and the means of employment, be innocently idle. An early habit of industry is one of the best natural preventives of disease, ennui and sin, that can be devised. It was judged useful to our first parents in paradise, and there can be no rational doubt, that the redeemed of the Lord find employment in heaven, suited to that high and holy stage of our immortal existence.

But man is to pursue his business, and exercise his faculties, both physical and moral, under a sense of his dependance on, and obligations to, his Creator. Every intelligent creature receives his being under a law, and under the obligation of that law he is held for ever, whether he acknowledges and lives up to it, or not. The moral law, or that law of the Creator which is designed for the government of intelligent creatures, is the imperishable bond that connects the moral kingdom of Jehovah in all its parts, and holds

both men and angels responsible to Him who made them, and who has, of course, a right to prescribe their duty. Under this law, Adam and Eve received their existence, and it is reasonable to suppose, that some duties were enjoined upon them by divine authority, wisely chosen and happily calculated to keep them mindful of their obligations to the munificent Author of every good and perfect gift. Of this sort was the observance of the weekly Sabbath; which was now instituted, as we are informed in the third verse of this chapter:—"And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it;" that is, set it apart—distinguished it from other days—appropriated it to devout and holy services exclusively, and promised a blessing on those who should observe it in a thankful and religious manner. Some persons have strangely fancied that the Sabbath was not to be observed, till the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. But, if it was not intended to be observed till two thousand five hundred years after the creation, why was it instituted so early? That it was instituted on the seventh day of the creation week, and the first day of Adam's life, is as plain, in the passage just cited, as language can make any thing. And the fact of its appointment, in the beginning, shows that it was to be sacredly kept from the beginning; just as the fact, that the precept concerning it is placed in the decalogue, or summary of the moral law, as written by the finger of God and promulgated by the ministry of Moses, leaves us no room to doubt that the religious observance of it will be obligatory on mankind to the latest generation. The change of the day, from the seventh to the first, at the resurrection of Christ, does not, in the least, affect the principle of the ordinance, which demands the seventh part of our time to be devoted to God and the concerns of religion. Our first parents, no doubt, obeyed the law of the Sabbath, agreeably to its spirit and design; keeping it as a day of holy rest—acknowledging the wisdom and power of the Creator, as displayed in the works of his hand—and offering him their grateful praises for all the tokens of his goodness with which they were sur-

rounded. Let us imitate their pious example. To us the Sabbath commemorates not only the creation, but, also, the redemption of the world. And although the institution originated in the sovereign authority of God, yet is it so clearly benevolent in its bearing on both man and beast—so benign in its influence on public morals and general happiness, that, one would think, the common principles of humanity would prompt all men to regard it with reverence, and to give it the weight of their influence and unqualified approbation.

But the most interesting point of light in which we can contemplate the primitive parents of our race, is that of their being a party to the covenant which God was pleased to enter into with the human family, then existing in and represented by them. It would not comport with the design of these lectures, to go minutely into the discussion of any topics in systematic theology. But this is a subject which lies at the foundation of revealed religion; and, perhaps, we should not pass it over without some special notice. That such a covenant, as has just been mentioned, did exist between God and man, seems evident from the frequent references made to it in the New Testament. The doctrine has, indeed, been maintained, with some modifications, by the great body of Christian divines, in every period of the church; and it is believed that the passage of sacred scripture now before us, teaches it in terms which cannot be otherwise explained, without destroying their consistency, and perverting their obvious import. “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Here is, we think, the substance of a covenant, though not in a very extended or explicit form. There is, first, a condition proposed, viz. obedience to a prohibitory command, “thou shalt not eat of it;” secondly, a penalty, in case of disobedience, “thou shalt surely die;” and, thirdly, a promise of life and happiness

implied, consequent, on the fulfilment of the condition. The whole was propounded by God; and when propounded, man could not, rightfully, refuse to acquiesce in it, because he was bound, by the law of his nature, to yield obedience to his Creator, in every instance. He would readily perceive, therefore, that the covenant would impose no irksome obligation upon him, whatever advantages it might secure to him and his descendants, in the event of his faithful compliance with its condition. And that he did, in fact, acquiesce, is made perfectly plain in the sequel of the sacred history. The tree of life appears to have been the seal or memorial of this covenant; the fruit of which was doubtless eaten, by Adam and Eve, with religious solemnity and thanksgiving. We have a remark or two to make on the penalty annexed, and to be inflicted, in case of man's disobedience. It is important to understand its import. It is expressed in language somewhat equivocal: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It is *death*, and that in a very extended and awful sense—temporal and spiritual; which would, of course, be eternal, were there no remedy provided. But there is a remedy: and on those who accept it, the second death, or death eternal, can have no power. To suppose that nothing more than temporal death is meant, would be to make the word of God of no effect; for Adam did not die that kind of death, the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit—he continued in this life more than nine hundred years after he became a sinner. But, *spiritually*, he *did die*, and that *immediately*. He was filled with shame—lost communion with God—was driven from paradise, and prohibited the fruit of the tree of life. Whether the blessings of the covenant would have been enjoyed for ever in this world, or whether, in case of Adam's fidelity, he and his posterity would have been removed, in due time, to another state adapted to a higher stage of existence, are questions which it were vain to agitate; for they are questions of mere curiosity, on which the Scriptures are silent. According to God's glorious plan of

grace, this world was meant to be but the vestibule of the world to come, and all conjectures about what it might have been, on another plan, are baseless visions.

But were the descendants of Adam included in this covenant? So we are taught from the beginning to the end of the Bible; and we verily believe, that right reason has no solid objection to bring against the doctrine. Paul, the apostle, in his epistle to the Romans (ch. v.) tells us, that "by one man's offence many were made sinners—and that through the offence of one, judgment came upon all to condemnation." The apostle, here, manifestly alludes to the covenant of which we have been speaking. And it seems to us, that no one who is tolerably conversant with the writings of Moses and the prophets, and of Christ and his apostles, can hesitate to admit that the following answer to a question in our catechism, is founded on scriptural authority: "As the covenant was made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression."

But let us look at this matter in the light of reason, as there are those who prefer the less light to the greater. Man was created a moral agent, and he was designed to propagate his species. This species is of great consequence in the universe. It is presumable, therefore, that God would notice them in a way suited to their rank in the scale of creatures; and that in his laws given to, as in his transactions with, the parent of the race, he would have regard to the offspring. Now the covenant in question was calculated to suit man's character as a free, moral, and accountable creature, and to secure important benefits to the whole family, had the parent held fast his integrity. But he was fallible: he failed, and these advantages are forfeited. And from this sad event, are drawn most of the plausible objections to the measure. In the contrary event, i. e. had the covenant been kept and the blessings been secured, the

measure would have been esteemed good by every child of Adam. No one would have had any objection to being made happy, in consequence of the representative character of our great progenitor: and does not this prove, that all objections drawn from the unhappy issue as it actually turned out, are wholly selfish and invalid? Furthermore, let it not be forgotten, that Adam was placed in circumstances the most favourable that can be conceived for retaining his moral rectitude, and for securing the blessings of the covenant to his descendants. On what ground can we flatter ourselves that we would have acted a better part, had we been placed in similar circumstances, and entrusted, each one in succession, with the care of his own virtue and happiness? Such considerations as these should produce in our minds a quiet and filial acquiescence in the counsels and decisions of our heavenly Father, in relation to this momentous and interesting transaction. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his acts." Let us justify him in our hearts, and take shame to ourselves. We are the degenerate plants of a strange vine. By nature we bear the image of the earthy Adam; but, through grace, we may be made like Christ, the heavenly Adam. Redeeming love has provided a remedy for the miseries of our mournful apostasy.

"Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing."

## LECTURE III.

## THE APOSTASY.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.—GEN. iii. 6.

THE fall of man, the introduction of sin, with its long train of direful consequences, may be ranked among the deep things of God. Why was it permitted? how was it brought about? and what will be its issue? are questions which, when duly considered, can hardly fail to make us feel our intellectual weakness. “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” The fact that mankind are a depraved race of beings, is undeniable; and to suppose that they came from the hand of the Creator in this depraved state, would be to impeach the glorious purity of the divine character. To account for the sad degeneracy of our nature, has long been a matter of laborious investigation with the learned and the inquisitive. Various opinions have been started, and, for a time, prevailed in the pagan world. One set of philosophers maintained the absurd and self-destructive notion of two independent principles, the one good, and the other evil—the latter aiming, perpetually, to mar and defeat the designs of the former: hence, they fancied, arose all the corruption, disorder, and infelicities of nature. Others talked about the perverseness and obliquity of matter—as if its connexion with mind in the human



species, unavoidably produced a deterioration of our intellectual powers and moral qualities. Indeed, one hypothesis has given place to another, in such long succession, and with so little additional light or probability, that it would seem philosophy and unaided reason can come to no satisfactory conclusion on the subject. The short account of Moses, comprised in the third chapter of Genesis, though not without its difficulties, will be found, on candid examination, even aside from its inspired authority, more rational, coherent, and consistent with the character of God and man, than any other that has ever been given to the world. Let us attend to it, then, with an honest desire to know the truth, however humbling it may be to the pride of our hearts. And be it our fervent prayer to God, that “as we have borne the image of the earthy, we may also bear the image of the heavenly.” 1 Cor. xv. 49.

It will be proper, here, to recollect the leading points attempted to be established, in a preceding lecture, viz., that as man is a moral and accountable creature, he received his being under a law suited to his rational character, honourable grade, and high destination in the great kingdom of the Creator; that, as he was designed to propagate his species, it was fit and proper that any transactions between God and the original progenitor of the race, should have a bearing on his descendants; that the covenant formed with our first parents, by a promise of eternal life and felicity in case of their obedience, and a threatening of death in the contrary event, imposed upon them no new or irksome obligation. That being already complete and undeniable from the law of their nature, it is plain that such a dispensation could be of no disadvantage, whatever benefits it might secure to them and their posterity. We have seen, also, that Adam and Eve were made in the divine image—were endued with knowledge, rectitude and holiness—indulged with divine communications—invested with dominion over all other creatures in this lower world—loaded with a rich profusion of the bounties of

Heaven, and placed in circumstances the most favourable that can be conceived, for holding fast their integrity and securing the blessings of the covenant; insomuch, that no person has any ground to think, he would have acted a wiser, or a better part, had his destiny been put at his own disposal.

Bearing these ideas along with us, proceed we now to contemplate our fallen nature—but the wreck of what it was, “till one greater Man restore us, and regain the blissful seat.” The subject naturally divides itself into three parts which we shall consider briefly, in the following order: viz. First, the temptation which led to the breach of the covenant in eating the forbidden fruit; secondly, the criminality of that act; and thirdly, the consequences that ensued.

I. The temptation. The visible instrument employed in this, according to the narrative of the sacred historian, was “the serpent.” Of what species this serpent was, or how far its nature and properties may have been changed and degraded, as a memorial of God’s hatred of sin, it were useless and vain to inquire. Some writers suppose, that, before the fall, serpents were beautiful, docile, and inoffensive creatures; that they inhabited trees, and fed on fruits; that they were endued with great sagacity; and that our first parents regarded them as favourites, in comparison of the other orders of inferior animals. The learned and ingenious Dr. Adam Clarke is of opinion, that, by the serpent is meant one of the ape or ouranoutang tribe; that those disgusting caricatures on human nature were, originally, gifted with speech and reason, walked erect, and possessed we know not how many other noble endowments; but upon their concurring with the prince of devils, in the ruin of our species, they were degraded to their present condition, deprived of articulate language, and in a great measure of reason, doomed to go on all-fours and lick the dust, “cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.” As the doctor has kindly licensed his readers to adopt or reject this opinion as they may see meet, no person can hesitate to give him all

the credit due to such a novel and curious discovery. They who adopt this opinion to get rid of one set of difficulties, will have to encounter another class, equally formidable and perplexing, if not more so. Moses remarks that "The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." Had it been, naturally, a speaking and reasoning creature, capable of referring so adroitly to the character of God, and of giving to his threatening, in the penal sanction of the covenant, so deceptive a gloss, its superior subtlety would not have been at all remarkable; for in that case, it would have borne a stronger resemblance to a fallen angel than to any beast of the field. We prefer, therefore, the common understanding of the Mosaic account; i. e. that the visible agent, in this affair, was a serpent, in the usual import of the term, and that Satan, the prince of apostate spirits, was the efficient actor and foul instigator of the evil that ensued. How he made the sharp tongue of the reptile subservient to his nefarious purpose, we pretend not to explain. Neither do we know by what organs he spake when he assailed our Saviour in the wilderness of Jordan, or how he commanded the tongues of the demoniacs, of which we read in the evangelists. These were instances of extraordinary power, which the Almighty permitted him to exert, for reasons doubtless just and good, but which lie beyond the horizon of our limited view. That this apostate prince of darkness was the real tempter of our first parents, is perfectly evident from a variety of passages in the New Testament, where we find him mentioned by names and titles drawn from the malignity of his character, particularly as it was manifested in the sad tragedy of the garden of Eden. Our Saviour calls him a murderer, a liar, the father of lies, and an adversary. The apostle Paul speaks of the serpent that beguiled Eve, and in the same chapter tells us that he is sometimes transformed into an angel of light. In other places, he speaks of his devices, his fiery darts,—and exhorts Christians to vigilance and prayer, from the con-

sideration that Satan goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The apostle John calls him a sinner from the beginning, the old serpent, a dragon, and a deceiver. These and the like expressions may be considered as incidental notes, explanatory of the text before us. "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" This abrupt sentence in the interrogatory form, is supposed to have been but a part of the serpent's address to Eve. However that may be, it is extremely artful and insinuating; as if he had said, expressly, "It cannot be that the bountiful Lord and proprietor of all things would forbid you the use of any fruit with which he has enriched this delightful garden. You must have mistaken his meaning. Such a restraint would be unreasonable and unworthy of God." Hereupon the woman repeated the law; but, as if half conquered already by the adversary's plausible speech, added a small comment of her own: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." This "neither shall ye touch it," does not appear in the prohibition, as given by God in the 17th verse of chapter 2d. And "lest ye die," a soft and doubtful phrase, is substituted for the pointed and peremptory declaration, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Emboldened by this reply, as clearly indicating the beginning of pride and unbelief, the serpent lays aside his disguise and declares roundly, "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Here we have both lying and perjury, with a successful appeal to the rising pride, self-will, and libertinism of the human heart. To "be as gods," was the overpowering charm—the fatal ambition, that ruined and degraded our species, as it had, probably, hurled the devil and his angels from the heights of heaven to the depths of misery and despair. The secret aim

and supreme desire of our unsanctified nature is, to “snatch from God’s hand the balance—to rejudge his justice, and be the god of God.”

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.” Perhaps Satan suggested that he had tasted the fruit, and derived extraordinary advantages from it—his subtlety, power of speech, great acuteness in discerning the properties of things, and, in one word, a knowledge and happiness nearly resembling the Creator himself. The result of the interview was a determination, on the part of our first parents, to break through the salutary restraint of the covenant. The woman took, and ate, and gave to her husband, and he ate also. “And what great wrong was there (says the unbeliever) in this act?” What harm could there be in eating an apple, a fig, or a cluster of grapes?” This we are now to inquire into a little.

II. Any act, however indifferent in itself, may, by divine institution or appointment, become vastly important. The will of God is the standard of right. To oppose his will, whatever may be the matter or form of the opposition, is to do wrong. Our first parents had before them a clear and express revelation of their Maker’s will in this case: “Thou shalt not eat of it.” Now the violation of this precept was a practical renunciation of their allegiance to the great Lord of heaven and earth,—a foolish attempt to withdraw from the divine government, marked by the blackest ingratitude to their heavenly Benefactor, and by the most unequivocal contempt for infinite authority. And was there no wrong in all this? But let us look at this matter a little more closely. The prohibition in question, was not a mere display of arbitrary sovereignty. The holiness and benignity of God make it morally impossible that he should ever will or command any thing which is not wise and good. “The tree of the knowledge of good and evil

(says the learned and pious Vitringa) was chosen of God to be a visible, familiar, and permanent lesson, by which man was not only admonished of the eternal distinction between good and evil; but was put upon his guard as to the quarter from which alone evil could assail him." But why was the fruit of it forbidden? In answer to this question, we remark, that the prohibition answered three purposes, all tending to the honour of God and the good of the creature.

First, it served as a test of man's obedience. And this enters essentially into the very notion of a probationary state suited to the character of a rational and accountable creature. Here was a positive precept. The thing to which it related was simple and easily understood. It was well adapted to the existing circumstances of those whose obedience it demanded. They were in a garden of the Lord's own planting, with liberty to use all its productions, this only excepted.

Secondly, it served to keep man in mind of his dependence on the bountiful Giver of every good and perfect gift; it taught him to seek his happiness in the way which God had prescribed, and to expect higher and purer and holier enjoyments, than were to be found in the terrestrial Eden: that unqualified submission to the will of his Creator was, at once, his duty his privilege, and safety. Thus that tree, whose touch was death, was, untouched, a source of useful instruction and moral improvement.

Thirdly, it served as a sacramental pledge of faithfulness to the covenant, which God was pleased to form with them, and in them, with their posterity. In this covenant, there was a promise of life and happiness, ratified by the tree of life, which they were allowed to use, while they continued obedient; and a threatening of death, in case of transgression, ratified and sealed, by the tree of knowledge, the fruit of which was forbidden to be used. "When by a gratuitous promise of immortality, the law of duty was converted into a pacific covenant, the tree of life and

the tree of knowledge were the two sacraments of that covenant; the former being a visible document of God's faithfulness to his promise, and the latter a visible document of his faithfulness to his threatening. And thus the assurance of life or death being exhibited to our first parents, by sensible signs, they were constantly admonished of the interest staked in their hands, and of the infinitely happy or horrible issue of their probationary state." (Vitringa.)

If these views of the subject be correct, the criminality of eating the forbidden fruit must be abundantly evident. It was preferring self-will to God's will, and profanely denying his right to the homage of his intelligent creatures; it was an arrogant encroachment on the divine prerogative; it was a profanation of the seal of the covenant, and a forfeiture of life, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Nor is that opinion extravagant, which makes it a virtual violation of every precept in the decalogue, an infraction of every tie that binds the rational creature to the Creator and Sovereign of the universe.

III. What then were the consequences of this high and heinous offence? To Adam and Eve, as might be expected, the immediate consequences were shame, fear, confusion, and expulsion from the garden of God. Vile affections usurped the seats of peace, innocence, and joy. Their eyes were opened—the charm was broken—they felt themselves justly liable to eternal ruin; naked and exposed to the penalty of the covenant, they vainly attempted to fly from the presence of their offended God. But neither fig-leaves, nor all the trees of the garden could screen them from the piercing eye of Omniscience. The criminals are arrested—Adam endeavours to throw the blame upon the woman, and she upon the serpent—but all in vain; they had acted freely, and against the clear light of truth and the majesty of Heaven. They are, therefore, condemned. Adam is doomed to a life of toil and labour, which is to terminate in death—"dust to dust and ashes to ashes." Eve, as first in the transgression, is to bring forth children in pain and multi-

plied sorrow, and to be subject to the will of her husband. The serpent, which aforesaid had probably inhabited trees, and fed on delicious fruits, and held a respectable rank among animals, is sentenced to go upon his belly and eat dust all the days of his life. But, in the sentence of the serpent, there is one redeeming clause: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Here is the incipient revelation of a Saviour: the serpent and his seed are the wicked one and his emissaries; Jesus Christ is the seed of the woman—as concerning the flesh, the offspring of a virgin—manifested to destroy the works of the devil. On this foundation our first parents were now directed to repose their trust. And that all hopes from the violated covenant might be given up, the man, who had been, in a measure like God, able to discern between good and evil, was now driven from the garden, and the access to the tree of life was guarded by the cherubim, armed with a flaming sword, lest the offenders should profane the sacrament intended to seal and guarantee to the faithful, blessings which were now forfeited, and not to be attained but through the mediation of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

Alas for our fallen nature! "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" Reader, do you receive the divine testimony, on the humbling subject of this lecture; and do you feel yourself to be a degenerate plant of a strange vine, a guilty, helpless sinner? Then, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will, thereby, secure an interest in a covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. But remember, that unless Christ be in you, the hope of glory as the gospel is true, there is no warranted hope for you; for "neither is there salvation in any other." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36.



## LECTURE IV.

## THE OFFERINGS OF CAIN AND ABEL.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering: but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect.—GEN. iv. 3-5.

THE divine conduct towards our fallen race, has been uniformly marked by the most indubitable evidences of kindness and compassion. When our first parents violated the covenant of innocence, and rose in rebellion against the majesty of heaven and earth, they might have been abandoned, as were the angels who kept not their first estate. This, however, was not the case. True, they were expelled from the delightful walks of Eden, and denied its pleasant fruits; subjected to various afflictions of a disciplinary kind, calculated to make them feel, that in forsaking God they had forsaken their own comforts; but the glorious remedy provided in the counsels of eternity—the seed of the woman—the gracious healer of the breach was announced to them even before their expulsion from Paradise. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt braise his heel,” comprises the germ of hope, the first intimation of mercy, published to guilty man. This promise placed the human family, at once, under a dispensation of grace, and rendered heaven attainable, by Adam and his descendants, through the mediation of the Son of God—

the promised seed—manifested in due time, to take away sin, and destroy the works of the devil. But man, though thus favourably situated for the attainment of pardon and eternal life, through the merits of a Redeemer, had now become a depraved creature—the glory of his primitive righteousness had departed from him: Adam had lost the image God, in which he was created; and when he became a father, his offspring must inherit his likeness, as well in the temper and qualities of their minds, as in the form and faculties of their bodies. In perusing the Bible, therefore, where we have a faithful history of man, and of God's providence towards him, while we cannot but see and acknowledge the sad indications of our native corruption and entire degeneracy, it will be pleasing to observe occasionally, the divine efficacy and triumphs of redeeming grace. Of this remark, we have an illustration in the short narrative of Moses, respecting Cain and Abel, the first two persons of whom we have any authentic account, that came into the world by ordinary generation. How long after the creation they were born, we are not informed; it is generally supposed to have been within a short period. Neither do we know certainly, what difference there was in their ages. A critical examination of the Hebrew text, seems to me to favour the opinion, that they were twins. Be this as it may, Cain was the first born; and his mother appears to have entertained high hopes concerning him: "I have gotten a man from the Lord," exclaimed the joyful mother, on the birth of her first son. The name *Cain* signifies acquisition; and he was probably so called by his mother, as a grateful memorial of God's goodness, in making her, what her own name imported, "the mother of all living." In the birth of this child, Eve had some evidence that the race was to be continued for a time at least, notwithstanding the guilt of her first transgression. Her faith respecting the seed who was destined to wrest the prey from the hands of the mighty adversary, was thus confirmed; and, perhaps, she flattered herself that this was the Redeemer

announced in the promise. If so, her mistake must have been soon corrected. The development of his character proved that he was of "the wicked one." Parents should never neglect to render thanks to God for their children; but let not their expectations respecting them be too sanguine. Our children will be blessings to us and to the world, if God, by his providence and grace, make them so; but not otherwise. We should always bid them welcome, and spare no pains in bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; yet, to use an old proverb, "they are in themselves certain cares, but uncertain comforts." In infancy, they press upon the hand, and in after life they, in many instances, press still harder on the heart.

Abel, though born of the same mother, was of a spirit widely differing from that of the first born. We have no account of his temper or conduct in childhood; but, from his occupation, we are naturally inclined to think that he was of a mild, peaceful and contemplative disposition; and from the respect shown by the Searcher of hearts to the offering which he brought to the Lord, it seems probable that he was at an early period of his life, a subject of religious impressions. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."

We are here given to understand, in few words, that agriculture, and the rearing of cattle, were the first employments of mankind. This is perfectly natural; and we are here furnished with internal evidence of the truth of Scripture history. These occupations were first followed, because they were the most necessary and useful. The first essays in husbandry must have been very simple, perhaps little more than dressing and protecting the spontaneous fruits of the ground. Time and experience would correct mistakes, and suggest many improvements. And the culture of cattle was important, not only on account of the religious use to which they were put, as victims for the altar, but for their milk as an article of sustenance, and their fleeces and skins, which af-

forded the raw materials for clothing: for it does not appear that their flesh was, as yet, allowed to be used for food. As Adam, when placed in the garden of Eden, was required to dress and keep it, he doubtless trained his sons to habits of industry. Let us who are parents take a useful hint from this fact. Our children, whether we shall leave them little or much property, will be nothing the worse, and they may be vastly the better, for being acquainted with some branch of business, by which, in the failure of other resources, they may gain an honest livelihood. And let young people remember that it is their duty, and therefore both reputable and comfortable, to be industrious. The idle boy that has been dandled on the lap of mistaken fondness till he comes into the possessions of his patrimony, cannot be very capable of either appreciating it aright, or of managing it discreetly. And the mistress of a family, however ample may be her fortune, will always find her account in understanding, at least, the rudiments of housewifery. Nor let it be forgotten, for it cannot be disputed, that indolence, while it feeds on the bounty of friendship, or imposes upon unsuspecting charity, operates not only against personal virtue, but deeply and powerfully against the public morals; it is not a solitary sin—it is the mother of a progeny, in stature gigantic, and in number countless. But do not mistake my meaning, readers. Industry is not piety, nor are all industrious people pious. Cain, for aught that appears to the contrary, was as attentive to his tillage as Abel was to his flock; while in their religious principles and moral characters, they differed essentially, as it will appear in the sequel.

“And it came to pass in process of time, (or, as you find it in the margin of the Bible, *at the end of days*, i. e. at the end of the days of the week, on the Sabbath, the day on which divine worship was performed stately and solemnly,) that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.” This was evidently a mere thank-offering, designed as an acknowledgment of the divine munificence, but which

implied no confession of sin on the part of the offerer, or faith in the great propitiation to be offered, in due time, for the sins of the world. "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." This offering of Abel was of the finest of his lambs or kids; a living creature, of which the blood was to be shed, and the flesh consumed on the altar, agreeably to divine appointment, as an acknowledgment that the offerer was a sinner and deserving of death; and it likewise had, manifestly, a typical import, and implied a profession of faith in the Lamb of God, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering: but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect." The acceptance of Abel's service on this occasion, was shown in a manner which was well understood by all present: probably, it was by fire issuing from the presence of the Lord to consume his sacrifice, as in the case of Elijah, in his contest with the votaries of Baal, and several other instances recorded in Scripture. But to Cain and his offering no respect was paid. Why was this? There must have been some good and sufficient ground for the preference; for with God there is no respect of persons.

With a view to a right understanding of this matter, we have two or three remarks to make, which may shed some light on the subject. First—the use of animal, or, as they are sometimes distinguished, bloody sacrifices, has obtained among mankind, from the earliest times, of which we have any historical notices. Patriarchs, Israelites, Jews and Pagans, have resorted to them, as the means of propitiating the divine favour, of deprecating the wrath of Heaven, and of procuring the pardon of sin. Now that a holy God should be pleased with the pouring out of the blood, and the burning of the flesh of any of his creatures, seems so unlike a dictate of natural reason, that the most judicious writers have felt constrained to refer the origin of such oblations to a divine institution. And, after a candid investigation of the subject, we embrace this opinion, as true and correct.

We think the use of animal sacrifices originated in divine appointment, immediately after the fall of man; that Adam was required to use them, as an important branch of his worship; that he handed the use of them down to his posterity, and that the custom passed to Pagan nations through the medium of tradition. That they were recognized, and ordered to be offered, with a vast apparatus of ceremony and expensive ritual, under the Levitical priesthood, and that they continued to be used by the descendants of Abraham, till the advent of Christ, is well known to all who have any acquaintance with the Bible. As the flesh of animals was not then allowed to be used as food, it is presumable, nay, highly probable, that those animals, whose skins our first parents used for clothing, had been offered in sacrifice. Gen. iii. 21. And, from the well known character of Abel, whom our Lord calls "righteous Abel," as also from the acceptance of his service in the instance before us, it is not to be supposed that he offered of the firstlings of his flock without a divine warrant.

Our second remark regards the design of this institution; which was, we think, twofold—first, to remind mankind that, as transgressors of God's law, they deserved death; which they could scarce fail to reflect upon, with solemn penitence, as often as they placed the bleeding victim on the altar, as an atonement for their sins; but, secondly, and chiefly, it was designed as a typical representation of the sacrifice of Christ, the grand and efficient propitiatory, through which Jehovah purposed, from the beginning, to extend pardon and salvation to guilty man. Viewed in reference to this glorious object of faith and hope set before a rebellious and ruined world, how venerable, how significant and august those bloody sacrifices, and symbolical rites, which preached to the world, for ages, under the Old Testament dispensation, what is clearly taught in the gospel, i. e. that "we have redemption through the blood of Christ."

If these remarks be just, it will not be difficult to discover the reason why Abel and his offering were

regarded propitiously, while Cain and his were rejected. When man became a sinner, he became unfit for any direct and immediate intercourse with his Maker. Yet God saw fit, in mercy, to reveal himself as accessible, and as disposed to forgive sin and accept the services of sinners, through a Mediator. This stupendous plan of redeeming love was announced in the first promise of a Saviour. It was illustrated and forcibly represented by the institution of animal sacrifices, in which we are to look for the origin of that maxim universally admitted by the Jews, and which is unequivocally evangelized in the New Testament, viz. "That without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." In one word, the covenant of grace, or that scheme of divine compassion to fallen man, founded on the mediatorial character and work of Jesus Christ, was administered in these primitive times chiefly by sacrifices; and the religious use of them, for the great end contemplated in their appointment, implied a profession of faith in the promised Redeemer: whereas a neglect or contempt of the types and symbols, involved a practical disregard towards the antitype or thing signified, which was, indubitably, the Lamb of God, destined to take away the sin of the world, by the sacrifice of his blood. Abel, then, appears to have acquiesced in God's plan of saving sinners, and to have believed the revealed testimony concerning it. He approached the throne of grace, as a sinner, confessing his guilt, presenting at the altar, "of the firstlings of his flock," a sin-offering, in compliance with the divine command, imploring forgiveness, and professing hope in "Him who was to come, and give his life a ransom for many." Thus, as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and, by it, he, being dead, yet speaketh." Heb. xi. 4. But Cain, though he believed in God as his creator and benefactor, and, therefore, deemed it proper to acknowledge his munificence by an eucharisti-

cal or thank-offering, yet, not being humbled for his sins, nor believing in the promised Redeemer, refused to bring that species of offering which typified redemption by the blood of Christ: and he was, consequently, rejected or disapproved of, as one who obstinately clung to the violated covenant—self-confident, and unwilling to be a debtor to grace. A short extract from Dr. Adam Clarke's notes on this passage of Scripture, shall close this article of our lecture. "Cain, the father of Deism, not acknowledging the necessity of a vicarious sacrifice, nor feeling his need of an atonement, according to the dictates of his natural religion brought an eucharistic offering to the God of the universe. Abel, not less grateful for the produce of his fields and the increase of his flocks, brought a similar offering, and by adding a sacrifice to it, paid a proper regard to the will of God, as far as it had then been revealed, acknowledging himself a sinner, and thus, deprecating the divine displeasure, showed forth the death of Christ till he came. Thus his offerings were accepted, while those of Cain were rejected; for this, as the apostle says, was done by faith, and therefore he obtained witness that he was righteous, or a justified person, God testifying with his gifts, the thank-offering and the sin-offering, by accepting them, that his faith in the promised seed was the only way in which he could accept the services and offerings of mankind." Did God, then, abandon the unbelieving Cain, and allow him no farther space for repentance? Far from it. Even when he became wroth, and his fallen countenance betrayed the blasphemy of his heart, God, "who delighteth not in the death of the wicked," condescended to expostulate with him, in a manner eminently calculated to bring him to repentance, and the acknowledgment and love of the truth. "Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." In the words of our Saviour to the unbelieving Jews, we have a short but excellent comment on this address of the Most High to Cain: "Ye will



not come unto me, that ye might have life!" Cain knew the terms of salvation as well as his brother Abel; and if he refused to comply with them, he must abide the consequences. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and cannot do an unrighteous act. His word of threatening, as well as of promise, must stand fast, and be unbroken for ever. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Cain had sinned; and if he refused to accept of redemption through the mediation of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, he must die. Yet he might have life—a ransom was provided. "Sin lieth at the door." This passage may, and we think ought to be rendered, *a sin-offering coucheth at the door*; that is, a lamb, for a sin-offering, lieth at the door of the sheep-fold. And it seems to be implied that, if he would bring such an offering, in faith, as did his brother, he should be pardoned and accepted. And though he began to meditate mischief against Abel, from the base principle of envy, God, as if to prevent the horrid deed that ensued, assured him that none of his rights or privileges, as the first-born, were at all abridged—that Abel would still render him all due respect, and treat him, in the family circle, with that deference and submission which belonged to the elder brother. But all this could not satisfy his jealous soul, or melt his obdurate heart. He regarded the ways of God as unequal, and resolved that heaven's favourite should feel the weight of his vengeance. He talked with his brother—probably disputed with him on religious subjects, and, having lured him into the field, rose up against him, and slew him, as an apostle informs us, because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. Mark, here, the difference between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. Abel was a believer, a professor of godliness; he, therefore, suffered persecution—his career on earth was short—his death was premature and violent. But he suffered for righteousness' sake, and he was blessed, in his deed and in his end. He may be considered as the first martyr; and he probably now

leads the van of that noble army of witnesses for the truth, which, encircling the throne of glory, cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever."

Let us learn from the subject of this lecture the importance of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and the necessity of a believing regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, in all our endeavours to honour the Creator, and to secure the divine acceptance of our persons and services. We are sinners: and heaven is inaccessible to us, save through the merits and intercession of the divinely constituted Mediator, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. From that fulness may we receive, and grace for grace!



## LECTURE V.

### DEATH OF ADAM—BIRTH OF SETH, &c.

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth. And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years; and he begat sons and daughters. And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos. And Seth lived, after he begat Enos, eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.—GEN. v. 3-8.

THE descendants of fallen Adam are, universally, degenerate plants of a strange vine. Divine grace, however, has, from the beginning, been marvellously manifested in calling and sanctifying a people, a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and disposed to honour and serve the living and true God. The dis-

inction of righteous and wicked obtained in the days of Cain and Abel; and the Bible, in giving us a faithful history of mankind, as, also, of the providence and mercy of Heaven towards them, affords us some concise notices of both these classes. Of the wicked, we have information so far only as their general character had a bearing on the interests of society, and as their bad conduct and unhappy end furnish a solemn warning to all the world, that "the wages of sin is death."

When Cain by evincing his unbelief in the promised Saviour, as well as by murdering his brother, incurred the divine displeasure and proved himself to be "of the wicked one," he appears to have abandoned the worship of God and the society of his people. Retiring to the eastward of Eden, he took up his abode in a place called the land of Nod, a name which signifies vagabond, and which seems to have been so called, in allusion to his character, as a fugitive and outcast from the ordinances of God, and the fellowship of the pious. Here he built a city, and called it Enoch, in honour of his first born son. After Enoch we have barely the names of Irad, Mehujael, and Methusael, without any account of their character, or pursuits. Lamech, the son of Methusael, and the fifth in descent from Cain, was the first transgressor of the law respecting marriage. He had two wives, at the same time; and, though his example was followed by Abraham, Jacob, and others, who appear to have been, in the main, amiable and excellent men, yet the practice is manifestly an infraction of the law of nature, and an unwarrantable departure from the original and benevolent institution of the Creator. The fact, that instances of polygamy are recorded in Scripture, by no means proves that it was right: nay, we are taught, even in the Old Testament, indirectly, at least, that it was wrong; as it was, invariably, a source of family feuds, favouritism, jealousy, and other serious and distressing evils. The names of Lamech's wives were Adah and Zillah. The former had two sons, viz: Jabal, who seems to

have made such improvements in the shepherd's occupation, that he was distinguished, as "the father, or instructor of such as dwell in tents and have the care of cattle:" and Jubal, "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ:" i. e. the inventor of such musical instruments as were used in those early ages. Zillah had a son and a daughter: viz. Tubal-cain, "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron:" i. e. one who introduced useful improvements in the implements of husbandry, and who, probably, invented some of the first weapons of war, which are formed out of the hard metals: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

Lamech's speech to his wives, on a certain occasion, is supposed to contain a difficulty: "Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech, for I have slain a man to my wounding and a young man to my hurt." Gen. iv. 2, 3. Whatever difficulty may be in this passage, it can be of no great importance, as it does not relate either to any doctrine which we are to believe, or to any duty which we are to perform. The sentence is abrupt, and evidently elliptical, more being implied than is expressed. The family seems to have been agitated and unhappy from some cause or other. Perhaps, conscious of their guilt, they began to express their fears to one another, that the judgments of God might one day overtake them. Hereupon Lamech, either in a fit of anger, or with a view to quiet their fears, by vindicating his past conduct, and by quoting the supposed impunity of Cain, their wicked ancestor, interposes his authority, and commands attention to what he was about to say, which I suppose might be paraphrased thus: Dismiss your groundless apprehensions of the Divine judgments. If there be a God, he is not strict to mark iniquity: and admitting we have our failings and have done some wrong things, we are not greater sinners than some of our neighbours: We shall, therefore, fare as well as most other people. Have I been guilty of any heinous crime? Have I slain a man, that I should be wounded, or a youth that I should

be hurt? If Cain, who committed fratricide shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech, who has never been guilty of so great a crime, shall be still more secure. Should any one attempt to injure or disturb him, he shall be avenged of his adversary, seventy and seven-fold. Here the sacred historian closes his account of the descendants of Cain; and we hear no more of them, except incidentally, in the history of progressive wickedness, which provoked that tremendous expression of Heaven's hatred of sin, the deluge.

Our attention is next directed to another, and a more hopeful branch of the human family. Abel had fallen by the hand of violence—and, with him, the chief earthly comfort of our first parents, and the hope of the world seemed to have perished. But that the purpose of God might stand, and that there might be a seed to serve him on the earth, Seth was born unto Adam, in the hundred and thirtieth year of his life. This son, designed as a substitute for Abel, and as the first link in the long chain of our Lord's progenitors, "as concerning the flesh," is said to have been begotten by Adam, "in his own likeness and after his image;" an image differing widely from that, in which Adam came from the immaculate hand of God. Had the first man retained his original integrity, his offspring would, of course, have inherited his moral purity; but having become a sinner, his children must, by parity of reason, be conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. Human depravity is propagated by a universal law of procreation; i. e. in every species of creatures continued, by a series of generations, the offspring possesses the specific qualities of the parent stock. And this law operates as certainly and uniformly upon moral and accountable beings, as it does either in the vegetable kingdom, or among the various orders of animals. Hence we learn, that, though, as we have reason to hope Adam was pardoned and saved, through the grace of the Redeemer, yet having become a transgressor before he was a father, his children were all born in sin; and if Abel and Seth were pious and righteous men,

*divine grace*, and not their natural disposition, made them differ from Cain the vagabond and the murderer. And to the same cause are we to attribute the difference between the saint and the sinner, in all ages of the world. Sin is hereditary; it is interwoven in our very nature, pervades our entire moral system, and is, therefore, propagated from generation to generation. But piety, or true holiness is owing, solely, to a divine and gracious influence upon the heart: it is, in fact, supernatural; i. e. foreign to our fallen nature: and, it cannot, therefore, be transmitted to posterity by any law of ordinary generation. Supposing Adam to have been a good man, a subject of saving grace, when he begat Seth, he could not convey his goodness to his son, for this obvious reason—it was not an essential, but a superinduced quality of his regenerate nature. Indeed, most of Seth's descendants, as well as those of Cain, gave unequivocal proofs, in process of time, that they bore the image and likeness of a corrupt and sadly dilapidated nature. And it is a mournful and undeniable fact that pious fathers and mothers are, in many instances, the parents of ungodly children. Yes, readers, the image of apostate Adam is the wretched inheritance which we entail upon our beloved offspring: let us spare no pains to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and while we live, let us not cease to entreat the God of all grace, that he would impress upon their hearts the image and likeness of the heavenly Redeemer.

The birth of Enos, the son of Seth, took place about the year of the world two hundred and thirty-five. In his time, it is said, men began to call on the name of the Lord; or, more properly, then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord. As one of the objects had in view, in these lectures, is to ascertain the church of God, observe its growth, and notice the changes which were made, from time to time, in its visible form and rites of worship, the age of Enos is worthy of some regard. It is evident that God was worshipped before this time, by the use of thank-

offerings and expiatory sacrifices, as we have seen in the history of Cain and Abel. These services included prayer and praise, with confession of sin and a profession of faith, and hope in the promised Redeemer. Hitherto divine worship seems to have been confined to the family altar. Every pious head of a family officiated as priest in his own house, teaching his children, praying and praising God with them, and offering, on their behalf, the stated and prescribed oblation. And much is it to be lamented, that this primitive mode of acknowledging God as the kind preserver and gracious benefactor of our families, is so generally laid aside. It is a neglect of duty for which no apology can be offered; it borders closely on practical atheism, or living without God in the world; and there is a fearful doom denounced in Scripture against the families that call not on God's name. Jer. x. 25.

In the days of Enos, mankind had multiplied considerably, (for we are not to suppose that the Bible gives us the names of all the people then living,) and with the increase of population, there was no doubt an increase of wickedness. Hence it became necessary, for those who feared God and loved the institutions of his worship, to associate for the maintenance of truth and piety; to form a religious community distinct from the ungodly and the profane. Thus separated unto God, and meeting stately, on the Sabbath, for the performance of religious service, they, as a body, either called themselves, or were designated by others, in a way of derision, "the sons of God;" as we find them, in the next chapter, distinguished by that title, from the family of Cain, and others who followed their bad example. It is also probable, that some additions or modifications were now made in the rites of religious worship; but what they were, we are not told in the Bible, and therefore have no means of ascertaining. As there does not appear to have been any particular order of men set apart, as yet, to the priests' office, we naturally conclude that their religious ritual was simple, and that their ecclesiastical

government, like their civil polity, was patriarchal. Here then, was the visible church, in its infancy; a seed to serve the Lord; a people distinguished and recognized as the sons of God, united, and adhering to the service of Jehovah; bearing testimony against infidelity, idolatry, and all the works of darkness. And it seems probable that Seth and his seven descendants, whose names are recorded in holy writ, with many of their families for several generations, were church members, and gave evidence that they were a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Of Enoch, the son of Jared, the sacred historian gives a most amiable and exalted character, in four words: "He walked with God." And for his eminent piety, he was indulged the rare privilege of an early and deathless removal from this vale of tears. "God took him." "By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for, before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Heb. xi. 5. "Blessed are they whose God is the Lord!" Thrice blessed, they who love his service, think upon his name, and keep his testimonies, hearkening unto the voice of his word! Be it our glory, readers, to be called by his name, and our care to walk worthy our high vocation. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Surely it cannot be less the duty and the privilege of men to call themselves by the name of the Lord now-a-days, than it was in the days of Enos. The church is the glory of the whole earth; a blessing is in her; the oracles of truth, with their infallible counsels and comforts; the covenant of mercy, with its seals and promises; the charter of immortality; the tree of life; the throne of grace, and the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel. Let no sinner be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; it is the power of God unto salvation. The world lieth in wickedness; and the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself. The workers of iniquity shall be



destroyed, though hand join in hand. The church of God is a visible and consecrated community, governed by holy laws and fed with bread from heaven. It has its precepts, its promises, and ordinances, to which every sinner, who hears the glad tidings, should submit thankfully, without regard to the fear or favour of man. "What agreement (saith the apostle) hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. vi. 16-18.

"And all the days that Adam lived, were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died; and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died."

The great age to which many of the antediluvians lived, appears very extraordinary to us, whose term of continuance here below, is but as a dream when one awaketh. Seth and his descendants, whose names are recorded in Scripture, with the exception of Enoch, who was translated, at the age of three hundred and sixty-five, lived from seven hundred and seventy-five, to nine hundred and sixty-nine years; on an average, twelve times three score and ten. So that Adam, who lived to within seven hundred and twenty-six years of the flood, may have seen his descendants to the twentieth generation. This was a longevity truly astonishing; yet, it is indubitable: the fact, we admit, on the testimony of God, by the ministry of Moses, corroborated by the suffrages of several of the oldest, and most credible profane writers, with whose works we have any acquaintance. Manetho, Berossus, Hesiod, and Hecataeus and others, as Josephus informs us, generally agreed that the ancients lived about a thousand years. It were absurd to make the years of Moses lunar years, or months, as

some fancy we should do. This hypothesis, while it might help us out of one difficulty, would involve us in at least three, viz: "First, this calculation reduces their lives to a shorter period than our own: Secondly, some of them must have been fathers under, or about six years of age: and thirdly, it contracts the interval between the creation and the flood to less than a hundred and fifty years."\* It is impossible for us to account for this extraordinary longevity, on any natural, or philosophical principles. It has been ascribed to their plain diet; to the excellence of their vegetables and fruits; to the disuse of animal food; to the healthfulness of their atmosphere; to the vigorous organization of their bodies; the strength of their stamina, &c. But these causes are all imaginary and inadequate to the effect. We resolve it into the good pleasure of the Creator. And it was an appointed means of peopling the world, in its infancy. True, it gave an opportunity for the rapid growth of impiety; as the event proved. And, we cannot, therefore, but regard the present reduced term of human life, as a wise and merciful arrangement of Providence. Life is still long enough to afford us an opportunity of preparing for eternity; and this is the great purpose for which it is given. To the pious, it is better, if the Lord will, to depart and be with Christ; and to the wicked, a protracted term of probation is, in many instances, through their own fault, an occasion of aggravated guilt and awful condemnation. But how forcibly do the comparative brevity and great uncertainty of this life urge us to make preparation speedily, for that which is to come! Hear the Scripture: Set your affection on things above; not on things that are on the earth. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. What is thy life? A vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. Behold! now is

\* See Dr. Colliyer's Lectures on Scripture Facts.

the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!

Reader, do you believe these sayings of the Holy Ghost? Do you think much, and pray much concerning them? If you receive the Bible, as the word of God, you know and acknowledge that you are going into a future state, where you will be either happy, or miserable for ever. What provision have you made for an exchange of worlds? You have a hope; on what is it founded? Have you peace with God, through faith in our Lord Jesus? Then may you say, with Paul the apostle: To me to live is Christ; and to die is gain. "Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!"



## LECTURE VI.

### THE DELUGE.

And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights: and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.—GEN. vii. 1-6.

THAT portion of biblical history which is to form the basis of the ensuing lecture, gives us an account of the *Deluge*, the most awful indication of God's abhorrence of sin that ever was exhibited on this globe. According to the most generally received chronology,

this tremendous catastrophe took place one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years after the creation of the world, and in the six hundredth year of Noah's life. In attending to the subject, it will be proper to notice—first, the excessive wickedness, which rendered so fearful a judgment necessary; secondly, the time afforded to the ungodly for repentance, and the means employed for their reformation; thirdly, the method adopted to preserve a seed to replenish the new world; and, finally, the practical lesson which the whole matter is calculated to impress upon our minds.

When we take into view the great age to which men lived before the flood, we cannot but admit that the population of the world must have increased very rapidly. And, after the apostasy of our race, the growth of wickedness would naturally keep pace with the multiplication of mankind. Adam himself, who lived to the age of nine hundred and thirty years, must have seen a numerous and depraved posterity. The family of Cain, as has been observed in a preceding lecture, were extremely abandoned. Withdrawing from the society of the pious, and neglecting the instituted worship of the true God, they soon became vain in their imagination, licentious in their manners, and, whatever form of religion they maintained, it was no doubt idolatrous. In the descendants of Seth, God had a seed to serve him, a people for his praise, to whom he vouchsafed the oracles of truth, and the influence of his grace. Among these many appear, for a considerable time, to have reprobated the works of darkness, and to have maintained a deportment worthy their high vocation. But, alas! how difficult it is, by reason of the depraved bias of our nature, to “keep ourselves unspotted from the world.” The Sethites, called by way of religious distinction “the sons of God,” began, in process of time, to hold converse, and to form intimate connexions with the degenerate offspring of Cain; and, as is uniformly the case, this unwarrantable intercourse with the wicked led to a participation in their

evil deeds. Intermarriages with the ungodly are particularly mentioned by Moses, as one cause of that profligacy of morals which provoked the Almighty to demolish the work of his hand by a deluge. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." Thus the professed worshippers of Jehovah, instead of maintaining a holy singularity, began to lose sight of their sacred character, and to indulge their sensual desires, till at length, dropping one distinction after another, they became conformed to this world. The salt of the earth lost its savour. The hands of the wicked were strengthened; piety declined, and sin triumphed. The offspring of these unlawful marriages would, of course, be still more abandoned than their corrupt parents. Many of them were, no doubt, giants in impiety, as well as in stature. Freed from the salutary restraints of an enlightened and faithful conscience, unawed by parental gravity or religious example, they committed sin with greediness, and ripened apace for destruction.

Let us be thankful, readers, for that measure of Christian influence which prevails in the community where it is our lot to reside. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Let those young persons, therefore, who have been baptized into Christ, and who hope for heaven through his merits, beware of forming ungodly connexions; especially, let them not be "unequally yoked with unbelievers." "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." "But what fellowship hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?"

But we proceed, secondly, to notice the forbearance of Heaven, in affording to the wicked time and space for repentance, even when the measure of their iniquity appeared to be full. When God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; that all flesh had corrupted his way, and that the earth was filled with violence; when the divine Majesty was openly insulted, and sin stalked

abroad with the most daring effrontery, He who takes no pleasure in the ruin of the wicked, manifested a willingness to wait, and to be gracious. On his announcing the day of vengeance, for the vindication of his authority, he publishes a respite: mercy is mingled with judgment—the warning voice precedes the stroke of justice. “And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man; for that, he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” During this term of probation, various means were used to bring about a reformation, and ward off the impending storm. Noah, and no doubt other preachers of righteousness, remonstrated; the Spirit strove, and the providence of God gave indubitable signs of approaching judgment. But all to no purpose. Evil men waxed worse and worse; scoffers multiplied; hand joined hand in striving against God; and because sentence against their crimes was not executed speedily, therefore, their hearts were fully set in them to do wickedly. Divine compassion expostulates; the great Lord of heaven and earth, even in taking hold of judgment, for the support of rightful authority, discovers parental pity, and reluctance to punish: “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” Strictly speaking, it is impossible that God should repent. He is unchangeable alike in his nature and counsels. “In him is no variableness or shadow of turning.” His measures are all taken in perfect wisdom, and he is completely self-sufficient; he cannot therefore, be liable to either grief, or disappointment. The expression before us, therefore, is obviously used, after the manner of man, to indicate God’s irreconcilable hatred of sin, and at the same time to show, that he commiserates the sinner whose punishment is demanded by justice.

The term of probation drawing towards a close, the Lord reveals more clearly his determination to display his power in the utter overthrow of those who continued to despise his grace. But that his purpose of mercy towards the human race might stand fast amidst the wreck and ruin of the ungodly, a seed is

to be preserved to replenish the earth, after it shall have been washed by the waters of a flood. The method adopted for this end is the third particular that claims our notice.

Thirdly: "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher-wood: rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." The ark does not appear to have been formed for travelling, but merely to float on the surface, and afford shelter for its inhabitants, during the prevalence of the waters. By the gopher-wood of which it was composed, is generally understood the cypress, as being the firmest and most suitable, then known, to resist the violence of the weather. Whether it resembled a ship, or was flat-bottomed and rectangular, is altogether undetermined by the sacred historian. But, as it was intended to rise with the gradual rise of the water, and to rest again wherever divine providence should see fit, we incline to the latter opinion, as the more probable of the two. Moses gives us its dimensions, as prescribed by God himself. Its length was three hundred cubits; its width fifty, and its height thirty. There were two sorts of cubits in use among the Jews, differing in length about four inches. If we compute the capacity of the ark by the shorter cubit, which was 18 inches, we shall find it to have been 450 feet long, 75 wide, and 45 high; if by the longer, which was 22 inches, the result would be 547 feet in length, 91 in width, and 54 in height: and its solid contents would be upwards of 2,730,781 feet. The learned and ingenious Dr. Arbuthnot computes it to have been a vessel of eighty-one thousand and sixty-two tons burden. When completed and stored with provisions sufficient for its intended inhabitants, Noah and his family, eight in number, were required to enter it, taking with them of every clean beast, i. e. such as was allowed to be used in sacrifice, by sevens, either seven individuals

or seven pair; and of unclean one pair of every kind.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that land animals only would be taken into the ark, as the others would still be in their native element. But was there room in the ark, capacious as it was, for so vast a variety of animals, together with food enough to serve them for a whole year? This has been questioned, without due consideration, I apprehend, by some who take the liberty of doubting almost every thing contained in the Bible. We are not prepared to speak, with great confidence, in regard to the room which one pair of all kinds of land animals would occupy. As to those that were used in sacrifice, the number of species was so small, that seven pair of each could have taken up but a small share of room. And the others will not be found, on accurate inquiry, half so numerous, or to need near so much room, as at first view we are liable to imagine. A respectable writer of Great Britain, we mean Bishop Wilkins, has investigated this subject with great care and labour, and he, as well as several other writers that might be mentioned, has made it pretty evident that the ark was amply capacious to answer the end for which it was constructed. One passage in his "Essay towards a Philosophical Character and Language," is worthy of special notice: "The capacity of the ark (says he,) which has been made an objection against Scripture, ought to be esteemed a confirmation of its divine authority: since in those ruder ages, men, being less versed in arts and philosophy, were more obnoxious to vulgar prejudices than now; so that had it been a human invention, it would have been contrived according to those wild apprehensions which arise from a confused and general view of things, as much too big, as it has been represented too little." Should any be desirous of knowing how wild and ferocious beasts and birds could be brought within the sacred inclosure of the ark, we would observe, that as notice of the deluge was given more than a century beforehand, Noah may have tamed, or secured them in



some way, and had them in readiness, when the time arrived for him and them to be shut in from the general ruin: or, should this be deemed improbable, it will not be denied, that He who gave strength to the lion, fierceness to the tiger, untameable disposition to the bear, and subtlety to the serpent, could with perfect ease incline them to obey his will, and subserve the ends of his holy and all-controlling providence.

It has been made a question whether the deluge was universal, i. e. whether the waters covered the entire surface of the earth. We have no hesitation in taking the affirmative side of the question. The language of Moses is plain and unequivocal on this point. "The waters (says he) prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered; and all flesh died that moved upon the earth; of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing, and every man." These declarations need no exposition, and they admit of no evasion. Indeed, on the supposition of a partial flood, the labour and expense of an ark might have been spared. Noah and company might have removed to a distant region, with far less apparent danger than that which they encountered in the ark. But, in that case, the ungodly would very soon have followed in his train, however much they had derided his faith.

That the deluge was universal, is, we think, rendered indubitable, by the well known fact, that vestiges of it are to be found in all parts of the known world. In Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, at the greatest distance from the ocean, far beneath the surface, and on the loftiest mountains, marine substances are to be seen, which bear unimpeachable and incontrovertible testimony that the flood was there.

But where, demands the sceptic, could water be obtained to cover the whole earth, fifteen cubits above the Alps and the Andes? In the central abyss, says Dr. Burnet, who fancies the earth resembled an egg,

and that its exterior covering was broken at the deluge, and sunk down beneath the prevailing waters. By the agency of a comet, says the ingenious Whiston, who supposes that one of those eccentric bodies involved the earth in its atmosphere, whose aqueous vapours being condensed by the contact, poured down in torrents of rain, which he imagines is what Moses intends by the opening of the windows of heaven. By violent earthquakes, says M. de la Pryme, an ingenious French writer. By the melting of the ice in the polar regions, says the eloquent St. Pierre. But however curious these hypotheses may be, they are far from being satisfactory. Moses mentions two sources whence the waters came, which, we think, are quite sufficient, viz. the extraordinary descent of rain for forty days and forty nights, and the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep. The Almighty is never at a loss for means to accomplish his designs. He who, in the beginning, said, "Let there be light, and light was," and who made the world by the word of his power, could readily furnish water sufficient to drown its inhabitants. The opening of the windows of heaven, and the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep are, in our opinion, strong figurative expressions, intimating the fall of rain unusually fast, and for an unparalleled length of time. It is said, the waters prevailed for a hundred and fifty days; i. e. during that time its depth increased, and the ark rose higher and higher with its elect inmates. Then God remembered Noah, and caused the waters gradually to subside, and on the seventh month, and seventeenth day of the month, the ark, by divine guidance, rested on Mount Ararat, a noted eminence in the mountains of Armenia, between the Black and the Caspian seas, some hundreds of miles north-east of Palestine. Here a delightful scene ensues. The tenth month showed the mountain tops. Yet, forty days, and the window of the ark is opened. First, the raven is despatched; then the dove, thrice; on her second return she brought in her beak an olive branch plucked off, from which it would readily be

inferred that the waters were decreasing; and from this circumstance the olive branch has been used as the emblem of peace by all civilized nations. The three missions of the dove were marked by an interval of seven days; whence it would seem, that Noah and his family observed the weekly Sabbath, and performed special religious service on that day. "And in the second month (i. e. in the second month from the beginning of the next year,) and on the 27th day of the month, was the earth dried. And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee: bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee of all flesh," &c. It appears that Noah was in the ark one entire solar year; for he entered it on the second month of the six hundredth year of his life, and left it the same month of the year next ensuing.

In regard to the truth of the Mosaic account of the deluge, there cannot be a rational doubt entertained by any one who considers, candidly and dispassionately, the mass of evidence by which the fact is supported. On this point we with pleasure give an extract from one of the eloquent Dr. Collyer's Lectures on Scripture Facts: "Had there been no deluge, it were difficult to account for the universal traditions respecting it; still more so, to explain the appearances presented in the face of nature itself. It was impossible for Moses to impose the belief of it upon the Jews, appealing, as he did, to the names found in the line of their ancestors, and fixing a certain era for this wonderful event. Many of them were well acquainted with the contemporaries of Joseph; Joseph with the particulars of Abraham's life; and Abraham lived in the days of the sons of Noah. Now the Jews must have received traditionary accounts of every remarkable event, handed down through successive generations in other channels besides the writings of Moses. Had his history clashed with these traditions, they could not have failed to observe it; and had he attempted to impose a fable upon them, they could not have failed to detect it. And such a detection at the com-

mencement of his history, could not have failed to weaken, in the minds of his contemporaries especially, the authority and validity of the whole." And the writer might have added, that, on this supposition, the Jews would have utterly rejected the mission and writings of Moses, which all the world knows is far from being the fact.

From the fearful manifestation of divine displeasure against sin, which we have been contemplating, we may learn that the threatenings of Scripture, no less than the promises, will certainly be executed in due time: for, although God is slow to anger and of great kindness, and has no pleasure in the misery of his creatures; and although he has set his bow in the heavens, and promised, by covenant, not to destroy the world again by water; yet has he pledged his veracity, that those who discredit his word, outrage his authority, and despise his grace, shall not go unpunished. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Psalm xi. 6. Reader, there is an *ark of safety*: believe God, come to Christ, and you shall be free from fear of evil.

## LECTURE VII.

## THE NOAHIC COVENANT.

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold I, establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of the covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.—GEN. ix. 8-15.

THE situation of Noah and his family, immediately after the flood, must have been peculiarly interesting. Preserved by a kind and powerful Providence, in the midst of desolation and death, their bosoms could not fail to swell with gratitude to the gracious author of their distinguishing mercies. The only survivors of a guilty race, that had been swept from the face of the earth by an exterminating judgment of heaven, they must have had an impressive sense of the evil of sin, and of the importance of acknowledging God, in all their ways, by a prompt and religious attention to the instituted rites and ordinances of his worship. Accordingly, we find their first act, after leaving the ark, was an act of solemn devotion. "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every

clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." Nor was this a vain service. God had appointed sacrifices of this nature, as types or significant representations of the Redeemer's blood, that rich and never failing fountain which cleanseth from all sin. And they who offered gifts on the altar, in the faith of the divine testimony, and with a believing reference to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, were in every instance, blessed in their deed and made accepted in the beloved. Thus it was with Noah, on this occasion. "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour: and the Lord said, in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living as I have done." The Lord's smelling a sweet savour is a figurative expression, intended, evidently, to indicate his gracious acceptance of Noah and his offering. And that this favourable acceptance was vouchsafed, by virtue of the mediation of Jesus Christ, is pretty plainly intimated by the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, v. 2, where he uses an expression, in regard to the great sacrifice of the cross, substantially the same as that now before us: "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, *an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a SWEET SMELLING SAVOUR.*" Let us, then, in all our approaches to God, and in all the services we render him, have respect to our divine Advocate with the Father, who suffered *once*, the just for the unjust; but who is now exalted at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, where he "ever liveth to make intercession for his people." Our best performances are polluted with sin; nor are we warranted, in Scripture, to expect the acceptance of our purest desires, or most fervent prayers, save through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus. He is our hope. In him the Father is well pleased: and, for his sake, mercy can be extended to the chief of sinners.

The Noahic covenant, which is to be the main sub-

ject of this lecture, conveys to mankind several pieces of useful and desirable instruction. It consists in a *promise*, on God's part, confirmed by a sacramental sign and seal of divine appointment. It is a solemn stipulation, that the world shall not be again visited by a universal deluge; that, under the hand of cultivation, the ground shall produce food convenient for man and beast; that the seasons of the year, "seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease, while the earth remaineth." This covenant engagement was accompanied by a command to multiply and replenish the earth, and to regard the life of man as sacred and inviolable. Murder was forbidden on pain of death. Even a beast that caused the death of a human being was to be slain, as an attestation of God's indisputable claim to be the *sole disposer*, as he is the giver of life; "Surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by *man* shall *his* blood be shed; for, in the *image of God made he man*." In connexion with these commands, there was renewed to Noah and his posterity, the grant of dominion over the inferior animals, originally vested in our first parents; and, in addition to this, a right was now *first* given to man to use animal food, *excepting blood*, which was strictly prohibited. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb, have I given you all things: but *flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat*."

In contemplating this covenant transaction with the new world, the serious mind is strongly impressed with the condescension and benignity of the Creator towards his dependant creatures. As all things received their existence from God, so are they dependant on him for their preservation and well being. The survivors of the deluge may reasonably be supposed to have been painfully apprehensive, that, on the increase of their numbers, and the consequent

growth of wickedness, they might be, again, visited by a similar calamity. This fear, if not removed by some express revelation of the divine purpose of clemency and forbearance, would have checked the spirit of enterprise, and greatly retarded their progress, in useful arts, and intellectual improvements. Even their pious affections and religious exercises would, probably, have partaken more of servile fear, than filial confidence, gratitude and joy in the Lord. Behold, then, the loving-kindness and tender compassion of the Most High. He has never withheld from mankind the tokens of his goodness. On this occasion, he gave full and formal evidence of his gracious regards for the creatures of his power. The little remnant of his faithful worshippers had devoted themselves to his service by sacrifice and thank-offerings, of which he testified his favourable acceptance; and now, that they are entering on a new world, which they are to people and to cultivate, and where they are to maintain the worship of Him who made heaven and earth, and use their endeavours to promote his truth and honour; and while the desolating expression of his wrath against sin, is still fresh in their minds, he condescends to reveal himself to them, as their covenant God and faithful guardian. He directs them to replenish the earth: and to encourage them, in so doing, and to remove their fears of a second deluge, he assures them, by solemn stipulation, that the earth shall yield her increase to the hand of industry; that there shall be seed-time and harvest, day and night, winter and summer; that all flesh shall not any more be swept away by the waters of a flood: and that they and their descendants, to the latest generation, might have a visible token or remembrancer of this kind and gracious engagement, the rainbow, or as it is called in Scripture, "God's bow in the cloud," was set, or appointed, as the seal of his faithfulness and truth. Whether that beautiful phenomenon, the rainbow, existed and was seen before the flood, or whether it was now produced by some change in our atmosphere, for the express purpose of confirming and



perpetuating the remembrance of this covenant, is a question, as unimportant as it is difficult to decide. It is unimportant, because, admitting that it existed *before*, it did not exist *as the token of any covenant between God and man*; and, when once appointed as the seal of Noah's covenant, it would answer that end as completely, as if it had been formed expressly for that purpose. The question is difficult to decide, because, although it proceeds from natural causes, the reflection and refraction of the sun's rays from innumerable drops of rain in a thin cloud, yet so many concurrent circumstances are necessary to its production, that no man without knowing the alterations which may have taken place in the atmosphere at the time of the flood, or what change may have been made, after that event, in the mode of watering the earth, can prove, with certainty, that the antediluvians ever saw a rainbow. No object, perhaps, on the face of nature, is viewed with more complacency and delight than the *bow in the cloud*. This may be owing, in part, to its rich colours and elegant form, but chiefly, to its religious and appropriate design, as a messenger of good tidings, and a pledge to the world, that the earth and its inhabitants shall not be again visited by a general, or extensively destructive flood. And, I doubt not, that it is from a vague knowledge of this interesting fact of sacred history, received through the medium of tradition, that Homer, the father of epic poetry, takes his fine idea of Iris, or the bow in the clouds, being the messenger of Jupiter, the Pagan king of heaven. Where it is said, in Scripture, that when God looks upon the "bow in the cloud," he will remember his covenant, we are to understand the expression, as used after the manner of man; for God, in whom there is no variableness, needs no remembrancer; he cannot, from the perfection of his nature, forget or fail to accomplish any of his promises. The outward memorials or tokens of any of God's transactions with man, are for man's use and benefit; to remind him of his duty, and to encourage his faith and hope in the divine promises. That this is true,

in the case now before us, will not be doubted. When, therefore, we look upon the rainbow, let it remind us of our duty to Him who painted its beauteous colours, and placed it in the cloud as the symbol of his goodness to a dependant and guilty world. Nor let our thoughts be limited to temporal benefits, when viewing this beautiful emblem of the divine benignity. To those who are interested in that covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure, it conveys a lesson of the highest and most consolatory import; a lesson of hope and confidence in Him whose blood and righteousness secure them from that fearful deluge of wrath that shall, in due time, come upon the ungodly. Hear the word of Jehovah, by the mouth of his prophet Isaiah: "This is as the waters of Noah unto me; for, as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee: for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Isa. liv. 9-10.

As an improvement of this article of our lecture, allow us to suggest a few practical reflections.

In the covenant which we have been considering, God claims to govern the world, as well in its physical, as in its moral concerns. The laws of nature owe their efficiency, and steady operation to the constant agency of God. And not to acknowledge this truth, is but little short of practical atheism. The inimitable Cowper has some fine thoughts on this point:

"Some say, that, in the origin of things,  
 When all creation started into birth,  
 The infant elements receiv'd a law,  
 From which they swerve not since!—That under force  
 Of that controlling ordinance they move,  
 And need not *His immediate hand*, who first  
 Prescribed their course, to regulate it now.—  
 — But how should matter occupy a charge,  
 Dull as it is, and satisfy a law  
 So vast in its demands, unless impell'd  
 To ceaseless service by a ceaseless force,  
 And under pressure of some conscious cause?"

The Lord of all, himself thro' all diffused,  
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.  
Nature is but a name for an effect,  
Whose cause is God."—TASK, b. vi.

Yes; it is God that sustains the earth in its orbit, and causes grass, and bread corn, and all its pleasant fruits to grow on its surface, for the use of man and beast. It is God that gives us the former and the latter rain, seed-time, and plenteous harvests. He it is, that maintains health in our borders, or visits us, as he sees fit, with sickness, disease, and death. He it is, that preserves the ships that convey our friends and our property across the mountain waves, and the trackless deep. He it is, that rides in the whirlwind—that directs the tornado—that lets loose his water-spouts, in such measure, and on such places, as he pleases, to teach men their dependance on his providence, and their obligations to his protecting power, and bounteous munificence. He it is, in one word, that gives us all our comforts, and removes them from us, at his pleasure. To him, therefore, let our prayers and thank-offerings be continually presented, in the name of Jesus, to whose mediation we owe all our comforts, and all our best hopes.

The partial inundations that often occur are no infraction of the Noahic covenant; as that only engages that there shall not, again, be a universal deluge. "The waters of a flood shall not any more destroy all flesh." Inundations, like earthquakes, pestilence, famine, and war, are the ministers of God's anger, by which he visits and reproveth guilty communities of mankind. But the covenant sealed with its "*bow in the cloud*" secures the world from destruction by water, and constitutes our only authentic assurance of seed-time and harvest, winter and summer, and day and night, while the earth remaineth.

Let us be thankful for the Bible, which among innumerable other precious pieces of instruction, contains this charter of the world's preservation and privileges, till all the designs of redeeming mercy shall be fully accomplished.

The apostle Peter teaches us, that the fashion, or present form of the world is ultimately to be changed, or destroyed by a universal conflagration. "The heavens and the earth, which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men—the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." 2 Pet. iii. 7-10.

It is not certain, however, from this or any other passages of sacred Scripture, that this earth is to be utterly consumed, blotted from existence, or even rendered useless, in the great empire of Jehovah. That the time will come when it shall be wrapped in flames, and undergo a purification—be stripped of its combustible furniture, by the action of fire, of which it comprises immense stores in its own bowels, cannot be doubted by any believer in the lively oracles of revelation. Yet, that it may answer a valuable purpose—be the dwelling place of some happy intelligences, after that event, is quite possible; nay, even probable: and the apostle Peter himself seems to encourage an expectation of this kind, when he says, in a subsequent verse of the same chapter, and, in concluding his description of the general conflagration:—"Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness:" verse 13. We do not believe that *annihilation* will ever invade any of the Creator's works.

To conclude: let us try to fix in our minds the true idea of the nature and design of that covenant which we have been considering. That it was not *formally* and *precisely* the covenant of grace, is, we think, plain from these facts—viz. that there is no mention in it, of any spiritual and saving benefit; that its promise is made not only to all mankind, but to every living thing; fowl, cattle, and beasts of the earth; a scope of promise which certainly does not belong to the covenant of grace.

We think, however, that the Noahic covenant, must be regarded, as having been formed with the world, for its temporal benefit and comfort, in consequence of the mediatorial office and work of Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant: for all the patience of God, in sparing a world stained with crimes, is to be ascribed to his gracious design of redeeming unto himself, a peculiar people, by the cross of Christ: so that, had not the covenant of grace taken effect before the deluge, there would have been no ark furnished for the saving of Noah and his family; nor any covenant of peace and safety, sealed by the rainbow, to quiet the fears, and gladden the hearts of guilty men. John the Evangelist saw, in the visions of Patmos, a rainbow round about the head of the Son of man, our glorious Redeemer. In *him*, we have that peace of God which passeth understanding. The *bow* of *his* *covenant*, perpetually encircles the throne of heaven; and, when the storms of divine wrath shall sweep away all refuges of lies, they who put their trust in him, and accept the blessings of his grace, shall be safe, and peaceful, and triumphant, world without end.

Whenever we look upon the rainbow, let us recollect, and be thankful on the recollection of the blessed truth, that by virtue of the gracious interposition of Christ, we are placed under a dispensation of mercy, where we not only enjoy the common bounties of a munificent Providence, but have an opportunity of securing "the true riches," an interest in the favour of God, the forgiveness of sins, and the life everlasting through him that loved us, and gave himself for us. Sin has drawn down a curse upon the earth, and inflicted on the children of men most grievous maladies: but there is a fountain opened, in the blood of atonement, whose streams make glad the city of our God. There is a covenant, *well ordered* in all things, and *sure*; a covenant, rich in its provisions, and immutable in its engagements. The gospel of God, our Saviour, unfolds to us the contents of this *divine* compact; and, often, has our faith in its liberal pro-

mises, been invited, by the exhibition of its hallowed seals, in the ministry of reconciliation. To this well authenticated instrument of redeeming grace, let us yield consent, and affix our names, and entrust our souls: and, then may we sing with the poet:

“ Ere God pronounc’d creation good,  
Or bade the vast unbounded flood  
    Through fixed channels run;  
Ere light from ancient chaos sprung,  
Or angels earth’s formation sung,  
    He chose us in his Son.

Then was the cov’nant ordered sure,  
Through endless ages to endure,  
    By Israel’s triune God:  
That none his cov’nant might evade,  
With oaths and promises ’twas made,  
    And ratified in blood.

God is the refuge of my soul,  
Tho’ tempests rage, tho’ billows roll,  
    And hellish powers assail:  
Eternal walls are my defence—  
Environ’d with Omnipotence,  
    What foe can ere prevail?

Then let infernal legions roar,  
And waste their cursed, vengeful power,  
    My soul their wrath disdains:  
In God, my refuge, I’m secure,  
While cov’nant promises endure,  
    Or my Redeemer reigns.”

## LECTURE VIII.

## NOAH'S PROPHECY AND DEATH.

And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.—GEN. ix. 24-29.

IN pursuing the thread of sacred history, in these lectures, we cannot expatiate largely on every fact that occurs in the inspired narrative. It is our aim to select the most important events, and deduce from them such practical lessons as they seem designed to convey. But every thing connected with the history of Noah, is interesting and instructive. He was six hundred years an inhabitant of the old world—was preserved, with his family, during the space of three hundred and sixty-five days, on the surface of a boundless ocean, to repeople the new one—and, though far from being a spotless character, he was a man whom God delighted to honour. He had been a witness for the truth, a preacher of righteousness, and an eminent example of faith, to the antediluvians. After the deluge, his religious services were graciously accepted; and with him, as a second progenitor of the human family, the Lord condescended to form that remarkable covenant, sealed by the “bow in the cloud,” which constitutes the world’s charter, while the earth remaineth, for seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, and for its preservation from destruction by the waters of another flood.

It will not be amiss for us, therefore, before we take leave of his history, to notice, briefly, two or three things which took place towards the close of his life, and in which he had the principal agency.

We are taught by Moses, that soon after the covenant transaction which formed the subject of our last lecture, Noah began to cultivate the ground; that he planted a vineyard; that, on a certain occasion, he became intoxicated, and that by his indecent appearance while in this state, he drew on himself the mockery and derision of Ham, one of his own sons. In this affair, we may read the frailty of human nature. The best of men are liable to be overtaken in a fault; and all have need to pray continually, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Some interpreters of Scripture, eager to defend the character of the father of the new world, allege that he must have been ignorant of the inebriating quality of wine; and, had this conjecture but a moderate degree of probability in its favour, we should certainly be disposed to acquiesce in it, as a decisive exculpation of the man of God, from the foul charge of drunkenness. But it seems unlikely that the use and effects of wine were unknown in the world for upwards of sixteen hundred years; especially in a part of the earth so favourable, in point of soil and climate, to the production of the grape. It is observable, also, that the planting of a vineyard was one of the first branches of agriculture to which Noah directed his attention; which shows pretty plainly, that he was not unacquainted with the useful product of the vine, and can hardly be supposed to have been ignorant that the juice of the grape, when taken immoderately, would produce intoxication. These obvious considerations compel us to admit his criminality in this matter. It were equally uncandid and uncharitable to suppose that he was henceforth a habitual drunkard. From his general character and conduct, we are bound to hope that this was the only instance in which he was overcome by that disgraceful and ruinous sin. And those persons who indulge freely in that abominable vice, and



appeal to the conduct of righteous Noah, as affording an apology for their base and wicked practice, do but trifle in serious concerns, and sport with their own deceivings. "No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God:" the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it! In the treatment which Noah received from his sons, on this unhappy occasion, children and youth may take a useful hint, in regard to the duty which they owe to parents. The conduct of Ham was infamous; and showed a mind equally wanting in delicacy and filial reverence. A tender regard for the honour and happiness of an earthly parent is a sentiment, which in the scale of moral duty, stands next in order to that of religious reverence for the Great Father of Spirits. A child may see, and lament in secret, the errors of a parent; but to take occasion from his faults to revile him, or to expose him to public scorn, is a crime against nature;—a heinous offence in the eyes of the God of nature, and an unequivocal indication of a bad heart. Shem and Japheth appear in this instance to have been dutiful sons; though there is no reason to conclude that they either approved or connived at a father's sin, they endeavoured, with commendable delicacy, to protect his honour and screen him from popular contempt. Go children and do likewise. You are under obligations to your fathers and mothers, which you can never fully discharge: while you obey their commands, shield them from reproach, and minister to their comfort, without violating any of the divine precepts, you perform a sacred duty, and may hope that God, for Christ's sake, will bless you in your deed.

But it may be thought, and has indeed been more than insinuated, that Noah on his recovery from the ill effects of his wine, evinced a spirit of revenge and bitterness unworthy of a pious father, in the sentence which he pronounced on his sons and their respective descendants. Let us look dispassionately at this transaction. We are not bound to defend every act of every good man, whose name we find in the Bible; but we are bound to do justly and judge

righteously. The sacred Scriptures, unlike the fictions of ancient poesy, or the senseless dreams of modern romance, present us with no sinless characters, save that of Jesus Christ. We have here a faithful record of human nature, always frail and prone to evil, except when prevented and redeemed by the grace of God. But, we verily think, Noah was not blameworthy in this matter. It is well known that one of the early modes of predicting the character and destiny of families or nations, was that of a father's valedictory and solemn address to his children; of which, we shall have occasion to notice some instances in the sequel of these lectures. Of this nature, as we think, is the sentence now in question. We are not obliged to believe that Noah, immediately on awaking from a fit of intoxication, proceeded to pronounce on the character and future fortunes of his sons. The sacred history is very concise, and therefore, considerable time may have elapsed between events which seem to follow one another closely in the narrative. The patriarch was now an aged man; his sons were about to leave him, that, in conformity to the divine purpose, they might improve and replenish the earth. He calls them about him, and moved by the Holy Ghost, utters in their hearing a prophecy of a most extended and comprehensive kind, to the fulfilment of which, age after age and century upon century have borne uniform and decisive testimony. "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." The name of Ham is not mentioned in the curse at all. How will you account for the omission, on supposition that the patriarch was influenced by a principle of revenge? Would he pass by the offender, and vent his passion on a grand-son, who, so far as we know, took no part in the base conduct of his father? To us, this really appears incredible. It is then a prediction uttered in the name of God; and the event proves that it respects the posterity of Ham, in general, and the family of Canaan, in particular. The Canaanites were subdued or extirpated by the

Israelites, the descendants of Shem. And the Phenicians, the Sidonians, and Carthagenians, the posterity of Ham, were oppressed and subjugated by the Greeks and Romans, the children of Japheth.

The unhappy sons of Africa are the offspring of Ham; and that they have been for ages subject to the will—the misrule—the avarice and tyranny of Japheth—the inhabitants of Europe and America, cannot be doubted. The blessing of Shem has been realized, in the fact, that his posterity comprised the church of God for many ages—and of him, “as concerning the flesh, Christ came,”—the glory of Israel, and the light of the Gentiles. God has enlarged Japheth. To his family have been assigned an extensive portion, and some of the choicest spots of the habitable globe. Besides several districts in Asia, his children occupy the whole of Europe and both Americas. And by the gracious triumphs of Christianity, first propagated by Jesus and his apostles, of Jewish descent, Japheth has been made to dwell in the tents, and to worship the God of Shem. “There never has been a son of Ham,” says the venerable Mede, “who has shaken a sceptre over the head of Japheth. Shem has subdued Japheth, and Japheth has subdued Shem; but Ham never subdued either.” There may have been some small exceptions; but, in general, Ham has been pretty uniformly the servant of his brethren of the other branches of his father’s family. Of the four greatest empires that ever existed, viz. the Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman, it is remarkable, that the first and second belonged to Shem, and the third and fourth to Japheth. And at the present time, while America, Europe, and a part of Asia are free, powerful, and independent, Africa is the common mart of the world for slavery and trafficking in human flesh. Noah does not then deal out his curses and benedictions to his sons from passion or spleen. As the Lord’s prophet he foretells a state of things in relation to them, which, for wise reasons to be unfolded in due time, shall continue for a season; but it shall not continue always; mercy’s remedy is

destined to have a wide extension; the grace of our Lord Jesus shall reign through righteousness, where sin has abounded. When the heathen are given to Messiah, for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth, for his possession, Canaan shall cease to be a servant of servants. Man shall no longer doom his fellow-man to bondage, because he finds him defenceless and guilty of a coloured skin. All shall know the Lord—be free in Christ—and love as brethren. O come the blessed period! when the millennial light of the Sun of Righteousness shall spread its cheering rays over the whole face of this great world, so long the abode of sin, and the scene of human wretchedness and crimes! Come, speedily, the bright and the promised day, when all people and kindreds of the earth shall dwell, with sweet accord, in the tents of Shem;—when all flesh shall see the salvation of our God, and triumph in redeeming grace, under the universal reign of Christ, the Lord and King of Zion! But this is a digression from our subject. We are pressing upon the closing scene of the patriarch's life: "And Noah lived, after the flood, three hundred and fifty years; and all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died."

He had lived long, and shared largely in the care and distinguishing bounties of Heaven. He had an antediluvian constitution, and therefore attained to a greater age than any other inhabitant of the new world; which he lived to see extensively peopled, and overrun, a second time, with idolatry and every evil work; for he must have continued till near, if not some years after the time of Abram's birth, in the year of the world two thousand and six. He had experienced enough of the sorrows of this life to make him willing, through grace, to exchange it for another of brighter, holier, and more cheering prospects; and though we have no account of his dying exercises, we may conclude, from his general character, from the tokens of divine favour shown him at sundry times, as also from the divine testimony res-

pecting him, that his latter end was peace. Readers, you and I must die also. Nor can we count upon centuries, or even half-centuries; our days are as an hand-breadth, in comparison with Noah's nine hundred and fifty years. The time of our sojourning is calculated by scores, and generally limited to three and a half of these scanty periods. Three little words, "*and he died,*" will quickly close the history of the longest liver among us. Good God! on what a brief and precarious term depend the infinite interests of these our deathless souls! "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Readers, this melancholy subject is often pressed upon your serious consideration in the ministry of reconciliation, and in the providence of God, not to diminish or disturb, but to secure your happiness and peace. The magnitude of the subject is a sufficient reason for its frequent recurrence. Happy for you, if after all that you have seen and heard of death, you shall be prepared to die in hope and comfort! Ministers of the word who visit the sick, and often stand about the bed of the dying, have, of all men, the best opportunity of appreciating the importance of being furnished for passing that "bourn whence no traveller returns." We see persons die in a great variety of circumstances: some stupidly;—some in fear;—some in despair, refusing to be comforted;—others in peace, triumphing in Christ, as the resurrection and the life. The dying often preach to us, and make us feel the duty of preaching to the living. Ah! how many we have heard, with their latest breath, lament their neglect of the great salvation, during their day of grace: but we have never heard any one say, that he had thought too much on the subject, or been too diligent to secure the heavenly prize. It is natural and becoming, therefore, for the pastor who regards rightly the worth of a soul, to feel solicitous that the people of his charge may be ready to give up their account to God, with joy and not with grief. Now, reader, your nature is depraved; of

this you have unequivocal evidence from the Bible, the Lord's sure word of testimony; from the history of the world; from your own observations, and from the faithful dictates of conscience. Without a new heart and a right spirit, therefore, it is plain you are not fit for heaven; and, if not fit for heaven when death lays his cold hand upon you, your souls will be lost for ever to God and to happiness. The dissolution of the body is a small matter compared with the death of the soul—called in Scripture, the second death—that *deathless death*, that *eternal succession of deaths*, shall we say, inflicted by the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. Now the gospel of the grace of God points you to a refuge; not from death temporal, for that is inevitable, nor is it terrible to the good man, because it is a transition from earth to heaven; but this gospel points you to a refuge from the *second death*, the *death eternal*: “Christ in you, the hope of glory; Christ the way, the truth, and the life; Christ the propitiation for our sins, and the Lord our righteousness.” Have you fled to this refuge? Have you laid hold of this hope set before you? Some of you have, through grace, we cannot doubt. But have you all? All souls are alike precious, considered as the subjects of eternal weal or wo. If the gospel is to be preached to every creature, should not every creature regard it seriously, and accept the remedy which it offers, against the otherwise fatal malady, sin? Do you not all expect to die? Indubitably. When? “Ye know neither the day nor the hour.” Noah lived nine hundred and fifty years, “and he died.” But none of you can expect to live one hundred years; many of you not half that time: but what if you should, by reason of uncommon strength, attain to five score years? Death would be as awful then, should it find you in your sins, as it would be to-day. Seeing then, there is no discharge in this war, what is your hope for the world to come? Do any of you indulge the comfortless, the debasing belief in annihilation; that the grave is the end of man, soul and body? Annihilation is an atheistical phan-

tasm. There is not a particle of evidence, either in the *lively oracles*, or in the wide field of nature, that any of God's creatures, whether matter or mind, shall ever be utterly blotted out of being. Is your hope of acceptance with God founded on your good works? What then will you do with your bad works? Or, if you believe the Bible, how do you interpret that passage; "By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight?" Are you saying in your heart, with Felix; "Go thy way for this time?" or, with the sluggard, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber: a little more folding of the hands to rest?" Ah! this is the sin that slays its thousands. Many, it is to be feared, permit the pilferer, *procrastination*, to steal away their time, day after day, and year after year, till the season of grace expires, and the impassioned exclamation bursts from the bosom of despair, "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended; and we are not saved!" O let us listen heedfully to the voice of divine mercy, urging us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure: "Behold, *now* is the accepted time! Behold *now* is the day of salvation!"

"There is a time, and justice marks the date,  
For long forbearing clemency to wait;  
That hour elapsed—the incurable revolt is punished."

## LECTURE IX.

## THE ORIGIN OF VARIOUS LANGUAGES.

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city, and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel: because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."—GEN. xi. 1-9.

THE precise time when the events related, in this portion of sacred history took place, cannot be ascertained; but it is highly probable, that they occurred within two hundred years after the deluge, and during the lifetime of Noah. Peleg, the son of Heber, and great grand-son of Shem, was born about one hundred years after the flood; and we are told that in his days the earth was divided; and, to commemorate that event, he received the name Peleg, which signifies division. But this name may have been given to him, prophetically, as was the name of Noah, and several others, before the event occurred, which it



was designed to commemorate. And, as he lived two hundred and thirty-nine years, we may fix the date of the dispersion, which is said to have taken place "*in his days*," any where within the limits of his lifetime. It is generally fixed about one hundred and fifty years after the flood. At this period, mankind must, on the most moderate computation, have increased to several thousands; so that there was no want of hands to undertake the building of a city and tower, as has been suggested by certain writers, who affect to know more than Moses, about the early history of the world.

Several things, in the passage before us, are worthy of special notice. In our remarks, we shall pursue the order of the inspired historian.

In the first place, we are informed that, at this time, "the whole earth," i. e. all mankind, used one common language, and were of one speech. Every fact, related in the Bible, is consistent with the whole, and, when considered seriously, tends to confirm our faith in the entire volume, as an inestimable treasure of revealed truth. Admitting that mankind, except a single family, were swept from the earth by a universal deluge, as Moses teaches us, in the preceding pages of his history, it is perfectly natural, at the distance of a hundred and fifty years from that catastrophe, to find this favoured family, and their descendants using one common form of speech. Whereas, on the opposite supposition, that men had lived many generations in different states of society, and in distant parts of the world, it would be difficult to believe that there was but one language in use among all nations; for it is undeniable that the lapse of time—different forms of civil government—the influence of climate on the organs of speech, and other causes, will produce great changes, both in the matter and form of language. But whatever diversities of this kind may have obtained in the antediluvian world, it is reasonable to suppose that Noah and his offspring, living, as they did, in much the same habits, and in the same quarter of the globe, would, at least

for three or four generations, be all of the same language, and use, essentially, the same forms of speech.

But what particular language was it, that was now in universal use? On this question there is a diversity of opinion; and, like many other unimportant inquiries, it is difficult to solve, with any degree of certainty. Our limits will not allow us to notice the pretensions that have been advanced for several of the oriental tongues. The claims of the Hebrew appear to deserve the preference. This was the language in which Moses wrote;—and, from the significant import of most of the proper names, in the Pentateuch, or first five books, in the Old Testament, it seems probable that this was the tongue spoken by Adam, and in which he gave names to the inferior animals, when they were brought to him, for that purpose, at the creation. And, as men lived to a great age before the flood, language would not, then, be liable to such rapid changes as take place in modern times. There were but little more than a hundred years between the death of Adam and the birth of Noah; which makes it highly probable, that if the Hebrew was the language of the old world, it was also the only one in use, by Noah and his family, till the confusion effected, by divine interposition, on the plains of Shinar.

From the mountains of Armenia, where the ark rested, at the termination of the deluge, the people seem to have moved towards the south-east; and, as the land of Shinar lay southward from Mount Ararat, somewhere within the limits of the country afterwards called Chaldea, they must, in approaching it, have “*journied from the east,*” as Moses states. On those once beautiful and fertile plains, watered by the river Euphrates, they resolved to found a city, adorned with a magnificent tower, which should be the seat of empire—the centre of their extending settlements—and the emporium of wealth. The materials used for constructing these mighty works, were brick, instead of stone, and a sort of slime, called bitumen, which abounded in the place, and which served as

cement. Their design, in building a *city*, is sufficiently obvious. Heretofore, they had been kept together by the ties of fraternity, as also by motives of self-defence from the encroachments of wild beasts, and by the use of one common language. But, on finding their numbers increase rapidly, it was natural for them to think of erecting a METROPOLIS, or point of UNION, whence they might extend their settlements, and to which they might return, as occasion required, for the purposes of trade, and the adjustment of any disputes which might arise, in relation to their property. But their object in constructing a *tower*, whose top should reach to heaven, or as the expression imports, *to an extraordinary height*, is not easily determined. Some writers suppose it was intended to be a refuge, in case of a second deluge, or extensive inundation. Three considerations render this conjecture improbable: First; had this been their design, they would have chosen, as the site of their tower, not a *valley*, or *plain*, but a *mountain*. Mount Ararat, or some other neighbouring eminence, would have placed them more out of the way of destructive floods, than the low banks of the Euphrates. Secondly; they had received express assurance, by covenant, from God himself, that the earth should not, again, be destroyed by water;—and that too within so short a period, that it could not have been forgotten; especially as the memorial of it was repeatedly brought to their view by the *bow in the cloud*. And, thirdly; the expedient was inadequate. A pile of brick and slime could not long stand the violence of the waters of a flood; and, even if it did, it would afford a retreat for but a small proportion of their number.

Nor is it likely, that this *tower* was intended, either for idolatrous purposes, or for making astronomical observations; though, we believe, it was converted to these uses, in after ages; when, with some modification, it became the temple of Belus, and served as a *philosophical observatory*.

In the consultation which they held, on the subject,

two motives are suggested, for undertaking this stupendous work. The first is, the *proud ambition* of rendering themselves famous—of leaving behind them a memorial of their wealth and power. “LET US MAKE US A NAME.” This is a motive which has always had too much influence on man, ever since his apostasy from God. These *Babel-builders* were more concerned for the honour of their *own name*, than for that of *their Maker*. The same unworthy principle has done many foolish things, and produced great mischief in the world. It has often wrought faction in the state, and schism in the church. It has written volumes of controversy, in politics, morals, and religion. It has erected palaces, mausoleums, and pyramids. It has fought duels, and broken the peace of many families. Bursting asunder the bonds of brotherhood, it has revolutionized nations, and turned the world into a field of blood. The other motive is couched in these words: “*Lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.*” They wanted a sort of pharos, or beacon, that might be seen at a vast distance, and by which they might regulate their movements, in gradually extending their settlements out from the *Metropolis*. It may, also, have been intended to answer some useful purpose to the shepherds, in attending their flocks, on distant mountains; and who, by the frequent migrations which they were obliged to make, for the sake of good pasturage, might, otherwise, have been at a loss to find their way to the capital. All this appears, at first view, harmless and laudable enough. But, then, it is to be remembered, that this project of *keeping together*, and of forming one great and absorbing empire, was in direct opposition to the design and express command of God, that they should disperse, in companies, and replenish the earth. And this design of Providence was evidently wise and good. Thorns and briars were now every where springing up; wild beasts were rapidly increasing; a vast extent of the earth was uncultivated—while one small portion of its surface was overstocked with people; which must soon have given

rise to contests about its produce. A dispersion would remedy these evils:—there was room enough; and extended culture would afford not only a more easy subsistence to the same number of people, but would conduce much to the multiplication of the race, and the peace of the whole. Furthermore, God knows what is in man. He knows that absolute power cannot be safely entrusted to mortal hands. When once acquired, it is liable to be maintained by oppression and cruelty. It seems, therefore, to have been his benevolent purpose, from the beginning of the world, that there should be several distinct kingdoms among men;—that they should be distributed into different nations, and live under different forms of government. That, instead of a universal monarchy, there should be an opportunity afforded of maintaining a balance of power;—and that there should never be wanting an asylum for the oppressed, or a retreat for persecuted piety. And who does not perceive, and admire the wisdom and benignity of divine providence in all this? “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.” Psalm cvii. 43.

“And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded.” This passage, like many others in the *sucred volume*, is to be understood as spoken after the manner of man, and in condescension to our inability to comprehend the mode in which a spiritual being operates. The infinite God is every where present, at all times. There is no escaping from his notice—no fleeing from his Spirit. When he is said, therefore, to come specially to any place, or people, the meaning is, that he there *manifests his presence and displays his power*, in an extraordinary way. From its being said here, that the city and tower were builded by the children of men, some have supposed that Noah, and the few pious of Shem’s family, who were like-minded, took no part in this wild and wicked project. And this is far from being an improbable supposition; for, even before the flood, the ungodly were called the *children*

of men, and the pious were distinguished by the honourable title of the *sons of God*. It appears, however, from the next verse, that the measure was generally approved, and helped forward by those present. "And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language." That is, they are united in design, and their common form of speech, by which they can readily carry on an interchange of ideas, favours the execution of their purpose. "And now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." This expression conveys a reproof, and indicates the necessity of divine interposition. The meaning we take to be as follows: If these people be permitted to go on with this device of ambition and folly, they will take encouragement from thence, to outrage my authority—to disregard my commands in other matters; and, in following the vain imaginations of their own hearts, they will commit all manner of iniquity, with greediness, and bring upon themselves and their children, swift destruction. "Go to," therefore, saith the Lord; "Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Here, as in the phraseology used, in regard to the creation of man, we have an intimation of a plurality of persons in the ADORABLE GODHEAD. "Let us go down," is a phrase which seems to indicate pretty strongly, what is fully and unequivocally taught in the New Testament; viz. that GOD the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, is the only proper object of religious homage and adoration. This is indeed a great mystery; but, to our mind, it is not more mysterious or incomprehensible than is the *eternity* or *omnipresence* of the DIVINE BEING, which, it were *blank Atheism*, not to believe and acknowledge.

"So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel, i. e. *confusion*, because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth." Thus we see, the confounding of their language, was the means of

arresting the visionary scheme which these men of Shinar were bent on carrying into effect; and, in their dispersion, the purpose of Jehovah triumphed over the evil devices and proud designs of man.

But if it was necessary that these people should be scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, why did God take *this method* to effect their dispersion? Jehovah does his own work in his own way; "and let all the earth be silent before him." He might have opened his water-spouts upon them, or commissioned the fires of heaven to consume them and their works of vanity; but he is slow to wrath, and delights in mercy. He meant to show that he regards what is done on earth; and, in this measure of his righteous government, he has furnished to future generations, a memento of his power and providence, as touching the affairs of men, in that diversity of languages, which continues to this time, and which will, probably, continue to the end of the world. But would not the dispersion have taken place, in time, without any miraculous influence? Yes; but not in all probability, without wrangling and bloodshed. How many languages, then, were produced? No more than were necessary to answer the purpose contemplated. We are not to suppose an entire confusion, so that no two individuals could understand one another. It seems likely that each family, or tribe, had its common form of speech. But whether there were *three, sixteen, or seventy-two*, we are not informed, and it were idle for us to inquire. The Hebrew continued in the family of Shem, in the line of Heber, from whose name the language, probably, took its designation; and his descendants, in the line of Abram, were called Hebrews. But were the people of Shinar driven away from their projected seat of empire, with precipitancy, and in wild disorder? Moses has not said so:—nor is it credible. God is a God of order. Though the tower ceased to rise, time was, doubtless, afforded for an orderly departure from the scene of folly and discomfiture. But we must conclude. The facts recorded in this portion of Bib-

lical history, are corroborated by several profane and foreign writers. The fable of the giants making an attempt upon the gods, in heathen mythology, doubtless owes its origin to an obscure tradition respecting the tower of Babel. The substance of what the ancient Pagan historians say on this subject, is, "that a huge tower was built, by gigantic men, at Babylon—that there was then but one language among mankind—that the attempt was offensive to the gods—and that, therefore, they demolished the tower, overwhelmed the workmen, divided their language, and dispersed them over the face of the whole earth."

One practical lesson is fairly deducible from the theme of this lecture; and that is a lesson of humility and submission to God. The Creator unquestionably governs the world in righteousness. All his commands are just and good. He knows what is best for us. He has taught us our duty, in the lively oracles; and we cannot slight his authority, or despise his grace, with impunity. "Wo to him that striveth with his Maker!" Though hand join hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished. Let us not, therefore, spend our time, or waste our strength, in *Babel-building*. "He builds too low, who builds beneath the skies." Lay up treasure in heaven. Secure a place in the house not made with hands. Instead of attempting, like the men of Shinar, to make *yourselves a name*, be zealous for the *honour* of God's *name*, and he will take care of you, as in the life that now is, so also in that which is to come. Renounce the world, the devil, and the flesh. Forsake your sins;—believe in Christ;—obey his gospel;—walk as he walked;—repose your undivided confidence in him; and when the workers of iniquity shall read their folly, by the light of eternity, in the ruins of their *Babel-schemes* of happiness, you shall be safe, and live to participate in heaven's *highest, sweetest, loudest anthem of praise*, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, who loved us, and washed us from our sins, in *his own blood*. Amen.



## LECTURE X.

## THE CALLING OF ABRAM,

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.—GEN. xii. 1-5.

THE calling of Abram forms an important epoch in the history of the Bible. It took place four hundred and twenty-seven years after the deluge; i. e. in the year of the world two thousand and eighty-three, and before the birth of Christ, one thousand nine hundred and twenty-one. He was a descendant of Shem, at the distance of ten generations. His father's name was Terah; and he had two brothers, viz. Nahor and Haran, both older than himself, and a nephew, named Lot, a son of Haran, and who is associated with him in the subsequent history. The family lived in Chaldea, in a place called "Ur of the Chaldees." Here it was that Abram received the first intimation that he and his family were to be made the depository of true religion, for the accomplishment of heaven's merciful designs towards our guilty race. But the purpose of God was not fully revealed to him till some years after this period. The Chaldeans, it seems probable, had now become corrupt in

their religion. Dr. Shuckford, and several other learned writers, are of opinion, that they had fallen into that absurd form of idolatry which consists in worshipping fire; that *Ur*, a name which signifies fire, was then the seat of this foolish practice; that, upon Terah's attempting a reformation, a rupture took place between his family and the rulers of Chaldea, which led to the expulsion of him and his adherents from that country. Be this as it may, Terah with Abram, Nahor and his sons, and with Lot the son of Haran, (for Haran himself died in Ur of the Chaldees,) left that place in quest of a new and more comfortable settlement: and having found a pleasant tract of country in Mesopotamia, they halted and began to make some improvements. They built a small town, which they called the city of Nahor, and gave to the country the name of Haran, their deceased relative, whose remains they had left in Chaldea. Here Terah died; and after his death, corruption creeping into his family, many of them apostatized from God and became idolaters. It was *here*, and on *this occasion*, that the call was repeated to Abram, in a way, doubtless, which satisfied him that it was from God, to come out, and be separate from the workers of iniquity; to maintain the worship of Jehovah in the midst of surrounding corruption; to forsake all who would not join him in that reasonable service; to follow the Lord whithersoever he might conduct him, and to yield himself entirely to the care of his providence and the influence of his grace.

To the *nature* and *design* of this call, and to the promptitude with which Abram obeyed it, your attention is now requested. And these are topics worthy our attention; for, in the family of Abram, if I mistake not, you are to look for the visible church of God in its post-diluvian infancy. It is true, that, before this time, there were persons in the world who feared the Lord and thought upon his name; who worshipped him in spirit and in truth, and were blessed in their deed. But these were the Lord's hidden ones—they were not formed into a commu-

nity distinct, or easily distinguishable, from the rest of mankind; whereas, now, at the calling of Abram, a church was organized and made clearly visible, that is, a people were called out from the world, united, by divine authority, in the belief of revealed truth, and in the observance of certain rites and ordinances of divine appointment, with a view to the glory of the Creator, and the happiness of his faithful worshippers; which is the true import of the term *church*. We hope, also, to make it appear in the sequel, that the Abrahamic vocation and covenant constitute a part of the gracious scheme of redemption by the blood of Christ; that the measure was adopted in wisdom; that there was in it no indication of partiality, or favouritism, on the part of God; and that its influence on the state of the world has been, in a high degree, salutary and beneficent. And, it may be, that, in the readiness with which the father of the faithful obeyed the heavenly summons, we shall find an example at once animating to the people of God, and worthy the imitation of all who would wish to become the children of Abraham, by faith in the Lord Jesus.

I. For a right understanding of the nature of this call, we must look carefully at the meaning of the terms in which it is communicated. These are intelligible, expressive, and peremptory: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."—Country, kindred, and paternal residence, are all to be forsaken in obedience to the divine command. This appears to be a hard condition. The love of our country is an amiable affection; and it is one which generally gains strength as we advance in years. Habit incorporates and establishes it as a principle of our nature; so that few men, at the age of seventy-five years, the age to which Abram had now attained, are easily persuaded to encounter the sacrifices and hardships attendant on a change of country. To our kindred we are connected by the most endearing ties, and to part from them without any hope of being restored to their society and embraces, is like

resigning a portion of our own flesh and blood. This we feel when our friends remove from us to a distant part of the world; and, especially, when death makes a breach in our domestic circle, and consigns to the darkness of the grave, the desire of our eyes, the child of our love, the companion of our social comforts. Abram was not required to leave all his relatives, for some of them chose to accompany him and join with him in the true worship of God; but those who served the creature rather than the Creator, who complied with the idolatrous practices of the country, or indulged in licentiousness and vice, were to be forsaken, as companions, on the principle, that "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

It is not probable that the inhabitants of Canaan were a better people than those of either Ur or Haran; but, being *strangers*, the influence of their bad example, and wicked maxims, would be less likely to prove pernicious to Abram and his family. An ungodly relative, or an intimate associate and old acquaintance, of a bad character, is a much more dangerous companion than a stranger, into whose company we may be occasionally thrown in the transaction of business, and to whom we feel no other attachment than that of humanity and good will. So frail are we, and liable to be overcome of evil, that natural affection and personal respect may, in an unguarded moment, shake our faith, or diminish our sense of duty to God our Saviour. Hence, our blessed Lord declares, expressly, that instances shall occur, in which, "A man's foes shall be those of his own household." Matt. x. 36. "And thy father's house." A father's house comprises charms of endearment, which every one feels; but which no language can rightly describe. It is the place where we are first visited by the preventing benignity of Providence. Here it is that we are fed and protected with parental tenderness. Here it is that we begin to walk, to speak, to love, and to sympathize. Here we receive our first religious ideas—are taught to pray—to read—to think, and to sing of redeeming mercy.

In a word, it is the scene of our earliest, and, generally, of our purest pleasures. The principle of association makes its very defects delightful in our esteem: and to quit it, with no rational prospect of seeing it again, is always a painful trial. Abram could not have been insensible to it. The family had made one removal, from Ur to Haran. Here they had built a city, and were flattering themselves no doubt, with the pleasant idea of dwelling together in unity. Terah had deceased; but here was his *sepulchre*, and the venerated seat of his late residence. A thousand objects would conspire to attach the children to the spot where the father's ashes were deposited. Abram himself, had now arrived at that period of life, when the spirit of enterprise and experimenting usually gives place to the love of tranquillity and home. But God commands him to arise and go forth; and, as a good man, he may neither hesitate, nor inquire whither or wherefore. Behold here, reader, the grand and fundamental principle of practical piety! supreme regard to the authority and will of God. Without this, our religion is but a name—a shadow—a dream—a thing of no value. Difficulties and doubts may, and often do arise, respecting what God does require of us. And here wisdom is profitable to direct; our judgment is to be exercised, and our decision formed, in the light of such evidence as we may be able to collect on the subject. And should we err through weakness, or invincible ignorance, we may hope for pardon; for he, who made us, knows our frame and remembers that we are dust; and “there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.” But in a plain case, where the law of our duty is intelligible and explicit, as the Bible makes it, in all important matters, we may neither gainsay nor expostulate. Nor need we be backward to render prompt obedience in every instance; for, though the Almighty acts and commands as a sovereign, yet, from the perfection of his nature, we are assured that all his ways are right, and all his commandments holy and good. His will is the true and only standard of right, and

forms the immutable distinction between moral good and evil. Men who talk of ascertaining what is duty, by a reference to the law of nature and nations—the fitness of things—the dictates of right reason—of common sense—of humanity—of conscience—the law of honour, &c., do but darken counsel by words without knowledge. These are mutable things, and partake largely of that fallibility and imperfection which characterize the human mind, in its best, and most highly cultivated state. But, in him, who does his pleasure in heaven and on earth, there is neither variability nor shadow of turning. Blessed are they that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word!—Abram was required to leave his home, his friends, and his country, for a land as yet undefined, and to him utterly unknown. And relying on the power, submitting to the will, and confiding in the truth and goodness of the Lord, “he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

Nor is it a vain thing to serve the Lord, however repulsive or painful it may seem to our depravity and self-will. The sinner who submits to God, thereby, repairs to the throne of grace, accepts of mercy, and takes shelter under the wings of the Almighty. Abram did so; and he was blessed, and made a blessing to many. He knew whom he believed; and he had the best possible ground to expect both grace and glory. His faith rested securely on the sure word of testimony—even on the word of the Lord which endureth for ever.

II. We inquire, secondly, into the design of this extraordinary call. God does nothing in vain. Every precept of his word, every ordinance of his appointment, and every act of his providence has for its object the accomplishment of some great and good end. Of the end to be answered by the dispensation, now under consideration, we have a concise and comprehensive view in the text: “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that

curseth thee: and, in thee, shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

These words, I think, warrant us to consider the design, as three-fold; viz. The glory of God; the happiness of Abram; and the good of mankind in general.

First, *the glory of God*. This is the highest, the holiest, and the best end that can be named or conceived of by men or angels. And it is obviously implied, in the first clause of the passage of Sacred Writ, just cited: “I will make of thee a great nation.” That is, as the subsequent history authorizes us to expound the promise, I will distinguish thee and thy descendants from all other people, by my presence, my favour, my power, my truths, and my ordinances. I will make of thee a peculiar people—a nation of which I will be both king and lawgiver; a nation in which I will manifest my providence, my justice, my munificence, patience and clemency;—a nation with which I will deposit my oracles, and establish a covenant comprising blessings temporal, spiritual and eternal;—a nation which, though full of faults, and guilty of frequent partial apostasies, shall yet, in the main, be zealous for my honour, and for the purity of my worship. And who does not perceive that the glory of Jehovah was maintained and promoted in the world by these exhibitions of his character, and of his claims to the homage of his intelligent creatures? Once and again, had all flesh corrupted their ways, and forsaken the Lord that made them. Scarcely had the waters of the deluge dried up, when men, growing vain in their imaginations, “began to change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and fourfooted beasts and creeping things.” The Chaldeans paid divine honours to fire—the Persians worshipped the host of heaven—and Egypt ranked among her numerous divinities, the ox, the crocodile, and the serpent. So that, had not God chosen a people for his praise, and dwelt among them by the visible symbols of his presence, his very name would

soon have been forgotten and lost, amidst the rabble of imaginary deities, the spawn of human depravity and ignorance.

Secondly, *the honour and happiness of Abram.* "I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." If the Lord tries his people, and requires them to exercise self-denial, and to follow him in a way which they have not known, it is for their good, as they shall assuredly find in the issue. Abram was tried; and he was blessed—blessed personally and relatively, temporarily, and eternally. God manifested himself to him in a variety of instances: protected him by his power, and comforted him by his grace. Wherever Abram made any considerable stay in the course of his pilgrimage, there he built an altar unto the Lord, and there Jehovah condescended to accept his offerings, and strengthen his faith, by renewing the promises; affording him more enlarged views of his great and merciful designs towards him and his seed, and, through that channel, to a lost and guilty world. He was given to see the Redeemer's day, and made to joy and rejoice in him, as the desire of nations. "I will make thy name great." This promise has been clearly fulfilled. Abram, though not distinguished as a statesman, a warrior, a great genius, an inventor of arts, or writer of books, is, nevertheless, the most famous man that ever lived. Not only the twelve tribes of Israel, but the Arabians, his descendants in the line of Ishmael, glory in retracing their descent from the father of the faithful. The apostle Paul speaks of him in a way which shows that God delighted to honour him, and make his name great, to the latest generations, when he says, "believers in Christ are blessed with faithful Abraham." And again, "we are all the children of Abraham by faith." The apostle James, in a few short words, passes upon him an eulogium of rare eminence and glory: "Abraham was called the friend of God." James ii. 23. And our Saviour, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, makes Abra-



ham's bosom the emblem of heaven. Thus has God made his name great.

He was, also, blessed relatively. The covenant was renewed with Isaac—with Jacob and his sons. The families of Israel were protected in Egypt, and at the appointed time, brought out of bondage with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. A way was opened for them through the Red Sea: and, for the space of forty years, they were fed with bread from heaven, and furnished with water from the rock. To them, by the ministry of Moses, the law was given from the Arabian mount, and at length they were introduced into a goodly land, according to the promise made four hundred and thirty years before, unto their honoured progenitor, the friend of God. Here Jehovah dwelt among them, in the tabernacle and in the temple, in the Shechina, and between the cherubim, on the mercy-seat. What nation or people under the whole heaven, have been favoured like this people? To them, in the fulness of time, the Shiloh came, as to his own; and though, generally speaking, they received him not, yet it is remarkable, that from among them he selected the first ministers of his gospel; and the New Testament teaches us that, when that blindness, which has happened to them, in part, shall be removed, they shall be restored to their vacant place in the OLIVE TREE, and all Israel shall be saved.

But, finally, this call of Abram had respect to *the moral improvement and welfare of the world*—“Thou shalt be a blessing—and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Now there can be no doubt that Abram, like every good man, was a blessing to his family, and those who had any acquaintance with him. He may have been a blessing also, to many in later times, who have perused the history of his trials and his triumphant faith. But how are all families of the earth blessed, or to be blessed in him? Can this be in any other way than that the covenant established with him, is founded on the covenant of grace, of which Jesus Christ, his illustrious descendant, according to the flesh, is Mediator? This covenant

and its seal of circumcision will be the theme of a subsequent lecture. We only remark here, that in order to find any sober sense in this promise, it appears to us absolutely necessary to admit that it has its ultimate fulfilment in our blessed Redeemer; because neither Abram nor any of his descendants, except Christ, ever was, in any tolerable sense, a blessing, or means of happiness to all the families of the earth. The excellent Matthew Henry has three short remarks on the passage of sacred history which we have been considering, with which we shall conclude this lecture.

“Those who serve and follow God themselves, should do all they can to bring others to serve and follow him too. Those souls they are said to have gained: and we must reckon ourselves true gainers if we can but win souls to Christ.

“Those who set out for heaven must persevere to the end, still reaching forth to those things that are before.

“That which we undertake in obedience to God’s command, and a humble attendance on his providence, will certainly succeed, and end with comfort at last.”

## LECTURE XI.

## THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee; and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham: for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee; and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee: Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."—GEN. xvii. 1-14.

THE life of Abram is instructive, and deserving of special regard, chiefly, because it is intimately connected with the history of the church. In him was eminently displayed the power, the efficacy, and the

consoling influence of divine grace. And in him and his family, if I mistake not, we find the visible church, organized, owned, and guarded by the special favour of divine providence. Pious individuals there undoubtedly were in the world before this period; but they were in a scattered condition, and mainly distinguished from the mass of mankind by their personal integrity, and devotional habits. Whereas, in the days of Abram, we find a people called of God; made the depository of his truth and ordinances; taken into covenant relation with the Most High; and recognized, as his professed worshippers and servants, by a religious rite of his own appointment.

In the passage of Scripture now before us, we have an account of a transaction, which bears all the marks of a covenant. The design of this covenant, its provisions and promises, its seal and its sanction, with the practical lessons which it teaches, are the main points to which our attention will be directed in the present lecture.

I. We cannot think that the sole, or even principal design of this covenant, was to give assurance to Abram of a numerous progeny, and that he and his family should be protected and provided for, in their sojournings, and that they should, ultimately, be put in possession of the land of Canaan. All this had been promised once and again—nay, had been guaranteed by solemn compact, as may be seen in Genesis xv., from the 7th verse to the end. And God said unto Abram, “I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he (i. e. Abram,) said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?” Whereupon he is directed to prepare a sacrifice, consisting of several animals. He did so: and having disposed of the parts in due form, with the sections opposite each other agreeably to custom, a deep sleep and an horror of great darkness fell upon him; his senses were closed to all other objects, and the Lord revealed to him his designs respecting himself and family; taught him that they should be in bondage four hundred

years; but that, in due time, they should come into the promised land, where he himself should be buried in a good old age. A smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the parts of the sacrifice, as a token of the ratification of the promise. "In that same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river Euphrates." Now, let it be observed, that this sign was given to Abram, for the express purpose of confirming his faith in the promise, that his posterity should inherit Canaan. Nothing is said here, of all the families of the earth being blessed in him; no token is instituted to be applied to his seed, in their generations: a circumstance that distinguishes the compact, into the design of which we are going to inquire. In one word, temporal blessings only seem to have been the subject matter of the transaction just alluded to; whereas the *covenant of circumcision* has a deeper, a more lasting, and important aim, as we hope to show in the sequel.

Nor are we satisfied with that view of the transaction, now under consideration, which represents it as a renewal or formal exhibition of the *covenant of grace*. We suppose, indeed, that the mediation of Christ is the basis of this and all other favourable dispensations of Providence to any of the human family: for a holy God can have no intercourse with sinners, except through a Mediator, duly qualified to guard the rights of the divine government, while he saves the guilty. But the covenant of grace was formed in the councils of eternity, between the Father of mercies and his beloved Son, as the surety and Saviour of his people. It was in operation long before Abram was born. Its benefits had been applied to many individuals, by the Holy Spirit, even before the deluge. Abram himself, we are expressly assured, had the righteousness of faith, before he received the circumcision which is in the flesh. "He believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

He was, already, in a state of grace, a renewed and a justified man. A compliance with the terms of this external compact, therefore, whatever evidence it might afford of his piety, could not place him on safer ground, in regard to the salvation of his soul, than he occupied before it was propounded to him. What, then, was the true intent of the covenant of circumcision? What relation did it constitute between the parties, that did not exist before? If it was not a domestic and temporary covenant, securing to the patriarch a numerous natural seed, and to that seed an inheritance in Canaan—nor yet the covenant of grace, securing to the elect eternal life and blessedness, what was it? We answer, it was an exposition and solemn ratification of that remarkable promise given to Abram, when he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees: “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed:” “and the effect of it was to bring him and his family, with all who should join them, by making a like profession, into a *church estate*; i. e. it was an ecclesiastical covenant, by which Jehovah organized the visible church, as *one, distinct, spiritual society*; and, according to which, all his after dealings with her were to be regulated. Hitherto she had been scattered, and existed in detached parts. Now it pleased God to reduce her into a compact form, that she might be prepared for the good things to come. Since Abram was designated as the man from whom the Messiah was to spring; since he had signally glorified the Lord’s veracity, not staggering at his promise through unbelief, he selected this his servant, as the favoured man in whose family he would complete the organization of that church in which he designed to perpetuate the righteousness of faith. With this church, as with a whole, composed, in the first instance, of Abraham’s family, and to be increased afterwards, by the addition of all such as should own his faith, was this covenant made.”\* Such, in our apprehension, is its true purport. It is the sealed bond

\* See Christian’s Magazine, vol. i. p. 147, 148.

of union between the Almighty God, and that great and growing community, which we call the visible church, and which is composed of all people, with their families, who profess the true religion, and worship the true God, according to the plan revealed in the Bible, the statute book of Jehovah's kingdom.

II. The provisions and promises of this covenant are ample, and of the most momentous import. The Lord proclaims himself to Abram, as the Almighty God; the shield and exceeding great reward of him and his seed; and, hereupon, requires them—First, “to walk before him, and be perfect:” that is, to act as seeing him, their all-sufficient but invisible protector; to confide in his power, to believe his word, to obey his precepts, to celebrate his worship, and keep his ordinances pure and entire. Secondly, that they keep his covenant in their generations: that is, that they consider its great end and design; holiness of heart and purity of manners; that they apply the seal at the time, and in the manner prescribed, to the proper subjects; that they maintain the discipline of his house, and guard, with the utmost vigilance, against the neglect or profanation of any of the institutions of his grace. And, as the requirements are strict, so the promises are great and precious.

First, there is obviously a promise of protection couched in the proclamation already noticed; “I am the Almighty God!” United by covenant to the Almighty, Abram and his seed have nothing to fear. “The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” “Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!”

Secondly, there is a promise of large accessions to this community of the Lord's people: “I will multiply thee exceedingly; and I will make thee exceeding fruitful; and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.” And as a memorial and confirmation of this promise, the patriarch's name is changed from Abram to ABRAHAM, so as, instead of high father, to signify *high father of many nations*. This promise cannot relate to Abraham's

natural seed, because the benefits of this covenant were expressly limited to his descendants in the line of Isaac; and from Isaac downward, in the line of Jacob; Esau having profanely bartered away his birth-right. So that, by this limitation, Abraham was, literally, the father of no more than one nation. To the Christian dispensation we must, unquestionably, look for the fulfilment of this promise. The apostle Paul has expounded and applied it: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." It is, as the honoured father of all who believe in Christ, that Abraham is the *high father of many nations*.

But, thirdly, the most comprehensive and extended promise is in these words: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This promise concerns all the covenant seed of Abraham; but that seed, we have seen, designates all who profess the true religion, and worship the true God. Hence, it is plain that the people of God, at this day, have a right to plead this promise for themselves and their children. All Christians are Abraham's seed: let them lay hold of this covenant-promise; let them dedicate their little ones to the God of Abraham, and commend them to his divine care and influence. Be it your constant aim, Christian parents, to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; "The promise is to you and *to your children*." And if the Lord be your God, and establish his covenant with your households for ever, no essential evil can befall you; all things shall work together for your good; "the voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacle of the righteous."

III. The seal of this covenant, in its original form, was the rite of circumcision. "This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised." It were idle for us to inquire why God chose this strange and painful observance, as the



token or sign of his covenant. We may be sure it was not selected without good reasons. It was designed not merely to distinguish the family of Abraham from other nations, but to remind them of their native depravity, and of the necessity of self-denial, submission to God, and obedience to his commands, however irksome these things might be to their fleshly and corrupt nature. And, as an ordinance in the church, it certified to the seed of Abraham that the covenant with their progenitor was in force; that they were under it, and might humbly hope to partake of the benefits which it secured. And the apostle Paul, in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, has taught us that it was “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had, being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of *all them that believe*, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.”

This seal was to be applied to male-children, without needless delay, after they became eight days old; but not before that age: from which circumstance, it appears that this rite was not considered essential to salvation, else it would not have been permitted to delay it; for many children must have died before they attained to the prescribed age. We learn, also, from this provision respecting the application of the covenant-seal, that it is not proper to postpone the dedication of our children to God, in baptism, beyond the first favourable opportunity, which Providence may afford us.

Circumcision was to be administered to servants, by those who enjoyed their services, and had charge of their religious education and improvement. “He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised.” Alas! how little this duty of taking care for the morals and religious principles of servants, is regarded by many masters and employers now-a-days!

Finally, this covenant was guarded by a sanction, or penalty; and it was an awful and solemn one. “And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his

foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." The guilt of this neglect, undoubtedly, rested on the parent or master, not on the child; and the consequence was, the excommunication of both, from the communion and privileges of the visible church. Let it be carefully observed here, that a neglect of this rite is declared to be a violation of the covenant. God does nothing in vain. He institutes no needless ordinances; issues no superfluous commands. Let no one expect to go unpunished, who contemns his wisdom, or slights his grace, by neglecting the means by which it is ordinarily communicated. It is dangerous to live in the neglect of divine institutions; they are happily adapted to our circumstances and wants. Respect for the authority of God, gratitude for his goodness, and a suitable regard for our own peace and spiritual edification unite in urging us to walk before the Lord in all his statutes and ordinances blameless. "Ye are my friends," says Christ, "if ye do whatsoever I command you:"—"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."



## LECTURE XII.

### ABRAHAM'S FAITH TRIED BY THE VIRTUAL SACRIFICE OF ISAAC.

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, 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.  
—GEN. xxii. 1, 2.

FAITH, which is essential to true religion, is proved and developed by trials. The trials which Abraham

sustained, and the manner in which he behaved under them, enable us to understand, in some measure, why he is called, by way of eminence, "the friend of God, and the father of the faithful." He was distinguished, pretty uniformly, by an unshaken confidence in the divine testimony, and an unhesitating submission to the will of God. His faith had been frequently put to the test; but never in a manner so severe and extraordinary as in the instance now before us. Isaac was a child of prayer, and of great promise; and to part with him, in the ordinary way, would have been a heavy affliction. But that the father should be required to despatch his beloved son with his own hand, was a trial altogether without a parallel. Here was a case in which the divine promises and command seemed to interfere, and to be utterly inconsistent with one another; yet Abraham was promptly obedient to the heavenly mandate, assured that God would maintain his truth, and, in due time, display the wisdom and equity of the command.

This, however, is a difficult passage of Scripture. It has not only been excepted to by infidel writers, but many pious people have been at a loss to know how to reconcile it to the benignity of the Creator, and the rectitude of his government. The command is so repugnant to our feelings, and appears, at first view, to be of so bad a tendency, that one is tempted to ask, was not the patriarch under a mistake in believing that it came from God? may it not have been the suggestion of some malignant spirit, and have been intended to seduce Abraham into the perpetration of a deed, which would bring reproach upon him and his religion? In reply to this objection, which is indeed very plausible, we would remark, that it impeaches not only the character of Abraham, but that of Moses, the sacred historian. Supposing the patriarch to have been deceived in this matter, how came Moses to record the deception, and present it to us, and to all the world, as an express and peremptory injunction of Jehovah? If you say that Abraham was deceived, you give up the authenticity

of the Pentateuch, and admit that the writer of the first five books in the Bible was not only an uninspired man, but a man very deficient either in honesty or discernment. Nor is this all; the author of the epistle to the Hebrews is involved in the same condemnation: for, among the triumphs of faith which he mentions in the eleventh chapter of his letter, this is noticed with unqualified approbation: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten Son." That Abraham was fully convinced that the command was from God, is evident from the promptitude with which he proceeded to execute it. If it be asked, how he could know assuredly that God required this sacrifice at his hand, we answer, by an explicit manifestation of the divine will, such as impelled him, first, to leave "Ur of the Chaldees," and, afterwards, to go forth from Haran of Mesopotamia. God condescended, on several occasions, to make himself known to him in a very special manner. He did this in various modes; as, by symbols of his presence, by an audible voice, and by the ministry of angels. He had entered into solemn covenant with him, as the father of all them that believe, and as the representative of the visible church. And Abraham, as an evidence of his acquiescence in this covenant, submitted to circumcision; a painful rite—a rite which a sober man, at his advanced age, cannot be supposed to have accepted for himself and his numerous family, without a full and deliberate conviction that it was ordained of God for a wise and holy purpose. And, after all this, is it credible that the "high father of many nations" would be left to follow the suggestion of a lying and malignant spirit; and that too, in a matter of so much moment as the life of Isaac, the heir according to promise, in whom the holy seed, the church, was to be continued, and in whose family the ordinances of religion were to be maintained till the coming of Messiah? It is not credible. But, not to detain you longer on this point, the *result proved* that Abraham was *not deceived*. Had he been instigated

by Satan, to sacrifice his son, the deed would have been accomplished; for they who so far yield to temptation, as to make arrangements to comply with it, seldom stop short of the ultimate design of the tempter. But Isaac was not actually slain: the end being answered which God intended, Abraham's hand is arrested by a voice from heaven; a voice not of reproof, but of commendation: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him." Why? Not because thou hast been deceived, and art following the instigations of the devil; but, because, "*now* I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine *only* son from me." Now, if Abraham was convinced that this command proceeded from the Lord, it was clearly his duty to obey it, however grievous it might be to flesh and blood. *The known will of the Creator is and ought to be law to the intelligent creature.* Faith does not make void this law; genuine faith invariably yields obedience and submission. These are its proper effects, and where these are wanting, the existence of the principle is, at least, questionable.

But, it may still be alleged that, though God is to be obeyed in all cases, and in some instances contrary to those tender feelings which are connatural to us, yet, as he always acts according to the eternal rules of reason, he can neither act himself, nor require his creatures to act in a manner contradictory to those rules. "And as the slaying of a child is an obvious violation of the law of nature, which obliges a parent to cherish and protect his offspring, would it not be impugning the character of the divine Being, to suppose that he ever issued such a command as that now in question?" This is placing the difficulty in a strong point of light: let us see whether it be not capable of a rational and satisfactory solution.

That God acts, uniformly, on principles of the most perfect rectitude is indubitable; that he can neither *do*, nor command others to do a wrong thing, is also indubitable. But then it should be recollected that the rules which regulate his conduct have a bearing

on the whole universe, and are deduced from the infinite relations which his works and designs have to one another, and to the ultimate good of his kingdom, considered as *one immense and entire whole*. Now we cannot comprehend these vast relations of things, and, therefore, we cannot determine, in any given case, what would be right, or what would be wrong in the divine government, because that is conducted on principles of which we can form no adequate conception. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts, saith the Lord."

Even on the supposition that God had intended that Abraham should take away his son's life, there would have been no injustice in the command. The Author and Giver of life has a right to resume it, at what time, and by whatever means he sees fit. So that had the injunction been actually executed, we must have acknowledged it to have been wise, just, and good; because a divine command necessarily implies wisdom, justice, and goodness, though we may be unable to discern the reasons upon which it is founded. But did not this intentional sacrifice of Isaac give countenance to the practice, which is known to have obtained among some pagan nations, of offering human victims to propitiate their gods? Had the sacrifice been actually made there would have been some force in this objection; but as the fatal blow was arrested by the same divine authority that ordered it to be inflicted, the effect of the whole affair, as narrated by Moses, would, in our view, be to discountenance the practice to which the objection refers: Isaac is spared, and a ram of the Lord's own providing is offered in his stead. And this, most obviously and impressively, intimated that the God of Abraham delighted not in human blood; that he approved of inferior victims, and designed that these should serve as types and shadows till the fulness of time, when the true LAMB OF GOD should appear in the flesh, and shed his blood as the great and inestimable sacrifice which cleanseth from all sin.

As Isaac must have attained nearly, if not quite, to the age of manhood when this transaction took place, it is naturally asked why he made no resistance, but quietly submitted to be bound and laid on the altar? The only way in which we can account for this is, by supposing that he was an eminently pious youth; that he was satisfactorily informed that God required him to submit, and that he was endued with the devoted heroism of the martyrs; many of whom, even under the Jewish economy, as a testimony of their love of truth and duty, "were stoned, sawn asunder, and tortured; not accepting deliverance, that they might inherit a joyful resurrection." Josephus, the Jewish historian, taking his materials from the glosses of the rabbis, tells us, that Abraham made a pathetic speech to his son, on the occasion, exhorting him to constancy and submission to the decree of heaven; to which Isaac attended, says he, with a composure and resignation worthy the son of such a father. And upon this account of their mutual behaviour, (whether true or fictitious, we pretend not to determine,) Gregory Nazyanzen, an eloquent father of the Greek church, makes the following impressive remark; "All the strength of reluctant love could not withhold the father's hand; and all the terror of a violent dissolution could not tempt the son to move for his own preservation. Which of the two, shall we say, deserves the precedence in our wonder and veneration? For there seems to have been a religious emulation or contest between them, which should most remarkably signalize himself; the father in loving God more than his own child, and the son in the love of duty above his own life."

Whatever of truth may be in these representations, both father and son seem to have acted under a strong sense of duty, with a reverential regard to the *authority*, and a single eye to the *glory* of Jehovah. That Abraham expected his beloved Isaac would be restored to life, after he should have sacrificed him in obedience to the divine command, seems highly probable; not only from his remark to the young men

that accompanied them to the foot of the mountain, “abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you,” but from an observation of Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, xi. 19, “accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence, also, he received him in a figure.” And this hope would be not a little consolatory to them both in yielding a compliance with the painful duty to which they were now called, the one actively, and the other passively.

Having thus endeavoured to remove the principal objections, to which, at first view, this passage of sacred writ seems liable, let us try to ascertain the end, or useful purpose, which was designed to be answered by the wonderful transaction therein recorded.

The end to be answered, we suppose, was twofold: First, to afford to the church, and to all who should read the sacred story, an illustrious exemplification of the nature and energy of a true faith in God; secondly, to furnish, in the virtual sacrifice of Isaac, a type, or symbolical adumbration of our blessed Lord’s voluntary sufferings and death.

In the first place, this command was designed to prove Abraham’s faith, and to afford an exemplification of the amazing power of that divine principle. “God,” it is said, “did tempt Abraham.” To tempt, is a phrase used in Scripture in two senses; its most common meaning is, to suggest evil thoughts, or instigate to wicked actions. In this sense, it is never applied to the divine Being. “Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” James i. 13. The other acceptation, in which the phrase is used, is to *prove*, or *try* a *person* or *thing* by experiment. In this sense it is frequently applied to God, in his conduct towards mankind. And thus, he *tempted*, *proved*, or *tried* Abraham; not for his own satisfaction, for he knew what was in his heart, and how he would acquit himself in this trying juncture; but to make his example the more useful, “that



the trial of his faith, being much more precious than of gold, that perisheth, might be found, or noticed, unto praise, and honour, and glory;" that all future generations, reading the history of his *faith* and *obedience*, might glorify God in him, and look on his example as a shining light, placed by the hand of Providence, in the firmament of the church, to guide and animate other believers, in the intricate and arduous paths of duty through which they may be called to pass. As God chose to honour Abraham, by giving him the title of the father of the faithful, it was proper that the genuineness of his faith should be thoroughly tried; and it was tried in a way which proved it to be a divine principle. "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, on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." It is scarcely possible to conceive of a more trying case. The ligaments that bind the child to the parent's heart, are inexpressibly *tender* and *endearing*. We find it no small trial to part with one of our children, even by an ordinary sickness and death; if it be an only child we are apt to be utterly overwhelmed and inconsolable; the affliction whitens the father's head, and opens the fountain of the mother's tears. But in the case of Abraham it was an only son; a son of religious desire; a son given in an extraordinary way, and in consequence of divine promise. Nor was this all; he was a son with whose life and offspring the growth and prosperity of the visible church were, by God's own covenant, intimately connected. The patriarch might have demurred against the command, saying, not so, Lord, for then what shall become of thy promise? How will he be a father of many nations, when he is cut off from life? Especially might he have declined the office of priest, when it had been determined that his beloved Isaac was to be the victim. But no, he was obedient, not staggering at the command through unbelief. Nor is the painful service to be performed instantly; the mountain lies at the distance of some

two or three days' journey. Here was time for deliberation; the awful scene was continually in his mind's eye from the announcement of the decree till the third day, when the destined mount showed its summit above the line of the horizon. Still the faithful patriarch proceeds, submissive. At the foot of Moriah, the servants are ordered to remain till this mysterious act of worship is performed. The altar is prepared, the wood is laid in order; and now a dialogue ensues between the father and the son, which, for natural simplicity and affectionate tenderness, stands *unrivalled and alone*. "*My father! here am I my son; behold the fire and the wood! but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering!*" What mutual kindness! What meekness! What loyalty to the king of heaven and earth! But we forbear to darken counsel, by words without knowledge. Any attempt to give an adequate description of this interview, would be like an idle effort to give fragrance to the *rose*, or *colouring* to the *rainbow*.

God did provide himself a lamb; it is offered; Isaac is restored, in a figure, to the enraptured father. The hand of the Lord is acknowledged, and, as a memorial of this marvellous interposition, the mountain is called Jehovah-Jireh; i. e. "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." Walk, believers, in the steps of faithful Abraham, and you will find that the Lord will provide for you, and make all his providences harmonize with his promises. "Then shall ye know the design of the mysterious ways and dispensations of divine providence, if ye follow on to know the Lord." See to it that ye possess the faith of God's elect; so "shall your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Finally, from the typical action, which we have been contemplating, let us turn our thoughts, with devout admiration and adoring thankfulness, to that Great Sacrifice through which we have the forgiveness of sins, and the hope of life everlasting. Christ,

the only begotten Son of THE MOST HIGH, died voluntarily, "*the just for the unjust*, that he might bring us to God:" and now a voice from the excellent glory is heard, saying, "deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." Let us believe the infallible Oracle, and we shall realize the blessedness of him whose God is the Lord. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!"



### LECTURE XIII.

#### INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF ISAAC.

And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi.—GEN. xxv. 11.

It will be recollected, that we have already expended three lectures on the three most important events in the life of Abraham; i. e. his vocation first from Ur, and afterwards from Haran; the covenant of circumcision which God formed with him in relation to the promised seed; and the trial of his faith, in the intentional sacrifice of his beloved Isaac, who, as the heir and successor of his father, will be the principal subject of the ensuing lecture.

But here it may not be amiss to notice briefly, two or three occurrences, that took place towards the close of Abraham's mortal pilgrimage, which, while they tend still further to develope his amiable character, cannot fail to suggest some useful reflections.

Not long after the memorable transaction on mount Moriah, Abraham appears to have left Beersheba, and pitched his tent in Hebron, a town in the land of the Hittites, the descendants of Heth. Here he was visited by a sore affliction: Sarah, the wife of his youth and the mother of his Isaac, was taken sick

and died, at the advanced age of one hundred and twenty-seven years. How did the patriarch behave on the occasion? Like a tender husband he mourned and wept for her. He knew, and doubtless acknowledged, that this was the Lord's doing; yet he mourned and wept. The strength of his faith did not diminish his natural affection; nor are we forbidden to feel under our bereavements. We may pay the tribute of a tear to the memory of a departed friend, provided we neither murmur nor sorrow as they that have no hope. Abraham's grief was not so great, or so long indulged, as to disqualify him for the sacred duty of "burying his dead out of his sight." Our sympathies are excited to see the venerable man, in a land of strangers, destitute of a spot of ground in which to deposit the remains of his deceased wife. The people of the land were, indeed, hospitable and generous: "In the choice of our sepulchres," say they, "bury thy dead." This friendly offer was courteously declined; the right of burial was, in his estimation, a matter of too much moment for him to accept as a gift, while he had the means of procuring it by a fair and honourable purchase. Accordingly, after a negotiation of some length, conducted by both parties on liberal principles, and agreeably to the simple usage of the times, "the field of Ephron, including the cave of Machpelah, was made sure unto Abraham, for a possession of a burying-place by the sons of Heth." There the body of Sarah was laid to rest, "dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." And there it was, that Abraham began to receive the fulfilment of the promise—"I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."

Another thing, worthy of notice, in the conduct of Abraham is, the pains which he took in regard to the marriage of his son. Isaac must have been now about forty years of age. And as he had been selected as one of the progenitors of the Messiah, and as he was to have the chief management in religious concerns during his life-time, it was of importance that his

matrimonial connexion should comport with the end of his high vocation. The management of this matter was committed to Eliezer, the eldest servant or the steward of Abraham's house, under the solemnity of an oath. He was charged not to take a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of the Canaanites; but to go and seek one among the remote kindred of the family. The design evidently was, not to look for wealth and other fashionable accomplishments, but to procure a companion suitable for a pious man, and to guard against an alliance with idolatry and other forms of immorality and wickedness. Eliezer accepts the charge—proceeds to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, where, after referring the matter seriously to the disposal of Providence, his mission is speedily crowned with success. Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, and grand-daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, is obtained by consent of the family. We forbear any remarks on the manner in which this negotiation was conducted. It is narrated by Moses in a style of inimitable delicacy, precision, and simplicity. No person of taste and discernment can read the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, without being forcibly impressed with the piety and fidelity of Eliezer, in executing his trust; as, also, with the hospitality and mutual kindness of Rebekah and her kindred, while they submitted, quietly, to a separation which must have been exceedingly grievous, had it not been evident, that "the thing proceeded from the Lord."

We are, incidentally, made acquainted with Isaac's contemplative and devotional turn of mind. When the servant and Rebekah arrived at the well Lahai-roi, the place of Isaac's residence, they find him meditating in the field, at even-tide, a season highly favourable to retirement and religious thoughtfulness. Such a retreat from the noise and cares of the world, at the close of every day, would conduce not a little to his peace of mind and growth in grace. And, suffer me, readers, to recommend some such practice to you. It is as useful now, as it was in the patriarchal age. Secret devotion tends to prepare us for

public duty; it cherishes the pious affections—fortifies our minds against temptation, by cultivating a sense of dependance on divine aid—and by habituating us to live and act as seeing him who is invisible: and though we may not have a field to meditate in, yet we may all have a closet, and we know who has given this explicit direction, “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.” Matt. vi. 6. But to return:—Isaac approved of what the servant had done; and, convinced that the whole affair had been ordered by a wise and holy Providence, he received Rebekah, no doubt with suitable marks of kindness and respect, conducted her to his mother’s tent, and “she became his wife, and he loved her.”

Parents may learn from this piece of sacred history, how to advise their children on the subject of marriage. And let youth listen with filial reverence, to the counsels of experience and parental affection. And you will allow me to say, without any disparagement to those external accomplishments which are well enough in their place, that, in choosing an every day companion, a partner for life, a friend for adversity as well as prosperity, of all requisites, *piety and correct morals, good sense, and habits of industry,* are fairly entitled to the preference.

Some time after the death of Sarah, Abraham married a second wife, whose name was Keturah, by whom he had six sons. To these sons, when grown up, we are told he gave gifts or portions, and sent them away from Isaac his son, eastward unto the east country. This measure seems to have been taken with a view to prevent family dissension. The descendants of these sons of Keturah, together with the posterity of Esau, are mentioned, in history, by the name of Edomites or Idumeans.

But we have now reached the concluding paragraph in the long narrative of this good man’s diversified and interesting pilgrimage: “And these are the

days of the years of Abraham's life, which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost (i. e. resigned his spirit into the hand of the Creator,) and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron—which is before Mamre; the field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife." "Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord! Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them!" Long after the patriarch's decease, Jehovah proclaims himself the God of Abraham; and in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, our Saviour makes Abraham's bosom the symbol of heaven. May you and I, readers, be found at last among the "Many that shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. viii. 11.

"And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac." On reviewing the history of the early ages, we are pleased to find, amidst the wide-spreading desolations of sin, the noiseless but powerful operation of redeeming grace. The Lord has always had a people for his praise in our apostate world; and, in the darkest and most degenerate times, he has exercised over that people a very special care. This observation is happily illustrated, in that portion of the sacred story which is connected with the life of Isaac. In the preservation of the seed from which the Saviour was to spring, we see the hand of God often and signally displayed. May we learn to adore and trust the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things! His word endureth for ever, and his faithfulness unto all generations! Abraham, the high father of many nations, cannot continue, by reason of death; but Isaac is raised up in his stead. And as it had been with the father, so it proved with the son; God blessed him, even as he had blessed the father—not only with a large increase of worldly sub-

stance, but with abundant communications of grace, and with promises and revelations reaching in their design and import to the end of the world, even to the ages of eternity.

As Isaac appears to have been of a retiring disposition, so the history of his life is marked with but few striking events; and our notices of those few must be short and general.

He was encouraged by divine promise to expect a numerous offspring. But his faith and patience were tried, on this point, for about twenty years. Nor let it be thought that this was a small trial. To a man, in his circumstances, a desire to have children, was a religious affection; for had he died without issue, the promise had failed, the covenant had been broken. He, therefore, entreated the Lord, once and again; and at length, as if to enhance the value of the gift, it is granted, in answer to much prayer. Two sons were born to him at one time, which, though an immediate occasion of joy and thankfulness, proved afterwards a source of trouble. Concerning these two sons, it had been announced, before their birth, that they were to be the heads of two nations of different characters; that the one people should be stronger than the other people, and that the elder should serve the younger. In allusion to some extraordinary occurrences which happened on that occasion, the elder was named Esau, which signifies *red*, and the younger, Jacob, or the *supplanter*. As these youths grew up, they chose different occupations. "Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents." Each parent had a favourite. Isaac loved Esau, for a reason not very creditable, "because he did eat of his venison;" but Rebekah loved Jacob, we are not informed why, but, probably, because he was of a domestic turn, and gave her more of his company. But this favouritism is a bad thing in families; it produced mischief in this case; and it cannot fail to engender strife, jealousy, and envy, wherever it is indulged to any considerable degree. Parental affection should be like the wisdom



that is from above, "without partiality." That these two brothers did not feel towards one another as they ought to have done, is obvious; and that the blame of this, was partly attributable to the parents, is very probable. In that strange affair, the transfer of the birth-right, one scarcely knows which of the two is most censurable; Esau, for his profaneness, or Jacob, for his insidious craft and want of brotherly kindness; the divine purpose furnishes no excuse for either. God never required any of his creatures to do a wrong thing to accomplish his decrees. But why is Esau pronounced profane, for bartering away his birth-right? Because the first-born was sacred to the Lord; and because it was his privilege to officiate as priest of the family, and have the chief government in matters ecclesiastical; he had a right to the particular blessing of his dying father, that he might transmit to the next generation the promise of a Redeemer, and all the blessings of the covenant made with Abraham; so that, in giving up the rights of primogeniture, he proved himself a despiser of religion; a contemner of God, and things divine. "Thus Esau despised his birth-right," and for so doing, the apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, has called him a profane person, and has grounded upon Esau's bad conduct an exhortation, which evidently supposes that persons, under the gospel dispensation, may be guilty in a similar way. But how? What birth-right have we, which any of us would be so foolish as to despise? I will tell you, readers: many of you are the children of pious parents—of parents who professed to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; you were born in the visible church, and accordingly had the seal of God's covenant with his people affixed upon you in your infancy; it is, therefore, your birth-right to belong to that people whose God is the Lord. You drew your first breath within the sacred pale of the visible household of faith, and it is your duty to do the will, and keep the ordinances of God your Saviour. Have you all done so? Are you doing so now? How many baptized youth are

growing up in a state of unblushing conformity to the world? Yea, more; how many have become parents themselves, who have never felt or acknowledged their obligations to Christ by commemorating his death? How many are letting their children grow up unbaptized; and, therefore, without any visible connexion with the church of God? Is not this to despise our birth-right? I know there are those who are deterred from an open avowal of their faith and hope in the Redeemer, by scruples respecting their experimental acquaintance with true religion. To such, we would say; "Then shall ye know if you follow on to know the Lord." But there are some who seem to have little or no concern about their relations to God, to his church, or to eternity. If they were baptized in infancy, it is well; if not, it is of no great consequence; they eat, and drink, and play—forget the Rock that begat them, and the Lord that bought them; they expend their labour and thoughts for that which satisfieth not, while the meat that endureth unto everlasting life is utterly neglected. Angels may desire to look into the mysteries of redeeming mercy, but the wicked care for none of these things. "O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing!" Turn ye, for why will ye die! Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Why should you barter away heaven for a morsel of meat? As you would not join Esau in his sin and misery, or be numbered with the profane in the day of judgment, cleave to the God of Isaac; believe in Christ, and keep his precepts. God blessed Isaac, as he had blessed Abraham; so, if you choose the fear of the Lord, he will bless you, and keep you by his mighty power through faith unto salvation: "If thou seek him," as says David to his son Solomon, "he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

How affecting it is to see persons who have been born of pious parents; who have been taught in the Scriptures from childhood; and who have had all the

advantages of a Christian education, growing up in sin, wholly neglectful of their relation to the church, and of their duty to the God of their fathers! Whatever excuse may be urged by those who have been reared in ignorance, and led astray, from the womb, by the example of their natural guardians, the children of the visible church, the offspring of God's professing people, will surely be inexcusable, if they forsake the law and ordinances of the Lord's house, and pursue the paths of the destroyer. Let the rising generation consider this matter betimes. Dear young people, the goodness of Providence, anticipating your wants and foreseeing your danger, has placed you in the most favourable circumstances for securing an interest in redeeming love. Will you, then, O can you disregard the claims of gratitude—the grace of the Redeemer—and the counsels of parental solicitude for your eternal welfare? Are you bent on your own ruin? Are you resolved to press through all restraints, and make your way to endless perdition, in the face of all that cloud of witnesses which attest the turpitude of sin, and the peace and pleasantness of wisdom's ways? "O that they were wise—that they understood this—that they would consider their latter end!" Let young people imitate the devout and contemplative disposition of Isaac; and they will find it greatly to their spiritual advantage. Let them retire frequently into the field, or the closet of sober reflection, and it will, with a divine blessing, have a happy influence in discovering to them the vanity of the world; let them but consider seriously and repeatedly their latter end, and they can hardly fail to perceive the importance of preparing for death, and the solemn scenes of eternity. O young man, whose strong passions are hurrying thee on in the pursuit of pleasure, honour, or earthly gain, go sometimes and take a thoughtful walk "on the shore of that vast ocean (eternity) which you must sail so soon." Think of the day of judgment, and of the general resurrection, and of the righteous and irreversible retributions of the world to come. Push your

thoughts forward to that momentous period, when, at the sound of the last trumpet, "they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall come forth, some to everlasting life, and, O tremendous reverse! some to shame and everlasting contempt." See the countless millions of the human race starting into life; rising to immortality; and looking up to the descending Judge, with unutterable sensations of joy or grief, expecting from his lips the final sentence which is to fix their doom for ever; and while the awful scene is full and vividly in view, ask yourself whether you are prepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead, and to give up your account with joy, and not with grief.

"When rising from the silent tomb  
O'erwhelm'd with guilt and fear,  
To meet that last unchanging doom,  
O! how will you appear?"



## LECTURE XIV.

### LIFE OF JACOB.

Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.—GEN. xxvii. 28, 29.

ISAAC, though a man of eminent piety, was a man of affliction. It must have been matter of grief to him that Esau, his favourite son, discovered strong symptoms of profaneness, not only by selling his birthright, but by marrying into an idolatrous family. On one occasion we find him driven from Canaan by famine, and obliged to take up his abode for a season in the land of Philistia. There, by the good hand of the Lord, his wants were liberally supplied; but his pros-

perity soon drew upon him the envy of the Philistines; and, for many years, in the latter part of his life, he appears to have been entirely blind. Finding himself unable, in this condition, to superintend the affairs of his family, and the concerns of religion, he wished to resign the care of those weighty matters to Esau; but, by the overruling providence of God, the solemn charge was devolved on Jacob, in the words of our text, "God give thee of the dew of heaven," &c. One design of the present lecture is to inquire into the import of this blessing. But, before we proceed, two or three questions, arising out of the history of the affair, seem to demand some notice. Why was Jacob preferred to Esau, in the divine purpose? How came Isaac to be under a mistake respecting the decree of heaven in that matter; or, if he understood it, why did he aim to frustrate it? What are we to think of the imposition practised, by Rebekah and Jacob, on Isaac, in correcting his mistake? And how can we justify the conduct of providence in permitting its design to be carried into effect, by such means as were used in this case?

The first question we cannot solve except by referring the choice of Jacob, in preference to Esau, to the good pleasure of God. Jehovah is free and independent in all his designs and in all his dispensations; all creatures are his, and he has a right to dispose of them as he sees fit. On this obvious principle, had the preference in question respected the eternal and immutable condition of Isaac's sons, in a future state, we know of no good ground on which we could find fault with it: but, in our opinion, the preference was not so extensive in its design as to determine the everlasting destiny of either Jacob or Esau. No such inference can be fairly deduced from the divine declaration respecting them, while yet in their mother's womb: "The one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." God designed that Jacob, and not Esau, should form the next link after Isaac in the chain of our Lord's lineage, according to the flesh; and that the younger,

instead of the elder, should succeed the father in the chief management of religious and ecclesiastical matters. But this design no more determined that Esau should perish eternally, than the calling of Abraham determined the everlasting destruction of all the rest of mankind then living. It is true that Esau, so far as we are made acquainted with his character, appears to have been a wicked man; and if he served sin in the lusts thereof, he no doubt received its wages, which is death; but Jacob's being preferred, and destined to rule over him, in the family and in the church, imposed on him no necessity to be profane and do wickedly.

As to the second question which presents us with this alternative, viz. That Isaac was either ignorant of the divine purpose, assigning the paternal blessing to Jacob; or, knowing the decree, he aimed to frustrate it; we think it would be unjust and uncharitable to impute to him a wish to defeat or oppose the will of God in that matter, had he rightly understood it. We suppose, therefore, that he was in an error, that he verily believed Esau, as the first-born, was entitled by custom to the blessing; and, accordingly, would have conferred it upon him had not providence interposed. That Isaac's error was altogether blameless, in this instance, we do not assert; he may not have been as attentive as he should have been to the indications of the divine will; and, as he was evidently partial to Esau, his passionate fondness for a favourite son may have darkened his views of duty, and led him to mistake his own wishes for the will of his Maker. He seems to have been convinced ultimately of his error, and to have acquiesced in the divine disposal of the blessing, without murmuring: for upon Esau's application for the benediction, which had just been given to Jacob, the father says firmly, yet feelingly, as if sensible that he had heretofore been fighting against God, "I have blessed him, i. e. Jacob, yea, and he shall be blessed."

As to the intrigue and falsehood employed by Rebekah and Jacob, in this affair, we have no apology

to make for them; a pious fraud is just as flagrant a violation of the law of truth and honesty, as any other piece of deliberate and wilful deception. The deed of sale, ratified by oath, which made over to Jacob the primogeniture, even supposing the birth-right included the paternal blessing, conveyed no license to use unlawful and immoral measures to secure it. That end which cannot be accomplished without resorting to unlawful means, may, to say the least, be suspected of being a bad end; nor can any end, however great and holy, sanctify unhallowed means. Had they a full conviction that God designed the blessing for the younger, and not for the elder? Then they should have waited patiently for God to effect his own design in his own way. The Lord of all the earth will do right; his purposes are holy; his power infinite, and his resources abundant; he has means enough, always at hand, to accomplish his designs, without tarnishing his glorious goodness, or fixing a stigma on his immaculate purity. And, readers, while we thus censure the wickedness of Jacob and his mother, in this affair, may we not take a useful hint, even from their misconduct? We are often perplexed, and in straits—often at a loss to reconcile the promises of God with the dispensations of his providence. When this is our case, let us wait on the Lord, and stay ourselves on the Most High; if he assigns us a heavy cross, let us take it up, and bear it patiently; let us follow our blessed Master whithersoever he may conduct us, but let us never go before him, by the use of forbidden expedients, for the purpose either of getting rid of our trials, or of bringing about what we may believe to be according to the good pleasure of his will. Whatever may be our circumstances, either in temporal, or in spiritual concerns, let us confidently, yet humbly, commit our cause to God our Saviour, for “blessed are they who put their trust in him!”

But how shall we justify the conduct of Divine Providence in permitting its design to be accomplished by such means as Rebekah and Jacob used in wrest-

ing the blessing from Esau? This is a difficulty which belongs, in common, to several cases recorded in sacred Scripture; and though we may not be able to justify the ways of God to man, in the case now before us, or in any other given case, yet, that they are justifiable, and that they will be vindicated one day to the honour of the divine government, and to the entire satisfaction of holy men and angels, it is our happiness most confidently to believe. Let it be carefully observed, that the difficulty is not peculiar to the case now under consideration. God designed that Joseph should go into Egypt to prepare the way for Jacob and the rest of his family; but God never required Joseph's brethren to conspire against him, and send him thither as a slave.—It was “according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” that Jesus of Nazareth was to die, the just for the unjust; but the righteous Lord of heaven and earth never required Pontius Pilate to condemn the innocent, or the Jews and Romans to take him, and, with wicked hands, to crucify and slay him. So God designed that Jacob should inherit the paternal blessing; but who will say that he either demanded or needed circumvention and falsehood for the accomplishment of his design? In all these cases the human agency concerned in bringing about the several events, was volunteered. No necessity of doing wickedly was laid upon Joseph's brethren, nor on the murderers of our Saviour, nor on Jacob and Rebekah; they acted freely, deliberately, and voluntarily; their acts were their own, and theirs were the guilt and turpitude of those evil deeds, which the wonder-working hand of God overruled for good, and rendered subservient to his most holy and merciful designs. If you ask why God did not prevent the acts of these wicked agents, you might as well ask why he permits the wicked to act voluntarily, i. e. why he does not divest them of their moral character, and free them at once from all responsibility for the deeds done in the body. The power that educes good out of evil, that lays the worst actions of men under con-



tribution to the most worthy purposes of heaven, is, indeed, mysterious, and, to our feeble intellect, utterly incomprehensible; yet that there is such a power continually operating in our world, we as fully believe, as that the sum of all the parts is equal to the whole, or that two and two make four. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." Rebekah and her favourite son may have designed evil against Esau; they followed the devices of their own hearts; their motives may have been bad; their agency was unsolicited and obtrusive; the means they employed were wicked and unwarrantable, as appeared in the sequel, by their personal sorrows, as well as by the feuds and animosities which their unnatural conspiracy engendered: they repented, however, and both, we may hope, obtained forgiveness through grace. But the divine purpose was good; nor was it to be frustrated by the ignorance, or ill designs of erring mortals. The mistake of the fond father, and the pious fraud of the partial mother and her ill-advised son, are overruled by a wise and gracious Providence. Jacob receives the benediction, and, through him, it is conveyed not only to his immediate descendants, the heads of the twelve tribes, but to the seed of Abraham, the church of the living God, down to generations yet unborn.

Proceed we now to inquire briefly into the meaning of the paternal blessing: "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down unto thee; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." This solemn and religious benediction, was one of the distinguishing usages of the patriarchal or Abrahamic dispensation; the design was, as has been already observed, to transmit the promise of Canaan, of a numerous progeny, of divine protection; and, especially, the promise of that seed of the woman that was to bruise the serpent's

head, and in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed; as, also, to transmit from father to son the sacerdotal office, as it then existed; so that the son who received the blessing, was invested with authority to offer sacrifices, and preside, generally, in ecclesiastical concerns; and, along this line of succession, as far as it extends, we are to look for the lineage of him, who “came a light into the world,” and who is the Prophet, the High Priest, the King, and sole Head of the Church.

It is observable that the blessing here given to Jacob, is prophetic; and that it consists of three branches; viz. all needful supplies of worldly substance;—extensive dominion;—family pre-eminence, and great and lasting spiritual advantages. “God give thee, or God shall give thee of the dew of heaven.” In hot countries, where rain is less frequent than in others, the morning and evening dews afford an appropriate image of plentiful harvests and fruitful seasons. “And the fatness of the earth.” Canaan, assigned as the temporal residence of Jacob’s posterity, was a fertile soil; and, therefore, it is called “a fat land,” Neh. ix. 25, and the fatness of the land means its produce, in rich abundance. “Plenty of corn and wine,” are expressions of similar import. “Let people serve, and nations bow down unto thee;” this was fulfilled to Jacob’s descendants, when the Idumeans, the Arabians, and Syrians, were subservient to the Israelites, in the reigns of David and Solomon. “And let thy mother’s sons bow down unto thee;” this part of the blessing indicated the prerogative of Jacob, as having the chief authority in the family, particularly in religious matters. “Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee;” this is manifestly a promise of divine protection, in the form of a solemn warning to the world, not to treat the church of God with contumely or reproach.

To exhibit the sense and import of this remarkable and prophetic benediction, as fully as possible in a small compass, we would observe:—That the blessing given to Jacob in terms implying dominion over

his brethren, was a conveyance of authority in the visible church, and a transmission of the special blessing promised to Abraham, which related to Christ, and his kingdom. This prediction, then, had its full accomplishment, neither in the person, nor in the natural posterity of Jacob, but in that illustrious personage descended from him according to the flesh; and “who being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. ii.

Come the blessed day, when this glorious design shall be brought to pass, in the unbounded reign of Messiah, the Prince of Peace, and the desire of nations!

## LECTURE XV.

## JACOB'S VISION.

And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went towards Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and, behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.—GEN. xxviii. 10–15.

WE wish it to be recollected, that these lectures are not designed to be a commentary on the whole Bible; but to explain and defend a few of the most remarkable facts and doctrines exhibited in the sacred text—to trace the history of the church—to bring into view her form of government, and rites of worship—to notice the changes made therein, from time to time—and, particularly, to show the faithfulness of Jehovah, in fulfilling to her his promises, in protecting her, and in augmenting her advantages, increasing her numbers, and extending her influence, through successive generations, for the accomplishment of his great and merciful designs in regard to our guilty race. Our readers are not, therefore, to expect us to give them even the biography of the patriarchs, except in so far

as may be necessary to unfold the providence of God, as it has been employed in carrying into effect the stipulations of the covenant with Abraham, respecting the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ—the *seed* in which all the families of the earth are to be blessed.

Jacob had now obtained the paternal benediction. As the successor of his father Isaac, he was invested with the sacerdotal office as it was then exercised, and stood first in matters religious and ecclesiastical. He had used unlawful means to reach this eminent and honourable station, and he was therefore severely chastised for his sin, as will be seen in the sequel of his history. God, however, while he manifests his displeasure at Jacob's unrighteousness, by resolving to correct him for his folly and wickedness, nevertheless, recognizes his accession to the primogenial privileges, and, accordingly, renews to him the promises and engagements before made to Abraham and Isaac.

The occasion of Jacob's leaving his father's house, as we are informed in the close of the preceding chapter, was the envy and cruel hatred of Esau, who, under the influence of a bad heart, had formed the horrid design of murdering his brother, so soon as their father should be laid in the dust. The time fixed on for the perpetration of this deed of vengeance, shows Esau's dreadful wickedness, and entire want of affection for his mother: "The days of mourning for my father are at hand," says he, "then will I slay my brother Jacob." To prevent the execution of this malicious purpose, the *supplanter* is directed to retire quietly to Mesopotamia, and there remain with his mother's kindred till the violence of Esau's revengeful passion should so far abate, as to encourage a hope of mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. This precautionary measure, though it was certainly wise, in existing circumstances, must have been grievously afflictive to Rebekah, and, indeed, to all the members of Isaac's household, in whom the evil passions had not obtained an ascendancy over the sympathies and better feelings of nature. And from the readiness

with which Jacob consented to be exiled from his father's house, we may suppose he began to feel some ingenuous compunction for the bad conduct by which he had brought trouble, not only on himself, but also on his aged and beloved parents. "The way of transgressors is hard;" and, even God's own people, are not without some experimental acquaintance with the awful truth of this maxim. They sin often, but never with impunity. If they become remiss in duty, or violate any of the divine precepts, they are sure, either to be overtaken by outward affliction, or to lose that comfortable sense of an interest in redeeming love, which the pious heart prizes above rubies. While we view the father of the twelve tribes of Israel obliged to leave the loved scene of his youthful pleasures, and enter on a journey of three or four hundred miles, lonely and sorrowful, because of his sin and ambitious folly, let our fervent prayer ascend to heaven, that we may have grace to "do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God."

It may seem strange that Jacob, whose father must have been a man of wealth, should set out on so long a journey so destitute, and without a single attendant. That he should be dismissed quietly, and without a retinue or any great preparations, was proper, not only in order to avoid exciting Esau's envy, which a small matter might have drawn into open acts of violence, but that he, who was intended for future services of a trying nature, might learn to endure hardness in the school of adversity, and that the dependent circumstances in which he was placed, might afford him a strong inducement to repose his entire confidence on the care and munificence of heaven. Bereavements and privations, when sanctified, are blessings in disguise. Affliction often furnishes us with an errand to the throne of grace, and divine consolations are never more welcome to the soul, than when we feel the hollowness and instability of earthly enjoyments. The truth of this remark is strikingly exemplified in the life and experience of Jacob.

The only incident of importance, that occurred on

his way to Haran, with which we are made acquainted, is related in the text: "He lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." This was hard fare for one who had been accustomed to the comforts of home, and the assiduous attentions of a fond mother. But why should Jacob choose to sleep in the open air, in or near the town of Luz, where it seems probable he might have had more comfortable lodging? The fact may appear strange to us, because it does not accord with the usages of our age and country; but when the circumstances of the case are taken into view, we shall have no reason to question its truth. We need not suppose that he was unprovided with the means of defraying the expenses of the journey; but, in those days there were no inns for the entertainment of travellers, and Luz may not have been distinguished for its hospitality to strangers. However this may have been, the climate was warm, the air bland, and if the night were pleasant, a man, used to a shepherd's way of living, might sleep quite comfortably under shelter of a tree. Our sympathies are excited while we view the solitary traveller overtaken by night, reposing on the ground, with a stone for his pillow, and the sky for his canopy; yet, it is highly probable, that Jacob never passed a happier night in his life. His lodging in the open air seems to have been ordered by Providence, as a preparatory step to what followed: "And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it; and, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." Dreams and visions constituted one of the modes in which God revealed his will to man in those early ages, before the canon of sacred Scripture was completed. The design of the one recorded in the words

just recited, appears to have been to show that there is an intercourse maintained between heaven and earth—that God exercises a providence over the works of his hand in this world, and that angels are employed as the messengers and executioners of his will towards mankind. Of the doctrine of providence, we have a full development in the New Testament; but it is not peculiar to the Christian dispensation. It was gradually revealed, with increasing evidence, from the creation: indeed, it is a doctrine which is fairly deducible from the existence and perfections of the Creator. It is utterly incredible, that the only wise God would make, and beautify such a world as this, and then leave it, with all its inhabitants, without any further notice. This symbolical representation must have been in a high degree useful and impressive to Jacob, in his present lonely and afflicted circumstances. Far from his father's house and all the comforts of home, he was hereby encouraged to put his trust in the Father of spirits, whose tender mercies and watchful care are over all his works. Nor was this manifestation of the divine providence designed for the benefit of Jacob alone. All the Scripture is profitable unto all men. It is of extensive import, and intended for the use and instruction of mankind to the latest generation. Let us never forget or relinquish our faith in this important doctrine. Nothing else can afford us adequate support under the sorrows and vicissitudes of life. Through the mediation of Christ, our heavenly Father extends a vigilant and unceasing care to the children of men: blessed are they who repose their confidence in him. "His kingdom ruleth over all;" and he makes "all things work together for good to them that love him."

While Jacob contemplated the wondrous vision, he was addressed by a voice from the Excellent Glory. The paternal benediction was confirmed to him by God, who assured him, that the land on which he now lay, should be given to him and his posterity; that his seed should be numerous as the dust of the



earth; and that one of his descendants, according to the flesh, should be an extensive blessing, insomuch, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. Then follows this cheering promise: "Behold, saith the Lord, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." The subsequent history shows that these engagements were punctually fulfilled, and in their accomplishment that the providence of God was often and very remarkably displayed.

The effect of this vision on Jacob's mind was deep and solemn. He confessed the presence of the adorable Godhead. Grateful for the assurances of divine favour and guidance just received, he erected a monument to the honour of God, pouring oil upon it, agreeably to the usage of that age; bound himself, by a voluntary vow, to serve the Lord, and devote to his service and glory the tenth part of all his earthly substance.

It seems probable that it was on this occasion, and not before, that Jacob became a subject of true religion. Before this, he certainly gave little or no evidence of real piety; but henceforward, though some parts of his conduct may be excepted, yet, in the main, we find him faithful to his vow, and walking steadfastly in the commandments and ordinances of God.

Respected readers, have you all dedicated yourselves to the Lord in the way of his appointment? You too are pilgrims and strangers on this earth. You are all on a journey to the world of spirits: your days, like those of a hireling, will soon be accomplished:—Is the God of Jacob your God? Is religion—is salvation—is heaven your aim, and the object of your supreme desire? God, in the gospel of his grace, has uttered many great and precious promises. Have you laid hold of the hope set before you? Are the lives, which you now live in the flesh,

lives of faith in the Son of God? Then happy are ye: for the Lord will not leave you until he has done that which he has spoken to you of! And if any are not in this happy condition, let them make haste and delay not to “seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near.”

We can but barely glance at the remaining events of Jacob's life. Under the guidance of a gracious and almighty Providence, he reached Mesopotamia in safety, and was received by his kindred with flattering marks of kindness. He continued in that country about twenty years; acquired great riches; married two wives, Rachel and Leah, daughters of Laban, and had two concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah, the hand-maidens of his wives. He cannot be justified in yielding to the custom of polygamy and concubinage, which was then common. He had no divine warrant for so doing; nay, the thing is obviously forbidden, at least by implication, in the original institution of marriage: “*They two* (not they three, or more,) shall be *one flesh*.” The nearly equal number of males and females—the former being to the latter about as twenty to nineteen—strongly intimates the design of the Creator in this matter. But experience, whose lessons are uniformly according to truth, proves incontestably, that polygamy is unnatural, and of course, unfavourable to virtue, to happiness, and the best and dearest interests of human society. In the family of Jacob it was the source of more trouble and confusion than any other single cause, that is noticed in the history of his life. Indeed, it is a practice which for ever carries with it the undeniable evidences of its folly and pernicious tendency. Yet, as this custom did not involve the violation of any express moral precept then given, Providence seems to have intended that its ill effects should gradually prepare the way for its discontinuance and entire abolition. This has taken place under the Christian dispensation. “We have no such custom.”

While in Mesopotamia, the patriarch had born unto

him eleven sons and one daughter. On the birth of Joseph, who was the youngest born in that country, Jacob intimated to Laban his wish to return to Canaan; but Laban objected to his departure, rather from selfish than from friendly motives: "I have learned, by experience," said he, "that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." Jacob, however, continued a few years longer with his father-in-law, and was greatly prospered in his outward circumstances. His growing wealth attracted the envy of Laban's sons: idolatry began to get footing in his family: whereupon, being admonished of God so to do, and being favoured with a repetition of the promise of divine protection, he gathered his family and possessions together, and set out for his father's house. Laban, offended at his sudden removal, pursued him in wrath, and overtook him on Mount Gilead, where, by a special interposition of Providence, Jacob and his family were secured from danger, and a covenant of amity was formed between them. It is pleasing to see the unhappy difference terminating in a friendly manner; both parties pledging their faith, to be at peace, and to love as brethren.

Jacob's next concern was to meet his brother Esau in peace. The means which he used for this end were wisely selected, and completely successful; they were a friendly message, a rich present, and fervent prayer. The brothers met—mutually buried their animosities; and we find them, subsequently, united in paying the last tribute of filial regard to their deceased father. These happy events and kind deliverances Jacob ascribed to an all-wise and overruling Providence: for he was a man of prayer—a man who, ever after the vision at Bethel, appears to have cultivated habits of devotion, and to have enjoyed very intimate communion with God. His encounter near the brook Jabbok, with a personage called at first *a man*, and afterwards *GOD*, or, as some say (and we believe not without good reason) with the *GOD-MAN MEDIATOR*, we take to be a symbolical representation of the energy and prevalence of his supplications. To per-

petuate the remembrance of this trait in his character, as also to encourage other suppliants, his name was changed from Jacob to *Israel*, which signifies one who has power with God, and prevails.

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## LECTURE XVI.

### JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BRETHREN.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near. And he said, 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. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."—  
GEN. xlv. 4-8.

THE life of Joseph is one of the most interesting and instructive pieces of history in the Old Testament Scriptures. The style is uniformly beautiful, the incidents eminently touching, and the moral lessons conveyed in the inspired narrative, are, in a very high degree, practical and useful. But that which principally claims our attention, in this portion of the sacred records, is the providence of God, as it is manifested in the preservation and enlargement of the visible church. To this grand object, indeed, our views are to be chiefly directed in these lectures. We purposely avoid going into minute details, either in relation to characters, or difficulties, which occur in the holy Scriptures. Those who have the taste and the leisure for extensive inquiry on such subjects,

will find them ably and elaborately discussed, by Dr. Henry Hunter, in his "Sacred Biography," the Rev. Thomas Robinson, in his "Scripture Characters," Dr. William Bengo Collyer, in his "Lectures on Scripture Facts;" by Stackhouse and Burder, in their respective "Histories of the Bible;" and by other writers of distinction, that need not be mentioned.

In these brief sketches of Biblical History, our aim is to exhibit, in a plain and practical manner, the church of God, as distinguished from the world, by the revealed truths of which she was the repository, by her rites of worship, and by the special care of divine Providence, in guarding her interests, chastising her for her sins, and promoting her edification by the agency of a great variety of means.

That we may attend, profitably, to the general subject presented in the passage of Scripture now before us, let it be carefully noted, that the family of Jacob were, at the time referred to, the salt of the earth, in their *collective capacity*, though individuals among them manifested very little, if any thing, of the savour of godliness—that they therefore needed chastisement to bring them to a sense of duty, and to reclaim them from their evil ways—that they were, nevertheless, Abraham's seed, to whom the land of Canaan had been, long before, solemnly promised—that they now sojourned there, in the midst of idolaters, whose manners were exceedingly infectious—that it was, therefore, judged proper by the great disposer of events and of nations, that they should be removed to Egypt, where, by a suitable course of discipline, they might be prepared to take exclusive possession of the promised inheritance, and to occupy it agreeably to the intention of the divine donor; and, further, that Infinite Wisdom deemed it necessary, that one of their number, the most amiable, no doubt, of the whole family, the *father alone excepted*, should be sent before them, to provide for their reception and comfortable sustenance, during their feeble and defenceless condition. Let it be recollected, moreover, that the preservation of the family of Israel

from extinction, and from entire apostasy to the vices and abominable idolatries of surrounding nations, was intended to be, *ultimately*, as it has actually proved already to many nations, *a blessing of transcendent magnitude to the whole world of mankind*. The truth and ordinances of the living God, in which is promulgated the gracious plan of redeeming love, are benefits of inestimable importance to our benighted and guilty race. Now, if these oracles of truth and grace were to be conferred at all, they must, from the nature of the case, be deposited, in the first instance, with some select and particular portion of the human family; and, if so, what objection can be made to the children of Jacob, that will not lie, with equal force, against any other tribe or nation that ever existed?

It was the holy and immutable purpose of God, that his people Israel should go down to Egypt, and that they should be nourished in the land of Goshen until, from a mere handful, they should become a great nation. The preparatory steps taken, and the means employed for the accomplishment of this end, are marked by the same mysteriousness that characterizes all the works and ways of the unsearchable God. Joseph, the principal agent in the whole transaction, already bereft of his mother, must, at the tender and impressible age of seventeen years, be torn from the embraces of a fond father, bartered away, through envy, by his brethren, dragged to the court of Pharaoh, sold as a slave to the captain of the king's guard; and under pretext of a false and foul accusation, thrust into prison, where he languished for several years. Then, when he had been sufficiently drilled in the school of affliction, to bear, without serious detriment to his religious character, the sunny and soothing smiles of prosperity, this same Joseph is elevated, by a series of extraordinary providential events, from a dungeon to the office of prime minister of state, "a father to Pharaoh, a lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." In all this wonderful process, Joseph seems to have recognized, with unshaken faith and filial confidence, the hand of Je-

hovah; and, therefore, a feeling of revenge towards those who had been instrumental in procuring his degradation and sufferings, had no place in his pious and magnanimous soul. He did, indeed, use great reserve, and something like harshness and severity towards his brethren at their first visit, as we shall see in the sequel. But these measures were obviously employed to bring them to salutary compunction, for the wicked and unnatural part which they had acted, not only in selling him to the company of merchants, but in trifling with the feelings and disregarding the honour and happiness of an aged and venerable father. This end secured, their sorrow for their misdeeds being apparent, he is all forgiveness; and, instead of upbraiding them, he mingles his tears with theirs, and endeavours to make them feel that they are in the presence of a *brother*, and in the hand of a merciful and sin-pardoning God: "Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life."

The brethren of Joseph were certainly blameworthy in this affair, and that in a very high degree; for, although God in accomplishing his purposes, often uses the agency of the wicked, yet neither his purposes, nor the methods which he takes to carry them into effect, afford the shadow of excuse for human guilt. In the case now under consideration, it was the duty of these cruel brethren of Joseph to love him and treat him with fraternal kindness. The law on this point was plain, and plainly revealed. They knew not the decrees of God; those unrevealed determinations of the Creator were no rule of duty to them. In doing as they did, they acted freely, voluntarily, and without any other constraint than that which the strong bias of their own evil hearts exerted in producing their wicked deeds. They were, therefore, accountable, and punishable, for the wrong which they did, although God overruled their conduct and made it subserve, extensively, his own glory and the good of his kingdom. This principle is true and applicable,

universally. The divine decrees coerce no man in an evil course. Their fulfilment may be counted upon as absolutely certain; yet the movements of Providence, in accomplishing the good pleasure of his will, where intelligent creatures are concerned, are so wisely and justly adapted to their intellectual and responsible character, as to leave the sinner inexcusable and consciously answerable for all his evil thoughts, purposes and acts.

In following Joseph, rapidly, to the consummation of his wretchedness, in prison, where this lecture will terminate, it may be proper to notice some things that served as provocatives to the unkind and cruel treatment which he received from his brethren.

The father's partiality is the first that occurs, in the sacred narrative. Joseph was his favourite; as was indicated by the fine coat of many colours. The reason assigned for this preference, viz. "that he was the son of his old age," one feels inclined, at first glance, to admit as natural, and of some weight. But it is not valid; though quite common, in similar cases. The children of a family, like citizens of the state, have equal rights, so long as they are dutiful and obedient. Even after they have gone out from under the parental wing, they have still equal claims upon the parent's tender regards, though they may not be precisely alike deserving. A profligate child should be pursued by the advice, the entreaties, and the prayers of his parents, while life lasts; for who knows but regenerating grace may be granted in answer to the prayer of faith? If it be said, and it may be said with some truth, that, owing to our frailty, we cannot always regulate and control our affections according to our judgment of equity and fitness, we would only remark here, that parents certainly may and ought to *do justly* towards their children, if they cannot bestow on each one an equal share of affection. They may avoid giving tokens of their partial fondness, which never fail to produce envy on the one hand, and self-complacency on the other. The larger the family, the greater need there is of care in this matter.



Here Jacob erred; and his error, no doubt, contributed to his own sorrow, as well as to the depression, for a time, of his favourite son: "When his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

Joseph's own conduct, though in general remarkably correct and amiable, may, in one or two instances, have given some occasion against him. He reported to his father the ill conduct of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, while engaged with them in feeding the flock. For this he has been stigmatized as a "busy body and a talebearer." It is possible he may have been indiscreet and too officious in this way, for he was young and open hearted; yet we can discover nothing really censurable in his conduct in this respect. Children should not conceal one another's faults from their parents. Talebearing is wrong; it is mean, it is malevolent. But the purest benevolence, the most perfect kindness may prompt one to give information concerning the faults of a brother or sister, with a view to bring parental authority and influence into exercise for the correction and benefit of the offender. Were this principle allowed to operate in families, schools and colleges, the maintenance of good order and comfort in those little communities would be comparatively easy. It is next to impossible to support wholesome discipline in any society, where the members, substituting the whim of honour instead of the law of duty, hold themselves bound to conceal each other's faults.

Joseph's dreams tended also, in no small degree, to stir up the envy and malice that lurked in the hearts of his degenerate brothers. "They hated him yet the more, for his dreams and for his words." These dreams being prophetic, as the event demonstrated, the only error that Joseph seems to have been fairly chargeable with, in relation to them, was his *telling them to his brethren*. The interpretation of them was so easy, so much in his favour, and against their haughtiness, he might have been sure, on a little re-

flection, that the less he said about them, the better. There may have been something, too, in his manner of narrating them, which indicated a vainglorious, self-exalting spirit; yet it were more charitable, and quite as natural, to impute his conduct on the occasion to juvenile ardour and unsuspecting simplicity. Dreams, it is well known, was one of the modes in which God revealed his will to his servants, on some special occasions. The design, in this instance, seems to have been to support Joseph under the sore tribulation which awaited him, anterior to his promised eminence. Now-a-days, the Bible being given to us, as a perfect rule of faith and practice, dreams, visions, and strong impressions are not generally to be relied on; yet we would not altogether despise or neglect them. Useful hints may be taken from them. In so far as they tend to make us careful to regulate our tempers and conduct, agreeably to the written word, they are beneficial; but to be greatly depressed or elated by them—especially to pay more regard to these vague and dubious prognostications than to the precepts, promises and threatenings of holy Scripture, is *ridiculous, fanatical, wicked*.

The conspiracy of Joseph's brethren, not only against his honour and happiness, but his life, was defeated by Providence in a very remarkable manner. Visiting them at Dothan (whither they had removed with their flocks for sake of good pasturage,) with the kindest intentions, and in obedience to his father's command, instead of greeting him as a brother, "they say one to another, behold, this dreamer cometh: come, let us slay him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams; let us cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him!" This nefarious project needs no comment. It tells, in the simple language of inspiration, a tale of human depravity, at which the benevolent heart sickens and is humbled. But the divine purpose was, that Joseph should yet live, and go down into Egypt. Reuben is, therefore, moved, by what motive it is difficult to say, for he was by no means amiable, to propose casting

him, alive, into the pit, intending to release him, privately, and restore him to his father. The proposition was agreed to: and they, accordingly, strip the unoffending youth of his many-coloured coat, place him in the pit, and sit down to eat bread, when a company of Midianitish traders appear, and Judah, probably from a principle of avarice, suggests the idea of selling him; which being readily assented to, they draw the victim of their shameful hatred out of the pit, and sell him for the paltry consideration of twenty pieces of silver; the same sum though nominally different, as is supposed by able critics, for which Judas Iscariot betrayed his Lord and Master.

How vain are the devices of men, when opposed to the counsels of Jehovah! These crafty conspirators fancied that they had ruined Joseph's hopes of distinction and falsified his prophetic dreams, while they were in fact, executing the designs of Providence, by sending him into Egypt to save life. Thus the Lord makes the wrath of man to praise him. The wicked do not aim at the fulfilment of the divine purposes; they are actuated by selfish, sinister and impure motives; their agency, therefore, entitles them to no praise: nay, acting voluntarily, in pursuit of their own unwarranted ends, they are always blameworthy and justly punishable. God never required, nor inclined, by a direct influence, Joseph's brethren to sell him into Egypt. Their assistance was neither demanded nor needed; but being volunteered, it was used and made subservient to a great and good end, while, on their own souls, it brought an awful weight of guilt and wretchedness.

We shall not stay to animadvert on the shameful deception, which these men of wickedness practised on their venerable father, except to remark, that crimes have a strong and almost irresistible affinity for one another. One sin leads to another, and that other to a third, and so on, with augmented force, till, without the interposition of redeeming grace, the sinner becomes the bondman of Satan, and is led captive by him at his will. O youth, ye who are beginning to forget

the covenant of your God, and entering on the paths of the destroyer, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die!" Joseph's brethren began with envy and the use of reproachful language, and finished their shocking climax of evil deeds by intentional fratricide and deliberate falsehood, which, but for the kind providence and grace of God, would have broken the heart of their father.

The Midianitish merchants conveyed Joseph to Egypt, with their other articles of traffic, and there sold him to Potiphar, a principal officer in the king's army. How mysterious are the ways of Providence! Here is a lovely youth, of undoubted piety and high promise, the stay and hope of an aged father, not only, but of a large family, betrayed into the hands of mercenary strangers, dragged away to a foreign land, and there doomed to servitude! But let us judge nothing before the time. The Lord's way is often in the deep; but justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Joseph is cast down, but not forsaken. He who had been a faithful son, was enabled, by divine grace, to acquit himself in the humble capacity of a servant, with so much integrity and diligence, as soon to secure the entire confidence of his master. Potiphar, finding his account in the humble services of one so faithful to his interests, raised him to the office of steward of his house, and superintendant of all his domestics and domestic affairs.

See here the happy influence of religious principle. God was with Joseph, and made all that he did to prosper. An approving conscience, a good character, and a divine blessing, will make one useful and contented in any situation. Let servants and others, who occupy the lowly stations in society, remember this, and they will find little occasion to envy those of their fellow mortals, who move in the higher and more showy walks of human life. An honest, industrious, and trust-worthy servant will not go long unnoticed or unrewarded. "Let every man," says Paul, "abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou

called, being a servant? care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather: for he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man: likewise, also, he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." And let masters learn from this part of Joseph's history, to prefer pious servants. "The Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake." Godly servants are a blessing in any family; and such should always be treated with kindness and generosity. The more of genuine religion they possess, the more faithful they will be in the performance of their duty, and the more assiduously will they endeavour to promote the interests and happiness of their employers. Let such never be oppressed with too much hard labour; let them never be neglected in sickness or in old age; and, above all, let them never be deprived of the rest and religious privileges of the Lord's day.

The occurrence, which, while it illustrated the sterling excellence of Joseph's moral character, eventuated in his imprisonment, is related by the sacred historian in few words, and with artless simplicity. His "goodly and well-favoured person" excited one of the basest passions in his shameless mistress, who tempted him to sin with her in a way that shall not be named. But, behold, how good and necessary it is to have the heart well fortified by the fear of God and the love of virtue! The temptation, though presented in circumstances singularly embarrassing, was resisted, in a spirit of fidelity to his master and of piety to God, to which no language of mine can do justice: "But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I: neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: *how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" Mark here the genuine principle of obedience to the divine commands, and the grand reason why no sin may be indulged: **IT IS AGAINST GOD!** Yes, however much

wickedness may injure ourselves or our neighbours, it is ultimately and mainly against God. It is so, whether practised openly or secretly; it is so, even when it comes not into action, if it be cherished in our hearts. O that the devisers of mischief and the workers of iniquity would consider that "the darkness and the light are both alike to HIM with whom we have to do!

But Joseph's base tempter, in the affair just alluded to, disappointed and chagrined, on finding his virtue proof against the violent assault which she had made upon it, resolves that if he will not sin with her, he shall feel her vengeance. Accordingly, having contrived her story with great ingenuity, and given to it an air of plausibility, she takes the earliest opportunity of preferring her complaint against the hapless Hebrew servant. The project succeeds. The credulous husband believes the specious tale; his wrath is kindled against Joseph; and, without allowing the accused a hearing, "he took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound; and he was there in the prison;" where, for the present, we must leave him, after barely adding, in the words of Scripture, by way of relief to the painful sympathies, which have followed him thither, that, "the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison."



## LECTURE XVII.

### JOSEPH'S ELEVATION AT THE COURT OF EGYPT.

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.

GEN. xxxix. 2.

THIS passage of Scripture exhibits Joseph in circumstances very different from those in which we left

him, at the close of our last lecture. *There* we saw him immured in prison, and suffering, in his good name, under the foul aspersion of a worthless woman; *here* we behold him clad in the habiliments of honour, occupying the second station in the kingdom of Egypt—the temporal saviour of the Egyptians—the magnanimous friend and bounteous patron of his father's house. What hath God wrought! While we are delighted with the brightening prospects and growing influence of this good man, let us not forget the hand that is raising him up, to save life, and to prepare an asylum for the church, in a season of weakness, and exposure to the perils of idolatry and famine.

In noticing, briefly, the steps by which Joseph advanced from bondage and imprisonment to the chair of state, we shall have frequent occasion to mark the excellence of true religion; and to admire the providence of God, which so often brings extensive good out of partial evil, and makes all things work together for his own glory, and the happiness of his people.

The young Hebrew had been distinguished for his diligence and fidelity, in the house of Potiphar; and, when put in ward with the king's prisoners, the Lord gave him favour, in the eyes of the keeper of the prison, so that, in a short time, he was made, in some sort, deputy-jailor, having the charge and oversight of his fellow prisoners. This was an alleviating circumstance; and it doubtless gave him more comforts and advantages than he could have anticipated, in that situation. Thus, in the most unpromising condition in human life, God can make us useful, and cause our enemies to be at peace with us. "The Lord will give grace and glory to them that walk uprightly; and he who trusteth in him, at all times, shall not lack any good thing."

One of Joseph's extraordinary endowments was his divine skill in interpreting dreams. We call this a divine skill, or extraordinary endowment, because it was manifestly from God. Prophetic dreams were sometimes had by persons of doubtful, or even bad character; but the gift of interpreting them was

a species of inspiration, and was conferred on those only, whom Jehovah delighted to honour, in the accomplishment of his own great and holy purposes. The exercise of this gift, was made a means, in the wonder working hand of Providence, of Joseph's release from imprisonment, and of his elevation to the confidence and esteem of Pharaoh and his counsellors.

It happened that two of the king's domestic servants, the chief of the butlers and the chief of the bakers, for some misdemeanor, were thrown into prison, with Joseph, and, by the captain of the guard, committed to his special care. These men had, each a dream, in the same night, which gave them great uneasiness, as being, in their apprehension, ominous of their approaching fate. On observing the sadness of their countenances, he kindly inquires into the cause, and offers to perform for them, the office of interpreter; reminding them, at the same time, that "interpretations belong to God." The dreams are related with great exactness, and interpreted with equal precision. The butler's three branches of the vine denote three days, and the baker's three baskets of meats, the same period, within which time, the former was to be restored to his office, and the latter put to death. The event verified the accuracy of the interpretation: For "it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants;—and he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them."

Joseph, though far from being disposed to murmur against God, under his heavy affliction, nevertheless felt it sensibly, and desired, earnestly, to be released from his unjust imprisonment, so soon as this could be effected by fair and honourable means. He had been kind and attentive to the butler, while he was his fellow-sufferer; and, having just relieved him from anxious solicitude, by announcing his speedy restoration to liberty and favour with the king, his master, he very naturally expected a grateful return. He,



therefore entreated the butler not to forget him; but to use any influence which he might have, at court, to procure his discharge from an unjust and cruel imprisonment, which must have been, already, of several years' continuance. His appeal, on this interesting occasion, is couched in terms, which, for their delicacy and heart-touching power, cannot be surpassed by human language. Not a syllable is uttered against his cruel brethren, his despotic master, or unprincipled mistress: "But think on me, when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me; and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for, indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and, here, also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon."

One would suppose that such a request, made in such impressive circumstances, could not be forgotten. But, alas, the human heart is naturally selfish, deceitful, and unthankful. This much obliged cup-bearer, like a thoroughpaced courtier, when once raised to place and power himself, lost his sympathies for the interpreter of his dream—the friend, who had ministered to his comfort, in the time of his adversity: "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." Let us take occasion, from this instance of ingratitude, to charge ourselves never to grow neglectful of our *old friends*; especially, of those who may have assisted us, by their advice, their influence, or their charities, in seasons of distress: and, above all, let us never forget our heavenly Benefactor, whose goodness has attended us, in every trial, and whose tender mercies are continually over us. Ah! how many sick-bed resolutions, and solemn purposes of amendment formed in affliction, are broken and obliterated from our minds, on the return of health and prosperity! We feel, and often repine, under the hand of God, when employed in chastising us; but we are exceedingly prone to disregard it, when loading us with its bounties. Of the ten lepers, that Christ cleansed, on a certain occasion, one only retained, and

manifested a sense of obligation to the gracious deliverer: "There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

But should father and mother, lover and friend, forsake us in times of trouble, the divine promise is sure and steadfast; "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "He that trusteth in God, shall be as mount Zion:"—equally secure and immoveable, under the patronage of almighty power, and unchanging love.

The Hebrew captive had waited long and patiently, on the Rock of his salvation; and now the set time for his deliverance was at hand. "At the end of two full years," from the time of the chief butler's release, Jehovah, "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed," "spake once, yea, twice" unto Pharaoh the king, to give him a merciful intimation of a fearful calamity, which was about to come upon Egypt and the neighbouring nations. The scene of this vision is laid "by the river side, i. e. on the margin of the river Nile, on the annual overflowing of which, depended the fertility of the land in Egypt. By the kine which were seen, in one of the dreams, are, no doubt, meant the hippopotamus, or river horse, which inhabited the Nile, and, being an amphibious animal, came out, occasionally, to browse on the river's brink. The ears of corn, which constituted the matter of the other dream, were perfectly natural and expressive of the thing intended. The vision was repeated, to show the certainty and importance of the event, which it announced. Pharaoh's spirit was troubled with these visions of the night; but none of his magicians, or reputed wise men could guess out a satisfactory solution of their import. Then was the ungrateful butler put in mind of the long neglected "young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard;" with whom he had once been a fellow-prisoner, and from whom he had received repeated proofs of superior wisdom and kindness: "Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day."

An awakening sense of our sins, even at a late period, is better than continued insensibility, which is always attended by a neglect of duty: But a stupid, slumbering conscience, is a dangerous, though an in-offensive companion. It were better to have it thoroughly aroused; even if that should cost us strong crying and tears, with the loss of our dearest earthly comforts. Many a poor sinner has recollected his faults, on a death-bed, with very little evidence of genuine repentance, or hope of pardoning mercy. Consider this, betimes, ye that forget God, and neglect, in the day of your merciful visitation, the things that belong to your eternal peace.

Pharaoh the king, on hearing of Joseph's skill, in interpreting dreams, as it had been exhibited in the case of the cupbearer and the baker, ordered him to be brought out of the dungeon, without delay. The order is promptly obeyed: "He shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh." His conduct, on this occasion, was dignified, respectful, and altogether admirable. In reply to the observation, "I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream, to interpret it," he explicitly ascribes his gift in this respect, to the source of all good; "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." The dreams are then related, and an interpretation is given, substantially, as follows:—the two visions, with the two sets of symbols, are of one and the same import; and are designed to show Pharaoh what God is about to do. The seven well-favoured kine, and the seven full ears of corn *are*, or *denote* seven years of plenty; and the like number of ill-favoured kine, and blasted ears signify seven years of scarcity;—"What God is about to do he showeth unto Pharaoh. Behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: and there shall arise, after them, seven years of famine—and the plenty shall not be known, in the land, by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous." In the full persuasion of the correctness of this interpretation, Joseph subjoins to it his advice;

—that suitable measures should be taken to provide for the impending dearth; that the best course that could be pursued to secure this most desirable object, would be to gather the surplus produce of the intervening years of plenty into public granaries under the control of the government, and to appoint proper officers, with a discreet superintendent over them, to attend to this business, throughout the whole land. “And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this—a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou:—See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck: and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee.”

Here the design of Providence, in relation to the man whose tragical sufferings excite our sympathies, and whose patient meekness, under them, commands our admiration, begins to be unfolded. Joseph was destined to render an important service to the church of God, then in his father’s family; and, in rendering that service, he was to fill a station of perilous distinction; and, that he might be prepared to occupy that station, without detriment to his moral and religious character, it was needful that he should be long and severely disciplined in the school of affliction.

We tremble to see Joseph passing, so suddenly, from the extreme of poverty and wretchedness, to that of affluence and courtly grandeur; because human nature is, in its best estate, frail; and worldly distinction is a severe trial to virtue. But the same all-sufficient grace that sustained him under the pressure of sorrow and weakness, enabled him “to do

justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God," in his new and elevated station. The experience of the last thirteen years, spent in bondage and in prison had taught him the folly of trusting to an arm of flesh, and the blessedness of a good conscience and a firm trust in the living God. Let all who sow in tears, stay themselves on the mighty One of Israel, and, when the proper season arrives, they shall reap in joy.

Soon after Joseph's inauguration, as prime minister of state, he received an Egyptian name, Zaphnath-paaneah, i. e. Revealer of secrets, in allusion to his supernatural talent in the interpretation of dreams. He was also married to an Egyptian princess, Ase-nath, daughter of the Priest, or Prince of On, or city of the Sun. Joseph has been censured for marrying into an idolatrous family. We feel under no obligation to vindicate all his acts; for he was fallible. But, as he was, now, in a country of idolaters, into which he had been sent by divine providence—as his matrimonial connexion resulted in the birth of two sons, afterwards distinguished among the heads of the tribes of Israel—as he gave names to these sons, commemorative of God's goodness to him, in all his troubles, and, especially, as no blame is attached to him in Scripture, for this act, we are disposed, in the spirit of that charity which "thinketh no evil," not to judge him rashly. Had we a knowledge of all the circumstances of the case, we should, probably, be satisfied, that, in this, as in other important events of his life, the Lord directed his steps. His situation was peculiar, and the services which he had to perform in church and state, were, altogether, extraordinary; it would, therefore, be unfair to infer, from his example, the lawfulness or expediency of Christians intermarrying with professed unbelievers. Such heterogeneous alliances are unequivocally discountenanced, in the New Testament. Unity of spirit is all-important to the vigorous action of the bond of peace.

Our limits will scarcely allow us to remark on the policy which Joseph pursued, during the first fourteen

years of his government. It has been called in question, by those who are seldom suited with any thing, which they find in the Bible. He is charged with making the king a tyrant; and the body of the people mere vassals, dependent on the monarch for every thing; and, (which is most unpardonable.) it has been alleged, that he favoured the priests, by not taxing their land, or taking it in lieu of provisions, furnished during the famine, as was done with that of others, thus making them a privileged order. Whether any thing is said, in the narrative of Moses, to give the semblance of a foundation for such charges as these, the candid reader of the sacred volume will judge. In regard to the priests, it may be observed that, as they were the ministers of idolatrous rites and ceremonies, Joseph, a worshipper of the only living and true God, would not be likely to symbolize very closely with them, or, of his own choice, to show them any special favour. But, aside from this consideration, who, that is acquainted with the biblical account of this matter, does not know, that the immunities of the priesthood were established, by law, *anterior* to the commencement of Joseph's administration? "Only the land of the priests bought he not?" —Why not? "Because the priests had a portion assigned them *of Pharaoh*, and did eat their portion, which Pharaoh gave them; wherefore they sold not their lands." Upon the whole it would be difficult to mark out a line of conduct more wise or more humane than that which Joseph pursued, considering the state of public affairs as he found them, and, in prospect of the awful calamity which was coming upon the country.

During the seven years of plenty, a fifth part of the produce of the land was exacted from the farmers, and laid up in public store-houses; not to enrich the king and his servants, but to save life, when other resources failed. And when the scarcity commenced, and the people began to be in want of bread-corn, it was measured out to them, equitably: and, that a lazy leaning on the munificence of the state might

not be encouraged, money, and cattle, and land, and, in some instances, liberty were accepted for this seasonable supply of the staff of life: yet, these pledges might be afterwards redeemed; as no doubt they were, in many cases, by the deserving and the industrious.

But we hasten forward to the meeting of Joseph and his brethren. As this part of the sacred story is, perhaps, more familiarly known than most other portions of the Old Testament, owing, partly, to the strong hold which it takes on our natural affections, and, partly, to the pains that have been taken to illustrate and enforce the practical lessons which it teaches, it will be the less necessary for us, to dwell long upon it. The famine, announced by Pharaoh's dreams, extended beyond the limits of Egypt. The inhabitants of Canaan felt its distressing effects, and the family of Jacob, among the rest. Hearing that provisions were to be had in Egypt, ten of his sons were despatched to procure a supply for their respective households, Benjamin remaining at home, to assist the aged father in taking care of the rest. These ten sons of Jacob having reached Egypt, and having made known their business, were directed to Joseph, as were all others, who came on the like errand. Unconscious of the near relation which existed between him and them, they approach him, according to the custom of the times, with every indication of profound respect, "bowing themselves before him with their faces to the ground:" thus fulfilling the prediction in his dream of the sheaves, had, upwards of twenty years before, and for which they hated him. Now Joseph knew his brethren; but they knew not him. This is easily accounted for, from the difference in their ages, at the time of their separation, and from the effect which his courtly dress must have had in concealing the features, and changing the personal appearance of the shepherd's boy. But why did not Joseph make himself known at once? Why charge his brethren with being spies, and treat them, not only with reserve, but with harshness, putting them all in ward for three

days; and afterwards, retaining one of them in bonds, as a hostage; requiring the other nine, as a test of the truth of their statement, to return to Canaan, a distance of three hundred miles, and bring the young brother, whom they had mentioned incidentally, as being at home, with the old man, their father? This course of conduct seems strange, at first view. But it was not the effect of caprice, nor of the wantonness of power, nor of a revengeful and vindictive spirit, as is evident, from his loading their asses with corn, and returning the money, secretly, which they had paid for it. Neither was there any want of natural feeling on his part; for "he turned himself away from them, and wept," when Simeon was about to be bound, before their eyes. The whole of this apparent sternness was, manifestly affected; and the design was benevolent, as was mentioned in our last lecture. Joseph knew that these brethren were guilty men; that they had committed heinous sin, particularly in their treatment of him, and their venerable father, and he wished to bring them to repentance. Nor was he disappointed; for when they found that they must return home, without Simeon—"They said, one to another, 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:" and Reuben adds, "Behold, also, his blood is required!" And, again, when the restored money was discovered, in one of their sacks, recognizing the hand of offended justice, in their affliction, "their heart failed them, and they were affraid, saying one to another, *what is this that God hath done unto us?*" We have had no evidence, till now, of the penitence, or piety of any of these brothers. Here is confession of sin, at least.

Thus circumstanced, the nine brethren return to their home, full of painful musings, no doubt, on the wickedness of their past lives, and of gloomy forebodings of what might yet befall them, for the punishment of their sins. They reach their father's tent, and relate to him the sorrowful tale: Simeon is left, in Egypt,



and Benjamin must go back thither with us, or the hostage cannot be redeemed. Who does not feel for the afflicted patriarch, while, in an agony of parental solicitude, he exclaims—"Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not; and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me!" Yes, the beloved Benjamin must go; for the pressure of the famine is sore; and the governor of Egypt was peremptory, says Judah, "Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you."—"Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we and thou, and also our little ones: I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever." Then said their father Israel unto them, "If it must be so, now, do this: Take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and cary down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds. And take double money in your hand; (mark the old man's rigid honesty) and the money that was brought back, in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight. Take, also, your brother, and arise; go again unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin: If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." The second meeting of these interesting brethren, will be the subject of our next lecture. In the mean time, let us observe, as exemplified in the case of Joseph, how God makes all things work together for good to them that love him. Truly, "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

## LECTURE XVIII.

JOSEPH MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS BRETHREN, AND SENDS  
FOR HIS FATHER.

And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.—GEN. xlv. 12—15.

PRESENTS, of one kind or other, have long been considered, among the Eastern nations, as necessary to gain access to princes and other persons of distinction. The custom is kept up, at the present day. The agents of the American Colonization Society, in their treaties with the native Africans respecting a tract of land for the planting of a colony of free people of colour, from this country, had to pay their respects, frequently, in this way, to the kings and head men of the tribes, with which they had occasion to confer on the business of their mission. In conformity to a usage which had obtained all the force of a law, and which has continued from that day to this, Jacob's sons, by order of their father, prepare a present, of such delicacies as Canaan afforded, for the governor of the country, and, taking their youngest brother with them, set out on their second journey to Egypt, in the hope of redeeming Simeon, and of procuring another supply of provisions for their families. In the concise and expressive language of sacred Scripture: "the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph." "When

Joseph saw Benjamin with them," he determined to entertain them, in a friendly and hospitable manner; and, accordingly, gave orders to his steward to prepare a dinner, suitable to the occasion, by the proper hour. "Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon." In the meantime, affairs of state, as it would seem, demanded his attention. What important practical lessons the Bible every where teaches us! Here we are reminded that, the civilities of hospitality, and the charities of friendship are not to be permitted to interfere with due attendance on the duties of our station. We should not hesitate, if the case require it, to say to friend, or stranger, the claims of business, or the obligations of a previous engagement prohibit me the pleasure of your company and conversation, at this hour. Every good thing is beautiful, in its season. The right distribution of our time is indispensable to the despatch of business; nor are the claims of duty ever to give place to those of mere courtesy. So faithful was Joseph to the public trust reposed in him, that the arrival of a beloved brother, whom he had not seen for many years, did not make him regardless of the duties of his office.

When the men were brought into Joseph's house, agreeably to the friendly order given at their arrival. "They were afraid; and said, one to another, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks, at the first time, are we brought in, that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen." Conscious guilt is always timid, and apt to mistake even acts of kindness for tokens of approaching retribution. These men had become, in some measure, sensible of their ill-desert; it was, therefore, perfectly natural that they should be fearful, and apprehensive of some distressing mark of the divine displeasure, on account of their evil deeds: for, sooner or later, vengeance to the full, will overtake those who go on in their sins. The price, for which Joseph, and a greater than Joseph were sold, never afforded the traitors much satisfaction. Indeed, all ill-gotten gain

is unblest, and cannot profit the possessor, for any considerable time. A conscience void of offence towards God and man is better than rubies. "The righteous is as bold as a lion; but the wicked fleeth, when no one pursueth him."

The conduct of the steward, on this occasion, was soothing and amiable. Having heard their statement, respecting the money which had been returned in their sacks, he endeavoured to soothe their troubled minds, referring them to an overruling providence, in the whole matter, and assuring them of his master's kind intentions, he introduced Simeon to them, and gave them water to wash their feet; a usage which was common, and necessary to comfort and cleanliness, in those countries where people wore sandals, instead of shoes or boots, such as we are accustomed to.

Joseph, having attended to the call of public business, came home at the appointed hour, and received the present at the hand of these visitants, who respectfully bowed themselves to the earth before him; again, verifying the dream, which had been a subject of ridicule and an occasion of jealousy and hatred. And here ensued a painful struggle between Joseph's fraternal affection and magisterial firmness. "He asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well?—the old man of whom ye spake. Is he yet alive?—And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, *his own mother's son*, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son! And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother, and he sought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber and wept there." What a force upon nature's strong and kindly tendencies! Those tender inquiries concerning his venerated father, and the sight of his dear Benjamin, raised the pleasing hope in our minds, on first reading the history, that the veil was now to be laid aside, and that we should immediately, have the pleasure of seeing these sons of Jacob, so long separated and afflicted, falling into each other's arms, with mutual congratulations, and united

thanksgiving to the God of their father Israel. But no: the design of Joseph's concealment of his kindred relation to them is not yet fully accomplished. He, therefore, after giving vent to his feelings in his private chamber, refrains himself; resuming his usual self-possession and dignity of deportment, he comes forth, and orders dinner to be served up, in a style becoming his station. Three tables were furnished, on the occasion: one for Joseph, one for his brethren, and one for the Egyptians, who, from prejudice, or national antipathy, refused to eat bread with the Hebrews. The foundation of this antipathy is, probably to be found in the fact, that the Hebrews sacrificed, and ate the flesh of certain animals, which the Egyptians held sacred, and reckoned among the multitude of their idols. While at dinner, Joseph showed his peculiar fondness for Benjamin, by the bountiful manner in which he supplied him with the choice viands and delicacies of his own table. This may seem like a trivial circumstance; but it was one of the curious usages of the times, and was intended as a mark of distinguishing favour. It would, also, serve, in this instance, as a gentle test of the estimation, in which this young favourite was held by the other brothers:—"And they drank, and were merry with him." The Scriptures give us a faithful and unvarnished account of men and things. There are, in these inspired records, no pains taken to excuse, or set off to advantage, favourite characters. We are here reminded of the oblivious effect of indulging freely at the festive board. It is always dangerous; and often produces a degree of hilarity bordering on delirium, which renders men, alike, unmindful of duty, and incapable of performing it. These sons of Jacob had come a long journey, on important business, and in very affecting circumstances. They had come to Egypt to get bread for their families, in a time of distressing scarcity, and to procure, if possible, the enlargement of a brother, whom, on a former visit to this country, they had been obliged to leave in bondage. This was not a time for merriment. They en-

tered the house of Joseph in great trepidation, lest they should be detained as bond-men, and utterly fail of accomplishing the object of their mission; but, at the conclusion of this sumptuous feast, we find them drinking and making merry, although their business was not yet done, nor their danger past. The famine was still raging in Canaan—their aged father was praying in his tent, for their success and speedy return—the perils and anxieties of their wives and children at home, were increasing every hour. Their conduct, then, was manifestly exceptionable, and unseemly in this matter. Behold, here, as in a mirror, the madness of those men, who resort to intemperance, to forget their troubles; and who, in forgetting their troubles, sin against their God, ruin their souls, and beggar their families!

Joseph probably observed this tendency to lightness and dissipation, in his brethren; of which, he might deem it important, that they should be cured, before he made himself known to them. He might judge that *further* trials and disappointments were needful to prepare them to enjoy, with becoming thankfulness and humility, the kindly influence of that flood of blessings, which Divine Providence intended, in due time, to pour forth upon *them* and their *father's house*. Hence the project which he adopted for the detention of Benjamin. Soon after the social entertainment, just noticed, Joseph directed his steward to “Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they could carry, and to put every man's money in his sack's mouth:” and, he adds, “Put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn-money.” These orders being executed, the eleven brothers, laden with provision, set their faces towards Canaan, delighted with what had taken place, and cheered with the prospect before them. But they had not proceeded far on their way, when the steward receives orders to pursue them, and charge them with ingratitude and dishonesty: “Up, follow after the men; and, when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is

not this it in which my lord drinketh? and whereby, indeed, he divineth? Ye have done evil, in so doing.” It would, perhaps, be difficult to vindicate the whole of Joseph’s conduct, in this affair. The charge alleged against the men, the Hebrews, was the stealing of a certain cup, which the governor used for purposes that are specified by the steward: “Is not this it in which my lord drinketh?” There could be no harm in using the cup for that purpose; nor any thing amiss, in looking diligently after the rogue, if it was really stolen. But the steward adds, “and whereby, indeed, he divineth.” We suspect, with Poole, and other judicious expositors, that our translators of the Bible, have not given the true meaning of this place. The verb rendered, *to divine*, signifies *to inquire*, or *search* diligently: and that which is translated, *whereby*, might be rendered, *concerning*, or *about which*: Then the steward’s interrogatory would run thus: “Is not this it in which my lord drinketh; and, indeed, *concerning which*, as estimating it highly, *he will make diligent search*?” This construction is consistent enough with the 15th verse of this chapter: “Wot ye not, that such a man as I, can certainly divine?” That is, make strict inquiry after offenders, and not suffer them to escape with impunity? There is no evidence in the Bible, unless it be in this text, that Joseph practiced any of the superstitious, or idolatrous arts of Egypt; and we are satisfied, that the cup in question, was not used by him for any improper purpose. He was no magician—he affected no familiarity with evil spirits. For the power of interpreting dreams, as we have seen in a preceding lecture, he repeatedly acknowledged his dependence on the true God. But he did bring a false accusation against his brethren: he did order the steward to place the cup in Benjamin’s sack, and then directed him to pursue the company, and charge them with stealing it: and, in doing this, he did a wrong thing. It is of no avail to allege, in his defence, that the *end* was good, and that the whole matter *issued* happily. A good *end* can never justify the use of *unlawful*

*means.* All stratagems are violations of the ninth commandment;—they are lies, whether they be expressed in words or embodied in actions; they are, therefore, indefensible, on the principles of sound morality, even in time of war, and when practised on a public and avowed enemy. But it may be said, the hand of Providence was in this thing, to order it, and bring it to a happy and useful issue. This is readily conceded; and so the hand and counsel of God were concerned in the crucifixion of Christ; but who will undertake, from that fact, to justify the malice and wickedness of his crucifiers? The good which Providence educes out of the evil deeds of men, while it redounds to the praise of the divine wisdom and benignity, changes not the nature of those deeds, nor diminishes aught of the guilt, which they involve. Joseph was voluntary, and unconstrained, in accusing his brethren of a crime, which he knew they had not committed; and, therefore, he was blameworthy: let not his example be followed, or pleaded in similar cases. His object was benevolent, no doubt; but it might have been accomplished without the use of stratagem and false accusation.

The effect of this unrighteous contrivance, was, at first embarrassing and painful. On being arrested, the men solemnly declared that they were innocent of the charge; cheerfully offered to submit to a rigorous search; and proposed, conscious of their integrity in the matter, that the one, in whose possession the cup might be found, should be put to death, and that the others should become bondmen. These terms were not, indeed, accepted by the steward; but even his condition was distressing: “He with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.” The sacks are all laid on the ground, and opened; and the officer, commencing with the oldest, proceeded in the examination, without success, till he came to the youngest; when, to their utter consternation, the cup is found in Benjamin’s sack. What an unexpected and disastrous event! How changed their prospects! What gloomy apprehensions must have



filled and saddened their hearts! In token of deep distress and self-abasement, they rend their clothes, and lade their asses, and return to the city. Joseph receives them with an appalling sternness, and not without reproaching them, impliedly, for their supposed folly and wickedness. "What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine!" What a strange compound of inconsistencies is man! Joseph is doing violence to his own nature, and pursuing a course, in which we shall soon see him retracing his steps with penitence and tears. We know that his aim is good; but we utterly disapprove of the measures taken to effect it. *Truth* and *justice* are sacred things; and are not to be trifled with, on any occasion, or under any pretext whatever. This ill advised scheme for the detention of Benjamin, and his swearing "by the life of Pharaoh," which seems to have been a fashionable oath, among the courtiers, are blemishes on the character of Joseph, recorded and handed down to teach the world, that perfection is not to be found in any mere man. Of Jesus Christ *alone* could it be said with truth, that "He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." Joseph has been blamed, also, for keeping his father ignorant upwards of twenty years, of the fact, that the son whom the old man supposed to have been torn in pieces by some evil beast, was yet alive and well. For this seeming neglect of filial duty, however, there may have been weighty reasons, arising out of circumstances, with which we are not made acquainted.

When it had been decided, that Benjamin should be detained a bondman, in consequence of the cup being found in his sack, the other brothers, with Judah for their spokesman, make their appeal to Joseph's clemency and compassion, in one of the best constructed, most eloquent, and impressive speeches that ever was delivered. The whole address is exquisitely fine, and deserves to be in every one's memory. Let us attempt a brief analysis of it:—First, we observe, a respectful and conciliatory introduction; "O my Lord, let thy servant, I pray thee,

“speak a word in my Lord’s ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servants; for thou art even as Pharaoh.” On this introduction, Mr. Henry, the commentator observes: “Religion does not destroy good manners; and it is prudence to speak those fair, at whose mercy we lie: titles of honour, to those that are entitled to them, are not flattering titles.”

2. Benjamin’s tender age, and his being, as was supposed by the family, the only surviving son of his mother Rachel, are urged, as giving him some claim to compassion: “He is a little one—he is young compared with the rest of us—unacquainted with the world, and not inured to hardship, having been reared up by his father’s side: And his brother, (Joseph) is dead, and he alone is left of his mother.” This remark must have touched a tender fibre in Joseph’s heart.

3. Benjamin had been brought down to Egypt, in obedience to the command of Joseph, who had expressed a great desire to see him, and forbidden the others his presence, unless the younger brother came with them; and, now, that he had been brought through so much difficulty, at the governor’s urgent desire, might he not hope for mercy. But,

4. The grand argument, which Judah insists upon is, the insupportable grief which it would be to his *father*, if Benjamin should be left in servitude. “His father loves him:—his life is bound up in the lad’s life.” This the good old man himself had urged against his going down into Egypt at all; “If mischief befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” This consideration is, therefore, pressed with inimitable skill, and earnestness: “Now, then, when I come to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us; (seeing that his life is bound up in the lad’s life) it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, *that he will die*; and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow, to the grave.”

5. To show his respect for Joseph’s decision, as well as to evince his own sincerity, in begging for

Benjamin's enlargement, Judah offers himself to become the bondman, agreeably to the suretiship which he assumed, to gain Jacob's consent to his favourite son's accompanying them into Egypt. Thus the law would be honoured, and Joseph would be no loser by the substitution of the one for the other.

"Now," says the excellent expositor just named, "had Joseph been, as Judah supposed him, an utter stranger to the family, yet even common humanity could not but be wrought upon by such powerful reasonings as these, for nothing could be said more moving—more tender; it was enough to melt a heart of stone. But to Joseph, who was nearer akin to Benjamin than Judah himself was, and who, at this time, felt a stronger affection, both for him and his aged father, than Judah did, nothing could be more pleasingly, or more happily said."

But no human paraphrase, however studied and elaborated, can do justice to this address. It is truly a finished piece of intercessory pleading. It is all sheer nature—nature speaking the truth, in simplicity, under the influence of intense feeling, which is always eloquent. The concluding sentence is irresistible: "Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide, instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren: for *how* shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me? lest, peradventure, I see the evil that shall come on my father." It is enough. Joseph can no longer act a part. He sees that Benjamin is sincerely beloved by the other brethren—he cannot refrain himself—he weeps aloud, and between the convulsive sobs that break from his affectionate heart, says, in broken accents: "*I am* Joseph:—doth my father yet live?" No wonder his brethren could not answer him, but *were troubled at his presence*. They are petrified, shy, and incredulous—it cannot be, that this is our brother. Yes, it is even so.—"Come near to me, I pray you:—I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt: nor be grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to

preserve life.—It is my mouth that speaketh unto you.”—“And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck: Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that, his brethren talked with him.”

What a pleasing development of the deeply involved scheme of Providence! What a noble triumph of religion and fraternal kindness over envy, injustice, and cruelty! How delightful to see brethren reconciled, and dwelling together in unity; heart beating to heart, with commingled tears, and mutual forgiveness! who does not participate, in this feast of love? The mighty sensation is felt all about the court of Egypt. Even Pharaoh’s stout heart feels the kindly influence. Joseph’s brethren are come; and for Joseph’s sake, they shall taste the good of the land;—they shall be nourished in Goshen. Go, my faithful minister, says the generous monarch, take wagons—lade them with provisions, for the way—send for your father’s house: the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. It is done; as Pharaoh gave command. “So, Joseph sent his brethren away; and they departed; and he said unto them, see that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt: and Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not;—and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob, their father, revived. And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die!”

In our next lecture we intend accompanying Jacob and his family from Beersheba, of Canaan, to Goshen, in the land of Egypt. But it is time to close this, with a few reflections. How entertaining and instructive the brief biographical sketches, contained in the BIBLE! We have only touched, here and there on the thread of Joseph’s life, and yet, what an amount of useful and interesting matter has come under our notice! Scripture biography is not eulo-

gistic; neither is it romantic, or imaginative. It gives us a faithful delineation of human nature. It narrates the faults and foibles of its subjects, as well as their good qualities and praiseworthy deeds. Truth, and impartiality are its distinguishing characteristics. Thus, it gives us just ideas of men and manners; apprizing us of what we may expect to meet with in our intercourse with mankind, and guarding our minds against those wild and visionary notions, so often imbibed by the reading of works, whose object is to gratify a false and fastidious taste, rather than inform the judgment and improve the heart. We have, here, no faultless characters, for the reason that, there is no perfection in man; but we are shown, in numerous and impressive instances, that "godliness is profitable unto all things—having promise of the life that now is, and, also, of that which is to come." "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word."

## LECTURE XIX.

JACOB AND HIS FAMILY GO INTO EGYPT; AND THERE THE  
PATRIARCH DIES.

And Israel took his journey, with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob! and he said here am I: and he said, I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will, also, surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba; and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle, and their goods which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his seed with him: his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt."—GEN. xlv. 1-7.

IT is good to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways; for we have the sure promise that, if we do so, he will direct our paths. Jacob acted on this principle, and found it greatly to his advantage. The venerable patriarch, contemplating a removal into a strange land, deems it proper to consult God, and seek his special guidance and protection, amidst the perils and difficulties of the undertaking. Accordingly, having come to Beersheba, on the southern border of Canaan, a place noted, as the scene of divine manifestations to Abraham and Isaac, he offered sacrifices to the God of his fathers, and implored the heavenly benediction on himself and his family. His success and acceptance, on this occasion, were such as could not fail to confirm his faith and animate his hope in the great disposer of the lots, and lives, and destinies

of men. "God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt: for I will there make of thee a great nation." Observe, here, the importance of being in covenant relation with our Maker, and of serving and adoring him, as the God of our fathers. Jacob is directed in the path of duty, and assured of the divine favour and protection, with particular reference to the covenant-promises, made to his father Isaac. "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee," is a promise of vast extent, and most blessed import. It is, as we verily believe, to this comprehensive promise made to the church, then in the family of Abraham, that the apostle Peter refers, in his address to the anxious multitude, on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; *for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*" Let not baptized youth forget the obligation which their baptism lays upon them, to serve God in newness of life: nor should parents fail to plead this promise, in praying for their children. Having dedicated our little ones to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, let us follow up the solemn act, by faithful instruction, pious example, and fervent intercessions; and why may we not indulge the fond hope, that *our God* will be the God of our children, in their generations? It is not strange that Jacob should be afraid to go down into Egypt. It was the strong hold of idolatry, where evil communications would be very likely to corrupt the good manners of his family. He probably recollected, also, the premonition given to Abraham, that his descendants should suffer sore oppression, in that country. But, being assured of the presence and guardianship of the God of his father, who promised not only to be with him, but, there to cherish him,

and make of him a great nation, his fears would subside, and he would go forward, hopeful and submissive, committing his way to the Lord. Nor was he left in doubt concerning the issue of this perilous migration: "I will, also, surely bring thee up again, continues the Holy Oracle, and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." This was cheering intelligence; and, as we shall see in the sequel, God did bring him up again, in his posterity, and his beloved Joseph did close his eyes in death. With these decisive indications of the divine will, and ample assurances of the Almighty's care, the aged patriarch, with his family and the moveable property gathered in Canaan, sets out for the land of Goshen. How unsettled and liable to vicissitude is our condition, in the present world! Here is a man, nearly worn out, and sinking under the sorrows and toils of his pilgrimage, called of Providence to seek a new habitation in a distant country, at the advanced age of one hundred and thirty years! We may not expect a permanent residence here below; but we look for one, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. How mysterious, also, the dispensations of Providence towards his people, considered as a community in covenant with the Holy One of Israel! Here is the whole visible church of the living God in motion, to seek deliverance from the pressure of famine, in a heathen land, where we should naturally expect to see her merged and lost, in the common mass of human corruption. Such would be the anticipations of sense and unbaptized reason. But not so: her God is still in the midst of her; and, by his direction, she is going to an asylum purposely prepared for her, where she is to be fed, and reared up into a great nation.

The number of souls that accompanied Jacob into Egypt, is stated to be sixty-six; but, including Jacob himself, together with Joseph and his two sons, they amount to seventy. As there is an apparent discrepancy between this account and that which is given in the Septuagint translation of the Bible, and, by Stephen, in Acts vii. 14, where the number is stated



to have been three score and fifteen souls, we give, from Dr. Whitby's "Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament," the best solution of the difficulty that we have met with: "According to Gen. xlv. 26, all the souls that come into Egypt, from the loins of Jacob, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty and six; add to these the wives of his eleven sons, and they make seventy and seven; take from them Hezron and Hamel, not yet born, and they were only seventy-five. Now it was the design of Moses only to give an account of those that came out of Jacob's loins, as it is said, verses 6, 7, 8, 26, and, therefore, he excepts their wives out of his catalogue of sixty-six, and makes them up seventy, as before, verse 27. But Stephen undertakes only to tell us the number of those that Joseph called into Egypt, viz. his father and all his kindred. Some, therefore, of the list of Moses must be left out of Stephen's number, viz. Joseph and his two sons, who were there already, Hezron and Hamel, who were not yet born, and Jacob whom he reckons apart; that is, take out these six from the seventy, and there remain sixty-four; which, with the eleven wives of his sons, are seventy-five. Now that these wives were a part of those that were called by Joseph is certain; because he called Jacob and his household and all that he had, Gen. xlv. 11. And, thus, it appears, that Moses, the Septuagint, and Stephen, so far from contradicting each other, all speak the truth, in harmony." (See Whitby's Annotations on Acts vii. 14.)

The Israelites, then, at their entrance into Egypt, exclusive of Jacob himself, and Joseph, with his descendants, but including the wives of Joseph's brethren, were seventy-five in number; but taking into the calculation Jacob, and Joseph, with his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim, they would amount to seventy-nine.

When the family reached the land of Goshen, Joseph gave them a cordial reception, and spared no pains to make them happy. "He made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel, his father,—and

presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, *now* let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." What a tender and interesting meeting! The aged patriarch, delighted to embrace once more, his living Joseph, seems desirous of leaving the world, in his present happy frame of mind, lest he should be a burden to his children, or have to encounter further trials, which might disturb his peace, and tempt him to sin, under the growing infirmities of old age. Thus the good old Simeon, when he clasped the infant Saviour in his arms exclaimed; "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!" Other pious persons, in similar circumstances, have felt something of the same longing desire to leave this vale of tears, and enter into the heavenly rest. But it is better, and more becoming the servants of God to say, with Job, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." We should be willing to stay in this world, till we are regularly dismissed by the Author of life. We were brought into this probationary state, for wise and holy purposes; and so soon as these purposes are accomplished by us, or upon us, we shall be discharged from the labours of our heavenly Master's vineyard, and introduced into a state of final and eternal retribution, where every one will be disposed of, according to the decisions of infallible truth and perfect righteousness.

The filial affection and reverence, which Joseph manifested to his father, are truly admirable, and worthy of imitation. Young people are too ready to forget, or to neglect the obligations they are under to serve and honour their parents. Those, especially, who have risen, from humble circumstances to wealth and distinction in society, are very apt to grow shy and neglectful of their obscure relatives. This is a sin against nature; and it is exceedingly offensive to *Him*, with whom there is no respect of persons. We may, indeed, have occasion to blush and mourn for

the sins and ill conduct of our kindred; but we are never to disown them, or treat them with contempt. They are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh: and, if we differ from them, for the better, we should remember, that it is providence, or grace, that makes the difference. Parental love is the purest and most disinterested affection that glows in the human heart; and when unimpeded in its influence, by the baser passions, it prompts to services, watchings, and self-denials, which can never be fully repaid. O, with what wakeful solicitude does the faithful parent guard the child, during the period of helpless infancy, and along the perilous pathway of childhood and youth! In fact the assiduous attentions of our earthly parents, bear a strong resemblance to the tender mercies of our Father in heaven. They cannot be too highly appreciated; and we shall, doubtless, feel their kindly and obliging power in the future world. When tempted to neglect the wants, or the honour of those whose offspring we are, and who cared, and prayed, and toiled for us, when we were, from weakness and inexperience, incapable of taking care of ourselves, let us call to mind, not only the fifth commandment, and the example of Jesus, who committed his mother to the care of his beloved disciple John, but let us think of Joseph, who did not disdain to descend from the chair of state to embrace his father, though a plain man, whose "trade had been to feed cattle, from his youth." Here was genuine dignity—real greatness—honest nature, sanctified by grace, and worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. No factitious eminence of rank, or power, can exempt us from the sacred duties of filial devotion. The man, therefore, who from vanity, avarice, or any other motive, deserts his father or his mother, while it is in his power to shield, to honour, and to comfort them, must have made fearful progress in the road to confirmed depravity, and cannot be considered as deserving to participate of the endearments and the charities of social life.

--Joseph's kindness to his brethren was a noble in-

stance of the triumph of religion over the corrupt passions and propensities of the human heart. They had treated him with shameful and unnatural cruelty—had consigned him to slavery, and banishment from his father's tent; and now we see them at his feet, and completely in his power. He might avenge himself upon them to the full, if he were so disposed; but no, he chooses to act on the magnanimous and divine principle of overcoming evil with good. Not revenge, but forgiveness was sweet to his regenerated taste. No marks of condescension, no acts of brotherly kindness are too expensive to demonstrate his affectionate regard for them and their wives, and their little ones. He owns them at court, introduces them to Pharaoh, feeds them in their time of need on the finest of the wheat, and assigns them, by permission of the king, one of the most fertile provinces in the empire, as a possession and place of residence.

Joseph's good sense, in advising his brethren not to be ashamed of their occupation, is, also, worthy of notice. They had been employed from their youth, in the care and rearing of cattle. This they were directed frankly to acknowledge, when interrogated by Pharaoh on the subject, although "every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians." The ground of this antipathy to the character and business of a shepherd, is supposed to have been three-fold.

1. Feeders of cattle were, in many instances, a sort of freebooters, who committed such outrages as rendered the name and employment of shepherds odious.

2. Manetho, the historian, says, that at a certain period, hordes of marauders, under the name of shepherd-kings, from Arabia, Syria, and Ethiopia, whose chief occupation was to keep flocks, made an irruption into Egypt, which they subdued and ruled, with great tyranny, for upwards of two hundred years.

3. That which formed the principal occasion of prejudice against the Jewish shepherds, and which has been noticed before, in the course of these lectures, was the fact, that they sacrificed those very animals, the ox and the sheep, which the Egyptians held sa-

cred, and regarded as objects of worship. Hence Tacitus, the Roman historian, says, of the Israelites; "They sacrifice the ram, in order to insult Jupiter Ammon; and they sacrifice the ox, which the Egyptians worship under the name of Apis."

But, notwithstanding the shepherd's employment had been rendered odious, by the misconduct of some who followed that way of life, still, it was not, in itself, dishonest; and as Joseph's brethren had been accustomed to it all their days, he would not have them relinquish it for other pursuits, to which they were strangers, and for which they, probably, had neither the taste nor the talents requisite to success. This piece of counsel was wholesome and judicious; and it suggests a useful hint, on a practical and important point of duty. There is a fickleness in some people, which operates very injuriously, often, to their interests, both temporal and spiritual. Fancying that the business to which they have been trained is not so reputable, so easy, or so gainful as that of some others, they are ever ready for an exchange of place, or of employment; and, not unfrequently, such persons resign a small, but regular income, for the precarious fruits of wild and hazardous experiments. In religious concerns this restless instability of character does immense mischief. It keeps some, for years, in search of the best scheme of religion—the purest denomination of Christians—the most approved and most popular preachers. Persons of this description cannot be religiously edified. They are unwilling to locate themselves in any particular church, lest something should turn up to make them regret their choice. In the meantime, they either worship God no where, or they are going from Dan to Beersheba, and traversing the land, in its width, in pursuit of a *pure*, or of a *philosophical*, or of a *fashionable* church. The result, in some instances is, they get their heads so filled with the favourite notions, and distinguishing tenets of all sorts and sizes of religious sects, that they conclude religion *itself* is but a name or a form; and that one will be freer and happier unconnected with any body

of religionists—a perfect cosmopolite—a free-thinker, an atheist, or any thing else that may happen to suit a vitiated and untutored taste.

But, to resume the thread of history. The family of Jacob, following the good advice of Joseph, retired from court, tended their cattle, gave themselves diligently to the cultivation of the luxuriant soil of Rameses, and, under the smiles of Providence, they multiplied and prospered, beyond a parallel, for the space of seventeen years. And, now the time drew near, when Israel, the sorrow-worn and beloved patriarch, must die. He had not, indeed, attained to the age of his fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage; but a hundred and forty-seven years was long enough to have lived a stranger in a strange land. Of his diversified life, the seventeen years he spent in Egypt were probably the happiest; yet, being a man of faith, he was unwilling that his bones should lie there. Regarding Canaan, not only, as an inheritance promised to his descendants, but as a type of heaven, he desired that his mortal remains might be borne thither, and deposited in the cave of Machpelah, “which is before Mamre, and which Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place.” He, no doubt, intended this to remind his family that Egypt was not to be the place of their settled residence, and to encourage them to expect the fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers. Accordingly, Joseph is engaged, under the solemnity of an oath, to see the venerable old man’s will, in this matter, carried into effect; and, as might be expected, the dutiful son is all attention to the wants and wishes of his sick and dying father. The closing scenes of the lives of good men are, generally, edifying and impressive. This of Jacob is peculiarly so. Mark, how he exerts himself, on the bed of languishing, that he may recount, in the hearing of his children, the past mercies and promised blessings of Heaven, to him and to his seed after him, for many generations! His soul seems to grow vigorous, and lucid, and heavenly, in proportion, as his outer man fails. See, with what parental fondness

he embraces Manasseh and Ephraim, the children of his beloved Joseph, adopting them, as his *own* sons, making them heads of distinguished tribes in Israel, and preferring, by divine guidance, the younger to the elder! Hear with what heaven-inspired ardour, he pours his blessing upon the interesting group that stand before him! "And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel, which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth! And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers."

Jacob's last discourse, Gen. xlix., delivered in the hearing of all his sons, convened to receive his blessing and witness his departure out of this world, is one of the *richest, deepest, and most comprehensive* pieces of prophecy contained in the Bible. The things here foretold were, chiefly, to befall them "in the last days;" whence it is evident that they relate, not so much to the twelve patriarchs, personally, as to their respective families, in successive and distant generations. But as the illustration of prophecy falls not within the scope of these lectures, we shall pass over this interesting portion of the sacred text, with only two or three short remarks.

1. Simeon and Levi, for their base conduct towards the Shechemites, Gen. xxxiv. 25, are to be "divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel;" i. e. they are to be dispersed among the other tribes, and have no distinct allotments in Canaan: which prediction was literally fulfilled. The Levites were employed in the service of the tabernacle, and had no inheritance, except forty-eight small villages scattered through the land: nor had Simeon any, except a small share as a temporary accommodation, in one corner of Judah's lot, Joshua xix. 1; which, upon finding it too contracted, they abandoned, and planted colonies on a tract of

country, which they wrested from the possession of the Idumeans and Amalekites. 1 Chron. iv. 39.

2. Judah is pointed out, as the honoured tribe from which the Redeemer was to descend: "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies: thy father's children shall bow down before thee:—The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until SHILOH come; and unto *him* shall the gathering of the people be." This prophecy fixes the time of the Messiah's advent, with admirable precision; and its exact fulfilment, in Jesus of Nazareth, has been demonstrated with a force of argument, and a flood of light, which it is not easy to resist, without the aid of sophistry, or obstinate and determined unbelief. It will stand, while the world stands, a monument of Jacob's prophetic gift, and a memorial, to all generations, that the DIVINE DELIVERER *is come*, and that all ends of the earth should receive and adore him.

3. The benediction pronounced on Joseph is conveyed in a style of inimitable beauty, and seems to point, ultimately, to the church of God, under the emblem of a luxuriant and wide-spreading vine: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob: from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."

But we must take leave of the sainted seer, whose history has so much delighted and instructed us. He is going the way of all the earth—he is ripe for glory; let us observe the manner of his exit:—"And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace!" What a tranquil, desirable, easy, and hopeful transition from the scene of conflict to the seat of bliss! To expatiate here, would be to



enfeeble the majestic diction of the Spirit, and to check the flow of devout feeling that moves, and warms, and elevates the soul to heaven, and to God: "Let me die the death of the righteous; and let my last end be like his!" Israel's spirit is *gone*; and it is no sooner *gone*, than it is *gathered to his people: so near are we to the other world!* It only remains, now, to dispose of the mortal remains of this beloved and venerated man of God, in a manner suited to his inestimable worth; and Joseph who has put his kind, and filial hand on the eyes that were used to look upon him with complacent fondness, will not neglect the last office of love that can be performed for one so dear.



## LECTURE XX.

### JACOB'S FUNERAL, AND JOSEPH'S DEATH.

And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's house: and Joseph lived a hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up upon Joseph's knees. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.—GEN. I. 22-26.

WE have dwelt longer, already, on the history of this amiable man, than we originally intended. But it is difficult to tear one's self away from the contemplation of a character so full of interest and useful instruction. Three particulars concerning him remain yet to be briefly noticed, viz: The attention which he paid

to the disposal of his father's remains, agreeably to the old man's dying injunction; his generous conduct to his brethren and their families, after their common parent's decease; and his own departure out of this world.

1. When Jacob had resigned his spirit into the hands of Him who gave it, Moses informs us, that, "Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him." This was an unequivocal indication of filial fondness; yet, there was in it more of the delirium of grief, than of quiet submission to the will of God. The mortal remains of our deceased friends should be treated with every suitable mark of affection and respect; but to be making loud lamentation over them, and clinging to them, with a sort of idolatrous attachment, is not seemly; nor does it correspond well to the faith and hope of Christians. These lifeless forms are but the frail and perishable tenements of our departed relatives, and they are designed by the God of nature, to be buried out of our sight. The soul which wings its way to the Father of spirits, at the last stroke of the beating artery, carries along with it all that is most lovely and attractive in the human creature. The practice, therefore, of kissing the corpse, and of looking into the grave, after it has been laid to rest there, till the morning of the resurrection, had better, perhaps, be dispensed with; for, although it may not be sinful, yet it does seem like a needless aggravating of the anguish of nature, on such occasions, with very little effect, so far as our observation has extended, in mending the heart, or in disposing the survivor to prepare with diligence for his own final exit! We should do all the good in our power, to our friends, while we have them about us; and when on the bed of languishing, we should grudge no pains or expense for the recovery of their health, or the mitigation of their distress, nor grow weary in offering intercessions for the salvation of their souls: but are they, indeed, gone? It is Christian duty—it is loyalty to the King eternal, to say, and sing, submissive, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken

away: blessed be the name of the Lord!" Excessive grief, we will not say for the loss, but for the removal of our friends by death, indicates a want, or at least a weakness of faith in God, our Saviour:

" Good when he gives; supremely good!  
Nor less when he denies.  
E'en crosses, from his sovereign hand,  
Are blessings in disguise."

So soon as Joseph recovered himself from the first paroxysm of sorrow, he ordered the body of his dear father to be embalmed, according to the usage of the country;—a usage which, though it seems to have originated in necessity, was afterwards kept up, as a matter of pride and pageantry. The necessity of using some means of preserving dead bodies from putrefaction, originated in the overflowing of the Nile, which rose and spread over the best part of Egypt, periodically, to the height of from twelve to sixteen cubits, when interment was impossible, till the waters had subsided. The process of embalming is described, with minuteness, by Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and others; but we have only room to observe, that the effect was similar to that of tanning. The object was, to remove the juices of the animal substance, and close up the pores of the skin, so as to render it impervious to air and water. This was effected by the abundant and long continued use of certain kinds of spicery and salts, after the body had been thoroughly cleansed, and otherwise prepared for the application. The ceremony was less or more expensive and tedious, in proportion to the distinction and supposed worth of the deceased. The embalming of Jacob's body was necessary, as it was to be removed to Canaan; and, in his case, neither pains nor expense seems to have been spared. The whole process occupied forty days; "and the Egyptians mourned for him three score and ten days:" i. e. thirty days, in addition to those spent in the embalming. And now, the body, thus prepared, is to be conveyed to the cave of Machpelah. But Joseph, who has charge of the funeral rites, will not proceed, without leave of the

king; and as no one, in the habiliments of mourning, was allowed to come into the royal presence, a messenger is sent with this respectful and touching request: "Now, therefore, let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again." "Go up, says the generous prince, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear. And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt; and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house;—and there went up with him, both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company." Here is the most costly, if not the most splendid funeral procession, that we have ever heard of. Not only the numerous relatives of Israel and Joseph, by consanguinity and marriage, but the courtiers, the servants, and household of Pharaoh, with all the elders or chief men of the whole land of Egypt, are moving in order, and with tokens of the profoundest respect for the memory of the deceased, to the place of burial, at the distance of at least three hundred miles. The whole of the funeral ceremonies, including the embalming of the body, the procession, and the interment, must have occupied several months; and the expense, in time, provision, horsemen and chariots could scarcely be calculated. This is noticed, in Scripture, not as a commendable thing, or as an example to be imitated, (for Jacob's was an Egyptian funeral) but to show that genuine goodness of character is venerable, and capable of commanding the homage and respect even of a wicked and idolatrous people. With Jacob, the Egyptians could have had but a slight acquaintance; but the father of such a man as *Joseph*—the faithful servant, the heaven-taught interpreter of dreams, the philanthropist, and the upright statesman, was not to be buried, without suitable marks of respect for the tried *excellence* of the son, if not for the *piety* and *humble greatness* of the father. It is pleasing to see the memory of the beloved patriarch honoured, even in a strange land, and by a pagan people, for he was

a good man—a man of God, and a man of renown immortal; but it should be remembered that neither gorgeous funerals, nor elaborated eulogies can confer posthumous worth on one, who, while living, was useless or mischievous to society. Many a wretch, whom the world was quite glad to get rid of, has been consigned to the dust with imposing tokens of regret at his removal, and of esteem for his memory. But it is all a vain show. Personal worth is an intrinsic thing. If a man will live to himself, and to the gratification of his lusts;—if he will pursue the objects of an unsanctified ambition, and will not contribute his part towards the advancement of the interests of truth, righteousness, piety and humanity, during his life-time, you may spend a fortune on his obsequies, and erect a mausoleum over his ashes, but you cannot raise one emotion of respect for him in the minds of those who knew his manner of life, nor can you break, or in anywise alter the adamantine seal which death fixes on his character. “The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.” Prov. x. 7.

When the funeral procession of Jacob had reached Canaan, it halted at the threshing-floor of a man, named Atad, near Jericho, on the west side of the river Jordan. It was usual in that country, to have threshing-floors, or places for treading out their grain in the open field: and Atad was probably an able farmer, and could furnish the great company with such accommodations as were requisite for themselves and their horses, that they might take some rest, after a long, fatiguing journey, and make the necessary preparation for proceeding to the place of interment, yet several miles distant. Here Joseph ordered a special mourning of seven days continuance, agreeably to the divinely instituted usage of the house of Israel. This observance was so solemn and impressive, as to attract the notice of the Canaanites, who pronounced it “a grievous mourning;” and to perpetuate the remembrance of it, Atad’s threshing-floor was called by a new name, Abel-mizraim, i. e. the

mourning of the Egyptians. This hallowed season of affectionate wailing ended, the sons of Jacob, with their numerous attendants, moved forward, and did according as their lamented father had commanded them; they "buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah:" "dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," to mingle and rest till the morning of the resurrection, with the mouldering remains of Abraham and Isaac, Rebekah and Leah, his beloved kindred, whose bodies had taken peaceable possession of the promised land before him, and whose souls, gathered to their people, had already received his happy spirit into everlasting habitations in the kingdom of glory.

This last office of filial devotion performed, Joseph returns to his place, and resumes his duties agreeably to promise, at the court of Egypt. But, now, that their father, the common object of veneration and centre of union, is removed, Joseph's brethren become uneasy, lest he should take advantage of their dependent condition, to avenge upon them the evil which their own consciences fearfully reminded them, that they had done unto him. They, accordingly, go in a body and prostrate themselves before him, confessing their misdeeds, offering to become his servants; and, in the name of their father, and their father's God, imploring forgiveness, and further protection: which brings us to notice,

2. His treatment of these offending, but humbled and conscience-smitten brothers.—We have had occasion to observe and admire his conduct in this respect, before; we shall therefore content ourselves, at present, with a very few additional remarks. The forgiveness of injuries was manifestly an article in Joseph's creed, which had thoroughly transfused its kindly influence into the temper of his heart. The injustice and cruelty which he received from sinners, were regarded by him as the *rod*, in a *divine hand*. To that hand his eye was continually directed for support and deliverance. His views rose above instruments and second causes, up to the grand mover and controller of all events; and this devout habit of

regarding the Lord's hand in every thing that befell him, whether prosperous or adverse, gave him a noble superiority to the spirit and maxims of the world. He would rather *suffer* wrong, than run the risk of *doing* wrong, in attempting to vindicate his rights, or take vengeance on his adversaries. He was willing to refer his cause to the Searcher of hearts, and quietly to await the decisions of the final judgment. Hence, we find him saying, with tears, to his suppliant brethren, "Fear not; for am I in the place of God?" That is, Is it for me to seek revenge? Doth not vengeance belong to God? So far as I am concerned, I freely forgive you, and am heartily disposed to do you good, and not evil. But, if you would have peace of conscience, and desire that your sins may be so pardoned, as that they shall not rise up in judgment against you at another day, you must ask pardon of *Him* who hath power to forgive sins, and who hath power, also, to destroy both soul and body in hell. And, here, again, he refers them to the gracious designs, and overruling Providence of heaven, in permitting them to treat him, as they had done: "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." This language conveys no apology for their sin; their evil intention involves guilt and proves them blameworthy: but their minds are directed to a wonder-working Providence, as comprising in its mighty sway all possible occurrences, and conducting them, eventually, to great and holy ends. And now, to put the hearts of these trembling brothers at rest, in regard to his disposition towards them and their families, he offers them more than their request; "Fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." Here we see brotherly kindness and genuine magnanimity beautifully blended, and shedding a glory, the one upon the other. What a fine exemplification of Paul's maxim: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." Joseph's repeated

acts of generous beneficence operated on the hard-heartedness of his brethren, like fire upon the fusible metals. They, at first, felt the operation to be painful, as it brought them to serious reflection, and covered them with shame for their enormous offences: but, in the issue, it proved salutary. It mollified, and melted them down, as into a new mould; and resulted in a perfect reconciliation, and mutual confidence between them and their much injured brother. Evil, in this instance, was fairly overcome with good. Blessed triumph! Let us go and do likewise, to all that have wronged, or offended us. To pass by an injury is the property of a great soul: to take fire, and insist on satisfaction for offences, sometimes imaginary, and when real and intended, are often the effect of passion, which, if allowed a little time, would subside and relent, betrays a small mind and a corrupt heart. Revenge is a spirit of darkness;—forgiveness, an angel—a messenger of peace, from the region of love divine.

Joseph had dwelt in Egypt, now, about thirty-nine years, thirteen of which were spent in bondage, and imprisonment, and twenty-six, in the office of prime minister of state, in which office he probably continued till his death, which did not take place till fifty-six years after that of his father. Of this period but little notice is taken by the sacred historian; whence, we may conclude that it was tranquil, and not marked by any very striking incidents. We are informed, however, that he “saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation, and that the children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up upon Joseph’s knees.” From these short hints, it seems probable that he lived to see his father’s house greatly multiplied, and growing rapidly into a great nation, according to the divine promise; that the latter portion of his life was more peaceful than the former; and that he met the king of terrors undismayed, and with a hope full of immortality.

This is rendered probable not only by the general tenour of his life, which was eminently pious and



useful, but by the manner in which he speaks of his approaching dissolution, and the order he gives concerning his bones. And thus, we are brought to the last article of our present lecture.

3. The departure of this interesting man out of this world.—We find many useful lessons in tracing his varied and active life; let us stand by him in the closing scene: perhaps his example, here, may suggest some ideas worthy of attention, concerning death: “And Joseph said unto his brethren, *I die*: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” *I die*. What simplicity of expression: yet, the thought is awfully sublime. It bespeaks a mind perfectly self-possessed, hopeful and tranquil, just entering the world of spirits. Reader, if the summons were put into your hand, could you say, with the like composure, to your brethren and friends, *I die*? If you have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, you could; but not otherwise. Think of this, betimes. The good hope is now set before you, in the gospel; but if you defer laying hold of it till the inexorable messenger beckons you away to other worlds, you will find something *in dying* more fearful than has ever been described to you. Place the eternal life of your soul in safe keeping “with Christ in God,” and death, instead of being terrible, will be one of your covenant-blessings. “To me to live is Christ; and to die is gain.”

Mark, also, the energy of the patriarch’s faith in the divine promises, and his solicitude to encourage the faith and hope of his surviving friends, even in the hour of dissolution. “God will *surely* visit you, and bring you out of this land, &c.” Thus, Christian, when you come to die, cleave with full purpose of heart to the exceeding great and precious promises of the blessed gospel, and try to engage survivors to come out of sin’s dark territories, and aspire after the light and liberty, the peace and joy of the redeemed.

“And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry

up my bones from hence." This order in relation to his mortal remains, was his last act so far as we are informed: and that it was an act of that divine faith, which "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," has been infallibly determined by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, xi. 22: "By *faith*, Joseph, when dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." This solicitude of the patriarchs, particularly of Jacob and Joseph, to have their bones laid in the cave of Machpelah, Abraham's burying-place, had its foundation in religion. It was not so much to sleep with their fathers that they desired, as to sleep in Canaan, the land of promise, and the type of heaven. They designed thus to evince their faith in God, and their hope of everlasting life; and to stimulate their descendants to expect the fulfilment of every word of promise that proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord. A desire to mingle, in death, with the dust of kindred and countrymen is still extensively felt among mankind. But, as the same reason does not now exist which influenced Israel and his sons, we need indulge no anxiety on the subject. It is a matter of little moment where our bodies are deposited, or how widely the particles that compose them may be scattered; for, whether they swim in ocean's vast domain, or lie unburied in the forest, or soar aloft in feathered forms, enough to secure personal identity shall be forthcoming at the archangel's call, enforced by the trump of God. "Those who sleep in *Jesus*, will God bring with him:"—"wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

"So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

*A coffin!* Reader, the boards may be seasoned, of which yours is to be made. You will not live a hundred and ten years; and your days are numbered, as the days of a hireling. Be a follower of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. Serve

Joseph's God;—fly to the angel that redeemed Joseph's father from all evil: and let the coffin come: let it receive the sacred deposite—the mouldering tabernacle. No coffin shall enclose the soul: that shall be free, and safe, and happy. If needful, a convoy of angels shall have it in charge, and conduct it to Abraham's bosom, where it shall be ever with the Lord, to behold his glory and to join the blood-bought throng in that celestial chorus—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever: Amen!"

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## LECTURE XXI.

### THE BIRTH AND PRESERVATION OF MOSES.

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages—and the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son; and she called his name Moses; because, said she, I drew him out of the water.—Exodus ii. 9, 10.

THE portion of sacred Scripture, on which we now enter, is called *Exodus*—a Greek word, signifying literally, the *going out*, or *the departure*; because the departure of the Israelites from Egypt is the principal subject of which it treats. It narrates the transactions of about one hundred and forty-five years, beginning at the death of Joseph and ending with the erection of the tabernacle, in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai. Moses is generally believed to have been the writer of this book, although, as was usual with the inspired penman, he speaks of himself in the third person. And, if it be asked, how he could give an account of his own birth, and the circumstances attending it, we answer,—In the same way in which

he described the creation of the world, and other events that took place long before he was born; that is, by the inspiration of the Almighty, and by means of tradition, used under the special guidance of Divine Providence. We observe a fulness, and occasionally, a minuteness, in this and the three following books of sacred Scripture, which we do not find in the book of Genesis. This is what we would naturally expect, as the writer here relates facts in which he was personally concerned, and, of which he was, for the most part, an eye-witness.

In the beginning of this second book of Moses, we have the names of Jacob's sons, who, with their several families, accompanied him into Egypt, amounting to seventy in number, as was stated towards the close of the preceding book: or, leaving out of the calculation, Hezron and Hamel, not then born, together with Joseph and his two sons, and Jacob himself, and including the wives of Joseph's eleven brethren, the number would be seventy-five; but including Jacob and Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, the whole household of Israel, at the time of their taking refuge in Egypt, from the pressure of famine, amounted to seventy-nine. To prevent confusion, however, we shall follow Stephen's reckoning, Acts vii. 14, which makes their number three-score and fifteen.

After the death of Joseph, and his brethren, and all that generation, which is mentioned in one short sentence, as if to remind us of the brevity of human life, we are told that, "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them;—a striking fulfilment of the divine promise, often repeated to Abraham and his sons, as well as a verification of Jacob's prediction, on his death-bed; Gen. xlviii. 16, that they should "grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

This rapid increase and growing prosperity of the house of Israel, soon attracted public notice, and in process of time, drew upon them the oppressive rod of a jealous government. "Now there arose up a new

king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph; and he said unto his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land: Therefore they did set over them task-masters to afflict them with their burdens:—and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.”—Strange that such eminent services as Joseph had rendered to the state, not only during the seven years of famine, which, but for his agency, would probably have depopulated the kingdom, but during an administration of eighty years, including the reign of four or five monarchs, should have been forgotten, within the space of half a century, from the death of that distinguished statesman and philanthropist! Such is the ingratitude of the world, the fickleness of popular favour, and the depravity of the human heart. Cupidity and selfishness often impel men to measures of cruelty and injustice, while the claims of humanity and brotherly kindness are utterly disregarded. “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes.” But this new king was a shallow politician. The children of Israel were, now, very numerous; and, by his own acknowledgment, the fruits of their industry contributed, not a little, to the welfare of his kingdom. He expresses a fear, that they might, by and by, “get them up,” and leave the country. He had no wish to get rid of them; for they were good workers, and productive labour is national strength. If, therefore, he had any doubts concerning his ability to keep them in due subjection, he ought to have forborne all steps which might incense their indignation, and provoke them to try their own strength. Had he treated them well, and been a father to them, as Joseph had been to the Egyptians aforetime, they would soon have filled the treasure-cities, Pithom and

Raamses; which seem to have been designed as store-houses, to catch the proceeds of their hard-earnings, for the use and aggrandizement of the government. But, to place task-masters over them, to watch them with a jealous eye, and to exact from them the performance of tasks that were exorbitant and oppressive, was not to “deal wisely with them,” even according to the wisdom that is earthly and sensual. Such a course of treatment would naturally tend either to break down the spirits and impair the physical strength of these people, and thus diminish their usefulness to the state—or, to exasperate them—to alienate their patriotic feelings, and prepare them for revolt and violence, whenever an opportunity might offer. This was bad policy;—it was wicked and short-sighted: it grasped at too much; and in so doing, it risked, and eventually lost all. This, or something very like this, is the policy which some men, in our own times, would pursue towards that hapless portion of the African race, that have been doomed to slavery from generation to generation. They would “deal *wisely* with them” by keeping them in ignorance, the more profound the better, and by making them “serve, with rigour;” so as to “render their lives bitter with hard bondage,” lest they should presume to think of their natural rights, and “so get them up out of the land” of their oppressors. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness;” and the day is coming, when the God of the spirits of all flesh will look upon the children of Ham, as he did upon the children of Israel, to redeem them from their “hard bondage,” and that, if need be, with a high hand, and an outstretched arm. Let the nations prepare to yield prompt obedience to his high and holy behest.

The oppressive counsels of Pharaoh,\* though adopted and carried into effect with unrelenting severity, did not succeed. The good hand of the Lord was about the house of Israel, and, therefore, “the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew.” But the tyrant, bent on the accomplishment

\* There was a succession of Pharaohs.

of his base and barbarous purpose, resorts to other, and still more infamous measures. Those persons who practised the obstetrick art, were charged under pain of the royal displeasure, and perhaps, with a promise of large rewards, to put every male child of the Hebrews, which they assisted in bringing into the world, immediately to death. Two individuals, of that useful profession are particularly mentioned, viz: Shiphrah and Puah, on account, probably, of their influence and distinction in the line of their business. But the venerable matrons, it seems, feared God, and therefore regarded not the unrighteous mandate of the king: and, in consequence, it is said, that "God dealt well with them; and the people multiplied and waxed very mighty." The sense of this passage is plain enough; "They that walk uprightly shall not want any good thing." But it is added, "And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses." The meaning of this place appears, at first glance, somewhat obscure: But taking into view the circumstances of the case, and comparing scripture with scripture, we have no hesitation in saying that the true import is, That God blessed and built up the *families*, not only of the midwives, but of the people, generally; *houses* being taken, *here*, as in numerous other texts, for *households*. "Godliness is profitable unto all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

But the remorseless monarch will leave no expedient untried to effect his inhuman design. Finding private menaces and bribery unavailing, he had recourse to a public edict, which stamped his reign with eternal infamy. "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." Under the operation of this bloody decree, on which we offer no comment, was born Moses, the historian of the world, the Heaven-taught deliverer and law-giver of the house of Israel. Had the statute just cited continued in force any considerable length of

time, it must have given a serious check to the progress of population among the Hebrews. But its day was brief. It was too violent to be long tolerated. It was a mere ebullition of despotic rancour, soon discharged, and consigned to merited contempt. It must have been enacted subsequently to the birth of Aaron, who was but three years older than Moses; and several circumstances, taken in connexion with the silence of history concerning it, warrant the conclusion that it was rescinded not long after Moses was born.

In the extraordinary preservation of this Moses, amid the perils that encompassed his birth and early childhood, we may see, and we ought to acknowledge religiously, the hand of God revealed and exerted to prepare the way for the deliverance of his people, and for the maintenance of his truth and honour to the end of time. The scheme of Providence is vast and comprehensive. Every thing in the divine plan has its use and bearing in the great and gracious work of redemption by Jesus Christ. It is by the church that Jehovah designs to show his manifold wisdom to the inhabitants of heaven and earth. On this blessed object of divine care and everlasting love let us keep our attention mainly fixed, while we mark cursorily the coincident events and concurrent agencies employed by a wonder-working Providence, to save and rear up the Hebrew infant, that was destined to write the Pentateuch and to become a temporal saviour of the visible church.

Moses was a descendant of Levi, Jacob's third son, as well on his mother's as on his father's side. Amram and Jochebed were cousins; and they had probably been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. So far as their characters are made known to us, they appear amiable and pious. They seem to have had at least a strong natural affection for their offspring; and it must have been a sore trial to them to have a son born under the murderous decree which consigned every male child to a watery



grave. Let us be thankful for the blessings of civil and religious liberty;—that we are subject to the caprice of no ambitious tyrant—that we are permitted to dwell together in families, as heirs of the grace of life—that no sanguinary laws demand our children—and that no popish decretal can wrest from us our Bibles, or disturb our ecclesiastical order, is owing to the distinguishing goodness of the great Disposer of all things and all events.

There seems to have been something peculiarly engaging in the infant Moses, which encouraged his mother to attempt his preservation from a violent death. “When she saw him, that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.” There may have been some foundation for the extravagant fancies, which the Jewish writers advance respecting his personal beauty, his divine countenance, &c. But the parents were influenced by higher motives than those of natural affection and a passionate fondness for a beautiful child. They had respect to the divine promise made to Abraham, and repeated to Jacob, that their nation should be delivered from the yoke of bondage; and they manifestly indulged a hope that this infant boy might, one day, become an agent in effecting their national redemption. The faith of God’s elect has a piercing eye, and a mighty efficacy. It penetrates the darkest clouds, and, in that strength which “is made perfect in weakness,” attempts great things: and this was the principle that prompted to the concealment in question, though the act must have been attended with the most imminent danger to those who were concerned in it: “By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.”

But, at the end of three months, concealment from the malign vigilance of Pharaoh’s mercenary spies, became impossible. If the parents’ *lives* were not in jeopardy, they must have been in fearful expectation of seeing their little one torn from their embraces by the hand of violence, and subjected to peculiar

torture, in consequence of their too adventurous fondness, which had indicated contempt for the royal mandate. What then is to be done, in this critical juncture? Nature feels and trembles; but she is blind, and full of doubts. What will faith suggest? What ground of hope can *she* discover, in so dark and distressing a case? Will *she* tell this distracted mother to sit down and await the salvation of God, without the use of any further means to save her boy from impending destruction? No:—but she will teach unskilful hands to attempt the construction of a frail bark, in which the precious treasure may be deposited—in which it may float, for a little season, on the watery surface, and in which it may, *peradventure*, be wafted, by the breath of prayer, into the hands of God, and be saved from the hands of the wicked. “And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein: and she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink: and his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.”

Hannah More, in her Sacred Drama, entitled, “Moses in the Bulrushes,” has furnished a comment on this touching scene, which can scarcely be surpassed. The introduction, here, of a few lines of her beautiful description, needs no apology.

“ Since the dear, fatal morn, that gave him birth,  
I have revolv’d in my distracted mind  
Each means to save his life: and many a thought  
Which fondness prompted, prudence has opposed  
As perilous and rash. With these poor hands  
I’ve framed a little ark of slender reeds:  
With pitch and slime I have secured the sides.  
In this frail cradle I intend to lay  
My little helpless infant, and expose him  
Upon the banks of Nile.

’Tis full of danger!

’Tis danger to expose, and death to keep him.  
Yet, O! reflect: Should the fierce crocodile  
The native, and the tyrant of the Nile,  
Seize the defenceless infant!!

Know, God is everywhere.  
Not to one narrow, partial spot confined:

No—not to chosen Israel: he extends  
 Through all the vast infinitude of space:  
 At his command the furious tempests rise—  
 The blasting of the breath of his displeasure.  
 He tells the world of waters when to roar;  
 And, at his bidding, winds and seas are calm:  
 In *Him*, not in an arm of flesh, I trust;  
 In *Him*, whose promise never yet has fail'd,  
 I place my confidence."

Observe on what a slender thread the most momentous events seem, in human view, to be suspended. See the hope of Israel—their future Moses—their leader and lawgiver, sleeping among the flags of the Nile, helpless, and quite unconscious of the dangers that lurk around him. Should a breath of wind arise—should the tide prove unpropitious—should some hungry monster despoil the reedy cradle, with its feeble occupant, the child is gone;—the believing mother's fond expectations are disappointed, and the hard servitude of Jacob's hapless children must continue. But not so; for *chance* is but a *name* of *nothing* that exists. Providence is all; and all efficient, to guard the falling sparrow, and protect the Hebrew infant;—to guide the floating atom, and to poise the rolling words.

But this child of many prayers, and flattering promise, must perish for want of nourishment if not speedily relieved, even if the winds and waves and crocodiles should spare him. True: but it is Heaven's purpose to send him seasonable deliverance. And now, let us mark, in the means employed for his relief, a concurrence of volitions and movements of various and opposite agents, which distinctly bespeaks the presence and power of a divine hand. Jochebed and Miriam, Pharaoh's daughter and her train of maidens—the tide, the wind, the weather, the place of the exposure, and, even the hour of the day, must all cooperate to save him whom the Lord designs to employ, as an instrument in accomplishing the counsels of his will, and the purposes of his immutable love. The princess comes to the river's brink, precisely at the right time—the ark is discov-

ered—it is opened—the babe weeps—the heart of compassion is moved, and instantly takes the resolution to adopt the foundling:—by means of the sister's interposition, supposed to be incidental, the child is restored to the arms of its own mother to be nursed as an Egyptian prince. "The name Moses, which signifies *drawn out*, is given him, as a memorial of his wonderful deliverance; and, in process of time, he appears at court, as the adopted son of the king's daughter, and receives an education suitable to this elevated rank;" and, what is worthy of special notice, qualifying him, so far as human learning can go, for the high and responsible offices of leader and law-giver to the house of Israel.

In concluding this brief account of the birth and preservation of Moses, let us notice and admire the providence of God, in providing for the exigencies of his church and people. No weapon can prosper against Zion. Her glorious Lord and King reigns over all. His power and wisdom are infinite—his truth and covenant engagements are steadfast and infallible. Let us remember this in reference to our personal salvation; as also, in reference to the spread of the gospel, and the ultimate triumphs of redeeming grace. The Lord's arm is revealed, and the nations are feeling more and more sensibly, its gracious subduing power. The heathen are given to Christ for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. "He shall prolong his days—he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied!" "All flesh shall see the salvation of our God. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

## LECTURE XXII.

## MOSES FLEES INTO MIDIAN.

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, surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses: but Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian.—Exod. ii. 14-15.

Our last lecture concluded with the introduction of the infant Moses to the palace of the king of Egypt, as the adopted son of the king's daughter. The name of this princess, Josephus tells us, was Thermutis. She would probably continue her little foundling some three or four years with his own mother, who by a wonderful arrangement of Providence, as we have seen, was employed as his nurse. In Acts vii. 23, we are told that "he was full forty years old, when it came into to his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." Whence, it would seem that he must have resided at court, and been regarded as a member of the royal family, for the space of about thirty-five years. Of his history, or of the manner in which he spent his time, during this period, we have no information in the sacred Scripture. Indeed, the palaces of kings are, so generally scenes of vanity and dissipation, that the Spirit of God seldom furnishes us with any details concerning them, except so far as may be necessary, in giving a just view of Providence, in relation to the visible church—the chosen depository of the truth and ordinances of Jehovah. From the circumstances of the case, however, and, particularly, from Stephen's declaration, Acts vii. 22, that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and

in deeds," we conclude, with a degree of certainty, that he was occupied chiefly, during the period just mentioned, in the acquisition of science and literature, for which Egypt was at that time, the most distinguished country in the world.

And here, let us notice and admire the wisdom and forecast of the Almighty, in rendering the generosity of Thermutis and the learning of Egypt subservient to the accomplishment of his own great and holy purposes. Moses was destined to arduous and important services. He was to stand before Pharaoh, and plead the cause of his oppressed brethren, the Israelites;—he was to encounter the ignorance, to remove the prejudices, to rally the sluggishness, and reanimate the desponding spirits of his own kindred, as well as contend with the craft, the power, and the malice of the magicians:—to lead forth a multitude of people, amounting to more than a million of souls, strongly attached to the place of their servitude, and much inclined to murmuring and mutiny, as their history abundantly evinces. He was to act as a temporal mediator between this untoward people and their covenant God;—to offer intercessions, in their behalf, when the just judgments of heaven menaced them for their grievous offences;—and to receive the law of the Lord, communicated on Mount Sinai "by the disposition of angels," and publish it, with its fearful sanctions, to the great congregation. He was to superintend the movements, the morals, and the religious observances of this vast multitude, during a peregrination of forty years in the wilderness, to which they were subjected by a righteous Providence, as a piece of discipline preparatory to their taking possession of the promised land. These were services of no ordinary importance;—services of extreme difficulty, on the faithful performance of which much depended, in relation to the glory of God and the happiness of mankind. And, although the Almighty can work without means, yet, he usually employs them; and when he is pleased to make use of human agents in the execution of his purposes, he

ordinarily endows them, in one way or another, with qualifications proportioned to the magnitude and arduousness of the duties to which they are called. That Moses, therefore, might be qualified for the duties of his station, as leader and lawgiver of the house of Israel, the only wise God judged it proper that he should have an extensive acquaintance with the world, and possess all the advantages which a liberal education could afford. The court of Egypt is, accordingly, rendered unwillingly tributary to the divine decree. "When God will work, who can let it?" The king's daughter is foster-mother to the Hebrew youth, who is destined to subdue the power of her tyrannical father, and rescue the church of God from idolatry and bondage. From such facts as this let us take encouragement to cast our personal cares on the Lord, and to commend to his wakeful and effective guardianship the interests of his own most blessed cause. No weapon formed against Zion shall prosper, for Jehovah is her keeper; and he is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

"When Moses was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." That is—He resolved to resign the pleasures and splendour of the court, and go to his own people, that he might lighten their burdens, and share with them in the blessings of the covenant made with their fathers. This determination is not to be ascribed to moroseness, or a want of gratitude to his generous patroness: nor can it be accounted for, on the principles which commonly influence mankind, in similar cases. He certainly had very strong inducements of a worldly nature, to retain his place in the household of Pharaoh! He had ease, and affluence, and royal favour; and if the statement of Josephus and other Jewish writers is to be relied on, he was heir-apparent to the crown. What more could the natural heart desire? On the other hand, in going to his brethren, he must have counted with certainty on hardships, reproaches, and heavy charges of ingratitude and folly. How then shall we account for his con-

duct in this matter? By referring it to that wonder-working principle which influenced his pious parents to "hide him three months," in defiance of the king's commandment;—the principle of faith in the divine testimony, which is so largely celebrated in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews: "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 in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." With this instructive instance of self-denial, and victorious faith before us, let us pause, and inquire whether we are like-minded. Are we ready to sacrifice all worldly advantages, which may be incompatible with our duty to God? In what estimation do we hold the reproach of Christ? Are we prepared to take up our cross, and follow him, in defiance of all the opposition and hindrances to be met with in the path of duty? Let us not forget that he has expressly declared, "If any man love father or mother, houses or lands more than me, he is not worthy of me:" and again, "whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his glory, and the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

But while Moses manifested a noble superiority to the world, and a commendable zeal for God, and for the welfare of his afflicted kindred, we cannot but notice in his first attempt to avenge their wrongs, and vindicate their cause, a precipitancy and violence altogether unwarranted and blameworthy:—"Observing an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren, he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." There may have been mitigating circumstances attendant on this act, with which we are not made acquainted. Possibly the Hebrew was slain by the Egyptian; and in that case,



Moses might think himself authorized by the precept given to Noah, concerning manslaughter, to put the murderer to death, without awaiting the regular process of law. Yet, as the narrative is given in the sacred text, he does appear to have been *conscious*, that the act was wrong; else why his circumspection, his "looking this way and that way," before striking the fatal blow; and why did he so precipitately bury the body of the Egyptian in the sand? The truth is, his zeal was not quite according to knowledge;—he was for executing judgment, in a summary way—he was governed too much by feeling—he ran—he rushed forth as the champion of his father's house, before he was sent;—for he had not yet received his commission. Nor were his own people disposed to second his violent measures; his assuming a power which had not been conferred upon him, tended to alienate their confidence, and awaken their jealousy. Accordingly, when he went out the second day, and finding two Hebrews striving together, offered his counsel and services to effect a reconciliation, his friendly interference was rejected with indignation and reproach, which he must have felt keenly: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?"

From this historical incident, we may take several useful hints. First, we learn from it the importance of proceeding with caution and religious prudence, in all our enterprises and labours of love, for the advancement of truth and righteousness among mankind. A man may, in the ardency of his pious zeal, commence a reformer—a reprovcr of others—or even a preacher of the word, before he is called of God, and duly qualified for such services. Moses, it would seem, was in this respect, forty years ahead of Providence in regard to the deliverance of Israel from the house of bondage. And many an ardent, and well-meaning minister of Christ has begun to proclaim the glad tidings, with sanguine hope of accomplishing great things in a short time, who, like Luther's amiable co-adjutor, in "The

Reformation," soon learned, from experience, that "Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon."

Secondly, the narrating of the fact, that Moses slew an Egyptian in an unwarrantable manner, affords *internal evidence* of no equivocal character, that the Bible is given "by inspiration of God." An imposter, intending to impose on the world a spurious book, purporting to be of divine origin, would never have recorded of his favourite hero an act so exceptionable and offensive as that of manslaughter; committed, too, with evident indications of conscious criminality. And allowing that Moses himself was the writer of this narrative, do not such instances of stern, unsparing, and impartial faithfulness as that in question, prove, beyond all reasonable doubt, that he considered himself as under bonds of a *divine necessity*, (if the expression may be used,) to tell the *truth*, and that he wrote indeed, "as he was moved by the Holy Ghost?" This characteristic of simplicity and unbending integrity pervades the sacred Scriptures; and it deserves the very serious consideration of those who may entertain doubts concerning their plenary inspiration.

Thirdly, from the failure of Moses' first attempt to rescue his brethren from the thralldom of Egypt, we may infer that various qualifications are requisite to fit a man for difficult and important services in the church of God. Human learning is very useful; but this *alone* is not sufficient. Deep heart-felt piety—some acquaintance with human nature, and a strong sense of the necessity of divine direction and influence, are indispensable to our success and acceptableness in the work of the Lord. Moses, though "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and in deeds," was yet rash, self-confident, and quite deficient in a practical knowledge of mankind. He had, therefore, to remain forty years in a state of pupilage, under divine tuition, before he could enter acceptably upon the duties of the high and awful office for which he was designed. The palace, and the royal seminaries of a pagan prince

might supply great advantages for the attainment of literature and polished manners; but they could not be favourable to one's growth in grace, and in the habits of devotion. Earthly wisdom "puffeth up;" but "the wisdom which is from above, is *first pure*, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Many a laudable undertaking has been marred and many a noble enterprise utterly ruined, through the pride or self-sufficiency of agents employed in the execution. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." The Lord, therefore, ought to be acknowledged in all our ways, as "the giver of every good and perfect gift;" as the inspirer of all good thoughts, and the efficient cause of all success in "the labours of love and the work of faith" to which we are called. In striving for the heavenly prize, "a man is not crowned except he strive lawfully."

Finding that his conduct, in slaying the Egyptian, had not only disgusted his own kindred, but exposed him to the avenging sword of civil authority, Moses "retired from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian;"—a small district in Arabia Petrea, east of the Red Sea, and in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai. Here, by a train of circumstances which need not be detailed, he got introduced to the family of a distinguished personage, the priest or prince of the country, who seems to have had several names; for he is here called Reuel; in Ex. iii. 1. Jethro; in Numb. x. 29, Raguel; in Judges iv. 11, Hobab; and Judges i. 16, Keyne, translated the Kenite. This prince of Midian had property, as was usual in those times, in flocks and herds; and Moses being "content to dwell with the man," married Zipporah, one of his daughters, who bare him a son whom he called Gershom, i. e. *desolate stranger*; for said he, "I have been a stranger in a strange land."

How great and surprising are the vicissitudes of human life! Here is that Moses, whose preservation in infancy, cost his parents every thing but the ago-

nies of death—in whose favour divine Providence linked together a most wonderful concatenation of propitious occurrences—*that* Moses, who was rocked in the cradle of princely munificence—named and nurtured by a king's daughter—educated in the most liberal style, as presumptive heir to the sceptre of a mighty monarchy—reduced to the humble station of a hired shepherd, “in a strange land!” He had, indeed, voluntarily sacrificed his flattering prospects of earthly grandeur to the cause of truth, justice, and godliness, “accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, for a season: but *in one unguarded moment*, and by *one guilty act of unhallowed and mis-judging zeal*, he lost the confidence of his father's house, destroyed his own peace, and forfeited the protection of public law. And we behold him, *now*, sitting weary and forlorn, by a well in Midian, and *then* tending the flock of Jethro, as a means of procuring his daily bread. But though “cast down, he is not forsaken.” True, he has sinned; and for his sin he is visited with stripes; but the divine purpose concerning him is not altered. He is a chosen instrument of great and extensive good. He is to be the deliverer and lawgiver of Israel; and here he is placed at school, where he is to make large attainments in a species of knowledge more needful than that which he had mainly acquired about the palace in Egypt;—a knowledge of his *own heart*, and an experimental acquaintance with the *adorable source* of true wisdom and sanctifying grace. Here, in the solitude and seclusion of a pastoral life, he will have leisure for meditation and serious reflection. He will call to mind the covenant which God made with his fathers, and ponder well its import, and its ample provisions;—he will retrace the history of his own eventful life, marking well the mercies that have continually attended him, and sorrowing after a godly sort for the sins of his youth; he will ascertain his vulnerable points, and learn to lean less to his own

understanding, and to trust more fully and fixedly in the Lord;—he will survey, at the end of mortal line, the deep and mighty designs of Providence;—he will contemplate in *prophetic vision*, the glories of *that seed* of Abraham, in *whom* all the nations of the earth are to be blessed: and thus he will be prepared to stand before Pharaoh in heavenly panoply—to march at the head of the ransomed tribes, with the firmness and fortitude of a genuine believer in the divine testimony, and to converse with Jehovah on the flaming mountain, with the meek and lowly confidence of a saint. O consecrated school of affliction—blessed poverty—enviable retreat, from the fascinating perils of a luxurious and dissipated court! Thus may we judge, when a holy Providence sees fit to reduce us—to strip us of earthly comforts, and subject us to salutary discipline; to heal our backslidings, and to teach us to set our affection on things above! Only let us in the spirit of Moses, forsake all for Christ, and instead of being losers we shall be infinite gainers. Though we fall, we shall rise again, through the power of redeeming grace. We shall go from strength to strength, till in the issue of the conflict between sin and holiness we shall come off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No:—“I am persuaded, says Paul the apostle, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

## LECTURE XXIII.

## MOSES RECEIVES HIS COMMISSION.

Now, therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me, and I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them: Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.—Exodus iii. 9-10.

THE forty years, which Moses spent in Midian, was probably the happiest—certainly the most tranquil portion of his life. Nor did he spend his time there, in self-indulgence or sullen indifference about the interests of humanity and religion. To the family of Jethro, with which he became connected by marriage, he seems to have been both useful and agreeable. The unassuming and noiseless occupation of a shepherd, was favourable to the attainment of several qualifications highly necessary to fit him for the arduous and awful ministry, which he was designed to execute. He appears indeed to have been a diligent and successful student in the school of meekness; and his progress in the divine life we may conclude, was rapid and delightful. A more intimate acquaintance with his own heart, and a deeper sense of dependance on God, for success in every good enterprise, cured and chastened that self-confidence and impetuosity of zeal, which had impelled him to commit that act of violence on the person of the Egyptian, noticed in our last lecture, and which occasioned his flight into this land of strangers. How admirable are the ways of Providence! An incident which in human view threatened to blast the hopes of the

pious, who were sighing for the redemption of Israel, and to defeat the kind intentions of Moses himself, in regard to the deliverance of his kindred, and the church of God from the yoke of bondage, is made ultimately subservient, in a very eminent degree, to the accomplishment of the divine purpose, not only towards his afflicted people, but also in relation to a world lying in ignorance and sin.

In the happy retirement of Midian, while tending the flock of Jethro, and holding intimate converse with his God, Moses is supposed to have written the book of Genesis—the oldest, and excepting the other portions of sacred Scripture with which it stands on an equal footing, the most entertaining and the most important record on earth—a record which describes the origin of men and visible things; which sketches their history through a period of more than three and twenty centuries; which exhibits a righteous Providence directing all events; which announces the introduction and desolations of sin, and at the same time pourtrays the incipient development of the great and glorious redeeming plan; a record, therefore, which will be studied and quoted, and venerated as an infallible oracle while the world stands. The other four books of the Pentateuch, Moses must have composed, during the remaining forty years of his life, while an eye-witness to, and prominent agent in the transactions which he describes.

Let not those who are placed in obscure situations in life, imagine that they can do nothing in such circumstances, for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. Let them call to mind the useful labours of Moses in Midian, while employed as a hired shepherd; and of Paul the apostle while a prisoner at Rome; of John the beloved disciple, when banished to the Isle of Patmos, and of a host of others who counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and let them be instant in prayer for the prosperity of Zion; let them *form* and *execute*, so far as may be practicable, benevolent schemes for the promotion of truth and for the salvation of sinners. If

we have a *heart* to the work we shall seldom or never be without opportunities of doing good.

Moses was happy and useful in retirement; but the time had now arrived when he was to enter on the duties of a public station of no ordinary importance. In process of time, the sufferings of the children of Israel became intolerable;—they, therefore, cried unto the Lord, who in fulfilment of his covenant with their fathers, interposed his mighty arm for their deliverance. And as Moses was to be the principal instrument in accomplishing this merciful object, the divine will was made known to him, and his commission furnished and sealed in a very extraordinary manner. While attending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the vicinity of Mount Horeb, “The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not consumed: And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush and said—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. Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.”

The majesty of this passage bids the expositor take heed, with what intent and with what spirit he approaches it. Our remarks upon it shall be few and cautious.

The personage appearing and speaking to Moses, on this occasion, is called, “the angel of the Lord,—the Lord,—God,—and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;” whence we may safely conclude that it was not a created being, inasmuch as three of the names here given are used throughout the Scripture to designate the Deity. We believe, therefore, that it was the Son of God—Jehovah-Jesus—the Cap-



tain of our salvation—the Messenger of the covenant, in whom dwelt the fulness of the godhead bodily, that appeared in the burning bush, to commission the man Moses. The same glorious person afterwards appeared on Mount Sinai, delivered the law to Israel, and, upon various occasions, in revealing his will to the patriarchs, assumed a visible form in prophetic anticipation of his actual assumption of our nature, in the fulness of time. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him:”—and again, “The Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.” John i. 18; v. 37.

The symbol used, in this august manifestation, is the most appropriate that can be imagined. *A bush in flames but not consumed.* How aptly expressive of the state of Israel in Egypt; oppressed, but not diminished; of the church of God in every age, persecuted, but not forsaken; and of the believer assailed by the fiery darts of the wicked one, but sustained and cheered by Christ within him, the hope of glory!

In this truly divine scene, we are admonished not to indulge a vain curiosity, by prying into mysteries beyond our line; but in all our religious acts and exercises, to approach the Almighty “with reverence and godly fear, remembering that while our God is LOVE to those who fear him, he is also a *consuming fire* to the workers of iniquity. When Moses would “turn aside” to examine, curiously, “this great sight,” and to ascertain if possible, why the fire does not consume what seems to be combustible, the bush becomes *vocal*, and his presumption is arrested: “Moses, Moses!—Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is *holy ground.*” Wherever Jehovah records his name and manifests his glory, *there* the ground is holy; and *there* it behoves his professed worshippers to maintain a deportment indicative of reverential awe. Let us remember this when we enter God’s house,

and join in the solemn services of the sanctuary. The Lord is as *really*, though less sensibly, in the house of prayer, as he was in the bush of Horeb. His word and ordinances are the symbols of his presence. Let us fear before him: Let us listen to the messages of his truth and grace with something of that holy fear which covered the face of Moses, when accosted by the *Holy One of Israel*. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to *hear* than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil."

"I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."—This passage our Lord cites, Matt. xxii. 32, in arguing with the Sadducees, to prove the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, from the writings of Moses, which they professed to receive as of divine authority. When this declaration was made, the patriarchs named had been dead some hundred years; yet Jehovah was still their God. Their souls, therefore, existed and were happy in the enjoyment of the chief good. But how does this saying prove the resurrection of the body? By obvious and legitimate inference; thus—God is the eternal and unchangeable portion of the *persons* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but the *bodies* of those good men are constituent and essential parts of their *persons*: consequently, their bodies, though dissolved in death are in covenant relation with God, and must of course, unless the divine promise fail, be raised up, and in union with their souls be admitted to "the full enjoyment of God to all eternity." With those who believe the Scripture, and admit the infinite power of God, this argument is conclusive and irresistible. In the New Testament, this blessed doctrine is made as clear and indubitable, as words of truth and acts of divine efficiency *can*, perhaps, make any thing of the kind. May a firm and intelligent belief of it, bring solace to our bleeding hearts, when bereaved of beloved relatives and friends. If the Lord is *their* God, and *our* God, we have not lost them, nor have they utterly forsaken us. The separation is

only for a short period. They are gone before—and we are following onward to our Heavenly Father's house, where we shall find them ready to receive us into everlasting habitations: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

But let us attend to the investiture of Moses in the office of leader and lawgiver of the house of Israel.

"And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." The God of mercy and truth never loses sight of his people. In their deepest distresses his eye is on them for good, and his ears are open to their cries. And, although his presence fills immensity, yet in addressing himself to man, he speaks after the manner of man, that he may be understood and gain attention. Hence he is here represented as moved with compassion, and coming out of his holy place to break the rod of the oppressor, and rescue the prey from the hand of the mighty. Canaan, though *at present* a barren wretched country, owing chiefly to the joint and baleful influence of ignorance, wickedness and despotism, was *once* a delightful region; and though at no time so large as Pennsylvania, it might be called a *large* land in comparison of Goshen, the place of Israel's bondage. Floods of milk and honey are the similitudes employed to designate its luxuriance. To this promised and most desirable land, Israel is to be conducted; and the ministry of Moses is demanded to break off their fetters, and to superintend their removal: "Come now, therefore," saith the Lord, still speaking from the midst of the mystic fire, "and I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Here is a call of God so distinct, as to be easily un-

derstood; and proclaimed in circumstances so awfully impressive, that one would think it must have been instantly obeyed. Yet Moses hesitates and alleges several excuses for wishing to decline the charge. What a change has taken place in his mind;—how different his views on this subject, from what they were formerly. Some forty years before, he was for going ahead of Providence. He sallied forth as the champion of his kindred, and as the minister of their deliverance, without any call except what he made out of his own vague impressions, encouraged perhaps by the suggestions and guesses of some zealous friends. Now we see him shrinking from the mighty undertaking, with a diffidence and timidity bordering on, if not actually partaking of, unbelief and rebellious obstinacy. Let us hear his objections and observe how completely they are removed by the voice from the burning bush.

“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!”—This language indicates a deep sense of his unworthiness as well as insufficiency for the arduous task. It was fit and proper that he should feel thus; but if the arms of his hands be made strong by the mighty God of Jacob, he will be enabled to do valiantly, and the force of this objection will be removed. Here then follows a promise of all needful support and assistance:—“Certainly I will be with thee.” That is—I will not send thee unfurnished for this difficult service;—I will accompany thy exertions by a blessing, and by an energy that shall be effectual: only believe my word and trust my power, “nothing doubting.” He who goes forth at the divine command, and with an express promise of all-sufficient aid, one would think might enter on any service, however perilous, with confidence and fearless intrepidity. That which is called a *token* in the latter clause of this promise, is to be considered as addressed to the faith, not to the senses of Moses:—“When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this

mountain.” As if it had been said—You shall accomplish the business on which I send you—I will bear you through all difficulties—you shall return in safety with my people to this place; and here I will meet with you to bless you, and to accept your homage and grateful acknowledgment of my power and and faithfulness. Still, Moses is slow to believe; accordingly one objection being removed he takes refuge in another, derived from the ignorance and stupidity of the people.

“When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?”—If there was any foundation for this alleged difficulty, it gives a gloomy idea of the state of religion among the Israelites at that time. It represents them as having forgotten the names and titles of the true God. This seems incredible; for Joseph had not been dead but about a hundred and forty-four years: and during his lifetime they would certainly be protected and encouraged in the observance of their religious rites and ordinances. The timid imagination of Moses, which probably suggested to him this objection, may be supposed to have given a strong colouring to the picture of their moral degradation. It is manifest, however, that the circumstances of this people changed very soon, and very much for the worse, after the death of Joseph. Their burden increased daily—and it is quite likely that their task-masters would not allow them even the weekly Sabbath for religious duties. They were moreover, surrounded by idolaters and accustomed to hear the names, and witness the impure rites pertaining to the worship of a multitude of gods, falsely so called. In such circumstances they must have degenerated rapidly;—the few good things that remained among them, were ready to die; which conspired, with various other considerations, to evince the necessity of their speedy removal from the foul and contagious influence of the abominations of Egypt. To confirm the faith of his doubting servant, and to

remove the fears which arose from this quarter, God proclaims himself by a *name* not heretofore mentioned in sacred Scripture; "I AM THAT I AM:—Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." This title implies the incommunicable attributes of the GLORIOUS GODHEAD—*Eternity, immutability, independence, and underived, unrivalled, and indescribable majesty.* An attempt at exposition here, would be presumption: all that we can say, is, that JEHOVAH IS, and WILL BE WHAT HE IS. Go, then, Moses, in the name of the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible;—bring forth his chosen people, that they may be organized, and consecrated, as the keepers of his oracles and covenant, to be made known in due time to "earth's remotest bounds." And lest they should be dismayed at the proclamation of this *new and august title*, assure them that the Lord God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has sent you to bring them up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto a land flowing with milk and honey: Go, and they *shall* hearken to your voice. Go to Pharaoh—urge my claim—exhibit your commission, authenticated by my seal; and, although I am sure he will not yield, except by a mighty hand, yet you shall see his power crushed by an out-stretched arm; for I will do wonders in Egypt, and after that he will let you go: Nor shall you come forth empty;—I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, whom I will constrain to supply you, not only with raiment and other articles needful for the journey, but with jewels of silver and jewels of gold; and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians. Strange, that Moses should still hesitate, and indulge his unbelieving fears! But so it is—"Behold, said he, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice." Here is something worse than excessive timidity. Mark, now, the condescension and patience of the High and Lofty One! Two sensible tokens, altogether of a miraculous nature, are vouchsafed to secure the faith, and animate the courage of

this *weak*, and we might perhaps say, *skeptical* believer:—the shepherd's crook is changed into a serpent, and re-converted into a rod; and one of his hands is made "leprous as snow," and instantly "turned again as his other flesh:" nay, more—he is endowed with the power of turning water into blood; and yet he doubts, and begs to be excused under a new plea;—"O my Lord, I am not eloquent, I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." And when it is intimated that the Creator of man's mouth can, if necessary, make *his* tongue fluent, *still* he pleads; "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send!" Here "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses," and he was no doubt, rebuked for his obstinate incredulity, and backwardness to obey the voice of the Lord; but after all, he is not abandoned. To satisfy his doubts, as it would seem, and to furnish him with a useful and pleasant colleague, his brother Aaron, distinguished for eloquence, is put in the commission with him; and now the two brothers, relying on the Divine promise for all needful support, go forth in the Lord's name to break the yoke of the oppressor, and bring their brethren, of the house of Israel, into the land of promise.



## LECTURE XXIV.

MOSES AND AARON PROCEED TO EXECUTE THEIR COMMISSION.

And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they: and Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old when they spake unto Pharaoh.—Exodus vii. 6, 7.

IN the preceding lecture, we noticed the appointment of Moses to the office of leader and law-giver of Israel, and some of the circumstances connected with

his designation to that arduous and important service. Before we attend him at the opening of his commission in the presence of Pharaoh, and in the execution of his awful functions as Jehovah's ambassador to that haughty monarch, an occurrence which took place on his way to Egypt claims some attention, as well on account of the obscurity which hangs about it, as for the practical lesson which it seems to have been designed to teach. The occurrence alluded to is related in these words;—"And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, (i. e. Moses,) and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, *Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.* So he let him go: then she said, a bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision."—Without staying to cite the various conjectures of commentators on this obscure passage of sacred Scripture, we would remark upon it—that Moses appears from some cause or other, (perhaps in compliance with his wife's prejudice against the rite,) to have neglected the circumcision of one of his sons. For this violation of the Abrahamic covenant, which required that every man-child should be circumcised, at eight days old, on pain of being cut off from his people, (Gen. xvii. 9–14,) the Lord's displeasure was manifested against Moses, in some very distressing manner. Hereupon Zipporah, moved by fear, and finding her husband rendered incapable of attending to the duty, performed the external rite with a sharp instrument made of a species of stone susceptible of a keen edge, and frequently used in such operations. The commanded duty being thus complied with, the token of divine displeasure, whatever it may have been, was removed; and Moses was permitted to proceed on his journey. The speech and behaviour of Zipporah on the occasion, indicated a high degree of petulance, if not of contempt for sacred things. "A bloody husband art thou to me, because of the circumcision," was a declaration, which not only betrayed great disrespect for her husband, but



evidently involved a reproachful reflection on his religion. Such a querulous-tempered woman would probably be neither contented in her own mind, nor helpful to Moses in the difficult business upon which he was going to Egypt. We may conclude, therefore, from this circumstance, taken in connexion with what is related, Ex. xviii. 1, &c., that, by consent of all parties concerned, Zipporah and her two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, went back to the paternal dwelling of Jethro, under whose care they remained till Moses, at the head of the ransomed tribes, returned in holy triumph to the mount of God.

The practical lesson suggested by this singular piece of history is, that we should be careful to perform every known duty in its proper season. No pressure of worldly business, no fear of man, no complaisance to the skeptical notions of respected friends should be allowed to hinder us from a prompt discharge of those duties which God has enjoined upon us, in his blessed Bible. And this principle holds good in regard to ritual observances, or positive institutions, no less than in relation to moral and relative duties. Did the Lord meet Moses in the way, and lay upon him some sore affliction for neglecting to circumcise his son? Then may we expect similar visitations of his anger, if we treat divine ordinances with similar neglect. This thought deserves the serious consideration of parents, who either wholly neglect, or needlessly delay the dedication of their children to God in baptism; and of those persons also, who abstain voluntarily, and with heedless indifference, from the Lord's supper. The Almighty has instituted no useless ordinances. Wisdom and goodness mark all his appointments; but most conspicuously are these divine attributes blended in the sacraments of the New Testament. As we would, therefore, acknowledge the authority, and celebrate the grace of God our Saviour, let us keep his precepts with all diligence, and earnestly endeavour to walk before him, with our households, in the way of his commandments, blameless. Thus may we hope to realize in our domestic circles, the

faithful saying of the Psalmist: "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."

Soon after the unpleasant event which took place "by the way, at the inn," Moses was joined by Aaron, his brother, who, in obedience to the heavenly vision, had come forth to meet him in the wilderness of Midian. This must have been truly a joyful and a solemn meeting. The brothers, after a separation of forty years, are brought together by a wonderful Providence, to unite in a mission of a very extraordinary character. They embrace each other with more than natural affection; confer fully and freely on the subject matter of their high vocation; and after united prayers and thanksgivings to the God of their fathers, they set forward for the scene of action, bearing along with them the rod of God, and a warrant from the court of Heaven, signed by THE GREAT I AM, to bring the seed of Jacob out of the house of bondage.

The sacred narrative, passing over in silence the incidents of their journey, next presents them to our notice in the midst of the children of Israel; who, on being informed of the kind errand on which they had come, and on hearing the words which the Lord had spoken to them, and beholding the signs of supernatural power with which they were endued, "bowed their heads and worshipped." Following their instructions, they then proceed to open their commission and exhibit their credentials, in the presence of Pharaoh, with a "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." To this demand the haughty king of Egypt was far from being disposed to yield: his reply affords an instance of fool-hardy contempt for the authority of the Most High, such as is rarely to be met with in the annals of human depravity: "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord; neither will I let Israel go?" And here commences the conflict, which is to be the main subject of this exercise. Our obser-

vations upon it, shall be arranged under three heads, viz. The design of this extraordinary mission; the obstacles that opposed its being carried into effect; and the means employed in its accomplishment.

I. The design of the mission.

This was *great*, and *good*, and *extensive* in its bearing, beyond mortal measurement. To say that it was to deliver a numerous people from unjust servitude—to redeem a *nation* from the iron grasp of cupidity and despotism, would be saying little; though that alone, would have been an object worthy the special interposition of a righteous Providence. What, excepting life itself, is so dear and desirable to man, as liberty and the right of self-government? Let the aged men, who, even at this day, love to recount the perilous exploits of that eventful contest which, under favour of Heaven, terminated in the Independence of these United States, say whether the liberation of a great people from a foreign yoke, is not a matter of the *first magnitude* in human affairs. This allusion may seem strained, and inapplicable to the case of the Israelites, inasmuch as the American colonists dwelt in a large land, without task-masters, and scarcely conscious of the yoke which they bore. This may be true; but the cases are, nevertheless, analogous. The same principle that would impose taxes without allowing the *taxables* the privilege of being represented in the government, which a portion of their hard earnings contributed to support, would, if an opportunity should offer, exact the *full tale of brick*, without furnishing the requisite *straw*.

But the mission in question contemplated something more than the temporal emancipation of a great nation from the thralldom of Egypt. The glory of the only living and true God was deeply concerned in its success. The world was now filled with dumb idols; and amid the heterogeneous mass of fanciful divinities, the supposed patrons of all manner of vice and cruelty, the principles of pure religion and the rights of the Creator, were in danger of being utterly forgotten

among mankind. Of these sad fruits of sin, Egypt was, at this time, the most prolific hot-bed, perhaps, on earth: here, therefore, it seemed important that the power of Jehovah should be displayed, in some impressive form, calculated to awaken men from their delusive dreams, to break their confidence in lying vanities, and turn their devotions to the only proper object of religious homage. That this purpose was, in some degree answered, by the legation of Moses and Aaron, is made plain in the sequel of the history now before us. Nor was this all:—In mercy to the world, God intended to make a revelation of his will to mankind, that they might know the duties required of them, and learn the way of salvation through the blessed Redeemer. It was judged necessary, therefore, by the only wise God, that a peculiar people should be selected as the depository of this revelation; and that they should be placed in circumstances favourable to their receiving it with due reverence—that it might be preserved with religious care, and transmitted to succeeding generations, unadulterated and entire. And that this benevolent purpose, reaching in its influence to all ages and nations of the world, was more likely to be attained by means of the family of Jacob, redeemed from Egyptian bondage, and separated, afterwards, from the rest of mankind by a wall of ceremonies, under the ministry of Moses, than by any other method that can be conceived, will scarcely be denied, we think, by any intelligent man, who shall examine the subject candidly and with an honest desire to know, and ingenuousness enough to acknowledge the truth. Such we take to be, summarily, the design of this extraordinary mission: and, when we seriously consider the magnitude and benevolence of the design, are we not constrained to allow, that it furnished occasion for all the mighty apparatus employed in its execution?

II. The obstacles, which opposed its being carried into effect, were;—the *dejected state of the Israelites*; the *cunning craftiness of the magicians*; and the

*insatiable cupidity and obdurate wickedness* of the king of Egypt.

The people had worn the yoke so long that they had become, in a measure, inured to its galling pressure. Their spirits were broken down—their mental energy prostrated;—and they had been made to serve with so much rigour, and allowed so little time for religious improvement, that they had nearly forgotten the promises made to their fathers, in relation to their being put in possession of the land of Canaan, in the fourth generation from the time of their entrance into Egypt. Hence, when they found that the incipient steps towards their deliverance gave occasion to an augmentation of their burdens, they not only refused to exert themselves, but reproached the Lord's messengers, as if they had come to aggravate their sufferings. "And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh—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.*" This grievous charge, though totally unfounded, had a painful and ill effect on the mind of Moses. It furnished him, indeed, with an errand to the throne of grace; but his complaining prayer on the occasion, betrayed a remnant of the old leaven of unbelief, and is not to be imitated in similar trials: "Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil-intreated 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." Alas, for our fallen, faithless nature! Were God's ways as our ways, or his thoughts as ours, nothing would be done, in the difficult work of redemption—it would cease for ever.

Another hindrance to the accomplishment of the design of this mission, was the cunning craftiness of the magicians. These men had an almost unbounded influence on Pharaoh—on his courtiers, and on all classes of his superstitious subjects. Interested, therefore, to maintain the credit of their infernal art, they

set themselves, with unrelenting malignity, to oppose the messengers of Jehovah. Whether these magicians were in some sort of alliance with the spirits of darkness, or acquired their skill in their vile art by long practice, without any preternatural aid, is a question which we have neither time nor inclination to discuss. We will only say in passing, that it does appear to us on the face of the Holy Scriptures, of both Testaments, that there is a prince of devils, with many evil angels under him;—and that these foul spirits have a surprising power, not only of influencing wicked men, but of disturbing and harassing the minds of the pious occasionally. But whatever may be their power, it is *permitted*, and *bounded*, and *controllable by the Almighty*. The Son of God commanded the demons out of the demoniacs, in the days of his visible abode on earth: and the God of Moses and Aaron enabled them to triumph over the tricks of Jannes and Jambres, after the second experiment at least. The sorcerers succeeded tolerably well “with their enchantments,” in the transmutation of the rods into serpents, and of water into blood, because the substitution of the one in the place of the other might be practicable in certain circumstances without being noticed by superficial observers. But the lice, the frogs, the boils, the murrain, the hail, the darkness, &c., they could neither imitate nor command. This obstacle, therefore, to the accomplishment of the divine purpose was overcome by divine power.

The other grand impediment to the speedy execution of the design was, the insatiable cupidity and obdurate wickedness of Pharaoh. His cupidity appeared in his unwillingness to relinquish the services of the Israelites—and his singular obstinacy, in his peremptory refusal to acknowledge Jehovah’s claim to that people—and in his contempt of repeated demonstrations of a power in the heavens, which he could not gainsay or resist with the least hope of success. “Woe to him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth; shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What

makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" The hardness of Pharaoh's heart is proverbial. It certainly appears to have been of a very intense and unyielding sort. How did he arrive to such a consummate degree of obduracy? In the same way, we suppose, that many other sinners make themselves vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction; i. e. by fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, and by resisting the means used by a Holy Providence for their conviction and conversion from the error of their ways. In the narrative before us, it is in several places, said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart; and in other places, that he hardened his own heart: and here is a difficulty, for the solution of which, great critical ingenuity has been displayed, and much time spent, which might have been more usefully employed. We have but few words to say on the subject. This wicked monarch was raised up, or sustained in life—not crushed instantly by the divine arm—in order that Jehovah's power and long suffering might be manifested in his case, in a striking and memorable manner. But a God of purity can impart no sinfulness to any creature, nor add to it where it already exists, *by a direct and positive influence*: the only way, therefore, so far as we can conceive, in which he could harden Pharaoh's heart, was by affording him such warnings and other means of conviction, as must, in the nature of things, leave him without excuse for his impenitence; and as must, of course, aggravate his guilt if he continued rebellious and disobedient to the commands of his Creator. But, not to mention other considerations, let it be carefully noted here, that the obdurate wickedness of Pharaoh was the most formidable obstacle that impeded the execution of the design contemplated in the mission of Moses; an obstacle, to subdue which, some half a score of tremendous judgments were inflicted on Egypt. We cannot, therefore, suppose that God actually hardened this man's heart, without supposing (what amounts almost to blasphemy) that he created a hindrance to the fulfilment of his own purpose, for the sake of displaying his power in subduing

it. Such were the obstacles that opposed the accomplishment of Heaven's kind designs in the redemption of his people from the house of bondage.

III. Our observations on the means employed for the removal of these impediments, and for the complete execution of the divine decree in this important matter, must be short and cursory.

The God of mercy proceeded in this instance, as he does ordinarily with those who set themselves against his authority and holy counsels. He first adopted lenient and persuasive measures, and when these failed to produce the desired effect, he resorted to his strange work; his hand took hold on judgment, his glittering sword is lifted up, to show that while he takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked, he will by no means clear the guilty.

The transmutation of Aaron's rod into a serpent, and its devouring those of the magicians, when "they did so with their enchantments," was not a plague, but merely a token to Pharaoh, that God Almighty had empowered and commissioned his servants to bring forth his people, that they might serve him in the wilderness, and in the land of promise. Accordingly, after exhibiting this testimony of the validity of their pretensions, the two ambassadors approach the king of Egypt with all due deference, and respectfully lay before him this statement and humble petition: "The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword." But the haughty monarch, unmoved by this respectful appeal, the Lord's ambassadors were obliged, in the execution of their commission, to have recourse to stronger and more effectual measures, as we shall see in our next lecture.



## LECTURE XXV.

## THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED.

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say—It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses.—*Exodus* xii. 26, 27.

THE redemption of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt was, on several accounts, an important and memorable event. It gave occasion to a very extraordinary display of God's power and faithfulness in the fulfilment of his promises, and in the protection of his people. It was a significant act of Providence, manifestly designed and admirably calculated to convey to mankind, in their successive generations, instructions of the utmost moment. A religious rite was, therefore, instituted to perpetuate the remembrance of this illustrious event—a rite called, for a reason mentioned in Scripture, "The Sacrifice of the Lord's Pass-over," or, more commonly, "The Pass-over," simply. This divine ordinance, with some of the most striking circumstances of its appointment, and particularly its relation to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, will be the subject of our present lecture.

The institution is described in the sacred text, with a minuteness which clearly indicates its importance, and supersedes the necessity of a laboured or tedious exposition. On the tenth day of the month Abib, afterwards called Nisan, and corresponding, nearly, to our March, the people were directed to take, by families, a lamb, of the male kind, without blemish, and not exceeding a year old, from the flocks, to be

kept for the purpose till the fourteenth day of the same month, when it was to be slain, its blood sprinkled on the door-posts of their dwellings, and its flesh roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. This was to be done in the evening; and, if any part of the victim remained over night, it was to be consumed by fire in the morning. And, that they might be ready to depart whenever the signal should be given, the people were, moreover, required to eat the paschal lamb in haste, having their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands. Some of the particulars here mentioned in the *manner* of observing the rite, were rendered proper by the circumstances of the people at the first celebration, but were afterwards discontinued as not being essential to the due observance of the ordinance; such as the partaking of it in separate families, the sprinkling of the blood on the door-posts of their private houses, and all those preparations which related to a speedy march out of the house of bondage.

Concerning the subsequent observance of this sacred memorial, "in their generations," the law directs that it should be celebrated, not in private dwellings, but "in the place which the Lord should choose to place his name in;" i. e. at the tabernacle and the temple; that the service should continue for seven days, and that the first and last of these days should be kept with peculiar solemnity, and abstinence from secular business; that not a bone of the Paschal lamb should be broken, and that a stranger should not be allowed to partake of the festival till he had professed his faith in the God of Israel, by the circumcision of himself and the male members of his household. And as the Passover was considered as a commemorative sacrifice, so the ritual directs, agreeably to the general rule concerning sacrifices, "Thou shalt, therefore, sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose to put his name there."

The primary design of this institution, was mani-

festly to keep up in the tribes of Israel, a grateful remembrance of their deliverance from the oppressive yoke of their Egyptian masters; and thus to engage and encourage their devotion to, and confidence in, the God of their fathers, who had broken the rod of the oppressor and redeemed them from servitude, agreeably to his promise, "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm." The people were accordingly commanded to "observe this thing, as an ordinance to them, and to their sons for ever:" that is, during their existence as the peculiar people of God, the holy nation, the depository of the divine oracles, till SHILOH should come, who was to break down the middle wall of partition, and proclaim salvation to all nations, through the sacrifice of his blood. The people were required, also, to explain the nature and design of the institution to their children, when settled in the land of their destined inheritance: "When ye be come to the land, which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised," and "When your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses." This ordinance was celebrated with religious care and punctuality by the Israelites in their best days, as during the times of Joshua, Samuel, Hezekiah, and Josiah, and after their return from the Babylonian captivity. Its observance was indeed, at several periods of their history, interrupted by their frequent wars and relapses into idolatry; but the due attention to this and their other divinely instituted rites, was always regarded as indicative of their national prosperity and of the favourable state of religion among them. The existence of this rite, and the estimation in which it was held by that people, from the departure out of Egypt till the destruction of their temple by the Romans, a period of more than fifteen hundred years, affords a strong argument, or rather, monumental demonstration of the truth of the history contained in the book of Exodus. The very

*name*, in fact, "The sacrifice of the Lord's Passover," points to the origin of the rite as related by Moses, with indubitable certainty and precision. All such observances take their rise from events of interest and notoriety, else it would be impossible for them to obtain currency and credit among mankind. This observation may be made with additional force in relation to the Christian Passover, the memorial of our Saviour's death. Without allowing the truth and reality of the event which it is intended to commemorate, it is impossible to account for the existence of the rite.

The remembrance of Israel's departure out of Egypt was secured also, by a distinction of the year into *ecclesiastical* and *civil*, to which that event gave rise. Anterior to the Exodus, the Jews considered the year as beginning with the month Tirzi, answering nearly to our September, about the autumnal equinox; and, as we have observed already, the departure from Egypt took place in the seventh month, according to the usual reckoning, called Abib, or Nisan, about the vernal equinox. But to indicate the magnitude of the deliverance accomplished on this occasion by the interposition of divine power, "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." Accordingly, they ever afterwards considered this as the commencement of their ecclesiastical year, and calculated from it the time of their feasts and other religious observances; while in civil concerns they, in common with some neighboring nations, followed the old reckoning.

The relation which the Passover bears to the Lord's Supper, claims special consideration. That these institutions are analogous, the one to the other, just as the two dispensations to which they belong, respectively, correspond to one another, is the prevailing opinion of the best expositors of sacred Scripture, with whose writings we have any acquaintance. Under the Old Testament dispensation, the gospel was exhibited *symbolically*; under the Christian dispensa-

tion we have the blessings of the same glorious gospel presented to our acceptance in a more luminous, direct, and inviting form. The whole Jewish economy—"The adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;"—the patriarchs and the prophets, the types and the sacrifices, and the prophecies, all terminate in CHRIST, the REDEEMER, "in whom all the promises are yea, and amen, to the glory of God the Father." On this grand principle, which seems to be *inwoven* throughout the whole tenour of Scripture, the deliverance of Israel was a type of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ; and the instituted rite which commemorated that deliverance, was designed to give place, in due time, to the memorial of that *blood shedding*—that *one sacrificial offering*, "which for ever perfecteth them that are sanctified." The *death of Christ* is the object contemplated as well in the Jewish sacrament, the passover, as in the Christian ordinance, the Lord's Supper. The former pointed to a dying Saviour *prospectively*; the latter looks *retrospectively*, to the same surprising proof of redeeming love. It is conceded that the passover was designed, primarily, to commemorate the temporal redemption of the seed of Jacob; but, then, that redemption *itself* was but "a shadow of good things to come;" and of course the rite which kept up the remembrance of it, must have referred *ultimately* and *mainly*, to the shedding of that blood which cleanseth from all sin; which constitutes "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Unless we admit this reference of the paschal lamb with its attendant ceremonies, to Christ crucified, it seems impossible to find a reason for its appointment, or to conceive of an end to be answered by it, worthy of the wisdom and goodness of the only wise God. The slaying of the lamb, the sprinkling of its blood on the door-posts, the eating of its flesh with unleavened bread, &c., had no effect that we can discern, either from Scripture or from the nature of the case, in subduing the opposition

of Pharaoh to the enlargement of the Israelites. Why then was the rite ordained? and why were the people commanded to observe it in their generations for ever? To these and the like questions, the only rational answer is, that this whole ceremonial was intended to prefigure "Christ our passover, who was sacrificed for us." The Lord's Supper, therefore, commemorates that which the Jewish passover typified, viz. the atoning sacrifice of the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Let us then, in what remains of this exercise, attend to some of the most striking points of resemblance between these ordinances, particularly in regard to the spirit and manner of their due observance. The redemption of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, is a most significant and impressive type of that glorious deliverance which our Lord and Saviour has accomplished for his people: nor can the full import of the former be seen, without a reference to the latter. The true and efficacious sacrifice of the Lord's passover is the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. Jesus, the Son of God, is the Lamb, virtually slain from the foundation of the world, as the true paschal lamb of our redemption. Let us, then, keep the feast that commemorates his love, "not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Let us obey his precepts, in proof that we love him; and when asked what we mean by this service, we will say, because "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," therefore, we eat bread and drink wine, "in remembrance of him who loved us, and gave himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering unto God for a sweet smelling savour." Thus may we hope that others will join us in the delightful service, and find by happy experience that his yoke is easy, and his burden light; that his ways are pleasant, and all his paths peaceful. To the Lamb that was slain, as the great "sacrifice of the Lord's passover," let us unite with the blood-bought multitude,

which no man can number, in the sweet and appropriate lines of the poet:

“Hail! thou agonizing Saviour,  
Bearer of our sin and shame!  
By thy merits we find favour,  
Life is given, through thy name.

Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,  
All our sins on thee were laid;  
By Almighty love anointed,  
Thou hast full atonement made.

All thy people are forgiven  
Through the virtue of thy blood;  
Open'd is the gate of heaven:  
Peace is made 'twixt man and God.”



## LECTURE XXVI.

### PARTICULARS CONNECTED WITH THE EXIT FROM EGYPT.

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 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. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord 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.—Exodus xiii. 17-22.

SEVERAL facts and circumstances connected with the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, are worthy of notice; some on account of the apparent difficulties attending them, and others on account of the con-

firmation which due attention to them may afford to our faith in the sacred narrative. Of this nature are—The *period* of their stay in that country—their *number* at the time of their exit—the *means employed* to obtain some remuneration from the Egyptians for past services—the respect which they showed to Joseph's remains—the *direction* in which they first moved—the *symbol* of the *Divine Presence* which accompanied them—and their extraordinary passage over the Red Sea. To a brief consideration of these particulars, this lecture will be chiefly devoted.

In regard to the term of Israel's continuance in Egypt, there is some difficulty. It is not incapable, however, of a satisfactory solution. From what is said, (Exodus xii. 40 and 41,) it might be inferred, on a hasty perusal of the passage, that they were in the house of bondage four hundred and thirty years; whereas the fact is, they were there only half that time, viz: two hundred and fifteen years. The text referred to, speaks of the *sojourning* of the children of Israel, i. e., of Abraham and his posterity, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, but does not limit this *sojourning* to Egypt: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, *who dwell in Egypt*, was four hundred and thirty years: and it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day, it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." Abraham was a sojourner from the time of his leaving Ur of the Chaldees, at the divine call, till the day of his death. And his descendants were pilgrims and strangers in a migrating and unsettled state, long before their descent into Egypt. The four hundred and thirty years are designed to express the whole period of their pilgrimage and servitude, anterior to their getting possession of Canaan. In Genesis xv. 13, God tells Abraham, that the oppression of his seed shall be four hundred years; i. e., thirty years short of the period mentioned in the passage just cited from Exodus xii. To reconcile this prediction with the account which Moses gives of its fulfilment, it is only necessary to observe, that the



prediction was uttered about the time of Isaac's birth, which was from five and twenty to thirty years after the calling of Abraham; and, consequently, about four hundred years before the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt. "The children of Israel," says Dr. Shuckford, "did not live in Egypt four hundred and thirty years; for they came into that country with Jacob, A. M. 2298, and went out of it, A. M. 2513; so that they lived in Egypt but two hundred and fifteen years: therefore the sojourning of the children of Israel must not be limited to their residence in Egypt, but must be extended to the time of their living in Canaan; for the four hundred and thirty years here mentioned, begin from Abraham's first coming into Canaan." The Samaritan text has the verse thus: "Now the inhabiting of the children of Israel *and their fathers*, whereby they inhabited in the land of Canaan, and in the land of Egypt, were four hundred and thirty years." Dean Prideaux considers this as a paraphrase on the Hebrew text, and regards it as giving the true sense of the passage. This view of the subject is confirmed by the testimony of Josephus also, who says, "that the Israelites left Egypt four hundred and thirty years after Abraham's coming into Canaan, and two hundred and fifteen years after their entering that country with Jacob." It appears, then, that the Israelites, after remaining in Egypt two hundred and fifteen years, left that country in the year of the world 2513, and, consequently, before the birth of Christ 1491 years; or, to aid the memory by means of a round number, we may say about fifteen hundred years before the advent of our Saviour.

It is not easy to ascertain the exact number of these people, at the time of their exit from the land of oppression. They came into Egypt a feeble band, their whole number then, including Joseph and his sons, not exceeding four score. In the space of little more than two hundred years, they had increased, the sacred text informs us, to six hundred thousand men capable of bearing arms, besides women and children,

and old men, who had passed the military age. On the moderate calculation of four persons of all other descriptions for one man capable of military service, their whole number must have been three millions; the most extraordinary instance of a rapid increase of population that is to be found in the annals of the world: especially when we take into view the circumstances in which they were placed, by no means favourable to their growth and prosperity as a people. For, admitting what indeed seems probable, that their oppression did not commence till after the death of Joseph and his brethren, yet when we recollect that Moses was born under a decree of the cruel Pharaoh, ordaining the destruction of the male children, and under which many undoubtedly perished, although it seems not to have continued in force long;—when we consider, that the land which the people cultivated was not their own, and that their servitude, for at least a hundred and twenty years, was most abject and disheartening, we must, I think, ascribe their extraordinary multiplication to the special favour of Divine Providence, in fulfilment of the promise made, and often repeated to their fathers, of a seed resembling the stars for multitude. To furnish such a vast body of people with the means of sustenance for a long and perilous journey, such as they were now about to enter upon, must have been a matter of serious difficulty and solicitude to the leaders in the enterprise: for, although they were supported in the wilderness by miracle, as the sequel of the history shows, yet not being fully assured that it was the divine purpose *thus* to supply their wants, they would naturally endeavour to provide for themselves, so far as circumstances would permit. Some property they undoubtedly had of their own. But it must have been inadequate to their wants; and as the king and his counsellors, for cogent reasons were anxious to have them leave the country immediately, they would of course be disposed from selfish motives to favour their speedy departure. Hence the method taken to supply this deficiency, by securing

some remuneration from their oppressors for past services; a measure which we are bound to vindicate, because it was taken, as appears in the inspired record, by divine direction.

“Speak now in the ears of the people,” says God to Moses, (Exod. xi. 2,) “and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver and jewels of gold.” And in chap. xii. 35, 36, we are told, that “the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.” Exception has been taken to this transaction, as disingenuous, if not flatly dishonest, on the part of the Israelites. Lord Shaftsbury, who improves all occasions against the Bible, says, with an air of triumph: “The wit of the best poet is not sufficient to reconcile us to the retreat of a Moses by the assistance of an Egyptian loan.” This objection assumes what needs proof, viz:—that the children of Israel had no intention of returning, at a future day, either the articles loaned, or something equivalent to them, in value. In our apprehension, this might have been the fact, for aught that appears in the history, or in the nature of the case; though it is, we admit, rendered rather improbable by its being said, (chap. xii. 36,) that “they (i. e., the Israelites) spoiled the Egyptians.” But the truth is, as every Biblical scholar knows, the word *borrow* is improperly used in this place. It does not convey the true meaning of the original, which signifies to *ask* or demand. It is the same word, in the Hebrew language, that is used in Psalm ii. 8, which is translated correctly: “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” The children of Israel, then, pursuant to divine instructions, ASKED the Egyptians for jewels and raiment; “and the Lord,” it is added, “gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians,” so that they gave them, as some small remuneration for service rendered, such things as were needful, in the existing emergency. This, which we

believe to be the genuine sense of the sacred text, is confirmed by Josephus, who says that, at the time of the Exodus, "the Egyptians made the Hebrews considerable presents; and that some did so in order to induce them to go away the sooner, and others out of respect for them and on account of their acquaintance with them." Thus the Lord proves himself a present help to his people in time of need. The earth is his, and the fulness thereof; and he can, in various ways, supply their wants, and make even their enemies be at peace with them. The family of Jacob came into Egypt under the pressure of famine—there they lived, not only in a state of dependence on a despotic and capricious monarch, but, during the latter half at least of their stay in that country, are subjected to the most degrading bondage; yet God is not slack concerning his promise. When the season of their emancipation arrives, HE, whose kingdom ruleth over all, gives them favour in the sight of the Egyptians, and leads them forth, laden with the spoils of their iron-hearted oppressors.

It is pleasing to observe, amid the embarrassment of a hasty removal, the marked respect which was paid to the dying request of Joseph, in relation to his mortal remains. "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you." This injunction had been laid on a preceding generation; for Joseph had been dead now about a hundred and forty years, (Gen. l. 24, &c. ;) but the memory of his worth was not lost, and the present race deemed it their duty to fulfil an engagement entered into by their fathers. Joseph was a firm believer in the divine promises; and he wished to confirm the faith and encourage the hope of his kindred, by giving them a charge concerning his bones, which was calculated to keep them mindful of his dying testimony to the truth and faithfulness of the Almighty: "I die," says he, "and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham,

to Isaac, and to Jacob.” And, as if he had said, to assure you of my entire confidence in the accomplishment of this divine stipulation, I charge you, when God shall thus visit you, to carry my bones with you, that they may rest, along with the ashes of our pious forefathers, in the hope of a resurrection unto everlasting life and blessedness. Let us remark, here, that it is seemly to honour the memory of the just, and those that have been useful in life, by a respectful attention to their funeral rites, and by all due regard to their reasonable wishes in relation to the place, and other circumstances connected with the interment of their bodies. Joseph had been an eminent benefactor to his father’s house, and had been distinguished for his piety and public spirit; it was fit and proper, therefore, that his name, and *even his bones should be held dear* by his surviving friends. But as he had, as we have seen, a weighty reason of a religious import, for wishing his remains carried to Canaan, his example, it is manifest, was not designed to be drawn into a precedent, except in cases where similar reasons can be alleged. It is not, ordinarily, a matter of much moment where our mortal bodies, or those of our kindred, are deposited. They will not be overlooked in the morning of the resurrection. “This is the will of *Him* that sent me,” says our blessed Redeemer, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: **AND I WILL RAISE HIM UP AT THE LAST DAY.**” (John vi. 40.)

Joseph’s bones were a sort of pledge for the release of Israel from the house of bondage, and of their introduction into the land of promise. But, Christians, we have a much better security for our final redemption, in the many sure and precious promises of God’s word, in the weekly Sabbath, which perpetuates the remembrance of our Saviour’s triumph over death, and in the sacramental seals of his well tried and everlasting love; “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him: Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thess. iv. 14. 18.)

“And the children of Israel went up *harnessed* out of the land of Egypt.” The word here rendered *harnessed*, signifies also, *fixed, prepared, and arranged*. The meaning, I take to be, that they were distributed into several companies, under the immediate command of leaders taken from their respective tribes, for the purpose of securing as much order as possible in the movements of so great a multitude; for the state of bondage from which they were just emerging, forbids us to suppose that even their men of war were furnished with arms, and otherwise equipped in military style. Thus prepared for their exit out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, the Lord himself condescends to become their guide and protector; the ministry of Moses being employed only occasionally, and by express orders from the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL.

“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 about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.” The nearest route from Egypt to Canaan lay in north-eastern direction, through the Isthmus of Suez; and the journey from the one to the other might have been performed, for aught that we can conceive, by easy and slow marches, in a very few weeks. One of the reasons why the Israelites were not conducted in this way, is mentioned in the passage just cited from the sacred text: Philistia lay along this route; and as the Philistines were an inhospitable and warlike people, assaults and depredations from them might be expected: and the people of Israel, unarmed and dispirited as they must have been, from long servitude, and having in charge their wives, their children, and aged parents, were not in a fit condition to encounter the hardships and perils of war. Other reasons are disclosed in the sequel of the history: God designed to manifest his power by the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea; that Siani should be the scene of the promulgation of his

law, and that his chosen people should be trained and tried and disciplined, for the space of forty years previous to their entrance upon the inheritance promised to their forefathers. Therefore, "He led them about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea." And to secure their confidence in his guidance and care, "The Lord 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." It were idle to attempt a description of this extraordinary symbol. It was a piece of that wonderful apparatus which Jehovah saw fit to employ in the deliverance of his people Israel, to show the world that he is never at a loss for means to accomplish his great and holy purposes. The uses of this cloud are evident. It shielded the people from the assaults of their enemies, and from the distressing effects of a summer sun. It served to dispel the darkness of the night, and especially it directed all their movements; was a visible token of the Lord's presence, a standing oracle, to which recourse was to be had for divine instruction on all occasions. And may we not add, that this *mysterious chariot* of the Most High, alternately affording light and shade to the ransomed tribes of Israel, was a typical representation of that gracious influence which guides, and guards, and cheers the children of God on their way to the Canaan of everlasting rest! "The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalm liv. 11.) "Fear not, O Israel! the Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore." (Psalm cxxi. 5-8.)

It only remains, of our design in this lecture, to notice briefly the consummation of Israel's triumph over the oppressor, in the miraculous passage of the Red Sea. Pharaoh, having recovered a little from the con-

sternation produced by the slaying of the first-born, began to regret the loss of so many useful servants; and, with the view either of reclaiming them, or of taking vengeance upon them, for daring to shake off the fetters of slavery, he pursued and overtook them in their encampment, between a town called Migdol, and that branch or bay of the Red Sea called Hieropolis—some ten or fifteen miles south of the Isthmus of Suez. The natural barriers which here obstructed the progress of the Israelites, inspired their pursuers with a confident hope of an easy conquest. The bay is supposed to have been, at this point, from two to five miles wide, and on either hand were impassable mountains, while the chosen chariots and horsemen of Egypt pressed hard upon their rear. In such circumstances, to the eye of sense, the only alternative for Israel, was death or an immediate surrender. But the Lord's arm is able to bring deliverance in all emergencies. Moses, agreeably to orders from the cloudy pillar, animates the faith of the people, exhorting them to await the salvation of God. "Lift thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and bid the people go forward," says the holy oracle. It is done:—"And the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them, on their right hand and on their left." The infatuated Egyptians continue the pursuit; but, behold! whilst they are yet in the midst of the sea, and the chosen tribes have just reached the opposite shore, the consecrated rod is again waved, and the waters return in their strength, whelming the chariots and horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh, so that not one escapes. "Thus the Lord saved Israel, that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore." The signal favour of God, shown to his people on this occasion, is celebrated by Moses in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, in one of the most elegant, and most ancient pieces of



poetry now extant. What pity it is, that young people generally have not a greater relish for the beauties, and interesting facts, and doctrines of the Bible! In view of what has fallen under our notice in the course of this exercise, let us learn to revere the justice, and confide in the grace of God. To every one who is disposed to serve him, and inclined to trust in the mercy that is revealed in the gospel, the word of promise is, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." "Be not faithless, therefore, but believing." In every extremity, stand still and see the salvation of God: his providence may conduct you in a circuitous and afflicted path; but know assuredly it is the right way. From the fate of Pharaoh and his host, let sinners learn the awful danger of hardening their hearts by neglecting the calls, the warnings, and gracious offers of God's holy word.

## LECTURE XXVII.

## OCCURRENCES BETWEEN THE RED SEA AND MOUNT SINAI.

In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mount. 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. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation: These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.—Exodus xix. 1-6.

SINAI and Horeb are two adjacent peaks, or summits of a mountain in Arabia Petraea, situated between the two bays or gulfs which extend northward out of the Red Sea. From the proximity of these mounts, they are often mentioned in Scripture indiscriminately, to designate the scene of occurrences which took place in that neighbourhood. The Arabs call Sinai the mount of Moses, or emphatically, El Tor, *The Mount*. The surrounding region, on account of its dreary and sterile aspect, is denominated the wilderness of Sinai. Here the children of Israel encamped early in the third month from the time of their leaving Egypt; and here they were organized as a holy nation, a kingdom of priests unto Jehovah, their God and supreme governor, from whose lips they received the law of duty, in circumstances well calculated to impress their hearts with a strong sense of the divine majesty, and

to secure their confidence in the truth and faithfulness of the great Creator, from generation to generation. But before entering on the consideration of these important matters, it will be proper for us, following the thread of the inspired narrative, to notice cursorily some things which took place anterior to the arrival of the ransomed tribes at the sacred mount.

After celebrating the triumph which God gave them over their enemies, at the Red Sea, and securing as we may presume, the implements of war, and other property of the Egyptians, which may have been driven ashore by the waves, they moved forward under the guidance of the cloudy pillar, and in three days, as we are informed (Numb. xxxiii. 8,) pitched their tents in the wilderness of Etham, at a place which they seem to have named Marah, i. e., *bitterness*, in allusion to the quality of the water which they found there. "They could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: and the people murmured against Moses, saying what shall we drink?" See the ingratitude and rebellious temper of these people. They assail Moses openly with their faithless murmurings, as if he had engaged to secure them from all those inconveniences which were to be expected in passing through a trackless and barren desert. How soon they forget the great things which God had done for them, but a few days before! Such is the human heart; and a small occasion is sufficient to disclose its folly and wickedness. In the conduct of Moses in this as in many other trying emergencies, we behold the effect of a firm faith: "He cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." In going to God in our distress, we go to one who is both able and ready to help us. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, says he, and I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me." This deliverance is often obtained too, by the use of prescribed means, altogether inadequate in themselves to produce the desired effect. It is not at all likely that the tree which the Lord pointed out to Moses possessed such

medicinal qualities as would correct the offensive, or unwholesome property of the waters of Marah. It was more probably chosen of God, as a visible token of a divine energy intended to be communicated in connexion with the believing use of the instituted sign. Thus the symbols used in the Christian sacraments are but outward signs of spiritual blessings; but God makes the right use of these emblems, the means of edification and holy comfort to his people: let them never, therefore, be neglected or despised by those who long to experience the refreshing influence of the water of life.

The next encampment was at Elim, "where were twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm trees:"—a striking contrast to the accommodations at Marah; and we may hope that the people would be disposed to render thanks on the occasion to the bounteous giver of all good. Dr. Shaw, in his interesting travels, says that he found nine of these wells, the other three having been filled with sand;—and the seventy palm trees, he remarks, have multiplied into more than two thousand, the dates of which bring a considerable revenue to the Greek monks at Tor. Thus, sufficient evidence of the authenticity of this part of the sacred history remains, after the lapse of more than three thousand years.

In the wilderness of Sin, which they appear to have entered upon their leaving Elim, it seems probable that the provisions which they had brought from Egypt failed, as it was now the middle of the second month of their sojourning. Here, of course, their impatience and insubordination became excessive. The whole congregation, as with one voice, rail against Moses and Aaron, exclaiming in despair, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." An evil heart of unbelief is strongly prone, not only to depart from the living God, but to forget his goodness, and distrust his faithfulness and

care. Much had been done, and ample promises made to secure the faith and obedience of this people; yet we find them petulant, and faithless, and unthankful, to a degree which we might perhaps be inclined to discredit, were we not conscious of possessing the same evil propensities, and of having manifested similar ingratitude and unfaithfulness towards God, our Redeemer. It was well for the children of Israel, and well it is for us, that God's ways are not as our ways. Verily, he deals with us not according to our deserts. He waits to be gracious; and aims continually to overcome our evil, by expressions of his goodness and grace. Thus, to allay the tumult, and silence the clamours of the impatient multitude, who had forfeited all claim to his favour, he directs immense flocks of quails to alight in the camp, and rains down bread from heaven to supply their wants, and to prove them, whether they would walk in his law, and confide in his holy providence. "At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, *It is manna*; (i. e., *what is it?*) for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." The supply of quails appears to have been temporary; that of *manna* was continued daily, during the term of their sojourning in the wilderness, even "till they came to a land inhabited." In regard to the appearance and qualities of this heavenly bread, we have this short account in Scripture, viz: That it was like coriander-seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. It was nutritious; and that it was miraculously furnished, there can be no reasonable doubt. Should the skeptic ask, how can

this be? we would only remark, that when he shall be able to explain to us all the mysteries connected with the process by which bread is furnished to man in the ordinary way, perhaps we may be able to *tell him how* the manna was produced. Several useful observations might be made respecting this extraordinary interposition of Providence, did time permit. The people were required to gather the manna daily, to show that men's exertions are not rendered needless by divine energy: a double portion was furnished and ordered to be collected on the sixth day of the week, in honour of the sanctity of the Sabbath, which proves the obligation of keeping that holy day before the giving of the law at Sinai: an equable distribution was to be made of that which was gathered, that "he who gathered much might have nothing over, and that he who gathered little might have no lack," intimating the duty of helping the weak and ministering to the wants of the poor: and, finally, an omer, *about three quarts*, of this bread from heaven, was ordered to be preserved, as a memorial to future generations of the Lord's bountifulness, in thus providing for the necessities of his people. The learned Dr. Adam Clarke, in his Commentary, has some good practical remarks on this piece of sacred history, with which we shall close this article. (See his notes at the end of Exod. xvi.) Concerning the manna, he remarks: 1. That the sacred historian has given us the most circumstantial proofs, that it was a supernatural and miraculous supply; that nothing of the kind had ever been before, and probably nothing like it had ever afterwards appeared: that it was a type of our blessed Redeemer, and of the salvation which he has provided for man, there can be no doubt; for in this way it is applied by Christ himself; and from it, we may gather this general conclusion, that *salvation is of the Lord*. The Israelites must have perished in the wilderness had not God fed them with bread from heaven: and every human soul must have perished (*eternally*) had not Jesus Christ come down from heaven and given himself for the life of the world.

2. God would have the Israelites continually dependant on himself for all their supplies; but he would make them, in a certain way, *workers with him*. He provided the manna; they gathered and ate it. The first was God's work; the latter their own. They could not *produce* the manna, and God would not *gather* it for them. Thus the providence of God appears in such a way as to secure the *co-operation* of man. Though man should *plant* and *water*, yet it is God who giveth the *increase*. But, if man should neither plant nor water, God will give no increase. We cannot do God's work; and he will not do ours. Let us, therefore, in things temporal and spiritual, be *workers together* with HIM. 3. This *daily* supply of the manna probably gave rise to the petition: *Give us this day our daily bread*. It is worthy of remark, that what was left over night, contrary to the divine command, became unfit for use; that a double portion was gathered on the day preceding the Sabbath; that this alone continued wholesome on the following day, and that none fell on the Sabbath. Hence we find that the Sabbath was considered a divine institution *previously* to the giving of the Mosaic law; and that God continued to honour that day by allowing no manna to fall during its course. Whatever is earned on the Sabbath is a curse in a man's property. They who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare; for, using unlawful means to acquire lawful things, they bring God's curse upon themselves, and are drowned in perdition. Dost thou work on the Sabbath to increase thy property? See thou do it not. Property acquired thus, will prove a curse to thee and to thy posterity. 4. To show their children, and children's children, what God had done for their fathers, a pot of manna was laid up before the Testimony. We should remember our providential and gracious deliverances in such a way as to give God the praise of his own grace. An ungrateful heart is always associated with an unbelieving mind, and an unholy life. Like Israel, we should consider with what bread God fed our fathers,

and see that we have the *same*—the same Christ, *the bread of life*—the same doctrines—the same ordinances, and the same religious experience. How little are we benefited by being *Protestants*, if we be not partakers of the protestant faith? And how useless will even that *faith* be to us, if we hold the truth in unrighteousness!”

The next occurrence which we deem it proper to notice, took place while the people lay encamped at Rephidim, in sight, as is generally believed, of Mount Sinai. Here there was no water; and the people, though relieved repeatedly from their distresses by evident manifestations of the divine power, evince the utmost turbulence and distrust of Providence, renewing their complaints against Moses, as if he were to be held responsible for all the hardships and privations that befell them. Moses again goes to God, by prayer and supplication: “What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.” He is directed to take of the elders with him as witnesses of the miracle about to be wrought, and the rod with which the waters of the Nile had been turned into blood, and proceed to a certain rock in Mount Horeb, which, upon being smitten in the name and presence of the Lord, should send forth water in sufficient quantity, at least to afford relief from the present distress. The command is executed, and the voice of murmuring is once more silenced by the overflowing of Heaven’s unmerited goodness; and to furnish the ungrateful multitude with a remembrancer of their baseness on the occasion, the scene of this miraculous deliverance was called Massah and Miribah; i. e., *strife* and *contention*. From what the Apostle Paul says respecting this rock, (1 Cor. x. 4,) some have imagined that either the rock itself, or the water flowing from it, followed the Israelites in all their sojourning, till they reached Canaan. But this opinion, we think, is by no means supported by Scripture. When Paul says, “that rock was Christ,” he means, *indubitably*, that it was a type, or emblem of Christ; and when he calls the water that issued from it, “spiritual drink,” he means to



teach, that it represented the influences of the Spirit, which are vouchsafed to sinners through the mediation of *Him* who was smitten of God, and wounded for our transgressions. It was Christ, therefore, that followed Israel, by his power and grace, as he attends all his people in all their trials on their way to the heavenly rest.

In the war with the Amalekites, which took place about this time, we have a memorable exemplification of the efficacy of prayer. The assault seems to have been unprovoked and furious on the part of Amalek. On the part of Israel it was conducted with religious solemnity, and at the same time, with vigour and success. The immediate command of the army was entrusted to Joshua, while Moses, with the rod of God in his hand, and accompanied by Aaron and Hur, ascended a hill, probably Horeb, which overlooked the scene of battle, there to supplicate the blessing of the Lord of hosts on their efforts to repel the invaders. "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. And Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun: and Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." A memorandum was made and ordered to be preserved, of the result of this war, in which Amalek was evidently the aggressor and the most guilty, as appears from the tremendous threatening of utter extermination, which was executed in the reign of David. "I will," says God, "utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah-Nisi—i. e., **THE LORD IS MY BANNER**. The church of God is called upon to "fight the good fight of faith;" and while she contends under the Lord's banner, and makes a right use of the armour which is provided for her, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance," she has nothing to fear. Jesus, the

captain of her salvation, will in due time discomfit all her enemies and bring her off victorious, through the sacrifice of his blood and by the might of his power.

The only other incident that remains to be noticed in this lecture, is the meeting of Moses with his father-in-law, his wife, and two sons, whom he had left in Midian, when he proceeded to Egypt, commissioned of God to bring Israel out of the house of bondage. This meeting is just such an one as the benevolent mind loves to contemplate. It is a meeting of near relatives that had been long separated, and who must have felt deeply and tenderly concerned for each other's welfare. It is characterized by dignity, affection, and piety. It is described in the simple language of nature, sanctified by religion; and the description forms an item in *that rich and instructive variety* which makes the BIBLE the *most entertaining book in the world*. Read it. (Exodus xviii.) It needs no comment. Every thing is natural, respectful, kindly, and serious. It is delightful to meet with friends after an absence of even a few days; and he who, after a separation of weeks or months, does not regard a meeting with his family as one of the purest luxuries on earth, does not love them as he ought. "Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done to Israel." What a blessed influence has true religion in conciliating kindness and confirming friendship! When people cordially agree in the same glorious object of worship, the little peculiarities of form will not obstruct the mutual attraction of brotherly love. Prejudice will droop and die, and charity will draw a veil over its neighbour's singularities and imperfections. Happy the family whose union is cemented by piety; the family whose happiness and peace are built upon the love of God; whose employments, communications and pursuits, are improved and sanctified by prayer!" Thus, in following Israel from the shore of the Red Sea to the foot of Sinai, we have seen that, notwithstanding his ingratitude and disobedience, "the Lord bore him on eagles' wings to bring him unto himself," that he might prove him, whether he would walk in

his *law* and keep his *covenant*. The promulgation of this law, and the covenant entered into on the occasion, will be the subject of our next lecture.

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## LECTURE XXVIII.

### THE LAW GIVEN, AND THE SINAI COVENANT INSTITUTED.

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.—EXODUS xx. 1, 2.

IN all the divine dispensations, there is an admirable mixture of sovereign authority and condescending kindness. By the former, we are taught to regard with reverence every thing that God does or says; while by the latter, we are encouraged to hope in his mercy and confide in his grace. Thus, when about to promulgate his law to Israel, in a manner so terrific, as to make even Moses exceedingly fear and quake, he reminds the people of his relation to them as the Lord their God, who had already redeemed them from bondage, and who was now going to confer upon them privileges which would distinguish them from all other people, and constitute them a holy nation. Such indications of favour were well suited to prepare their minds to receive the law from the mouth of God, their Redeemer, as the rule of duty, and to acquiesce in the covenant propounded to them on this occasion, and which was designed to engage them, as a people, in a course of holy and cheerful obedience.

By a similar mixture of terror and mildness—of judgments and mercies, the Lord is continually aiming to bring mankind to submit to his authority, and accept the blessings of his grace. Thus, says Paul, “Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;”

and, in another place, "We beseech you, brethren, by the *mercies* of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice—holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." But, how affecting it is to see men pressing on in the broad way to perdition, in defiance of the varied means used by the God of all grace, to reclaim them from the paths of the destroyer! Neither the thunders of Sinai, nor the accents of mercy issuing from the courts of Zion, will avail, without a divine energy to conquer the obstinate wickedness of the human heart. How few of that favoured people, whose history we are tracing, profited by their peculiar advantages! Once, and again, we hear the Judge of all the earth testifying against them, as "a seed of evil-doers—a people laden with iniquity." Their perverseness was handed down from generation to generation, so that when the Messiah, in the fulness of time, came to them as to his own, and in fulfilment of the predictions of their own prophets, they received him not. They would not come to him, that they might have life; and, at this day, the remnants of their scattered tribes are pining away under the withering influence of that awful imprecation—"His blood be on us, and on our children!" The sad effects of their rebellion and unbelief, are recorded in Scripture for our admonition:—God grant that we may know the day of our merciful visitation; and be enabled to pay due attention to the things that belong to our peace, ere they be hidden from our eyes!

Two things, nearly related to each other, claim our attention in this lecture, viz: the giving of the law; and the ratification of what is commonly called the Sinai Covenant. The children of Israel reached the wilderness of Sinai, the scene of the transactions which we are now to contemplate, some time in the third month, i. e., from forty to fifty days after their leaving Egypt—which they did about the middle of the first month of their ecclesiastical year. Here they continued till the twentieth day of the second month of the second year of their sojournings, i. e., within a

few days of one whole year; when, as we are informed, (Num. x. 11 and 12,) they removed into the wilderness of Paran. As the occurrences and communications of this period were deeply interesting, so the history of them occupies a large space in the books of Moses, extending from the nineteenth chapter of Exodus to the eleventh verse of the tenth chapter of Numbers, including the whole of Leviticus. It is useful in reading history, to notice carefully, and as distinctly as possible, the *time* and *place* of the events which it records. Chronology and geography are fitly called the eyes of history, because they contribute to the perspicuity and permanent effect of its narrations. We seldom remember long, or feel much interest in events said to have taken place, we know neither *where* nor *when*. This fact should be borne in mind, in reading the historical parts of the Bible. It will be found useful even in catechising children, to accustom them to inquire in what part of the world, and at what time, such and such events took place.

After the arrival of the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, some days were probably spent in making preparation for the giving of the law, and in those religious services which were designed not merely to distinguish them from other nations, but to make them a holy and a happy people. In the preparatory measures taken, as well as throughout the whole of the revelations and transactions that followed, Moses acted by divine direction, as the Lord's minister, and in a limited sense, as mediator between God and his people; accordingly we find him continually occupied in receiving messages from God and bearing them to the people, whose engagements and promises he regularly reports to Him, who speaks from the top of the hallowed mount.

I. The covenant which was ratified at Sinai, and which from this circumstance, is called the Sinai Covenant, seems to have been formed previously to the publication of the law. A few remarks concerning its nature and design may not be out of place here. It is first propounded in Exodus xix. 5, &c. "Now, there-

fore, if ye will obey my voice, indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." When Moses, by divine command, laid this proposal before the elders, "the people answered together and said, all that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." The subject is brought up again in chapter xxiv. verse 3, and onward, where we have a particular account of the solemnities observed at its ratification. An altar was built and sacrifices offered;—twelve pillars were erected as memorials of the compact;—the stipulations were read in the audience of the people, and they reiterated the promise—"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient: and Moses, as was usual on such occasions, took blood, and sprinkled it on the people and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words!" This covenant is, by some, confounded with the covenant of works, under which our first parents were placed; and by others it is considered merely as a renewal of the one that was made with Abraham. But in our apprehension, it is distinguishable from both, by its local and temporary character, as we shall endeavour to show presently. In regard to the covenant of works, in which Adam and Eve, as the representatives of their posterity were a party, it was violated, as we all know to our sorrow, but it has not been abrogated. Its penalty is justly due to every transgressor, and will certainly be executed on every sinner of the human race, who, rejecting the hope set before him in the gospel, dies without an interest in Christ, the surety and advocate of his people in the covenant of grace. "There is, now, no condemnation, says Paul, to them that are in Christ Jesus." But the Redeemer himself says—"He that believeth not in the Son of God is condemned already:"—and again, "He that believeth not the Son, hath not life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The Abrahamic covenant, though resembling, in

some respects, the one now under consideration, differs from it in its visible seal, and in the promise that in Abraham's seed all nations should be blessed; whereas the benefits of the Sinai covenant were limited by its terms, to the particular nation with which it was formed. The covenant with Abraham, founded upon the covenant of grace was designed to exhibit the relation which God sustains to his church as a visible community, and is still in full force under the gospel dispensation, except that a change has been made in its form of administration, and in its seal—baptism having come in the place of circumcision.

The Sinai covenant related chiefly to external conduct, with a promise of temporal blessings: and was intended to be annulled at the coming of Christ to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. What then, it will be asked, was the nature and intent of the covenant in question? It was the act of incorporation, by which the turbulent and undisciplined tribes of Israel were constituted a body politic—a kingdom of priests—a holy nation, with God Almighty for their King and Lawgiver. It was the charter of their national rights, privileges and duties: and was designed mainly to place them in a fit capacity to receive, and preserve, and obey, with sentiments of loyalty and religious awe, the statutes and ordinances of God, about to be promulged and entrusted for a season, to their care and keeping. The form of a covenant with its usual solemnities, sacrifices, mutual engagements, and the sprinkling of blood, seems to have been chosen on the occasion, in order to inspire the people with the greater confidence in the power and faithfulness of their Divine Ruler, and to secure all possible respect for his commands and institutions. From this period till the days of Samuel, when Saul, the son of Kish, was proclaimed king at Mizpeh, the government of Israel was a theocracy; i. e., a government involving a close alliance between church and state—and in which the Creator is recog-

nized as Legislator, Chief Magistrate, and Supreme Judge, in all causes civil and ecclesiastical.

Hence it is that God is often called in Scripture, the King of Israel; and the fact of his having been their Supreme Governor, in the sense just stated, is clearly disclosed in the first book of Samuel, chap. viii. 4, &c., where we have an account of the breach of the national compact on the part of the people, and of the consequent designation of Saul to the kingly office, in compliance with their obstinate determination to conform, in this particular, to the surrounding nations. "Hearken unto the voice of the people," (says God to Samuel, his faithful and praying minister,) "for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."—"Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice: howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the King that shall reign over them."

If this view of the matter be correct then, it will be readily perceived that the Sinai covenant was, in its leading features, distinguishable from those before mentioned, as well as from all others recorded in Scripture.

It was a national compact requiring national obedience; and it guaranteed to the people concerned in its provisions, the possession and use of a certain tract of country, with political existence and protection, so long as they in their corporate capacity maintained their allegiance and fidelity to their God and king, but no longer. It was not intended to give or secure eternal life to any one. Pious individuals were then, as they are now, justified, and sanctified, and saved, on the ground of another covenant—a covenant mediated by the great High Priest of our profession, Jesus the Son of God. This blessed covenant and that of Sinai are compared, and the superiority of the former to the latter demonstrated with conclusive evidence, by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews; see particularly chap. viii. 6, &c. "But now hath he (i. e., Christ) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was



established upon better promises; for if the first had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second: For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It ought to be carefully noted, that when the apostles speak, as they frequently do, of the old covenant that had become antiquated, and "was ready to vanish away," and was in fact abrogated and of no force under the Christian dispensation, they mean not the covenant with Abraham, but that of Sinai, which was local, national, and temporal in its nature. Those who wish to see a masterly discussion of this subject, would do well to read Dr. Owen's exposition of the sixth verse of the eighth chapter of Hebrews.

On the promulgation of the law—the other principal topic for consideration in this lecture—we shall say but little. The scene is described by the pencil of inspiration, in a style and manner which would be impaired by any comment that we could offer. It was the most stupendous display of God's glorious majesty that ever was made in the present world, excepting that which attended the crucifixion of Christ; and its effects, so far from being confined to the Jewish nation, will be felt, and seen, and admired till the end of time. The multitudinous house of Israel, after suitable and significant ablutions, having been taken into covenant with the Almighty, are ranged in reverential attitude along the foot of the sacred mount, to hear the Most High speak to them from his cloudy chariot. "And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud

upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people in the camp trembled.— And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly: and when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.” Exod. xix. 16, 18, 19. “And God spake all these words saying,” (as it would seem by way of preface, to relieve the people from the overwhelming terror of the scene,) “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Then follow the commandments, statutes, judgments and ordinances, which, with the various historical matter interspersed, occupy upwards of fifty-six chapters in the Bible. And it is important to observe here, that by the law, as promulgated on this memorable occasion, is meant comprehensively all that was delivered by God to the Israelites, during their stay at Sinai; the delivery of which, must have occupied several weeks, if not months. Moses was twice in the mount, receiving divine communications, forty days each time; and it seems quite improbable that so much time would be taken up in delivering the ten commandments.

The term law, then, taken in the large sense just stated, is three-fold; *moral*, *political*, or *judicial* and *ceremonial*: or, in other words, the laws and ordinances given at Sinai, and to which the people were obliged by covenant to yield obedience, were of three kinds, viz: 1. Moral precepts, comprising the principles of our duty to God, and to our fellow-creatures, at all times, and in all states of society. 2. Judicial statutes, adapted to the theocratical government under which the people were placed—all of a benign tendency, but some of which are unsuitable to be introduced into other forms of civil government; because they were intended for a particular people, in peculiar circumstances, and only for a certain definite period. 3. Ceremonial rules and regulations, relating to the

priesthood, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, the holy seasons, and religious rites peculiar to that obscure, typical, and burdensome dispensation. To this class the New Testament writers refer, when they speak of the law "as making nothing perfect—as being an intolerable yoke—as having a shadow of good things to come." These three kinds of laws are intermixed in the Bible; but they are distinguishable; and the Biblical reader will find it greatly to his advantage to remember the distinction, and, so far as he can, to refer every precept to its proper class.

The first class, i. e., the moral precepts, which we are mainly concerned to know, and to keep religiously, is summed up in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments. These alone, it is believed, were written by God himself, on the two tables of stone delivered to Moses, and which were preserved with so much care in the ark of the covenant—a small coffer, or chest of rich materials and curious workmanship—which, with its lid, the mercy seat, and its two symbolical images, called cherubim, is minutely described, Ex. xxxvii. 1, &c. The first four commandments are supposed to have been written on one of the stones, and the remaining six on the other; which has given rise to the common distinction, the two tables of the law; the one teaching us our duty to God, and the other our duty to our fellow-men. We have not time at present to unfold the import and various bearings of these densely rich precepts. They may be viewed as a new edition of the law of nature, or of the rule and measure of moral rectitude, which was originally impressed upon the heart and conscience of man, by the finger of his Creator. It would be saying little, to say that the decalogue, consisting of ten short and easily remembered precepts, is the purest, the most comprehensive, and the most sublime system of practical morality, with which the world has been blessed;—indeed, nothing of the kind on earth will bear a comparison with these holy and immutable principles of right, excepting that unrivalled epitome of them by Jesus Christ—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart, soul, and mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Matt. xxii. 37, &c.

The giving of the law commenced on the fiftieth day from the departure out of Egypt; and as the latter event was commemorated by the Passover, so the feast of Pentecost, a word signifying fiftieth, while it served as a thanksgiving for the fruits of harvest, celebrated also the promulgation of the holy commandments, as a blessing never to be forgotten. It is remarkable, that our Saviour's death and resurrection took place at the time of the Passover; and fifty days afterwards, the day of Pentecost was rendered doubly and eternally memorable by the miraculous effusion of the Spirit on the Lord's apostles, attended by the impressive and appropriate symbol of "cloven tongues, like as of fire." The power of the Holy Ghost was imparted, and the ministry of reconciliation fully instituted, fifty days after the Redeemer's triumphant victory over death and the powers of darkness. Let us be thankful for the good things shadowed forth and typified by the law and its wonderful appendages; and may God make them useful to us, as means of bringing us to Him who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth!" Let us close this exercise, in the sublime and touching language of inspiration, Heb. xii. 18-29: "For ye (Christians) are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits

of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.”

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## LECTURE XXIX.

### THE TABERNACLE AND JEWISH MINISTRY.

And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats; and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. Thus did Moses; according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.—Exodus xl. 12-16.

THE tabernacle and priesthood, or sacred ministry of the Jews, as they are closely related in their design and use, may be advantageously considered together and in the same discourse. Both are brought to view

in the passage of Scripture just cited; and we propose to treat of them briefly in the present lecture, in the order in which they are presented by the inspired penman.

I. The tabernacle of *testimony*, or *of the Lord*, as it is sometimes called to distinguish it from the tabernacle of the congregation, in which the people ordinarily assembled for the despatch of secular affairs, was erected at the foot of Mount Sinai, agreeably to instructions given by God to Moses, the first day of the first month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt—in the year of the world 2514, and before the coming of Christ 1490. It was designed as a place of public worship; and the materials of which it was composed, were furnished by the people with a liberality worthy of imitation, and which Moses judged it proper in due time to restrain, by ordering that no further offerings should be made, as sufficient stuff was already received for completing the work. Bezaleel of the tribe Judah, and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan, are named as the most distinguished workmen employed on the occasion. These and others not named, but characterized as “wise hearted,” seem to have been qualified for the service by extraordinary endowments: for it is said, Exodus xxxi. 3, that they were “filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.” The tabernacle was so constructed as to be easily taken to pieces, and carried along with the people in their journeyings. It was a complicated and rich structure, though far inferior in value to the temple, to which it gave place in the days of Solomon. A learned antiquary\* gives the following estimate of the metals which were used in completing it: viz. gold, £175,460, sterling; silver, £37,721 17s. 6d.; brass or copper, £138 6s. Total £213,320 3s. 6d. To which, if we add the cost of the wood, the curtains, the laver and its foot, the high priest’s official dress, the clothes of the priesthood, and

\* William Brown, D. D., of Eskdalemuir.

the workmanship of the whole, we may estimate the entire cost at £250,000 sterling—more than a million of dollars. Should it be thought strange that a people just redeemed from a state of bondage were able to meet such an expense, let it be recollected that they must have had some property of their own—that they received large presents from their oppressors as inducements to leave Egypt; and that they probably availed themselves of the spoils of Pharaoh and his army, who were drowned in the Red Sea while pursuing them; which may have been washed ashore, and to which they were entitled by the laws of war. And if the expenditure should be objected to, as extravagant for people in their circumstances, let it be considered, that while in the wilderness, their necessary wants were supplied by the power and bountifulness of their divine Redeemer;—that the tabernacle was the only building for public worship which they had;—that it was to be the dwelling place of the Most High, under the symbol of the cloudy pillar, or Schechinah;—that it was a national institution; and that it served as the house of God, and the scene of religious observances, for a nation consisting of perhaps two millions of souls. This extraordinary edifice, with its courts and furniture, has been minutely described by Dr. Brown, of Eskdalemuir, in his “Antiquities of the Jews,” and other writers on the same subject. But a short and intelligible account of it may be seen in “Calmet’s Dictionary of the Bible,” from which the following brief description has been formed: “The tabernacle was an oblong square, thirty cubits; (a cubit being twenty-one inches) ten in breadth, and ten in height. It was divided into two apartments. The one twenty cubits long and ten wide, called the SANCTUM, or *Holy place*; in which were placed the table of shew-bread, the golden candlestick, and the golden altar of incense: and the other, ten cubits square, and called the SANCTUM SANCTORUM, or MOST HOLY PLACE, containing the Ark of the Covenant, with its covering, the mercy-seat, adorned with two splendid images called cheru-

bim, one on each end, and their faces towards one another, bending over the sacred chest, to denote the admiration with which the angels contemplate the divine testimony. A curtain of rich and curious embroidery separated the holy from the most holy place. As a similar curtain was afterwards used in the temple, for the like purpose, it seems highly probable that *that* was the *veil*, said by the evangelist to have been rent from top to bottom, at the time of our Lord's crucifixion; indicating that a way was now provided whereby sinners might approach the Holy One of Israel, and find acceptance through the mediation of Christ; or as it is sometimes expressed, "through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh." The tabernacle had no windows; but was open at the east end, which was the entrance. At the west end, and on the two sides, it was enclosed with curtains; and four or five fold of curtains constituted its roof. These latter were of various materials, suited to the purposes of ornament and shelter from the weather, according to the situations which they occupied severally. That which appeared from within, was of the colour of hyacinth, striped with purple, scarlet, and crimson. Over this was thrown a covering made of goat's hair, which was impervious to rain. The two outer curtains were composed of sheep skins, the one dyed red, and the other azure-blue, and called in our translation of the Bible, badger skins. The *court* of the tabernacle was an area of a hundred cubits long and fifty wide, enclosed with pillars overlaid with silver, and based in brass, and hung round with a species of network made of twined linen thread. In this court, and opposite to the entrance of the sanctum, or holy place, stood the great altar of burnt offerings, on which animal sacrifices were consumed. Here also the laver was placed, with water for the use of the priests, who received the victims when brought by the people, and prepared and presented them to the Lord, agreeably to prescribed forms and ceremonies."—Thus you have a condensed view of the first building for the public worship of God, of



which we have any account. It is, indeed, a very imperfect sketch; but it is as full as our limits will admit.

When the tabernacle, its vessels and appendages, were prepared, the whole were dedicated to God, by the application of a peculiar kind of oil composed of very costly ingredients; viz: pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, casia, and olive oil, in a certain prescribed proportion. In the Epistle to the Heb. ix. 21, we are informed that the sprinkling of blood was also used: and the altar of burnt offerings, particularly, was sanctified by sacrifices of seven days; while the princes, or heads of the tribes, brought rich donations for the service of the sanctuary.

Here we see the origin of the custom of dedicating places of worship, a ceremony which, while it may be considered decent and harmless, is by no means necessary under the Christian dispensation. *Spiritual worship* is the best consecration of a church; and while we hold it to be *inexpedient*, ordinarily, to transact secular business in a place devoted to religious service, we cannot prove it to be unlawful. When Christ drove the money-changers out of the temple, he not only aimed to correct a gross abuse, which ought in no case to be tolerated, but acted under the sanction of the ceremonial law, which, though ready to vanish away, continued mainly in force till the day of Pentecost.

The tabernacle being erected and dedicated, the next measure taken was designed to secure due attention to the sacred services, of which it was to be the scene and centre. This brings us to the second article for consideration in the present lecture, viz:

II. The institution of the sacred ministry, as it existed among the Jewish nation.—This matter is worthy of special notice, as it is the earliest account on record, of an order of men being set apart for the performance of religious services. Heretofore, every pious person seems to have been his own priest. Heads of families officiated for their households; and, on the decease of the father, the eldest son took his

place in this, as well as in several other respects. Princes also, seem to have performed, or directed the performance of the sacerdotal functions for their subjects, collectively. We are not, indeed, to suppose that the pious did not, previous to this period, assemble in considerable numbers for public worship; this I suppose was done, even before the deluge, and subsequently, in the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with additional rites and solemnity; but the exercises were more simple, and the manner of conducting them less systematic. Whereas, now that a nation had been taken into covenant with God, and that the sacred writings and divine institutions were to be embodied and preserved for the honour of the Creator, and the good of mankind, in all time to come, it seemed good to infinite wisdom, that the public ministrations of religion should be more regularly performed, and that an order of men, in succession, should be ordained exclusively to those holy duties. Accordingly, Moses, while receiving other communications from the Lord on Sinai, is commanded; "Take unto thee Aaron thy brother and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office; even Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons:" and in the passage placed at the head of this lecture, orders are given for their ordination to the ministerial work. Had the institution of the priesthood been a mere politic contrivance of Moses, without divine authority, as infidels have insinuated, is it not marvellous that his own sons were left out in the appointment; and that too, by a permanent regulation, a fixed succession, secured by a statute which was to remain, and did actually remain in full force during their generations? The Aaronic family had no very strong claims to the honours of the priesthood. Aaron himself had acted a very unworthy, nay, a blameworthy part, in the affair of the molten calf, just before. The people in the forty-days' absence of Moses, and the cloudy pillar on the mount, became impatient and turbulent. They wanted a visible symbol of divinity in the

midst of them continually:—"Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses—we wot not what is become of him." And, as they probably wished something, after the fashion of Egyptian idols, Aaron yielded; and certainly had an agency in procuring the gratification of a factious and idolatrous spirit, which, whatever extenuating circumstances may be alleged in his favour, cannot be vindicated: and when called to an account, for his conduct on the occasion, his own apology but added to his guilt: "I cast it, i. e., the gold, into the fire, and there came out this calf." It was no small offence to be concerned in a treasonous freak which incensed divine justice, and cost the nation the sacrifice of three thousand lives. Yet Aaron, very soon after this disastrous and reproachful occurrence, was placed at the head of the sacred ministry. He was called of God, according to an immutable purpose: and in this, as in many other instances of the divine conduct, we see a union of grace and sovereignty calculated to humble the pride of human wisdom, and nullify the pretensions of merit in fallen man.

The ceremony of ordaining the priests to their holy vocation, consisted in washing, or baptizing them with water, at the door of the tabernacle;—dressing them in their official robes;—and anointing them with holy oil. The application of water to their persons, denoted that inward purity of heart, as well as outward decency and decorum, which became them as ministers of the sanctuary. Their official garments, provided at the public expense, reminded them of the responsibility of the office which they sustained, not for their own personal aggrandizement, but for the glory of the God of Israel, and the spiritual good of his people. The pouring of the holy oil upon them, indicated, agreeably to long established usage, that they were wholly devoted to God; and that they were not at liberty to neglect the appropriate duties of their sacred office for any selfish, or secular pursuits whatever. This particular might also be intended to signify to them their need of a divine in-

fluence in the discharge of their ministerial duties. There was a remarkable conformity to these rites of ordination to office, in the circumstances of our Saviour's entrance on his public ministry. When he was about thirty years old, (the ordinary age at which the Jewish priests were ordained,) he was washed, or baptized of John, at Jordan—was clothed in the beautiful garment of meekness, and mercy, and received in his human nature the anointing of the Holy Ghost, beyond measure; while he was "called of God," by a voice from heaven, in the audience of the people, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

In the Jewish ministry there are three orders, viz: 1. The High-priest, who had the oversight of the whole ecclesiastical concerns, and whose peculiar duty it was to enter the Holy of Holies, once a year, on the great day of atonement, to sprinkle the blood of expiation, burn incense, and perform the other rites proper to that solemn occasion, as described, Leviticus xvi.; and to whom it belonged to receive special communications from God, on great emergencies, and for important purposes, connected with the general interests of the community. 2. The ordinary priests; who prepared and offered the sacrifices, kept up the perpetual fire on the altar of burnt-offerings, tended the lamps in the sanctuary, &c., under the general superintendence of the High-priest. 3. The Levites; i. e., the descendants of Levi, Jacob's third son, with the single exception of Aaron and his family; for the sons of Moses had no part in the priesthood, and were only common Levites. God, as we are taught in the third chapter of the book of Numbers, chose the Levites instead of the first-born of all Israel, for the more laborious services of the sanctuary. They were subject to the orders of the priests—ministered wood, water, and other things necessary for the sacrifices; had charge of the music, vocal and instrumental; studied the law, and, in a word, were obliged to give attention to a variety of duties, connected more or less with the general interests of morality and religion. Their num-

ber was great, amounting, in the time of Moses, to upwards of twenty-two thousand. Yet they were well supplied with the means of living; for although they had no allotment of territory assigned them in Canaan, yet they were allowed forty-eight cities, with ground sufficient for gardens and pasturage, besides the regular tythe of all the produce of the land. Of these cities, thirteen belonged to the priests, and six were cities of refuge.—But we must conclude. If any should ask, what have Christians to do with the tabernacle and priesthood of the Jews? let them remember that “*all the Scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.” The Bible is a perfect system of religious truth. It is a self-interpreting book; and the more intimate our acquaintance is with all its contents, the more of its glorious excellence we shall discern, and the more likely we shall be to feel its claims, and rejoice in the grace which it reveals. We ought, indeed, to bless God that our lot is cast under the Christian dispensation, and that we enjoy the privileges of a ministry comprising the substance of which that of the former dispensation was but the shadow. But crude and superficial notions about the authority of the Old Testament, have done immense mischief in the Christian church. Believers in Christ are the children of Abraham; and the same gospel, in which we profess to glory, was preached in the symbols and sacrifices of the Hebrew ritual. What is the Epistle to the Hebrews, but a profound and irresistible argument, drawn from the institutions of Moses, for the priesthood, the sacrifice, and authority of Jesus Christ? And who can understand that portion of the New Testament, without some knowledge of the Old? When our Lord directed the Jews to search the Scriptures, as testifying of him, and exhibiting the way of life and salvation, he referred to the Scriptures of the Old Testament mainly. While, therefore, we rejoice in the simple glory, light, and grace of the gospel day-spring, under whose cheering beams it is our privilege to serve God in the beauty of holiness, let us reverence, and be thankful for, the whole of the Scriptures,

which are all perfect and useful in converting the soul, and in fixing its confidence in the great High Priest of our profession, Jesus the Son of God: To whom be glory for ever, Amen!

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## LECTURE XXX.

### PRESUMPTION AND REBELLION PUNISHED.

Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me; doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.—NUMBERS xiv. 29–31.

THERE is a meaning in every act of the divine government; and if we regard, with suitable reverence and attention, the works of the Lord, we may derive useful instruction from all the dispensations of his holy providence.

The history of the Israelites is, on this account, eminently instructive and worthy of serious consideration. In all God's conduct towards that people, the two-fold design of advancing his own declarative glory, and the good of mankind, was manifestly kept continually in view. Some important lesson may be learned in every page of the sacred narrative. "The works of the Lord are great; sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Bearing this idea along with us, let us in the present exercise, notice briefly some occurrences which took place not long after the erection of the tabernacle, and the institution of the priesthood.

A few days after the ordination of the priests,

Aaron offered his first burnt sacrifice for himself and the people, which God was pleased to signify his acceptance of, by sending down fire from heaven, to consume the oblation on the altar. This fire, as fitly betokening the pure flame of devotion which ought to attend all acts of religious worship, was ordered to be kept burning; and no other was allowed to be used in their future offerings. The violation of this order was the sin, and proved the ruin, of Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron's sons. These men, officiating in their turn, took the liberty, contrary to the divine command, to use common fire; and, as a manifestation of Jehovah's regard for his own institutions, and of his abhorrence of all profane temerity in the celebration of his worship, they were destroyed by lightning, or by a sudden flash of fire from the Lord in the form of lightning; and, that others might see and take warning from their doom, their bodies were ordered to be carried forth and buried, without mourning or any other tokens of respect. From this awful event, we may learn the importance of worshipping God with a right spirit, and, so far as we can discover his will, in the manner and in the use of the ordinances which he has prescribed in his word.

About the same time that the above named priests were punished for profane rashness in the ministrations of the sanctuary, we find two instances of persons being put to death by divine command; the one for blasphemy, and the other for Sabbath breaking. Such cases as these in the Old Testament, taken in connexion with that of Ananias and Sapphira, at the commencement of the Christian dispensation, seem intended to teach the world, that God will not suffer his holy commandments to be outraged with impunity. The wrath and curse of the Almighty do sometimes alight on bold transgressors, even in this life; and we learn from the word of truth that, in the day of final account, all veils will be taken off, and that every covert act, and every secret purpose of iniquity shall be brought into judgment. Let us bear this in

mind, and endeavour to act, and form all our designs, as seeing *Him* who *always sees us*. He with whom we have to do cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked, without avenging every insult offered to his holy omniscience.

After the people had advanced towards Canaan about three or four days march from Sinai, and had manifested a refractory and discontented spirit at Taberah, Moses, by divine direction, appointed a court of judicature, consisting of seventy of the chief of the elders of the people, men of good report for their wisdom and integrity, to take cognizance of minor causes, and thus afford him some aid in the maintenance of order, and the administration of justice. The idea had been suggested by Jethro, before they reached Sinai, and some temporary arrangement of the kind was then made accordingly; but the measure was now adopted in a more solemn form, under the sanction of divine authority. This appointment seems to have given rise to what has been improperly called "a family quarrel between Moses on the one side, and Aaron and his sister Miriam on the other;" in which, say some infidel writers, it was beneath the majesty of God to interfere in the manner described in the Bible. The account of this unhappy affair is given in the twelfth chapter of the book of Numbers: where we are told that "Aaron and Miriam spake against Moses, because of the Ethiopian or rather Arabian woman whom he had married." This complaint about the Ethiopian wife was manifestly a mere covering for jealousy of their younger brother's power and influence. The sum of the matter seems to be this:—Moses had nominated the seventy elders to assist him in the government of the people, without consulting any of his friends or counsellors. This gave offence to Aaron and Miriam, who, not prepared to bring a charge directly against the administration of their brother, assailed him through the medium of his wife, reproaching her as a foreigner, and alleging that she had too much influence over him. This was an at-



tack on the official character of Moses, and amounted to sedition: the offence, therefore, was not to be connived at. Moses, indeed could, and, as appears from his intercession for the chief offender, did really forgive, *so far as he was personally concerned*, but God judged it proper to discountenance such seditious proceedings in future, by inflicting on Miriam the loathsome disease of leprosy, and ordering her to be excluded from the camp seven days, according to law in such cases. Here was something more than a family feud:—it was a crime against the state. Nor was there any thing in the divine interposition on the occasion, at all incompatible with the majesty of Jehovah, considered as the King of Israel. It was a just judgment, designed to check a spirit of faction which disturbed the peace, and menaced the subversion of the government. And had not Moses been more concerned to exhibit the truth and give a faithful history, than to aggrandize his family by publishing their honours and concealing their faults, the world would never have heard of the very unpleasant disturbance which took place at Hazeroth. Let us learn from it, to respect the constituted authorities of the community to which we belong. Jealousy and ambition are the principles of tumult and anarchy—alike incompatible with personal virtue and social comfort.

At Cadesh-Barnea, on the southern borders of Canaan, twelve men, one out of each tribe, were commissioned to go into the promised land, to ascertain the nature of the soil, the strength of its fortifications, the courage and probable number of the inhabitants. On the return of these men, although they brought with them specimens of the produce of the country, clearly indicating the fertility of the soil, a spirit of murmuring and discontent arose among the people, which became intolerable. This was owing, in part, to a diversity of opinion among the spies themselves. Joshua and Caleb, confiding in the divine power and faithfulness, endeavoured to animate the dejected tribes to press on to the conquest; but the other ten,

being of a different opinion held a different language. Their faithless apprehension spread among the multitude, and the result was an almost unanimous determination not to proceed, but, if a suitable leader could be found, to return to the land of Egypt. Hereupon Moses renewed his humble and earnest intercessions at the throne of grace, confessing the great and aggravated sins of the people; but, at the same time, alleging that should they be cut off in the wilderness, the enemies of religion would triumph, and that the matter would probably be construed to the dishonour of the truth, faithfulness, and power of the God of Israel. Mark the importunity and noble disinterestedness of this favoured servant of the Most High! He is assured, that should this generation be smitten by pestilence and disinherited, God would make of *him* a greater nation, and mightier than they. Still he urges the strong plea of the divine glory, with an ardour of pious eloquence that has scarcely ever been surpassed. “And Moses said unto the Lord—then the Egyptians will hear it, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land; for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people;—that thou, Lord, art seen face to face; that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them by day in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in this wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the *iniquity of this people*, according to the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now!” Here the propriety of the pious inter-

cessor's representation seems to be admitted, but his particular request cannot be granted; while he is assured that Jehovah will take care of his own glory, amid the displays of his justice. "And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word:" i. e., in time past. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Then follows the irreversible decree, which Moses is ordered to announce to the people: "As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you; your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness—all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upwards, which have murmured against me; doubtless, ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised:—and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, [idolatries,] until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness: I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation that are gathered together against me."—Without staying to animadvert on the stupid obstinacy of the people on this occasion, let us observe, first, that there was no breach of covenant on God's part, in this determination; for the promise of Canaan was made to the seed of Abraham, not to this particular generation; and to the following generation, i. e., to those who were now twenty years old and under, with their children, the promise was fulfilled. Secondly, that God ordinarily employs rational means and presents the most weighty considerations to induce mankind to keep his commands, and thus secure their own best interests, before he visits them in judgment. Thirdly, that there is a point in the career of sin and rebellion, beyond which the divine clemency and forbearance are not to be expected: and, Fourthly, that the same principle of unbelief that excluded the rebellious children of Israel from Canaan, will shut unbelievers,

under the gospel dispensation, out of heaven. Thus we are taught by the apostle to the Hebrew Christians: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God:—while it is said, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, *as in the provocation*; (alluding to the very history now before us,) for some when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit, not all that came out of Egypt by Moses; but with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, *but to them that believed not*? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it; for unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*" Heb. iii. and iv.

Passing by many events connected with the incorrigible wickedness of the people, in the course of their wanderings, the next thing that seems to claim special notice, is the rebellion of Korah and his faction. This was an attempt to break down the spirits, and curtail the influence of Moses and Aaron. Korah was a Levite. Dathan, Abiram, and On, whom he associated with himself in the seditious project, were of the tribe of Reuben. These were the ringleaders; but the whole faction amounted to two hundred and fifty, said to have been men of renown, and chiefly Levites. The complaint was, that Moses and Aaron took too much upon them;—and that they acted from sinister motives. It was alleged that all the congregation were holy, and that, therefore, all distinctions of rank and office were encroachments on the people's rights and privileges. Moses, as usual interceded and remonstrated; and, after due consideration, referred the whole matter to a divine and infallible decision: Take, says he, Numb. xvi., every man his censer and put incense in them, and bring ye before

the Lord, (i. e., at the tabernacle,) two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron each of you his censer:—even to-morrow, the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy. The proposition being agreed to, Moses finally staked his character and pretensions on the issue; saying, “Hereby, ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; (for I have not done them of mine own mind,) if these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quickly into the pit, then ye shall understand that those men have provoked the Lord.” The result was as might have been expected. The earth did open her mouth, and swallow up all that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods: and a fire from the Lord consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. And, as a memorial of the fact, and a warning to others, the censers of the rebels were beaten into plates, and used as a covering for the altar. Shortly after this fearful catastrophe, a remnant of the same leaven beginning to operate, the mal-contents were visited by a plague, which cut off fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who perished in the matter of Korah. The divine legation of Moses being pretty clearly established by these terrible visitations of God upon those who presumed to question his authority, the priesthood was shown to belong, of right and exclusively to the house of Aaron, by a supernatural sign, exhibited summarily as follows: Twelve rods, branches probably taken from an almond tree, one for every tribe, and the name of each on its rod respectively, were ordered to be laid up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, over night; “And it shall come to pass, saith the Lord, Numb. xvii. 5, that the man’s rod whom I will choose shall blossom; and will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you. And it

came to pass accordingly, (ver. 8.) that on the morrow, Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and, behold, the rod of Aaron, for the house of Levi, was budded and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." And in memory of this divine attestation to the indubitable right of Aaron and his family to exercise the functions and enjoy the emoluments of the priesthood, this blooming rod was, by divine direction, preserved in the tabernacle, *in* or *by the side* of the ark.

Should skepticism suggest, that "possibly this affair of the rod may have been a juggle, or a pious fraud of Moses, to allay jealousies and put his brother's family in peaceable possession of a respectable office," let it be remembered, that the suggestion goes to impugn the character of Moses, as if he were a dishonest man. But allowing, for sake of the argument, that the end in this case might justify the means, is it not, to say the least, extremely improbable that any imposition could have been practised on the occasion? Here were at least twelve men, heads of the tribes—men of discernment, and deeply interested, to be dealt with. Their names had been inscribed on the rods, which no doubt were carefully examined: when produced the next day, they would of course, be re-examined; and had the slightest symptom of deceit been discovered it would have been published, and charged upon Moses. But nothing of this kind appears. Every man, we are told, took his rod, and departed in peace. Had Moses, as the objection implies, substituted another rod in the place of that which had been laid up the day before, inscribed with Aaron's name, it seems difficult to conceive how a second could have been procured, so nearly resembling the first as to escape detection. But above all, he must have been a juggler of no ordinary skill, who could, in the space of four and twenty hours, or even in a whole year produce a rod bearing *buds*, and *blossoms*, and *fruit*, all at the same time: and then that this said rod should be laid up, and preserved, with religious care, and the fraud never be detected.

He that can believe all this, as the effect of craft, might, one would suppose, believe in a well attested miracle.

It was remarked in the beginning of this lecture, that there is a meaning in all the dispensations of Providence, and that a profitable use may be made of them. What then was the design of keeping the Israelites forty years in the wilderness? and what useful lessons are to be gathered from the history of their peregrination? As to the design, it is unfolded summarily, Deut. viii. 2, "Thou shalt remember all the way, which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, *to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or not.*" God designed to demonstrate, by an experiment made in circumstances altogether favourable to a true and certain result, that man is a depraved creature, and that he stands in need of divine grace to make him what he ought to be, and what he must be, before he can be happy. Another design was, to show the world that the Creator governs his intelligent creatures in righteousness—that he will by no means clear the guilty—that he is a just God and a Saviour—and that he guards and provides for his church graciously, and in covenanted faithfulness; so that they who fear him have nothing else to fear, and they who sin against him, wrong their own souls and make their perdition *certain and inevitable*. The lessons to be learned from this history are numerous and weighty. Take the following, among others that might be specified did time permit. Learn to renounce all confidence in the flesh. Your nature is sin and weakness. You need a new heart and a right spirit; and these are blessings which none but God can give you. There is a hope set before you in the gospel. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." To-day is an accepted time; a day of grace—a day of merciful visitation: To-morrow may be to you as the day of retribution.

Let the children of Zion learn to confide in the providence of their Heavenly Father. He who fed Israel with manna, and supplied them with water, educed from a rock in a desert land, will never suffer you to want any thing that is *really good for you*. Your Joshua has taken possession of the Canaan above, in your name; and, if a legion of angels should be necessary for your safe keeping, while in this wilderness of a world, they are at his command; and as they worship him, so they delight to do his will by ministering to the heirs of salvation. "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Fear not the perils of the way; your guide and guardian is infallible. Fear not the last enemy; inhale the spirit, and join in the triumphant song of those who have gone before you: "O grave, where is thy victory; O death, where is thy sting!" "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"



## LECTURE XXXI.

### THE BRAZEN SERPENT A TYPE OF CHRIST.

Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 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. And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.—NUMBERS. xxi. 7-9.

WE learn from an infallible source, Heb. iv. 2, that the gospel was preached to the Israelites, under the



Mosaic economy as well as to those who lived under the Christian dispensation. The form in which it was proclaimed to them differs from that in which it is presented to us; but the substance is the same, and the design the same in both cases. To *them*, the plan of salvation was exhibited under a variety of prophetic and symbolical representations, connected with ceremonial rites, which, though tedious and burdensome, were nevertheless well adapted to the times and circumstances in which they were placed;—to *us* the same glorious scheme of redeeming grace is announced, in much greater simplicity, and with peculiar facilities for obtaining a competent knowledge of it, and a joyful hope of an interest in it. These observations are supported by a multitude of instances recorded in the Sacred Oracles; and by none, perhaps, more forcibly than by that which is to be the theme of this lecture. The limits of these brief sketches of Biblical History, will not admit of particular attention to every thing of this sort that occurs; but the *brazen serpent*, as it has been adduced by Christ to illustrate the nature of evangelical faith, seems to demand special regard. In attending to the subject, we will notice,—first, the occasion on which this remarkable type was instituted; secondly, its fitness to set forth the way of salvation through Christ; and thirdly, the practical use which should be made of it.

I. The occasion was this:—Soon after the death of Aaron and Miriam, which took place on the borders of the promised land, and probably, in the thirty-eighth year of their sojourning in the wilderness, it became necessary, in order to avoid an unseasonable and disadvantageous conflict with the Edomites and other hostile tribes, to make a retrograde movement, as if about to return to the Red Sea. This was felt to be a grievous disappointment, as they, no doubt, expected in a few days to enter Canaan, and terminate their painful wanderings. The first generation of emigrants from Egypt, were by this time, chiefly cut off by death. But the children inherited much of the evil disposition of the parents. They, in their

turn, murmured against the providence of God, and assailed his servant Moses with bitter complaints of the tediousness of the way, the scarcity of water, and the lightness of the manna. Hereupon, God saw fit to visit them with a desolating judgment, in the form of venomous fiery serpents, which occasioned great distress and mortality among the people. As the Scriptures say very little about these noxious reptiles, the following short account of them, taken from writers on natural history, may be acceptable. The Hebrew terms used to designate them, signify *burning*, and *winged* serpents. They are said to be common in Egypt and Arabia; and they would be exceedingly destructive, but that Divine Providence has, in mercy to man and other animals, endued them with an instinctive propensity to self-destruction, the young brood, destroying the mother, and the mother her mate, whenever a fresh litter is born. The ibis, also, or Egyptian stork, it is said, feeds upon them, and seems to take pleasure in killing them; which may have given rise to the worship which the ancient Egyptians paid to that fowl. Herodotus and Bochart say, that the serpents in question, strongly resemble (if they are not the very same,) those which the Greeks and Latins call *Hydræ*. These authors describe them, as being short, and spotted with various colours, and having wings like the bat;—as frequenting trees that bear spices, and marshes, where the aromatic reed called casia, grows; and tell us, that when the Arabians go to collect casia, they cover themselves all over, excepting their eyes, with skins to escape being bitten by these dangerous creatures: (See Stackhouse's *His. Bib.*)—The Israelites it would seem, had been hitherto preserved from these destructive serpents; but now, as a token of the divine displeasure, they are commissioned to execute vengeance on the rebellious. The scourge is a tremendous one; it is sensibly felt, and acknowledged to be a righteous visitation of God. The people are humbled under it; confess their sin, and beg Moses, to intercede for them. “We have sinned; for we have spoken

against the Lord, and against thee: Pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us: and Moses prayed for the people." But, though the Lord's ears are ever open to the cries of the penitent in distress, and his arm always able to bring deliverance, yet he chooses his own method of affording relief to the afflicted. This is fit and proper; and in this we should cheerfully acquiesce: because the only wise God knows better than we can know, what methods of grace will comport best with his own glory, and the real good of his creatures. The fiery serpents, like the mischiefs of sin, are not to be annihilated, but a remedy is provided against their destructive influence: and the efficacy of the remedy results from the divine appointment—not from any suitableness, which we may be able to discern, in the means employed to answer the end contemplated. God, regarding the intercession of his faithful minister, and pitying the people in great distress, which, however, they had brought upon themselves by their iniquities, directed Moses to procure a brazen image, resembling one of those poisonous vermin whose sting was so fatal, and to elevate it on a pole, in the midst of the camp, so that all might have an opportunity of seeing it. To this strange but *divinely instituted* symbol the sufferers were instructed to look, with confidence in the appointed remedy and in despair of relief from any other quarter. "And it came to pass, says the sacred historian, that, if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."—Such was the occasion on which this remarkable type was instituted, and such were its original use and form. We may add here, that this brazen image was preserved in Israel about seven hundred years—till the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, who, upon finding that it had become an object of superstitious reverence, caused it to be broken in pieces, and gave it the name of Nehushtan, i. e., a brazen bawble. 2 Kings xviii. 4. Let us

II. Inquire into the fitness of this emblem, as a medium of religious instruction. That it was in-

tended to be a typical representation of the gospel plan of redemption, will scarcely be questioned, when it is recollected that our Lord referred to it as such, when he preached the gospel to Nicodemus: "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, 15. If it should be thought unnatural to employ the image of so vile a creature as a serpent, to represent the holy and immaculate Redeemer, let it be remembered, that crucifixion was a very odious and shameful death; yet Christ was *crucified*, and that according to the determined purpose of infinite wisdom; and the peculiarly glorious doctrines of Christianity have been long denominated **THE DOCTRINES OF THE CROSS**. A serpent was the first creature that was pronounced accursed, after the fall of man; and Christ is said, by Paul, to have been made a *curse* for us—and to have been made *sin* for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse, or penalty of the law, and be made the righteousness of God, *in Him*. Gal. iii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 21.

But the aptitude of the type does not consist so much in the image employed, as in its appointment—the manner in which it was exhibited—the duty enjoined in relation to it—and the blessing attendant on a right use of it. (1.) When every other expedient failed—when the people of Israel were perishing by reason of the envenomed stings of the fiery serpents, Jehovah appointed a remedy which was perfectly adequate, and which was, at once, seen to be quite beyond the reach of human skill. So, when all other methods of rescuing man from the power of sin were found ineffectual, "God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Here the analogy is clear and striking between the type and antitype. In both, we see grace reigning through righteousness;—the creature's dependence, and the Creator's mercy manifested together, and in beautiful accordance. (2.) The manner in which the sacred emblem was exhibited,

shows its appositeness, as a means of religious instruction. It was elevated in the midst of the camp of Israel, in the view of the multitude, where every sufferer was allowed to look upon it and live. It was placed, not in an obscure or inaccessible situation, but on a pole of sufficient height to command the horizon of the twelve tribes of the house of Israel. Nor is it said to have been limited, in its design, to any particular class, or given number of persons. It preached good tidings of great joy to all the people. Its language was, *Whosoever will, let him look and live.* Thus Christ, the glorious antitype—the substance indicated by the shadow—the original of the symbolical picture, was crucified at Jerusalem, on Mount Calvary, at the Passover, one of the great religious festivals of the Jewish nation, in the view of an immense concourse of people. His manner of death was seen—his meek and patient sufferings—his prayer for his enemies and murderers was heard—his grace manifested towards the penitent thief:—the sympathies of nature were witnessed, proclaiming the majesty of the wonderful sufferer—the supernatural darkness—the rent veil—the cleft rocks—the trembling earth, and the opening graves! Hear the witness of the Spirit of truth concerning the divine testimony publicly borne to Jesus, when about to be lifted up, and offered as a sacrifice for the healing of our moral maladies: “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? *but for this cause* came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name: *Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* The people, therefore, that stood by and heard it, said, that it thundered; others said, that an angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, this voice came, not because of me, but for your sakes: now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, if I *be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*” John xii. 27–32. In the Scriptures, and in the ministry of reconciliation, Christ crucified is *exhibited*, or as it is some-

times expressed, elevated on the pole of the gospel, as the power of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation to every one that believes in his name. In the commission, under which his ministers officiate in holy things, it is ordained that the good tidings of redemption, through his blood, shall be preached to all the world. The merits of his obedience and death are continually set forth in the ordinances of his grace. From the Old, and from the New Testament a voice issues, and is reiterated by prophets and apostles, by pastors, and teachers, and missionaries: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;—Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;—He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life;—Ho, every one that thirsteth—come ye to the waters; and whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely." The middle wall of ceremonial partition is taken down, since the Lamb, chosen and virtually slain from eternity, has been actually offered to take away the sin of the world. The factitious distinctions of Greek and Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, all vanish in Christ. To the eye of faith, the Saviour of the world is every where discernible: and to the contrite and wounded soul, every where and equally precious. No diversity of languages—no distance of place—nor seas—nor mountains, can present an insuperable barrier to that mighty stream of *healing influence*, which issued from the heart that was pierced, by the soldier's spear, on the hill of Calvary. It flows on, sustained and impelled by an immutable decree of mercy; and has already reached the inhabitants of Greenland, and those of South Africa—the Indians of the East—the savages of the West, and the Islanders of the Pacific. It was not without meaning, therefore, that the brazen symbol was publicly exhibited in the camp of Israel.

(3.) The duty enjoined, in relation to it, is the next point to be noticed. Here, if I mistake not, we shall find a strong resemblance between the sign and the thing signified. "And it shall come to pass, that every

one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live: And it came to pass, accordingly, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." The language of the Spirit is concise on the subject; but it obviously implies, that the wounded Israelite, sensible of his disease, and renouncing all confidence in every other expedient, was to look upon the instituted symbol with entire dependence on the gracious power of God to heal him, and rescue him from impending death. And was not this to preach the gospel to him? What is the gospel but a revelation of a divine scheme, whereby sinners of the human family are saved from sin and perdition, by free grace abounding through a constituted, chosen, and acceptable Mediator? Admitting that the Israelite's views concerning the Messiah were imperfect, and in some points erroneous, still, in the case now before us, and in many others, he must have been convinced that the favours and mercies bestowed upon him came through a mediatorial channel, inasmuch as he knew they flowed from the hand of Him, who had peremptorily declared, that he *would by no means clear the guilty*: that is, that sin must be expiated, before the transgressor could be acquitted; and that the penalty of the law must take effect, either on the offender, personally, or on his voluntary and accepted surety. This doctrine was taught by a ritual, with which every intelligent son of Israel must have had some acquaintance. If the gospel was preached, as an apostle assures us it was, to the ransomed tribes of Jacob's race, it must have been proclaimed through the medium of types and sacrifices. We do not know what measure of knowledge is essential to a true faith in the Redeemer; but if Abraham did not know enough of him, to be a *true believer in Him that was to come into the world*, as the glory of Israel, and a light to lighten the Gentiles, then it could not, with truth and propriety be said, as it is explicitly affirmed, by Paul, that Christians are the *children* of Abraham, by faith in Jesus Christ. Now let us see what the great duty is, to which we are

urged, in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, under the gospel dispensation, and mark the correspondency of the shadow to the substance. "If ye believe not that I am *He*, ye shall die in your sins—He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned—Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But we need cite no more passages. To believe in Jesus Christ, is the great commandment of the gospel. The act is sometimes described, figuratively, by the expressions, *coming to him—receiving him—eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, &c.* But all the forms of diction used in Scripture on the subject, involve the idea of complete dependence on Christ, connected with a sense of our own unworthiness, weakness, misery and guilt. When we *truly* believe we "receive Jesus Christ, and rest upon him *alone* for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel:" and, as God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, what is faith, but an unqualified reliance on the mercy and grace of our Creator, exercised towards us, through the mediation of his beloved Son, in whom he is accessible, propitious, and reconcilable to sinners? Is there not then, as regards the duty enjoined in relation to both, a very striking correspondency between the type and the antitype—the emblem and the thing denoted thereby? To the Israelite, stung by the fiery serpent, the command is, LOOK and LIVE. To the sinner, poisoned by sin, and ready to die the death eternal, the word is, Believe and be saved. The principle in both cases is the same; and it is a principle of uncompromising submission to the authority, and undivided confidence in the free grace of Jehovah of hosts.

(4.) As to the last point of resemblance; viz. the blessing attendant on the right use of the sign, and of the thing signified, respectively, but little need be said. The blessing is secured, in each case, by the veracity of Him whose promise is as infallible, as his power is irresistible;—"whose very word of grace is strong as that which rolls the stars along."—"If a serpent had



bitten any man, when he looked upon the serpent of brass, he lived.”—“He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life;—My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life;—Because I live ye shall live also;—There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus:—Your life is hid with Christ in God.” Has the faithful and true Witness given these pledges, and shall he not redeem them? Has he spoken, and shall he not bring it to pass? When and where has he ever failed to accomplish his promise? Is he not a God of truth, in whom is no variableness, or shadow of change? Did he heal every obedient Israelite that looked to the appointed symbol of his mercy; and shall he not save the soul that believes the gospel, confiding in the truth and grace which came by Jesus Christ? Yea, verily; “They that trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Zion.”—We have seen the aptitude of the brazen serpent, as a typical medium of religious instruction: we have seen that it embodied the principle of faith in Jesus Christ—the sun of the moral system—the central glory of the redeeming plan—the ALPHA and the OMEGA of the Bible—the Saviour and the hope of the world.—And, now,

III. What practical lessons are we to deduce from this subject? If God intended, by the brazen serpent, and other types of the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, to teach mankind the necessity of a Mediator, and to direct their views to *Him* who in the New Testament, is styled the way, and the truth, and the life, then is it not of vast importance for us to have genuine faith in Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man? If a sinner may be saved without faith in the Messiah, why such immense pains to prepare the world for his advent? What rational meaning can we give to the types, and sacrifices, and ceremonies of the Hebrew ritual? Why so many well authenticated tokens of his matchless glory—as well when he died on the cross, as when he was born in Bethlehem and cradled in a manger?

Why does he himself, and his evangelists and apostles after him, make the salvation of the soul to hinge upon a believing reliance on the sacrifice of his blood, and the merit of his righteousness? Do you say you cannot see any good reason why your eternal felicity should be suspended on your having faith in Jesus? The wounded and dying Israelite might have said, with much greater plausibility, that he could not see why his being healed should depend on his looking upon the brazen serpent; yet he *looked* and *lived*. And, remember, believing in Christ is something more than a sign. It is an exercise of the soul, whereby it becomes interested in the Redeemer, as the covenant head of his people. By believing in Jesus, you appropriate to yourself the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, for justification and eternal life, without which the Scriptures teach you, that you can never be justified and received into God's holy and happy family. Again; by faith in Jesus, you become united to God, not essentially, but by the only bond, through which a creature can hold communion with the Creator; so that, without faith it is as much impossible to *enjoy* God, as to *please* him. Faith, moreover, is a principle of sanctification, as it is the only genuine principle of obedience. "The love of Christ constraineth us,"—*beareth us along*, through all hindrances. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. Looking unto Jesus, is the grand secret of holy living; and, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Let us, then, without gainsaying, acquiesce in God's way of saving sinners. We have ruined ourselves—in him is our help: "Neither is there salvation in any other." The word of invitation issues from the cross—"Look unto me, and be saved all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour!"

## LECTURE XXXII.

## THE CHARACTER AND PROPHECY OF BALAAM.

I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.—NUMBERS xxiv. 17–19.

BALAAM, whose character and prophecy will form the subject of this lecture, was a singular man. He is first introduced to our notice in the sacred history, when the Israelites, towards the termination of their sojourning in the wilderness, reached the plains of Moab. He appears to have been a magician of Chaldea, who by practising the art of divination, or fortune-telling among a superstitious people, had acquired great influence and celebrity, not only in his native country, but among the surrounding nations of the East. Accordingly, Balak, then king of the Moabites, finding that Israel had encamped on his borders, and intending to make war upon them, sent for Balaam to come and curse them, i. e., imprecate the vengeance of the gods upon them, agreeably to ancient custom, previous to the commencement of actual hostilities. The soothsayer, at first, seemed to be very conscientious, professed an unwillingness to engage in the enterprise without divine authority, and claimed time to ascertain the will of heaven on the subject. What means he used to obtain direction on the occasion, we are not informed; but it pleased the God of Israel expressly to forbid the undertaking: “Thou

shalt not go with the men; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." Hereupon the invitation of Balak was declined, and the messengers dismissed. But, in the hope, no doubt, of overcoming the magician's scruples by large rewards, a second embassy was despatched, composed of men of note and high standing at the court of Moab, repeating the king's urgent request, on terms of unbounded liberality. Balaam still hesitates, and makes strong professions of integrity, and contempt of filthy lucre: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." This sounds very well; but mark the influence of a ruling passion. His heart went after its covetousness; and therefore, he spares no pains to make his duty accord with his wishes. Here, the man's character is disclosed, the mask drops off, and we see that he was actuated by unworthy motives. Had he been a good man, he would have rejected the bribe, and dismissed the ambassadors, without hesitation. The will of God had been clearly revealed; and why should he expect a change in the divine purpose? It is always dangerous to listen to considerations calculated to encourage a deviation from the path of known duty. He, who stops to dally with temptation, is half conquered; and has reason to fear being left of God, to follow his own devices in the way to ruin. This remark is forcibly illustrated, and shown to be worthy of special attention, by the history before us. Balaam, bent on his object, and loving the wages of unrighteousness, was allowed to follow his evil inclination, though with manifest tokens of the divine displeasure. God, impliedly said to him, in answer to his hypocritical prayers and feigned scruples of conscience, *Go*, act out that which is in your heart—but abide the consequences. And was this a license to do a wrong thing? Far from it. God only declined coercing his moral agency; on the obvious principle, that involuntary or forced services cannot be either praiseworthy, or blameable. For this reason, God permits thousands

of sinners to pursue practices, of which he by no means approves; nor are men's sins the less heinous, because infinite power is not interposed to prevent their commission.

Balaam seems to have been so infatuated as to conclude, that because the permission just mentioned, was granted, he had in some sort, the divine sanction, for obeying the summons of Balak. He, therefore, set forward with the princes of Moab, elated, doubtless, with the expectation, that the mission would prove a *lucrative*, if not a *successful* one. But he had not proceeded far before he met with a signal and mortifying indication of the divine displeasure. "God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way, for an adversary against him." And, as it would seem, to bring into contempt the art which he practised, and by which he had acquired the reputation of wisdom and sanctity, the dumb beast on which he rode, was so far endued with the power of speech, as to reprove him in an audible and intelligible tone. In regard to this extraordinary fact we have only to remark, that it was a miracle, and, that all miraculous events, of whatever nature they may be, are alike easy to Him with whom all things are possible, except such as involve an absolute solecism. That the fact did occur, as Moses relates it, we have the unequivocal testimony of the apostle Peter, who, speaking of Balaam, with other evil-workers, says, that "he was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet:" 2 Pet. ii. 16. God, however, never works a miracle without good reason, or some important end to be promoted thereby; and, generally, the design is either made known, or easily discoverable. In this instance, the influence of the magical art, which had become very extensive and pernicious, was designed to be brought into disrepute—and the church and truth of Jehovah were intended to be protected from a formidable combination of insidious and powerful enemies. By this occurrence, Balaam's confidence in the warrantableness

and success of his undertaking was evidently a good deal impaired; and his language, on the occasion, indicated something like repentance. When God opened his eyes to behold the angel, with a drawn sword, opposing his progress, and his ears to hear the appalling declaration—"Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me," he fell on his face, confessed his sin, and intimated a willingness, if *it was really necessary*, "to get him back again." But his heart was not changed—his purpose was unaltered—he still indulged a wish that the law of duty might be so modified as to comport with the accomplishment of his wishes. "I have sinned," says he; and, now, *if it displease thee*, I will get me back again." *If it displease thee!* See how the unsanctified heart cleaves to its darling object! What further evidence would he have had, that his conduct was displeasing to God? He had been expressly told that Israel were blessed, and that he ought not to favour the views of their enemies, in seeking their injury. Was not this sufficient? Why did he not abandon the wicked design, and sacrifice the rewards of divination immediately? Because the lust of money predominated in his heart over the love of duty. And are not multitudes of mankind going in the way of Balaam, in this respect? It matters but little what the ruling passion is; if it be a bad one, and if it obtain the ascendancy, it invariably renders a man's way perverse before the Lord. Hence you find sinners often, under affliction, and in the prospect of great sufferings, professing repentance, and talking of reformation, if it be, indeed, necessary, in order to escape future punishment. But while sin retains its dominion in the heart, there is no real desire to be made holy—no hungering and thirsting after righteousness—no sorrowing after a godly sort—no meanness for the heavenly glory—no peace with God—no hope in Christ—no part or lot in the imperishable inheritance of the saints in light. And yet, it is affecting to observe, what pains persons in this state of mind often take to keep up the appearance of sanc-

tity, and reverential regard for the laws and ordinances of God. When Balaam came to the king of Moab, he pretended that he could do nothing, less or more, aside from the revealed law of duty: "Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." Costly sacrifices are ordered to propitiate the God of Israel—the chosen of the Lord are acknowledged to be a happy people;—the ardent petition is heard: "Let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his!" while he, forthwith, betakes himself to his enchantments to spell out permission to curse and devote to destruction those whom Jehovah had pronounced blessed. What infatuation—what self-deception—what mockery of God! O let us remember, that nothing but truth in the inward man will be of any avail with the Searcher of hearts. The way of transgressors is hard. Confusion and disappointment await them at every step of their downward career. No art, no wisdom, no combination of powers can prevail against the counsels of the Almighty. After repeated, laborious, and expensive attempts, the project of Balak, and the sorcerer in whose skill he confided, utterly failed. No advantage could be gained over the people whose God was the Lord; and, while the king, in a fit of passion, orders the soothsayer to depart, as not having been able to answer his purpose, Balaam is constrained to bear testimony to the glory of Israel, and to utter a remarkable prophecy concerning Christ and his spiritual kingdom. We proceed to a brief consideration of the import of this prophecy.

"I shall see HIM; but not now: I shall behold HIM; but not nigh: There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come HE *that shall have dominion*, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."

On this prediction, we may remark, first: That, in common with several other prophecies, it has a *primary*, and an ultimate, or more exalted meaning. It refers, primarily, to David, subsequently king of Judah, who obtained a complete conquest over the kingdoms of Moab and Edom, as well as some other neighbouring tribes, as we learn from 2 Sam. ii. and xiv., and other passages of sacred Scripture. 2dly. That it refers, ultimately and mainly, to Jesus Christ, of whom David was a type and progenitor: and this application is justified and confirmed by various other prophecies, in which the Redeemer is described as subduing heathen nations to the obedience of faith, and as destroying the incorrigible enemies of his kingdom. 3dly. That the sceptre is used as an emblem of kingly authority, and a rising star to denote the appearance of some illustrious personage, to bless and enlighten the world. And is it not probable, that, by a knowledge of this prophecy, preserved in the archives of the orientals, the wise men of the East were induced, prompted by the extraordinary meteor mentioned by them, to visit Jerusalem and Bethlehem, at our Saviour's birth, saying, "Where is **HE** that is born, King of the Jews? for, we have seen *his star in the East?*" And, as a respectable commentator suggests, if these wise men were descendants of Balaam, which is quite possible, then he might say, in reference to Christ, "I shall see him; (i. e., in my posterity) but not now: I shall behold him; but not nigh." But, possibly, by seeing Jesus at a distance, and at a future day, the prophet might refer to his second advent, to judge the world; when we are assured, in other passages of Scripture, that "every eye shall see him—and they who pierced him shall wail because of his coming." Then, indeed, all his enemies shall see him, "but not nigh;" for they will be driven away into outer darkness, and "punished, with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."—"Out of Jacob shall **HE** come," says Balaam, "who shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."



And, says David, in Psalm lxxii. 8, 9, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth; they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust."—And, says Paul, the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 25, "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."—"There shall come a star out of Jacob," says Balaam. And, says the Redeemer, when disclosing a glimpse of his glory to the beloved disciple, in Patmos, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches: I am the *root* and the *offspring* of David, and the BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR." Rev. xxii. 16. Thus much, as to the meaning of this prophecy, and our authority for applying it to Jesus Christ.

Who would expect, after the utterance of so many expressions of admiration of Israel, and of Israel's Redeemer, to find this famous man of Chaldea, plotting mischief against the people whose God he professed to adore, and whose latter end he had pronounced blessed and desirable? Yet, such was the fact. His next expedient was to seduce the people into *lewdness* and *idolatry*, as if knowing that nothing but sin could separate between them and their God. And, in this evil device he succeeded, by calling to his aid the idolatrous women of Midian and Moab. The consequences were direful; a judgment from the Lord—a destructive war, and the loss of many lives; and, among the rest, Balaam himself fell in the bloody conflict: Numb. xxxi. 8, 16. Thus perished the man, whose conduct, so far as we are made acquainted with it, was a perfect riddle. He was originally a sorcerer, far-famed for his intimacy and influence with the world of spirits. Then, when it seemed to favour his selfish ends, he was a professed worshipper of the true God. At one time, we see him courted by Balak, the king; at another, reproved by the most stupid of animals. Now, we hear him sing; "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"—But, anon, we see him busy with his enchantments, seeking occasion against the people, whose praises he had just been

celebrating. To screen the impotency of his art, he avows his obligation to obey the word of the Lord; but, when his necromancy and dissimulation both fail, he throws off the veil, and, by an artful appeal to the lusts of the flesh, succeeds in making Israel to sin; and, finally, falls on the plains of Moab, taken, ensnared, and ruined, in the fearful consequences of a wicked project of his own devising. In vain did he wish to die the death of the righteous, while he loved the rewards of iniquity. The good Lord save us from following his steps, and from sharing in his doom!

We conclude with a few practical reflections. First; Let us beware of covetousness; which an apostle assures us (Col. iii. 5,) is idolatry—a sin against which the anathemas of God are reiterated throughout the Bible. This was Balaam's master-passion. This it was that urged him forward in a perverse way—that made him belie his avowed principles, and, eventually, drowned him in perdition. The caution of our Saviour, on this point, is peculiarly emphatical and worthy of regard: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth:" Luke xii. 15. Money is a useful thing, when in circulation; but, when hoarded up, for the sake of calling it our own, it can be of no use, for the time being, either to ourselves or others. Let us, then, try to keep *the love of it* within legitimate bounds, by doing good and communicating, as we have opportunity: With such sacrifices God is well pleased, and our fellow men may be greatly benefited. Secondly; Let preachers and other professors of the true religion remember, that *privileges* and *professions* are not *graces*. The tares grow in the same field with the wheat: and God sometimes employs the services of bad men, in accomplishing his purposes of grace. Some of the worst characters have exercised the holiest functions, for a season, and then been cast off for their wickedness. Balaam spoke in exalted terms of the blessedness of the church of God, and was used, as an instrument, in announcing one of the

most striking prophecies on record, concerning the Redeemer of the world. King Saul was among the prophets: Judas Iscariot was among the twelve apostles, and may have been the means of bringing sinners to repentance. And many, we learn from the best authority, will plead in the day of judgment, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? to whom the Judge will answer, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 22, 23. These are awful, but salutary truths, calculated to convince us that outward advantages, forms, and sacred offices will be of no avail to the saving of our souls, without the power of godliness, and the indwelling of the holy, sanctifying Spirit. O how needful it is, that every one of us should adopt sincerely, and with importunity, the prayer of David—"Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Thirdly; Let us not attempt to compromise matters between the favour of God and the love of the world. That no man can serve two masters, is a maxim of common sense, sanctified by inspiration. Why, then, should we halt and hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord be God, let us serve *him*, and *him only*. The terms of Christian discipleship are before us, in strong and intelligible language; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me:—and where I am, there shall my servant be also." Nor are these terms arbitrary. From the nature of the case, from the state of the world, from the character of our malady, and from the essential holiness of heaven, they are indispensable. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world: and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John ii. 16, 17. The Saviour claims our hearts, and his demand is valid. Let us, therefore,

give ourselves to him, without reserve. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. Blessed are they who put their trust in Him!

Finally; Let us learn from the history, which we have been reviewing, not to yield to faithless fear, in relation to the safety and prosperity of Zion. She is founded on a rock; and no weapon formed against her can prevail. Her Maker is her husband; the Lord of hosts has her in his holy keeping. A Balaam may plot, and a Balak may offer large rewards, for her injury; but her Redeemer is mighty to save. The star out of Jacob will shine into her dark places; and the sceptre of Israel will guard her interests and defend her children from their spiritual enemies. Jesus shall have dominion. The heathen are given to him, by covenant, and the uttermost parts of the earth. "His name shall endure for ever; his fame shall be continued as long as the sun: men shall be blessed in him; and all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God—the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things: and blessed be his glorious name for ever: Let the whole earth be filled with his glory: Amen, and Amen!"



## LECTURE XXXIII.

THE DEATH OF MOSES, AARON, AND MIRIAM, AND JOSHUA'S DESIGNATION TO OFFICE.

So Moses, the servant of the Lord died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord: and he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses, in the plains of Moab, thirty days.—DEUT. xxxiv. 5-8.

How just and worthy of remembrance is the reflection of Job!—"Man that is born of a woman is of

few days, and full of trouble: he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." It may be applied to the most prosperous and happy man that ever lived. It is strikingly exemplified in the history of Moses, that favoured servant of the Lord, whose last acts, and final exit will form the subject of this lecture. His hundred and twenty years were *little* when compared with the five and twenty hundred years, of the events of which his writings give us a succinct account, and in comparison with eternity, nothing. His trials commenced in the ark of bulrushes, on the margin of the Nile, and continued, with accumulating weight, till they terminated in death, on the summit of Nebo, in the land of Moab. And what a sore disappointment it must have been to him, not to be permitted to enter Canaan, after a painful pilgrimage of forty years in the wilderness; and especially, to know that this privilege was denied him, as a punishment for his sin, in the affair of the water of Meribah! Yet such was the righteous decree of Heaven. He was only allowed to take a view of the beauteous landscape, formed by the plains of Jericho, and the fair cliffs and lofty cedars of Lebanon, and then yield implicit obedience to the irreversible mandate—"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The tear of nature for a deceased brother and sister, was scarcely dried away, when the sympathizing mourner was called to follow his kindred to the house of silence, and mingle *his* ashes with *theirs*. It has often been remarked, though the observation is not always true, that near and aged relatives, especially where their affection has been tender and mutual, seldom long survive one another. This was the case with Miriam, Aaron, and Moses. They all three died within a year of each other, east of Jordan, in sight of the promised land, and in the fortieth year of Israel's sojourning between Egypt and Canaan.

Of the deaths of Miriam and Aaron, we have a short account in the twentieth chapter of Numbers. Concerning the former it is only remarked, in few

words, that "while the people abode in Kadesh, Miriam died there, and was buried there." Moses, we see, dealt not in laboured eulogies upon his nearest relatives. The reason why so little pains seem to have been taken to honour the memory of this woman, at her death, probably, was that she had headed a faction, and manifested contempt for a divine appointment, on a certain occasion, for which she had been visited with the leprosy, and excluded from the camp for seven days, as was noticed in a former lecture. These marks of disapprobation were designed as a testimony against wrong-doings, and as a warning to others; showing that God will have those honoured, who honour him, and that those who despise his ordinances are lightly esteemed. On the same principle, only debased by pagan superstition, the Egyptians held a kind of inquest over the bodies of the deceased, and refused the ordinary rites of sepulture to persons who were found to have been guilty of certain offences injurious to public morals. The policy of such a proceeding, to say nothing of its justice, is indubitable: and if funeral honours were, by common consent, denied to every man who falls while wantonly exposing his own life, and aiming at that of a neighbour, it would give a more effectual check to duelling, than all the other pains and penalties that can be devised, and annexed to the barbarous practice.

Of Aaron's death and burial we have a fuller and somewhat more honourable account; though, as a token of the divine displeasure, for the part which he acted, in the matter of the golden calf, and, subsequently, at Hazeroth and Meribah, he was expressly told that he should not enjoy the privilege of entering the long hoped for land of promise. Yet he had been, upon the whole, not faultless, but, in the leading and master features of his character, amiable, pious, and useful; and, as he had occupied a station of eminence in the commonwealth of Israel, it was befitting that some suitable marks of respect should be shown, at his decease. The inspired narrative,

though short, is exceedingly natural and beautiful; and one can hardly read it attentively, without emotions of tenderness, on seeing the aged and venerable priest, leaving the great congregation, for whom he had so long ministered and interceded before the mercy-seat, and ascending Mount Hor, in obedience to the heavenly vision, with no attendants, save Moses, his only brother, and Eleazar, his eldest son, there to lay aside his robes of office, and, after taking a last look at the dear charge just resigned, and a rapid glance at the country beyond Jordan, to die, and be gathered to the fathers, who had fallen asleep before him! Thus, when death shall put his summons into our hands, we must straightway leave this world, however many and strong the ties that bind us to earth, and friends, and official duties. Nor let us defer preparation for the great change, on the presumption that we shall have many days' notice of our departure. "Be ye ready," says Christ, "for the Son of man cometh in an hour when ye think not." Had Aaron been unprepared, how great would have been his surprise when the Lord, *probably in his hearing*, spake unto Moses, saying, "Take Aaron, and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there?" The order appears to have been immediately executed. "Moses did as the Lord commanded; and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation." The robes were stripped off the father, and transferred to the son, publicly, to denote the transfer of the office of high-priest to Eleazar, who ministered in his father's stead. "And Aaron died there, in the top of the mount." What mighty changes! And how soon effected by the irresistible hand of Providence! How insignificant, in God's account, is the pageantry of a long funeral procession—a crowded graveyard, and expensive monuments! Here we see the *first*, and most distinguished ecclesiastic in Israel, and *own-brother* to the greatest general and law-giver

that ever existed, finishing a long life of service to the community on the top of a rugged mountain, and that by divine command, with only two relatives to close his eyes, and cover his mortal remains, in a plain style, and in a sequestered spot, so difficult of access, as to discourage at once the intrusive visits of curiosity, and the idolatrous wailings of affection. Nor does duty allow the brother and son of the deceased to linger long about the place of interment. "Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount:" and, when the people learned from them that Aaron, their beloved minister was really dead, appreciating his services when deprived of them, more highly perhaps than before, they felt their loss, and "mourned for him thirty days, even all the house of Israel." This was a becoming token of respect for one who had pleaded their cause before Pharaoh; shared, with them the toils of a tedious pilgrimage, borne the names of the twelve tribes before the ark of testimony, and been accustomed, for forty years, to instruct and bless them and their children, in the name of the Lord.

And now, that Miriam and Aaron are gone, Moses is admonished of his own approaching dissolution. This intimation, as first given, is recorded, Numb. xxvii. 12, 13, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel: and, when thou hast seen it, thou also *shalt be gathered unto thy people*, as Aaron thy brother was *gathered*." Abarim was the name of a range of mountains, of which Nebo, with its lofty summit, called Pisgah, was one of the highest and most remarkable. "*Thou shalt be gathered to thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.*" This expression is worthy of notice. It clearly indicates the conscious existence of the soul, after death. Moses and Aaron are described as going to their people, when they died. The same is said of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others. Their people were the *pious*, who had died before them, and who are supposed, by the language in question, to be in a



condition to receive them, and welcome them into their society. This is a blessed thought; and it is unequivocally developed and confirmed in the New Testament. It is a trial, even to the Christian, to leave his friends and kindred behind him, at death: but let him commend them to God, and to the word of his grace; and let him remember that he is going to be gathered to his people—to God's redeemed people—to that great and happy family, where death shall never make a breach, where sin shall never interrupt the sweet stream of benevolence and brotherly love. And let those, who mourn the death of godly and beloved relations, be careful to walk in their steps, serving their God and Redeemer, and the painful separation will be but for a little season—just long enough to make a reunion in heaven inexpressibly delightful. This was the hope of Moses; and, in the exercise of this hope, see with what composure, with what public-spirited regard for the welfare of those whom he was going to leave, he receives the summons of death! True, he desired and prayed to be permitted to enter Canaan, if it should comport with the divine will; (see Deut. iii. 23, to the end:) but, in any event, he was resigned and tranquil. His great concern was that the people of his charge, and the cause of God might not suffer by his removal from the field of labour. Hence his intercessory prayer, (Numb. xxvii. 15–17:) “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them, and who may go in before them—that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd!” This prayer was speedily answered. Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim, a man of an excellent spirit, who had been long in training for the important office, and who had signalized himself in the war with the Amalekites, was designated, and set apart, by imposition of hands and other religious solemnities, as colleague and successor of Moses. It is worthy of remark, that none of the near kindred of Moses was chosen his successor; which shows that the whole

matter was of the Lord's ordering; and, that a regard to the public weal prevailed over all considerations of friendship and favouritism. Grace, and other qualifications for responsible offices of trust, do not descend from father to son, like estates and titles; and, therefore, it is no marvel, that in hereditary monarchies, the king is often a mere puppet, moving obsequious to the dictation of his ministers.

After the appointment of Joshua, Moses seems to have entrusted to his care a large measure of the affairs of state, and to have given himself mainly, for the residue of his life, (which may have been some weeks, if not months,) to the duties of religion. In this interval, it is believed, he delivered, in the audience of the people, most of what is comprised in that interesting portion of the Pentateuch, called Deuteronomy, i. e., the second law, or rather the recapitulation of the law. In this, and indeed, in the other books ascribed to Moses, it is possible that Aaron, Joshua, Hur, or some other person under his eye, and by the guidance of the Spirit, *may* have written, nay, *probably*, did write some small portions; such as the commendation of *his meekness*, (Numb. xii. 3,) and the last chapter of Deuteronomy, giving an account of his death. These pieces may have been, at first, appended to the voluminous writings of Moses, as notes; and afterwards, upon being approved of, as giving a true statement of facts, and as contributing to the more ready understanding of the whole history, they may have been incorporated with the text, when the canonical Scriptures were collated by Ezra, or some other inspired man of God, after the Babylonish captivity. Nor does this affect, at all, either the authenticity or the genuineness of the books. The objections of infidels on this, as on most other subjects, connected with the authority of divine revelation, are perfectly childish and unfounded; and only need to be tested by the received rules of fair interpretation to expose their sophistry.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we have the farewell addresses of Moses to the people of Israel. These

addresses are of the most dignified, and yet of the most tender and affectionate character imaginable. Here we have, indeed, a rich miscellany of law and gospel, of duty and privilege, of judgment and mercy, of history and poetry. The wonderful dispensations of Providence towards the ransomed tribes, are recounted in a lucid and forcible style, from their memorable exodus out of the house of bondage, to the eve of their entrance into the goodly land, promised to Abraham's seed, in Jacob's favoured line. The lawgiver and chief magistrate seem lost in the father and minister of religion, while we hear him, in his last address, saying to them, with all the sanction of inspiration, and the earnest solemnity of a dying saint, "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day; which ye shall command your children to observe, to do all the words of this law; for it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it:" Deut. xxxii. 46, 47. In truth, the chapter from which this passage is quoted, is one of the finest specimens of composition in the English language. It is very properly entitled in the table of contents, "The Lord's song by Moses." The sentiment is truly sublime—the figures the happiest and most expressive that could have been chosen—and the appeal to the judgment and heart of man, powerful and moving beyond description. Is it not strange that persons of taste and high pretensions to a love of learning, do not read the Bible more than they generally do, if it were only for sake of the ancient history and usages, moral maxims, and elegant poetry which it contains? But this is a digression from our subject.

The last public act of Moses, the man of God, was his pronouncing a prophetic benediction on the several tribes, including Simeon with Judah, the lawgiver. The grateful service performed, much in the manner of good old Jacob, two hundred and thirty-nine years before, the enraptured prophet bursts forth into a declaration of the majesty of God, and of the safety

and blessedness of his people;—and these are his last words on record: “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, destroy them: Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also, his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places!”

The holy man’s work is done, and he is going to enter into the joy of his Lord. He ascends the mount, even to Pisgah’s top, over against Jericho. The land given by covenant, and confirmed with an oath unto Abraham and his seed, spreads out before him, even from Dan unto Zoar, and westward unto the utmost sea; for “his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated.” I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, said God, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord; and he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.”

Three questions briefly answered, according to the writer’s best judgment, will comprise all which it is deemed proper to say on this mysterious dispensation of Providence:

1. Why was not Moses allowed to enter the land of promise?—Because he had sinned publicly, and in the exercise of one of his most holy functions; Num. xx. 7–13. He smote the rock at Kadesh twice, with a “*Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?*” instead of simply speaking to it, before the eyes of the people, as the Lord commanded him. For this faithless and petulant violation of an express command, in a case intimately connected with the

divine glory, the Lord declared to 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." And God is faithful in the execution of his threatenings, as in the fulfilment of his promises. Beware of departing from the revealed law of duty. If you do, you will forsake your own mercies, and suffer loss in *this life*, if not in that which is to come.

2. What is meant by the Lord's burying Moses?—That a wonder-working Providence took care that his mortal remains should be disposed of without human agency, and, perhaps, by the ministry of angels.

3. Why was he ordered away from his fond friends, to die alone, and without one kind hand to close his eyes; and why was the place of his interment so scrupulously concealed?—That the affection and respectful regards of the people might be the sooner transferred to his successor in office, and that the worship of saints and relics, (an abomination that has long disgraced one section of the Christian church,) might be prevented among the tribes of Israel.

"Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; and the children of Israel wept for him in the plains of Moab thirty days; so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended." Temperate expressions of mourning for the worthy dead, are not forbidden, but rather countenanced in Scripture. David lamented the death of Jonathan in the most pathetic strains, and Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus; but our moderation in this, as in other things, should appear unto all men. As to the time and badges of mourning, custom governs—not law. One thing may be remarked, and ought to be remembered, on this subject:—Funerals, and mourning dresses should not be more expensive than the mourners can conveniently bear. Pride and extravagance may be discovered on very grave and solemn occasions. "Let all things be done decently, and in order." That the children of Israel should mourn *thirty days* for Moses, can scarcely be thought an excessive indication of

respectful regret, at the death of such a man; for he was a good man—a great man, and a highly honoured instrument of good to Israel, and to the world. Scepticism may impugn his mission and cavil at his writings; but his name will be revered while the world stands—his record is on high—and his songs, celebrating the praises of God, the Redeemer, are sung in heaven. But after all, his highest praise is, that “by faith, when he was come to years, he 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 in Egypt.”

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## LECTURE XXXIV.

### THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN. .

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel, according to their divisions by their tribes; and the land rested from war.—JOSHUA xi. 23.

THE principal design of this lecture is to vindicate the conquest of Canaan, by the Israelites, which was effected under Joshua, the successor of Moses, about fourteen hundred and thirty years before the birth of Christ. This subject demands some special attention, not only because it has given occasion to sceptical objections to the sacred history which narrates the fact, but, also, on account of the typical reference which it has to the final triumph of the church militant, the spiritual Israel of God, under the conduct of Jesus, the captain of our salvation.

According to the account which the Bible gives

us of this matter, the Israelites, in dispossessing the inhabitants of Canaan, acted under a divine commission. If then, the history be true, all objections to the conquest lie against the authority by which it was achieved. Now, for the truth of the narrative concerning this transaction, we have, to say the least, as much evidence as we have for any other portion of the sacred Scriptures. This evidence, as it is very complicated and various, we shall not attempt to exhibit fully, at present; yet, a few marks of its verity, furnished incidentally, and apparently without any studied design on the part of the historian, ought, perhaps, to be summarily noticed here. Let it be observed, then, that the history of the Jewish nation is a journal kept from day to day, as the events composing it transpired among the people to whom it principally relates. The keeping of this journal was superintended by Moses, during his life; and on his decease, Joshua succeeded him in this service, as in the other branches of his high and responsible office. The same series of annals was continued, after the death of Joshua, by Samuel and others, and finally, revised, arranged, and completed by Ezra, the last historical writer, pretending to inspiration, in the Old Testament. The whole history, though penned by several hands; and at successive periods, is to be regarded as one continuous chain, of which, if one link be broken, the whole may be justly suspected as a rope of sand—a thing of no strength, and of no value. Now, that an ingenious writer, visiting a distant tribe of men, for the purpose, might, on his return to his native country, furnish an untrue account of the said tribe, which should gain some credit and currency, among his countrymen, *for a time*, is quite possible; but for other writers to take up the subject, and continue the deception for several centuries, would be very difficult, if not impossible: and when commerce and the researches of the learned came to disclose the real history, manners, and customs of the supposed people, the imposture would inevitably be detected, and exposed to general contempt. Now let us see

how the matter stands in regard to the history of the Jewish nation. The history of this people was not written by foreigners, but by native, and home-bread Israelites;—men of note, and of good repute in the nation;—men, whose whole conduct, so far as disclosed, shows that they were concerned to maintain the honour of their countrymen, if that could be done consistently with truth and honesty. They lived, and acted, and alternately mourned and rejoiced—suffered and triumphed with the people, whose singular chronicles they have transmitted to the world, as the oracles of truth. They detail transactions to which they were eye witnesses, and many of which implicate, and exhibit as exceedingly blameworthy, the whole nation—their most prominent characters, and *themselves*, in some instances, not excepted. What motive, other than the love of truth, could they have had for so doing?

But supposing these writers to have been malicious, or visionary, as you please, could they have made the people receive their fictions for true history? Could they have instituted, and caused to be celebrated, for a long course of ages, expensive and laborious rites commemorative of alleged events, which never really took place? Take two or three prominent facts and institutions to illustrate this idea. If Moses had not, under divine guidance, led the tribes of Jacob forth out of Egypt, by what conceivable art, or by what unheard-of infatuation was the belief that he did so, originated; and, how happens it that this belief is cherished by the descendants of Israel, in all their dispersions at the present day? If the first-born of Egypt were not slain by the death-dealing angel of justice, what means the Jewish passover; and who will undertake to give us a rational account of its origin? If the scenes said to have been exhibited at the Red Sea were fictitious—if the Israelites did not cross on the bare channel, and if Pharaoh and his host, in attempting to pursue them, were not overwhelmed, and drowned by a visitation of God, what is the theme of that beautiful and sublime hymn, re-



corded in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus? What is the thing intended to be commemorated by the feast of Pentecost, if the law was not given at Sinai, fifty days after the exit from the house of bondage? And why that other great national festival, the feast of Tabernacles, if the people of Israel did not dwell in tents in the deserts of Arabia? Whence, and where, and why originated the religious and ceremonial peculiarities of the Jews—their priesthood, their tabernacle and temple services, if not at the time and place, and for the reasons assigned by Moses and the other writers of the sacred story? Would Moses, or any other man, in his right reason, have dared to publish among the people, of whom he was writing, that they were supplied, for forty years, with bread from heaven, falling nightly, in and around their encampments, if such had not really been the fact? Would Joshua have had the hardihood to tell the story of the miraculous passage of Jordan, and could he have prevailed on the chief of the fathers to erect a monument of twelve stones, in the bed of the river, and another on its western margin, to perpetuate the remembrance of a fiction—a wicked and known falsehood! These suppositions are too extravagant to be entertained, for one moment; and yet they must be admitted, if the truth of the history be denied. And, it is worthy of notice, that the facts just mentioned, and many others, interwoven in the history, are quoted, or alluded to as true, and of weighty import, in the subsequent books of Scripture, not only in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, by Christ and his Evangelists, and Apostles: so that to reject the history of Israel, or any part of it, really involves the rejection of Christ, and the whole Christian system.

It ought not to be overlooked, in examining the internal evidence of the truth of the Jewish history, that the facts recorded were of a public nature; that they took place, in the view of a numerous people, by no means disposed to submit to the dictation, or orders of their leaders, without the strongest evidence that

God spoke and operated by Moses and others, as his ministers. Yet we find them submitting, time after time, manifestly under the irresistible hand of Omnipotence, and repeatedly renewing their covenant engagements to do, as the Lord commanded Moses; and this Moses and his coadjutors have been held in the highest estimation by the children of Israel, in their generations, even down to the present hour. This certainly indicates pretty clearly, the truth and faithfulness of the historical statements communicated in the sacred pages of the Bible.

It is also worthy of remark, that *foreign writers* bear testimony to the truth of the leading facts, in the history of Israel. This argument is ably handled by the learned Grotius in his well known work, on "The Truth of Christianity." The author of the celebrated Orphic verses speaks of Moses, as having been born of water, and as having received of God the two great tables of the moral law. Strabo, Juvenal, Diodorus Siculus, Pliny, and Tacitus, mention him as a writer of great merit, and profess to respect his history. Chalcidius calls Moses the wisest of men, enlivened, not only by human eloquence, but by divine inspiration: and ancient writers, generally, commend the piety of the Jews, so long as they adhered strictly to the law, which they received by the hand of Moses. Such testimonies as these, frequently to be met with in pagan writers, show the estimation in which the historical books of Scripture were held by those who were no way interested to favour, or defend the character of the Jewish nation. Indeed, when we recollect that the conduct of the Israelites, in invading the territory of the numerous tribes of Canaan, must have excited the most wakeful jealousy, it seems impossible that any imposture, on their part, should have been practised with success. There is, therefore, no deficiency of evidence, for the truth of the history which we are reviewing; and the man who rejects it, as fabulous, must, to be consistent, reject all historical testimony, and be contented with the little measure of

knowledge which he may be able to gather, within the narrow circle of his own feelings and observation.

The people of Israel then took possession of Canaan, and exterminated, or made tributary, the former inhabitants, by a divine warrant. And that they verily believed they had a divine commission to act as they did, appears from several particulars, which might be adduced if time permitted. We shall notice, briefly, one or two things in the conduct of Joshua, which evince his entire confidence in the protection of God, and in the success of the enterprise on which he had entered by divine command. The first is:—The observance of the painful rite of circumcision, a few days after crossing Jordan. This rite, because it disqualified the subject for active service, for some time after its administration, had been omitted ever since they left Mount Sinai, i. e., upwards of thirty-eight years. The generation that came out of Egypt, had all perished in the wilderness, excepting Caleb and Joshua himself. The whole of the males, therefore, who entered Canaan, with the exception just named, were to be circumcised; and that too, immediately on their entrance into a country densely inhabited by a people all on the alert to repel the invaders, and defend their property and their lives. Yet, when the will of God is announced, Joshua immediately obeys the command without stopping, as he might have done, to allege that this service would, at this critical juncture, place him and his people at the mercy of their enemies. Nay, more: the ordinance of circumcision was preparatory to that of the passover, which had also been omitted, for the same length of time, on account of their migratory state in the wilderness: so that some weeks must have been spent in religious services, before a single village had been subdued, and within a few miles of the populous and well fortified town of Jericho. Would a wise general, such as Joshua evidently was, have acted thus, without the fullest persuasion that he and his people were under the shield of the Almighty? Certainly not. And why did not the enemy come upon them, in their disabled circum-

stances, and utterly destroy them? Why, but because they were overawed and held in restraint by the God of Israel?

The only other particular of this kind, that our time allows us to notice is—The command which Joshua addressed to the sun and moon, with the view of gaining time to complete the victory over the five confederate kings, in the case of Gibeon, mentioned in the book that bears his name, chap. x. 12: “Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon!” Would any man of common sense risk his reputation on the issue of such an order as this, without being fully assured that it would be obeyed? Could any thing short of an *afflatus* from the God of universal nature have moved a rational, created being, to utter such a command? and could any thing short of divine influence have given efficacy to it? for it was promptly obeyed: “The sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.”

We shall offer a few remarks, now, upon what deistical writers call the *great question*, i. e., whether it be consistent with the justice and other acknowledged perfections of God, to authorize the extermination of the Canaanites? On this point we shall not multiply words to any considerable extent. Our aim is, not so much to refute the infidel, as to guard the young against his blasphemy, and to confirm the faith of the believer in the divine testimony.

The conduct of Israel, in Canaan, has been compared to that of the Spaniards in Mexico; both, it has been alleged with confidence, acted a base and cruel part. Now, we say, the cases are not at all parallel. The Israelites acted under a divine warrant, ratified by miracles; the Spaniards were actuated by avarice, and misguided zeal for Papal domination. The truth, respecting the conquest of Canaan, may be summed up in a few short propositions, to which, as it seems to me, every discerning mind, disenthralled from the power of prejudice, will accede, as postulates, or first principles, in the divine govern-

ment, viz: "That the Almighty has an indisputable right over the lives and fortunes of his creatures;—that the sin of nations may become so aggravated as to justify him in destroying them, *as nations*;—that he is free to choose the instruments by which he will effect such destruction;—that there is not more injustice or cruelty in effecting it by the sword, than by famine, pestilence, deluge, or earthquake;—that the circumstance of a divine commission entirely alters the state of the case, and distinguishes the Israelites from the Spaniards, or any other plunderers, as much as a warrant from the magistrate distinguishes the executioner of law from the murderer;—that men may be assured of God's giving such a commission;—and, that there is incontestible evidence upon record, and from facts, that the Israelites were thus assured." (See Bishop Horne.) If any one, capable of conducting an argument, will undertake to refute these simple propositions, or to prove the converse of them to be true and just, he will be very likely to convince himself, that there was no unrighteousness on God's part in the matter in question. That the Canaanites were a wicked people—that they were eminently abandoned, is undeniable, if any reliance is to be placed on history. They had been warned; they had seen the cities of the plain laid waste, by a storm of fire and brimstone. Abraham, and Lot, and Melchisedeck, and Isaac, and Jacob, had sojourned among them and preached to them; but they were wholly given to their idols and their lusts. Much forbearance was exercised towards them; they had space for repentance; God waited to be gracious for more than four hundred years after they had become grossly corrupt. The country which they inhabited, and which they probably took possession of by unauthorized conquest, had been long promised to Abraham and his seed, (Gen. xv. 16;) but the Lord would not drive them out, until they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, and become ripe for destruction. And when incensed wrath did come, it fell upon them gradually; for thus was Moses instruct-

ed concerning these devoted sinners: "The Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee, *by little and little*: thou mayest not *consume them at once*." "Here we observe," says a learned writer,\* "a trait of *mercy* in the midst of judgment. Thus an opportunity was afforded of escaping by flight. Time was also allowed them, to consider the wonderful works of the true God; and it would seem, that those who repented and forsook their evil ways, were spared, and admitted to communion with Israel, as were Rahab and her father's family." Justice requires that wicked nations should be punished *in this world*, inasmuch as they are not supposed to exist, *as nations*, in a future state. It is not said, in Scripture, that these people were all consigned to endless perdition; and, as to the objection made to the death of so many infants, it is too broad, in its bearing, to be of any force in this case. Infants are removed from this world by a great variety of distressing diseases and calamities, without affording any just ground of complaint, as to the time or the manner of their removal. Jehovah rules in righteousness; "let all the earth keep silence before him." The whole territory is his, by right of creation; and he not only apportions it to the various tribes of men, as seems good in his sight, but, very often for good reasons, transfers it from one nation to another, in the exercise of his indisputable sovereignty, for the maintenance of his authority, and the glory of his kingdom.

Should it be alleged, that the conquest of Canaan authorizes aggressive war upon an unoffending people, it may be said, in reply, that any nation, commissioned as were the Israelites in the case of Canaan, would be mere executioners of the divine will, and therefore, justifiable; otherwise, the invasion of a state, whether barbarous or civilized, from motives of ambition, or the lust of gain, is to be regarded as robbery and murder, on a great and terrific scale. Defensive war, when all other means of composing

\* Dr. John Jamieson.

international disputes have been tried in vain, may, perhaps, be sustained by the laws of self-preservation; but wars, waged for the display of superior power, or for the acquisition of territory, or commercial advantages, at the expense of other nations, are incapable of rational vindication, on any principle, either of sound morality or common sense. To resort to deadly strife in defence of our honour, or even of our unquestionable rights, is the sure way to make bad worse, as it invariably puts in jeopardy interests of far more importance than those which give rise to the contest. It is high time that a custom so base in its origin, and so fraught with mischief to the happiness of mankind, and so adverse to the evangelization of the world, should yield to the obvious dictates of humanity and religion. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people;" and, we may add, that sin—national sin—will be the ruin of any people. This is the momentous lesson taught by the overthrow of the ancient Canaanites. God is just and holy; and he has declared, that, "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished."—"Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!" May the rulers and legislators of our happy republic be richly endued with the wisdom that is from above; so that our national affairs may be conducted in righteousness, and in the spirit of peace, and with a due regard to the glory of God, and the permanent well being of our great and growing nation!

## LECTURE XXXV.

## THE LAST ACTS AND DEATH OF JOSHUA.

And it came to pass, after these things, that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they buried him in the border of his inheritance, in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, which he had done for Israel.--  
JOSHUA xxiv. 29-31.

IN our last lecture, we offered some considerations in vindication of the conquest of Canaan, showing, that it was effected by a divine commission, for the glory of God as connected with the maintenance of his worship, the preservation of his truth and ordinances, and the good of his church, in all subsequent periods of the world. Joshua acted, in this whole matter, as the Lord's servant. We have noticed his conduct, as a consecrated warrior; let us now see how he behaved, under the success which attended his arms:—Mark the spirit with which he closed the duties of his high and responsible station;—observe the influence of his example and instructions on the people of his charge; and then endeavour to take some practical lessons from the subject.

I. The expulsion and extermination of the devoted people of Canaan, was a work of time. From the passage of Jordan to the distribution of the land by lot, to the several tribes of Israel, must have been not less than seven years. During this period the war was carried on with vigour, under the superintendence of that illustrious personage, who appeared to



Joshua, at Jericho, with a drawn sword in hand, and proclaimed himself, "CAPTAIN of the LORD'S HOST." This was none other than the angel of the covenant, our adorable Redeemer, as appears from his accepting divine honours, and from his commanding the son of Nun as he had done Moses, forty years before, at the burning bush in Horeb, to take off his shoes from his feet, for that "the place whereon he stood was holy ground." Even while the war continued, the pious leader of Israel was not inattentive to the duties of religion. The sacraments of circumcision and the passover were celebrated; the blessings and threatenings of the law were published in the audience of the people, and they were admonished by altars, sacrifices, and faithful warnings, of the importance of trusting in the living God, in all their conflicts and military movements. And no sooner had the Lord given him rest from his enemies, than we find him taking measures to settle the affairs of government, agreeably to the directions which he had received from the holy oracle. The land was distributed in lots, apportioned to the number of souls, in the tribes, severally, except that of Levi, the ministers of the sanctuary, for whose support, as well as to meet the expense of maintaining public worship, a permanent tax was levied on the produce of the country, and a certain number of towns, with their suburbs, were allotted to the priests and levites, where they ordinarily resided, and superintended the general interests of religion and literature, when not engaged in the duties of public worship. The tabernacle was erected at Shiloh, where the ordinances of religion were administered and attended by the people, with great solemnity, for upwards of three hundred years. Indeed, the spirit of Joshua was a spirit, not of ambition and violence, but of meekness and piety. His military success was uniformly made subservient to the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of the people, whom he governed. When the two tribes and a half were about to return to their settlement, east of Jordan, at the close of the war, their venerable commander dismissed

them with his blessing, and charged them as a father would his children; "Take diligent heed," said he, "to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul:" (xxii. 5.) It is not common to hear such advice as this from the lips of conquerors. Most men, who have distinguished themselves by their bravery and skill in military operations, are extremely fond of flattering attentions and honours from their countrymen; and seldom think of referring their achievements to the providence of God, or of recommending a regard to the divine commands, as a means of improving the advantages which may have been gained over the enemies of their country. Here, then, is an example worthy the imitation of warriors and statesmen. Joshua was honoured in being designated the successor of Moses; and he was, afterwards, highly honoured of God, in the eyes of the people; inso-much that they placed unbounded confidence in his judgment, and yielded prompt obedience to his orders. Yet we find him, in the height of power, modest, humble, unassuming;—indifferent to the applauses of men, and mainly anxious to engage his subjects in a course of holy obedience to the statutes and ordinances of the Lord, their Redeemer. Bearing in mind the responsibilities of his office, he never seems to have considered himself exempt from the obligations of religion by his extensive and burdensome secular duties. While performing, with activity and zeal, the services due to the commonwealth of Israel, he was mindful of his latter end, and could command time enough to attend on the services of the sanctuary. Nor was he inattentive to the more private duties of religion. His piety appeared, in his intercourse with his family and friends; "As for me and my house," said he, "we will serve the Lord." Thus we see, he bore prosperity with meekness, and manifested a becoming sense of dependence on the provi-

dence and grace of God, amidst all the honours that were conferred upon him, by a grateful and devoted people. It is remarkable, that he evinced as much indifference to worldly wealth, as to the honour which cometh from man. His family seem not to have been distinguished, in this respect, from the other families of the tribe to which they belonged: and although he appears to have retired, in a great measure, from public duty, some time before his death, yet we hear nothing of any provision being made for his living in affluence and splendour. It is only remarked, (chap. xix. 49, 50,) that, “when they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua, the son of Nun, among them; according to the word of the Lord, they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnath-serah, in Mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt there.” What a noble example of moderation, in one who had so much in his power! And how admirable the influence of true religion, in rendering an individual a blessing to his generation, and at the same time, a model of meekness, and superiority to selfish and sinister ends! Happy would it be for the world, if more of such characters occupied the high places of power and influence among mankind! Let us observe

2. The spirit with which this good man closed the duties of his high and responsible station.—Here we have only to peruse, attentively, the last two chapters of the book which bears his name; where his zeal for the glory of God, and the good of the people, is disclosed in a manner which clearly indicates its genuineness and ardour. Twice he assembled the tribes, at Shechem, near the place of his residence, and taught them not only as one having authority, but as one who cared for them, as a father about to die cares for his children. He reminds them of the marvellous things which God had done for them; and of his high and rightful claims to their undivided and unwavering obedience and trust. He recounts the history of the nation, as far back as the calling of Abraham,

who had been selected by a gracious Providence, from among an idolatrous people, and made the honoured depository of revealed truth, the nucleus of the visible church, and the father of a numerous and favoured race. He appeals to them, as witnesses to the divine faithfulness, in fulfilling the promises made to their fathers. "Behold," says he, "this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know, in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that *not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you.*" They are assured, also, that God will not fail to execute his threatenings upon them, if they disregard his commands, and imitate the manners of the wicked:—"When ye shall have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them, then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you." To these solemn warnings, he adds this earnest and pressing exhortation: "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord." And, not content with general instructions, he labours to bring them to an open and decided avowal of their purpose to renounce their refuges of lies, and devote themselves to the service of the living God:—"Choose ye, *this day*, whom ye will serve." Not that he would have them enter into covenant with the Most High, in a rash, or inconsiderate manner; for, he reminds them, that Jehovah is a holy, and a jealous God, and that he will not tolerate transgression: but, aware of the danger of hesitancy and delay, in so plain a case, he endeavours to persuade them to choose, upon due consideration of motives and consequences, the good and the right way. His own mind was made up—he was going the way of all the earth—he was just taking leave of them, and entering the eternal world, trusting in God, the Saviour; and it was his heart's desire,

that they should exercise a similar confidence, so that he might hope to meet them in heaven, and there join them in the triumphs of redeeming grace. These faithful endeavours were not in vain. The people, unable to gainsay the truth, and moved by the entreaties of their venerable leader, whose affection for them they could not doubt, "said unto Joshua, *The Lord our God* will we serve, and his voice will we obey." With the view of ratifying this engagement, so that it might not be soon forgotten, Joshua, after recording the transaction in the book of the law of God, erected a monument of stone, near the sanctuary, and said, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be, therefore, a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God: so Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance." This was a solemn meeting;—perhaps it was the most useful one that Joshua had ever held with the congregated tribes of Israel. The people may not have been all sincere, in the engagement; but the purpose formed and ratified was good; and the man of God could now resign his charge, and go to his eternal rest, conscious that he had spared no pains to secure their immortal interests.

We see, in this piece of sacred history, how natural and befitting it is, that a Christian minister should greatly desire to see his hearers entering into covenant with God, and abounding in every good word and work. The sacraments of the New Testament are witnesses for Christ; and, to those who receive them in the faith of the gospel, they are helpful and hallowed remembrancers. They exhibit, in a symbolical form, the truth and grace of our God, and remind us, that, as Christians, we are not our own, but *his* who loved us, and bought us with his precious blood. These sacred institutions are not only badges of distinction, but appointed means of confirming the faith and animating the hope of the believer. They cannot be neglected without dishonouring Christ, and wronging our own souls; and the due observance of them

has, from the first introduction of the Christian dispensation, been regarded as evidence of the progress of the gospel, and of the renovating power attendant on its faithful administration. Let all, therefore, who have the opportunity, and who purpose in their hearts to serve the Lord, and to obey his voice, ratify and seal their good intentions by a serious and reverential participation of these divine ordinances.

Concerning the death and burial of Joshua, we are not gratified with any particulars. The inspired writer who penned the last paragraph of his instructive biography, mentions his exit and interment without any effort, or note of admiration:—"And it came to pass, after these things, that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they buried him in the border of his inheritance, in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim."—"Precious, in the eyes of the Lord, is the death of his saints!" As this sainted servant of God had spent a long and active life of usefulness, we may presume his departure out of this world was peaceful and blessed: and the simple, unostentatious manner in which his mortal remains seem to have been disposed of, accorded well with the meek and unassuming spirit which he uniformly manifested during the whole course of his benign and laborious administration.

3. In regard to the influence which the instructions and example of Joshua had upon the commonwealth of Israel in his lifetime, and for some time after his decease, we shall not enlarge. That it was salutary, and of some considerable duration, is plainly indicated in a single sentence of the sacred historian: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and who had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel." The conduct of the Israelites was at no period of their history so holy and unblameable as might have been expected, considering the peculiar advantages which they enjoyed; but, for the first half century after their entrance into Canaan, they seem to have paid more than usual attention to

the divine commands, and to have abstained in a great measure from idolatry, and other gross abominations. Several causes may have concurred, under Providence, in producing this temporary reformation: but we are warranted, by the passage of Scripture just cited, as well as by observation and experience, to ascribe it, in part, to the influence of Joshua's holy example and faithful admonitions. The manners and habits of mankind are very much influenced by example; and the instructions of wisdom from those whose lives are comments upon the doctrines they teach, are seldom, if ever, without effect. It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose, that the upright administration,—the pious deportment,—the solemn warnings, and earnest entreaties of the venerable leader of Israel, had contributed largely to elevate the tone of public manners, and secure attention to the laws and ordinances of God. "The memory of the just is blessed." Their record is on high; and, being dead, they still speak to survivors, and call upon them to seek after glory, honour, and immortality.

4. Several practical lessons may be deduced from this piece of sacred history. As,

(1.) We see the importance of *piety* in those who occupy stations of eminence among mankind. A man's influence depends very much on the situation in which he is placed. In private life, it is necessarily limited; in public, it is more extended: though every man exerts an influence, either for, or against religion and morality, proportionate to the circle of his acquaintance. A warrior, a statesman, or a civil magistrate is known through the medium of the press; and his acts are frequently, and among all classes in society, the subject of remark and imitation. How desirable it is, that the character and conduct of such men should always be, as becometh the gospel of God!

(2.) In Joshua's closing counsels to the people of Israel, we see what importance he attached to *decision*, in the weighty concerns of religion. "Choose ye, *this day*, whom you will serve."

In concluding these lectures, in which the benefit of young people has been kept steadily in view, the writer begs leave to make an affectionate appeal to the children and youth of the church, on the danger of neglecting the doctrines and duties of religion in early life.

DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS: Your position is one of intense interest. You are, many of you, balancing between life and death. If you have been dedicated to God, by parental solicitude for your souls, that act, unless ratified by your own deliberate and cordial surrender of yourselves to the Saviour, will not, as a matter of course, secure your salvation; and if the seal of God's covenant with his church has not been impressed upon you, then, the world, which lies in sin, claims you for its own, and will spare no pains to detain you in its ranks, and amuse you with its transient and unsubstantial pleasures. So that, until you give your hearts to God, the Saviour, you are in jeopardy every moment. You cannot remain long in this wavering and undecided state. If you decline choosing whom you will serve, and wait, like Felix, for a more convenient season, in defiance of God's assurance, that "now is the accepted time and day of salvation," your habit of negligence may become as *fixed* and *immovable* as the leopard's spots; or the angel of death may, in an unexpected hour, set his seal upon your character and destiny for eternity, while you are yet in your sins. A more convenient season than the present, for making your peace with God, by embracing the Saviour, you will never find. Procrastination is a concealed rock, on which many a baptized and amiable youth has been wrecked and ruined forever. "Seek the Lord, while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." "What is your life?" What the longest life? "A vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away!" And yet your day of grace may end before you die. You may grieve away the life-giving Spirit, without whose sacred influence you will neither repent, nor believe the gospel. Esau, who sold



his birth-right, and afterwards desired a father's blessing, "found no place for repentance, *though he sought it earnestly with tears.*" Of Ephraim, it was said, "he is joined to his idols; let him alone." Jerusalem neglected the day of gracious visitation, and, therefore, "the things that belonged to her peace were hidden from her eyes." These are fearful warnings; but they are published in love. God waits to be gracious. Flee, then, beloved youth, from the wrath to come. You act unwisely, nay, wickedly, to remain undecided in so plain a case. Why will ye die? Life and death are set before you. "They that seek me early," says incarnate WISDOM, "shall find me." But you *must seek him.* The Saviour knocks at the door; but will not *force* it open. "*To-day*, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Take notice; the emphasis, here, is on the word, *to-day*. So in Joshua, "Choose ye, *this day.*" Your friendly monitor cannot be put off with a "go thy way for this time." *This* may be your only time. Your condition is too perilous to admit of delay. Ponder it, we earnestly beseech you, as it is forcibly described by the pious poet:

"Lo! on a narrow neck of land,  
 'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand,  
 Yet, how insensible!  
 A point of time, a moment's space,  
 Removes me to yon heavenly place,  
 Or shuts me up in hell.

O God, my inmost soul convert,  
 And deeply on my thoughtless heart,  
 Eternal things impress;  
 Give me to feel their solemn weight,  
 And save me ere it be too late;  
 Wake me to righteousness."







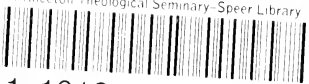






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