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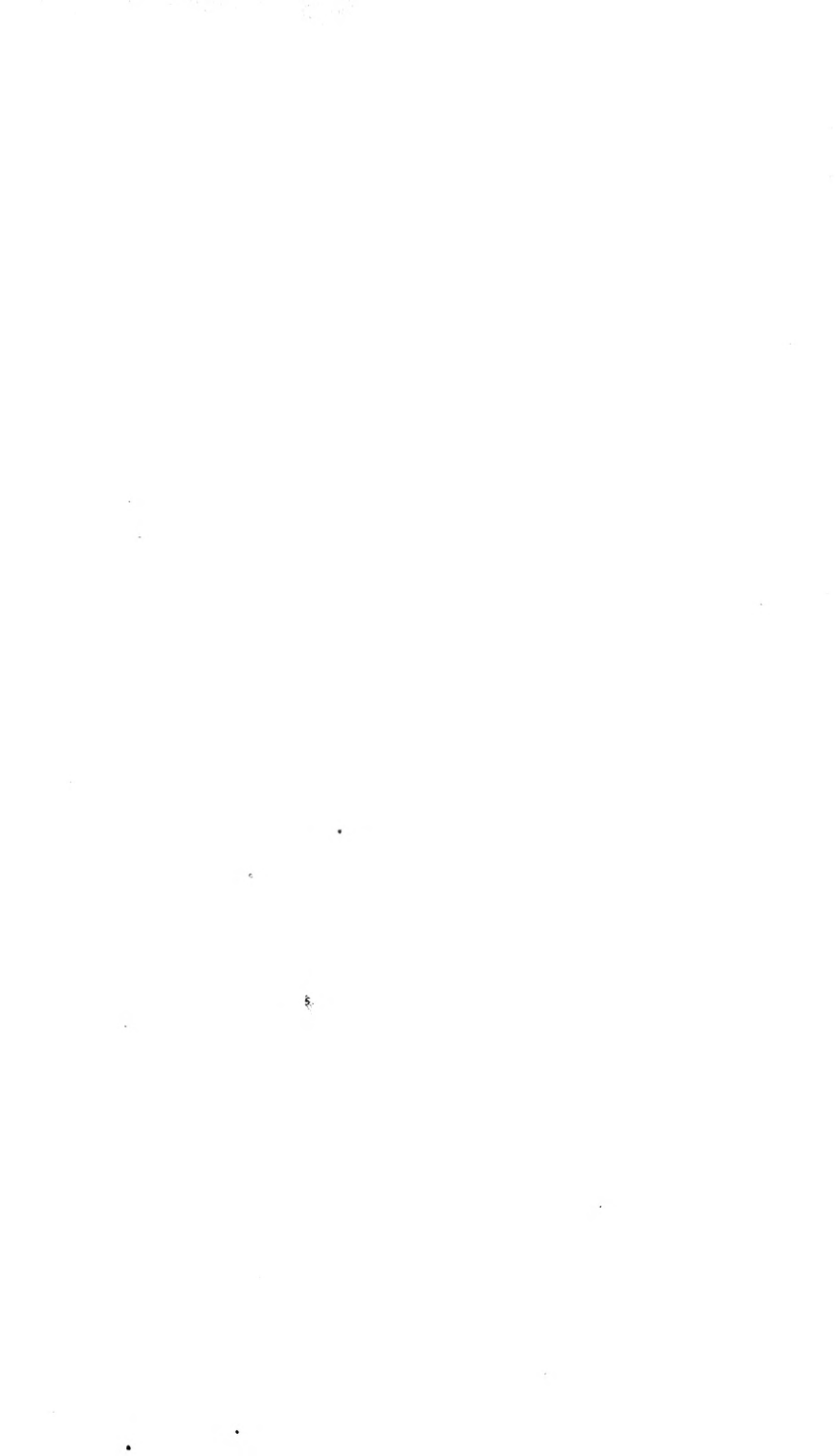
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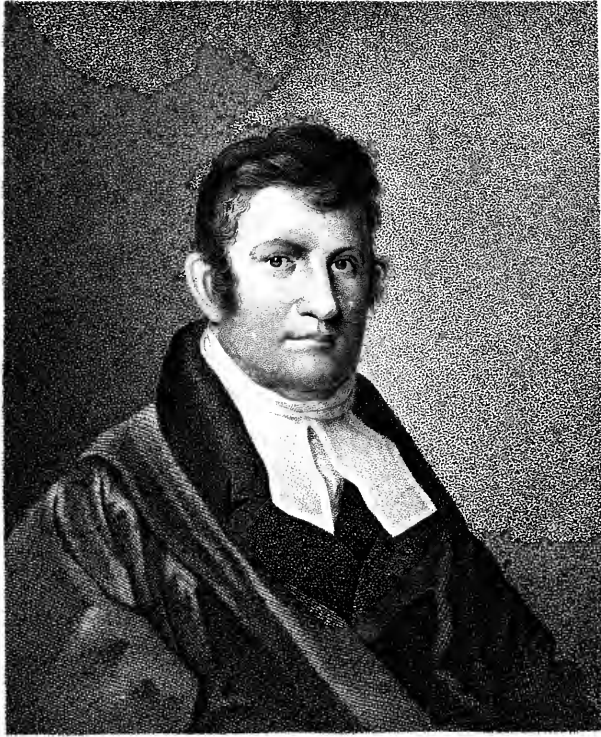












REV. HENRY KOLLOCK, D.D.

*The reverse of W. Willcock's signature*

Henry Kollock

# SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY

**THE LATE HENRY KOLLOCK, D. D.**

WITH

**A MEMOIR**

OF

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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VOLUME I.

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SAVANNAH :

PUBLISHED BY S. C. AND I. SCHENCK.

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1822.

*Southern District of New-York, ss.*

**B**E IT REMEMBERED, That on the thirteenth day of November, in the forty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States of America, S. C. & J. SCHENCK, of Savannah, Georgia, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words and figures following, to wit:

“ Sermons on various subjects, by the late Henry Kollock, D. D. With a Memoir of the Life of the Author. In four volumes. Volume 1 ”

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JAMES DILL,  
*Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.*

TO THE  
INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION

OF  
SAVANNAH,

THE FOLLOWING

**MEMOIR AND SERMONS**

OF  
THEIR LATE BELOVED PASTOR,

*ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,*

BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,

THE EDITOR.





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## PREFACE.



IMMEDIATELY after the decease of Dr. KOLLOCK, his bereaved congregation and friends were solicitous for the publication of the Sermons which he left. They were anxious to see those Discourses preserved to which they once listened with pleasure and profit, that the perusal might again afford them gratification and pleasure. Their wishes are now complied with, and all his writings, which were fit for the press, are presented to the public. At first, it was designed to publish only the posthumous Sermons of the author; but, after the work was put to press, there were so many urgent requests from his friends, that the Discourses which he himself published in 1811, and which for many years have been out of print, should be inserted, that the editor has yielded to their solicitations: with the exception of a few Biographical Lectures, which are inserted in their proper place with the scriptural characters, they will all be found at the end of the last volume.

The Sermons, which were left in manuscript, were all written by the author for the pulpit, without any thought or design of publication. They were not even revised by him

before his death. If they had had his finishing hand, they would have appeared more accurate and correct.

May that God, whose glory the author strove so zealously to promote, bless the perusal of these Sermons to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom!

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**MEMOIR OF THE LIFE**

OF THE

***REV. DR. HENRY KOLLOCK.***

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*MEMOIR, &c.*



IN reading the writings of men of genius and learning, our curiosity is often excited to know the history of their lives, and to mark the incidents which are worthy of imitation. We read with warmer interest the sermons of a distinguished minister of Christ, when accompanied with an account of his life, and a delineation of his character; when we see the particular instances of his usefulness; when we behold him in the interesting walks of retirement, and contemplate the social virtues that adorn his life. But it is not entertainment alone that we derive from the biography of those who have been eminent for learning and piety; we may gain much instruction by contemplating their numerous excellences and successful labours. What we are obliged to admire and respect, we are ever prone to imitate.

HENRY KOLLOCK was born at New-Providence, in New-Jersey, whither his parents had retired during the distresses of the revolutionary war. They had previously resided at Elizabeth-Town; but when the enemy was approaching, they feared those acts of wanton cruelty which had been perpetrated in other places, and thought it prudent to retire for safety to this little village. Here the subject of these memoirs was born on the 14th day of December, 1778. He was the eldest of ten

children, eight of whom survive him. On the return of his parents to Elizabeth-Town, he at an early age commenced the study of the learned languages under able and excellent instructors, with whom he enjoyed every opportunity of advancing in knowledge and virtue. The years of his infancy and childhood were distinguished by intimations of a superior mind ; by a natural curiosity and thirst for knowledge, which his friends hailed as the presages of his future eminence. So completely was his mind absorbed by the pursuit of knowledge, so close and unwearied was his application to his books, that, at a very early period, he impaired his health and endangered his life. Often were his parents obliged to urge him to desist from his labours, and at the hour of midnight to force him to bed.

But while his parents afforded him every advantage for the improvement of his mind, and fostered with anxious care the unfolding talents of their son, they were far from neglecting his religious education. They were unwearied in their efforts to imbue his tender mind with the principles of piety, to enlighten his conscience, and to convince him that there was no hope for the sinner except in the mediation of Jesus. The impressions made upon his mind by such religious instruction, at this early period, were never effaced.

After going through the usual course of study at the grammar school, he entered the college of New-Jersey in November, 1792, when he was but thirteen years of age. At this early period he was admitted a member of the junior class. He entered upon his collegiate studies with uncommon ardour, and pursued them with unremitting assiduity ; manifesting by his improvement, that his mind, though young, was sufficiently mature to comprehend the higher branches of mathematics and philosophy. Not satisfied with distinguished attainments in

the mere collegiate studies, he spent his leisure hours, not, as is too frequently the case, in vain amusements and dissipation, but in judicious and profitable reading. With such diligence in his studies, and with so exemplary a deportment, it does not excite our wonder that he should have gained the peculiar affection of his companions, and conciliated the high esteem of his instructors.

He was graduated with peculiar distinction in September, 1794 ; and received the degree of Bachelor of Arts before he had attained his sixteenth year.

After he had completed his collegiate course, he returned to his father's house to mingle with the society of his relatives, and to enjoy those scenes of domestic and social felicity which his affectionate heart was so capable of relishing. Amidst the quiet which he there enjoyed, he devoted his time to the improvement of his mind ; accurately reviewing the sciences which he had studied at college, and cultivating, without interruption, those branches of literature to which his taste most strongly inclined him.

It was about this time that he was deeply and solemnly impressed on the subject of religion, although he had before often experienced moments of serious reflection. Under the preaching of the pastor of the church of Elizabeth-Town, he was awakened to a concern for his eternal interest, and brought to see his native guilt, helplessness, and danger. These impressions, strengthened and confirmed, resulted in a saving knowledge of the plan of redemption, and a cordial acceptance of Christ, as the only Saviour. When he had thus felt the power of religion, and hoped that he had become the subject of divine grace, he resolved publicly to declare his attachment to the Redeemer ; and was admitted to the communion of the Pres-

byterian church in Elizabeth-Town, in 1795, when he was about seventeen years of age.

How interesting and lovely is such a spectacle! How exquisitely pleasing, to see a youth of that tender age devoting his affections to God, trampling under foot the vanities of the world, subjecting his passions to the government of religion, and complying with the affectionate commands of the Saviour!

After he had publicly professed his faith before the world, it was strongly impressed upon his mind, that God had designed him for the Christian ministry. He reviewed with attention the dealings of Divine Providence towards him, and his own heart seconded the wishes of his friends in prompting him to choose this sublime and dignified profession. His zeal for the honour of the Redeemer, and his glowing affection for immortal souls, inspired him with a desire to enter a sphere of usefulness, where all his time and talents could be consecrated to God. He commenced his theological studies under the direction of his pastor; and became a candidate for the gospel ministry in 1797, under the care of the New-York Presbytery.\*

About this time he was elected a tutor of Princeton college. Since he had left that institution, Dr. Witherspoon had finished his earthly course, and the Rev. Dr. Smith had been appointed his successor. During the continuance of Mr. Kollock at Princeton, his talents and assiduity, his thirst for knowledge, and his extensive information, had attracted the attention of

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\* At that time the New-York and the Jersey Presbytery formed but one indicatory, under the name of "The New-York Presbytery."

Dr. Smith, then Vice President of the college ; and he received from him a pressing invitation to return and assist in the instruction of the lower classes of the college. This office he accepted, and, while he continued to occupy it, performed its duties with acknowledged faithfulness and reputation.

The situation in which he was now placed was favourable to the highest improvement ; every advantage which he could desire for storing his mind with useful knowledge was afforded him. He prosecuted his theological studies under President Smith with unremitting ardour, not only attending to the lectures which he regularly delivered to his students of divinity, but also attentively reading those treatises of the old divines which contain so much solid theology, and display such extensive erudition. Here too he extended his acquaintance with the great writers of antiquity ; the poets, the orators, and the historians, of Greece and Rome ; and read with avidity and attention the British classics, for which, from a child, he had a peculiar relish. By being familiar with these excellent models of writing, he acquired that ease and elegance of style, and that correctness and delicacy of taste, which are perceptible in all his productions. He had before made some progress in the French language ; anxious to become still more accurately acquainted with it, he, at this time, renewed the pleasing study, and made himself so far master of it as to read it with readiness and ease. He admired many of the French authors, and was frequent in the perusal of their writings. Sometimes, when the clergyman who officiated on the Sabbath was absent or indisposed, it would devolve upon him to read a sermon to the students. On such occasions, he would frequently choose some favourite French divine, and read the sermons of Superville, Beausobre, or Saurin, translating as

he proceeded with as much facility as if he were reading his own language.

But while he was thus enriching his mind with useful knowledge, he was not neglectful of personal piety ; while he was making the most rapid progress in literature and science, he was advancing in the experience of divine things, daily becoming more holy and humble. He had chosen, as his profession, the sacred office of the ministry, and while he was conscious of the important work in which he was to engage, and of the necessity of peculiar grace to prepare him for its duties, he panted with ardour for the holy service, and longed to be early and extensively employed in the vineyard of Christ. To this darling object were directed all his time and talents, all the ardour of his soul.

Having passed through the usual trials with high approbation, he was licensed to preach the gospel, on the 7th of May, 1800, by the Presbytery of New-York. As soon as he appeared in public, his preaching excited universal notice, and was every where regarded with the highest admiration. The charms of his eloquence attracted multitudes to his preaching ; all acknowledged his superior and uncommon talents ; his fame spread far and wide ; and in a few months he gained the highest reputation as a pulpit orator. When we consider the character of his preaching, it should not excite our wonder that such an effect was produced, that he was so universally popular, and that such multitudes crowded to hear him. In his preparation for the pulpit he was careful and particular, and always entered the sacred desk with discourses that were the result of deep and profound study.

It has already been remarked, that he was fond of the French preachers, and was in the habit of frequently perusing their

sermons. He admired the beauty of their imagery and descriptions ; their forcible addresses to the imagination and passions ; their great earnestness and warmth ; their tender and pathetic expostulations. In these respects he esteemed the French writers as good models for young men ; he studied them for these qualities, and studied them with success ; he caught the glowing spirit which breathes in their discourses, wrote with the same brilliancy of fancy, was equally happy in the management of the bold figures of passion, and, doubtless, was as successful in producing the same effects. But while he thus admired and imitated these splendid beauties of a Massillon, a Flechier, and a Bossuet, he was not insensible to their defects. These faults he neither copied nor admired ; in sound sense and acute reasoning, he more resembled the English divines ; and united, with their argumentative eloquence, the imaginative and impassioned oratory of the French. His discourses were always purely evangelical, and founded on subjects which warm and interest the heart ; his soul panted with ardour for the salvation of sinners ; principles derived from Heaven seemed to influence all his actions. Should we then wonder that an energy and animation were imparted to his solemn appeals which could not be resisted ? Should we wonder that the youthful preacher every where excited astonishment and admiration ; that in the village, and in the city, all who heard him were not only instructed and edified, but charmed and delighted ?

After he was licensed, he continued a few months at Princeton, attending to the duties of his office, closely engaged in composing discourses, and preaching to the congregation on the afternoon of every Sabbath. In these labours he was successful in the cause of his Divine Master, and was the instrument of doing much for the promotion of religion.

His extraordinary powers, as a preacher, soon attracted the attention of important churches ; and many who were destitute of a pastor desired to enjoy his valuable ministry. In October, 1800, a unanimous request was presented to him from the Presbyterian congregation of Newark, to become the colleague of Dr. Mc.Whorter, that venerable servant of God, who was such an ornament to the church of Christ, and whose memory is still so highly revered. In the same month he received a pressing solicitation from the congregation of Elizabeth-Town, to become its pastor. This, together with the former invitation, was laid before the Presbytery at its regular autumnal meeting.

The invitation from Elizabeth-Town, it would be readily conceived, was most agreeable to his wishes and feelings. To exercise the pastoral office in a place where he had, from his infancy, been educated, among his endeared friends and relatives ; where he had spent the greatest part of his past life, and had formed the strongest and most tender attachments, could not but gratify one who was social in his disposition, who possessed so warm and affectionate a heart. But, in a matter of such vast importance, he was not wholly guided by his feelings ; he sought the divine direction ; he solicited the advice of his most judicious friends, and, after due deliberation, accepted the invitation.

On the 10th of December, 1800, the Presbytery met at Elizabeth-Town, ordained him to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed him pastor of that church. The exercises on this occasion were remarkably impressive ; all things conspired to affect the feelings of the ministers, and gratify the hearts of the people ; all things united in making it a solemn and interesting day. The ordination sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Mc.Whorter. The charge to the minister was de-



livered by the Rev. Dr. Rodgers, of New-York ; it was most impressive and affecting ; such as might have been expected from that great and good man. He was peculiarly attached to Mr. Kollock, and often acted as a father towards him, giving him his kind and paternal advice. In such a relation he seemed now to stand, as a parent addressing an affectionate child. With what affection and tenderness he addressed him by the endearing name of “ my dear son,” the members of that congregation still remember and often mention.

After he was fully invested with that sacred office, for which he had ardently panted for many years, he immediately entered with diligence and zeal upon its important duties. Although it is, in some respects, pleasant and gratifying to the feelings of a young man to reside as a minister in his native place, yet, on many accounts, it is painful and peculiarly trying. It requires more than ordinary prudence, circumspection, and talents, to be extensively useful in such a sphere. To address those who were the companions of our childhood, with whom we were educated, who were acquainted with all our youthful follies : to instruct those who themselves instructed us when we were advancing to manhood ; to edify those who were confirmed, established Christians, when we were infants in our mothers’ arms, who saw us at the baptismal font, and, as officers of the church, admitted us to the sealing ordinances of the Lord’s house : Duties, like these, are to the youthful minister peculiarly trying. Precisely in such a situation was the Rev. Mr. Kollock placed when he took charge of the congregation at Elizabeth-Town ; but that he performed his arduous labours ably and successfully, all who then sat under his ministry can testify. Feeling the responsibility of his situation, and the peculiar difficulties with which it was attended, he commenced his labours with “ fear and trembling,” but not without encouragement and hope, that God would grant

him grace to be faithful to his flock, and successful in promoting their spiritual interests. In this he was not disappointed.

As a preacher his reputation was daily increasing ; the more his people listened to him, the more were they impressed with his overpowering eloquence ; they saw sound sense, deep learning, and fervent piety, presented in the most attractive form, in language copious, elegant, and striking. To prepare sermons that excited such universal interest and delight, not only in his own congregation, but wherever they were heard, it is almost unnecessary to add, required from him close and diligent study. Though not neglectful of general literature, he now devoted his attention principally to theology, and subjects connected with the pastoral office,—the history of the church at different periods, controversial divinity, biblical criticism, and the study of the original languages of the Scriptures. The works on theology which he, at this time, extensively read, and deeply studied, were those of the Puritan divines, and many of the Church of England, the treatises of Charnock, Baxter, and Howe, and the invaluable sermons of Tillotson, Barrow, and Bishop Hall.\* These works, so incomparably excellent for their solid sense, extensive acquaintance with the Scriptures and a spirit of devotion, he studied closely by day and by night, and derived from them most ample stores of wisdom. The time when he resided as a minister at Elizabeth-Town, may be considered as the period of his excessive

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\* These authors are particularly mentioned, because they were the peculiar favourites of Dr. Kollock, not only at this time, but through life. There were no writings that he quoted more frequently in his sermons than those (to use his own expression) of “good Bishop Hall,” and “the excellent Richard Baxter.”

Devotion to study ; when with unwearied diligence he applied himself to the improvement of his mind. Devoting but a few hours to sleep, preserving the most rigid abstinence, and assiduously cultivating all his intellectual faculties, he, indeed, made the most rapid progress. By this means he laid a broad foundation for future reputation and usefulness, and collected those sacred and invaluable treasures, out of which he brought things “new and old,” and presented for the edification of his people.

His labours, while he was pastor of this church, performed with unceasing constancy and diligence, were eminently blessed. He was the instrument, not only of instructing, consoling, and confirming the disciples of the Saviour, but also of convincing many thoughtless souls, and introducing them into the church of Christ. A special attention to serious things was visible in the congregation during the winter of 1802, though it was far less extensive than what has since occurred in that highly favoured church.

It need scarcely be remarked, that at such a time as this the pastor was unusually engaged. He panted eagerly for the salvation of souls ; the news of every convinced sinner increased his zeal, and made him more solicitous for the conversion of others. In the pulpit and in his closet, in his pastoral visits and in the associations for prayer, he seemed to lose sight of every consideration but the glory of God and the spiritual benefit of his people. Numbers, at this time, were added to the church, of whom many are still living, ornaments of their Christian profession ; while the spirits of some have ascended to the realms of bliss, and are uniting with their spiritual father in the perfect enjoyment of their God and Saviour.

But the time was approaching when this tender relation, between a beloved pastor and an affectionate people, was to be dissolved. In December, 1803, Mr. Kollock received a warm solicitation from the Dutch Presbyterian church of Albany, to undertake the pastoral charge of that congregation. He maturely considered this invitation, and, after serious deliberation, declined its acceptance, believing that he should be more useful in the situation which he then occupied. In the same month he was appointed Professor of Divinity in the college of New-Jersey. His people heard of this appointment with deep regret; they were warmly attached to their pastor, and they could not bear the idea of parting with him: they knew, too, the importance of the station to which he was called, and they feared that he would be advised to leave them. The issue proved that their fears were not unfounded. At the next meeting of the Presbytery, he, in accordance with the views of its members, declared his acceptance of the appointment, and the pastoral relation between him and the congregation was accordingly dissolved.

Those only who have experienced it, know how sad and painful it is for a pastor to leave an affectionate flock, to which he is fondly attached, and by which he is equally beloved. To leave a people, among whom he has for years laboured with pleasure and encouragement, and to whom he is bound by a thousand tender ties, and endeared by a thousand tender recollections; to stand for the last time as their stated pastor, and give the parting farewell to those who have often listened to his instructions with delight; to bid adieu to those solemn meetings in which they have mingled their prayers and tears before the Lord, in which they have rejoiced and sat down together at the table of the Saviour—is a trial to which nothing can reconcile us but a strong and imperious sense of duty. It was this conviction of duty which led Mr. Kollock to sacrifice his

personal feelings, excited by many tender scenes and dear remembrances, for the glory of God and the general interest of the church. Leaving the congregation of Elizabeth-Town, he removed to Princeton in January, 1803.

When we consider the nature of the appointment which he at this time received, and the age when it was conferred upon him, we can have some idea of the estimation in which he was held as a scholar and divine. He was, by one of the most important and respectable colleges in our country, called to fill the theological chair, when he was but twenty-five years of age; chosen at that early period to succeed a Dickinson, a Burr, an Edwards, a Witherspoon. At the time when he was elected to this office, he was solicited by the congregation of Princeton to become their minister, and when connected with the college, undertook the pastoral charge of that church.

His situation was now more important than any in which he had been placed, his sphere of usefulness more extensive, and his labours more constant and arduous. Duties, which are ordinarily considered as sufficient to engross the time, the attention, and the talents of many, devolved on him alone. The morning of every Sabbath witnessed his stated labours in the pulpit; in the afternoon he regularly gave the children religious instruction, and publicly expounded a portion of the shorter catechism; and, as pastor of the congregation, performed all its parochial duties.

As professor of theology, he instructed his pupils in all the branches connected with this science. He lectured twice a week on didactic and polemic divinity, and once a week on ecclesiastical history, church government, and Jewish antiqui-

ties. Besides these lectures, he occasionally instructed his students in the Hebrew language.

Under such a weight of duties, an ordinary man, in the youthful period of life, would have sunk in despondency. Not so with Dr. Kollock. He knew that his labours were multiplied and arduous ; yet, by close attention to study, economical management of time, and invincible perseverance, he was enabled to discharge them with extensive reputation and usefulness. The inhabitants of Princeton, and those who were then members of the college, still remember with what alacrity they repaired to the place of worship, and how often they returned with their hearts deeply affected by his impressive discourses. They can testify how successful were his efforts in expelling infidelity from the institution, and how often he was the instrument of bringing many to a knowledge of the Saviour.

As a professor of theology, he was highly esteemed and extensively useful. Fond of instructing, possessing talents which peculiarly fitted him for it, and engaging in it with his whole heart and soul, he could not but be successful in this interesting employment. By his public lectures, and his private counsel, he strove to qualify his students for the holy office for which they were destined. His labours were not ineffectual ; his hopes not disappointed. Many of those who were then his pupils have become distinguished divines in the Presbyterian church. They still remember his instructions with exalted pleasure, and cherish for his memory the highest veneration.

It was about this time that the strongest intimacy was formed between the subject of these memoirs and that venerable man, the late Rev. Dr. Smith. A friendship had existed pre-

vious to this period when Mr. Kollock was tutor in the college, which had been cherished by long and repeated intercourse. But when he was associated with him, as a permanent officer, these tender ties were strengthened, and an intimate friendship was formed, which continued until death. Afterwards, when they were far separated, these two friends continued to correspond, and never lost that tender affection which they mutually professed. It was the wish of Dr. Smith, expressed a few years before his death, that this faithful friend should, after his decease, write his life. Dr. Kollock engaged to do so, and designed to publish a full account of his life, writings, and character; but death, which has destroyed so many other schemes, frustrated his expectations, and prevented the accomplishment of his purpose. It is to be lamented that he had not lived to render this testimony of gratitude and affection to his beloved instructor and friend.

On the first of June, 1804, he formed a matrimonial connexion with Mrs. Mahetabel, widow of Alexander Campbell, Esq. of Richmond, Virginia, and daughter of Mr. William Hylton, of the island of Jamaica. By this lady, who still survives him, he had no children.

At the commencement of 1806 he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity, from Harvard University, and a few months afterwards the same honour from Union College. His character, as a theologian and a man of science, must have been conspicuous to have received, at the early age of twenty-eight, this tribute of respect from institutions of such established literary reputation.

In the summer of 1806 he received a pressing request from the Independent Presbyterian congregation of Savannah, to accept the pastoral office over them. This church had long been

deprived of a regular ministry : in a place where some of the most faithful and eminent divines had toiled and laboured, there was scarcely a minister of any denomination to “ preach the gospel of peace.” Here the famous Dr. John Zubly preached as the first Presbyterian minister : a man of an energetic and enlightened mind, an accomplished oriental scholar, but yet a plain, faithful preacher of the doctrines of the cross. The memories of Mr. Robert Smith, and Mr. Robert Kerr, are still cherished with grateful affection by the surviving members of that congregation. They were both men of learning and piety ; and, in a pastoral relation, beloved and useful.

Although Dr. Kollock was warmly attached to the college and congregation of Princeton, yet he esteemed it his duty to accept the invitation from this church. The feelings which attended his departure from his people, were mutually affecting and painful ; but the strong conviction, that he was in the path of duty, tended, in some degree, to alleviate the pain of separation.

In the autumn of 1806 he removed with his family to Savannah, and took charge of that important congregation. In consequence of the long vacancy of the church, and a want of regular preaching in the city, as would be expected, the state of morals and religion was low. There was much gayety and dissipation among the inhabitants, little attention to religion, and less order and discipline in the church.

In these circumstances just such a man as Dr. Kollock was needed ; a man of unusual weight of character, of ardent piety and zeal, of great practical wisdom, and of commanding oratorical talents. He immediately commenced his ministerial labours, and manifested the same activity and diligence, the same tender anxiety for his flock which he had displayed in



other churches, over which he had presided. Catechetical instruction was introduced ; private associations for prayer were established ; order and discipline, in the church restored ; and many other means employed for the prosperity of religion. It was soon seen that these plans and labours were not ineffectual ; they were accompanied by the divine blessing, and an unusual seriousness immediately ensued. The congregation daily increased ; many who were never before seen in the house of God, became regular attendants upon public worship : the assemblies were large and solemn, and numbers were awakened to serious thoughtfulness.

At the first administration of the Lord's Supper, after his arrival, twenty were added to the church ; and at the second, eighteen publicly professed the religion of the Saviour. It was, indeed, cheering to the heart of the pastor to see his labours thus early owned and blessed by the God of Heaven.

While he thus indefatigably and successfully laboured for the promotion of religion, he did much for the advancement of literature and science. It was owing, in a great measure, to his exertions that the Chatham Academy, which for many years had been suffered to languish, revived, and, under his fostering care, became one of the most respectable in our country. To him is Savannah indebted for her valuable and extensive public Library. He proposed the plan, and by his influence succeeded in carrying it into operation. He was chosen to make the first selection of books ; and, to the period of his death, tenderly cherished and fostered it. He every where inspired a taste for reading ; and in proportion as religion flourished, science was advanced, and literature cultivated.

The first two or three summers after his removal to Savannah were spent by Dr. Kollock in the northern states : sometimes with his parents, in New-Jersey ; at other times extensively travelling through the country. Such was the influence of the climate in the summer and autumn, that his congregation and friends would not consent that he should risk his life there during the sickly season.

In one of these excursions he travelled through New-England, and was every where received with attention and respect; and wherever he preached, regarded with the highest admiration. He had before twice visited Boston, and in the summer of 1808, made a third visit. In no place which he had visited could he have excited more attention. The churches in which he preached were crowded with the multitudes who were attracted by his eloquence ; and more than one experienced the salutary influence of his preaching upon their hearts and lives. So great was the attachment of the people, and so strong the conviction that he would there be extensively useful, that a congregation was organized, Park-Street Church erected for him, and, in 1808, he was unanimously invited to be their pastor.

When he received this invitation, he was embarrassed to know how to decide, and for some time he remained in a state of uncertainty and suspense. As a man of letters, thirsting for science, his inclination would naturally have led him to remove to a place where he could enjoy the best literary society, and experience the highest advantages for intellectual improvement. He knew, too, the attachment of the congregation of Boston to his person and preaching, and could not but hope that he might there be extensively useful in preaching the pure doctrines of Christianity. But, on the other hand, such was the ardent affection of his flock ; such the success of

his labours, and such the prospect of still greater usefulness, in Savannah, that he felt reluctant to leave them. It was affecting, while his mind was in this state of suspense, to see the trembling anxiety of his people ; to hear their urgent and affectionate entreaties ; to read the warm-hearted letters which he received, sometimes from the youth of his charge, sometimes from the aged females of his flock, entreating him not to leave them. Such a tender scene as this his affectionate heart was incapable of resisting : he viewed in it the hand of Divine Providence, pointing out to him the path which it was his duty to pursue. He accordingly resolved to remain with his people, and wrote to the congregation of Boston the result of his determination.

In 1810 the presidency of the University of Georgia becoming vacant, by the resignation of Dr. Meigs, Dr. Kollock was appointed by the trustees to fill this important station. His reputation as a man of letters was universally acknowledged ; and they were convinced that his talents would elevate the character of the institution, and cause it to assume a new appearance. This appointment, however, to the great regret and disappointment of the trustees, he thought it his duty to decline.

In the winter of 1811, when the city was visited by earthquakes, there was an unusual seriousness in Savannah, the effect, not so much of terror, excited by the judgment of God, as of the power of the divine word, accompanied by the influences of the Spirit. On almost every evening there was religious worship ; the pastor was incessantly engaged, willing to “ spend and be spent” for the salvation of sinners : many were brought to the foot of the cross, and large additions were made to the church. The inhabitants of that city still remember this period as a time when the labours of their

pastor were peculiarly blessed, and often speak of it as the most solemn and interesting season which they have ever enjoyed.

In the same year, Dr. Kollock, by the solicitations of his friends, published a volume of Sermons. These Sermons were received with high approbation, every where sought for, and read with deep interest. They are illustrations of some of the plain and practical truths of Christianity ; constructed with a clear and judicious method ; written with elegance and strength ; animated with the glow of imagination and passion ; and calculated, by the beauty of their composition, to gratify the taste of the critic ; and by their piety, to warm the heart of the Christian. Perhaps no sermons, preached in our country, were ever more generally read, and admired as specimens of the highest eloquence.

In the year 1817, his health being impaired by his long continuance in Savannah, and the laborious duties which he was called to perform, he yielded to the solicitations of his people, and determined to make a voyage to Europe. For six successive summers he had remained with his congregation, and, regardless of personal labour and exposure, was engaged in the performance of the most arduous duties. Those who are unacquainted with the situation of the southern cities in the summer and autumnal months, when sickness and death make the most awful ravages, can have no conception of his immense labours. During these fatal seasons he was very frequently the only clergyman in the city : “ the care of all the churches ” was upon him ; and he was employed as the pastor, not merely of a congregation, but of a whole city. Except when engaged in the public services of the sanctuary, he was almost constantly in the chambers of the bereaved, at the beds of the

sick and dying, or at the mouth of the grave. Had he not possessed a vigorous constitution, soon would he have fallen a victim to the diseases of the climate. But though he had not, during this period of excessive labour, in a single instance, taken the fever to which he was so much exposed, yet he experienced a general debility of body, and was much affected with a violent palpitation of the heart, and spasmodic affection of the lungs. The physicians advised an intermission of his labours and a long sea voyage.

Another reason induced him to desire a visit, at this time, to Europe. He had, for many years, been engaged in writing the *Life of Calvin*; and, after collecting all the materials which he could meet with in this country, he found the progress of the work impeded by the want of further documents. These he was in hopes to procure in England or Germany.

Leaving his brother to supply his pulpit, he sailed for England in March, 1817, and, after a pleasant passage of thirty-two days, arrived at Liverpool. He visited the chief cities of England, Scotland, Ireland, and France; and was received with that attention and respect which are due to a man of science, and a distinguished minister of Christ. Wherever he travelled, his reputation as a preacher, the extent and variety of his information, and his amiable virtues, procured for him the friendship of many eminent divines, and other literary men, some of whom honoured him with their correspondence on his return to America.

In the principal cities of Great Britain there were few strangers who excited greater attention, or whose preaching was listened to with more interest. In London and Liverpool he

preached to overflowing congregations, and thousands paid a just tribute to the fascinations of his eloquence. He was in the former city at that interesting period, in May, when the anniversary meetings of the religious societies are held, and, in many of them, was invited to take a distinguished part. He had looked forward with expectation to these meetings as the source of the highest gratification and pleasure; but his expectations were more than realized. Writing to a friend in America, after he had attended some of these meetings, he says, "I am more and more convinced of the piety and benevolence of British Christians." And after his return, he often remarked, that the fortnight spent at this time in London was the most pleasant, and perhaps the most profitable, period of his life.

After an absence of about eight months, he returned to his native land, with his health much invigorated, and his mind highly improved by his travels. He arrived at Savannah on the 3d of November, 1817. It was the evening of the monthly association for prayer: his people, overjoyed at the prospect of again hearing his voice, crowded to the church, where he preached a most interesting discourse from that appropriate text, 1 Samuel vii. 17. "And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord."

It is much to be regretted that Dr. Kollock had not an opportunity, in his travels, of procuring the materials which he needed to complete the *Life of Calvin*. He had not time, however, to visit Germany, and in England he was unable to procure them. He left the work in an unfinished state, unfit for publication. This is a circumstance much to be regretted, as it deprives the public of a work which would have done honour to our country; and which, we may venture to say,

would have been an invaluable present to the Christian and literary world. He had bestowed much pains upon it, and, from various sources, had collected a mass of valuable information; and if it had been completed, according to the author's plan, it would have been decidedly superior to any work which he had published, or any manuscripts which he left.

The congregation having increased so much by the successful labours of its minister, it was found necessary to erect a new place of worship. Measures were accordingly taken, and a large building, vying in splendour with any in our country, was soon erected. It was solemnly dedicated to the worship of God on the 9th of May, 1819, when the pastor delivered an appropriate and interesting discourse from Haggai ii 7. which will be found in one of these volumes. But scarcely was this earthly temple finished and dedicated to the service of the Most High, when the pastor was translated to the joys of a better sanctuary, to "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens."

During the summer and autumn of 1819, Savannah was visited with unusual sickness and mortality. In proportion to the extent of the disease and the number of deaths, were the severity and constancy of Dr. Kollock's labours. Such were his unremitting duties, during this calamitous period, that he gradually relapsed into that state of organic debility, from which his voyage to Europe had restored him. The palpitation of his heart and the affection of his lungs had increased to an alarming degree, and led his friends to be anxiously concerned for his situation. Daily he grew more enfeebled; his sleep and appetite failed him; the pulsation of his heart increased, and his whole nervous system was disordered.

The pious part of his congregation remarked, that he was never known to be more engaged in the cause of religion than he was at this period. He seemed to be sensible that the time of his departure was not far distant, and he was determined to “*work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.*” Often he used to say to his friends, “I feel that I am almost worn out;” and the spirituality of his conversation, the fervour of his preaching, and his indifference to the world, showed, that these expressions were sincere. He preached, he prayed, he conversed, he lived, as if he knew, that he was *soon* to be arrested by the arm of death, and conducted to the silent grave.

On the 13th of December he had made an appointment to preach a charity sermon, for the benefit of the Union Society. During the whole of the preceding week he had been greatly indisposed; his flesh, and strength, and spirits, seemed to be all failing him. His friends endeavoured to dissuade him from preaching, alleging, that his strength was not sufficient for the services; but he could not be prevailed upon to desist: ever active in the cause of benevolence, he replied, “I must say something for the little orphans.” He went into the pulpit, and never was there a more affecting spectacle presented to his people; he was so feeble, so pale, and thin, that the sight of him chilled every one to the heart.

On this occasion he delivered a tender and touching discourse on the interesting parable of the good Samaritan. It was the last sermon that he ever preached; the last time that he ever entered the sacred desk. His bereaved people will ever regard this sermon with peculiar interest, and often peruse it with melancholy pleasure, as a memorial of the last solemn service which he publicly performed.



In the afternoon a stranger preached for him ; and, notwithstanding his great debility and fatigue, he went to church, and heard a solemn discourse, on the subject of death. While in church, he was attacked by a slight paralytic affection of the arm, which soon passed off ; but, on his return home, he sustained a more violent shock, under which he fell at his own door. Physicians were immediately sent for ; and, after the usual remedies were applied, it was found that circulation was soon restored, and that the stroke was only transient. The gloomy apprehensions of his friends began to subside ; they could not but hope, that he would soon be restored to health, and be able again to perform his ministerial duties. But, alas ! their hopes were vain. The All-wise, whose “ thoughts are not as our thoughts,” had ordered it otherwise, and His will must be done.

On the morning of the next Sabbath, after rising from his bed, and partially dressing, he was in the act of raising his hand to his head, when he was suddenly seized with a violent paralytic affection, which instantly deprived him of his mental and corporeal powers. Medical aid was immediately obtained, but all efforts to restore his reason and feeling seemed ineffectual.

It is impossible to describe the feelings of his beloved people, when they heard of the dangerous illness of their pastor : every countenance was overspread with gloom : one common feeling of sorrowful regret, and the deepest anxiety, was excited in every bosom. His house was constantly crowded by persons of both sexes, and of all ages, begging for permission to sit with their dying pastor, and minister to his wants. Such was the solicitude of the pious part of his congregation, that a prayer-meeting was immediately established in the church, to offer special supplication for their spiritual shep-

herd. There the children of God daily assembled, and earnestly prayed, that the Most Merciful would not take from them their beloved minister ; or, if he should be removed, that he would permit him, before his departure, to give a public testimony of his triumphant faith. Though God saw fit to deny one request, yet the other petition he was pleased graciously to answer.

The last moments of Dr. Kollock were of too decisive and interesting a nature ; his feelings, at the hour of death, too desirable, to be slightly passed over.

The death-bed of the Christian, presents a scene always affecting, and, at times, highly instructive. “ It is good for” us to approach the bed-side of the departing saint, and contemplate his conduct in the trying hour of dissolution. It is interesting and profitable to see him, with “ hopes full of immortality,” leaving the world with joy, hailing death as his friend, and longing to rest in the embraces of his Saviour. There we are sensibly taught the excellency of Christianity above all other religions, and see its efficacy in imparting consolation when every other refuge fails.

The chamber where the good man meets his fate,  
 Is privileged beyond the common walk  
 Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of Heaven.  
 You see the *man* ; you see his hold on Heaven.  
 Heaven waits not the last moment ; owns her friends  
 On this side death, and points them out to men.

On the morning of Wednesday, Dr. Kollock’s speech and reason were restored to him ; and in his conversation with his friends, he manifested a resignation and strength of faith, a tranquillity and peace, a calm and holy repose upon the Saviour,

which could not but edify and delight them. He was sensible of his approaching dissolution, but death seemed to him to have no terrors ; he rather contemplated it as the joyful messenger commissioned to bear him to his God. His patience and resignation were remarkable. Though he experienced the most exquisite bodily sufferings, yet no murmuring word ever escaped his lips.

“ Are your sufferings great ?” said a friend to him, at a time when his whole body was covered with blisters. “ Oh ! if you can imagine a human being placed on a bed of living coals, you can have some idea of my tortures ;” but, instead of uttering a complaint, he immediately added, “ Pray, pray for me, that I may have gratitude and patience.”

He requested to see the Rev. Mr. Capers and the Rev. Mr. Cranston. Before they arrived, one of the members of his church approached his bed and said to him, “ My dear pastor, do you remember the dying words of Stephen ?” With a countenance brightening with joy, and in an animated tone of voice, he replied, “ O yes ! ‘ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ ”

After this he revived considerably, and, seeing many of his pious friends in the room, called them to him, bade each of them farewell, and talked composedly of death and heaven.

When Mr. Capers arrived and approached his bed-side, he instantly recognised him, and clasping his hand, exclaimed, “ As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” “ Does your way into the holiest appear plain ?” “ I think so,” replied the dying pastor : “ I think that through Christ I am ready to depart.” Mr. Capers then prayed with him ; and, during the prayer, he manifested great devotion, and seemed much affected. Soon afterwards Mr. Cranston conversed and prayed with him ; and during the

conversation, it was pleasing to see with what rapture he dwelt on the love, and power, and grace of Christ, and how feelingly he spoke of that world of happiness into which he was entering.

About five o'clock he requested one of the family to get the "Pilgrim's Progress," and read the pilgrim's passage through the swellings of Jordan. This was one of his favourite books on practical religion ; he frequently read it when in health, and often derived from the perusal spiritual strength and consolation ; and now in his last hours, it affords to his soul the sweetest satisfaction. After making some observations on the passage which had been read, in which it appeared evident that his hope became stronger, and his faith more steadfast, as he approached the "heavenly city ;" he requested his friends to sing that beautiful hymn of Watts's—(31st, 2d book) :

" Why should we start and fear to die ?  
What tim'rous worms we mortals are," &c.

The agitation was so great, when he made the request, that the hymn could not easily be found. Observing it, he calmly said, " Never mind ; the 66th hymn of the 2d book will do ;" and, commencing, repeated the whole of it aloud :

" There is a land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign," &c.

His friends, who witnessed it, will never forget with what feeling and animation he repeated this beautiful hymn. His face was lighted up with holy joy, while contemplating the glory that awaited him ; every word of the poet expressed the delightful emotions of his own heart. The tremulous tones of his voice ; his countenance irradiated with the smiles of be-

nignity ; his eye kindling into rapture at the prospect of Heaven ; all seemed to say, " Lord, *now* lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

After the hymn was sung, he again introduced the subject of his death ; spoke with great composure of his funeral, and selected the hymns which he wished to be sung on that occasion. He then called the members of his family together, and to each of them spoke of the Redeemer with the interest and feeling of a dying Christian, and earnestly exhorted them to live near to God.

For nearly an hour before his death he said but little. With his eyes raised to Heaven, and his hands clasped in a supplicating posture, he was evidently engaged in fervent and humble prayer. With his " loins girt," and his " lamp shining" brightly, he was anxiously waiting the coming of his Redeemer. He waited not long. Without a groan or struggle, he peacefully fell asleep in Jesus, at a quarter past ten o'clock, on the night of the 29th of December, 1819, aged forty-one years.

It is impossible to describe the effect which this afflictive providence produced ; to show what a deep wound was inflicted upon the feelings ; to tell how many hearts bled, how many eyes wept. A universal gloom overspread the city ; deep and melancholy regret pervaded every heart. And is it strange that such sensations were excited ? The church had lost one of the most eloquent and useful preachers ; an affectionate people, an endeared pastor ; science, one of her brightest ornaments ; thousands, a tender and endeared friend ; society, one of the loveliest of men.

On the day succeeding his death, his people came in crowds to take a last look of the remains of their loved and venerated pastor ; to enjoy the mournful pleasure of beholding that countenance in death, on which they once used to gaze with delight.

As soon as his death was known, the public papers of the city appeared in mourning : the Mayor issued his proclamation, requiring all the stores to be closed, and a universal suspension of business : all the vessels in the harbour appeared with their colours half-mast.

On Friday the funeral took place, and never was there such a day witnessed in Savannah, a day of such dreadful gloom and universal sorrow. In the procession was seen every society in the city, civil, religious, and literary. The Mayor and Aldermen, Judges, and other public officers ; the Bible, Missionary, Library, Tract, and Sunday School Societies ; the trustees, teachers, and pupils of Chatham Academy ; the members of all the Christian churches, and the Jews, as a distinct society ; all assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of departed worth.

When the body arrived at the church, the solemn service was introduced by a prayer offered by the Rev. Mr. Sweat, pastor of the Baptist church ; after which, the 250th hymn of Dobell's collection, "*on the death of a minister,*" was sung. The Rev. Mr. Capers, of the Methodist church, then delivered a solemn and impressive address ; and the Rev. Mr. Goulding, pastor of the Presbyterian church of White Bluff, concluded the exercises by an appropriate prayer. The procession passed from the church to the burying-yard, where the service was performed by the Rev. Mr. Cranston, of the Episcopal church. The whole scene was solemn and affecting, and will

never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. On the succeeding Sabbath, funeral sermons were preached in all the churches of the city, to embalm his memory.

How much greater honour does such a scene yield to his memory, than all the empty pageantry of the world! How much more enviable a tribute of regard, are the sighs and tears of an affectionate people, than all the pomp of worldly glory!

In contemplating Dr. Kollock in the public or private walks of life, he has equal claims to our respect and veneration.

As a preacher, few in our country ever excelled him. Possessing all the requisites to form a pulpit orator, he carried the art of preaching to the highest perfection, and displayed all the characteristics of genuine eloquence. Deeply impressed with a sense of the important truths which he delivered, he added to fervent piety, the most brilliant and inventive imagination, the most correct and delicate taste, the clearest conception, and the most solid judgment. With these eminent endowments, he united all the advantages of delivery. In his public speaking, he was always animated; he threw the full force of his soul into all his discourses, and, at times, was painfully vehement. His voice was strong and full; his enunciation, remarkably deliberate and distinct; his gestures, though few, always impressive; his whole appearance dignified and commanding. His eloquence was not of that nature which merely gratifies the ear by the harmony of periods, or the elegance of language; it was that which goes directly to the conscience, agitating, alarming, melting the heart. He had the faculty, not only of presenting truth in such a light as gained the assent of the understanding, but also of painting it in such colours as moved all the

springs of the soul ; sometimes, by his tenderness and pathos melting the feeling of his hearers ; at other times, by his vehement passion, overpowering their minds. Many instances might be given of the effect which his preaching thus produced.\*

The succeeding sermons certainly possess the qualities of real eloquence ; but from merely *reading* them, we can have only a faint idea of his oratory. We may there see his method of treating a subject, the nature of his style, the purity of his doctrine, the tendency of his discourses ; but the tones of the voice, the expression of the countenance, the eloquence of the eye, and the force of gesture, are all lost.

During the latter part of his life, the discourses which he preached, were often unwritten ; and in these extemporaneous efforts, he certainly excelled. Many of these sermons were the most popular and useful that he ever preached.

The doctrines which he publicly taught, and the sentiments which he embraced, on religion, are every where unfolded in the following sermons. From them it appears, that his discourses are purely evangelical ; that it was his constant aim to humble the sinner and exalt the Saviour ; that he loved to dwell upon the glory of the Redeemer's person, the freeness of his salvation, the perfection of his righteousness.

As a scholar, Dr. Kollock was highly distinguished. Endowed by nature with a strong and vigorous mind, and possessing

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\* On one occasion, when preaching in Savannah for a benevolent institution, such was the force of his eloquence, and his pathetic appeals to the feelings, that a collection of nearly 1500 dollars was made in the church ; a collection, we believe, unexampled in our country.



invincible perseverance in study, he made the greatest proficiency in knowledge. He was always a laborious student; from his infancy he had an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and through life this literary diligence continued and increased. He read much and with rapidity; but yet he read with advantage; and with a memory extremely retentive and accurate, seemed never to lose the impressions that were made. This was a characteristic in him in which he excelled most men, and which those who were acquainted with him, must often have perceived. So extensive was his information, that there were few distinguished books, on the general subjects of literature, which he had not read with attention; few topics could be introduced, in history or philosophy, on arts or science, with which he was not acquainted. His attainments, in Greek and Roman literature, Hebrew and French, have already been mentioned; they were much more extensive and accurate than are usually made by divines in our country. Besides his acquirements in these languages, he was an excellent German scholar. For seven or eight years before his death, he had devoted much time to this language, and was able to read it with readiness and facility. He was fond of German literature, and took delight in perusing works of taste, and studying treatises on theology, in this language.

In divinity, and the branches of science immediately connected with it, he had made considerable attainments. Few men had more carefully studied the different systems of theology, and were better qualified to decide upon their respective merits; few were better acquainted with sacred literature, and had paid more attention to biblical criticism; few had a more correct and extensive knowledge of ecclesiastical history.

As a Christian, the general tenor of his life, the abundance of his labours, his usefulness in the church, his triumphant death, all attest that his piety was active and fervent. He lived under the abiding influence of religion, and made it his "meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father."

As a pastor, he was diligent, prudent, and successful. No difficulties or dangers ever prevented him from faithfully discharging his duties to his people. His own comfort was sacrificed, and a regard to his own health often forgotten in his solicitude for the spiritual interest of his flock. In his visits to the sick and dying, he was constant and tender. His sympathetic conversation, affectionate prayers, and endearing manner of recommending a Saviour, often operated as a cordial to their hearts.

In his intercourse with his people, he was cheerful, conciliating, and instructive. No scandal was ever uttered by him, or in the least degree encouraged. Those who knew him, remember how careful he was to practice the precept of the Apostle, "Speak evil of no man;" how tender he was of the reputation of others, and with what delicacy he always treated the characters of the absent. Whenever he visited among his people, he left the impression of his wisdom and prudence, his piety and amiableness. No wonder, then, that he enjoyed, in so high a degree, the esteem of his people wherever he laboured. No wonder that the congregation in Savannah, over whom he presided for many years, were warmly attached to him, "esteemed him very highly in love for his work's sake," and bedewed his memory with tears. Never was there a closer pastoral relation than that which subsisted between this congregation and its minister. Strong indeed was the tie which united them; they admired, revered, loved their pastor;

and he, on his part, regarded them with the tender affection of a parent. “It is delightful,” he used often to say, “not only to labour for such a Master as Jesus, but also for such a kind and affectionate people.” They most liberally “ministered to him in temporal things,”\* and he as abundantly “ministered to them in spiritual things.”

Exposed to all the dangers of an unhealthy climate, he laboured with unceasing constancy and patience, disregarding the scorching blaze of the noon-day sun, and the chilling and unwholesome dews of midnight. Such were his constant and fatiguing exertions, that nature sunk under them; he fell a martyr to the severity of his labours.† But it was in the noblest cause that he suffered and died, in the cause of his God and Redeemer.

In private life, he was no less distinguished than in his public character. As a husband, he was kind and tender; as a son, dutiful and respectful; as a friend, constant and sincere; as a brother, always affectionate. For real benevolence and Christian charity, he was always eminently conspicuous. The many hundreds of dollars which he annually bestowed upon religious and benevolent institutions, and other objects of charity, attest, that his generosity was great and extensive.

\* It is due to the benevolence of this congregation to observe, that the salary which they at first gave their minister was 3000 dollars; afterwards, a handsome parsonage was added; and on the 11th of December, 1818, the salary was increased to 4000 dollars, and thus continued till their pastor's death.

† His heart, after his death, was examined; it was found much enlarged and relaxed, and the valves ossified, owing to his severe and laborious exertions.

He embraced in the arms of Christian charity, those who differed from him in religious sentiment, and sincerely loved the followers of Jesus, by whatever name they were called.

Such was the character of the REV. DR. HENRY KOLLOCK. His career was short, but honourable : he was cut off in the meridian of life, but he had attained a good old age in usefulness.

“ Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them ! ”

# SERMONS.

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## SERMON I.\*



### LIFE OF ADAM.

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#### GENESIS v. 5.

*“And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.”*

IN the Holy Scriptures, God has used a variety of methods to teach us our duty, and to touch our hearts. Sometimes we read those plain and unequivocal precepts which declare his will, and at other times we are instructed by an interesting parable. Now we are allured by the voice of mercy which sounds from Zion, and then we are alarmed by the thunders which roll over Sinai. Heaven is here unveiled to us, and we almost hear the harps of angels, and the hallelujahs of the glorified saints: hell is there uncovered, and the shrieks of the despairing vibrate on our ears, and the smoke of their torments rises before our eyes. Here prophets look down the long current of years, and predict things which are to come; there inspired historians show us the accomplishment of these predictions. Here the merits of the

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\* This and the following sermon have been before published in another volume; but to complete the course of biographical lectures, it was thought advisable to insert them.

Redeemer, and promises sealed with blood, are reached forth to us by our heavenly Father; there the deep pollution of our hearts and the demerits of sin are developed to us. Every method is employed to bring back rebellious and revolted man to God, and to happiness. The understanding, the heart, and the conscience, are by turns addressed in language the most forcible, and by motives weighty as eternity. But the inspiring Spirit, well knowing the frame of man, well knowing how strongly we are stimulated by example, has especially chosen to communicate instruction to us from the lives of others. The greater part of the sacred volume is historical; and the histories which it relates, are not intended merely to excite a barren admiration, or to gratify an idle curiosity; but are designed and calculated to cherish the love and the fear of God, to teach us what he is, and what we are, and to give new warmth to all our devotional feelings. Properly speaking, they are not so much the history of particular men or nations as the history of God; of his nature, his perfections, his providence, and will, as exemplified in these particular instances; and they, therefore, when properly considered, are eminently calculated to lead the heart and the affections to him. When the blighted beauties of Eden are presented to our eyes, it is not that our regrets may be excited from contrasting it with its former glory, but that we may be made to shudder at the guilt of sin, and tremble at the danger of disobeying the Most High. When we behold Noah riding on the back of the swelling surges, secure amidst the desolation of a world, it is our duty not merely to rejoice at his personal deliverance, but to mark also the faithfulness of God, and the blessedness that results from believing his declarations and

obeying his precepts. When we see the arm of Abraham extended, and ready to be dyed with the gushing blood of his son, we should not merely have our natural sympathies excited, but learn from him to sacrifice the dearest objects of our affections,—those on which our souls rest with fondest delight,—at the command of God. When the smoking ruins of Jerusalem are spread before us; when we behold the countless number of her children that became the victims of the sword, of famine, and of sedition; when we listen to the shrieks of the bereaved, and mark the convulsive struggles of the dying—it is not merely to fill our eyes with tears, and our hearts with sorrow for this unhappy nation, that this picture is presented to us; but to show us the terrors of Jehovah, the woes which must crush the guilty, when the patience of the Lord is exhausted, and the arm of the living God, armed with thunders, is raised against them, and the accumulated misery which must at last overtake those who despise the means of grace, and the offers of salvation.

It cannot then but be highly profitable for us to review some of the histories contained in the sacred volume, and inquire what are those lessons of wisdom and piety which we are taught by them. It must especially be interesting to consider the history of our great progenitor, since his life is so intimately connected with the state of the world around us, with our constitutions and frames, and with that plan of redemption on which all our hopes are founded; since his life is full of events, in comparison with which the achievements of the most illustrious heroes become contemptible, and the rise and fall of the greatest empires that ever existed upon earth

dwindle into insignificance. Listen then, my brethren, while, following the word of God, we present to you the life of the first created man.

The world had already been formed by the great Creator; it displayed his perfections, and was replenished with every thing necessary for the benefit or felicity of man. But there was yet no rational being that inhabited it to contemplate these works, and trace in them, with adoring wonder, the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of him who made them. The sun, the moon, and the stars, declared in their courses the glory of God; but they did not perceive this glory. The earth with its productions showed that its Maker was divine; but unendued with intelligence, it could not recognise the divinity. Man then was formed, to behold this glory, to see these traces of the Godhead; and on earth to respond to the heavenly host, among whom "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy," at the view of the new creation. In order to manifest his superior dignity at his creation, there was, as it were, a solemn consultation of the sacred Trinity; for the holy volume plainly intimates a concurrence in counsel of the three persons for the formation as well as redemption of man. When other things were to be produced, God spake, and they appeared. He said, Let them be, and they were. But at the creation of man, he said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." His body was formed of the dust of the earth, and lay, like it, inanimate, till a nobler and immortal principle was infused in him immediately by God: "The Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Being formed in the image



of God, he was called Adam, from a Hebrew word signifying likeness.\*

Springing immediately from the hands of his Creator, he was doubtless endued with a perfection of body and soul, of which we can form but a feeble conception. In the plenitude of his powers he came into being. When the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, appeared to repair the ruins of the fall, he, in compassion to us, and to encourage all of every age to apply to him with confidence, became the babe of Bethlehem, and the youth that dwelt at Nazareth; but our progenitor appeared at once in his maturity, and knew nothing of the feebleness of infancy and childhood, of the dangers and inexperience of youth. "He was made a little lower than the angels." His body was probably surrounded by a splendour like that of Moses, when he descended from the mount; like that of Jesus when he was transfigured upon Tabor. The divine image which he bore, and in which, alas! the most eminent believers in this life are but very partially renewed, consisted, as we judge from some expressions of St. Paul, (Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24.) in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. His mind, not yet darkened by sin, was free from error and prejudice, and inspired with all natural, and especially moral knowledge, necessary for his state: his soul had no vicious propensity; his will was conformed to the will of God; his heart, filled with love to God, flamed with the fervours of devotion and gratitude by night and by day. Full dominion was given him over all the creatures; and he enjoyed an intimate communion with his Almighty Friend, and fellowship with the

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\* See Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon.

holy angels It is this communion and intercourse with God, which forms the felicity of heaven: must it not have given inexpressible delight to Adam upon earth? He was placed in the most beautiful part of a world, all of which was beautiful. This spot is called the garden of Eden, or of delight; its exact situation cannot, with precision, be ascertained; neither is it necessary that it should: "I do not," says good bishop Hall, "seek where that Paradise was which we lost; I know where that Paradise is, which we must study to seek, and hope to find. As man was the image of God, so was that earthly Paradise an image of heaven: both the images are lost; both the first patterns are eternal." In this favoured spot were collected all that was useful or pleasant; every variety of the animal or vegetable creation; all that could gratify the senses, the imagination, or the heart; and among the rest, two symbolical and sacramental trees; the one, the tree of life, the seal of that life and felicity which would have resulted from obedience, and, "by divine institution, a visible, familiar, and permanent lesson, by which man was not only admonished of the eternal distinction between good and evil, but put upon his guard as to the quarter from which alone evil could assail him."\* The other, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the seal of that death, which was threatened upon disobedience.

Here God was pleased to enter into a covenant with man. Though as our Creator, we are bound to obey him, yet he will not claim this obedience solely from his absolute sovereignty; but condescends to form a covenant of friendship, in which he vouchsafes to engage to recompense this obedience. He

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\* Vitringa, Obs. Sac.

permits man to eat of all except one tree, which he is prohibited to taste, under the most awful threatening: "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Thus he was placed between life and death; the symbols of both grew nigh each other, and were constantly exhibited to him, and he left to choose between them, after he had received proper instruction from God.

But there was still a void in the heart of Adam; he still needed some one of the same nature and powers with himself: formed for social intercourse, he needed some heart that would unite with his in celebrating the author of all good; some being, not like the angels elevated above him, but of the same rank with himself, with whom he might form the tenderest ties. He had looked through the inferior creation and found no helpmeet for him, and he sighed for one with whom to share the happiness which he enjoyed. How long he remained solitary we are not informed; long enough however to be taught a language by God, and to receive much information from him, and to survey every animal of the land and the air, and bestow upon them significant names. Feeling his want, disposed to seek this blessing from God, and to receive it with gratitude, it was not long withheld from him. In order that his partner might be more endeared to him, God was pleased to make her not only *like him*, but also *of his very substance*, and then conduct her as his gift to man. Who can conceive the happiness of this blessed pair? Surrounded by every thing that they could desire, rich in the most cordial love to each other, and united in the warmest love to their God; igno-

rant of those vices and passions which embitter life, and of that misery which is the fruit and the effect of sin; enjoying the visits of God and his angels, what more did they need? How sweet was the interchange of affection between them; how perfect the communion of thoughts, of sentiments, and good wishes! What new gratitude swelled the bosom of Adam, and with what transport, as one expresses it, “did he change the solitary, My Father and my God, into the social, Our Father and our God!” It is a state on which the imagination rests with delight: the mind, pained with the sins, the follies, and the woes which now infest the world, loves to wander back to the holy groves of Paradise, and to linger by the peaceful streams of Eden.

How long this happy state continued we know not; the scriptures, our only source of information, do not inform us;\* but after some time they fell; fell into that abyss of wo in which we yet lie. This sun which had risen with so much splendour and darted forth such cheering and animating beams, was soon obscured by rising clouds.

From the brevity of the scripture account of this event, it is not surprising that we meet with some difficulties in it. Yet what if there were more; should we therefore be authorized to reject this relation? Little have we observed either nature or providence, if we have not learned that though “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of God’s

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\* Some persons, from the consideration that almost every great trial mentioned in the scriptures was limited to forty days, as appears from the history of Moses, of Elijah, of Nineveh, and especially of that Redeemer of whom Adam was the type, and who came to vanquish the seducer of the first man, have concluded that the trial of our first parents lasted for this time.

throne," yet, "clouds and darkness are often round about him." It is perfectly inconsistent with the humility becoming worms of the dust, to sit in judgment on the conduct of God, and to treat as improper, what our feeble reason cannot perfectly comprehend. In things that are mysterious, let us always bend and adore, "knowing that the Judge of all the earth will do right."

The following is the substance of what we know concerning this interesting event. God, no doubt in infinite wisdom, appears to have thought proper to subject all his intelligent creatures to some trial before they were confirmed, to place them in a state of probation before they were established. This was the case with the angels, some of whom fell; this was also the case with men. To produce and to preserve upon their minds a sense of their dependence upon God, and of his authority over them, some test of their obedience must be given. This test, from the situation in which the world then was, could not be any of those great moral precepts, which would answer this purpose with regard to us. What moral precept could have been given to Adam for his trial, and as the condition of the covenant formed with him? He could not be enjoined to honour his parents—he had none: nor to abstain from murder, since, even if he had known what death was, and how to inflict it, this crime could be committed only upon the object of his dearest affections, without whom the world would be a solitude to him: the only two of the human race could not violate the marriage bed: Adam could not steal nor covet, because all things belonged to him: nor bear false witness, since there was no motive that could incite him to do it against the wife of his bosom: nor for-

give his enemies—none existed. It is the same with regard to the first table of the law: false gods were yet unknown; and images, invented to bring to mind the absent and invisible, could not be made by those who daily saw the glory, and heard the voice of God in the garden: perjury was the result of a more corrupted state of society; and the visible splendour of the Shekinah was too great to permit them to trifle with, or profane the name of its adorable resident: the rest of the Sabbath could not be violated by those who had no occasion for labour; who on that day enjoyed the special visitations and presence of God, and who just come from the forming hands of their Maker, could not possibly forget the wonders of creation. What moral precept then can you select, proper to be used as a test of the obedience of our first parents? These moral precepts they could not violate, and therefore their keeping them would be no test of virtue. Besides, the holiness of man rendered moral precepts improper for this purpose. To man, depraved and sinful, whose natural inclinations are estranged from God and holiness, they may serve as tests, since his compliance with them, in opposition to the seductions of corruption, may prove his regard to the authority of God. But in innocent man, all whose inclinations and desires led to their performance, who had no bias contrary to them, whose nature and constitution induced him to comply with them; in such a being obedience to them could not be a proof of his regard to the commands of God, since such an obedience would be the necessary result of his nature and the habits of his soul. It was then necessary that the test should be some *positive* precept; and the more simple and easy this precept, the more

would it display the goodness of God, and render man inexcusable for its violation. What then could be more suitable and proper for our first parents, living in a garden, than the command to abstain from a particular tree? Where now are all the impious witticisms of libertines on this subject?

The same God who, in consistence with his attributes, permits us still to meet with seductions and to be exposed to tempters, permitted it then. The apostate spirit assumed the body of the serpent, which in the state of innocence was as familiar with man as any other animal, and inspiring it with new wisdom, addressed himself to that party, which, being more tender and pliable, might more easily be led astray, and being more amiable and persuasive, would, when depraved, more probably seduce the other. We are not acquainted with the whole process of the temptation; we know enough to perceive that it was subtle. Satan first inquires, as though for information, whether this tree be prohibited: he suggests that she may have erred in her opinion; he insinuates that it was the envy of their Creator which debarred them from this valuable fruit; he speaks of it as pleasant to the taste, as desirable to make one wise, and at last he boldly declares that the threatening will not be executed, but they exalted to a higher rank of being, by a violation of the command: "Ye shall not die, but shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." She was made with power to stand, but free to fall: she listened to the tempter, and in an evil hour she plucked and ate. Adam, overcome by Eve's persuasions and seductions, yet "not deceived," says the apostle, (1 Tim. ii. 14.) presumptuously partook of her guilt and her punishment.

Here again the infidel sneers, and speaks of this

as a trifling crime. Let him consider, and he will find that it was a sin great as can be conceived. In violating this precept, our first parents defied the power of the Almighty; accused the God of truth of falsehood; attempted to deceive the Omniscient: with a baseness and ingratitude, which causes us to shudder, they suspected of malice and envy, Him who is love itself, and who had crowned them with blessings, so numberless and immense. In the covenant formed with them, an abstinence from this tree was made the test of their allegiance to their Creator; by eating of it, therefore, they rejected him as their sovereign, and renounced their fealty to him. Looking for knowledge and felicity elsewhere than from God, desirous to be more independent of him, believing satan in opposition to him, they withdrew themselves from him, and united themselves to the apostate spirits. This crime was also inconceivably aggravated by the advantages which they possessed, for knowing and performing the will of God, and by their freedom from those vicious inclinations and unholy passions, which are found in fallen man.

The pleasures of sin endure but for a moment. Soon were those hopes of felicity from eating the forbidden fruit, which they had foolishly entertained, blasted for ever. In the cool of the day, perhaps at the period when they had been accustomed to unite in pouring out their souls before God, "they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden;" and probably some visible tokens of the Divine Presence were manifested. It was a voice which was familiar, and had once been dear to them; they were tokens which they had once welcomed with exulting joy; but now that they know their nakedness, that they see themselves despoiled of their innocence, that



the blessings of the covenant are forfeited, and its curse incurred, they flee with confusion and terror, and foolishly attempt to conceal themselves from him who is omnipresent. But they are brought as criminals to the bar of their God: and what is here their conduct? Do they melt into tears? Do they bewail their transgressions? Do they confess their crime with humility, and pour out their prayers for pardon? No; instead of this, we behold only the most trifling evasions and subterfuges. But these are useless; they cannot deceive the Judge of all, who reads the thoughts of the heart; their mouth,—as will at the decisive day be the case with those sinners who now like them plead excuses for their guilt,—was stopped, and they were compelled to stand guilty before God. Their body by their transgression has lost its primitive glory, and has become subject to pains, to disease, and death. Instead of the sacred peace and holiness and tranquillity which dwelt in their souls, they now have become polluted, estranged from God; his image is departed and his communion is lost; the passions, once harmonious, now render their souls a tumultuous field of battle; conscience becomes their foe and points to the eternal misery which they have deserved; they see nothing which can save them from endless perdition. They stand trembling and in despair waiting for their sentence. What joy, what gratitude must they have felt when they heard a promise of mercy mingled with the denunciations of God; when they were pointed to the seed of the woman, to that blessed Messiah who should gain a victory over their seducer; and when to strengthen their faith in him, sacrifices to prefigure him were instituted. They were expelled from Eden; the ground was cursed for their

sake; sorrow and affliction became their portion till they returned to the dust from which they were taken; and cherubim and a flaming sword henceforth guarded the access to the tree of life.

The effects of this fall of our first parents were not confined to them, but are felt by us. Against this it is vain to object, for it is proved not merely by the assertions of scripture, but by fact and experience. Are we not by nature subject to misery and death? Are we not by nature polluted and defiled, with irregular passions and unholy desires? Are we not of consequence exposed to the just vengeance of God? This we cannot disguise from ourselves—Blessed be God, we have Him whom the tree of life prefigured, to whom we may have access; around whose throne there are no cherubim or flaming sword to prevent us from receiving those merits whereby we may live for ever.

How different was the remainder of Adam's life from its commencement. He henceforth saw misery around him in its various forms, and beheld in the world, in himself, and in his descendants, the awful consequences of his transgression. He had viewed the earth in its glory; he sees it in ruins. He had beheld man in the image of God—he beholds him now lying in the dust.

He became a father. Eve immediately exclaimed in the fullness of her joy, "I have gotten a man from the Lord;" or as, perhaps, the words should rather be translated, "I have gotten the man, even Jehovah;" the promised seed, the predicted Messiah. How many delightful anticipations did she form! What felicity did she expect to derive from this her child! But like all other expectations of permanent happiness from earthly

objects, they were blasted. Who can conceive her anguish when this son became the murderer of his brother; when she saw first exemplified in Abel that death which she had brought into the world? Of their numerous posterity but one more is mentioned, Seth; in whose family true religion was preserved, and in whose line Christ was born.

Adam lived till he saw the world overspread with wickedness, and then, according to the sentence, "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return," sunk into the tomb. Whether Eve survived him is unknown. It is supposed that they both, through faith in the promised Messiah, obtained the pardon of their sins, and entered at their deaths into a more glorious Paradise than that which they had lost.

This history teaches us,

1. The fatal effects of sin, and presents us with the strongest motives to hate and flee from it. It is sin which has inundated our world with a deluge of evils; which has converted the garden of God into an Aceldama, a field of blood. It is sin which has degraded our race from the elevated station which it once held; which has effaced the splendid image of God, and exposed us to his eternal indignation. It is sin which has dug the abyss of despair and kindled the flames of the world of torments. Look around you in the world; behold the infinitely varied afflictions of body and of mind "that man is heir to;" collect in one mighty mass all the groans that have been uttered, all the tears that have been shed, all the anguish that has been felt from the fall of Adam to the present time: unveil the depths of the human heart, and consider what loathsome spectacles it has presented to a holy God; stand by the beds of the departing, and mark the terrors of their souls and

the agonies of their bodies ; enter the repositories of the dead, and behold the worm and putrefaction preying on the mouldering carcass ; descend in imagination to the abode of the accursed, and behold there “ the fire that never will be quenched,” and the thunders of divine indignation which burst upon these devoted men : and then say to yourself—All this, inconceivably more than this, is the effect of sin. And will you still love this murderer, this murderer of two lives at once ? Will you still cherish it and give it a residence in your heart ?

2. This history directs us to the only Redeemer from sin, and points us to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the promised seed of the woman, as the only refuge of the guilty.—Mercy and forgiveness were proclaimed to our fallen parents, not in consequence of their sorrow and tears ; not in consequence of their resolutions to live in future devoted to God—Alas ! these could not satisfy the broken law ; these could not atone to the violated holiness of God. Resting on these alone, our progenitors must have been undone for ever. But pardon was proclaimed through the eternal Son, who then was promised, and the effusion of whose blood was thus early typified by that of the sacrificed victim which prefigured him. Neither Adam, nor a single one of his descendants, ever obtained salvation, except through him. Like the sun which enlightens both the stars above it and the earth beneath it, his merits extend backward to the fall of man, and forward to the consummation of all things.—Behold then, fallen man, thine only hope ; the promise made in Paradise has been fulfilled—the seed of the woman has come—“ His heel has been bruised :” he suffered, he agonized, he bled for man.

for thee : in him place all thy confidence : away with the fig-leaves of thine own righteousness : seek to be covered by his atonement. Flee from that covenant which can no longer profit you : put your soul under the bonds of that better covenant which offers you a Paradise, into which satan never can enter ; from which all the strength of the Godhead, all the stability of the covenant, all the faithfulness of the promises, all the merits of Christ, are engaged to prevent you from falling.

3. This history teaches us to avoid the first seductions to sin. Had Eve boldly and resolutely repulsed the tempter when he first approached, he would have fled from her : when she consented to listen to his reasonings and persuasions, she was already half undone. My brethren, he still tempts us in the same manner as he did Eve ; he still endeavours to excite hard thoughts of God and his commandments ; to lull us to rest with hopes of impunity, notwithstanding the most solemn declarations of the Lord ; to lead us to trust in ourselves ; to seduce us to unbelief ; to give us exaggerated ideas of the value of sensual pleasure ; to make us discontented with the state in which God has placed us. In such circumstances, what does prudence, what does our interest, what does religion demand of us ? Shall we dally with the temptation ? Shall we tamper with the adversary of our souls ? Shall we gaze upon the forbidden fruits to which he directs our attention, thinking that at any time we can withdraw our eyes ? Ah ! my brethren, if we act thus he will insensibly lead us to pluck and eat : if we do not oppose the beginnings of evil, we are undone. For the proof of this I appeal to the most hardened and profligate sinner among you. Time has been that you would

have shuddered if you had thought it possible that you should ever advance so far in the paths of sin as you have done. Time has been when you would have replied to one predicting that your character would be what it now is, in the indignant language of Hazaël—"Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things?" Yet you have thus far advanced in sin; you have become that character which you could not consider without horror. And how have you been led to this eminence in guilt? By rapid and gigantic strides? No: insensibly and by degrees. Satan spread his bait before you; you gazed upon it at first with apprehension; you shortly became enamoured with its imposing but deceptive charms; you began to wish that it were lawful; your desires duped your judgment, and you concluded that you might indulge in it once: after this indulgence, your conscience was at first alarmed, and you resolved to offend no more. But the temptation was again presented, and you had not learned wisdom from the past. You passed round the same circle; you were again lured to the edge of the precipice and thrust down it. A habit of sinning was formed; conscience became stupified; the fetters of satan were every day entwining you more and more securely, till at last you had not even the faintest desire to be liberated from his disgraceful vassalage. Oh! my brethren, if we could peruse the records of hell, how many thousands would we find who might serve as the originals of this picture! Let me then again conjure you, as you value your own souls, to trifle not with temptation: say not that you will advance a certain distance into the territories of satan and then return: the experience of millions proves the folly and the peril of such

an attempt. "Your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour: be therefore sober, be vigilant;" resist him immediately, "lest he beguile you through his subtlety." And remember too, that he is not your only tempter. If Eve fell through his seductions, Adam was ensnared by her blandishments: such trials (and they are severe ones) you may meet with. Those who are connected to you by blood or affection, may endeavour to seduce you from the ways of God: listen not to them: let the authority of God be paramount in your soul. Be ready to sacrifice every thing that comes in competition with your duty to him.

4. This history teaches us the dangerous error of those men who suppose that they are acceptable to God, merely because they discharge the moral and social duties. None of these were violated by Adam; yet he fell under the sentence of condemnation. Your religion (if I may call it a religion) might appear reasonable, if there were no God to whom you sustained important relations, and if there were no future world for which you were bound to prepare. But since there is a God and a futurity, it is the extreme of folly to rest on those hopes on which you lean. "You shall have your reward" in the esteem, the approbation, and love of your fellow-men whom you benefit: but expect not the approbation of that God "who is not in all your thoughts." The young ruler in the gospel was as moral as you, yet he was not esteemed by the Saviour one of his disciples.

5. Finally, my brethren, let us be all led by this history to examine ourselves. Let us listen to the voice of God crying to us, "Where art thou?" We were all born in the image of corrupted and fallen

Adam; exposed to the curses of that covenant which he violated: have we been also “created in Christ Jesus to good works?” Have the lineaments of “the second Adam, the Lord from heaven,” been impressed upon our soul? Have we from the depth of our misery looked with faith and love to him who “came to destroy the works of the devil?” If we have not, in vain do we hope to enter into the Paradise of God. Satan may whisper to us, as he did to our first parents, “Ye shall not die;” but neither his assurances, nor our confident expectations of felicity, shall be able to avert from us the stroke of death, everlasting death.

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## SERMON II.



CAIN AND ABEL.



GENESIS iv. 1—17.

IN the last discourse we contemplated the earth in its original glory, and afterwards despoiled of its beauty by sin: we beheld man formed in the image of God, and saw him afterwards deprived of this image and sunk in that abyss of guilt and wretchedness, from which he could be raised only by the grace of God. This grace was extended to him. Instead of that violated covenant which now spake nothing but indignation and wrath against our great



progenitors, they were admitted into a new and better covenant, which was confirmed by significant rites, and which included the promise of salvation through a Redeemer. In the present discourse we shall see in the history of the two first born among men, an image of what we still behold upon earth, where some “through an evil heart of unbelief depart from the living God,” and refuse to accept the offers of mercy made through the blood of Jesus; whilst others flee to his grace as their only refuge and sanctuary. We shall see the commencement of that combat which still continues between “the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent,” the pious and the ungodly; the former fighting under the standard of the Redeemer and with the armour of righteousness; the latter endeavouring by every method, however unjustifiable, by secret arts and open violence, to injure the cause and the people of God.

To our first parents expelled from Eden, some consolation was communicated on the birth of their eldest son. Parental hopes and joys were then for the first time exercised upon the earth; and they were exercised with the greater force, because experience had not then shown how often these hopes are blasted, and these joys withered for ever. “I have gotten,” exclaims the exulting mother, “a man from the Lord.” She formed, no doubt, a thousand tender anticipations: she looked forward to the time when he would be adorned with every virtue; when he would be beloved by God, and by those who should afterwards be born in the earth; when his affection and cares would cheer her declining years; when he would watch by her in her closing hours, smooth for her the pillow of sickness and of pain, and receive her last sigh. Her hopes were still more elevated if we

translate her exclamation, as it may and perhaps should be translated, "I have gotten the man, even Jehovah," the promised seed, the predicted deliverer. She imagined perhaps that this, her child, would restore her to a felicity greater than that which she had forfeited by her sin; that he would introduce her to a more blissful Eden than that in which she had first opened her eyes upon the works of God; that he would banish every grief from her heart, and wipe every tear from her eye, and re-impress upon her the image of the Highest. To express her joys and expectations she called him *Cain*, a word signifying a *possession* or *acquisition* that is highly valued. (Deut. xxxii. 6. Prov. viii. 22.)

Alas! how dearly was she afterwards taught the vanity of earthly expectations! With what unutterable anguish did this son whom she pressed to her bosom with so much ecstasy, wring her soul! How did he teach her the danger of making to ourselves an earthly idol, and suffering any thing below the skies to entwine too closely around our hearts! How did his conduct warn her to wait for the season appointed by God for the fulfilment of his promises; and to avoid hasty expectations, lest instead of a blessing, we embrace a curse.

She again became a mother. But on this second son she appears to have fixed less sanguine expectations, and he seems to have engaged a smaller share of her affections; she therefore called his name *Abel*, or *vanity*. Ah! my brethren, who of us has not found that those things which we most highly esteem, become often the sources of our deepest anguish; that our bitterest woes often spring from the bosom of what we regard as our dearest "*acquisition*:" and on the contrary, that those things and persons on which

we write "*vanity*," which hold but a small rank in our estimation, are highly favoured by God, and deserve the greatest affection from us.

The occupations of these brethren were different; the elder was a husbandman, the younger a shepherd. They were not on this account differently esteemed by God: he "is no respecter of persons." In every profession, except those which are in themselves unlawful, he has his faithful worshippers, the objects of his special love. Cain and Abel differed in a more important point; Cain was envious, malignant, unbelieving, self-righteous, a haughty despiser of salvation by faith in the promised seed, and not by his own works. Abel was an humble believing worshipper in the way which God had appointed; and we are told by the Redeemer himself that he was "*righteous*." Perhaps the furious passions and envious dispositions of Cain were cherished by the criminal partiality of his parents, considering him as a *possession* and his brother as *vanity*; and by being led to suppose that the special favour of God was due to him as his birth-right. Parents, as you value your own felicity and that of your offspring, avoid all such invidious distinctions between your children: let this affecting history which we are considering; let the anguish which flowed from this source in the family of Jacob, serve as beacons, warning you to avoid this dangerous error. Christians, observe in these two brethren the sovereignty of divine grace.—"One is taken and the other left." Isaac, in like manner, had but two sons, and one of them is a reprobate. There are but few families like that which dwelt in Bethany, all of whom love and are beloved by the Redeemer; there are many where the ties of blood are the only uniting principle; where there is

no affection formed for eternity. Are there any who hear, me whose families through the grace of God are different; who can all kneel together before a common Father; who have all been washed by the blood of a common Saviour; and who anticipate a common heaven. Happy indeed are ye! Ye only know all the energy of friendship and affection, since in you they are strengthened by the common Spirit residing in you, and augmented by the fervours of united devotion. Are there any persons who like Abel, in viewing their nearest connexions, see them the enemies of God and goodness, and who weep when they consider the impassable gulf that must shortly separate them from those to whom they are united on earth? Your trial is severe, but it is not peculiar to you. The wounds of your soul are deeper because the arrows that pierce it are dipped in poison by the hand of those you love: but the pain of these wounds can be assuaged by the balm of Gilead; these tortured souls can be healed by the heavenly Physician. You tread in a path in which you may trace the footsteps of thousands who are in glory. The God who guided them can conduct you to that world where all tears shall be wiped from your eyes, where you shall be surrounded by none but the holy.

The difference of character in these two brethren was displayed in the first acts of worship which are mentioned in the scriptures. "In process of time," or, "at the end of days," probably on the sabbath day, they both came to present their offerings to the Lord. Behold in them a spectacle which is still constantly exhibited to us: still the unholy and the pious appear together before God, engage in the same religious exercises, and perform the same acts of outward devotion. We all, my brethren, externally

unite in offering up our supplications to the Lord, in singing his praises, and in listening to his word; but does not God, who tries our hearts, see among us more than one Cain whose sacrifice is not offered with holy dispositions? Are there none of us who “have drawn near to God with our lips, while our hearts have been far from him;” whose worship has been that of the body, and not of the soul? Let such formal worshippers see in Cain what is their character, and in what estimation the Lord holds that worship which is merely external.

Not only the dispositions of soul, but the offerings also of the two brethren were different. “Cain brought of the fruits of the ground a *mincha* to Jehovah, and Abel brought a *mincha*; he also brought of the firstlings of the flock and of the fattest of them. And Jehovah had respect to Abel and his *mincha*; but to Cain and his *mincha* he had no respect.” In this manner the verses containing an account of this transaction should be translated,\* and they then afford us the reason of the acceptance of the one and the rejection of the other. Cain presented the *mincha*† or thank-offering of things inanimate, by which he acknowledged God to be his creator and preserver: this same offering was also presented by Abel. Nothing else would have been requisite had man continued in the state of innocence; to enjoy and to be grateful would have been all his duty: but he was now a polluted sinner, over whom the curses of a broken law impended, who was exposed to eternal death, and for whom there was no hope except in the grace of God through the promised Redeemer. Sensible of this, believing in Messiah who was to come,

\* See Kennicott's Two Dissertations.

† It consisted of fine flour, ming'ed with oil and frankincense. Lev. ii.

and complying with the institutions of God, Abel offered up a bloody sacrifice, the firstlings of his flock, for a sin-offering; thereby acknowledging his guilt, his need of an atonement, and his faith in that Lamb of God slain in the counsels of the Father before the foundation of the world. Cain, feeling no sense of sin, nor of his need of a Saviour, scarcely believing in the promised Messiah, and despising the blessings of that new covenant which was ratified with his blood, withheld the victim intended to prefigure him. It is through the Redeemer alone that the services of sinners can be accepted by a Holy God. No wonder, then, that while he “testified of the gifts\* of Abel,” he rejected the sacrifice of the unhumiliated and unbelieving Cain, who still clung to the covenant of works, and “going about to establish his own righteousness, would not submit to the righteousness of God, nor look to Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Rom. x. 3, 4.)

We are not informed in what manner the approbation of God was expressed; but from other parts of the scripture we may conclude that it was by consuming the sacrifice of Abel with fire from heaven; as in the case of Aaron when, after his consecration to the high-priesthood, he first offered for himself and the people; (Lev. ii. 24.) In that of Gideon when God showed that he had chosen him as the deliverer of Israel from the Midianites; (Judg. vi. 21.) In that of David when the pestilence ceased; (1 Chron. xxi. 26.) In that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple; (2 Chr. vii. 1.) and in that of Elijah when Jehovah displayed his superiority over Baal; (1 Kings xviii. 38.)

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\* *Δοξαί*, both the mincha and the sin-offering.

Let all the self-righteous look at Cain, and behold their character and their doom. The unregenerate, through ignorance, through enmity, and through pride, like him cling to the first covenant; are unwilling to submit to the self-abasing terms of the gospel, and in the character of helpless and polluted sinners to receive salvation as the free gift of God through Christ. So prone is fallen man to rely on that covenant which cannot profit him, that God expelled him from the garden lest he should still seek righteousness and life by that tree appointed as the seal of this covenant, and the sacrament of that life which it promised. But notwithstanding this, notwithstanding cherubim and a flaming sword were placed around it to cut off all our hopes, we still by nature seek righteousness by the works of the law; and when driven from this hold, we as foolishly endeavour to unite the two covenants together. My brethren, unless this temper of Cain, this pharisaical spirit be destroyed; unless we be brought to depend simply and entirely upon the Redeemer, we in vain hope for salvation.

What were the sentiments excited in the bosom of Cain, by the rejection of his sacrifice, and the acceptance of that of Abel? Was he not humbled in the dust at his unworthiness and guilt? Did he not diligently inquire into the cause of the rejection of his offering, that he might in future avoid it?—Though *his* offering was not accepted, yet did he not rejoice at the proof given by the acceptance of his brother's, that God would receive the services of sinners when presented with proper dispositions? Was not his love and esteem for his brother increased by seeing the superior piety of Abel, and the favour which God bestowed upon him? No: "his eye

was evil because God was good." The graces and the privileges of Abel filled him with envy and discontent; and resentment against his brother and his God agitated his heart and imprinted their traces on his countenance. "He was very wroth and his countenance fell." How opposite is his conduct to that of a believer! There are times when the christian has no tokens of acceptance, and no sensible comfort or joy in the discharge of duty; does he therefore with Cain quarrel with his Maker, and harbour resentment against those who are rejoicing in the assurance of their acceptance, and in the light of God's countenance? Does he with those guilty men described by Isaiah, say to the Almighty, "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?" (Is. lviii. 3.) Oh no! With diligence and humility he seeks what has interposed between him and God; with penitence he cries, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me;" with constancy he perseveres like the Canaanitish woman in the midst of her discouragements, or like Paul when he thrice besought the Lord before he was answered: he rests not from supplications, till he has obtained the blessing.

The Lord exercises towards Cain his patience and long suffering: instead of immediately punishing, he condescends to expostulate. He points out to Cain the unreasonableness of his anger: he exhorts him to subdue his resentment, and check his criminal passions: he declares that he also shall be accepted, if he exercise the same faith, humility, and sincerity, as Abel: that without repentance, his sin must expose him to punishment; and that Abel entertained a cordial affection for him, and in all temporal matters was still his inferior. "And the Lord said unto Cain, 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. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”

How hard must have been that heart which this mild remonstrance could not melt: but Cain continued insensible. No motives, however tender, no barriers, however sacred, can restrain the ungodly man when his passions are once excited. Burning with rage, corroded with envy, desirous of acquiring a pre-eminence without any competitor on earth, Cain became the murderer of his brother; of a brother to whom his heart ought to have been open, for whom he ought to have felt the tenderest love, but whom he could not endure, because the holiness of his life was a perpetual reproach to himself, and because he had received special marks of the divine approbation. Then Death secured his first victim among mortals; then a more painful wound than that of Abel was inflicted on the hearts of our first parents, when they considered that by them death came into the world: then were all those hopes of happiness from Cain which they had so fondly indulged, prostrated in the dust; then was the first redeemed sinner admitted into heaven: whilst the everlasting doors were opened and the eternal gates expanded to receive this son of Adam, this first-fruits of the sacrifice of Jesus, this leader of the “noble army of martyrs,” new hallelujahs, louder accents of praise, of adoring wonder, and joy, fell from the harps of the heavenly hosts.

Christians, why should we tremble at death? it is converted into a friend, and it came first to visit the favourite of heaven. Believers, let the bleeding body of Abel teach you not to expect your happi-

ness below ; you are members of that church whose symbol is the cross ; you are followers of that Saviour who was the man of sorrows ; you are tending to that world where “those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, have come out of great tribulation.” Persecutions you will meet with : be careful that, like Abel, religion be your only crime. Persecutors of the cause or children of God, whether by open violence, by secret insinuations, by reproaches or by scoffs, behold in Cain your archetype : his mark is fixed upon your forehead, his disposition rankles in your hearts.

The Lord saw and came to punish this murder : this blood cried to him for vengeance, and its voice was heard. To the question which he proposes to the murderer, “Where is Abel, thy brother,” Cain, hardened by sin, replies with impiety, with insolence and falsehood. But in vain is the attempt to deceive the Omniscient, and foolish is the expectation of impunity with the holy God, for those sins of which we have not repented. The Lord displays to him the horror of his crime, and represents all nature as ready to become the instrument of divine vengeance against him. The ground which Cain cultivates is cursed with a new degree of barrenness : he is obliged to depart from the society of his friends and parents, and from the place where God more immediately manifested his presence, and to wander upon the earth, forlorn and detested by men, and abandoned by God. So surely is sin, by the wise appointment of God, inseparably linked to sorrow, both in this world and that which is to come.

Not softened to repentance, but full of terror, he cries out. “My punishment is greater than I can

bear." How frequent are these horrors of soul in those who are still impenitent, and how awfully are they deceived, who suppose that they are the children of God, because they have felt them in a high degree. Read the history of the Old Testament and the New, and you will find that they have been experienced by the greatest enemies of God. What could exceed the anguish of Cain; what the quakings of the soul of Ahab; what the agony of Judas, which was so intolerable as "to make him flee to hell as a release, and embrace damnation as a refuge?" And in the world of torments, how awful are the terrors of the Lord which rest upon the souls of the accursed; how painful the "arrows of the Almighty which drink up their spirits." Wo then, I repeat it, to those who are resting in security, because they have been agitated and alarmed at the view of their sins and of the punishment which awaited them. How different are these exercises from those of real believers. They regard principally the guilt of their sin, and not the weight of that misery which will follow them. While Cain cries, "My punishment," not my guilt, "is greater than I can bear;" while Pharaoh exclaims, "Remove this plague," not this hard-heartedness, "from me;" the penitent David cries, "My sin," not thy vengeance, "is ever before me;" the returning prodigal says, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight," not, I have been starving in a distant land. Real penitence drives the soul to God; these slavish terrors cause it to flee from him. Peter's hearers, when truly alarmed, turn to the Redeemer; Cain seeks, by employing himself in earthly occupations, to lose these painful impressions.

Cain expresses his apprehension that every one

that meeteth him will kill him as a common pest, dangerous and unworthy to live. But he was to be preserved alive as a memorial to others of God's knowledge of our most secret sins, and of his resolution to punish them, and as a monument of that misery which must ever attend guilt. The Lord therefore gave him a token that his life should not be taken from him by violence. "He went out from the presence of the Lord," from the place where he manifested himself, and retired to the land of Nod; where, neglecting all the ordinances of religion, he became probably more and more corrupt. As his descendants increased, he built a city, which, from his son, he called Enoch. Here his posterity resided till the flood. They were celebrated for the useful, ingenious, and elegant arts: instruments of violence were in their hands; the harp and the pipe were at their feasts: abroad they were rapacious and violent; at home they were luxurious and depraved. In reading the list of them, we in vain seek to discover an individual who was a faithful servant of God. How poor, how miserable were they, notwithstanding their arts and pleasures!

We have, in the prosecution of this discourse, presented to you most of the practical lessons connected with this history—Let us, however, before we conclude, remark,

1. How inconceivably great may be the effect of an unholy parent's example. Who can calculate how many of the descendants of Cain were lost through his impiety! Criminal father, ungodly mother, who can tell how many thousand souls may in the day of judgment execrate thee as the author of their perdition, and imprecate the vengeance of the Almighty upon thee! Corrupting by thine example

thine immediate descendants, they may communicate the infection to theirs, and they again to others through a long succession of ages. Their united curses shall at last gather round thee, and sink thee deep into despair.

2. Let us inquire which character we bear, that of Cain or Abel. I have already said that if our worship of God be merely formal and outward, attended by no holy affections and sanctified desires; if we be possessed with a self-righteous spirit, and only cry with the Pharisee, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" refusing to lie in the dust, and with the unfeigned humility of the publican, exclaim, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" if we present our offerings in any other name than that of Jesus, and look for acceptance in any other mode than through his atonement and intercession; if we despise, envy, hate, reproach, vilify, or persecute the people of God, we bear the image of Cain. My brethren, are there no persons of this description within the sound of my voice? Let those whose consciences declare that they bear some traits of this character, instead of further imitating Cain, by denying their crime, by attempting to conceal it from God, by quarrelling with the divine justice, by employing the time of God's forbearance in building cities, or earthly pursuits, in business or in pleasure—instead of this, let them instantly turn to the Lord: otherwise they shall find that "it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" they shall sink under his curse; and, thoughtless and insensible as they now may be, shall hereafter cause the regions of despair to resound with that agonized cry, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

Are there on the contrary any, who feel that they

are guilty, but look with faith to the great atonement; meek but zealous worshippers of God, bearing the fruits of righteousness, patiently submitting to afflictions and persecutions for the sake of Christ, ready to lay down their lives rather than abandon him? Such have the character of Abel; like him they are beloved by God; with him their hearts and their voices shall hereafter be united in celebrating that "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

3. Abel, "being dead," says the apostle, "yet speaketh." Yes! from the height of heaven he addresses us; and how many important instructions does he communicate to us. He declares to us the efficacy of that blood of Jesus, by which he has obtained salvation: he shows us the duty of following the Redeemer through affliction, through persecution, through death itself: he teaches us the necessity of a constant and lively faith to support us in our trials, and render our duties acceptable. He calls to you, young people, and reminds you that youth and health, that the tenderness and desires, the prayers and tears of parents, cannot shield you from the stroke of death. He bids us all remember that we may suddenly sink into the tomb; that there is not a moment of our lives in which we may not be summoned to the bar of our God. Oh! may these instructions sink deep into our souls.

4. "The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel." It attracts not, but repels the thunders of divine indignation: it cries not for vengeance; but its language is, Grace, grace to the guilty. Let us seek to be sprinkled with this precious blood; let us, with this plea in our mouths, draw near to God for pardon; let us continually look

for grace and glory, for forgiveness and salvation, to that "great Shepherd of the flock," who was offered as a sacrifice to God, who was hated, persecuted, and murdered by his brethren. Though for shedding this blood they were accursed, scattered, and made a monument of divine justice; yet let our souls be washed in it and they shall be purified, forgiven, and prepared for heaven.

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### SERMON III.



LIFE OF NOAH.



GENESIS ix. 29.

*"And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died."*

YOUR attention, during the greater part of the ensuing lecture, will be called to that venerable patriarch, who beheld a world destroyed and a world restored; who was safely sheltered by the Almighty during the fury of the deluge, after he had stemmed the more dangerous torrent of vice and general depravity. Before entering upon his life, it will however be proper to review those events which connect his history with that of the persons whose character we have already been considering.

You sympathized with our first parents, deprived of both their sons. You entered into the deep sorrows of their hearts when they beheld all their hopes crushed, as they leaned over the bleeding body of Abel, and as they remembered his murder-

ous brother, worse than dead, a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth—tortured by the reproaches of his conscience, and pursued by the curse of God. But did they remain in this state of wo? Was no consolation given them by their merciful Father? Ah, Christians! how often have you found that he never forsakes the destitute! How often have you found, that when he removes from us one enjoyment, when he deprives us of one comfort, he confers on us another to supply its place! Another son is born, and Eve “called his name Seth; for God, saith she, has appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.” Gen. iv. 26. For some time he and his descendants were noted for their piety and devotion. Whilst the offspring of Cain were infamous for their violence and dissipation, for their forgetfulness of God, and their neglect of piety,—the happy children of Seth believed, loved, and worshipped the God of their fathers. In the days of Enos his son, “men began to call upon the name of the Lord;” or, as it is translated in the margin of your Bibles, they “began to call themselves by the name of the Lord.” The pious were filled with new zeal for God—they diligently and solemnly observed the outward institutions of religion—and, separating themselves from the idolatrous and profane, they received that most honourable of titles, “the sons of God.” Alas! in some few generations they forfeited this appellation, and the privileges connected with it. They yielded to temptation—they listened to the seductions of their criminal passions, and became deeply depraved. “The sons of God,” the posterity of Seth, and the professors of true religion, “saw the daughters of men,” the idolatrous and unholy descendants of Cain, “that they were fair;” and se-



duced by their beauty and allurements, they neglected the dictates of prudence and religion, the command and the example of their fathers, and “took them wives of all whom they chose.” Gen. vi. 2. The consequences of this improper alliance can readily be imagined: the line of Seth was corrupted—many professors fell away—their graces were withered, and they eagerly grasped at the forbidden pleasures of the world. Seductions and persuasions similar to those which had overcome the constancy of Adam, plunged his descendants into guilt, and all the abominations of idolatry, all the impurities of sensuality, succeeded to the strictness of their ancestors. From these unhappy marriages sprang *giants*,\* either men of enormous stature, who, according to the tradition of all nations, lived in these first ages of the world, or, rather, according to the usual import of the original term, and most of the ancient versions, *apostates, rebels, or assaulters*. This unholy progeny included also “mighty men, men of renown,” [Gen. vi. 4.] heroes and conquerors, whose fame then filled the earth, who were panegyricized by the poets and celebrated by the orators who then lived, and who fondly trusted that their memory would be preserved to the latest generations.

Christians, let this history, and many others of a similar nature recorded in Scripture, warn you against forming too near an affinity with the wicked. Especially in entering into the most intimate connexion of life, regard more the piety of the heart than any external qualifications. Listen not to the pleadings of passion, avarice, or pride; otherwise there is cause to fear that you will lose the warmth

of your devotional feelings, that you will gradually be led away from God, and that your children, even if you should retain in some degree the principles of piety, will follow the example of that parent, whom, from the tendency of their natural corruption, they will be most prone to imitate. Let the warning of the apostle be ever solemnly remembered, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." [2 Cor. 6. 14.] If they seduce you into sin, of what avail throughout eternity, will be the remembrance of their attractions? Will the ardour of the flames, which encompass you, be mitigated by recollecting the soft smiles with which their face was clothed when they lured you to destruction; the fascinating graces with which they presented to you the cup mingled with poison? Of what avail will it be that your sons become "mighty men, men of renown?" Probably, in a few generations, they, like the heroes before the flood, will be forgotten, or remembered only with execrations. Infinitely better is it for them that their names should be inscribed in the Lamb's book of life; the records of which shall survive the smoking ruins of the world, than on the fading pages of history. Infinitely better is it for them, like the former children of Seth, in holy retirement, in sacred obscurity, in the exercise of the unobtrusive acts of piety and benevolence, "to keep the noiseless tenour of their way," than to rise to the pinnacle of power, to be celebrated for their splendid achievements, to wear laurels dipped in blood, and have the curse of the Almighty resting upon them.

We cannot certainly tell at what precise period this apostacy took place. There are, however, some reasons which render it probable that it was in the

time of Naamah.\* If this be the case; the impenitent were perhaps hardened in sin from the prolongation of the life of Adam. He still survived, and “because sentence against his evil work was not speedily executed, their hearts were fully set in them to do evil.” [Ecc. viii. 11.] They laughed at the threatened judgments of God, derided the promise of the Redeemer who was to come, uttered their profane scoffs against the pious, and plunged into every excess of guilt.† Who can conceive what Adam must have felt at the view of this general reign of that sin which he had introduced into the world! The patience and long-suffering of God were strikingly displayed towards this impious people. Instead of immediately punishing them, he sent his prophets to warn and instruct them, and his Spirit to strive with them; he granted them the means of grace, and abundant time for repentance. Among these prophets was Enoch, whose history is related by Moses in a single verse: but how expressive is this verse!—“Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.” He “walked with God:”—Reconciled to the Lord through faith in the promised Seed, he lived under a sense of his presence, obeyed his commands, and enjoyed a sacred peace and delicious communion with him: he boldly declared the great truths of religion, and in the most fearless manner, as we may judge from the precious fragment of his preaching preserved by Jude, he pointed a careless world to that aw-

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\* This is rendered probable: 1. Because the genealogy of the line of Cain ceases at her father Lamech, as though the two lines were hereafter confounded together; 2. From her name נֶמְחָה which signifies *fair*. From the connexion of the 4th and 6th chapters, it is not improbable that she is thus pointed out as one of the most beautiful of those whose charms led to this alliance.

† See the prophecy of Enoch in Jude.

ful day, "when the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all." [Jude 14, 15.] Having finished his testimony, "he was not, for God took him." "He was translated, that he should not see death." [Heb. xi. 5.] Without feeling the pangs of dissolution, he passed from this world to heaven, in the same manner as man would have done had he remained innocent, as Elijah did under the law, and as those believers shall who shall be living at the second coming of the Redeemer. Thus God put his seal to the ministry of Enoch, testified his approbation of the conduct and doctrine of this holy man, and the reality of that future world which he preached, in which both body and soul should be rewarded or punished. Thus a new reproof was given to the impenitent, and stronger consolations vouchsafed to the pious.—My brethren, let us imitate the conduct of this patriarch, and we shall partake of his felicity. God will take us likewise, though not in the same manner; we also shall obtain a triumph over death. "The page of history," says a good man,\* "records the splendid actions of the great and illustrious; the report of the day proclaims the wealth which others have accumulated and left behind them, and of which they are gone to render an account; the monuments of the dead are often inscribed with pompous titles and flattering commendations; but may it *with truth* be engraven on my tomb-stone, or whispered in the obscurest corner, "He walked with God, and was not; for God took him;" and so far from envying *their* distinctions, not even Enoch's privilege shall be anxiously desired by me; but

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\* Scott, in loc.

“ I'll hail the sharpest pangs of death  
 “ Which break my way to God.” DODDRIDGE.

Before his translation, Enoch gave to the men of the world a prophetic warning, which would remain with them after his departure, of the punishment which God was about to inflict on them. This he did by conferring the name Methuselah upon his son; a name which signifies that when he who is so called is dead, there shall follow an inundation of waters.\* So perfectly did this correspond with the event, that the very year in which Methuselah died the deluge took place. But neither did this warning, nor the faithful preaching of Enoch, nor the miraculous attestation of God to his ministry, in delivering him from death, reclaim the vicious, and lead them to repentance. To prove beyond dispute, that the Lord is “slow to anger, and of great kindness;” that “he willeth not the death of sinners, but that they turn and live;” he still graciously bore with them for eight hundred years; and by his providence, his prophets, and his spirit, called them to return to him. So hard is the heart of man, that they remained unaffected. At the expiration of this period, iniquity, instead of being checked, had greatly progressed. It had before been a mighty river, impetuously rushing forward, and sweeping away in its course, the monuments of piety and virtue.—It is now a boundless ocean that almost covers the whole earth. Still the Lord delays to strike. He fixes one hundred and twenty years as the bounds of his patience, and as “the season of their visitation;” at the expiration of which time, if they continued impenitent, his spirit should cease to strive with them, they should be abandoned as incorrigible, and swept by the divine

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\* מְדוּשֵׁלָה illo mortuo emissio aquarum.

judgments from the earth which was burdened and polluted by their iniquities. "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The greater part of this time having elapsed, and men "still filling up the measure of their iniquities," and preparing themselves for destruction, the Lord resolves to execute upon them a signal and speedy vengeance. He therefore commands Noah to prepare an ark, in which he and his family, with a sufficient number of animals to restock the earth, might be saved.

The parents of this patriarch appear, even at his birth, to have considered him as an extraordinary personage, destined to perform eminent services. His father, probably inspired by the prophetic spirit, gave him the name of *Noah*; i. e. *Rest* or *Comfort*; foreseeing that he would bring *comfort* to his parents, and be a blessing to the world, and would be a type of that Redeemer who alone gives true *rest* to the soul! The subsequent life of this patriarch did not, as in the case of Cain, disappoint these parental expectations. In the midst of a corrupted age, he was not ashamed or afraid to avow his attachment to piety. "Walking with God," and "seeking that honour which cometh from him only," he despised the scoffs of the impious. He did not blush at a holy singularity, when those by whom he was surrounded renounced the principles and disregarded the practices of religion. Inspired with an ardent zeal, he was "a preacher of righteousness," [2 Pet. ii. 5.] and faithfully rebuked and warned the ungodly. Though for this he incurred their opposition and contempt, yet "he found grace in the eyes of the Lord." My brethren, you admire this character—would you have

imitated it had you then lived? Ah! when I see so much cowardice among Christians—when I behold so many, who, instead of reproof, with Noah, vices, though sanctioned by custom and general practice, conniving at them by a criminal silence, or basely making compliances against which their conscience remonstrates—when I behold so few who are willing to stand alone, “rather than be conformed to the world,” I am filled with fear that the greater part of us, had we then been upon the earth, would have partaken of the general destruction, rather than have “come out from the ungodly and been separate.”

The faithful discharge of the duties of religion is attended by the consolations of grace. No wonder then that Noah often communed with God; enjoyed the tokens of his special favour, and by the manifestations of his love was abundantly compensated for the unkindness of men. God revealed to him his intention to bring the flood upon the world; pointed out to him the method of deliverance; and gave him the most minute directions for the construction of the ark. Noah was not daunted at the obstacles and labour he would have to encounter—at the contumelies and reproach he would have to endure.—God had spoken—he knows that this God can sustain him—he believes the divine declarations—and hastens to obey. Behold him then commencing the ark, amidst the scoffs and derisions of the multitude. They accuse him of folly, of enthusiasm, of madness. The steady purpose of his soul, and his firm faith in God, are unshaken, and he perseveres. Every step of its progress, every stroke of the hammer, call them to repentance, warn them to avoid the gathering storm. But they are unconcerned—they cast upon the building a scornful glance, and return with their

accustomed avidity to their business and their pleasures. In proportion as it advances, he pleads with them with more earnestness—he exhorts, he beseeches, he supplicates—he points them to the mercy of God, which is still offered—to his judgments, which are just ready to burst upon them. In the hurry of dissipation, and the festive scenes of gayety, all these remonstrances are forgotten; the pipe and the tabret vanish them from their minds. The Lord removes one by one the few pious who were upon the earth, except the family of Noah. Instead of considering them as “taken from the evil to come,” and regarding their departure as a signal to prepare for the divine judgments, they rejoice that they are freed from those importunate monitors who troubled their festivity. Some of every species of animals, conducted by the hand of God, and laying aside their natural ferocity and fear of man, flee to him as their protector, and enter into the ark; and Noah is informed that in seven days the work of desolation will commence. Oh! with what energy does he now woo them to flee to the asylum still open to them—with what earnestness does he entreat them to have mercy on themselves—in what solemn accents does he warn them—with what supplicating tears does he beseech them! They point to the unclouded sky, and consider him as a madman. His last invitation has sounded in their ears—his last warning has been rejected—he has entered with his family into the ark, and “the Lord has shut him in.” What imagination can conceive the scene which ensued! The skies are covered with blackness—the windows of heaven are opened, and the rain descends in torrents—the earth trembles, as the fountains of the great deep, bursting their strong enclosures, rise from beneath, to mingle



themselves with the descending waters—universal nature shows signs of terror and alarm—the roaring of the affrighted beasts, as they flee for shelter—the screaming of the birds, as they in vain seek a place of refuge,—pale cheeks on the cheeks of the scoffers, and cause their hearts to quake within them. The rivers rise above their banks, and the ocean, neglecting its ancient boundaries, rushes upon the land. The plains are already deluged, and the ark floats upon the waters. The shrieks and bitter cries of thousands rise to heaven—palaces, cities, all the monuments of human pride and splendour, lie buried in undistinguished ruin. The survivors flee trembling to the highest mountains. Thither the vengeance of the Almighty pursues them—in the midst of their peril they view with envy, with self-reproach, with agony, the ark in which they had refused to enter, safely riding on the back of the swelling surges. They cry in anguish to him whose warnings they had despised, to assist them—they behold their dearest connexions borne from their sides, and swallowed up by the fury of the tempest. Before the last groans and shrieks of their companions cease, they themselves drop into a watery grave. Thus death and destruction advance till the highest mountains are covered, and the divine justice and indignation sit enthroned in terrific majesty upon the watery waste. Impenitent men, scoffers at religion, deriders of the children of God, do you not hear a voice, in this event, which speaks to your hearts! Does it not proclaim to you, in accents loud and dreadful as the thunders of heaven, that the patience of God has its bounds; that the infinite Jehovah will not for ever be contemned by the ungodly; that, unless they are melted by his mercy, he will at last dart forth his thunders and sink them in

despair? Pause then at last in your course to ruin. If you are unmoved by our supplications, let the distractions, the horrors, the perdition of these unhappy men, preach to you, and warn you no longer to trifle with the Eternal—to sport with the vengeance of the living God. Hear their cries from the midst of the waters—hear their cries from the regions of despair,—and tremble at your danger. Say not, the mercy of God is infinite; we know it—your continuance in life proves it—the offers of mercy that he still makes to you prove it. But his justice, his hatred of sin, are also infinite. Turn then immediately to the Lord. Like these unhappy men, you have slighted his invitations, and braved his terrors; you have despised the means of grace, and the offers of salvation. God forbid, that the parallel should ever be carried further! God forbid, that it should ever be added, like them you were crushed by his vengeance! To prevent this, penitently return to him. Delay not this necessary work; for we cannot say to you that the patience of God will continue for one hundred and twenty years; we cannot even cry to you, You have yet seven days to enter into the ark. You have no certainty of an hour to come; to-morrow's sun may shine upon your grave; this may be the last mean of grace vouchsafed to you. Neglect it not, as did these miserable men; “Despise not the riches of the patience, and the goodness, and long-suffering of God, lest you should treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

How different were the feelings of Noah from those of the multitude perishing around him! What a crowd of mingled emotions rushed upon his heart! Pity for a deluded world, and for friends and rela-

tives who were involved in the common destruction—gratitude to God for his distinguishing goodness to himself and his family—terror at the displays of the divine power and justice—a full persuasion of the faithfulness of God, a firm confidence in his protection, and a sacred repose of the soul in him,—these were part of them.

The consecrated ark safely floats amidst the convulsions of the earth; for the providence of Him who “in his wrath remembers mercy,” watches over it. The flood at length ceases, the dry land appears, and the ark rests on Ararat. Noah waits for the divine command before he leaves it, and at the direction of God comes forth from it in safety, after it has been his asylum for little more than a year. What a spectacle is presented to him! He sees the deserted plains strewed with the remains of those who had perished, and with the monuments of the awful consequences of sin. He recalls those seasons when he exhorted and prayed and wept for these unhappy men; and whilst he acknowledges that the Lord is righteous, he commiserates their folly and their doom. Recalling the special mercy displayed to himself, his heart swells with gratitude; and assembling his family around him, he rears an altar, and interrupts the universal silence by the warm effusions of praise and thanksgiving. Victims bleed, prefigurative of that Messiah on whom alone the hopes of all the generations of the pious were founded. Himself and his family were afresh consecrated to their Deliverer, and his protection and grace implored to guard them against dangers which they might still have to encounter. Learn wisdom from his conduct, you, who when delivered from some great peril, when rescued from some impending calamity, rush

into the world to pay to it your first homages, instead of bowing before Him to whom you are indebted for every mercy. Learn wisdom from his conduct, you who have no domestic altar; who have never, like Noah, in the bosom and in the name of your family, poured out your devotions before the Lord.

The Lord accepts the offering of the patriarch; establishes with him the covenant of grace, gives him a new grant of all the creatures, and engages that the earth shall no more be drowned for the sins of man. Of this last engagement the rainbow is made by God the seal and the pledge.

Of the subsequent life of Noah, we know but little. He was occupied in the engagements of husbandry, in the instruction of his children, and in the offices of devotion. He had still causes of regret, for he soon perceived that sin is so deeply rooted in the heart of man, that all the waters of the deluge were insufficient to sweep it from the world. Before he closed his eyes upon the earth, he saw it again covered with vice, and polluted with idolatry. Alas! my brethren, he saw the deep depravity of human nature in himself. Noah, who had faithfully admonished the old world, who had resisted the strongest seductions to sin, who had experienced the special mercy of God, and had often solemnly devoted himself to the service of the Lord, is next presented to us as lying drunken in his tent. The humiliating fact is simply related by the inspired historian, and we are left to form our own comments. Some have supposed, that, not aware of the effects of wine, he was involuntarily surprised. But it can scarcely be supposed that he could be thus ignorant, after living six hundred years before the flood, in a period noted for its intemperance and dissipation.

The circumstance is mentioned as a melancholy proof of human frailty. When we read such examples of frailty in the pious; when we see a Noah acting so inconsistently with the conduct of a long life; a David plunging into such guilt after such communion with God; a Solomon indulging in idolatry after so much wisdom from on high; a Peter denying his Lord after such warm protestations to him,—when we see such examples, what shall we say, my dear brethren? Shall we justify their offence? Shall we be led to think lightly of sin? Shall we palliate our own offences by their example? Ah! thousands of souls now in hell, by thus abusing these histories, have undone themselves. No; let us be led to fear and distrust ourselves—to exercise a holy jealousy over our own hearts—to feel our need of constant and renewed supplies of grace and the necessity of continual watchfulness and prayer, if we would be secure—not to be confident because we have triumphed over great temptations—and to live near to God.

While Noah was in this degraded situation, he was treated with impious irreverence by his son Ham, while Shem and Japhet displayed their filial regard for him. Awaking from his sleep, and inspired by the Spirit of prophecy, he uttered that remarkable prediction in which the future destinies of the nations springing from his sons were represented: “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren: Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.” It is not my intention in detail to show you the accomplishment of this prediction. It cannot, however, but strengthen our

faith in the divine oracles, to observe briefly how perfectly it corresponds with the records of history. Does Noah declare that Canaan shall be in subjection to his brethren? See the Canaanites subdued by the Israelites, the descendants of Shem; see the inhabitants of Syria, Tyre, and Carthage, who also sprung from Canaan, subjugated by the Greeks and Romans, the descendants of Japhet. "There never," says Jos. Mede, "has been a son of Ham who has shaken a sceptre over the head of Japhet. Shem has subdued Japhet, and Japhet subdued Shem; but Ham never subdued either." Is it declared that God will in a peculiar manner be the God of Shem? The majority of true worshippers, till the coming of Christ, were among his descendants; and from him, according to the flesh, Messiah sprung. Is Japhet to be enlarged? He was the progenitor of more than half the human race. Was he to dwell in the tents of Shem? Under the Greek and Roman empires, and in subsequent ages, his offspring possessed that authority and dominion which had formerly belonged to the children of Shem. I repeat it—I only glance at these points. It would be easy, did our time permit, to show that all nations and ages concur in verifying this prediction, and that it is indeed, in abridgment, the history of the world.

After surviving the flood three hundred and fifty years, and seeing the world again peopled, Noah sunk into the grave.

You have observed, my brethren, that I have not examined those objections which infidels have made against this part of the sacred history. This would have led me aside from the great design of these lectures. Besides, they have been too often refuted to render a particular examination necessary. A thou-

sand times has it been triumphantly shown, that the deluge is an event attested not only by the word of God, but by the traditions of every nation that ever existed, and by numerous facts in nature which cannot otherwise be explained. A thousand times has it been triumphantly shown, that there is nothing in the relation of Moses inconsistent with the strictest principles of philosophy. But even if there were serious difficulties, what then? Could they not be surmounted by Omnipotence? Can the Infinite God do nothing beyond the comprehension of a worm? To all the vain cavils of the infidel we need only answer, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

From the time of Noah, the duration of human life gradually diminished till it was fixed at the present standard. Many writers have endeavoured to discover natural causes for the longevity of the antediluvians. Their attempts are vain; the preservation of the human frame for so long a period, must be resolved into the will and the power of that God in whom we live. Many moral causes of the protraction of their lives readily occur to us: the earth was thus sooner filled with inhabitants; and knowledge, which in those ages was preserved by tradition, was thus more certainly and safely handed down to posterity. Even before the flood, we see circumstances in the sacred history, which teach us that these long lives are not to be regarded as special blessing; since those who soonest left this earth, were Abel and Enoch, the favourites of heaven. Immortality upon earth is a blessing only to innocent man. To man depraved and unhappy it would be a curse. And in proportion as corruption increased, did it become an act of mercy in God to abridge the measure

of our days. What inconceivable woes must the church have felt, had the Neros, the Dioclesians, and other persecutors, lived to a patriarchal age! What torrents of blood would have deluged the earth, had the Cæsars, the Alexanders, and other scourges of mankind attained the years of Methusalem! What violence, what rapacity, what heaven-daring offences should we every where behold, if the ungodly could look forward to centuries yet to be spent upon earth! Christian, it is in mercy that you are not kept so long from the world of holiness and felicity, from the enjoyment of your God and Saviour. Sinner, it is in mercy that you are not permitted to heap up a greater weight of sin. Enough is accumulated in the narrow limits of human life to crush you. Child of affliction, it is in mercy that your woes are hastening to an end—that there is just before you that peaceful habitation where “the wicked cease from troubling—where the weary are at rest.”

The destruction of the old world by water is the pledge of a more awful destruction which awaits it. “The world that then was,” says St. Peter, “being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. [2 Pet. iii. 6, 7.] Do you live regardless of that awful day of the Lord, immersed in business or pleasure? So did they before the flood—“they ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” Do you disbelieve it, and scoff at those who live in the patient expectation and full belief of it? The scoffs of these impious men were as bitter, their taunts as loud, their



confidence as great, as yours; yet mark their doom! Were they unexpectedly surprised? “The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; and when men cry peace, sudden destruction shall overtake them.” Were their lamentations useless, and their supplications unavailing, when the flood commenced? In vain will you cry for mercy; in vain will you lament your past folly, and bewail almost with tears of blood your neglect of the offers of salvation. The time of mercy will have past, and justice will be inexorable. Live then habitually mindful of that day when a still more awful desolation than that of the old world shall envelop the globe—when the Lord shall descend in the majesty of his power, in the splendours of his glory, “taking vengeance on all that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Jesus; when the earth shall be enwrapped in flames, and the heavens flee from the face of their Creator—when you and I and all men must appear before him—when all who have not fled for safety to the Redeemer must experience his vengeance. May we be prepared to stand then fearless and undaunted.

Finally, let us direct our eyes from Noah to the Redeemer whom he typified. His name is indeed *rest* to the weary and heavy-laden, comfort to the miserable and disconsolate. In the midst of a perverse generation, he gave a bright example—the only image of unspotted purity ever exhibited on earth. He was “a preacher of righteousness,” and declared the counsels of his Father; but, alas! few regarded his instructions. By him alone are all mankind delivered from the divine judgments. Through his sacrifice the curse is removed, and his children accepted. And with him is the everlasting covenant established; through him its blessings flow: to him

let us humbly flee. Sheltered in him, as in our ark of safety, we shall not fear the tempests of earth; we shall be unmoved by the storms raging furiously around us. We shall be carefully protected by Providence, till at last we shall rest upon the everlasting hills, where storms and convulsions, judgments and curses, never more shall assail us.

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## SERMON IV.



### LIFE OF ABRAHAM.



#### GENESIS XXV. 7, 8.

*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, and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.*

IN the progress of our lectures we have arrived at a character which holds a prominent rank in the sacred volume. In whatever light we view Abram, his history deserves attention. He held a distinguished station as the founder of the Jewish church and nation. He was venerable for his virtues and for the testimonials of the divine love which he received; exemplary for the firmness of his faith, the fervour of his love, and the constancy of his obedience; and interesting from the multiplied trials which he endured.

I. Let us observe in the history of Abram, the commencement of a new dispensation of religion, preparatory to that under which we now live.

Previous to the time when this patriarch lived, there had been many persons truly devoted to God, to whom the most precious promises had been made, and the most cheering revelations given; whose services had been acceptable to the Lord, and who had received the most endearing pledges of the divine favour. Yet still these pious men had been mingled with the world; there had existed no visible church, forming a separate society, and having some outward mark of distinction to serve as "a wall of partition" between it and the profane. The unhappy effects of this mixture of the pious with the ungodly had been plainly seen. It produced that vice and irreligion which brought the deluge upon the earth; and after the flood it occasioned that idolatry, that superstition, and depravity which were almost universal at the time when Abram was born. Every where false religions then prevailed; and the objects of nature and the works of men's hands were adored instead the great Creator. This was peculiarly the case in Chaldea, the birth-place of Abram, and even his parents were infected with the general corruption. Lest true religion should be entirely forgotten, and the fear and love of the true God obliterated from the hearts of men, he mercifully interposed. Instead of again sweeping from the earth which they polluted, all the idolatrous and unholy, and miraculously preserving his followers in an ark, he resolved to institute a separate society, in which they might live "unspotted from the world." He selected a particular person to be the founder of a church and nation, that should be the asylum of religion, and the

depository of the divine doctrines and oracles; that should receive the types and prophecies respecting Messiah; that should gradually be trained up for his advent; from whom, according to the flesh, he should spring; and who, separated by their belief and ceremonial practices, should preserve the true religion, while the nations around them were sunk in the darkness of heathenism and the horrors of superstition. This important event took place at a period about equally distant from the fall of man and the incarnation of the Redeemer; and Abram was chosen as the happy person who should be the father of this nation, the commencement of the visible church, and the instrument of so much felicity to mankind in every age.

Of the earlier years of this patriarch, we know but little. He is not presented to us in the holy volume till after he had passed the age of threescore years and ten. He then lived on the eastern side of the Euphrates, in the very centre of idolatry. Called by God to leave his native land, and go to a country whither he should be conducted by Providence, he obeys without hesitancy; and departs from Ur, attended only by his aged father, his beloved Sarai, and Lot his brother's son. Detained at Charan by the infirmities of his parent, he remained to perform for him the last sad offices of affection; and then, at the age of seventy-five, prosecuted his journey to Canaan. The visible church here commencing in him, he is represented in scripture as "the father of all those who believe," even at the present time; and we are assured that "if we be Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." "He was," as one remarks,\* "the root whence

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\* Edwards's History of Redemption.

the visible church rose as a tree distinct from all others, of which tree Christ was the branch of righteousness; and from which, after Christ came, the natural branches were broken off, and the Gentiles were grafted in: the same tree which has spread its branches over many nations; which, in due time, will cover the whole earth; and at the end of the world will be transplanted from an earthly soil into the Paradise of God."

We should naturally expect, that, since Abram held this distinguished station, he would have a clearer view of the plan of redemption than those who preceded him. And this we find to be the case. The light which rose upon our first parents in Eden now became more brilliant; and the covenant of grace was more fully revealed and renewedly confirmed to this patriarch. He was taught that Messiah should descend from him, and communicate his blessings to all nations. He was more clearly taught the nature and grounds of that justification by faith, by which alone a sinner can be accepted by God. He received new seals and pledges of the covenant, particularly in the rite of circumcision. In that act, which was the most eminent trial of his faith, he had a more distinct view of the mode of redemption than had been previously granted: in Isaac stretched upon the wood, he saw the eternal Son slain by his Father: receiving him as by a resurrection from the dead, he saw the real resurrection of Jesus: ascending Mount Moriah, he trod the very ground on which the blood of the cross afterwards smoked: in the three days from the time when Isaac was devoted to death, till he was restored to him, he marked the interval between the death and the resurrection of the Redeemer; and in the ram

which he was permitted to offer instead of Isaac, he saw the intermediate sacrifice of the Mosaic œconomy. Then it was that he “rejoiced to see the day of Jesus—that he saw it and was glad.” (John viii. 56.)

My brethren, you admire the privileges of Abram; but, in one sense, how far superior are the privileges which we enjoy! Clear as were his views of the work and character of Jesus, in comparison with those who had lived before him, yet he still saw this Redeemer through types and shadows—he still had to look down through successive ages to the period when he should come. While to us, his love, his actions, and his sufferings, are presented without a cloud; and to the twilight of the Christian Church has succeeded the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness. Wo to us, if, with such advantages, we be found destitute of that faith and holiness which distinguished Abraham! We are,

II. To present to you Abraham as a model of piety and virtue. What *self-denial*, what *obedience* to God, did he uniformly display! No sacrifice appears to him painful, no duty oppressive, when God commands. At a period of life when nature seeks rest and quiet, God calls him to leave his native land, to abandon those scenes rendered dear by a thousand tender remembrances; to forsake the friends who have grown old with him, and the relatives who shared his heart; to leave the graves of his fathers, and the temporal comforts which appeared so needful in his declining years; to enter upon a course of life full of difficulties and dangers. Yet God had spoken; the pleas of worldly prudence and self-indulgence are disregarded; the suggestions of those tender feelings of our nature, which are innocent,

and even laudable, when not opposed to the divine will, are silenced, and “he went forth, not knowing whither he went.” Imitate his example, if you wish his recompense. When the Lord commands, let not the fear of danger or the love of ease check your obedience. Carry not even natural affections to excess, remembering that your Saviour hath said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.” The same God who called Abraham to abandon Ur, calls from the height of heaven to you to abandon that state in which you are by nature—to come out from the wicked, and be separate—to regard not this world as your portion, but to consider yourself as a pilgrim and a stranger, and to look for “a better country, that is, an heavenly.” Ah! how few of us, like Abram, listen to this voice of our God!

Behold another instance of his self-denial and obedience. After his faith had been tried by many years delay, the promised son is born unto him. The piety and virtue of this beloved child, of this child to whom such exalted promises are made, gild the declining years of his father, and make the infirmities of age sit light upon him. He is ready to descend into the tomb, since his son will receive his last sigh—since his memory will be perpetuated in him who is to be a blessing to the nations.—Whilst indulging such felicity, he hears the voice of the Lord: “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 that I shall tell thee of.” What a trial was this! How great must have been that self-denial and obedience which did not shrink from it! Abram knows that it is the voice of God: and

he prepares not to reason, but obey. A mournful journey of three days does not shake the steady purpose of his soul. He ascends the mount, and prepares the sacrifice. Isaac is extended upon the wood—the arm of Abraham is raised to strike the fatal blow—when God, by a voice from heaven, arrests the sacrifice. Need I, my brethren, bring any other instances to show the sincerity of his obedience? Oh! let us, like him, be ready to relinquish all our enjoyments at his commands; and if our Isaacs be taken from us; if the objects on which our hearts rest with fondest delight, be torn from our embraces; if our friends be laid in the grave, let us always show that we are the followers of the father of the faithful, and are animated by his temper.

What warm *devotion* does Abraham display! Trace him in all his pilgrimages, and you will see that his God is never forgotten. If he stops but for a night, you behold him rearing an altar which he encircles with his family. At Sichern and at Bethel, at Mamre and at Beersheba, his offerings are presented. Every place where he rests is consecrated by his prayers and his sacrifices. Oh! what a reproach to those who have no domestic altar, and who never offer up their services to the Lord!

My brethren, there are many of you, who, like Abraham, have left your fathers' house, your kindred, and your native land. Have you, like him, in all your wanderings, preserved fresh upon your minds a sense of your obligations to God, and showed yourselves his faithful worshippers? Alas! this is not the case with all of you. This, perhaps, is not the case with some, who in their native land have received pious instructions, which were cherished by



the prayers of a holy father, or watered by the tears of a tender mother; but which are now all forgotten or neglected. Will not Abraham rise up against you in the day of judgment—Abraham who, though he witnessed only idolatrous examples, still in his pilgrimage remembered God?

What interesting *humility* do we observe in his devotions. He never forgets the infinite distance between himself and the all-perfect Jehovah. His highest privileges never make him overlook his character as a creature and a sinner. We see in his addresses none of that rude familiarity which some persons mistake for Christian confidence. When the promise is renewed to him, and the strongest proofs given him of the favour of God, he falls upon his face before the Lord. When he intercedes for Sodom, nothing can exceed the touching humility of his language. Imitate his conduct, if you would be accepted by God. “He rejecteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” If like the Pharisee you come to his throne, boasting of your good deeds and in a vain elation of heart, thanking him that you are “not as other men,” your sacrifice will be an abomination. If with the publican you deplore your offences, and penitently cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” you will be justified.

What an unshaken *faith* in the promises, what a confident *trust* in the providence of God! Of this we need give no particular examples. It is displayed in almost every incident of his life. It was the spring of his virtues, and his support under trials. It enabled him, though his way was often dark, though his prospects appeared glomy, though numberless obstructions, apparently insurmountable, rose before him,—to go on with steadiness, and without appre-

hension.—Oh! had we more of this divine principle, my brethren, from how many tormenting fears would it deliver us! How pleasantly should we pass through life, if we always, in the exercise of a tranquil confidence, would lean upon the arm of the Almighty,—and by a firm faith rely on his promises, and lay hold on his omnipotence for our guard.

What care to *impress his family* with a sense of the importance of religion. “I know him that he will command his children and his household, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.” Is this your conduct, my brethren? When he has a near access to God, with what fervour does he pray for Ishmael!—Do you thus carry your friends and relatives by prayer, to God—and supplicate his mercies upon them? What solicitude does he display with regard to the marriage of his son! seeking, not an alliance that should increase his fortune, or worldly influence, but one in which his religion would not be endangered, nor his soul led away from God.

But Abraham was not one of those characters who are satisfied with those graces which are peculiarly devotional, while the social virtues are neglected. No. He appears equally great and interesting in his conduct to his fellow men.

What tender attention does he pay to Sarah while living, and with what sincerity does he mourn and lament for her at Kirjath-arba! When strangers appear in the plains of Mamre, with what alacrity does he run to meet them, and perform for them all the offices of hospitality! When Sodom is threatened, with what affecting earnestness does he intercede for it! What disinterestedness, when he returned loaded with the spoils of the vanquished kings. and in his conduct to Ephron! What a pacific disposition, when

he relinquishes his rights rather than contend with Lot! What true courage, when at the age of eighty-five, he exchanges his pastoral occupations for the din of arms,—and rushes to the battle, not for some petty interest, or for the bubble reputation—but to rescue a beloved friend and relative!

So illustrious was the character of Abraham!—but he is not represented as perfect. But one model that we may at all times safely imitate, is presented to us in the word of God. To the example of Jesus we may always confidently look as the Israelites did to the pillar of fire and cloud, knowing that it will unerringly guide us through the difficulties and dangers of this earthly wilderness. All characters merely human bear the stamp of imperfection. But while we grieve at seeing the faith of Abram twice shaken, and beholding him, instead of relying upon God, have recourse to subterfuges and prevarications unworthy of him, to avert an imaginary danger; while we lament that he yielded to the impatience of Sarah, who, aiming to hasten the accomplishment of the promise by what appeared to her the most probable means, only involved herself in vexation by the birth of Ishmael: let us learn not to glory in men, or to depend upon any power or strength of our own; but to pray continually, “Hold thou me up, then shall I be safe: take not thine Holy Spirit from me; then shall I have respect to all thy commandments.”

The *trials* of Abraham were numerous and severe. They evidenced and strengthened his religious principles. If we are his followers, we need not expect to be exempted from them—we need not desire it. Without them there never was a high degree of piety. Without them we could not fully evidence to ourselves, or to others, the reality, the degree, and the supporting influence of our religious feelings.

## SERMON V.



## LIFE OF LOT



## GENESIS xiii. 12.

*“ Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom.”*

LÓT was the son of Haran, the elder brother of Abram. In early life he was deprived of his parent, and left an orphan. Who would not have condoled with his destitute situation? Who would not have pitied a youth left to the kindness of a cruel and unfeeling world? Who would not have sympathized with him as his tears flowed over the tomb of his father? But how imperfectly can we judge of the designs of Providence; and how often do those circumstances which fill our eyes with tears, and our hearts with anguish, prove our choicest mercies! Though Haran dies, Lot finds in Abram more than his father could have been unto him. Had Haran lived, his son would have perhaps continued with him in Chaldea; would have become infected with the prevalent idolatry; would have grown up unacquainted with the true God; would have passed his life in impiety, and then descended to the regions of despair. But in mercy to his son, Haran, by the providence of the Almighty, sinks into the grave; and Lot is admitted into the family, and enjoys the affection and the care

of Abram: the benefit of his holy example, his pious instructions, and his constant intercession. "His father and his mother," pierced by the arrow of death, "forsake him; but the Lord takes him up." Shall not this event console you who are mourning under the gloomy aspects of Divine Providence—who are crying out, like Jacob, at the occurrence of events unexpected by you, "All these things are against me?" Remember in how many instances light has sprung from the thickest darkness. Remember that

" God moves in a mysterious way  
" His wonders to perform;"

And that

" Behind a frowning providence  
" He" often "hides a smiling face."

Remember the anguish of Lot's heart at his early bereavement, and the subsequent blessings to him from this bereavement; and then bow to the dispensations of the Almighty, and submit to his disposals. Especially let these instructions be received by those who, like Lot, have followed to the house of silence near and dear relatives or friends. Painful as have been these separations, yet if they are sanctified, you shall see, perhaps in this life, certainly in that which is to come, that they were the choicest mercies, and sent in covenant love. Oh! has not this been the experience of some who hear me, who by the death of parents, of children, of friends, have been made to raise their hearts from the creature, and elevate them to the Creator,—have been led into the paths of goodness and religion!

When Abram was called out of Chaldea, Lot, probably affected by the same efficacious grace which

induced the patriarch to comply with the heavenly monition, undertook to accompany him in his long and dangerous pilgrimage, and committed himself with confidence to the protection of the Lord. With Abram he passed from place to place, witnessing his piety, and uniting with him in often rearing an altar to Jehovah, and pouring out before him the tribute of gratitude and praise. No doubt his religious feelings were strengthened, and his piety augmented by this intercourse with Abraham. Oh! what a privilege it is, like him, to have pious friends and relatives! and with what solicitude should we profit by the advantages to be derived from an association with them.

Lot continued with Abram, a stranger and a sojourner in Canaan, and accompanying him in all his removals, attended him to Egypt, when the land of promise was oppressed with famine. On their return, his property, as well as that of the patriarch, had greatly increased. But, alas! how often are large possessions the parent of trouble and contention! The harmony which had hitherto subsisted between Abram and Lot would probably have been interrupted, had not the patriarch addressed him with a meekness, a gentleness, and disinterestedness, conformable to his character, reminded him that they were brethren, and urged him to choose any spot that he should prefer for his residence. Here we see the first indication of what appears to have been the besetting sin of Lot—he was covetous; the augmentation of his property made him desirous to accumulate still more. He cast his eyes towards the plain of Sodom, and beholding its beauty and fertility, he there “pitched his tent,” notwithstanding its inhabitants were infamous for their vices and impiety. He who had so generously forsaken

his native country and his kindred, because they were devoted to idolatry, now, from a sordid love of gain, unites himself to the vilest idolaters. From the hope of accumulating a little more wealth, he leaves the holy society of Abram, to mingle with the wicked. Thus he plunged into temptation; and in prosecuting his history, we shall see what regrets, what disappointment, and anguish he prepared for himself.

My brethren, you blame, and you deservedly blame, these sentiments, and this conduct of Lot. But, ah! how many of you are there who in blaming him, condemn yourselves! This inordinate love of wealth, has seduced from the path of duty many thousands besides Lot; has caused numerous professors to dishonour religion, and to pierce their hearts through with many sorrows; and has sunk myriads in eternal perdition. Shall we not then pause for a moment, and solemnly inquire whether we are not in danger from this crime. This is the more necessary, because, although there is no sin against which the Scriptures utter more awful or more frequent threatenings, yet there is, at the same time, none under which the consciences of men are more easy, or in which they more frequently delude themselves. In most of the other gross violations of the law of God, men are constrained to acknowledge that they are guilty; but here how many evasions and subterfuges do they use to conceal the truth from themselves. This man supposes that he is not covetous, and that the threatenings against this crime do not concern him, because he is satisfied with what he has already attained and desires no more. As if an inordinate attachment to riches, a preference of them to God, did not as much show the worldly spirit as a desire for

more ; as if he whom Christ describes as a miserable, foolish, worldlying, had not said to himself, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”—This man supposes that he is not covetous, because he sometimes thinks of heaven, and is unwilling to sink into perdition when he can no longer keep the world, and because he sometimes prays, and gives alms, and observes the exteriors of religion ; as if more than this had not been done by those very Pharisees, whom our Saviour himself reprov'd as covetous. In order to decide whether we have this vice, we must ask, not merely whether we sometimes think of heaven, and do something for it—but where are we laying up our treasure ? where are our hearts, our happiness, and our hopes ? This man supposes that he is not covetous, because he is *poor* ; as if he who wanted riches, might not, by impatience, by discontent, by inordinate desires, show as great a love of them, as he who is surrounded by wealth. But it would be endless to trace all the illusions of the human heart, which is so ingenious to deceive itself. Let me then briefly show you the nature of this crime, and warn you against it. Those are esteem'd by God to be covetous, and inordinately attached to riches, whose practice and lives declare that they prefer worldly wealth before God and everlasting happiness ; who, in the language of the Scriptures, “make not God their strength, but trust in the abundance of their riches ;” who think of these riches more frequently, and with more delight than they do of Christ, and grace, and heaven ; who are more grieved at the thoughts of temporal want and poverty, than of sin, and God's displeasure ; who, from the anxious pursuit of wealth, neglect all serious duties, or attend to



them with coldness and distraction; who can be satisfied if their worldly affairs prosper, though their souls be unsanctified and unpardoned; who seek riches for their own sake, and not as the means of benefitting others, and advancing their salvation. It is a crime which sometimes (as was the case with Lot) is found in a degree, in those who have laid up their treasure in heaven, and who prefer God and holiness to all the enjoyments of earth. But in them these remains of an inordinate attachment to riches are hated, lamented, resisted, and so far subdued, that they do not habitually prevail against the interest of God and salvation. This is a sin which calls for bitter tears—which brings with it great sorrow—but which yet may be consistent with piety. In others this sin is predominant. Instead of being so affected by a lively practical belief of the joys of heaven, as there to lay up their treasures, they esteem the riches of this world as the foundation of their felicity, and consider themselves happy or miserable in proportion as these are augmented or diminished. This is a state of mind utterly inconsistent with salvation.

Professors of the religion of Jesus, are there any of you to whom any of these traits will apply? Pause and consider your guilt and your folly. How inconsistently do you act with the holy vocation whereby you are called; with your exalted hopes and your sublime destination! Shall the heart which ought to leap by its meditations and desires, to the throne of God, and be employed as angels are, and taste the delights which archangels enjoy,—shall this heart contentedly grovel in the dust? Were the eagle, instead of fixing his eye upon the sun, and soaring above the clouds, to come and crawl with the earth-worm, it would be a spectacle far less inconsistent.

Whilst God is on your tongue, and the badge of Jesus worn by you, let not your heart be immersed in earth. This anxious desire of accumulating riches may lead you to apostatize from God. Judas, Demetrius, Demas, a thousand other shrieking ghosts, elevate a warning voice to you from the infernal pit. Even if this awful effect be not produced, this temper will mar all your comforts and wither all your joys. An eclipse of the divine light may surely be expected when this earth gets between your soul and the sun of righteousness. Have you ever enjoyed the presence of God, and had the emanations of his love flowing in upon your soul, and his reconciled countenance manifested to you? You then cannot but be affected by this consideration: for you have then felt in a day's, an hour's, converse with God, more than the world can ever bestow. Remember in what terms those Scriptures, which you profess to receive as the rule of your practice, speak of this sin. Let your heart quake within you, while you hear James [iv. 4.] denouncing it as spiritual adultery, and "enmity with God," and Paul proclaiming that it is "idolatry." Reflect, how much you harden sinners in their guilt by your worldly lives; and can you bear to place a stumbling block in their way, over which they shall plunge in eternal despair? Remember what agonies you are laying up in store for yourself—what woes you are preparing to besiege your bed of death—what store of self-reproach you are providing for the hour of your dissolution! After a worldly life, you cannot then expect the divine consolations; and even if you should "be saved as by fire," your soul will probably depart shuddering, trembling, doubtful of your future destiny. Be awakened then, believers, and, as you value your own felicity, or the

interests of religion, acquire a greater indifference to the objects of earth; strive to get the world more out of your heart, and to trample it beneath your feet.

The importance of this subject will be a sufficient apology, my brethren, if I have too long detained you from the history which we are considering. Lot, then, animated by covetous desires unworthy of his character, removed to the plain of Sodom. Were his hopes there answered? No: he had many causes of sorrow, and his expectations of gain were frustrated. While Abram dwelt in holy peace and sacred tranquillity, enjoying the visits of God and of his angels, the heart of Lot was perpetually pained by the scenes of wickedness and impiety which he every where beheld. While the possessions of the patriarch daily increased, and the blessing of God upon him made him rich, Lot was stripped in a moment of all his possessions, and himself taken captive. Delivered by the courage of Abram, he again returned to the seat of wickedness; and, at its destruction, again lost all his property, and escaped only with his life. How often are men thus disappointed in their worldly expectations! And how miserable are those who have no other ground of confidence!

It is an honourable trait in the character of Lot, that, instead of partaking in the sins of Sodom, he openly reprov'd them, and mourned for them. "He was vexed," says St. Peter, "with the filthy conversation of the wicked: for that righteous man, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds."

What a reproof does his conduct present to those who, when they are in the midst of profane scoffers,

blush to profess their attachment to the Redeemer; to those, who, instead of faithfully reproving those vices that are sanctioned by custom, basely connive at them; to those who satisfy themselves by living as the world does, and quiet their conscience by the consideration that they go with the multitude. Had Lot thus acted, he would not have escaped the infection of guilt, and would have perished with the inhabitants of Sodom.

The iniquities of this and the neighbouring cities were now full; and the patience and long-suffering of the Lord, which had so long been exercised towards them, were exhausted: the cry of their sins had ascended to heaven and called for vengeance; the day of mercy was passed, and the divine indignation was just ready to burst on these devoted places. To save Lot and his family, the Lord miraculously interposed. The same angels who were the messengers of vengeance upon the guilty, warned him of the coming judgment, and urged him instantly to flee from it. He hastened to warn his sons-in-law of their danger. But hardened in guilt, they mocked him as a fool and a madman. Lamenting their obstinacy, weeping over their ruin, and at the impending destruction of so many relatives and acquaintance, Lot still lingers. The angels, by a gentle constraint, draw him from the city, and bid him, without delaying, or casting a look behind him, to flee to the mountains. At his supplications, he is permitted to enter into Zoar, a small neighbouring city; and its inhabitants, who would otherwise have been involved in the common ruin, are spared at his request. So true is it that “the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avail-eth much.” This deliverance of Lot is improved by Peter for the consolation of believers. “The Lord

knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." [2 Pet. ii. 9.] However perilous and afflictive your situation may be, cast yourself upon his care, rely on his providence, and you shall not be disappointed. He who missioned his angels to pluck Lot out of Sodom, shall send these same heavenly ministers to guard and defend you.

As soon as he was safely sheltered in Zoar, the work of desolation commenced. The inhabitants continued thoughtless and secure, deriding the vain fears and gloomy apprehensions of Lot. "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." [Luke xvii. 28, 29.] Who will not tremble at beholding this catastrophe, and acknowledge that the Lord is indeed a "consuming fire?" Say not that we are uninterested in this event. The Redeemer himself presents it as an emblem of the carelessness and stupidity of sinners; and his holy apostle tells us, that they were "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." [Jude 7.]

But though Lot was delivered from destruction, yet still dearly was he punished for that covetous spirit which had led him to Sodom. His possessions were lost; his family had yielded to the temptations around them, and become a source of anguish to him; his sons-in-law and his wife had perished; and his daughters, who had been preserved for his sake, appear to have been little calculated to give comfort to his declining years. After remaining for some time in Zoar, terrified, perhaps, by the iniquity of the place, and fearing that it also would sink under the divine vengeance, he fled to the mountains.

where, with his two daughters, he resided in a cave. Here he fell into the most horrid and unnatural sins. He who had stood firm against the seductions of Sodom, whose integrity had not been shaken by the examples of the sinners around him, now grossly falls, while in solitude, and in a cave of the mountains. So incapable are external circumstances of preserving us from guilt—so necessary is it at all times to watch over our deceitful hearts. He who had been so specially protected by God, forgets his obligations and vows, and outrages his Benefactor. Lord, what is man! How necessary is it “for him who standeth to take heed lest he fall!” How necessary for us, even if we have long and successfully resisted the seductions to guilt, still to distrust ourselves, and never to let down our watch.

After this period, we hear nothing more of Lot. The last event related of him is an awful blot upon his character; and if he were recovered to repentance, no doubt his soul was wrung with grief; and, sorrowfully spending the rest of his days, he at last sunk into the tomb.

Happy will it be for us, if, learning wisdom from his conduct, and instructed by his falls, we be led by his history to live nearer to the Lord, to rely upon his strength, to take him as our portion, and to seek from him a heart detached from the world, and not inordinately fixed upon earthly riches.

## SERMON VI.



LOT'S WIFE.



LUKE xvii. 32.

*“Remember Lot’s wife.”*

THE history to which we are regularly brought by the course of these lectures, has indeed a fearful interest. The impressions that it makes, though melancholy, are salutary. The lessons that it teaches, and the self-examination that it induces, are specially suited for a Sabbath that precedes our approach to the holy communion. Listen, then, with solemnity and self-application, to the exhortation of our Redeemer.

All the historical events that are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, happened, as the apostle teaches us, “as ensamples for us, and for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the earth are come.” But among those judgments of God, that are recorded in the Old Testament, there is scarcely any more frequently recalled to our remembrance in the New, more frequently held up as a beacon to guard us against sin and misery, than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This both Peter and Jude represent as a striking emblem of the punishment which awaits the ungodly. To this our Saviour refers, when he

declares how deep and aggravated will be the condemnation of those who perish under the gospel; and to one of the most noted of those who then fell beneath the anger of God he points us in the text: “*Remember Lot’s wife.*”

In order to feel the force of these words, and to derive instruction from them, it will be necessary to take a very brief review of that history to which they relate. Sodom and Gomorrah were two cities of the land of Canaan, noted for the beauty of their situation, the fertility of the adjacent countries, and the riches of their inhabitants, but infamous for the vices and impiety which prevailed in them. The patience and forbearance of God, which had long been exercised towards them, were at length exhausted—the cry of their sins had ascended to heaven, and called for vengeance—the day of mercy was passed, and the storm of indignation was just ready to burst on these devoted places. Amidst the general depravity, one man preserved his integrity. Lot was, says St. Peter, “just and righteous, and in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.” To save him and his family from the impending destruction, the Lord miraculously interposed. The same angels, who were the ministers of divine indignation upon the guilty, warned him of the coming judgment, and urged him with his family instantly to flee from it. His sons-in-law, hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, laughed at his counsel, and despised his apprehensions; but his wife and unmarried daughters, obedient to the heavenly monition, went with him without the gates. There they received another order, in the name and from the messenger of God: “Escape for your life! look not behind you, neither tarry in all the plain.”



The rest obeyed the divine orders, and safely arrived at Zoar, the haven of rest; but his wife, regretting the treasures she had left behind her, doubting whether God would fulfil his threatenings, lingered behind—looked back upon the city, in contradiction to the express command that had just been given—saw its wretched inhabitants enveloped in a destruction which they did not expect, and for which they were not prepared—was herself overtaken by the storm, and became a lasting monument of divine wrath.

In this history, thus briefly exhibited to you, there are two remarkable instances of the judgments of God—the punishment of the Sodomites, and that of Lot's wife. The first is calculated to alarm the obdurate and the careless, who have totally neglected the counsels of God, who continue presumptuously sinning against him, and who mock at those who bid them flee from that gulf of wo, on the borders of which they stand: let such consider the lake of Sodom, and tremble. The second is no less calculated to strike with apprehension all those who have listened in a degree to the commands of God, have turned their backs upon the world and sin, and apparently walked some time in the paths of piety—but who, beginning to doubt of the divine declarations, beginning to be dazzled by the deceptive charms of the world, or the alluring pleasures of sin, look back with eager and longing desires upon the course they have abandoned. Let such attend to the monitory voice of Jesus, (and oh! that it might reach their hearts!) "*Remember Lot's wife.*" Considering that she perished, as well as those who remained in Sodom, let them not relax in their exertions, nor falter in their path, but "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure."

To aid you thus to act, I shall, in the remarks which I have yet to make,

I. Present to you Lot's wife as a model of backsliders; and,

II. Urge upon your consciences several motives to induce those of you, who may discover a conformity between her character and your own, to repent and return to the Lord from whom you have strayed.

I. Backsliders may be divided into three classes; those of *the heart*, of *the mind*, and of *the life*; and all these may see the image of themselves in the wife of Lot.

1. It is the *heart* which is the source of all backsliding and departure from God. "Out of it," says the wise man, "are the issues of life;" and out of it, we may add, are also the issues of death. Whilst it remains fixed upon God; whilst it is thoroughly penetrated with a sense of his glories and mercies; whilst his love is shed abroad in it by the Holy Ghost; nothing will be found sufficiently powerful to draw the Christian aside from his duty and his Lord. But when the heart becomes cold and insensible—when earthly desires and sinful pleasures intrude into it, how soon it yields to every temptation! how ready is it to violate every command! Behold this in the wife of Lot! When the angel first announced to her the destruction of the city, and her deliverance, she was probably penetrated with gratitude to that God who had thus interposed in her behalf, and snatched her as a brand from the burning, and was ready to sacrifice every thing since her life was preserved. But no sooner had she advanced a small distance from the place, than the enjoyments of Sodom recurred to her mind, and cooled her gratitude. She remembered her treasure

that was there, and her heart flew back to it. She remembered the plenty and the pleasures she there had enjoyed. She repined to abandon the comforts of her old habitation for an humbler, though a safer, dwelling. She hesitated—she doubted—she paused—and she perished.

Oh! how striking a picture of those of you, Christians, whose hearts have become estranged from God! Time was, when your souls overflowed with love and gratitude to him who had plucked you from eternal despair; when you felt that the acquisition of life, of eternal life, was the only object worthy your cares; when your eyes were thankfully and constantly fixed on the angel of the covenant, who showed you your danger, and pointed you to the city of refuge. Why is it that your heart has undergone so great a change? Why is it no longer an altar, on which the flames of devotion and love burn by night and by day? Your thoughts, like those of the unhappy woman whose history we are meditating, were attracted by some earthly vanity which was loved beyond its real value, and your meditation on God became less frequent, less pleasant, less serious, less intent, than it was before. In consequence of this, the means to kindle and cherish the fire of divine love were used by you with greater carelessness and indifference, with more dulness and deadness than formerly. Conscience then raised its voice, and accused you of your omissions; but its remonstrances, not being sufficiently powerful to bring you back to God, though it convinced you of your sin, only made you fearful seriously to think upon him, and backward to draw near unto him. Thus, some earthly or sinful pleasure has made you backslide in heart—has robbed you of the holy joys that you

once possessed—has interrupted the fellowship between your soul and God. Remember from whence you are fallen. Cry to God that it may be with you as in years that are past.

2. Where the heart is seduced, it will soon seduce the *understanding*. As soon as we become enamoured with the world and with sin, we shall begin to doubt whether the commands of God are so strict as we supposed—whether his threatenings are so terrible, and their execution so certain. This appears to have been the case with the wife of Lot. She probably began to think that her husband had been alarmed without cause; that those enjoyments which she coveted would still be preserved unto her. As yet she saw no appearance of that terrible destruction which was announced. Notwithstanding the declarations of the God of truth, she dared to doubt; she looked back in unbelief, and received the reward due to her sin.

Do none of you, my brethren, here also see a portrait of yourselves? Are there none of you, whose hearts have thus shaken your faith, and duped your understandings? God has threatened eternal perdition in that lake, far more intolerable than the lake of Sodom, to all who lead not holy, humble, heavenly lives. Since you have made it your interest that these threatenings should not be executed, have you not doubted them? Have you not attempted to lower the qualifications for the future felicity, to widen the path which leads to heaven? Have you not, instead of adopting the simple doctrines of the gospel, framed to yourself a more convenient system, whereby you may live a worldly life, without trembling at the wrath of God? Remember Lot's wife:

she also hoped that the divine threatenings would not be executed. Fear, lest her fate be yours.

3. When the heart and the faith are corrupted, the *life* will not long remain pure. The wife of Lot, coveting the joys of Sodom, and doubting the execution of the threatenings of God, consummated her crime by looking back, notwithstanding an express and positive command.

Look at yourselves once more, my brethren, and say whether here you, none of you, resemble her. Alas! how common is it to see those whose heart has got away from God; who have lost the life and comfort of religion, led on step by step to the greatest backslidings in their outward conduct! At first the judgment reasons less strongly against sin than it did before, and the heart opposes it more faintly. The unhappy man then gazes on the bait that is presented to him, approaches as near to the sin as he dare, plays around the brink of the pit, till at last his passion thrusts him in. Though at first he feels remorse, he returns again and again to the commission of crime, till it has become habitual—till it has secured his love—till he has silenced conscience, and thus lost himself without resource.

II. And now, my brethren, having seen the several modes in which you may backslide from God, do not seek to delude yourselves; do not be averse from perceiving your true character, if you are in this lamentable state. Go, then, once more; deeply sound your heart, and inquire, Is it with you, as in former times, when the light of God shone on you, and you rejoiced in his ways; when you hated sin, and loved holiness, and were delighted with the society of the pious; when the word of God was pleasant to you, and when you poured out your souls before him in prayer

and thanksgiving; when you rejoiced in the day of the Lord, and were quickened and animated by the services of his house; when you looked with a holy contempt upon the joys of earth; when you hungered and thirsted after Christ and righteousness; when it was your daily business to prepare for death, and to live in the prospects of immortality? Christian, was this once your character? Is it so now? Is your heart still as warm—your life still as holy? If not, ponder, seriously ponder, the solemn considerations which I hasten to present to you; and may God so carry them home to your souls, that you may feel the misery and guilt of your situation. And do you, who have not yet departed from God, also listen, that you may be induced to resist every temptation that would draw you aside from duty, and cultivate, with still greater care, the holy affections of your heart, the pious walk of your life.

1. Consider, unhappy men, that you are returning towards that state in which you were before you professed the religion of Jesus, of delusion and folly, of sin and misery. If your condition then was happy, why did you so lament it? Why did you so earnestly cry for deliverance from it? Why did you so fervently bless God, when you hoped that he had actually delivered you? But if your condition was then indeed miserable, (and this you dare not deny,) why do you again return towards it? Behold Lot's wife! like you, she shuddered at the woes which were rushing upon her, if she flew not from Sodom; like you, she blessed that God who had reached forth from heaven the arm of his power, and plucked her from approaching destruction; like you, she began to walk in the path which conducted to safety, to peace, to felicity; like you, she looked to the wretched, unholy, heaven-

abandoned spot she had left. God grant that the parallel may never be carried further. God grant that it may never be added, Like her, you sunk under the vengeance of the Almighty.

2. Consider, once more, that you are advancing towards a far more dreadful state than you were in whilst you were totally thoughtless and unconcerned, since the guilt of an apostate is much greater than that of him who has never professed the gospel. His recovery is more difficult, and less probable. Listen with a holy awe to St. Peter, whilst he cries, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning: for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Listen, and let your soul quake within you while you listen, to that terrible declaration of St. Paul: "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary." I know that the apostle is here speaking of *total apostacy*; yet can you with safety approach the *borders* of a state so horrible? Was Lot's wife safe, because she did not enter within the very walls of Sodom, but stood at a little distance from it?

3. Consider against how much experience you sin, when you backslide from God. You have known the evil of sin, and the pains of repentance. You have tasted of the goodness of God, and the pleasures of religion. How many promises do you vio-

late!—promises made to God in your fears and dangers, in your sicknesses and communions. And shall all these be forgotten? How many mercies hath God bestowed on you!—mercies before your repentance, mercies which drew you to repentance, (if you were a sincere penitent,) and mercies ever since? For which of these is it that you abandon your Lord? Does not your heart melt when you look back on them, and consider your ingratitude. But omitting past mercies, remember from what a number of present blessings you run when you depart from God. Does not your conscience tell you, that it is safer, and better, and happier, to remain firm in your duty than to return to sin? Do you not sacrifice your felicity, when you leave your God, your Redeemer and Comforter—when you relinquish your title to pardon, to protection, and to all the promises of grace—when you bid farewell to all the comforts of a Christian? All these you abandon, when you backslide and depart from God.

And *for what* is it that you abandon these exalted privileges, these high hopes? For any thing that can a moment be put in competition with them? Oh no! For a little worldly gain or honour, for a little sinful pleasure and ease, which cannot make you happy now, and which cannot attend you into the eternal world? Oh man! where is thy boasted reason, if for this thou barterest away thy God, thy Saviour, thy soul, and thy heaven?

4. Consider that all your past labour and suffering are lost, if you depart from God. Of what avail was it to the wife of Lot, that she had left the devoted city, and advanced some distance towards Zoar?—did this save her when she paused and looked back? Of what avail will it be to you, that you have heard,



and meditated, and prayed,—that you have undergone much self-denial and many sufferings? If you now turn back, all this will profit you nothing. “Call to remembrance,” says the apostle to the Hebrews, “the former days in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly while ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly when we became companions of them that were so used. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”

5. Consider that if you now turn back for worldly and sinful pleasures, you will enjoy them with less relish than you formerly did, or than the totally insensible do now. Your old convictions of the danger of such a life can never be thoroughly erased; the mercies of Christ to you cannot be entirely forgotten: you will think of your former resolutions, and promises, and ways; your thoughts will run back to the days which are past, in which you walked with God, and forward to those which are to come, in which you must render up your account unto him. Thus, in the midst of your sinful enjoyments, your soul will be agitated with remorse and apprehension. For such joys as these, wilt thou sacrifice those joys that are to be found in communion with thy God, and which are so pure, so sublime, so unembittered with remorse?

6. Consider, you that are beginning to depart from God, what will be the issue of this departure. Do you expect to be recovered from it, and brought again to God? On this, which is the most favourable supposition which you can frame, what store of anguish, of agony, are you laying up for yourselves? When you shall think of your backslidings—of your

guilt in revolting, after such convictions, and promises, and mercies, and experiences, you will feel in your bosom a foretaste of hell; you will scarcely be persuaded that there is hope for you; you will be plunged into a despair, the horrors of which can be exceeded only by the tortures of the damned. And if you be restored, the comforts, the pleasures, the joys of religion, will probably for you be lost for ever.

7. Consider the example of those backsliders who are mentioned in the holy volume, and say whether you are not both afraid and ashamed to be found in such society. How frightful was the fate of Lot's wife! How frightful the remembrance of Saul, of Cain, of Judas! If you descend to later times, do you wish to suffer as did Spira, who on his bed of death, tortured by the remembrance of his backslidings, cried out, "I feel more exquisite sufferings than those of hell; who will tear my soul from my body? who will lead me to the place of the damned?" What agony unutterable must he have suffered before he could thus desire, "to fly to hell as a refuge—to embrace damnation as a release!"

8. Finally: Consider that, by backsliding, you dishonour God much more than those who have never professed to serve him. You declare by your conduct that you believe more happiness to be derived from the world, the flesh, and the devil, than from God. You thus harden the wicked in their sin; you discourage them from approaching the Saviour. They shall perish; but for their souls will not you have to answer?

Thus, Christians, I have, with a studied plainness, presented to you several considerations which surely ought to alarm those who have backslidden from

God, and induce those who “stand, to take heed lest they fall.”

Shall I stop here? Shall I say nothing to those of you who are congratulating yourselves in your hearts that none of these censures affect you; who are secretly rejoicing, that, whatever is your guilt, you are not backsliders, since you have never professed to know the Lord? Are you therefore more safe? I have directed backsliders to the pillar of salt; I point *you* to the lake of Sodom. Behold in that an image of the doom which awaits you, if you prevent it not by repentance. Like the inhabitants of Sodom, you have neglected the warnings of God, have continued in a course of sin against him. Every breath you draw is a rebellious breath, since you refuse to submit to your God. What will be the end of these things? On your soul, as upon Sodom, will for ever be poured the tempest of divine indignation. You, like them, will be suddenly surprised, and sunk into misery.

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## SERMON VII.



LIFE OF MELCHIZEDEK.

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GENESIS xiv. 17—21. PSALM cx. 4. HEBREWS vii.

THE whole sacred volume is a “testimony of Jesus;” he is the sum and centre of all revealed truth.

If we behold him unveiled in the New Testament, we find him typified and shadowed forth in the Old. He is the substance of *the law*, and brought grace to fulfil its requirements, and truth to make good its prefigurations. The ceremonial law he fulfilled and abolished; the moral law he fulfilled and established. He is the substance of the *prophecies*: these inspired men spake by his Spirit; and foretold, with rapture, his grace, his kingdom, and his salvation. And even in those *historics*, which are carelessly passed over by the thoughtless reader, the believer beholds his Saviour. This is especially the case with that illustrious type of the Redeemer, who this morning is to occupy our attention.

Who was Melchizedek? To this question, various and contradictory answers have been given by those writers who have endeavoured to pierce the obscurity which the Scriptures have thrown around this distinguished personage. It would neither tend to your improvement, nor be consistent with the design of these lectures, to enumerate all the erroneous sentiments which have been entertained on this subject. It will be sufficient to notice the three principal opinions that have been received respecting this extraordinary character.

1. The greater number of the Jews, and many Christian divines, have supposed that he was Shem, who was living at this time, and who, in every respect venerable, was certainly invested with the greatest authority. This opinion, however, though supported by great names, is perfectly inconsistent with the sacred volume. It can, in no sense, be said, that Shem was "without father, without mother, without genealogy;" since we have the history of his ancestors even to Adam. It cannot be said of Shem.

that he was of a family different from that of Abraham; yet this is asserted by the apostle of Melchizedek. St. Paul concludes that Melchizedek was superior to the Levitical priests, since Levi himself paid tithes to Melchizedek, in the person of his ancestor Abraham; but if Melchizedek be Shem, his reasoning is inconclusive, since Levi might as well be said to receive tithes in Shem, as to pay them in Abraham. There is nothing in the sacred history which renders it probable that Shem ever left Chaldea, the country of his ancestors, to come and reside in Canaan, where Melchizedek reigned; and Abraham could not with propriety be said to have resided there as in "a strange land," if one of his ancestors was there upon the throne. For these and similar reasons, we reject the opinion of those who suppose that Melchizedek was Shem.

2. Several persons of talents and piety have supposed, from the terms in which St. Paul speaks of Melchizedek, that he was Jesus Christ himself,\* who appeared on this occasion, as he doubtless did on some others, in a human form; thus nourishing the faith of the patriarch, and giving him an earnest of the incarnation. But this opinion is inconsistent with the whole design of St. Paul's reasoning, which is to show, that *even among men* there was a priesthood superior to Levi's. It is inconsistent with the relation of Genesis, in which no intimation is given that Melchizedek was more than a mere man; and with the assertions of the apostle, that he was made "like unto the Son of God;" that he was a type of the Saviour; and that Christ was "a priest after the order

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\* This is the opinion of Cunæus, du Moulin, Gaillard, Alling, Saurin, &c.

of Melchizedek"—expressions which evidently mark a distinction between them. Other difficulties, insuperable on this scheme, will readily occur to you.

3. We suppose, therefore, with the majority of Christian divines, that he was a king who probably was descended from Canaan, and the seat of whose empire was at Salem, the same place which afterwards was called Jerusalem.\* He was a pious man, and exempt from the idolatry which then had infected almost the whole world; he sincerely and acceptably worshipped the living and the true God. With his regal, was united the priestly office. He was a priest of the Most High. He entered into this office, not by succession, as was the case under the Levitical law, but was immediately raised up and set apart to it by God. And as he had no predecessor in it, from whom his genealogy was reckoned; so neither did any one succeed him. This is what the apostle teaches us, when he says, that Melchizedek was "without father, without mother, without descent," or rather, according to the original,† "*without recorded genealogy.*" An examination of the context will evidently show that the apostle is here speaking of Melchizedek, not as a *man*, but as a *priest*, and contrasting his priesthood with the Levitical. As a *man*, he was born and died like others. As a *priest*, his family was unknown. Whilst the genealogies of the Levitical priests were carefully recorded and scrupulously examined, Melchizedek was a priest without any regard to the family from which he sprung; "having neither beginning of days," from which his priestly office was to commence, "nor end of life," in which it terminated. Such is the person whose

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\* See Owen on Heb. vii. 1—3.

† *Ἀγενεαλογητός.*

history and whose resemblance to the Son of God we are now to examine.

Though a king, he was yet a pious man, and an humble worshipper of God. The splendour of royalty and the pomp of power did not seduce his heart. How attractive does he appear! How delightful is the union of dignified station and humility of heart; of an affluence of the enjoyments of this world, and a soul that soars above them and looks down upon them with a holy contempt. Alas! why must we add, how rare is this union! Worldly greatness too generally fills the mind with pride and self-sufficiency, and makes it unwilling to stoop to the self-abasing terms of the gospel; too generally weighs the soul down to the earth, and indisposes it to rise by holy aspirations, by ardent devotions, to the throne of the Eternal. When all the enjoyments of the world are spread before us, and placed within our reach, there are few who will deny themselves, mortify their passions, and submit to the strict requirements of religion. There are few, like Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man and a counsellor, who show their attachment to Jesus in the presence of his enemies. There are few in dignified stations, who, like Melchizedek, habitually and devoutly remember the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth. Ye whom Providence has distinguished from your fellow-men; ye who have influence over others, from your dignities, your wealth, your talents, or any other circumstances, imitate this king of Salem! Whatever pride may whisper to your hearts; whatever the voice of flattery may declare unto you; your worldly advantages will only aggravate your future wo, if they engross your affections, and steal away your hearts—if they are not sanctified by true

religion. Whatever distinctions Providence, or society, or a vain and self-deluding heart may place between you and others ; yet think of that day, when amidst the throes and convulsions of your departing spirit, you will acknowledge that vanity has rightly been inscribed on every thing beneath the sun. Think of that awful day, when before the throne of the common Maker of all, princes and slaves, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, shall appear on a level. Whatever distinctions Providence, or society, or a vain self-deluding heart, have placed between you and others ; yet still, notwithstanding these distinctions, you are sinners of the race of Adam, you are exposed to the wrath of God, and there is no shelter for you but in the blood of Christ. Oh ! that you would be induced to flee to this shelter ! Then your name, like that of Melchizedek, should be blessed—then would you secure the veneration and love of your fellow-men.

The piety of Melchizedek was the more unquestionable, because he was almost entirely surrounded by the impious. I have already mentioned that idolatry and false worship were at this time almost universal. The posterity of Shem, nay, even that branch of it from which Abram sprang, had not escaped the infection ; and in Canaan, the crimes of the Amorites and the abominations of Sodom and the neighbouring cities, called loudly to heaven for vengeance. In the midst of such impieties, this holy man dared to lift up a standard for God and for piety ; and by the lustre of his holiness threw light upon the surrounding gloom. How firm must have been that devotion which enabled him to resist that torrent which was sweeping so many thousands to perdition ! It is not a small degree of grace that will enable a man thus



to stand alone for God, and to despise the reproaches and the sneers of the impious ; thus, like Noah, like Daniel, like Melchizedek, to remain unshaken by the examples and solicitations of the ungodly multitude.

Such a heart was prepared to mingle with that of Abram ; and Providence soon made them acquainted with each other. In the life of the patriarch, you beheld him, at an advanced age exchanging his pastoral crook for the sword, and generously rushing to the field of war, to rescue a beloved friend and kinsman. The God of battles attended him, and rendered him signally victorious. As he returned, crowned with glory, he stopped in the king's dale, to deliver to the king of Sodom his goods and his people. Melchizedek here came forth to meet him with bread and wine, to refresh his exhausted troops. Abraham, who, with a munificence becoming a servant of God who had a better portion than earth could bestow, refused the offerings of the king of Sodom, immediately accepts the presents of Melchizedek. The royal priest, in the name of the Most High God, pronounces upon the patriarch a solemn sacerdotal blessing ; and Abram bestows upon him the tithe of the spoil.

Do not wonder, my brethren, that these two holy men so soon became intimate with each other. There is a sacred sympathy in pious minds—a heavenly attraction, which causes real believers soon to forget that they are strangers, to hail each other as brethren, and mutually to feel the sentiments of brethren. Let two who have been born in distant climes ; who have never heard each other's names pronounced ; who have ever been separated from each other by interposing seas and mountains : but whose hearts

burn with love to God, and dilate with affection to man: let two such persons meet, and how soon do the coldness, the indifference, and restraint of strangers vanish, when they converse together of the love of God, of the grace which renewed them, and the heaven to which they aspire; whilst they retrace to each other the various steps of their pilgrimage; whilst they pronounce the sacred name of Jesus, and pour out their souls together in united devotion! Christians, when compared with such meetings, how poor, how despicable appear all the associations of interest, of convenience, or politeness! Such joys were felt by this venerable patriarch and this royal priest. In Abram, Melchizedek beheld, with transport, one whose faith had induced him to leave his country and his kinsmen, at the command of God; one who was a bright example of holiness, a favoured and beloved servant of God, the depositary of the promises of grace—the privileged mortal from whom He was to spring, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. In Melchizedek, Abram beheld an illustrious trophy of divine grace; a splendid type of that Messiah who was to fulfil the promises made to him; a glorious light in the midst of the nations, emblematical of that Sun of righteousness, who was to rise upon the Gentiles when lying in the thickest darkness and shadow of death.

After this interview with Abraham, Melchizedek is not mentioned by Moses. But he again is presented to our observation in the inspired writings of the sweet singer of Israel. In the 110th Psalm, which contains so remarkable a prophecy of the kingdom and priesthood of Christ, the eternal Father is represented as declaring to the Redeemer, “Thou art

a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." But though the Jews, by this declaration, were carried back again to the consideration of this royal priest, and taught that his character was intimately connected with that of Messiah, they could not have seen all the typical import of his character, had not the application of his history to Christ been illustrated by an inspired apostle. Let us, guided by the unerring comments of Paul, behold in Melchizedek the dignity and offices of our Saviour; and derive instruction and consolation, from seeing the gospel preached in the earliest ages of the world, by types and figures.

Melchizedek united in himself the two offices of king and priest. Under the law of Moses, these could not be associated in the same person. Saul, for intruding into the priestly office, lost his kingdom; (1 Sam. xiii. 8—14.) and Uzziah, for the same crime, was smitten with the leprosy, (2 Chron. xxvi. 16.) But in Jesus we behold them both. It was prophesied of him by Zechariah, (vi. 13.) and the prediction has been accomplished, "He shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne."

1. Yes—he is a *king*; and one in comparison with whose empire, the most extensive earthly governments vanish from observation. He rules, not over a single province or country, but in his hands is placed the sceptre of the universe. "His kingdom ruleth over all;" "he has the utmost ends of the earth for a possession;" he is "King of kings and Lord of lords." But in a special manner does he sustain this office to his people—"He is head over all things to his church;" (Eph. i. 22.) God has "set him as King upon his holy hill of Zion:" (Ps. ii.) To

his authority all believers cheerfully submit; and whilst the impenitent cry, "We will not have him to reign over us," they love his laws, and rejoice that they are under his government. He is *King of righteousness, and King of peace*. Under these traits, he was foretold by the prophets. "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people." (Ps. lxxxii. 2, 3, 7.) "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth." "His name shall be called the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, to establish his kingdom with judgment and with justice." (Is. ix. 6, 7.) "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and the work of righteousness shall be peace." (Is. xxxii. 1, 17.) "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee—he is just, and having salvation; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen." (Zech. ix. 9, 10.) And in like manner, it is declared by the apostle Paul, (Rom. xiv. 7.) "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Christian, look at your Redeemer, and see how fully he merits these titles. In himself he is essential righteousness; "he loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity;" he is "the Holy One and the Just." His laws are a fair transcript of his own character: and, like himself, are "holy, just, and good." Judgment and equity are the bases of his throne. The end of his government is to render his people holy, and give them an inherent righteousness; whilst by his death he has purchased for them a justifying righteousness, in which they may stand before the holy God. Shall we not, then, triumph in him, while we

hail him by that august title given him by inspiration, "The Lord our Righteousness."

Again, fix upon him your thankful eye, believer, and adore him as *King of Salem*, that is, *King of peace*. Well does St. Paul exultingly term him "*our peace*;" (Eph. ii. 14.) since through him we can look up to God, not as "a consuming fire;" but as a "Father of mercies, and a God of all comfort;" since through him our terrified consciences are composed, and, "justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" (Rom. v. 1.) since he consoles us in all our afflictions, fulfilling to us that tender declaration, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." His gospel is the gospel of peace; his Spirit, the Spirit of peace. "Peace on earth" was the anthem sung at his birth; and peace was the legacy which he left to his disciples, when about to re-assume the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." (John xiv. 27.)

2. Jesus, like Melchizedek, was also a *Priest*; and how fully has he performed all the functions of this office! He has instructed us in our duty, and pointed to us the way to heaven. He has "presented himself an offering and a sacrifice to God;" and by the blood of the cross has made an atonement for our sins. He has carried his blood within the veil, and there intercedes for us; and pronounces upon us blessings infinitely more valuable than those of Melchizedek upon Abraham.

3. Like Melchizedek, he was introduced into the priesthood, "not after the law of a carnal commandment," but immediately by God.

In a nobler sense than Melchizedek, he has “ neither beginning of days, nor end of life ;” “ from everlasting to everlasting he is God ;” “ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” From eternity he was set apart as the priest of his people. The sacrifices of Adam and of Abel were accepted only through him. His priestly work still continues : and will never cease, so long as there is a single soul for whom to intercede before God. “ He abideth a priest for ever.”

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## SERMON VIII.



ISAAC AND JACOB.

No. I.



GENESIS' XXVII. XXVIII.

MY BRETHREN,

WE have attended “ the father of the faithful” during his pilgrimage. We have endeavoured to derive instruction from the several incidents in his eventful history. We have beheld in his virtues a model worthy of our imitation. We have marked the faithfulness of God, and the accomplishment of all the promises made to him. We have contemplated those personages whose histories are associated with his. We have seen him, full of years

and full of grace, tranquilly resigning his spirit to his covenant God; and have followed his afflicted children to the cave of Machpelah, whither they bore his body, to deposite it by the side of his beloved Sarah. You would naturally expect, in this lecture, to listen to the history of Isaac, "the child of promise," to whom the solemn patriarchal blessing was consigned, and in whose line the church was to be preserved. But the former part of Isaac's history is so intimately blended with that of Abraham, that we have already considered its principal events; and the transactions of his old age will be presented to you, while we trace the life of Jacob, his son. It will be sufficient to observe concerning him, that, although he was not faultless, yet, in the general tenor of his life, he exhibits an attractive pattern of piety, and an engaging display of the mild, placid, and retired virtues. Few splendid exploits rendered him illustrious; few great events occurred to him. But if his character does not, by its brilliancy, awaken admiration; by its sweet serenity it attracts our love. When we attend him, as at even-tide he goes out to meditate: when we behold him removing from the noise of the world, that he may enjoy a more uninterrupted intercourse with God and his angels, ever quietly yielding up his rights, rather than clamorously contending for them,—assiduously cultivating all the tender charities of life, and preserving in the midst of his trials a sacred composure of spirit, which reminds us of the peaceful calm of heaven; when we thus view him, must not our affection be excited? How much more interesting to the benevolent heart, how much more attractive to holy intelligences, is the plain of Gerar and the well of La-hairoi, when hallowed by the mild virtues of Isaac.—than those

fields of glory, as they are falsely called, where ambition gathers laurels dropping with blood; where renown is acquired by the dying groans of thousands—groans so soon succeeded by the agonies and bleeding hearts of countless widows and orphans! Oh! in the records of eternity how much more brightly will shine the spiritual and bloodless victories of Isaac, his sublime devotion, his holy communion with God, all those calm virtues and heavenly graces which threw a lustre around his retirement,—than those sanguinary conquests, which, while eulogized by men, are viewed with abhorrence by the God of peace.

But though thus formed for that domestic happiness, which, next to the pleasures of devotion, constitutes the highest felicity we can taste on earth, Isaac was not free from afflictions. The persecutions of the Philistines he could easily have borne, if from their unkindness he could have retired to a family where love and harmony reigned. But, alas! his declining years were embittered by the jealousy and enmity of his sons, and by the profane temper and irreligious connexions of Esau. Thus, by the wise appointment of God, our severest trials generally spring from the bosom of our dearest comforts. Thus the earthly objects on which our hearts most fondly lean, frequently pierce us through with sorrows, that we may feelingly be taught that nothing temporal can bring with it unmingled delight.

In addition to the ordinary infirmities of age, Isaac, for upwards of forty years before his death, was deprived of his sight; but he lived to the advanced age of one hundred and eighty—lived till his son Jacob returned from Mesopotamia, increased in wealth—lived to embrace his grand-children—to



know that his sons were reconciled—and then calmly sunk into the tomb, and passed to the more immediate enjoyment of his God, and the God of his father. If the fervour and zeal of some of the other patriarchs remind us of the holy intrepidity and resolution of those heroes of the New Testament, Peter and Paul; there is none of them which appears to me so delightfully to accord with the character of the beloved John, who, ever affectionate, mild, and devotional, wished only to rest on the bosom of the Saviour, and express to his Master the grateful and tender feelings of his soul.

Having given this brief sketch of the character of Isaac, let us now consider more in detail the history of his son Jacob.

Though the promise of a numerous offspring had been made to Isaac, yet nearly twenty years after his marriage had elapsed, and he had not become a father. Thus, his faith, his patience, and his submission to God were exercised. Precisely the same trial had occurred to Abraham; and probably one reason of its repetition was to show the dignity of the Messiah, who thus by a succession of miracles came into the world. Isaac, solicitous not merely from personal feelings, but that the promise might not fail, and the covenant be broken, offers up his supplications to the Lord. The promise was sure; but he still prays, knowing that promises are given to us, not to make us intermit our devotions, but to cause us to present them with more fervour and faith. Even when the Lord gives an absolute promise, he still adds, Nevertheless “for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.) The Lord regarded the supplication of the patriarch; and two sons were born to him at the same time. Even

before their birth, the counsel and purpose of God concerning them was declared to Rebekah; and she was assured, in a manner which did not permit her to doubt that the communication was divine, that these fier sons should be the heads of two mighty nations, differing in their dispositions, manners, and country; and that, notwithstanding the right of primogeniture, the elder should serve the younger. (Gen. xxv. 23.) The truth of this prediction, as far as it relates to these children themselves, will be seen as we prosecute their history. As to the nations descending from them, it was accomplished, when, in the time of David, the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, were subdued by the Israelites. the descendants of Jacob.

The different dispositions of the children were early displayed. While Esau was active and laborious, Jacob led a quiet and sedentary life. "Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents." To Esau his father Isaac was inordinately attached; while Jacob was the peculiar favourite of his mother. This fond partiality for one child rather than the other, was probably one great cause of that jealousy and hatred which we afterwards find subsisting between them, and contributed, in no small degree, to the domestic unhappiness of Isaac. Ah! how often have parents been warned, in the histories we have already reviewed, as they ought to be warned by observation of the danger of making these invidious distinctions between their offspring, and expressing a fond partiality for one child, to the neglect of another.

When they had arrived at manhood, Jacob, informed probably by Rebekah of the purposes of God

in his behalf, and the divine declarations that he should have the pre-eminence, was anxious to obtain the birth-right, which Esau, who little regarded it, soon yielded to him. Esau, returned from hunting, and oppressed with hunger, coveted his brother's pottage; and in order to gratify his appetite, consented to resign to Jacob his birth-right. In acting thus, says Moses, he showed that he "*despised* the birth-right;" (Gen. xxv. 34.) and for this conduct he is termed by Paul, "*the profane Esau.*" (Heb. xii. 16.) The propriety of these strong expressions appears from the nature of the birth-right, which conferred not only temporal blessings, but also spiritual privileges; and especially "the blessing of Abraham" concerning the promised Messiah, and an assurance that he would be born in that line which received the birth-right. Easily to part with such a privilege, certainly indicated the utmost profanity and contempt of spiritual mercies. It is true that Esau exclaims, "Behold, I am at the point to die." But not to mention that these words may, in consistency with the context, signify only (as many divines have understood them) "I am continually exposed to death;" the consideration that Esau was now in the house of his father, where it was not possible that he should die from hunger, proves that these words proceeded only from an impatience to gratify his appetite, and a resolution to sacrifice every thing rather than be disappointed. Let us, therefore, while we behold him, remember the warning which the apostle founds on this history, (Heb. xii. 16, 17.) and beware lest we also despise and reject, for any sensual indulgence, the blessings of grace.

But while we thus, with the sacred writers, condemn Esau, do we entirely justify Jacob? By no

means. If all the circumstances of this event are related by Moses, we must acknowledge that Jacob displayed a want of brotherly affection and kindness; that he acted inconsistently with that charity which has been required of believers under every dispensation of religion; that he basely took advantage of the passions and cupidity of his brother. It is true that the birth-right had been promised to him; but for the accomplishment of this promise, it was his duty patiently to wait. Providence needs not the crimes of men in order to accomplish his purposes; and if we will endeavour to hasten the execution of the divine promises, instead of waiting for God's time, we shall generally find that, instead of a blessing, we shall embrace a curse.

For several years after this event, we hear nothing of the history of Jacob. He probably remained tranquil and unoccupied with any great events, under the roof of his father. We first view him in circumstances in which we contemplate him with regret. Isaac, apparently about to leave the world, prepared to give to his family the solemn patriarchal blessing. These benedictions were not like the impotent wishes of ordinary parents, who, in their last moments, express what they desire, not what will actually come to pass. The patriarchal blessings were infallible predictions; they were uttered under immediate inspiration, and they certainly foretold the future destinies of their children, and of the nations that should spring from their children. Isaac, forgetting the declarations of God concerning the birth-right, or having never properly comprehended them, was disposed to follow the inclinations of his heart, and confer this privilege upon Esau. Rebekah, overhearing the discourse of Isaac to Esau, urged Jacob

to impose upon his father, and thus fraudulently obtain the blessing. Jacob at first reluctantly consents; but having complied with the solicitations of Rebekah, he adds falsehood to falsehood; and at last presumptuously and profanely introduces the sacred name of God to sanction his deceit. Isaac, guileless and unsuspecting, is deceived, and confers upon him the blessing that is designed for Esau.

You shudder, my brethren, at this conduct of Jacob. It was execrable. But learn from it the deceitfulness of sin, and the danger of entering upon a vicious course. Had Jacob imagined, when the designs of Rebekah were proposed to him, that he should be led to trifle with the sacred name of Jehovah, he would probably have rejected her plan with abhorrence. But he was led on, step by step, till at last he found no mode of hiding his past criminality, but by plunging still deeper into guilt. Ah! my brethren, why will we not learn that, except we oppose the beginnings of evil, we are undone; that one deviation from virtue will produce another to save us from detection, till at last we awake astonished and confounded at the depth to which we have sunk in infamy and guilt!

If the conduct of Jacob deserves our censure, much more does that of Rebekah; and yet are there none of you, mothers, who imitate her example? Is there nothing in the manner in which you bring up your children; is there nothing in the very system of what is called polite education, that necessarily reminds us of Rebekah, who, by fraud and dissimulation, strove to render her child distinguished in the world?

Let us admire and adore that superintending providence of God, which can over-rule even the vilest

passions and the basest crimes of men to the promotion of its purposes. Thus God over-ruled the wickedness of Rebekah and Jacob, to accomplish his pre-determined and pre-declared designs. Thus, in after ages, he over-ruled the malignity of the high-priests, the treachery of Judas, the criminal timidity of Pilate, for the salvation of the world. Without sanctioning or justifying the ungodly, he “makes the sins and the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he restrains.”

The enmity of Esau was excited by the insidious manner in which Jacob had wrested the blessing from him, and he avowed his intention to murder his brother on the death of Isaac. It became necessary, in order to preserve the life of Jacob, that he should abandon the paternal roof. Isaac, before his departure, renews, designedly and cheerfully, the blessing which he had before unintentionally given, confirms Jacob as “heir of the promise,” and offers up prayers for his happiness and success. Oh! what a consolation, and what a ground of security is it, to have a parent who has an interest at the throne of grace, there to intercede for us! Fearful of the designs of Esau, he leaves home, in secrecy and solitude, and without any attendant enters upon a long and dangerous journey. He was to be prepared for eminent usefulness in the church, and he therefore must undergo affliction; for, like the ground, the heart must be harrowed ere it will yield its richest fruits. None of the events of his journey are recorded; except those of one night rendered ever memorable to him. Obligated to lie down in the midst of the desert, with the earth for his bed and a stone for his pillow, he was favoured with one of those miraculous dreams which God often vouchsafed to the

patriarchs. He beholds "a ladder set upon the earth, and the top reaching to heaven; and the angels of God ascending and descending on it, and the Lord stood above it," manifesting some outward display of his majesty. God then confirmed to him the blessing of Abraham, assured him of the constant care of his providence, and of a safe return to Canaan.

Jacob, on awaking, was filled with reverential awe at these unexpected manifestations of the divine presence. Impelled by gratitude, he consecrated the stone as a monument of the goodness of God; and, solemnly devoting himself to the Lord, engaged to worship him on that very spot, on his return to Canaan.

How admirably does God adapt his consolations and supports to our peculiar cases! Jacob is alone in the desert; but God shows him numerous companies of angels that attend him. He fears the hatred of his brother; God shows him angels as his protectors. All his apprehensions must have vanished, when he saw thus exhibited to him this emblem of the providence of the Lord, and of the care which he took of his servants. This providence is still exercised towards the children of men. These angels, still under the command of God, perform numberless offices of love to us. This remembrance should comfort us in our difficulties and distresses, and cause us to sing with an holy triumph: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts is with us, the *God of Jacob* is our refuge." The divine consolations are then principally given when we are stripped of outward com-

forts. Never did the heart of Jacob experience so much joy, as when, in solitude and darkness, his head rested on a stone.

The remembrance of this night must have been peculiarly dear to Jacob, if he then, for the first time, (as many persons have supposed,) became truly impressed with the sentiments of real religion, and was renewed in the temper of his mind. This opinion is rendered probable from an examination of his future conduct. From this time, he acted as a real child of God, ever mindful of the vows he had made, and the obligations with which he had bound his soul. If this opinion be correct, with what transport did Jacob ever recall the hallowed wilderness of Luz! with what delight does he still, from the height of heaven, look down upon it, and adore that grace which there changed his heart!

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## SERMON IX.



LIFE OF JACOB.

No. II.



GENESIS XXIX. XXXii. 3.

IN our last lecture, we beheld Jacob fraudulently obtaining the solemn patriarchal blessing, and punished for his deceit by being compelled to flee from his father's house, in order to avoid the sanguinary



resentment of his brother Esau. We attended him as, solitary and friendless, he traversed the wilderness. We paused with him to contemplate the vision of angels at Luz, and beheld him anointing the pillar commemorative of his gratitude and his vows. Cheerfully prosecuting his journey, after the animating promises there given to him, he safely arrived at Padan-aram. There he met with an apparently friendly and affectionate reception from Laban; and having had but little experience of the falsehood and treachery of most human professions, probably anticipated the enjoyment of much felicity under the hospitable roof of his kinsman. But in a little time, the selfish, oppressive, and avaricious character of Laban was discovered; and for twenty years, while Jacob continued with him, he was exposed to every indignity and injury which a heart, steeled by covetousness against all the sentiments of humanity and natural affection, could inflict.

Jacob appears to have become enamoured with Rachel, on his first meeting with her, and his affection was returned. His passion was honourable, and he spoke of it with candour and openness to her father. But the sordid Laban, instead of seizing the opportunity of forming one of those happy marriages founded on mutual love and virtue, resolved to make the love of Jacob contribute to the gratification of his own avarice. When Eliezer had formerly come, richly attended, and with splendid presents, to seek a wife for his master Isaac, this same Laban cried unto him, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord;" and joyfully consigned to his care his sister Rebekah. But Jacob comes only with his staff; he is poor. Need I add, that in Laban he found, not an affectionate uncle, but an oppressive master? It was an-

ciently the custom, as we are taught both by sacred and profane history, for those who sought a female in marriage, to pay a portion to her parents. Laban demands of Jacob seven years' servitude, instead of this portion. Jacob complied with this hard demand. These years rapidly flew, for they were sweetened by a constant intercourse with the object of his affections, and his toils were rendered light by the remembrance of her for whose sake they were endured, and who was to be the rich reward of them. In the inimitable simplicity of Scripture language, we are told, "The seven years seemed unto him but a few days for the love he bore to her." At the expiration of this period, Jacob claims his wife. Laban, dissembling his intention, prepares a feast, observes the usual nuptial ceremonies, and then, by a base and cruel artifice, imposes upon the patriarch Leah, instead of Rachel. When Jacob, discovering the fraud, indignantly and bitterly reproached him, he excused himself by alleging the custom of the country, that the eldest daughter should be first married; and by offering Rachel also to him if he would serve him seven years more.

Who does not shudder at the conduct of Laban? Who does not behold him with abhorrence, while he endeavours to disguise his avarice under the mask of regard to the institutions of his country? To what will not covetousness impel a man? "To deceive the unsuspecting and unwary," says an eloquent divine, when commenting on this history, "to oppress the weak, to practise upon the stranger, are among the simpler and more customary operations of avarice. Behold it leading a father to—by what name shall I call it?—prostitute his own daughter! If there be a crime blacker than another; if, Laban,

there be a purpose which thou wouldst accomplish, which modesty shudders to think of, which the hand trembles to perpetrate, from which the conscience in horror recoils; infuse into some dark heart the demon of covetousness, the love of money; place gain in one eye—prostitution, parricide, any crime, however enormous, in the other—and the work of hell is done.”

We attempt not to describe the disappointment and distress of Jacob. His grief was no doubt augmented by having his own disingenuous artifices recalled to his mind. He had practised deceit upon his brother; and he is now made painfully to feel the evil of deception. In this manner we often see God punishing men by those very crimes in which they had indulged, “and meting out to them as they had measured to others.” If Adonibezek exercises cruelty towards his captives, this same cruelty experienced by himself will constrain him to cry out, “As I have done, so hath God requited me.” (Judg. i. 7.) If Pharaoh command the male children of the Israelites to be drowned, he himself will be swallowed up in the Red Sea. If Jehoram slay all the sons of his father, his sons will fall under the sword of the Arabians. (2 Chron. xxi. 4, 17.) If Jehoiakim murder Urijah the prophet, and refuse him burial, he himself shall fall by violence, and instead of lying in the tomb of his ancestors, be cast forth with contempt beyond the gate of the city. (Jer. xxvi. 23. and xxii. 19.) There where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall they lick the blood of Ahab and Jezebel. (1 Kings xxi. 19. and 2 Kings ix. 36.) Thus Providence often shows us our sins in our punishments, that we may be brought to repentance for them, and be guarded against them in future. He who basely

deceived an aged father, is himself basely deceived by a near kinsman.

It is probable that Jacob would never have sought another partner than Rachel, had it not been for the imposition of Laban; but having been disappointed, he unwisely and unlawfully agreed to purchase Rachel also by another servitude of seven years. Let us not justify his conduct. Though some good men have indulged in polygamy, this state is no more sanctioned by their example, than those vices are in which they have sometimes fallen. It is a state which our Saviour has taught us to be inconsistent with the original institution of marriage, and which we see uniformly blasting all domestic felicity. What a mournful proof of this is exhibited in the families of Abraham, of Jacob, and of Elkanah. The only palliations of the conduct of these men, are the darkness of the dispensation under which they lived, and the obscurity with which God had declared his will on this point. Envy, jealousy, and contention, the almost unavoidable results of this unnatural state, prevailed between Leah and Rachel, and embittered the life of Jacob. "The drought consumed him by day, and the frost by night," when attending to his labours in the field; and when he entered into his home, he in vain sought for that domestic peace and harmony which alone can render it delightful. Leah had borne him four sons; whilst Rachel had not become a mother. By her unreasonable and impatient language she sometimes excited the anger even of a husband, whose warmest affections she possessed. Her ardent desires were probably in a degree founded on the hope that from her that promised Messiah should spring, in whom the nations of the earth were to be blessed; but still it must be acknowledged that her

language is inconsistent with that acquiescence in the disposals of Providence that is required of every believer. "Give me children," she exclaims, "or I die." Alas! little did she think that the answer to her prayers would bring her to the tomb, and that the moment that witnessed the birth of Benjamin, should be the period of her death! How often do we inordinately desire those things that would be prejudicial to us! How often is it in mercy that God refuses to grant our requests! She was more happy, however, in the birth of Joseph, her eldest son; who was deservedly the favourite of his father, from his amiable disposition and piety, and who was afterwards to become the preserver of his family.

Jacob, having now faithfully performed his engagements, wearied with the oppressions which for fourteen years he had endured, and anxious to provide for his numerous family, was desirous of returning into Canaan. To this, Laban, not from that regard to Jacob which he pretended, but from a love to gain, refused to consent. His possessions had greatly increased under the care of the patriarch, and a particular blessing of God had evidently attended him. To the entreaties of Laban, Jacob at last yielded, on condition that all the cattle of a particular description, that should be produced, should belong to him. Though the wages of Jacob were ten times changed; though all the artifices of a man, greedy of amassing for himself, and envious of the prosperity of another, were employed against him; yet his possessions continually and rapidly augmented. "The Lord who maketh rich," crowned him with wealth. He was not unmindful of the source of his blessings; for instead of resting in his outward possessions, and arrogantly attributing the acquisi-

tion of them to his own wisdom and prudence, we hear him afterwards humbly and devoutly ascribing the praise to God. (Gen. xxxi. 9—12.)

Laban beheld his prosperity, and in *his* prosperity, that of his own children, with envy and hatred. The sons of the Syrian united with their father in rendering the life of the patriarch unhappy. But though Jacob knew that he had every thing to apprehend from their malice, their jealousy, and their avarice, he quietly waited in Padan-aram, looking up to God for counsel, and relying upon him for safety, till an express revelation ordered him to return to Canaan. Obedient to the heavenly command, but prudently desirous of avoiding the opposition of Laban, he seizes an opportunity while his father-in-law is absent, to depart for his native land. We are surprised in this part of his history, to be informed that Rachel took with her privately her father's teraphim, or household gods. Did she do this from a remaining inclination to idolatry; or from a desire to show her father the inefficacy of those idols which could not even preserve themselves?

Laban, enraged to hear of the departure of Jacob, pursues him with an armed force and with the most hostile intentions. He resolved, doubtless, to strip him by force of all his wealth, and perhaps to assail his person with violence. Jacob was unable to resist him; but what has he to fear, before whom the shield of the Almighty is thrown? The passions of all men are under the control of the Lord; and he can say to them, as to the swelling waves, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no further." The Lord appeared to Laban in a dream, overawed this plunderer's heart, and charged him to do no injury to Jacob. This admonition he dared not disobey. Whatever may be the

dispositions of Laban or Balaam, they are not able "to go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more." Their meeting, instead of terminating in a hostile manner, was concluded by a covenant of friendship, ratified with all the formalities of religion. "Laban returned to his own place." We know nothing of his subsequent life; but though his heart appeared to be softened on this occasion, it is not probable that a permanent change was produced in his character.

Let the deliverance of Jacob encourage us, believers, in all our difficulties. "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and can easily discomfit all the designs of our enemies. When human wisdom, baffled and confounded, can discern no mode of deliverance for us, his infinite wisdom perceives how we may be rescued in a thousand different methods. In an instant, he can wither the subtlest designs of our foes; or convert our bitterest enemies into our most cordial friends.

Rescued from this perilous situation, Jacob prosecuted his journey, indulging his gratitude to God, and feeling, as Israel did in after times, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us." (Ps. cxxxiv. 1.) As he advanced, relying on God's promise, and encouraged by this fresh experience of his goodness, "the angels of God met him." They had before invisibly attended him, and delivered him from many dangers; but now that he is to encounter greater difficulties than he has hitherto experienced, they present themselves to him in a visible form, to encourage and strengthen his faith. Jacob immediately exclaimed, "This is God's host." He was ad-

vancing nearer to his exasperated brother. He was defenceless, and unable to oppose the armed bands of Esau; but the sight of these angels, strong and mighty, dissipated his fears. We may imagine him saying, "Though an host of men should encamp against me, I will not fear; though war should rise against me, in this host of angels I will be confident. However great may be the force of my brother, yet more are they that are with me than those that are with him. This is *God's* host, sent and directed by him, and therefore must be victorious over all the strength of man." To commemorate this event, he called the place Mahanaim, as a memorial of the seasonable interposition of God, and as an incentive to himself and his descendants to trust in the Lord in all their difficulties.

Here we pause in the history of Jacob. In another lecture, we hope to finish his life.

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## SERMON X.



LIFE OF JACOB.

No. III.



GENESIS xxxii. xxxiii.

WE have beheld Jacob delivered by the guardian providence of God from the hostile designs of La-



ban, and more fully assured of the divine protection and favour by the vision of angels at Mahanaim. Was the patriarch authorized by these interpositions of God in his behalf, to suppose that his trials were now terminated? No, Christians. The brightest displays of the love of God towards us, the clearest manifestations of the affection of our Heavenly Father, are generally given to prepare us for new combats. God has no where promised to us that we should be exempted from trials; but only that we should have sufficient supports in all our afflictions, and that they should be over-ruled for our spiritual good. Jacob knows that he is accepted by the Lord; but still he must prepare to meet an offended brother.

Approaching the residence of Esau, he had sent messengers before him, in the most respectful and affectionate terms, to supplicate a reconciliation with him. Twenty years' absence had not extinguished the animosity of Esau. The messengers, returning, informed Jacob that his brother was advancing with four hundred armed men. By this intelligence, the faith of the patriarch was severely tried. To escape from Esau, was impracticable. He had no force that could resist him. The host of angels was no longer in view; and entreaties and supplications could not be expected to move him whose desires of vengeance had continued for so many years. He trembled lest his hard earned possessions should at once be wrested from him; lest the blood of his wife and children should soon smoke upon the murderer's sword. "*Jacob was afraid, and greatly distressed.*" His desponding fears are not to be justified. He ought to have exercised an unshaken trust in that God, who had so often delivered him in the most perilous circum-

stances; at whose command he was journeying back to Canaan; who had entered into covenant with him, and made him the most consolatory promises; and who had so often shown him that his holy angels were encamping around him. But who of us, believers, has not been guilty in the same manner as was Jacob? When we have been delivered from some imminent danger; when we have been rescued from some great distress; when the Lord has been to us better than either our fears or our hopes; we have gratefully and confidently declared to him that we would never again distrust him or yield to unbelieving apprehensions. But a severe trial has assailed us, and we again have felt undutiful fears and perplexities. Like Peter, we were ready, at the command of our Lord, boldly to walk upon the sea. Like Peter, when the wind became boisterous, we forgot our divine Supporter, and heard that tender rebuke, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Happy for us, if, like Jacob in such circumstances, we retain sufficient remembrance of our duty to induce us to use all those means for our safety which prudence prescribes, and to flee to God as our help in time of trouble.

He divided his company into two bands, that if one were cut off, the other might perhaps escape; and he then pours out his soul before the Lord. His prayer is short, but impressive. He addresses his Maker as a God in covenant: "*O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac.*" What consolation, what encouragement, must this title have given to the patriarch! "Thou art the God of my progenitors; thou enteredst into covenant with them, and *with their seed after them*; I rely upon thy faithful word; and since thou art the God of my father Abra-

ham, and of my father Isaac, I know, (though I am so unworthy that I dare scarcely lisp out the precious truth,) I know that thou art *my God* also. “*Thou saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee.*” How animating, when, in our difficulties and sorrows, we can thus appeal to God that they have befallen us from our obedience to his commands; and thus plead before him his promises to us! How animating, to remember his past goodness and faithfulness, and thence to derive encouragement for the future! Such recollections support Jacob. “*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.*” His danger, from the hostile intentions of Esau, had driven the patriarch to the throne of grace; yet Esau’s name has not yet been mentioned by him. But, now that he is encouraged by the believing view which he has taken of the covenant, the perfections, the promises, the past goodness and faithfulness of God, he cries out with confidence, “*Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me; and the mother with the children.*” What a privilege to have a compassionate God, to whom we can unbosom all our apprehensions, and weaknesses, and alarms. Had Jacob said to men, “*I fear Esau,*” probably instead of sympathizing with him, they would have upbraided him with cowardice, or treated him with contempt. He feared not this upbraiding, this contempt, from the Lord. “*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*” He listens to those complaints, and grievances, and apprehensions, which any other than a parent might

treat with scorn. Believers, there are moments when you feel within you weaknesses which you would blush to communicate to the meanest of your fellow-worms, but which you dare freely to reveal to your Heavenly Father, assured of his sympathy, condolence, and relief. Observe, also, that this is the only petition in the whole prayer. The patriarch well knew that "we are not heard for our much speaking." He makes known his wants unto God : he asks for deliverance ; but instead of prescribing the mode, leaves it to the wisdom of God. That this deliverance will be effected, he is confident, from that promise with which he concludes his supplication : "*And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.*" Happy for us, if, like him in our prayers, we can take a firm hold on the promise of God ! This alone will cause them to pierce the skies, and bring down blessings upon us : for though many persons suppose that nothing except a certain seriousness is requisite in prayer, yet the Scriptures uniformly teach us that no prayers can be acceptable, except those made in faith ; and it is the office of faith to receive and rest upon the promises of the Lord.

Ye believers, who often, in sorrow and in fear, have bowed before the Lord, and have risen from your devotions, full of a holy hope, a sacred peace, and a calm trust in God ; ye will not be surprised to observe in the patriarch, after his prayer, a composure of mind which he did not before possess. While he quietly "waits for the salvation of God," he adopts those measures for his safety which prudence prescribes ; for Jacob was not of the number of those deluded men who confound trusting and tempting God ; who neglect those means which Pro-

vidence has pointed out for the accomplishment of any end ; and who, sitting with folded arms, attempt to sanctify their sin and their sloth, by calling it a holy confidence and reliance upon God. Jacob's trust is active. He has " cast his care upon God ;" but he knows he is to use means. He labours as though every thing depended upon himself ; but still he looks upward, knowing that every thing depends upon God. He prepares for his brother a valuable present from his flocks and herds. This he divides into five different droves, placing an interval between them, and commanding those who had the care of them to use the most submissive and tender language from him to his brother. This division was made, that Esau might be gradually softened. A soothing consideration would be presented to him, and an interval given for reflection ; when the same address to his better feelings would again and again occur.

Having thus used every prudent precaution to reconcile his brother Esau, he sent his family, with his possessions, over the brook Jabbok, (a small stream rising in Mount Gilead, and emptying itself in the Jordan,) and himself remained behind, that, solitary and without interruption, he might converse with God, and implore from him that help which, in so perilous a situation, he peculiarly needed. Here an event occurred, which, from the succinctness of the relation of Moses, is attended with some difficulties ; but which is full of practical instruction for us. He was met by a person in human shape, but who afterwards appeared to be of a rank superior to our species. It is disputed by commentators, whether he was an ordinary angel, or (which is more probable) the great Angel of the covenant. Jacob at first endeavoured to detain him by force. To convince the pa-

triarch of the superiority and dignity of his adversary, and to show him that if he would procure a blessing, it must be obtained in another manner, the angel by a touch caused the hollow of Jacob's thigh to shrink; in commemoration of which event, his posterity never eat of the same sinew in animals. Jacob, convinced by this circumstance that his antagonist was more than mortal, was still more resolved to obtain his benediction. He therefore used that mode which alone can be effectual with God. This we are taught by the prophet Hosea, (xii. 4.) "*He had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him.*" The angel, in answer to his supplications for a blessing, conferred on him the name of *Israel*, i. e. *a princely prevailer with God*: and Jacob expressed his gratitude by calling the name of the place where this interview, ever memorable to him, occurred, *Peniel*; i. e. the face of God.

In order to understand this transaction, we must remember that, in the early periods of every nation, *figurative actions* were employed as a mean of conveying their ideas and sentiments. Thus Tarquin, by striking off the heads of the highest poppies, admonished his son Sextus to put to death the most illustrious of the Gabii. Thus Thrasybulus gave the same advice to Periander of Corinth. Thus the bird, mouse, frog, and arrows, sent by the Scythians to Darius, conveyed important instructions. In this, as in other circumstances, God condescended to the manners of men, and gave instruction by figurative actions. The intent of the occurrence related in the text, was probably to show to Jacob the opposition of Esau, and, by the event of the conflict, to assure him of success.

After the blessing which Jacob received from the

Angel of the covenant, and the memorable events at Peniel, all his apprehensions were dissipated, and a quiet trust in the Lord succeeded to his fears. Still, however, he knew it was his duty to use all proper precautions for his safety. When, therefore, he had crossed the brook Jabbok, and beheld Esau advancing towards him with four hundred armed men, he wisely arranged his possessions and family; placed his beloved Rachel and Joseph in the most secure situation; and went forward to meet his brother, paying him, as he came near, the most expressive marks of respect. Esau was deeply touched by this conduct. His affection was rekindled for a brother, with whom he had been born and educated, and from whom he had been separated ever since their youthful days. He hastened to meet him; and, agitated by tenderness, love, and joy, he threw himself in his arms, and kissed him. Every resentful feeling was borne down by the tide of returning fraternal affection, which ran with greater force from having been so long and so painfully obstructed. Jacob was no less transported with pleasure in beholding the emotions of Esau; in pressing to his bosom one whom he was conscious he had injured; and in finding that union of hearts restored, which nature had established, but which his own treachery had destroyed. Mutually affected, they could express their feelings only by their tears. After these first emotions were in a degree subsided, Esau tenderly inquires after Jacob's family; and afterwards concerning the cattle and servants which attended him. When told that these were a present designed by Jacob for him, he generously refused them: "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast to thyself." Overcome, however, at last, by

Jacob's reiterated persuasions, he accepted them; and after expressions of mutual regard, they parted in peace and love. Esau returned to Seir; there Jacob probably visited him according to his promise—and then removed to Succoth, where he built a house, or rather a tent, and remained a sufficient time to refresh his family after their fatigues. He then crossed the Jordan, and settled himself at Shechem. Here he immediately reared an altar to the God who had preserved him, brought him safely back to Canaan, and conferred on him a new and honourable name; and dedicated it to El-Elohe-Israel; i. e. God, the God of Israel.

Christians, let this deliverance of Jacob inspire you with confidence in all your dangers. In prosecuting his history, you have often seen this patriarch in perils and distresses. But did his God ever abandon him? Did not Providence ever interpose in the season of his extremity? This same Providence still watches over you; the God of Jacob is still the refuge of his people—"a very present help in time of trouble." The angels, who, missioned by the Almighty, so often cheered Jacob in solitude, in darkness, and in distress, still attend us, and perform for us a thousand offices of love. With confidence, then, cast your cares upon the Lord. Though you see no mode of deliverance from the enemies who encompass you, yet cry, with pious Jehoshaphat, (2 Chron. xx. 12.) "O our God, we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but *still* our eyes are upon thee." He can turn the hearts of your enemies, as he did those of Laban and Esau. He can deliver you in a thousand modes. Our perpetual alarms and distrusts impair our felicity, and do little credit to our faith and our religion.



Look at Jacob, ye haughty spirits, who, when you have injured your brother, think yourselves degraded by acknowledging it; and learn submission. How many are there, who, with a brutal pertinacity, will ever defend their past conduct, however criminal! How common is it for men to hate those whom they are conscious that they have injured! Had such been the character of Jacob, he would not have deserved our esteem; and instead of having his past unkindness obliterated by the fraternal tears and forgiveness of Esau, he would perhaps have beheld his family slaughtered around him, and himself been sunk to the tomb by the hand of violence.

Revengeful and implacable men, who never forgive an injury—ye votaries of honour, falsely so called, whose memories can forget all the kindnesses of God, while they treasure up the unkindnesses of man; look at Esau, and learn your duty. Would he have appeared half so noble, had his sword been imbrued in the heart's blood of his brother? Would the dying groans of Jacob's family, though they might have satiated his revenge, have been recalled by him in after years, with so much delight as this affecting and generous reconciliation? Would he not have shuddered in anticipating the judgment-bar, when he remembered that blood shed by him was pleading for his perdition before the tribunal of the Avenger! Barbarians, whose god is revenge, to whom you, like the worshippers of Moloch, offer human sacrifices, tremble! for the day is coming when the arm of Him, to whom alone vengeance belongeth, shall be raised to crush you.

Jacob, having now returned to his native land, probably expected to pass the rest of his life in tran-

quillity and peace. Alas! misery soon invaded his new habitation. A succession of woes, far more intolerable than any he had hitherto encountered, was just commencing. Those children, who he expected would be the stay and comfort of his declining years; whose virtues and attachment he supposed would lighten the infirmities of age,—planted daggers in his heart. We can more easily bear the afflictions that spring from a stranger or an enemy; but all the consolations of religion are necessary to prevent the heart from being crushed in the dust, and broken with anguish, when it is a friend or a child who wounds us. Jacob had an only daughter; and though surrounded by so many sons, his affections were doubtless fixed upon her with peculiar force. She was now of that age, when parental anxieties with regard to her were most alive; when a few years were to decide her future character. Through vanity, through pride, and love of pleasure, she “went out to see the daughters of the land.” Seduced by the gayeties around her, she fell a victim to the lawless passions of the prince of Shechem. She covered herself with infamy, and gave a wound to the soul of the patriarch, of which surely none but a parent can conceive. Let the children of vanity and dissipation, who, despising domestic duties and domestic enjoyments, fly abroad “to the daughters of the land,” to the giddy maze of festivity, in search of happiness,—remember the history of Dinah. Ah! how many melancholy instances have there been of those, who, nurtured amidst indolence, soothed by vanity, unrestrained by religion, have rushed into the tumult of the world, with desires afloat for pleasure, with passions never subject to restraint! Ignorant, inexperienced, and

exposed to danger, the conclusion of their history has been told by the agonies of their parents' bursting hearts, by the conscious blush of shame that suffused their own cheeks, and by the slowly pointing finger of scorn and contempt that was directed towards them. With what delight do we turn from such a character, to a Rebekah, cultivating all the domestic endearments and the still pleasures of affection; and by the fervour of her charity, the meekness of her piety, and the warmth of devotion, blessing all who are around her!

Severe as were the sufferings of Jacob on this occasion, they were aggravated by the conduct of Simeon and Levi. To Shechem, desirous of repairing the injury brought upon their sister, they were guilty of the basest treachery. Nay, they interposed the sacred name and ordinances of religion, and made them a cloak for their murderous designs. Would to God, my brethren, they were the only persons who had thus prostituted the benevolent religion revealed to us from heaven! Alas! numberless other examples of such conduct are recorded in history. But what then? Shall we, with the unbeliever, attribute them to that religion which condemns them, and which threatens eternal punishment to those who perpetrate them? Than this, nothing can be more disingenuous and uncandid. Let us execrate those who thus blasphemously sport with the name of God, and abuse his religion. But let us not cast the blame upon that pure and holy system, which utters its severest anathemas against such conduct.

When the Shechemites, in consequence of submitting to the sacrament proposed to them, were unable to make resistance, Simeon and Levi, assisted

by their servants and friends, entered the city, plundered it, and destroyed all its male inhabitants. The new stab that this conduct gave to a heart bleeding already from the conduct of his daughter, is shown, not only by the pathetic lamentation which Jacob utters when first informed of these transactions, but also by his recalling it to the remembrance of his sons so many years after, when he was upon the bed of death.

Believers, there are some of you, who, like Jacob, have children who are the enemies of God. When you fix your eyes upon them, you are distressed to think that they are the slaves of Satan, and that, if they die in their present condition, they must be the heirs of eternal perdition. We pity you. You need the consolations of God. Yet your trials are not peculiar to you. Remember Jacob. When he looked upon Dinah, Simeon, and Levi, he had cause to regret the time when he was first accosted as a father. Remember Aaron, as he beheld his two sons, smitten by the vengeance of an insulted God. Remember David, as his heart was torn by the iniquity and awful death of Absalom. Thousands have preceded you, poor parents, in the path in which you tread; and the God who supported them is still able to console you.

And do you, who, like these children of the patriarch, wound the hearts of pious parents, remember that you will have an awful account to render. Every groan that you have forced from them, every sigh that they have uttered, every tear that they have shed, every admonition and entreaty that they have given you, will, in the decisive day, aggravate your guilt. Oh! if you love those parents, and would give joy to their hearts; oh! if you love yourselves,

and would avoid a perdition more than usually dreadful,—turn unto the Lord, and devote yourselves to the Redeemer.

Jacob was alarmed, lest the Canaanites, irritated by this assault of his sons, should rise and exterminate his family. The Lord, to preserve him from their attacks, and to dissipate his fears, commands him to remove to Bethel,—to that place dear to him from so many precious remembrances, where God, when he was in solitude and affliction, appeared to him, and gave him the richest consolations and the most precious promises, and where the heart of the patriarch was probably first changed. Here he prepares to offer a solemn sacrifice to the Lord; but he remembers the sanctity of the God to whom he is about to approach, and he therefore orders his family to put away their strange gods. Perhaps Rachel had lately discovered to him the teraphim she had taken from her father; and probably some of the servants, who had come with him from Mesopotamia, had brought with them images, and others had been obtained in sacking Shechem. These, with the ear-rings, or idolatrous ornaments, worn as amulets, and for other superstitious purposes, he buried; and, after the ordinary ceremonial purifications, disposed himself to worship that God, who, says he, “answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” In all the warmth of piety, with all the fervour of thankfulness, he erected an altar, and inscribed it to the God of Bethel. His offering was accepted. The Lord again appeared to him, and confirmed the promises and the covenant made with him. In gratitude, and in obedience to the vow which he had formerly made, he consecrated a pillar of stone—pro-

bably that same stone on which his head reposed, when, fleeing from his brother, he was blest with the vision of angels.

Oh! how dear must this spot have been to Jacob, after this new manifestation of the favour of God! Christians, you may judge of his feelings by your own. Have you no Bethel? no spots where you have enjoyed intimate intercourse with heaven—where, with an unfaltering voice, you could address the Lord as your covenant God—where the excellencies of Immanuel were unveiled to you—where a sweet sense of the love of God was shed abroad in your heart—where, with a strong faith, you could lay claim to the promises of God, and, triumphing in the stability of these promises, look forward with confidence to the future glory? Oh! in such places has not Paradise appeared to be opened to you, and a new Eden to smile around you? The sun itself has seemed to shine with a brighter splendour, and the felicity of your heart has thrown a charm upon all the objects which surrounded you. Ah! why cannot we point to more Bethels in which we shouted, “Surely the Lord is here, and *I know it*; this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven?” Among other reasons, there are two suggested by this history. We do not, like Jacob, prepare with sufficient solemnity for our worship. We come fresh from the cares of earth, to enter into the presence of the thrice holy God; and therefore approach unto him without that sacred awe, that devout prostration of soul before him, which he requires. We do not, like Jacob, remember and perform our vows. In the book of God’s remembrance, are recorded the vows which we have uttered, both when the clouds of adversity lowered around us, and

when the beams of mercy enlightened our soul; and in vain do we hope for a Bethel, or a Peniel, if we do not recollect and pay them.

Having remained here for some time, Jacob removed to Hebron, to visit and comfort Isaac, his father. On the way, Rachel his beloved wife died, near the place where Christ was afterwards born, and where the children were massacred by Herod. For this reason, St. Matthew applies to this slaughter that most beautiful figure used by Jeremiah, who introduces Rachel mourning for her children, who were driven from their country, and carried captive by the Babylonians. At this horrible massacre by Herod, the evangelist, borrowing the words of the prophet, introduces Rachel rising from her tomb, and weeping at the view of these little ones, whose blood bedewed her ashes. The tears of the living are not sufficient to deplore so great a misery; it is necessary to join to them those of the dead, and especially of Rachel their mother, over whose tomb they are butchered, and whom their piercing cries cause to rise from the dead, and dissolve into tears. "In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning. Rachel, weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not." It would be difficult to find a figure more beautiful and interesting.

The circumstances of Rachel's death tended to increase the affliction of Jacob. To this we have already alluded, when considering her impatient exclamation, "Give me children, or I die." Her request was granted, and in becoming the mother of Benjamin, she expired. Ah! how often is it in mercy that God refuses to listen to our short-sighted requests!

We attempt not to describe the sorrow of Jacob, on the loss of this dear object of his affection. Judge of it, ye who, like him, have stood by the dying beds of the partners of your bosom—have perceived them labouring and panting for breath to express to you the feelings of their souls—have seen that eye which had so often sparkled with affection, or melted with tenderness towards you, already rendered heavy and obscure by the hand of death, yet still straining to give you a final look—have heard the voice which had so often cheered and directed you, in faltering and almost inaudible accents, pronounce a last farewell—have received the convulsive grasp of death from that hand which had so often been stretched out with joy to give to you the pressure of affection—have heard, whilst your blood froze within you, that last groan, at uttering which the soul found itself at the tribunal of its Judge—have fixed your views upon the lifeless corpse, and followed it to that silent bed, where the worm and putrefaction prey upon the mouldering carcass. Recall your own sensations, and tell what were the agonies of Jacob.

He reared a pillar upon her grave. Who dare blame a proper respect paid to the dead? It is a relief to the wounded heart to confer these sepulchral honours. The voice of nature, the impulse of gratitude, call upon us to deck the tombs of our departed friends; and the example of the saints authorizes this expression of our feelings. But let us not yet abandon Jacob, bending over the tomb of Rachel. Let him warn us, before we proceed, of the transitory nature of earthly enjoyments. Let his example teach those of us who are united in the tenderest relations, that these ties must shortly be dis-



solved; that one of us must shortly mark the throes of the other's departing spirit; that all that pleasant intercourse which forms the felicity of our life—that all the delights of friendship and affection, must, in this world, speedily terminate. Happy for us, if this consideration induce us to form our attachments for eternity, so that when the body of our friend—of our relative—lies in the tomb, we may by faith trace his spirit to the throne of the Redeemer, and behold it there waiting to be re-united to us beyond the possibility of a separation.

After this event, Jacob, with his family, advanced to Hebron, to the habitation of his venerable father. We know not whether Rebekah still survived, again to enfold in her aged arms her son, and those grandchildren, doubly dear to her, because the offspring of her beloved Jacob. Of the circumstances of this interview, the Scriptures do not inform us; and we shall not attempt to raise the veil which covers it.

Neither have we leisure to dwell on the anguish of Jacob, arising from the conduct of Reuben and Judah. Their crimes must surely have oppressed the patriarch still more than the death of Rachel; for the loss of dear and valuable friends far less severely pains us, than the iniquities of those who are left behind.

The cup of his affliction was not yet full. He had manifested an imprudent affection for Joseph, which had excited the envy of his brethren. His fond anticipations were blasted, when Joseph's coat was brought to him, stained with blood. He exclaimed, "An evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph no doubt is rent in pieces." He mourned, as one that had no hope, for this son of Rachel, this son of prayer, this

son of his old age, of whom he had formed such high hopes, and who had so often comforted him amidst the iniquities of his brethren.

Ah! let us be careful, my brethren, lest any worldly objects should entwine too closely around our hearts. If we have an earthly idol, we prepare sorrow for ourselves; for when God requires a sacrifice, it is the Isaac, the Joseph, for which he generally calls.

About twelve years after this event, Isaac died. Jacob and Esau buried him. Their union on this occasion shows that their friendship continued, and probably it was now confirmed. They poured their tears together over him, whose wisdom and tenderness had so long instructed, guided, and comforted them.

We hear nothing more of Jacob or his family, till the grievous famine which oppressed Canaan and the neighbouring countries. He was obliged twice to send to Egypt for corn, and he encountered many trials which will more naturally be considered in the history of Joseph. Oppressed with them, he unadvisedly exclaimed, "All these things are against me." Had he waited till God had become his own interpreter, he would have found, that all these things were the means of his preservation and future comfort. Ah! my brethren, how often do we here resemble Jacob! When our schemes are thwarted, when one disappointment succeeds to another, we are apt to murmur and repine. Why will we not commit the government to God? Why will we not tranquilly say, "He hath done all things well!" Why will we not be satisfied with that declaration of Jesus, that though "we know not now what he does, we shall know hereafter?"

But the close of Jacob's day was to be serene. His sun was not to set under a cloud. His children, returning to him, inform him that Joseph is yet alive, and governor of Egypt.

Who can describe the emotions of Jacob? I know nothing that can equal them, except the sentiments of a pious parent, who beholds a child, who had long been "dead in trespasses and sins," quickened and animated with a new life, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Such a parent, pressing his child to his bosom, cries out in accents not less rapturous than those of Jacob: "This my son was dead, but is alive again; he was lost, but is found." Such a parent's raptures are even greater. Jacob knew that Joseph, though now alive, must die; but he who thus "liveth and believeth in" Christ, "shall never die."

Let us accompany Jacob now in his last remove from Canaan to Egypt. Even in an advanced old age, he hesitates not to leave his native land. Encouraged by his Almighty Protector, he prosecutes his journey, and is safely preserved till he again beholds his beloved Joseph. He throws himself upon his neck with an eager embrace, and exclaims, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, my son; because thou art still alive."

There is something contradictory in the human passions. We should suppose that death would be most desirable in the depression of grief; yet it is in the height of our joy that we call for it. I recollect that Homer makes Ulysses declare in the midst of his wanderings, that he would die contentedly, if he could only behold the smoke from his native land: and we are told that when a certain Greek, at the Olympic games, saw victorious three of his sons, who

brought their crowns and placed them upon his head, the spectators cried out to him, "Die, die now; you can never die at a happier time." We find the same sentiment in Simeon, who, in embracing his Saviour, exclaims, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, since mine eyes have seen thy salvation." We find the same sentiment in Jacob on this occasion. Yet, strange as this expression at first appears, it is founded on a proper view of human life and human felicity. He who has known the world, knows that we can enjoy but a certain portion of happiness, and that this happiness can continue but a short time; and therefore, when it is re-attained, it is natural to desire to die before it be blasted.

The transports which Jacob felt on this occasion, make us think of the joys of re-union between pious friends and relatives at the last day. Have you wept, believers, over the ashes of your children? Dry your tears; if they departed in the Lord, they yet live, and you shall again embrace them. The voice of the archangel shall at last cry unto you. "Arise, thou pious father, thou holy mother, open thine eyes upon those children whom death tore from thine arms; behold them yet alive, although they have been the victims of the grave; behold them surrounded with dignities and honours, infinitely greater than Pharaoh could bestow."

The patriarch, when introduced to the king, was not ashamed of his religion, but in a solemn and devout manner, blessed Pharaoh. To a question proposed to him respecting his age, he replied, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the

days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." This is not the peevish lamentation of disappointment; much less the expression of unthankfulness. Jacob's heart swelled with gratitude to that God who had mingled so many mercies with the bitterness of his cup. But it is the cool and dispassionate language of one who felt the vanity of human life, and who saw little on earth to make him desirous of a longer continuance below.

It is a confession that we shall all, my brethren, be compelled to make. Though there appears an immense interval between you, young persons and advanced old age, yet should you live to pass over this interval, you will look back upon it, and see it contracted to a hand's breadth; you will acknowledge that our days are *few*. Though you are entering upon your career with all the ardent expectations of youth, and indulging those sweet dreams of fancy which promise you high felicity, yet, when you wake to the sober reality of life, when your fond hopes are crushed, when the visions of imagination fade away, when your heart has been wrung by the unkindness and treachery of the world, when you have been wounded by personal griefs and the afflictions of those who are dear to you, you will acknowledge that our days are *evil*. Happy for us, if this "picture of earth's happiest state" make us, with Jacob, consider human life as a *pilgrimage*; and induce us to "seek a better country, that is, a heavenly." Then we shall not have lived in vain. Then, during the eternity which we shall spend with the Redeemer, we shall adore that grace which enabled us to make a proper estimate of the world, and to employ our years for the noblest purposes.

Jacob remained in Egypt seventeen years. They

constituted the most calm and peaceful period of his life. But the hour of death approaches. He summons before him his beloved Joseph, and shows his firm faith in the promises of God, by causing his son solemnly to engage that his body should be carried to Canaan. He collects around his couch all his children, and prepares to give them his solemn parental and prophetic benediction. What an interesting spectacle! An old man, gray with years and rich in virtues, with a face lighted up to ecstasy by the Spirit that has descended upon him, and with hopes full of immortality, supported by his staff, probably the same one with which he crossed Jordan, and which now was a memorial to him of the various stages of his pilgrimage—this venerable man *dying*? No; this language is here improper—announcing his departure to his true country, the cessation of his wearisome pilgrimage with composure and with joy.

I regret that the limits of these exercises will not permit me distinctly to explain all the blessings which he pronounced. In the midst of them, he exclaimed, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.” Thus he, as well as Abraham, desired to see the day of Christ, and by faith “he saw it, and was glad.” Thus, in firm reliance upon the promised Redeemer, and with an assurance of the completion of his grace, he closed his afflicted life at the age of one hundred and forty-seven, and calmly entered into the tomb.

The body of Jacob, embalmed by the command of Joseph, was conducted with funeral pomp to Canaan, and there deposited by the side of his progenitors. His soul mingled with theirs in praising the faithful and covenant-keeping God.

Children of affliction, you have seen in Jacob a

man of trials. Imitate his trust in God; look forward, like him, to the world of glory; seek the sanctified use of your sorrows, and pray that at last you may “come out of your great tribulation,” and “sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.”

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## SERMON XI.



LIFE OF JOSEPH.

No. I.



GENESIS XXXVII. XXXIX. XI.

THESE are few histories in the sacred volume more interesting and instructive than that of Joseph. It is connected with some of our dearest remembrances. Most of us have wept at the tale of his sorrows, and have rejoiced in his prosperity, when, in the days of childhood, his story has been related to us by our parents; and, in more advanced life, we have contemplated his exalted character with renewed delight. He was an illustrious type of the blessed Redeemer; and few lives, except that of the Saviour, present more elevated models of virtue. It is calculated to communicate instruction to all conditions of men; for he experienced all the vicissitudes of this changing world; and, as affliction did not sink him in despondency, so neither did prosperity destroy the

humility and piety of his soul. It is a beautiful exhibition of the wisdom and power of that Providence, which educes good from intended evil; which often accomplishes its benevolent designs by means apparently the most adverse; which overrules the envy and hatred of men, to subserve its gracious purposes; which, making its way in the whirlwind, in the storm, and in darkness, still is, in a manner, inscrutable to us, effecting the fulfilment of the promise, that "all things shall work together for good, to those who love God." Behold Joseph in his afflictions, ye children of sorrow, and learn to bear your woes with patience. Behold him in his elevation, ye favourites of the world, and learn to be modest and undazzled by the splendours of earth. Behold him, Christians, cruelly persecuted, though adorned with the greatest virtues; yet, notwithstanding the malice of his enemies, rising at last from the depth of his afflictions, to the most splendid elevation; and trace the resemblance between him and the Saviour whom you adore.

In the history of Jacob we have seen that he regarded Joseph with peculiar affection. This is not surprising. Joseph was the first-born of his beloved Rachel. He was a son given, it would seem, in answer to prayer. He had ever displayed the tenderest affection and filial regard to his father, while his other sons had often wounded his heart by their unkindness. He was born when his father was advanced in life; and "Israel loved Joseph more than all his children," says the sacred historian, "because he was the son of his old age." Men never appear more gratified to revive in their descendants than when they are about to depart from earth. Happy those children who, by their amiable qualities and



virtues, thus attach the heart of those to whom they owe their being; who can say to themselves, "I form the joy of a tender father, of an affectionate mother: when their thoughts, or their looks, are fixed upon me, it is with a delicious emotion of soul; it is in raising to heaven their grateful hands, in blessing the common Father of men; in addressing to him the most fervent prayers in my behalf, and in placing me as their dearest treasure, under his safeguard and protection." Sacred delights, how much would we weaken and degrade you, if we attempted to paint you!

But though Jacob could not avoid cherishing a superior love for Joseph, yet he was highly imprudent in openly manifesting his partiality. By giving him a "coat of many colours," an embroidered garment, such as was then worn only by persons of distinction, the jealousy of his brethren was excited. They were indignant that one inferior to them in age, should so engross the heart of their common father, and be elevated above them by what they esteemed caprice or dotage. "They hated Joseph, and could not speak peaceably unto him." Parents, be warned by this history. If you would wish your houses to be the seat of peace and harmony, if you would not desire rudely to snap asunder those bonds which unite the hearts of your offspring to one another, and to yourselves, give to no child "a coat of many colours;" a badge of peculiar distinction. The favourite, in most instances, will be ruined by your blind partiality; and your other children, if timid and yielding, will have their spirits broken, and their minds debased; or, if ardent and impetuous, will cherish passions destructive of domestic felicity; will be

alienated from your idol, and will gradually forget their filial affection towards you.

The anger of Joseph's brethren was increased, because afflicted at some iniquitous conduct in which they had indulged, and which he was unable to reform, he had reported it to their father; not because he took pleasure in showing their guilt, nor from an officious interference, but from charitable motives—from a hope that paternal authority and remonstrances might reclaim them. An open testimony of our abhorrence of the conduct of sinners, if it do not melt their hearts, will irritate and inflame them. It is not therefore surprising, that his brethren afterwards regarded Joseph with deeper enmity.

But their hatred was carried to its highest point, and converted into cool malice and a deliberate desire of revenge, in consequence of Joseph's relating before them, in the simplicity of his heart, two dreams, which intimated that all his father's house should fall down, and express their submission to him. "His brethren envied him, and hated him yet the more for his dreams." If they esteemed those dreams to be supernatural and prophetic intimations of the divine purposes; who were they, that they should contend with God, and rebel against the appointments of his providence? Or, if they regarded them as the mere roivings of his fancy in sleep, was his life to be pursued, and his death resolved on, for the mere wanderings of his imagination?

Beware of the indulgence of envy. It is a passion that is restrained by no barriers. When once admitted into the heart, you know not to what enormous crimes it will drive you. It caused the brethren of Joseph to forget pity, humanity, natural affec-

tion; and to desire and plot his death. It caused the first murderer to shed the blood of righteous Abel. It rankled in the hearts of the Scribes, the high priests, and Pharisees, and conducted Jesus to the cross.

Are you hated by those who ought to regard you with affection? Why should you be surprised or disquieted? This has been the lot of the best men in all ages. Thus it was with Joseph; thus it was with the gracious Redeemer; and the servants ought to be contented to be as their Lord. Oppressed and wounded by the unkindness of his brethren, Joseph found consolation in the affection of his father. Afflicted believer, you have a Father infinitely more tender than Jacob, in whose sympathizing bosom you may confidently pour out all your cares, and whose smiles can abundantly compensate for the hatred and the frowns of the world.

The brethren of Joseph soon found an opportunity of satisfying their vengeance. They had gone a distance from home to procure pasture for their flocks. Jacob, who felt the warmest paternal anxiety for them, notwithstanding their unjust suspicions and jealousy, sent Joseph, who was now seventeen years of age, to inquire after their welfare. Not finding his brethren at Sichem, where he expected to meet them, he diligently sought for them, and would not return till he saw them, that the anxiety of his father might be relieved, and his own fraternal affection gratified. He approaches them with delight; his heart is filled with love; he rejoices in their felicity, and hopes to augment it by the glad tidings which he brings from their venerable parent. But how different are their feelings! The first sight of him rouses up every malignant passion, and they exclaim.

not "Behold our brother!" but "Behold this dreamer cometh!" They form immediately the barbarous and sanguinary project to deprive of life a brother, whose amiable qualities deserved their attachment who tenderly loved them; who was at that moment showing his love; and who was the joy and support of their father's old age. They say, "Let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." "*We will see what will become of his dreams!*" As if they could frustrate the purposes of God, and prevent the accomplishment of the designs of the Almighty! Far more easily could they have stopped the sun in his career. Notwithstanding their opposition, notwithstanding the malice of ungodly men and devils, the wheels of Providence shall still roll steadily along; and even their iniquitous designs shall tend to accomplish the declarations and counsels of the Lord. "*We will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him.*" There is a connexion between different vices; the indulgence of one crime frequently leads to the commission of others. Their intended murder must be concealed by falsehood. Do you view with abhorrence the degraded character of the liar? If you would wish that you might never be stigmatized with this vice, beware of other sins; lest, in order to elude detection, you, like the brethren of Joseph, and like thousands of others, should heap falsehood upon falsehood. "He alone that walketh uprightly, walketh surely."

Reuben alone dissents from the murderous plan. He had formerly deeply pierced the heart of his father; and from his unwillingness to inflict fresh pain upon him, we cannot but hope that he had now repented. But knowing that it would be in vain directly to oppose

their designs, he proposes, that, instead of polluting their hands with a brother's blood, Joseph should be cast into a pit, where he might die by hunger; intending then to deliver him, and restore him to his father. His plan was adopted. Joseph was stripped of his coat, and, notwithstanding his pathetic entreaties and supplications, cast into the pit. To complete their barbarity, we are informed, that while his cries were yet sounding in their ears, they "sat down to eat bread." At this time, a company or caravan, composed of Ishmaelites and Midianites, providentially passed. Judah, perhaps relenting, proposed that Joseph should be sold to them, and the sentence of death be thus changed into that of servitude and perpetual banishment. His brethren, impelled probably by that natural abhorrence of murder which even the most depraved feel when their purposes can be effected by other means, immediately consented, and sold him for twenty pieces of silver. How much greater a ransom would his father have paid for him, had he known his situation!

Reuben was not present at this transaction. He had left his brethren, and gone to deliver Joseph. When he arrives at the pit, and finds it empty, he is filled with grief, and exclaims, "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" He loved and pitied both Joseph and his father; but his brethren are unaffected with his sorrow. The time, however, is coming, when, their consciences awakened by their own distress, they shall listen with greater feeling to the remonstrances of Reuben.

How often, Christians, does God thus blast benevolent designs formed for the benefit of his afflicted people! Not that he is insensible to the sorrows of believers: "He pitieth them, as a father

pitieth his children." Not that he is regardless of the benevolent purposes of their friends; "These shall in no case lose their reward;" the Lord will recompense even their intentions: but because all the advantages which God designs by affliction have not yet been obtained, and that time for their deliverance, which was appointed in infinite wisdom and mercy, has not yet arrived.

To hide their guilt, they took the robe of Joseph, and, dipping it in a kid's blood, sent it to Jacob, who supposed that his son was certainly slain by some ferocious beast. They imagined now that their crime was effectually concealed; but we may cry to them, as Moses did afterwards to the descendants of Reuben, (Num. xxxiii. 23.) "Be sure your sin will find you out." Use as many artifices as you please, your iniquity shall at last be discovered.

You who, like them, have concealed your sins from the world, tremble at the conclusion of their history. In whatever darkness you have shrouded your guilt, Providence, in a thousand modes, can dissipate this darkness, even in this world; and display your crimes in all their deformity. And even if you here escape, your mask shall fall when you stand, with the assembled universe, at the tribunal of the Eternal.

Who does not sympathise with the unhappy Jacob, while, "refusing to be comforted," he cries, "It is my son's coat; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces; I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning." "This sorrow," says a good man,\* "is an emblem of that which we feel for departed friends. Jacob saw the garment torn, and concluded that Jo-

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\* Dr. Orton, in loc.

seph was destroyed. We see the body, the clothing of the soul, torn and breathless; and we act as though we supposed that the soul was lost. Let us remember that, if they were pious, they are, like Joseph, gone to reign, and to be infinitely happier than they would be with us."

"I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning." Ah! little did Jacob imagine what felicity was in reserve for him. How apt are even believers to indulge in undutiful and unbelieving apprehensions; to suppose that the sun will never again shine upon us, because it is obscured by a heavy cloud; to cry out, in despondency, "My way is hid from the Lord; my judgment is passed over from my God!" Remember Jacob, and learn never to despond while the throne of the Almighty is established in the heavens, and while all power is committed to the Redeemer. Oh! how do we mar our comforts by this unfilial distrust of God! If we would be happy, we must cultivate such a faith in his mercy, his love, and his care, as to make us behold in every Egypt an Exodus, in every Red Sea a passage, in every fiery furnace an angel of light, in every den of lions the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," in every temptation a door of escape, in every grave a resurrection.

The tears of Isaac, who yet was living, were mingled with those of Jacob, on the supposed death of his beloved grand-son. His grief must have been severe, because, in addition to the bonds of nature, the amiable and pious conduct of Joseph must have highly endeared him to the mild, placid, and devotional Isaac. Who would wish for extreme old age, when he considers how many thousand times, in consequence of it, the heart must bleed; the strong and

tender ties which unite us to others be snapped asunder; and the bosom be rifled of its dearest friends?

In the mean time, Joseph had arrived at Egypt. Little did the Egyptians think, that this obscure stranger, who now entered their land friendless and unprotected, was to be their future lord. Little did they think, in after times, when another Joseph, with the holy Virgin and the Babe of Bethlehem, entered their land, that the Lord of men and angels resided among them. Let us despise none for their mean appearance; for we know not what may be their future destiny. Joseph was here sold as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the king's guards. Thus reduced to a state of servitude, we know not whether he still exercised an unwavering faith in the assurances given to him in his prophetic dreams. If that true faith was in exercise, which, in the most afflictive circumstances, relies upon the promises of God; which judges of providences by his word, and not of his word by providences,—then his confidence was still unshaken. And such, my brethren, is the faith which we should cultivate; the faith of Abraham, which enabled him to see a posterity numerous as the stars of heaven, through natural impossibilities, through a bleeding sword, and a sacrificed son; that of Job, which could see a Redeemer, a resurrection, and a restoration, through the violence of heaven and of men, through sickness and bereavement, through the reproaches of friends, and the malice of Satan; that of Israel, who could see a land of promise, through a sea and a wilderness, through fiery serpents and sons of Anak. Such a faith was amply adequate to support Joseph in the lowest depression of his state.

Joseph was a slave; but, says the historian, “the



Lord was with him;" and he therefore enjoyed felicity; for this presence, protection, and love of God can give joy to the heart, in the most unprosperous circumstances. The blessing of God was so evidently upon his labours, that his master raised him from the rank of slave to that of steward of all his household, and committed every thing to his disposal. Servants, Joseph presents you with an example of industry, of contentment, and fidelity. Like him, be ever attentive to the interests of your masters; and you, like him, shall be regarded and esteemed by them. Like him, live in holiness and the fear of God; and you shall, like him, be raised at last to the highest dignities, and in the kingdom of God enjoy honours infinitely greater than mortals could bestow.

At this period, Joseph was exposed to a new trial, in which the integrity of his soul and the firmness of his religious principles were displayed. His conduct may be ridiculed by the licentious, and derided by fools, who "make a mock at sin;" but the scorn and laughter of the profane cannot alter the immutable nature of virtue and vice—cannot hinder this conduct from being an object of admiration to all whose approbation is worth desiring—and especially cannot influence the decisions that will hereafter be pronounced at the tribunal of the God of purity. The wife of Potiphar is held up to perpetual infamy, for forgetting her sex, her modesty, her duty, and cherishing the most irregular desires. Joseph was assailed by her beauty—by her solicitations—by the prospect of gain from her favour, and the probability of injury from her resentment—by the frequency and violence of her temptations. But he nobly rose superior to all her seductions, and was upheld by honour, by gratitude, by religion. The kindness

and confidence of his master, and a sense of the presence of God, were an impenetrable shield against all the assaults of vicious pleasure. “He said unto her, Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath into 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?” When her importunities were day by day renewed, Joseph, with holy prudence, avoided her society; and at last chose to sacrifice reputation, liberty, life, rather than wound his conscience and offend the Lord. “He left his garment in her hand, and fled from her.”

Let the votaries of licentious pleasure deride this conduct: their derision excites only our pity and compassion; for the time is coming when they will remember, with bitter agony, their scoffs at the restraints of religion, and will execrate those pretended friends, who have seduced them into those courses, “the steps of which take hold on hell.” In this life, they may be added to the countless thousands, who, by an indulgence in sinful pleasures, have withered the fair promises of their youth, and blasted the fond expectations of their parents and friends—have sacrificed the dignity of men, and, becoming the slaves of appetite, have rendered themselves incapable of sublime pursuits, and of noble aims—have become contemptible even to themselves, and have justly incurred the scorn of the wise and good. On the bed of death, what horrors shall besiege their departing spirits; and how awful shall be the voice of conscience, which, now stupified, shall then awake from its lethargy, and retrace to them, in accents dread-

fully impressive, all the enormities of the past, all the agonies of the future. And throughout eternity they shall find that sinners cannot, with impunity, treat with contempt the threatenings and commands of the living God. In imagination place yourself for a moment, O voluptuary, on the brink of the fathomless abyss. Through the flames seek those persons of whose crimes you have been the witness, the accomplice, perhaps the author. Behold the pleasures of a moment succeeded by an eternity of sufferings; the unhallowed fire which consumed them on earth, succeeded by that avenging fire, which tortures without being able to consume; that gayety and laughter in which they indulged, succeeded by blackness of darkness, by groaning and gnashing of teeth; view this awful spectacle, and in time pause in that career, the end of which must be destruction.

Let the young, especially, learn wisdom from the youthful Joseph. Your age is frequently made an excuse for improper indulgences. It is an excuse unauthorized by the word and the law of God. If your early years were not given you by God, they might be spent in the service of his enemies; but since all parts of your life are the gift of his goodness, they ought all to be consecrated to his service. Seek from him that grace which you need, in order to resist temptation; and “if sinners entice you, consent ye not.”

What bounds can be set to the wickedness of a female who forgets the modesty of her sex? Impelled by revenge, the wife of Potiphar falsely accused Joseph. Potiphar listened to her complaints, and Joseph was cast into prison. “His feet,” says the Psalmist, (cv. 18.) “were hurt with fetters, and he was laid in iron.” This was the severest affliction

he had yet endured. He had before experienced many sorrows; but his good name had not been assailed by calumny and detraction. Now he is accused of a crime which he abhors, and he has no possibility of vindicating his innocence. Yet he utters no complaints, but “possesses his soul in patience,” and calmly waits for that time when God “shall bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day.” (Ps. xxxvii. 6.)

Are any of you, my brethren, like him, unjustly reproached? Remember Joseph; remember the lives of almost all the pious men, whose history is recorded in the Old Testament and the New; and when you consider that you experience only the same affliction that was undergone by those “of whom the world was not worthy,”—be resigned. Remember, especially, the treatment of your Redeemer, the reproaches and calumnies which he endured; and commit yourselves to God, who, in his own good time, will “plead your cause.”

Joseph was in prison. Was he therefore unhappy? Oh no! Felicity depends not upon external situation, but upon the heart, the conscience, and the presence of God. Under outward splendour, the heart is often pained, while a foretaste of heaven can be enjoyed in the deepest penury. Belshazzar may tremble and be distressed, while surrounded by all the ensigns of royalty, and all the gratifications of sense; while Paul and Silas, beaten with many stripes, and thrust into a loathsome dungeon, can “at midnight sing praises unto God.” The sacred historian particularly informs us that at this period of his life, “the Lord was with Joseph;” and blest with that presence which constitutes heaven—which has filled with rapture so many expiring

saints, so many triumphant martyrs, could he be unhappy? Were we made acquainted with all the intercourse between God and his soul during this period; with all his heavenly communion, and the manifestations of the divine love to him: we might perhaps find this to be the most useful and the most joyous part his life.

The mercy of God was shown by inclining the heart of the keeper of the prison to favour Joseph. Convinced of his innocence and integrity, the jailer no longer treated him as a common malefactor, but committed to him the care of the other prisoners. For some years, he discharged the duties of this office with that fidelity and diligence which had distinguished him in the other stations in which he had been placed; when a circumstance occurred, which gave him some expectation of being liberated from his confinement.

The chief of the butlers and the chief of the bakers had offended Pharaoh. Of their crimes and of their names, we are ignorant. One of them came to an untimely end, and perhaps deserved it. The name of the other, if we knew it, could be mentioned only as an example of unkindness and ingratitude. They were committed by the captain of the guard to the care of Joseph. This captain of the guard was Potiphar, who now was probably convinced of Joseph's innocence, but, from a regard to the reputation of his wife, would not liberate him. In the same night, they both had dreams, which they were convinced were not the idle vagaries of fancy, but prophetic. Joseph, beholding their anxiety, inquires of them, "Wherefore look ye so sadly?" On hearing the cause, he directs them to the God of heaven, as the only Being who can give a knowledge of the

future ; and, enlightened from above, declares, that in three days the chief butler should be restored to his office, and the chief baker undergo an ignominious death. Happy for the latter, if he improved this timely warning, and prepared for that death which he so soon experienced ! Of the chief butler, Joseph asks his good offices after his liberation : “ Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew 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.” Nothing can exceed the tenderness of this address. He recounts his afflictions, but he reviles not his enemies ; he vindicates his conduct, but instead of loading with passionate reproaches, he does not even mention his brethren, and the wife of Potiphar.

The butler, in the first transports of his joy, probably sincerely intended to interest himself for Joseph ; but on his restoration, either the cares of his office, or the fear of incurring the displeasure of Potiphar, made him silent. “ Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.” A new proof was given to Joseph of the instability of human friendship—of the necessity of trusting only in the Lord ; and he remained, for two years longer, a neglected and oppressed prisoner.

You view with abhorrence this conduct of the chief butler. But in blaming him, do you not condemn yourselves ? If you have not displayed equal ingratitude towards men, have you not shown far greater towards God and that Redeemer who died for you ? Little did this butler think that his ingratitude would be recorded in a book that would hold

up his memory to contempt to the end of the world. We need not fear that our ingratitude will be thus recorded. But let us remember that there is another book, the book of remembrance, the contents of which will be displayed to the assembled universe. Wo, wo to us, if on its pages it be recorded, "We remembered not our God and our Saviour, but forgot them!"

Here we pause in the history of Joseph; we have viewed him in his afflictions. In another discourse we shall consider his conduct in prosperity.

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## SERMON XII.



LIFE OF JOSEPH.

No. II.



GENESIS xli. xlvii. 13—26.

**C**HILDREN of God, relinquish not your confidence in your heavenly Father, however severe or protracted may be your sorrows. When they shall have accomplished the merciful ends for which they were designed, the sunshine of joy shall succeed to the dark clouds which have lowered over your heads, and the storm shall gently die away. Though "many are the afflictions of the righteous," yet "the Lord," in that mode and in that season which is best.

will “deliver him from them all.” If tempted by the long continuance of your woes, to murmur or repine, remember Joseph, whose life, for thirteen years, was marked with misery; but who still confided in the declarations of God, and found that he was faithful to his promises.

In consequence of the restoration of the chief butler to his office, Joseph probably entertained hopes of deliverance from his unjust servitude. But these hopes were frustrated. Two long years, at that period of life which is most pleasant to those in health and at ease, rolled away, and he was yet in prison. Thus God caused him to renounce all confidence in men, and to trust solely and simply in him. He remained in confinement, not desponding, but “quietly waiting for the salvation of God.” And he was not disappointed. The selfish and ungrateful butler, in the midst of his prosperity, might forget him who had ministered to him in prison, and by his tenderness and supernatural gift of interpretation, cheered the gloom of his dungeon; but the Lord forgot not his faithful servant, but prepared to raise him to dignity and honour.

In the earlier ages of the world, when there was no written revelation, God frequently declared his purposes and will by prophetic dreams. Of these we have already met with several instances in the course of this history. Pharaoh had two dreams, by which he was agitated and disquieted. He was convinced that they came from God, and that they prognosticated things to come. He in vain sought an interpretation of them from his assembled wise men and *magicians*. Who were these magicians? The word, in after ages, signified those who pretended to supernatural revelations; but it is uncertain whe-



ther, thus early, it had this meaning, or denoted those who undertook to interpret dreams from natural observations, from astrology, or in some other mode. Whatever was their character, they were now confounded, unable to answer, and by the overruling influence of God upon their minds, constrained to acknowledge their ignorance.

The butler, supposing that his own interest might now be promoted by recommending Joseph, speaks of the poor captive, whose suit he ought to have urged two years before. How wise is the administration of Providence! Had the butler complied with his duty, and spoken of Joseph immediately after his liberation, the king might have brought the patriarch from prison, but not to elevate him to the high dignity to which he was raised. Probably the greatest honour which he would have attained, would have been to be numbered among the wise men and interpreters of the land.

Joseph was immediately brought into the presence of the king, and interests us by his piety, his modesty, and humility. He was not ashamed to declare that he was the servant of God, and, in the midst of an idolatrous court, to express his dependence upon him, and to point to him as the only Author of true wisdom, and as the God whose providence managed all events. When the king speaks to him, as one that is able to interpret prophetic dreams, he replies, "It is not in me; *God* shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." It was with the same spirit that Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, on a similar occasion, "The secret which the king hath demanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; but there is a God in heaven, who revealeth secrets, and maketh known to

the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living." Beautiful example for all who are endued with any spiritual gifts! Let them arrogate nothing to themselves, but give the glory unto God. Let them ever cry, with the apostle Paul, "Not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Those who, like Herod of old, are filled with self-elation and boast in themselves, deserve like him to be eaten up by worms.

"God shall give Pharaoh *an answer of peace.*" This is an expression of the desires and expectations of Joseph. He could not but regard the intimations of the divine will as sent in mercy. Not that he was afraid to declare the counsels of God, however awful they might be; but he delighted more in messages of peace. And such is still the disposition of the ministers of Christ. Though they are obliged, in the discharge of their duty, to proclaim indignation and wrath against the impenitent, and "by the terrors of the Lord to persuade men,"—yet it would be far more grateful to their hearts, far more accordant with the feelings of their souls, to utter only the words of consolation. But they dare not, like Michaiah, "prophesy smooth things," without authority from the Lord.

On the relation of the dreams, Joseph declares to Pharaoh that, under two different emblems, God had shown him that, after seven years of extraordinary plenty, should come seven years of extraordinary famine; and recommends that a fit person should be appointed, who, during the plenty, should provide for the season of scarcity. He proposes that a fifth of the produce should be reserved. It is probable that one tenth was the due of the king: Joseph re-

commends that another tenth be purchased at the current price, which, in such abundant seasons, must have been small. Do we approve the prudence of Joseph, in providing for future evils? Let us imitate it by making provision for that period, which will surely arrive to many of us before seven years are passed, when all the enjoyments and supports of life shall fail; when we must perish, unless we have “laid up treasure in heaven;” unless we have laboured, “not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.”

The advice of Joseph was approved by Pharaoh and his counsellors. It was acknowledged that the wisdom displayed by him showed that he was animated by a divine spirit, and he himself was chosen to carry his own plans into execution. “And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a man as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph. Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art.” What vicissitudes do we constantly perceive in the world! He who was lately treated as the basest criminal, is now loaded with eulogiums. Thus, Jesus was one day esteemed the Prophet of the Lord, and the next a confederate with Beelzebub. Fear not reproach, believer; it shall be followed by honour. Like Joseph, when assailed by ignominy, commit your cause to God. Like Joseph, when assailed more dangerously by commendation, be humble. He never deserved praise, whose heart is elated at hearing it.

Joseph was elevated to a dignity inferior only to that of Pharaoh, and empowered to transact all affairs of government. Instead of the fetters which bound him, he receives Pharaoh’s ring. This was a

sign of honour and authority, as is shown from the presentation of it by Ahasuerus to Mordecai; and in profane history, by Alexander to Perdicas. Instead of his prison-clothes, he was dressed in the fine linen, or *byssus* of Egypt, which was worn only by the great; and a chain of gold put upon his neck. He rides in the most splendid carriage of state, except that of the king; while it is proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" Instead of the confinement of a prison, into which the light of day was scarcely admitted, he traverses Egypt at his pleasure. Instead of being regarded with pity and contempt, he is the object of the public respect and love. Pharaoh conferred upon him the name of Zaphnath-paaneah. The imposition of new names was common among the ancients, in token of high esteem, and to designate the character of the persons who received them, or to serve as a memorial of important events. Thus, Abraham and Jacob received new and characteristic names from the Lord; Daniel and the three Hebrew youths, from the king of Babylon; and Simon and the sons of Zebedee, from the Redeemer. The honourable appellation now given to Joseph, signifies, if we derive it from the Hebrew, *the revealer of secrets*; and if from the Egyptian, *the saviour of the people*.

In a world full of changes, why should we set our affections upon the things of earth? Every thing below is fluctuating and uncertain. To-day, we may be rich, honoured, beloved; to-morrow, in the depth of poverty and humiliation. And on the contrary, to-morrow the darkness which now surrounds the children of sorrow may be scattered; and their garments of sack-cloth, like those of Mordecai, be changed for robes of state; and their prison, like that of Joseph, be

succeeded by a palace. Ye who are poor, despised, and disconsolate, though you cannot hope for such a reverse as that of Joseph, in your outward affairs, —yet the Lord speaks to you of a change infinitely more glorious, which he invites you to accept. Far less did Joseph, in his lowest abasement, differ from Joseph in his greatest elevation,—than he who is in vassalage to Satan, en fettered by the chains of sin, polluted by guilt, and bound over to the dungeon of eternal despair, differs from him who enjoys the liberty of the sons of God, whose fetters are broken by the Spirit of grace, whose soul is adorned with holiness, and who is freed from all condemnation. Seek, ardently seek, this elevation. Go to him who “gives liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound;” who “gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Though, like the prodigal, you be bowed down with misery, and perishing with hunger,—he will feed you with the bread of life; he will “clothe you with the garments of salvation, and cover you with the robes of righteousness;” he will “put a ring on your finger,” give you the tokens of his adopting love. He will confer upon you infinitely higher honour than imperial Pharaoh could ever bestow.

Sudden elevation generally intoxicates the mind. It had not this effect upon Joseph. We find in him the same fidelity and prudence in the high post which he now held, as we have admired in him when he was in Potiphar’s house and in the prison. Instead of spending his time in ease and festivity, in licentious mirth and sensual indulgences, in the giddy round of dissipation, or in forming plans of revenge against those who had so deeply injured him, we

find him actively and laboriously engaged in plans for the public benefit, and faithfully discharging the important trust reposed in him. That sense of the invisible presence of God, which had formerly preserved him from temptation, was still fresh upon his conscience. Gratitude for the kindness of Potiphar had formerly been shown in his conduct; gratitude for the greater kindness of Pharaoh now stimulates him to unremitting exertions.

He was not, however, insensible to the pleasures of domestic life. He was united in marriage to Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, the priest or prince (for the original word signifies either) of On, better known in after ages by the name of Heliopolis. He was blessed with two sons, to whom he gave names expressive of his gratitude to God for his favours, and who both became heads of distinct tribes in Israel. He was peculiarly formed to enjoy the still and serene pleasures of domestic life; but he did not permit them to interfere with his public duties.

According to the prediction of God, for seven successive years, there was an unexampled fertility in Egypt. They were probably spent by the majority in riot and dissipation; for the impenitent turn even the mercies and gifts of God into sources of misery and causes of their perdition. Some, more prudent persons, probably prepared for the time of need. But the land must have perished, had not Joseph built store-houses in every part, in which he received the fifth of the produce. Then he could look forward with confidence to the approaching judgments, knowing that in the midst of them the people would be preserved, and would bless him as their benefactor.

The years of distress commenced. The threaten-

ings of God will ever be as surely accomplished as his promises. When the private stores were exhausted, "the Egyptians cried unto Pharaoh for bread." To whom could they go but to him, who had in his store-houses enough and to spare? To whom, in our distresses, shall we go, but to Him who is the Fountain of all good, who giveth liberally, and can supply all our needs from the exhaustless source of his all-sufficiency?

Pharaoh directed them to Joseph, who opened the store-houses and sold them food. That he did not oppress them, is evident from the declarations which they themselves afterwards made. My brethren, you would have accused of folly that man who would have perished with hunger, rather than have applied to Joseph for relief. As much as the soul is more valuable than the body, of so much greater folly are they guilty, who suffer it everlastingly to perish, rather than go to that Redeemer who has the bread of eternal life, and who offers it "without money and without price."

For five years, the corn was thus purchased by the Egyptians. At the expiration of this period, no money was left in the hands of the common people, and little in the possession of the affluent. How the poor were sustained at this time, we are not informed in so brief a narration. There can, however, be little doubt, from the character of Joseph, and the very intent of his advancement, that he supplied their necessities. The money received from others, enriched not himself or his children, but was faithfully deposited in the royal treasury. When their money was exhausted, he gave them corn in exchange for their cattle. In this he did not take advantage of their necessities, but acted both with prudence and gene-

rosity. They had no food for themselves, and therefore none for their cattle. The land, consumed by dearth, could not support them: and it is highly probable that when he again settled the Egyptians on their habitations, he restored their cattle to them.

In the last year of the famine, they came to him and said, "Buy us and our land for bread; and we and our land will be servants to Pharaoh." He complied with their offer, gave them corn to sow on the ensuing year, and removed them to the cities nearest to them in which the corn was repositied, that they might more readily be relieved.\* To understand this transaction, we must attend to the original term, and to the subsequent conduct of Joseph. "We will be servants unto Pharaoh." The original term עֲבָדִים which we translate *servants*, is frequently applied to angels, to men immediately employed by God, to counsellors, nobles, and the principal officers of the court. The meaning, therefore, perhaps is, "We will hold our lands of Pharaoh, and pay him service for them." After the termination of the famine, he restored to the Egyptians their lands and their liberty, on condition that they paid to Pharaoh the fifth part of the produce. Thus he rendered their situation more secure than before their surrender of themselves, since he freed them from all those arbitrary exactions, to which, under that despotic government, they were before subject, and imposed on them only a tax for all the ordinary and extraordinary purposes of government, which, in that fertile country, they could easily pay. That Joseph was not an oppressor, is evident from the sentiments which the Egyptians themselves express—"Thou

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\* See Chandler against Morgan.



hast saved our lives;" and from the veneration and love with which his memory has ever been cherished among them. Instead of enslaving the people, as some have represented, he was the first that in Egypt limited the power of the crown, settling, by a firm ordinance, that portion which alone the king could touch.

In the whole course of his administration, we must admire his wisdom, his prudence, and his justice.

Having thus considered the political character of Joseph, we should next attend to the more interesting view of him, as a brother and a man. But this must be deferred till the next lecture.

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### SERMON XIII.



LIFE OF JOSEPH.

No. III.



GENESIS xlii. xlvi.

IN our last lecture we beheld Joseph elevated to the highest honours, and reviewed his conduct as the prime minister of Pharaoh. In this we are to consider him in the more interesting relations of a brother and a son.

The famine, against which he had so wisely provided, was not confined to Egypt. Its effects were also felt in all the neighbouring countries. Jacob,

whose family suffered from it, heard that there was corn in Egypt, and sent thither ten of his sons to procure a supply. Benjamin alone remained at home. He was viewed with fond partiality by his father, not only because he was the son of his old age, but also because he was, as the patriarch thought, the only surviving pledge of his beloved Rachel. That ardent affection which was once felt for Joseph, is now transferred to him. At this preference the envy and jealousy of his brethren were not again excited. They had probably felt too much remorse for the indulgence of these passions in the case of Joseph, and had been too feelingly convinced to what awful consequences they might lead, to be again willing to cherish them.

The ten brethren arrived in Egypt, and were admitted to the prime minister of Pharaoh; whose authority they acknowledged, and before whom they reverently bowed down with their faces to the earth. What a difference between their conduct now, and when they proudly and arrogantly exclaimed, "Shalt thou indeed rule over us, or shalt thou have dominion over us?" or when they cried, "Come, let us slay him, and cast him into this pit; and we will see what will become of his dreams." Ah! how vain is it to hope that we can thwart the designs of Providence, because they oppose our inclinations and desires. As well might we attempt to pluck the sun from the firmament, because it dazzles us with its beams—or to dry up the ocean, because it obstructs our progress. "The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." If we fight against God, all our efforts shall not only be unavailing,—they shall also, as was the case with these brethren when they sold Joseph into Egypt to prevent his fu-

ture greatness, be over-ruled for the accomplishment of the divine purposes.

In the illustrious Zaphnath-Paaneah, the lord of Egypt, the object of the esteem and love of a mighty people, none of the sons of Jacob discovered that poor injured Hebrew youth whom, more than twenty years before, they had sold into servitude, and who they probably supposed was long since in the tomb. Joseph, on the contrary, immediately recollected them—And what a variety of emotions at this recognition rushed upon his soul! Yet he concealed his knowledge of them, till he could discover whether they had repented of their iniquities; whether they were attached to each other and their father; and whether Jacob and Benjamin still survived. He assumed a sternness of behaviour towards them inconsistent with his feelings, and accused them of coming into Egypt as spies. But though, judging from the general benevolence and meekness of his character, and from the silence of the Scripture, we dare not accuse him of acting at this time from cruel or revengeful feelings. Though we esteem his principles to have been pure, and his bosom filled with fraternal affection, yet he cannot be exempted from the charge of improper dissimulation.

His brethren vindicated themselves from the charge brought against them, by assuring Joseph that they were all the sons of one father; that it was highly improbable that a parent would expose so many of his children at once to so dangerous an office, especially since he had but one son remaining with him, and had already wept for the untimely death of another. “Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan: and be-

hold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

Though Joseph had thus obtained part of the information which he wished, and discovered that Jacob and Benjamin were alive, he appeared still to disbelieve their declarations, and commanded them to send one of their number for their younger brother, while the others remained as hostages. "Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that ye may be proved whether there be any truth in you; or else by the life of Pharaoh, surely ye are spies." *By the life of Pharaoh.* Two different senses have been given to this expression. Some have regarded it as an oath—others, as only a strong asseveration. If its import be, "May Pharaoh die, if this be not the case," it is an imprecation utterly unworthy the mouth of so good a man. If it imply, "As sure as Pharaoh lives," it is only a strong declaration, somewhat similar to that frequent expression, "As thy soul liveth:" but still is far too much like a needless oath. The example of any mere man, my brethren, is not our rule. Imitate not Joseph where the propriety of his conduct is questionable. "Abstain from all appearance of evil"—"Swear not at all," neither by God nor by any creature; and be careful to use no forms of speech that encroach on the reverence due to the Lord.

As they refused to comply with this proposal, Joseph confined them three days in prison; and then insisted, as they valued their life and their liberty, that one of them should be detained in Egypt, while the others returned to bring their younger brother. They were filled with distress—their consciences woke from their lethargy—and they recollected, with horror, their cruelty to Joseph, and acknowledged

they were justly punished for their barbarity to him. His piteous cries once could not affect them; now in remembrance they strike with force upon their hearts. They were unjustly put in prison; as unjustly they had cast Joseph into the pit. They were treated as spies, when they were true men; they had considered Joseph as a spy upon their conduct, and as their enemy, when he entertained the sincerest affection for them. The governor of Egypt was regardless of their defence and of their entreaties; they had been equally deaf to the supplications of the afflicted Joseph. Thus they read their sin in their punishment; and said one to another, in the hearing of Joseph, not supposing that he understood them, "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."

Such, my brethren, is the power of conscience! Thus, in affliction, will it recall to us crimes long since perpetrated. Though the violence of passion may for a time suspend its force, yet it will at last wring the soul with anguish. Twenty years had elapsed since this inhuman action, yet it is present to them with all its aggravating circumstances. Ye who are at ease and in prosperity, but who have committed sins that have not been washed away by the blood of atonement, the day of trouble is approaching! Should you meet with no severe afflictions to recall your sins to remembrance during your life, yet still you must die—And will you add to the languors of disease, to the pains of body, to the unspeakable solemnities of that moment, the lashes of an enraged conscience? Oh! plant not your dying pillow be-

forehand with thorns—"Keep consciences void of offence toward God and towards man."

Reuben alone had opposed their conduct. He reminds them now that he had warned them against this wickedness: "Spake I not unto you, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, his blood is required." Ah! my brethren, you may now treat all serious admonitions with as much disregard as did these brethren the advices of Reuben—But hereafter you shall feel that you have thus added rebellion to iniquity; and all these despised reproofs shall be as burning coals in your bosoms.

Joseph, notwithstanding his apparent severity, was overcome by this scene. That he might not betray his real character, he was obliged to withdraw to give vent to his emotions. "He turned himself about from them, and wept." But as his purpose was not yet accomplished, he returned and bound Simeon, who, perhaps, had been the instigator of the crime, or who may have been less affected by remorse than the others. The rest were dismissed with kindness: they were laden with corn, had provisions given them for their journey, and had their money secretly returned.

We are naturally led to inquire, Why did not Joseph send by them some message to his afflicted father? Nay, why did he not, long before this time, inform Jacob of his prosperity? Did he not display an indifference towards one who loved him so tenderly, in suffering the patriarch for so long a time to mourn for him as dead, when he might so easily have cheered the heart of the venerable old man by an account of his real situation? Let us not hastily condemn a person whose general character we are

constrained to admire; nor attribute to him a want of filial affection inconsistent with his whole conduct. Perhaps he thought that he could not communicate this information without inflicting a deeper wound in his father's heart, by an account of the unworthiness of his other sons, than could be healed by the information of his own life and elevation; or, more probably, that God, whose counsel he sought, might have given him an express revelation, directing him in what time and manner to make himself known to his father.

At the present time he could not abandon the station which he held. He was ardently desirous to see his father and Benjamin. But had he sent intelligence by his brethren that he still survived, they would probably have suppressed it, in order to conceal their own crime, and have returned no more into Egypt. To ensure their return, and to prepare for the transplanting of their families, Simeon was detained, and Benjamin required.

Reuben engaged to liberate Simeon, provided Benjamin might be entrusted to his care, and permitted to go with him to Egypt; and he offers his two sons as hostages for his safe return. But to this proposal the partiality of Jacob would not permit him to listen: "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." These words are unworthy of Jacob. Why should he die with grief if Benjamin be taken? Is Benjamin his God, his life, his everlasting portion? How much superior was the conduct of Job, who, bereft of all his children, still looked upward, and saw his Redeemer living. But let us not too severely

censure one who had been oppressed by such multiplied griefs. He soon resumed his character, committed his all to his covenant God, and cried, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

When the provisions brought from Egypt were consumed, Jacob reluctantly consented that Benjamin should accompany his brethren. He gave them the most prudent counsels for their journey, provided presents for the governor, and then commended them to God in a prayer for them, that displayed both his piety and paternal tenderness. Arrived at Egypt, they were received by Joseph with the utmost kindness and affection. "He asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" But when he beheld his brother Benjamin, his heart overflowed; he could only say, "God be gracious to thee, my son;" and, overcome with the emotions of love and joy, was obliged hastily to retire, and enter into his chamber to weep there. Many were the bitter tears which he had shed, when exiled from all that was dear to him on earth. But those which now flow are the tears of joy. He beholds himself encircled by all his brethren, and hopes soon to behold the face of his father, and be folded in his embraces.

Returning to them when sufficiently composed, he appeared again with the dignity of the governor of Egypt; but, to their astonishment, invited them to sit down with him to a familiar entertainment. Here he showed to Benjamin particular attention, perhaps with a view to discover whether they still retained that envy and jealousy which he had experienced from them.

Still Joseph did not discover himself. He wished to make another trial of the sentiments of his brethren.



ren. He ordered his steward to put his silver cup into Benjamin's sack, that there might be a pretence for delaying him, and that the feelings of his brethren might be manifested when his liberty and life appeared to be forfeited. On beholding their deep distress—on listening to the pathetic speech of Judah, and his generous offer to become a bondman instead of Benjamin, Joseph was fully satisfied. He saw that the selfishness and barbarity of their spirit was subdued—that they sincerely repented of their conduct towards him—that they tenderly loved each other, and were warmly attached to their father.

This was enough, and more than enough, for the generous heart of Joseph. Every word of Judah's speech pierced his soul, and made him desirous to give full scope to his brotherly love. He saw his brethren worthy of their father, and interested in his happiness. He was confused to hear Judah frequently repeating, "thy servant our father." He felt the distress of Benjamin, standing before him under a weight of unmerited accusations, that appeared supported by undeniable proofs, waiting for that sentence which was to decide his own fate and that of his father. The tenderest and most powerful passions, filial and fraternal love, compassion and joy, swelled his heart. Scarcely able to articulate his orders that his servants should withdraw, that he might, without witnesses, indulge all the emotions of his soul, he burst into tears, and cried aloud, "I am Joseph: doth my father yet live?"

Who can describe their feelings at this unexpected discovery? Shame, confusion, fear, wonder, joy, must by turns have possessed them. Joseph hastens to dissipate their apprehensions—assures them of his full forgiveness—and directs their attention to that

Providence which had over-ruled their conduct, not only to procure his advancement, but also for the preservation of the lives of thousands.

Who does not admire this example of generosity and forgiveness? The elevation of Joseph had not made him regard his brethren with contempt; his long absence had not erased the impressions which nature had made upon his heart—Their cruelties, their indignities and barbarities, had not made him forget his tenderness for them. He forgave them all their injuries; his heart again was open to them; and his study, throughout the remainder of their lives, was to render them happy, and return them good for evil.

Revengeful and implacable men, whom the least offence inflames—who never forgive an injury incomparably less than that committed against Joseph,—how little, how contemptible are you, when compared with him!—How unlike are you to his great antitype, who on his cross prayed for his murderers: “Forgive them, for they know not what they do!”—How dreadful will be your destiny, when you shall experience the truth of that denunciation, “He shall have judgment without mercy,” &c.

Believer, when you behold Benjamin standing as a criminal before Joseph, and instead of the sentence which he expected, receiving the assurances and the marks of fraternal love,—does it not make you remember that blissful time when you stood trembling and fearful before the mercy-seat, apprehensive of that condemnation which you had deserved—but when, instead of words of indignation and wrath, you heard your Redeemer saying to you in soothing accents, “Fear not, I am Christ, thine elder brother”—when he gave you richer tokens of love than Jo-

seph could ever bestow, and filled your heart with “joy unspeakable and full of glory?”

The tidings which he had thus communicated to his brethren, he was anxious to have conveyed immediately to his venerable father. Knowing that the famine was yet to continue for five years longer, he was desirous to transplant him and all his brethren into Egypt, that he might rescue them from want, and provide for them a place of security and comfort near himself. He desired them to bear the tenderest assurances of love to their common father, and urged him instantly to remove all his household. “Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him: Thus saith thy son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down: tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy children’s children, and all that thou hast, and there will I nourish thee. Ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither.”

What a reproof does he here present to those depraved and corrupted persons who, suddenly elevated from obscurity, are ashamed of their connexions, and blush through a despicable vanity to acknowledge them. In his highest authority and power, he did not wish to conceal that he had sprung from an obscure Canaanite—from a family of shepherds, a class of men peculiarly odious to the Egyptians. Probably next to the joy resulting from the power of benefiting so many thousands, was that of rendering happy the last days of his venerable father. “Ye shall tell my father of all my glory which ye have seen.” This was not the expression of vanity, but of one who knew that his dignity would communicate as high delight to Jacob as to himself; of one who

felt as did that celebrated Theban, Epaminondas, who, being asked what he esteemed the happiest circumstance of his life, replied, "That my father and mother were living when I gained the victory at Leuctra."

This affecting interview was not yet concluded. "He fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin also wept upon his neck." A tenderness which words could not express was mutually felt by them. Though Benjamin was too young to have felt the loss of Joseph at the time that he was supposed to have been torn in pieces by wild beasts, yet he had often listened to his father speaking with tears of his virtues and his unhappy fate: and the loved image of Benjamin was deeply engraven on Joseph's heart, who saw in him his long lost, his lamented mother. But his affection was not confined to one: he felt the most fervent love for them all. "He kissed all his brethren, and wept over them."

Preparations were now made for their departure. Pharaoh, with a generosity and a gratitude which ennoble him far more than his throne, united his solicitations with those of Joseph, and offered to the family of Jacob the richest part of his dominions.—The brethren departed with presents for themselves and their father, and with conveyances for the removal of all their families. On departing, Joseph gives them a solemn counsel: "See that ye fall not out by the way." As their conversation would turn naturally on their past conduct, he was afraid that something would be said that might tend to mutual irritation; or that they might conceive a displeasure against each other for observations that were not intended to exasperate. Ah! my brethren, how needful is the same counsel, at all times, even to those

who are children of the same heavenly Father!—for, alas, they are too apt to reproach each other, and to “fall out by the way” to the heavenly Canaan.

They safely arrived at the habitation of their father. The good old man was happy when he saw them advancing both with Simeon and Benjamin.—His heart was lifted up with gratitude for that goodness which had preserved them by the way, and restored them to him in safety. But he soon discovered that he had more abundant cause for thankfulness and praise. “They said unto him, *Joseph is yet alive.*” Had they informed him that Abraham and Isaac had risen from the cave of Machpelah, he could not have been more surprised. But when they added, “he is governor over all the land of Egypt,” he could not suppose that the happy tidings were true. Like the disciples of Jesus, who, when they heard of his resurrection, “believed not for joy,” so “Jacob’s heart fainted within him when he heard of the life of his son, for he believed them not.” But the evidence at length being too strong to be resisted, he cries out, “It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.”

“It is enough.” I enjoy a happiness greater than the world can give, in the assurance that my son still survives. Are your children also spared to you, my brethren? Be thankful, although you should not enjoy all those mercies which God may bestow upon some of your neighbours. But perhaps you have lost the most beloved of your children—you witnessed their last agonies—you saw them deposited in their graves—you know you shall not behold them in this world—and you cannot avoid the afflictive comparison between your situation and Jacob’s, when you hear him exclaiming, “Joseph my son is

yet alive!"—Think of your friends that are alive. Jacob thought it was enough that Joseph was alive, though his beloved Rachel was in her grave.

Let the joys of Jacob give us a faint image of the delights of the righteous at the resurrection. Would it delight you if all those beloved friends, whose loss you have deplored, should rise to live with you in the present world? Is it not a greater source of consolation that we shall dwell with them in a better world, where there shall be no sorrow, or possibility of a separation?

Our friends who have died in the Lord are alive. They live with God and the Redeemer in heaven. We cannot go and see them before we die;—but death will bear us to behold them and our Saviour, and introduce us into an eternal society with them and with the beloved of our souls. Let this thought dissipate for us the gloom of the grave!

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## SERMON XIV.



LIFE OF JOSEPH.

No. IV.



GENESIS xlvi. xlvii. 1—13. xlviii. 1.

IN our last lecture, we beheld Jacob forgetting the many sorrows he had encountered, and filled with rap-

ture from the unexpected assurance that his long and deeply lamented son still survived, and was governor in Egypt. In the first transports of his joy, he exclaimed, "It is enough; Joseph, my son, is yet alive; *I will go down and see him before I die.*" But the passions of Jacob were regulated by religion. He would not depart from the land which was promised to his posterity, and to which he had returned at the express command of God, without the authority and direction of the Lord; and ardently as he desired to embrace Joseph, yet had he been prohibited by him whom he loved better than sons or life, he would, from the same principle of obedience which induced his forefather to extend Isaac upon the altar, have sacrificed the dearest desires of his heart. Happy they, who, like Jacob, thus "acknowledge God in all their ways;" they shall find him "directing their paths," and defending and blessing them in all their undertakings.

The patriarch went to Beer-sheba, a spot which excited the tenderest feelings; which had been consecrated by the fervent devotions of Abraham, and hallowed by the sublime communion which Isaac had there enjoyed with heaven. There "he offered sacrifices to the God of his father." The Lord, who in his youth had cheered him in the solitude of Beth-el, who in his maturer life had dissipated his fears at Peniel, did not forsake him when he was old and gray-headed, and weighed down by the infirmities of age. In the visions of the night, he said unto Jacob, "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 surely bring thee up again; and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." How consolatory

an address! How well calculated to banish every apprehension and anxiety from the heart of Jacob! “*I am God* ;” and therefore able to perform all that I promise. “*The God of thy father.*” I pity the cold heart, which does not feel the tenderness of this title; which prizes not that covenant which promises, “I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee;” which is not stimulated, by considering this relation, to greater holy activity; which is not led by it to cleave more fixedly to the Lord. Impenitent children of holy parents, can you, without confusion, remember the God of your father? It is the tender injunction of revelation, “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not;” and dare you, then, forsake and abandon your father’s God—his best, his eternal Friend?

“*I will go down with thee into Egypt.*” This promise was sufficient; the patriarch desired nothing more. It was this presence of God, which had cheered his heart under his sufferings in Mesopotamia, which had constituted his felicity in Canaan. Assured that this would accompany him, he could calmly bid farewell to the land of promise, and to all those scenes endeared to him by so long a residence, and by so many visitations of God and his angels. He could, in the evening of his days, re-commence his journeyings, after having hoped that all his removals were ended, except that which should bear him to the bosom of his covenant God. He goes to a strange land—but he will not there find a strange God, but will still be encircled by Him, who has always been his “dwelling-place.”

Though he knew that he should die in Egypt, he was persuaded that his posterity should be brought, increased in number and power, to the land which



God had promised to their fathers. Though he was to expire in a foreign land, yet he was assured that he should depart in peace, in the bosom of his own family; that his best-beloved child should certainly survive him, should stand by him in the closing hour, and perform for him the last sad offices of affection.

Thus encouraged, he could look forward to the journey before him, and to the rest of his pilgrimage through life, with serenity and comfort. No difficulties or dangers occurred to him. As he advanced towards Egypt, he sent messengers before him to inform Joseph of his approach. His heart was with his son; but not being able to travel with a speed equal to his desires, he wished that Joseph would hasten to meet him, that they might thus gain some hours of happiness. On receiving this information, Joseph flew to him, "and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a long while." Who can describe the raptures of this re-union, after a long separation of twenty years! In his ecstasy, the patriarch exclaims, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, my son, because thou art yet alive." Except in one illustrious instance, no parents ever felt greater pleasure in folding in their arms children who had been really dead, than did Jacob at this moment. His delight was exceeded only by that of the holy Virgin, when she saw him who was her son and yet her Lord, the consolation of Israel, and her chief joy—alive, after she had seen him expire upon the cross. The transports which swelled the heart of Jacob were great as those of the widow of Sarepta, when her son again opened upon her those eyes which had been closed by the hand of death; as those of the Shunamite, when the man of God, endued with power from on high, obliged death to resign his prey; as those of Jairus and his

wife, when the potent voice of Jesus cried, “Daughter, arise;” as those of the bereaved mourner of Nain, when that only child, in whom all her affections were concentrated, rose from the bier at the command of Him, who is the “resurrection and the life.” None of these were more fully convinced of the death of their children, than Jacob had been. None of them were more tenderly attached to their offspring.

“Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, my son.” Rapturous as was this meeting, he knew that in a short time they must again be separated by death. But oh! how happy will be that meeting of friends long lost to each other, in that world into which death will never enter, where there will no longer be a possibility of another separation! Many of you, my brethren, have left parents and near relatives in lands more remote than Egypt was from Canaan; perhaps you may never re-embrace them upon earth. To them no promise is given that their Joseph shall put his hand upon their eyes: but, oh! prepare to meet them in the kingdom of God, there for ever to mingle together your hearts and your voices before the throne of the Redeemer!

Of the particulars of the conversation between Joseph and his father, the Scriptures are silent; but there can be no doubt, from their character, that they warmly expressed their gratitude to God for his mercies; that they re-traced and adored the wonders of Divine Providence. But while Joseph was thus indulging in all the luxury of filial affection, he was not forgetful of his brethren. He showed the warmest regard to their interest; and though encircled with the splendours of a court, he was not ashamed to own as his brethren those whose occupa-

tion was so odious in the estimation of the Egyptians, and to regard as his greatest honour a descent from that hoary shepherd, who was the "friend of God."

Joseph wished his father's family to remain separate from the Egyptians, both because of the prejudices of this people against shepherds, and because he knew it would be dangerous for them to mingle with idolaters. He therefore, by the permission of Pharaoh, settled them in the land of Goshen, and there "nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household."

For seventeen years, he enjoyed the pleasing and instructive society of his pious father, and uniformly acted as a dutiful son and affectionate brother. At the expiration of this period, he was called to stand by the dying-bed of Jacob. As soon as he heard of his father's sickness, he hastened to visit him, accompanied by his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim, that they also might behold the faith and hope of a departing saint, and profit by his prayers and admonitions at that solemn period. While he was afflicted at losing so beloved a relative, he was consoled by the fervent piety, the unshaken confidence in God displayed by the venerable patriarch in his closing hours; by the earnest prayers presented to God, and the tender benedictions solemnly pronounced upon him and his children; though, contrary to his own desire, the younger was preferred before the elder.

Oh! how profitable are the dying beds of believers, when they thus maintain their hope in God, adore that mercy and grace which they have experienced, and triumph in the stability and firmness of that covenant on which their hopes are founded! How much more useful to Joseph must have been

this visit to his father, than all the pageantry of Pharaoh's court!

Joseph had the submission and resignation of a believer, but he also had the sensibilities of a man. He fell on the lifeless corpse of his father, and wept, and kissed him. He had cause to weep; but he must have been consoled by the remembrance of that filial tenderness and affection which he had ever displayed—by the recollection that he had never wilfully inflicted a pang on the heart of his father. What would not Reuben, Simeon, and Levi have given, could they have had this consolation, instead of the agony, the self-reproach, and remorse, with which they are tortured, when they look upon the dead body of their father, and remember how often they had pierced with anguish that heart which now has ceased to beat! Children, as you would look with composure on the dead bodies of your parents, as you would desire to remember them without agony, self-reproach, and remorse, perform to them now those offices of love which God and nature require from you.

In conformity with the oath that he had taken, Joseph prepared to remove the body of Jacob to Canaan, there to be interred in the sepulchre of Abraham. He caused it to be embalmed, after the manner of the Egyptians—a circumstance rendered necessary by the length of the intended journey, and a proper mark of respect to him who was so nearly related to the governor of the country. Joseph himself went with the relicks of his dear father to Canaan, and deposited him in the cave of Machpelah, with the precious dust of his progenitors.

Whilst mourning for his father, Joseph was afflicted by a message that he received from his brethren.

They supposed that he might have abstained from revenge, merely from veneration for their common parent, but that now they would fall under his heaviest displeasure. They sent, therefore, in the most supplicating terms, to implore forgiveness, enforcing their request with the sacred names of his father and his father's God. They also came to him, and did voluntarily what they had at first scorned to do, and did afterwards unknowingly; they prostrated themselves before him, and said, "Behold, we be thy servants." Let the generous heart that is suspected, when it has only purposes of kindness, judge of the distress of Joseph. He wept at their submission; he cheered them with assurances of kindness; and said to them, "Fear not—for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good. Now, therefore, fear ye not; I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spake kindly unto them." Beautiful example of Christian charity! Do we imitate it? Are we ready, at all times, to forgive and do good to our enemies? If not, let us tremble in repeating that prayer taught us by our Lord. In the mouths of the revengeful, it is the imprecation of an awful curse upon themselves, and a horrible profanation of the name of God.

Though he lived fifty-four years after the death of his father, yet this portion of his history is comprised in a few sentences. He diffused happiness around him, and saw his father's house and his own descendants greatly multiplied. Arrived at the close of life, his heart was cheered with a hope full of eternal happiness. He "died in faith," says the inspired author of the epistle to the Hebrews. Knowing that the promises of God would be fulfilled, he ordered

his body to be preserved, and his bones to be carried into Canaan when the Lord should visit his people. And we find, in a subsequent part of the sacred history, that when the Israelites departed from Egypt, his bones were conveyed as a sacred deposit, and as a proof of the fidelity of God to his promises.

It was not necessary to inform us concerning his soul, as we are told of that of Lazarus, that "it was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." His holiness and devotion to God assure us that he was united to his great progenitors, and "sat down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."

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## SERMON XV.



LIFE OF JOB.

No. I.



JOB xlii. 17.

*"So Job died, being old and full of days."*

THE book of Job, considered merely as a literary composition, claims our greatest attention. It contains many sublime strains of poetry—many glowing descriptions of the attributes, the works, and providence of God—of the state and destination of man,—

which cannot be read without emotion by persons of feeling or taste. Its high antiquity also excites a reverential feeling. Perhaps it is the very first work ever written which is now extant; and at any rate, it is exceeded in antiquity only by the Pentateuch. From the earliest ages—from the most distant lands—from the hoary ruins of the greatest revolutions in taste and manners which have taken place during the lapse of three or four thousand years,—we hear a voice speaking to us in this book; and we say to ourselves in its impressive language, “We are but of yesterday, and know nothing; because our days on earth are but a shadow. But the fathers here teach us and tell us; they utter words out of their heart.” (Job viii. 8, 9.)

It is not, however, my intention to consider its literary merit, nor to enter in detail into any of the controversies to which it has given rise; but merely to exhibit the character and conduct of the venerable man whose name it bears, after a few necessary preliminary remarks.

We cannot certainly tell by whom it was written. By some it has been attributed to Job himself, with the exception of the concluding part; by others, to Moses; while others, with perhaps more probability, suppose that it was written in Arabic by Elihu, (ch. xxxii. 15—17.) and translated into the Hebrew by Moses.

Except the simple historical narration of the events which befel Job, it is all written in the highest style of Hebrew poesy. The exact words used in the conversation between him and his friends, are probably not retained, but the arguments preserved, and the substance of them thrown into the present form.

In a few other respects, we find a poetical colouring always allowable in works of this kind.

Neither can we precisely ascertain the period when Job lived; though it is probable that he flourished between the death of Joseph, and the appearance of Moses at the court of Pharaoh, to demand the liberation of the Israelites. We read of no such eminent person in this period, that it might not with propriety be said of Job, as it was, "There was none like him in all the earth." That he lived before the giving of the law, is shown from the length of his life, which was extended probably to two hundred years—from his observance of the rites of the patriarchal religion—from his reference to no other species of idolatry as prevailing in his time, than that of the worship of the heavenly bodies—and from his total silence with respect to the miracles wrought for the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt.

He probably resided in Arabia, and was descended either from Abraham by Keturah, or from Uz, the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother.

This history gives us much information with respect to Divine Providence; warns us against uncharitably censuring our brethren, or judging of their piety by outward circumstances; presents the strongest consolations to the afflicted, the tempted, and the oppressed; and teaches us the benefit and duty of relying upon God even in the most disastrous circumstances.

There is no class of men that may not be benefited by an attentive examination of the history of Job. Let the prosperous behold him in his elevated station, that they may learn not to be seduced by the enjoyments which surround them. Let the afflicted consider him in the depth of his misery, that they



may be taught patience, submission, and resignation. Let us all, according to the exhortation of the apostle James, (v. 11.) when we “hear of the patience of Job, and see the end of the Lord,” acknowledge “that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy,” even in those dispensations towards us which appear most distressing.

Job is first presented to us surrounded by every felicity. He possessed all that his heart could desire. His riches are estimated (according to the simplicity of the time when he lived, and the present practice of the country where he resided) principally by his flocks and his herds; and we are informed, that his opulence was greater than that of any of the men of the East. He was vested with authority and power; and if it may be disputed whether, as many have supposed, he were actually a king, it is, however, certain, that he was a principal and important ruler. He was blessed with many domestic comforts. Seven sons and three daughters, of mature age, were settled nigh him, and entertained for each other, and for him, the warmest affection. And was he not corrupted by this prosperity? Did not the blessings of God make him forget the divine hand which conferred them? Did he not indulge all his passions and desires, neglectful of the commands of his Maker, and regardless of the happiness of his fellow-men? No, my brethren, he was saved by the grace of God, like the interesting person whose history we have just concluded, from those intoxicating effects of wealth and power which have proved fatal to so many thousands.

In the midst of idolaters, he was a faithful servant of the one only living and true God: and never bowed down with the multitude to “the sun when it

shined, or the moon walking in brightness." (xxx. 26.) Communion with God was the chief source of his felicity; and in his subsequent distress, this is what he most regrets when he looks back to his former state, and recalls the time when "the secret of the Lord was upon his tabernacle, and by the light of the Almighty he walked through darkness." (xxix. 3, 4.)

He had—shame to so many calling themselves Christians, who here do not imitate him!—he had his domestic altar, which he regularly surrounded with those children whose spiritual and eternal interests lay so near his heart, and engaged so much of his care. In reviewing his possessions, he ever regarded them as the gift of God. On his existence and preservation, his health and his talents, his opulence and his reputation, his family and friends, was inscribed by his thankful heart, "The Lord gave."—He who cannot be deceived, testified of him that he was "perfect," i. e. without guile and dissimulation, "and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil."

This piety was manifested in all his conduct. Instead of relying on his wealth as the ground of felicity, making of it his idol, and substituting it in the place of the Eternal, he could boldly declare before God, when he was cruelly charged with hypocrisy and insincerity, "I have not made gold my hope, nor said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence. I rejoiced not because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much." (xxx. 24, 25.)

Free himself from the pressure of calamity, he did not forget the wants of the poor and the woes of the destitute. He enjoyed the generous and elevated pleasure which wealth yields, when it is made the instrument of beneficence and usefulness to our fellow-creatures. He was a fellow-worker with the

Giver of all good, in promoting the happiness of all within the reach of his benevolence. This we are taught in those affecting words which he was compelled to utter by unmerited censure: "I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor." (xxix. 12, 13, 15, 16.) "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? (xxx. 25.) "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless when I saw my help in the gate: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." (xxxi. 16—22.)

Instead of indulging bitter and malignant passions, truth and justice ever directed him, and the fear of God Most High restrained him from all profane wishes against others. "I put on righteousness and it clothed me, and judgment was to me a robe and a diadem. I rejoiced not at the destruction of him that hated me, nor lifted up myself when evil found him; nor suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul." (xxix. 14. xxxi. 29, 30.)

Such were some of the leading traits in the character of this holy man. His whole conduct was a living comment on that solemn direction given many centuries after by the apostle Paul to Timothy—

charge still binding upon every minister of the gospel, and with which we cannot fail to comply, under the most awful penalties :—“ Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches ; but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Oh ! what blessings are such persons to the communities in which they reside ! Of how much good are they the instruments, both for time and eternity—both for the bodies and the souls of those with whom they are surrounded ! The veneration, the respect, the love of society, shall be enjoyed by them. They shall possess, not merely the servile attention of the sycophant, nor the artful court of those who wish to profit by their power or their wealth,—but that honest effusion of the soul from the virtuous and the good which Job so well describes : “ When I went out to the gate through the city ; when I prepared my seat in the street ; the young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up ; the princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth ; the nobles held their peace. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me.” (xxix. 7—11.) Happy such persons ! Their occupations leave an after-taste which satisfies the heart, and provide for permanent self-enjoyment. Whatever reverses they, like Job, shall experience, that holiness and benevolence, which were the fruits of the Spirit, shall cheer them in the hour of solitude, re-

fection, and wo, as they did that exemplary man whose character we are considering.

Job had for many years been thus blest, when, on a certain day, "the sons of God," the holy angels, "came to present themselves before God," in order to render an account of their ministrations, or to receive new commands; "and Satan came also among them." Of the place and manner of this presentation before the Lord, we know nothing. How far the account of this event is poetical—how far the transactions of the invisible world are here described, in language adapted rather to our conceptions than to their real nature,—we pretend not to determine.—The great fact, that the adversary of our souls, the accuser of the brethren, is ever desirous to misrepresent, to seduce, and to distress the children of God, is too fully proved, by numberless passages of Scripture, to suffer us for a moment to call it in question. It is no less certain that God, for purposes infinitely wise and benevolent, permits him to try believers. Yet he is still restrained by the Almighty, and all his malignant designs over-ruled for the benefit of believers, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Those whom he assaults will come forth from the trial, as did Job, "purified like gold," and shall leave nothing behind them but their dross.

Satan accusing Job of serving God only through mercenary principles, and from a desire of promoting his own interests, the Lord permits this evil spirit to deprive him of all his possessions, that his sincerity might thereby be tested. It is in the battle that the reality and degree of the soldier's courage are proved. It is in trials and spiritual contests that the reality and degree of the Christian soldier's graces are manifested.

Come, ye children of affliction! who distrust your filial relation to God, merely because of the calamities with which he visits you—and view Job looking upwards in all his sorrows, and beholding his Redeemer; still relying upon God, notwithstanding the frowns of his providence, and exclaiming, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!” Come, ye who suffer imagination to magnify your little griefs, till you suppose that your sorrows are greater than those which have been endured by mortals,—and, viewing the woes of Job, learn to be patient and submissive.

He had enjoyed riches and worldly distinction. In less than a day, he was reduced by robbers, and the lightning from heaven, to indigence! This is announced to him by three messengers treading upon the heels of one another; and suddenly, and without preparation, announcing to him his calamity, and thus inflicting stroke upon stroke.

But though the fortitude of his mind was unshaken by thus falling, in an instant, from the height of opulence to the lowest want, yet was he not crushed by that agonizing intelligence which was communicated to him, as he listened to the recital of his other calamities,—that all those children on whom his heart rested with such fond delight, who had so long engaged his affections, were suddenly buried by the fall of the building in which they were feasting together!

Ye parents, whose hearts have been filled with anguish by the death of one beloved child—who have refused to be comforted for its loss, though you were in a manner prepared for the separation by watching round its sick bed, and marking the gradual approach of dissolution,—judge ye what

strength of grace was necessary to support Job under this bereavement!

And now the wish of Satan was gratified. That same sun which, when it rose, beheld Job the most affluent man in the East, and surrounded by an affectionate and beloved family of children, before it set, saw him poor and childless! But were the predictions of Satan accomplished? Did Job curse God, and rebel against his providence? Did he abandon his principles and renounce his religion? No: he felt keenly his bereavement—religion permitted him to feel it: but he uttered no rebellious or profane word—he justified God—Looking beyond all second causes, and seeing the hand of the Lord, he humbly bowed himself and acquiesced. “He arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head,” the ordinary expressions of grief in those ages; “and he fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”—Oh! how does this conduct reprove those (and there are many such) who, under incomparably lighter afflictions, quarrel with the righteous dispensations of Providence, and peevishly and wickedly think that God has done them wrong, because he has resumed the blessings which he lent for a season!

Satan was thus discomfited—but he does not desist from his charges against Job. He declares that no evil had befallen the person of this child of God; that his apparent patience was only insensibility and indifference towards his children; but that if he himself were wounded, he would curse God to his face. The Lord permits the adversary again to try his servant, that his integrity might be more manifest. Let

us not suppose, my brethren, that we are secure because we have obtained one victory, and stood firm against one assault of the enemy of our salvation.—His attacks will be renewed in various modes while we remain upon the earth. Job is smitten from head to foot with the most painful and loathsome ulcers, so as to be constrained to sit down upon the ashes and scrape himself with a pot-herd, a burden to himself, an object of horror to all around him. None came to pour consolation into his wounded heart—to utter to him the words of condolence, of friendship and affection. “My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house count me for a stranger—I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer. My breath is strange to my wife. Yea, young children despised me: I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me; and they whom I loved are turned against me.”

To augment his sorrows, she who ought to have attended him with the tenderest assiduity, and encouraged his faith and trust in God, came to him only as a seducer, as an instrument in the hand of Satan, tempting him to “curse God and die.” But, rejecting with abhorrence these temptations to blasphemy and despair, he meekly and mildly, though firmly, replied, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”

Again was Satan defeated—for “in all this did not Job sin with his lips.” How great does he appear! Surrounded by calamities, each of which is severe—the union of which would appear intolerable—yet displaying the power of divine grace, the firmness of religious principle, looking up to God with confi-



dence, and exercising an unshaken trust in him. How much nobler, in the estimation of angels and of God himself, is this suffering saint, than the emperor on his splendid throne; than the conqueror in his triumphal car!

Here we pause in the life of Job. In another lecture we shall finish his history.

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## SERMON XVI.



LIFE OF JOB.

No. II.



JAMES V. 11.

*“Ye have heard of the patience of Job.”*

WE have admired the character and conduct of Job during his prosperity. We have also seen him precipitated from the summit of opulence and dignity to the lowest poverty and contempt—bereaved, at a single stroke, of all those children who for so many years had been entwining round his heart—tempted to blasphemy and despair, by her who ought to have supported and encouraged his devotional feelings—and suffering exeruciating anguish from a loathsome and painful disease; yet still submissive, resigned, justifying God, and saying, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name

of the Lord.” “ Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ? ”

Thus victorious over all the designs of Satan in two severe trials, he is still exposed to new combats, in which he shows us, that, though a man of God, he was not exempt from human weaknesses ; in which he confirms that truth which has been so often recalled to us during these lectures, that there is but one Sun without a spot—but one example entirely free from imperfection—that of our divine Redeemer.

The principal events that occurred during the remainder of the life of Job will be presented to you, while we illustrate the following observations :

I. We are taught the vanity of human friendships,—their inefficacy to support us under the pressure of sorrow,—and the consequent necessity of seeking a better Friend and a better Consoler.

We should be persuaded, even without the express declarations of Job, that in his state of prosperity, he was surrounded by multitudes who professed for him the warmest affection and regard. Did they not, then, as soon as they heard of his calamities, hasten to him to console his wounded spirit ; to relieve his necessities, and to pay him those attentions which his virtues, his woes, and their former professions demanded from them ? No: they supposed that the sun of his prosperity was set for ever, and they turned to look for some other luminary, in whose beams they might bask. Job is left to exclaim, in sorrow, “ All my inward friends abhorred me, and those whom I loved have turned against me.” (xix. 22.) When he recalls the confidence in them which he once felt, and the hopes of consolation and support from them which he had so sanguinely en-

tertained, and then thinks of their present base desertion and neglect,—he is reminded of those brooks in the country wherein he resided, which, swelled with the melting of the ice and snow from the mountains, were marked with attention by the caravans as they passed, and regarded with pleasure as the source of a future supply ; but, alas ! when in the midst of summer, parched with thirst, they resorted thither, they found these brooks entirely dried up, and their reliance upon them produced only distress and disappointment. “ My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away—which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid : what time they wax warm they vanish ; when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. The paths of their way are turned aside ; they go to nothing, and perish. The troops of Tema looked ; the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded, because they had hoped ; they came thither, and were ashamed.” (vi. 15—20.)

When some time had elapsed, during which no kind voice had cheered this sufferer, and no affectionate heart had consoled with him, three persons from among the crowd of his former friends, approached him, professing, and perhaps feeling, a desire to comfort him. These were, Eliphaz, the Temanite, probably a descendant of Esau ; Bildad, the Shuhite, who is supposed to have sprung from Shuah, a son of Abraham, by Keturah ; and Zophar, the Naamathite, of whose ancestry we know nothing. On approaching him, and beholding his desolate situation, they expressed their grief in the most emphatical manner ; but probably they already indulged and silently displayed those suspicions of Job, which they so

soon and so often declared. Overcome at last by his sufferings, wounded by the silence and reserve of his friends, and forcibly, no doubt, assailed by Satan, Job at last, in a highly unjustifiable manner, poured forth his curses (not upon God, as the adversary predicted, but) upon the day of his birth. The minds of his visiters were immediately changed, if their desigus were ever benevolent. Not the smallest allowanee is made for his situation. Instead of consolation, they load him with censures and contumely; and by unjust suspicions, by bitter reproaches, by violent altercations, they increase his distress. Eliphaz reproves his impatience, and declares that his sufferings prove that he was a profane man and a hypocrite. Bildad not only repeats the same charges, but asserts that the sudden death of his children was a proof of their wickedness, and a just judgment for their impiety. And Zophar accuses him of arrogance, of vanity, and falsehood, because he denies the unfounded charges that they bring against him. All of them display, with force and eloquence, the greatness and the certainty of the divine judgment against the false pretender to piety, and apply their remarks particularly to him. In vain does Job complain of their inhumanity, and tenderly adjure them, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me. Ye overwhelm the fatherless, and dig a pit for your friend. If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief." In vain does he appeal to God for his sincerity, and the falsehood of their charges. His expostulations only irritate them more, and cause

them, with greater severity, to reproach him with pride, impiety, passion, and madness. In their various attacks upon him, they uniformly appear malignant, irritable, severe censors—destitute of charity, and torturing and perverting all his expressions.

Is this, my brethren, a solitary instance in the history of the world? Oh, no! such examples of the instability and inefficacy of earthly friendships are certainly so numerous, that we should certainly be led to “cease from man,” and look for support, in our sorrows, to the living God. Has not the same insincerity, which was so painfully felt by Job, often been experienced by you? Oh! my brethren, ought we not, then, to labour to secure the friendship of Jesus, a “friend who sticketh closer than a brother?” Amidst the fluctuations, the miseries, the reverses of life, we need some friend on whom we may unreservedly rely—some support on which we may safely lean. Such a friend, such a support, is our Redeemer.

II. The history of Job leads us to reflect on that mixture of sincere piety with the remains of corruption, which is found in every believer.

God has thought proper to leave us but partially sanctified while we are on earth. Even the most holy are at times constrained, with the holy apostle, to complain of “a law in their members, warring against the law of their mind,” and with him to exclaim, “O miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” In consequence of this, they sometimes are seduced by temptation to the commission of acts, which, in the general disposition of their heart they abhor, and which are contrary to the habitual bias of their soul. The faith of an Abraham is shaken, the professions of a Peter are forgot-

ten, and the exalted patience and submission of Job, appear to waver.

In reading over his dispute with his pretended friends, we see much to admire; but we observe also proofs that he was “a man subject to like passions even as others;” we behold the light and darkness so intermingled, as to show us that he was still in this land of twilight and shadows, and not in the regions of celestial and unclouded light.

We see him acknowledging himself depraved and sinful, and assuming that lowly station which becomes the worthiest of men, when he cries, “I have sinned! what shall I do unto thee, thou Preserver of men? Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but make supplication to my Judge. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse; for how should man be just with God?” But he awfully forgot his character, as a creature and a sinner, when he so often challenged God to reason the cause of his afflictions with him, and to show him the justice of the judgments inflicted on him; when he so presumptuously cried, “Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me; then would I speak and not fear him. Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. Call thou, and I will answer; or let me speak, and answer thou me.”

We admire the meekness and resignation which he generally displays, and regard him with admiration, while, in the midst of such multiplied calamities, he declares, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” But we shudder at

hearing this same Job ungratefully cursing the day when he was born; in his impatience, lamenting that he had not died as soon as he had opened his eyes upon the light, desiring to be destroyed, and charging God with cruelty: "Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for; even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand and cut me off. Thou art become cruel unto me; with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me."

We are edified, when we hear him expressing his dependence upon God, his hope, and his faith, in those emphatic words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." But we regret to see, afterwards, this consolation vanished, his hope almost extinct, and the most gloomy apprehensions preying upon his soul.

We cannot justify, but let us pity, the unhappy sufferer. His circumstances were peculiar. Under such multiplied woes, he found only cruelty from those persons to whom he looked for consolation. Had they been more kind, he had probably expressed himself with less impatience. At least, when Elihu addressed him, in a manner mild, pious, equitable, moderate, and wise, equally free from adulation and severity—faithfully pointing out his faults, as well as those of his visiters—Job attempted no justification of himself, but submitted to his reproofs with patience. Besides, Job was at this time powerfully assaulted by Satan, who was permitted to exercise all his subtlety and power upon him, and who poured in upon him a flood of temptations; and, what was still more terrible, the sense of the favour and love of God appears to have been withdrawn, and a dread of divine vengeance resting upon his spirit. "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison where-

of drinketh up my spirit. The terrors of the Lord do set themselves in array against me." Ah! my brethren, who in such circumstances, would have remained perfectly unshaken? None but that mighty Saviour, who, experiencing in Gethsemane still keener woes—who, still more furiously assailed by Satan, and without the comfortable light of his Father's countenance—yet cried, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Instead, then, of severely censuring Job, let us look inward, believers, and, finding in ourselves also indwelling sin, which is liable to be excited into action by temptation—finding that in us also, though the old man is bound in chains, and has lost his supremacy, he still lives and struggles sometimes to break his fetters and recover his authority,—let us mourn over our unhappy state; let us supplicate that grace which alone can preserve us in safety; let us "watch and pray" that we be not led into temptation; let us long and pant for that world, where not only the dominion, but even the existence of sin shall be abolished in our souls.

III. This history teaches us the impropriety of judging of the spiritual state of others from their outward circumstances in life, and warns us against regarding as special judgments of God, inflicted for particular crimes, those extraordinary calamities with which God sometimes visits our fellow-men.

It is on this very point that the whole controversy between Job and his visiters turns. They will not believe that God would expose those whom he loved to such severe trials, and they therefore suppose that Job was insincere and false in his former professions. Neither was this prejudice confined to them. We see it in that question proposed to the Saviour



respecting the blind man, “Whether sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” We perceive it in those sentiments reprov'd by Jesus, when he asked, “Suppose ye that those Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? Or that those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, were sinners above all men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you. Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” We observe it in the inhabitants of Malta, who, when they saw a viper fastening upon Paul after his shipwreck, immediately exclaimed, “No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, vengeance suffereth not to live.” Yet how cruel are such conclusions! how inconsistent with the word of God, with the plan of Divine Providence, with the intent of afflictions! how contrary to observation, which shows us that the people of God are generally an afflicted people, and that “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven!” How conformable to the sentiments of the crucifiers of Jesus, who, because of his woes, esteemed him judicially smitten and stricken of the Lord!

Avoid carefully such sentiments. They spring from a flattering *self-love*, which, interpreting the judgments of God upon our neighbours to their disadvantage, make us suppose that our condition is safe, because we are in a different situation; from an *ill-will* to others, which is gratified by supposing that they are disregarded by God as well as by ourselves; from an arrogant *curiosity*, and desire to pry into the counsels and secrets of the Lord.

IV. This history teaches us that a view of the divine glory and majesty is humbling to the soul.

This effect was produced upon Job: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job xlii. 5, 6.) And it is produced upon all believers.

That we may not exhaust your patience, we shall not enter upon the illustration of this remark, but reserve it for some future occasion.

V. This history teaches us the duty and benefit of intercession for others.

When the Lord had appeared to Job, had testified to his sincerity, had reproved him for his impatient expressions, and humbled him in the dust—he directed his companions to apply to this venerable man to intercede for them. Job, forgetting the unkindness of their upbraidings, and the bitterness of their reproaches, offered up to God his warm intercessions in their behalf: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." What an encouragement to us to plead for others with God! Job had often prayed for himself with earnestness and fervour, and yet had appeared to receive no answer; but as soon as this illustrious testimony of his charity is added to his patience and his piety, then the favour of God beamed again upon him, and his sorrows ceased.

Nothing surely has a greater tendency to increase both our benevolence and our devotion, than to intercede with our common Father for some particular person among our brethren: especially after the example of Job, for one that has meant or done us wrong, who pursues us with injuries undeserved, with calumnies unprovoked. We then catch the spirit

by which the Redeemer was moved to interpose for us, and “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”

Let us imitate Job after all those religious jars and disputes which sometimes take place between us and our brethren. We should have fewer unpleasant feelings; we should be more cemented in affection; we should more tenderly cherish the sentiments of brethren, were we more engaged in prayer with and for each other to our common Lord.

VI. Finally, to use the expressions of James, when we “hear of the patience of Job, and see the end of the Lord,” we are taught that “the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy,” even in the afflictions with which he visits his children.

Whatever were the thoughts of Job during his sorrows, he was convinced, even in this life, of their happy tendency. He blushed at the impatience which he had sometimes displayed. He blessed him who by these trials had strengthened his graces; and in those regions of felicity in which he now dwells, his former accents of sorrow are changed into songs of praise, and he shouts, “Blessed be the day on which I was born; blessed be those trials which were sent me in covenant love.”

In due time he was restored to his former prosperity. He lived one hundred and forty years, probably twice the number that he had seen before his afflictions. All his possessions were exactly doubled, except his children, who were just as many as he had lost: an assurance to him that they did not cease to exist; that they were in another and a better state; and that they still survived for his consolation, though invisible to his eyes.

Children of sorrow, let this example afford you consolation. Are you bereft of your property—are you weeping over the graves of your children—are you exposed to the temptations of Satan—is your reputation stigmatized by the tongue of the slanderer—are your woes of long continuance—does God appear to hide his face from you, and seem to disregard your prayers? All this, more than this, was experienced by Job. The God who delivered him is able to succour you. Wait on the Lord, trust in him, and he will shortly restore you, if not in the same manner in which he interposed for Job, yet in a way much more important. “If you suffer with Jesus, you shall also be glorified together.” A few more sighs and struggles, and “Jesus shall come to be glorified in you and all his saints—to be admired in you and all them that believe.” His hand shall wipe all tears from your eyes, and on his bosom all your griefs and anxieties shall for ever expire.

## SERMON XVII.



LIFE OF MOSES.

No. I.



EXODUS i. ii. 1—10.

THE God of Abraham had promised to this patriarch that his descendants should occupy the land of Canaan. To preserve this family distinct from the other nations of the world, who universally were devoted to idolatry, until it became sufficiently powerful to conquer and possess the promised land, the Lord brought it into Egypt, the inhabitants of which were by their religious institutions forbidden to maintain a strict fellowship with strangers, and besides, regarded with peculiar aversion the occupation of shepherds, which was the employment of the Israelites. In scarcely any other country could they have been kept distinct from idolaters. Here the small company of seventy, that went down with Jacob, protected by Joseph, favoured by that Pharaoh who had derived such benefits from this patriarch, and enjoying the peculiar blessing of Divine Providence, rapidly increased and flourished. But in vain do we expect uninterrupted or long-continued prosperity upon earth. When Joseph and the monarch who had

promoted him had been sometime dead; when the blessings conferred upon the nation by this patriarch were no longer fresh in remembrance, his descendants were treated with cruelty. From their rapid increase, they appeared formidable to the Egyptians, who, regardless of the attachment and gratitude that the Israelites had ever displayed, expressed their apprehensions that they would endeavour to obtain possession of the whole kingdom, or in case of war, enter into alliance with their enemies.

“A new king arose who knew not Joseph.” Not that he was unacquainted with the history of this holy man, or the obligations of the empire to him—this is scarcely possible—but, according to the frequent use of the word, *to know*,\* in Scripture, he felt no affection for him—he regarded his memory without gratitude. The silence of Moses, and the want of records of profane history, render it impossible for us to decide who was this monarch.† Had his name been preserved, it would have been mentioned only with execration.

To check the growing power of the Israelites, he first cruelly oppressed them, and imposed upon them the severest burdens. But “the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew.” Urged on by a sanguinary policy, sacrificing every sentiment of humanity to his chimerical fears, he then ordered that all the male children should be privately strangled at their birth. Those to whom the

\* See in the Concordances instances of this use of  $\gamma\tau$ ,  $\alpha\lambda\alpha$ , and  $\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\kappa\alpha$ , referring to the affections, not the understanding.

† The opinion of Marsham, founded on a fragment of Manetho, that it was a king of another race, called in Josephus *Salatis*, and in Artaphanus, as preserved by Eusebius, *Philamanothes*, is unfounded. It was probably *Rameses Miamun*, or his son *Amenophis*.

execution of this barbarous order was committed, evaded it. This is not surprising. They were females, perhaps mothers, and knew the heart of a parent.

Disappointed by the benevolence of these pious women, he published an edict, the execution of which was committed to more relentless persons, that every male child, born of the Israelites, should be cast into the river. The Nile was esteemed sacred; and probably the king intended at once to destroy these children, and to make to his God an offering conformed to the cruel spirit that always has marked idolatry.

It is impossible to describe, and only you who are parents can conceive, the anguish which this edict excited in the habitations of the Israelites: the bursts of indignation and horror from the father; the tears and overwhelming distress from the mother, when they thus heard the sentence of death pronounced upon their unborn and innocent child. And when the child is born, who does not sympathize with the poor mourner, whose heart almost breaks with anguish as she hangs over her babe, (that smiles perhaps unconscious of its danger,) and trembles lest each moment the bloody executioner should come to tear it from her reluctant arms, and consign it to its watery grave? And when these fears were realized—when the dear object of maternal affection was plucked from her bosom, was dragged from her arms, which could no longer retain it, although they were nerved by despair and agony—what she then felt, mothers, your hearts must declare.

And now the tyrant supposed that the people who had excited his jealous fears would soon be exterminated: that his plans could no longer be thwarted.

his power resisted, nor his throne shaken. But ah! how vain are the designs of men when they oppose the counsels of the Almighty! How easily can he rescue his servants out of the hands of their enemies—with the power of even the greatest monarchs—shelter his people, and destroy their oppressors. The infants of Bethlehem may bleed, but that Messiah who had excited the apprehensions of Herod, shall not suffer: the children of the Israelites may perish, but he who is to be the deliverer of the people of God, shall be shielded by the Almighty.

Painful as were these sufferings to the Israelites, they were necessary in order to prevent them from being corrupted by the idolatry of the Egyptians, and to dispose them to depart from this country to the land promised to their fathers. From several passages (Josh. xxiv. 14. Ezek. xx. 7, 8. xxxiii. 8.) it appears that, notwithstanding the obstructions which the political and religious institutions of the Egyptians opposed to a familiar intercourse with the children of Israel, these had even at this time a strong tendency to idolatry; and there can be little doubt, that had they have been caressed by the Egyptians; nay, had they been only moderately persecuted, they would have been entirely seduced to unite in all their superstitions. Besides, the time was approaching when they must take possession of the land of Canaan; and if, notwithstanding their distresses, they were so attached to Egypt that they could scarcely be persuaded to leave it, and were ready so often to return to it—how impossible would it have been to have induced them to depart, had they enjoyed there uninterrupted prosperity and pleasure? And are not these still the causes of those sorrows with which we are visited?—Sometimes to



punish us for our departure from God, and make us cleave to him; sometimes to render us willing to leave this "land of bondage," this "house of affliction," to which we are inordinately attached, and to make us sigh to enter into our true country, that heavenly Canaan, which is secured to believers by a promise which cannot fail.

Let this effect be produced especially upon all those of you, my dear friends, who have experienced bereavements similar to those of the Israelitish parents. Let the death of your children prepare you for the Jerusalem on high. They have gone before you into the bosom of God: let them serve as a link connecting you with heaven. Instead of indulging the tears of nature, let faith lift up an eye sparkling with joy, and behold them radiant with glory in that world to which we are invited to follow them. Ah! think of the mothers of Israel, and cease to murmur! You could watch by the sick couch of your child, and perform for it every tender office of affection: on your bosom it expired: you resigned it to the Father of mercies, who called for it, and beheld no murderous arm intervening to hide your view of your God; you saw it consigned to the house of silence; and imagination does not haunt you with a picture of its swollen body mangled by the monsters of the Nile! Be thankful that you are saved from such woes. Learn wisdom from your bereavements. It is true, you formed a thousand delightful expectations from the sweet plant that you watched with such tenderness, that you cultivated with such care. You imagined that you saw the blossoms of every thing wise and virtuous rapidly expanding; but it is torn up by the roots—its buds have withered—its colours have faded—and with it your hopes have

been blasted. But it is not destroyed. It is transplanted to that paradise of God, where it blooms with richer luxuriance and with eternal beauty, to that paradise to which you also may be conducted by a deliverer infinitely more powerful than Moses, by the great Redeemer.

I repeat it—to make them long for the earthly Canaan, the Israelitish parents were deprived of their children. To make you wish and prepare for the heavenly Canaan, your children are removed. Oh! fail not to concur with the benevolent designs of your Father.

It was at this season of distress that Moses was born. His parents, Amram and Jochabed, had already two children, Miriam and Aaron, who appear to have entered upon the world in less disastrous times. On his birth they did not hesitate to expose themselves in order to preserve him. Natural affection would have disposed them to brave all perils: but in addition to this, the beauty of the child here pleaded for him. He was, says St. Stephen, (Acts vii. 20.) “exceeding fair,” or rather, as it is in the original (*αἰετιος τω Θεω*) “*fair to God;*” an expression that denotes not only an unusual sweetness of countenance, but intimates that there was something divine and supernatural, which drew the thoughts of the parents to a deep consideration of their child.\*

St. Paul expressly tells us (Heb. xi. 23.) that they acted “by faith:” but faith must have respect to some divine promise or command. Perhaps it might have been divinely intimated to them that this was to be the deliverer of Israel; or else, assured that God would fulfil his promise and redeem his people,

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\* See Owen on Heb. xi. 23.

urged by their distresses to the expectation and desire of deliverance, and beholding the uncommon beauty of this child, they may have been led only to a strong hope that this dear babe would be the instrument to rescue his people from oppression. At any rate, they confided in God, and "were not afraid of the king's commandment;" and braving all personal dangers, resolved to hide him.

For three months he was thus concealed. What must have been the feelings of Jochabed during this time, when, in addition to all the alarms and apprehensions that always assail a mother's heart, she had a constant dread that he might be discovered by those who were but too diligent on the bloody work committed to them. At the expiration of this period, her most ingenious tenderness can devise no means of concealing him longer, and she is constrained to expose him upon the waters. She forms for him a little ark or vessel of papyrus, in which he might for some time be preserved, although not long, without some providential interposition. Having thus done all in her power, she cast her care upon God, and laid this slender defence from death among the rushes by the river's brink, expecting, though in what way she knew not, that he would be delivered. She then removed, with distressful anxiety doubtless, though mingled with hope; while his sister Miriam was left nigh the place to watch what the event would be.

Let the view of Moses in this situation, contrasted with his subsequent greatness, impress upon us forcibly that injunction of our Saviour, "Despise not one of these little ones." Who, in beholding this feeble babe exposed to instant death, would have supposed that it was he who was to be the scourge of Pharaoh, the historian of the creation, the deliverer

of the Jews, a miraculously commissioned lawgiver, and inspired prophet? Who, in visiting the manger at Bethlehem, would have supposed that the child that there lay, was the Redeemer of the world, through whom countless numbers should obtain salvation, whose name should be pronounced with rapture by myriads upon earth and myriads in heaven? Parents, though your children are not destined to such high offices, despise them not, for everlasting consequences depend upon their character and conduct. Mistake me not: I do not suppose that you will literally contemn and scorn your offspring; but you virtually, and in the Scripture sense, despise them, when you do not treat them as the heirs of immortality—when you do not lead them to remember their sublime destination—when, instead of directing them to the throne of God, and causing them to emulate the employment of angels, all your advices and instructions relate to their bodies, and to the groveling concerns of earth, you despise them—you contemn their immortal spirits, and perhaps quench in everlasting darkness a spark that, properly cherished, might have illumined many on earth, and blazed for ever with the seraphic hosts in heaven!

We have seen the exposed state of Moses. Who would not tremble for him? Every one who did not recollect the power and watchfulness of Divine Providence: but, guarded by Omnipotence, what had he to dread? The daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river, directed thither doubtless by God to fulfil the designs of his providence. She beheld the ark in which the child was laid, and which, if assistance had long been deferred, must have become its tomb. Desirous of beholding what it contained, she sent her maidens for it: “and when she had opened it, she

saw the child, and behold, the babe wept." What eloquence is equal to the tears of suffering infancy? The appeal, thus made to the feelings of the young princess, was irresistible, and "she had compassion on him."

She perceived that it was a Hebrew child. But though sprung from a race of strangers, of whom the Egyptians were jealous—though liable to death by the edict of her father,—yet she resolved to adopt and educate it as her own. She not only executed this resolution, but probably obtained from her father the revocation of that cruel edict, which is not again mentioned, and which, from the rapid increase of the Hebrews, does not appear to have long continued in force. Excellent woman! thy name is not recorded;\* but thy memory shall ever be dear to the friends of benevolence and religion!

The sister of Moses seeing the emotions of the princess, offered to procure a Hebrew nurse for the child; and, when the princess consented, with a joyful heart flew to her mother. Language is poor to express the feelings of Jochabed, when the child was presented to her, with the address, "Take this child, and nurse it for me." She had before trembled from solicitude for his safety; she now trembles with a joy that can be exceeded only by that rapture which shall be felt by those friends who have been separated by death, at the instant of their re-union before the throne of God.

Females, learn in what your true greatness consists. Would the most splendid account of the dignities of the princess, engage your affection and respect so

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\* Josephus calls her *Thermutis*: and Artabanus, as quoted by Eusebius, (Præp. Evan. l. 9. cap. 27.) calls her *Meris*, or *Merris*.

much as this act of kindness? *Then* you appear greatest when resembling her—when employed in deeds of charity; when soothing the sorrows of the afflicted—binding up the broken heart of the widow, and alleviating the woes of the orphan. Such a female shall live in the grateful memory of posterity; her eulogium shall be pronounced by the feeling and the miserable; and the blessings of the unhappy shall embalm her name, when the tribe of the frivolous, the dissipated, or the gay, shall have sunk into oblivion or contempt.

“Take this child, and bring it up for me.” Parents, this is an address which God virtually makes to you, every time that he bestows on you a child. Do you comply with it? Do you bring up your offspring for God? Can conscience testify that it is your desire and study that their souls may be devoted to the God who made them, the Redeemer who died for them? Can your closets testify to the frequent prayer of faith for them—to a holy dedication of them to our heavenly Father—to warm and heartfelt supplications for their spiritual interests? If this testimony cannot be given, you are treacherous to your God, and are bringing them up for Satan and the world.

The princess conferred on this rescued child the name of Moses, from two Egyptian words, signifying “drawn out of the water.” Probably at his circumcision another name had been given to him; but he ever retained this, since it perpetually reminded him of his deliverance, and his obligations to Divine Providence.

We also have had many deliverances: let us not forget the mercies of our childhood and youth. Like Moses, let us preserve some memorial that will ever

remind us of them. Like Samuel, let us erect some Ebenezer, testifying our gratitude because hitherto the Lord hath helped us. Let it never be said to our reproach, that we retain with ease the unkindnesses of man, but remember with difficulty the mercies of God.

Here we pause in his history, after first turning our eyes to Him whom Moses prefigured, and who alone can rescue us from a slavery infinitely more dreadful than that of Pharaoh. If the Israelites longed for a deliverer when Moses was born, the world was anxiously waiting for Messiah when Jesus appeared. If one edict marks the birth of Moses, another brings the blessed Virgin to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. If Providence delivers Moses from the death with which he was threatened by the jealousy of one tyrant, Jesus is preserved from the designs of another. If the mother of Moses had presages of the future greatness of her child, Mary knew, from the annunciation of Gabriel, from the triumphant song of the heavenly host, from the adoration of the shepherds and magi, from the predictions and gratulations of the inspired Simeon and Anna, that her child was the long-expected Messiah, Jesus, who should “save his people from their sins,”—“a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.”

To this blessed Saviour may the gospel’s star conduct us all, my brethren; and when we expire, may we find in him our deliverer from death and hell—our conductor to the Jerusalem on high.

## SERMON XVIII.



### LIFE OF MOSES.

#### No. II.



ACTS vii. 22—29. HEBREWS xi. 24—26. EXODUS  
ii. 11—22.

IN our last lecture we beheld Moses a weeping babe, exposed on the borders of the Nile, and rescued by the watchful care of Providence from a death which appeared almost inevitable. Adopted as the son of the princess of Egypt, he was introduced to the court of Pharaoh, and passed the first forty years of his life surrounded by all its splendour and magnificence. Of the transactions of this period we know nothing, except what is mentioned to us by Stephen in a single verse of his speech before the Jewish council, (Acts vii. 22.) and by Paul when he rapidly retraces the exploits of faith in ancient believers. (Heb. xi. 24—26.)

How differently do God and man judge of the relative importance of events. While the writers of profane history dwell with delight on the brilliancy of courts, on the actions of kings, and the deeds of conquerors,—the inspired volume, rapidly glancing



at the transactions of palaces, and at those exploits that are eulogized by the poet and the orator,—dwells with interest on every thing connected with the pious and the humble; attends the shepherd of Mesopotamia in all his wanderings, pauses on the afflictions of the suffering man of Uz, or holds up for our imitation the patience and submission of a despised Lazarus.—In the estimation of God and his angels, the graces of the Spirit and the virtues of the soul, are infinitely superior to the pomp of royalty and the splendour of power: and, therefore, if Moses is exhibited at the imperial court, it is only to teach us that he rose superior to its seductions, and renounced its pleasures, when they came in competition with his duty to his God.

Egypt was at this time the most enlightened nation upon earth—and Moses was doubtless instructed in sciences and arts by the most distinguished of the magi. “He was,” says St. Stephen, “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;” a declaration abundantly verified by those writings which have benefited the church of God in every age. The providence of God was thus preparing him for the important stations which he was afterwards to fill. How often does the Lord thus qualify persons, unconsciously to themselves and their instructors, for eminent services which they did not anticipate. Little did the superstitious magi suppose that they were rearing one who, as the heaven-inspired historian of the creation, should show the folly and the guilt of their idolatry—who by the most splendid miracles should shake the fabric of their corruptions—who should be the deliverer and the legislator of his people. Little did the Jewish rabbis imagine, while instructing Saul of Tarsus, that they were preparing

the most illustrious champion of that cross which was a stumbling-block to their nation. Happy they who thus, like Moses, sanctify their intellectual attainments, and devote them to the service of the Most High—who thus with the gold of Egypt decorate the tabernacle of God.—Happy they who thus, like Paul, lay all their literary laurels at the foot of the cross. Such instances are not unusual; for often

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“ Piety has found

“ Friends in the friends of science ; and pure prayer

“ Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews.”

At the age of forty, Moses forsook all that the world idolizes, and united himself with the afflicted people of God. The delights which encompassed him, the honours that were heaped upon him, and the flattering prospects that were spread before him, could not make him forget the woes of his brethren. The seal of the covenant impressed upon him, probably led him to inquire into its nature and design. He thus was made acquainted with the promises of God to the father of the faithful, and urged to the knowledge and fear of the Lord ; and he shuddered at the thought of renouncing those spiritual and everlasting privileges thus exhibited to him, for all the kingdom of Egypt. Moses is not the only one who has been benefited in the same manner.—“ Whatever is pretended by some to the contrary,” (this is the remark of Dr. Owen on this event in the life of Moses,) “ it is a most eminent, divine privilege, to have the seal of the covenant in baptism communicated to the children of believers in infancy : and it hath been a means of preserving many from fatal apostacies, and of keeping them in the profession

of the true religion, notwithstanding outward temptations.”\*

Ye who in infancy were admitted into the visible church, but who live regardless of that covenant, the seal of which was in baptism applied to you, here imitate Moses, and let the consideration of the blessings exhibited to you in this sacrament, induce you to devote yourselves to the God of your fathers. Do not, by a wicked life, strive to tear the seal from the covenant, and wipe up the holy baptismal consecration from your forehead. Incur not the sin and the punishment of Esau by the neglect or contempt of a spiritual privilege—but give yourselves to that blessed Redeemer, whose name hath sacramentally been called over you.

Besides, there can be little doubt that the mother of Moses, who as his nurse was constantly with him during his tender years, early instilled into his mind the principles of the true religion, and taught him to abhor the Egyptian idolatry and superstitions.—Mothers, in this respect imitate Jochabed! The character of the rising generation depends in a great degree upon you. From you, your children receive impressions which generally give a complexion to their whole lives and to their eternal destination. Even when both parents are pious, yet it is principally by the mild, gentle, affectionate instructions of mothers, that the hearts of their offspring are touched. How many Christians are there who recall, with gratitude and emotion, those maternal advices and instructions which, accompanied by the prayer of faith and watered by the tears of holy solicitude, caused the youthful tongue to lisp out the praises of its

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\* Owen on Heb. xi. 24—26.

heavenly Father, and the youthful heart to throb with thankfulness to the compassionate Redeemer. Blessed for ever shall be the memory of such parents—but wo unto those who, while they enjoy advantages for instructing their children which the mother of Moses did not possess, neglect to lead them to the God of their fathers, and to acquaint them with his promises and grace.

Moses, thus instructed, “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer reproach with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ,” the scoffs that were cast upon the Israelites for believing in that Christ or Messiah, that glorious Deliverer who was promised to their fathers, “greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.”

All the circumstances in which Moses was placed when he formed this resolution, display the greatness and generosity of his soul.

Nothing but his own consent was wanting, to elevate him to the highest offices of the empire. Already adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh, his right to them was undisputed. He was not, then, one of those ambitious men, who, despairing to obtain those honours for which they secretly sigh, affect to speak of them with contempt, and pretend to despise them.

He was not unacquainted with the objects which he renounced. It was not a blind and ignorant resolution; for he had been surrounded by grandeur, opulence, and pleasure. And how difficult is it to renounce these, after having partaken of them! How few, who, like Moses, can preserve themselves from being seduced by them! How few, who, like him, are willing, at the call of duty, coolly to reject them!

Moses was forty years old when he formed this resolution. He was not an old man, disgusted with the world because he could no longer retain it, and rejecting pleasures because he could no longer enjoy them. He was not an impetuous and inconstant young man, drawn away by caprice, by inexperience, by the fire of imagination; and renouncing those things, of the value of which he was ignorant. But he was in the full vigour of body and mind; of an age when the judgment is formed, and we act with coolness and deliberation; at a period of life when ambition and the love of the world have the greatest influence upon the heart.

Moses makes these sacrifices, not that he may enjoy a calm and dignified retirement; such a choice would not display the power of religion; even a Diocletian, uninfluenced by pious principles, can quit the imperial purple, to seek at Salonæ that quiet and tranquillity which are incompatible with the sceptre. But it is contempt and persecution with the people of God, that Moses prefers before the splendours of the court.

The powerful *motives* which induced him to make these sacrifices were, *faith* and a *regard to the recompense of reward*, the future felicity of the pious. Animated by these motives, he “overcame the world.” His faith assured him that God would fulfil the promises made to the fathers; and though Israel was then loaded with contempt and hatred, he was willing to suffer with it, to partake of its shame and reproaches, that he might participate in its future glory. His faith pierces the thick clouds which envelop earthly objects and brings an endless felicity to his view; and he then no longer sees any thing on earth that can captivate his affections and desires.

He considers himself as a stranger and a sojourner here below, and advances with rapid strides towards his eternal country. His heart has flown thither before him; and sceptres, crowns, riches, pleasures, no longer possess the power to charm him. He chooses the greatest good. He prefers an eternal kingdom to a fugitive greatness; an unfading crown to a garland of flowers which quickly withers; a pure and durable joy to the transient pleasures of sin. He feels that his soul is immortal and infinite in its desires; and that nothing which is not immortal is co-etaneous to its duration—nothing which is not infinite can satisfy the immensity of its capacity; that in vain would he acquire the whole world, if it were lost.

Ah! brethren, how few of us display the temper which Moses here showed! How few of us feel the dignity of a soul that must exist for ever—and have our hearts swelling with those hopes that look beyond the limits of time—and seek enjoyments worthy of a being created in the image of God, and conformed to our sublime destination! Surely we should be filled with shame, when we contrast our conduct with his. We are never called to trials half so severe or painful as those which he underwent; and we have assistances and advantages which he never possessed. Moses was acquainted with the attributes of God; but how much more clearly do we see these attributes manifested in Christ Jesus! Moses was authorized to exercise faith in God; but how many encouragements to this grace, how many revelations and promises which serve to cherish it, do we possess which he never had! Moses knew that the righteous would be blest beyond the grave; but for us Christ has “brought life and immortality

to light," and has revealed to us the joys of heaven with a clearness, an extent, and a force, far superior to the views that were given to Moses. Since we possess so many advantages over him, how much superior should be our piety and obedience to his! Yet how many do we find, who, to avoid trials incomparably less than those which he experienced, or to obtain pleasures incomparably smaller than those which he renounced, violate their duty and defy their God! How many who expose themselves to perdition, not that they may secure all the treasures of Egypt, but that they may obtain a little handful of gold and silver. How many lose their souls, not that they may sway the sceptre over an extended nation, but that they may attain some petty dignity or office! How many plunge into ceaseless woe, not that they may riot in all those pleasures that royalty can purchase, but that they may taste of a momentary joy, that is embittered by remorse, and followed by eternal regret! Oh! with what force will not Moses plead against such men in the day of judgment! With what force will he not plead against all, who, in Christian lands, prefer time to eternity, the world to God, the pleasures of sin to the duties of religion!

Moses chose the worst condition of the pious before the happiest situation of the worldling. Of the propriety of this choice, he was convinced while he lived; but how much more plainly does he now see its wisdom—now that, from his throne in the heavens, he has seen that of Egypt crumbled into dust—now that, drinking of the river of pleasure which flows at God's right hand, he sees the source of earthly joys dried up—now that he enjoys durable riches in that world where the coffers of Pharaoh are regarded as dross!

Oh! what reasonable man would not prefer poverty and the blessing of God, to riches and his curse—the reproach of Christ and heaven, to the applauses of the world and hell—a lowly situation in life and eternal glory, to elevated dignities and endless perdition?

The renunciation by Moses was made by actions rather than by words. He did not abdicate his offices by any public act, in which he declared that he renounced the rights and prerogatives of his adoption. This would have been the conduct of a proud man, desirous to gratify his vanity by an appearance of disinterestedness and zeal. Moses, on the contrary, quietly departed from the court, and united himself to the people of God. He had some intimations from the Lord that he should be the deliverer of Israel, and he was disposed immediately to enter upon his important but dangerous office. His first attempts appear, from the event, to have been dictated by too hasty and rash a zeal. Neither Egypt nor Canaan had yet filled up the measure of their sins, and the predicted time had not yet arrived when Israel was to take possession of the land promised to the fathers. Moses, too, had yet much to learn, in order to qualify him for that high station which he was afterwards to occupy. In the court of Pharaoh he had become a profound scholar, an accomplished statesman, and an intrepid warrior. But it is in privacy and solitude that the humble believer is formed, and the devotional graces cherished. The Lord, therefore, prepares for him a retirement, where, by meditation, by prayer, and by intercourse with God, he may learn much of religion and of himself.



Two circumstances, however, afflict him in leaving Egypt. His people were not united in affection, but indulged in unkind strifes. In vain had he expostulated with them, "Ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?" (Acts vii. 26.)—their contentions and quarrels still continue. Is there not cause still to use this expostulation of Moses? Ought it not to be remembered by those, who, forgetting the many ties which unite all believers, forgetting that they all belong to the same family, weaken and divide the church of Christ, by severe debates and passionate disputes?

Moses was also deeply wounded, because it was one of those Israelites whom he loved, and for whom he had renounced so much, who reproached him, and obliged him to flee. It is comparatively easy to bear with opposition from the enemies of God; but to be rejected and reproached by Israel, by the professed friends of religion—to be treated by them with ingratitude—to be discouraged by their lukewarmness or impeded by their cowardice,—is doubly distressing to the soul. Yet this was a trial here experienced by Moses. It is a trial which other believers are often called to endure.

Behold, then, the future deliverer and law-giver of Israel, fleeing from Egypt to preserve his life; and arriving, an exile and a wanderer, in the land of Midian! He is unknown, poor, friendless, without any means of support. Yet he is happy; for he trusts in God, and knows, therefore, that his best interests are secure. Sitting down exhausted by a well, Providence conducts thither the daughters of Jethro, or Raguel, (for he bears both names in the sacred volume,) who was a priest or prince of Midian. Moses protects them from the violence and rudeness of

some neighbouring shepherds; and the grateful Jethro offers him an asylum under his hospitable roof, and gives him one of his daughters in marriage. Thus, in the season of sorrow and distress, does the Lord always raise up friends, and prepare a refuge for his children. Let them never, then, even in the most disastrous circumstances, indulge desponding and unbelieving fears. The God whom they serve "will never leave nor forsake them." Here, in obscurity and retirement, forty more years of the life of Moses glided peaceably away. They were marked by no actions which shine on the page of history: but were they, therefore, lost and unemployed? Ah no! When the records of eternity shall be unrolled, when the book of remembrance shall be unclosed before the universe—how many acts of strong faith and ardent love, how many heavenly aspirations and desires, how many seasons of intercourse with God, which sweetened and sanctified the solitude of Midian, will be there recorded!

Here we pause in his history, after directing your attention for a moment to that more illustrious Deliverer whom Moses typified; and his praises I love to introduce in every discourse. We admire the wisdom of Moses; but how infinitely is it exceeded by the uncreated wisdom of the Eternal Word—by Him "in whom are laid up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and "who spake as never man spake!" If Moses rejected an earthly crown, Jesus also disdained the sceptre, when the Jews would have "taken him by force and made him a king." If we praise the voluntary humiliation of Moses, what shall we feel towards Him, who, "when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet took upon him the form of a servant"—

who, “ though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich”—who cheerfully left the courts of heaven, and the songs of adoring cherubim, here to endure affliction for the people of God. Moses “ had respect unto the recompense of reward;” Jesus, “ for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.” Moses was at first rejected by those whom he wished to deliver: Jesus “ came unto his own, and his own received him not.” Moses displayed a touching tenderness and sympathy; but ah! how faintly do they shadow forth the infinitude of the kindness of Him, who, in his grace and compassion, as much exceeds the most generous of mortals, as in his divine nature he is elevated above them!

Of this grace may we all partake on earth, and ever taste its sweetness, and admire its freeness and extent, beyond the grave!

## SERMON XIX.



LIFE OF MOSES.

No. III.



EXODUS ii. 23—25. iii. iv.

IN our last lecture, we beheld Moses cheerfully renouncing the splendours and honours of the imperial court of Pharaoh, and scorning temporal riches and the pleasures of earth, when they came in competition with his duty. We followed him from Egypt to the solitude of Midian—where, in the exercises of devotion, in an intercourse with God, and in domestic pleasures, he enjoyed such felicity, that he envied not the happiest courtier in the palace that he had left.

But in the mean time, the afflictions of the Israelites were augmented. The king who had oppressed them when Moses left Egypt was dead. But his death brought no mitigation of their sufferings; for the Pharaoh who succeeded him, exercised still severer acts of cruelty. Affliction drove them to God—they lifted up their supplications to the Most Merciful as their only refuge—and the Lord listened to their groans, and resolved to send them a deliverer.

Feeding the flock of Jethro, Moses led it to Horeb or Sinai, as Stephen calls it, because Horeb and Si-

nai were two tops of the same mountain. It is termed the *Mountain of God*, because it was consecrated by the divine appearance at this time and at the giving of the law. Here Moses beheld with astonishment a bush, in the midst of which a bright flame burned without consuming it. Full of admiration, he approached to examine it, when the uncreated Angel of the covenant addressed him, commanded him by putting off his shoes, to express his reverence and his unworthiness to stand before the holy God; and, at the same time, to encourage his faith and his hope, declared, "I am the God of thy father; and the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Every thing here is symbolical. The burning bush strikingly represented *the state and condition of the Israelites*. They were encompassed by the fires of persecution—they were cruelly oppressed, and every effort was made to destroy them. Like the bush, they were regarded as mean and unworthy, and had not in themselves more ability to withstand their enemies, than it had to resist the action of fire. Yet they were preserved from destruction, and abundantly blessed. for the Lord was in the midst of them.

The bush, burning yet unconsumed, also properly represents that *Church of God* in every age which was typified by Israel. It has always, in the estimation of the world, been mean and contemptible—a trifling bush, and not the majestic cedar of Lebanon. It has often endured the fire of persecution. The powers of the world have been confederate against it. Authority, prostituted learning, wit, and the sword, have endeavoured to extirpate it. But it has endured the fiery trial; it laughs at the impotent attempts of its adversaries—"The Lord is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." Kingdom after

kingdom has been overthrown; empire after empire has been swallowed up by the revolution of ages— But the Church still exists—still extends its borders—and is only purified by its trials, as the bush was brightened by the flames.

Afflicted and tempted believer, the view of this burning bush should comfort thee. The fire, the sorrows, the temptations that thou endurest, shall only refine thee. He who was here present upon Horeb—he who was with the three Hebrew youths in the furnace, and rendered the flames “harmless as the morning light,” is also with thee. Fear not—he will sustain thee—he will spiritually accomplish for thee his gracious promise,—“When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.” (Isa. liii. 2.)

Happy indeed are they who are thus under the protection of God! He who “is a consuming fire” to the wicked, shall be “a wall of fire round about his people” for their eternal defence. But wo unto those who belong not to the spiritual Israel. In an awful sense they shall resemble the burning bush, unconsumed in the midst of flames, for “their worm shall not die, and their fire not be quenched.” Impenitent men, in time avoid this fearful doom! “Who of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Who of you can think, without shuddering, of those who, surrounded eternally by the fire of divine vengeance, are yet never, never destroyed? I have said, that the language of the Lord was calculated to encourage the faith and hope of Moses. Nothing can be more tender and impressive: “I am the God of thy father!” I pity the cold heart that feels not a thrill of delight when it can address the Most Merciful by this title. “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend.

forsake not," says Solomon. How much less should we forsake our father's God—his best, his kindest, his eternal friend? The Lord adds, "I am the God of Abraham," &c. He is "the dwelling-place of his people to all generations." He bestowed his blessings upon the patriarchs while they were upon earth; and although their bodies have mouldered into dust, he cries not *I was*, but *I am* still their God; since, according to the infallible exposition of our Saviour, they still live with him, and find him an all-sufficient portion.

What was the effect produced upon Moses by this divine manifestation? He "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." Such is the effect always produced upon the pious by displays of the glory or expressions of the love of God. What were the feelings of *Jacob*, when at Luz he beheld the symbols of the peculiar presence, the special favour, and guardian providence of God? "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. xxviii. 17.)—What was the language of *Job*, when the divine glories were unveiled to him? "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job, xlii. 5, 6.) What were the emotions of *Isaiah*, when in the temple he beheld that splendid vision of Jehovah? "Wo is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." What was the deportment of *Elijah*, when on this same Horeb where Moses now stood, the Lord passed before him? He "covered his face with his mantle," to testify his humility and reverence at the divine presence. What is the conduct of the seraphim, who encircle the throne of the All-Perfect? They veil

their faces, "not daring to look upon, not able to sustain, the flashes of glory and brightness issuing from this throne." And what has been your experience, believers? Have you not uniformly found, that in proportion as you got nearer to the Lord in the exercises of devotion—in proportion as you had sweeter pledges of his love, and more enrapturing views of his goodness,—in the same proportion were your hearts filled with holy reverence and awe—in the same proportion did you feel the infinite interval between a worm of the dust and the glorious Jehovah! What a difference is here found between the pious and unholy! Sinners are compelled to fear God, when he appears in the majesty of his power, and the terrors of his vengeance. When his judgments are poured out from heaven, and he comes in dreadful indignation to punish his enemies, they tremble—But saints feel a holy awe of him, as well when they contemplate him in his sunshine as in his thunders. His deliverances, his blessings, his mercies, affect them with a sacred reverence. They feel what the Psalmist means by "fearing the Lord and *his goodness*"—With him they cry, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

My brethren, this God, whose mild appearance to Moses caused this holy man to hide his face, we shall behold. We shall see him descending, amidst the dissolution of worlds, "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." What will then be our sensations? Shall we be inspired merely with the holy and filial reverence which Moses here displays? Shall we, as did Moses afterwards, at the giving of the law upon this same mountain, look up to him with confidence? Shall we shout with the



redeemed, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation?" Or shall we, with the impenitent, not from holy reverence, but from terror, endeavour to conceal ourselves, and cry, "Mountains, fall on us! Rocks, cover us from the wrath of the Lamb!"

The recollection of this appearance of God to Moses continued till his dying day. When standing, forty years afterwards, on the borders of the grave, and pronouncing a blessing upon the descendants of Joseph, he supplicates for them, as the chief of mercies, "the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush." (Deut. xxxiii. 16.) It is not surprising that he should recollect it. It was the *first* visible appearance of God unto him. Now the visions of God began which terminated but with his life. But not only was it dear, for the same reason that our first spiritual views of God and the Redeemer are precious to us;—it was, besides, glorious and animating in itself, since on this occasion God sealed to his soul the love and grace of the everlasting covenant. Believe it, there are seasons enjoyed by the believer, the sweet remembrance of which even the awful face of death cannot erase. In sickness, pain, and age, times of special communion with God, and special manifestation of his love to the soul, become, by recollection, as fresh and as cheering as they were at first. Thus it was with dying Jacob. Though so many years had elapsed, yet the remembrance of the vision at Luz still warmed his soul, and in his last moments he exclaimed with transport, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz, and blessed me."—Thus the dying Moses recalled this scene upon Horeb. Happy for us, my brethren, if, like these holy

men, we in our last hours can not only feel a covenant God present and supporting us, but look back to his former manifestations to our soul.

We return from these reflections to the history.—The Lord declares that he is about to deliver the children of Israel, and to send Moses to free them from the yoke of Pharaoh. Moses, who, forty years before, had been so resolute, shrinks from the office, and is unwilling to engage in it. He exclaims, “Who am I, that I should do this?” Doubtless in the retirement of Midian, Moses had become more humble; but the whole tenor of the history shows us, that with his humility were mingled a sinful distrust and an unbelieving fear. What a contrast between his hasty ardour before he left Egypt, and his timid reluctance now! Frail and imperfect creatures that we are, how often are the graces even of the most pious mingled with defects that obscure their lustre! Our zeal too frequently partakes of impetuosity and pride—our meekness degenerates into cowardice and inactivity.

The Lord graciously bears with his weakness, and to dispel his fears, declares, “Certainly I will be with thee.”\* This assurance was sufficient to banish every apprehension; for what more can he desire, than the presence and protection of Him who can control all things at his pleasure. With the shield of Omnipotence thrown before him, what need even the feeblest of mortals dread?

When God gave some new revelation to the patriarchs, or made them some new promise, he had fre-

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\* Ch. iii. 12. For two different explanations of the difficulty in the conclusion of this verse, see *Adam Clarke* in loc. and *Saurin*, Discourse XLIV.

quently mentioned some name or attribute that would strengthen their confidence in his declarations.—When Moses inquires by what name he should speak of the God who sent him, the Lord answers, “I AM THAT I AM,”—a name denoting the divine self-existence, independence, eternity, and immutability.

Though thus commissioned by the self-originated Being of beings, Moses is reluctant to undertake the honourable but dangerous office. He alleges one excuse after another, which the Lord answers with infinite condescension. He fears the people will not believe the divinity of his mission. To encourage him, the Lord endues him with miraculous powers, as his authentic and satisfactory credentials. Moses pleads his want of eloquence. The Lord replies, “Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or the blind? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and will teach thee what to say.” Still unwilling, Moses declines the office. “O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.” “Employ any one better fitted to the office; but let me be excused.” This continued reluctance excited the divine displeasure—Yet the Lord did not deprive Moses of an office, of which he had shown himself undeserving; but associated with him his brother Aaron, and promised to both of them those instructions and qualifications which they needed.

Are we surprised at the conduct of Moses? Let us look at our own lives—and how often shall we find similar instances of distrust and disobedience? How often have unbelief, fear of reproach, sloth, or cowardice, rendered us unwilling to serve the Lord? Like Moses, or like those Jews of whom Haggai

speaks, who cried, “The time is not come; the time that the Lord’s house should be built.”—we have often found self-love suggesting plausible objections against the performance of the plainest duties.

Another remark:—Who, in reading this portion of the life of Moses, is not struck with his sincerity as a historian? This same sincerity the most casual reader must observe in all the writers both of the Old and New Testament. The errors and vices of those whose history is recorded, are as faithfully exhibited as their virtues and graces. Throughout the whole, there is an air of sincerity, a stamp of truth, that must be felt by every one; and that is infinitely remote from the style of an impostor or a mere panegyrist.

At last Moses obeys. He abandons a spot where, for forty years, he had enjoyed the benedictions of heaven. He bids farewell to friends whom he dearly loved: and, armed only with the rod and promise of God, he goes forth, confident of delivering Israel from the mightiest monarch that then lived. The ministers of Christ, in like manner, go forward with only the “rod of God’s strength” against more powerful foes: but if the God of Moses be with them, they shall triumph over the prince of darkness, and in the might of the Most High, shall cause him to permit his long enslaved captives to go free.

On his way to Egypt, a severe trial befel Moses. From the brevity of the relation, there is some obscurity in it. The Lord threatened him, either by a sudden and severe illness, or by the ministry of an angel, with immediate death, for having neglected the circumcision of his youngest son, Eliezer. Probably he had been led into this neglect from a regard to the wishes of Zipporah. But his danger warns

us never to permit the tenderness of our feelings, or the warmth of our attachment to our dearest earthly friends, to interfere with our duty to God. He was delivered from danger by the performance of the rite which had been neglected. On this occasion Zipporah cried, "Surely a bloody husband," or rather, as it is literally in the original, "a husband of bloods art thou to me." The expression is ambiguous, because it may be addressed either to the Lord or to Moses. If Zipporah speaks to the Lord, she here claims a relation to God through the covenant, and says to him in the language of faith and love, "Surely a relation (יְתִיב) by blood art thou to me"—a relation by blood because of the circumcision. If she addresses Moses, it is not, as would appear from our version, an angry chiding, but the voice of love, declaring that she had espoused him again by blood, having preserved his life by the blood of her son.

The whole story strongly teaches us, to use the words of Scott, that "sinful omissions will draw down upon us divine rebukes; and to neglect the seals and pledges of God's covenant, is a sin of no small aggravation, being more replete with contempt of God, and ingratitude for his distinguished mercies, than professors of Christianity generally suppose."

Shortly after this event, Moses and Aaron met in the wilderness, after so long a separation. Their faith was mutually strengthened, while they revealed each to the other the communications God had made to their souls while so widely separated. Our devotional feelings are inflamed in a similar manner, when we meet with those who have lived at a distance from us—when we compare the impressions that have been made on our hearts, and the communications of grace that we have received while dwelling in re-

mote countries. From their sameness we doubt not of their common origin—we are assured that they proceed from the Father of lights, the God of grace.

The two brethren advance towards Egypt. They exhibit their commission, and work miracles before the elders of Israel, and are joyfully received as messengers from heaven. “The people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.” Thus Moses was taught that his unbelieving apprehensions were unfounded.

To us also, my brethren, God has often been better than our fears. We have anticipated a thousand difficulties in the discharge of duty—We have undertaken this duty, and these difficulties have vanished. Let us learn wisdom and confidence from the past; and when the call from God is clear, never hesitate to go forward, assured that he can smooth our path before us, and “make even our enemies to be at peace with us.”

Here we pause in this history, after presenting to you a contrast which your hearts, Christians, have already anticipated. Moses with difficulty undertook the office of deliverer of his people. Jesus with holy joy flew to the rescue of perishing men. In the counsels of eternity he cried, “Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O God.” On the wings of charity he descended from heaven to conduct us to glory—And when he knew that he was to undergo woes inconceivable by mortals, he longed to suffer them for our salvation. He cried, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.”

'This mighty deliverer has come unto us with the offer of salvation—Let us receive him with suitable emotions. As much as eternity is superior to time, and heaven to earth, so much should our raptures exceed those of Israel when Moses announced merely temporal deliverance. Let us also bow our heads and worship—Let us cry, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath performed the mercy promised to the fathers, and remembered his holy covenant. Hosannah to the Son of David! Blessed be he who has come in the name of the Lord!"

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## SERMON XX.



LIFE OF MOSES.

No. IV.



EXODUS V—xii. INCLUSIVE.

IN our last lecture we beheld Moses and Aaron, venerable for their years, for their virtues, for the commission given them by the Lord, and for the power that was conferred on them of working the most stupendous miracles, advancing into Egypt to rescue their brethren from oppression, and to conduct them into the land promised to their fathers. Having convinced the elders of Israel that they were divinely authorized, they entered into the presence

of Pharaoh; and in the name of Jehovah requested that the Israelites might be permitted to go three days journey into the wilderness, there to perform religious worship, and to offer those sacrifices which were required of them, but which they could not present in the land in which they were—since these sacrifices generally consisted of those animals that were adored by the Egyptians, the offering of which would therefore be an “abomination” unto them.—To this request, which was made in terms the most gentle and submissive, the haughty monarch replied with contempt, and derided the authority of Him in whose name it was presented. Supposing Jehovah to be merely some local and inferior deity, and judging from the depressed state of his people, that his power was less than that of the imaginary gods of Egypt, he impiously exclaims, “Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah; neither will I let Israel go.” Yes, Pharaoh! thou knowest him not; or thou wouldst shudder to treat him with scorn and insolent disregard. Hadst thou proper conceptions of that greatness and majesty which shall so soon be manifested to thee and to thy people, thou wouldst tremble. Yes, sinners who imitate Pharaoh, the language of whose conduct is, “Who is the Lord that we should obey him?” ye know him not; for if ye were acquainted either with his awful terrors or his amazing love, ye could no longer contend with him, and with impious folly defy him, but would humbly bend and adore.

Pharaoh, instead of complying with the orders of the Lord, commanded the burdens of the children



of Israel to be augmented;\* accused them of the basest designs; reproached them with idleness at the time when their strength was exhausted, and their spirits broken down with labour; and severely threatened Moses and Aaron. The threats of Pharaoh these brethren could have despised. Relying upon the promise and assured of the protection of the Almighty, they would not "fear what man could do unto them." But their hearts were deeply wounded by the reproaches, the impatience, and the ingratitude of the Israelites, who blamed them for their interference, and accused them of increasing their woes. In these circumstances, Moses "spake unadvisedly with his lips." Instead of that patience and fortitude which he ought to have exercised, he was discouraged, and wished to decline the arduous office imposed upon him. But he was now fitted to be a proper instrument in the hand of God, for he was now fully convinced of his own insufficiency, and disposed to give to God alone all the glory of the deliverance of Israel. The Lord therefore comforted him in his despondence, and encouraged him to proceed by declaring that *he* himself would now exert his own power: "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh." To animate him still more, the Lord recalls to him the promises he had made to the patriarchs, and the faithfulness with which he had fulfilled them. "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty," or All-Sufficient, (אל שׁדׁי) and therefore able to sup-

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\* In the east, bricks were often made of clay and straw kneaded together, and dried in the sun without being burnt. The Israelites were required to bring daily the same number of these bricks as formerly, though the straw which had been provided for them was now taken away.

ply all their wants from my exhaustless fullness; “and by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them?” (for thus should the latter part of this verse be read, as a question which strongly affirms.)—Did I not prove to them that I was the all-perfect, unchangeable, and self-existent God? Moses informed the Israelites of these gracious declarations: but “they hearkened not unto him for anguish of spirit.” Of how much comfort do we deprive ourselves from our unbelief! How often from the want of a firm trust in the promises and declarations of God, do we reject those consolations which would lighten the weight of our sufferings, and even fill us with joy under their pressure.

This unbelief of the people affects Moses; he again faints; and forgetting what the Lord has declared, renews his complaint of the want of eloquence. Ah! my brethren, it is not humility, but an unbelieving fear, a base and sinful distrust of God to plead our unfitness for any duty when we are clearly called to it by Him, who can accomplish his purposes by whatever instruments he pleases, and communicate strength to us according to our day. The Lord solemnly commands Moses to renounce his objections, his fear, and his unbelief, and instantly to demand of Pharaoh the liberation of Israel. Moses obeys the command; and henceforth we shall see his faith unshaken, his apprehensions dissipated, his courage undaunted, and his soul unmoved either by the power and threats of the king, or the timidity and murmurs of the Israelites. The authority given to him was unlimited.—“See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh.” He was thus commissioned to act as the representative of Jehovah; in the name of the God of heaven to call upon the tyrant to submit, and

to punish his disobedience with the most tremendous calamities; he was authorized to inflict or withhold the vengeance due to this haughty sinner till he yielded to the authority and obeyed the command of the Almighty.

Fortified with this commission and armed with that rod more formidable than the sceptre of Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron again appeared before the tyrant, repeated to him the orders he had received from God, and commanded him to deliver the Israelites. Pharaoh bade them work some miracle which at the same time should show that the God in whose name they spoke was worthy his regard, and that he had really sent them. He was immediately obeyed. Aaron took the rod, cast it to the ground, and it became a serpent. Pharaoh, instead of yielding, summoned his magicians, who apparently imitated this miracle. He was not a sincere inquirer after the truth—he was anxious to escape conviction—and the Lord therefore permitted him to be strengthened in unbelief: for this is what is meant by that expression so frequently used in this history, “The Lord *hardened* his heart.” Not that God by any positive influence produced this effect; such an opinion is inconsistent with the nature of God and with the whole tenor of scripture. But as, in the phraseology of the holy volume, the Lord is said to *do* that which he *does not interpose to prevent*, he is said to harden Pharaoh’s heart, when he merely left him to the power of his corruptions, and in righteous judgment withheld from him those gracious influences which would have melted and softened him. Pharaoh however was inexcusable; because even in those miracles in which the magicians pretended to imitate Moses, the superiority of Jehovah was fully shown. If the magicians

apparently changed their rods, which were the emblems of their power and authority, into serpents—these were immediately devoured by that of Moses. And afterwards, if they apparently performed some of the miracles wrought by Moses, there were others concerning which they were constrained to acknowledge their impotence, and concerning which they were obliged to confess, “This is the finger of God.”

The miracle wrought before Pharaoh producing no effect upon him, Moses was ordered to stretch forth his rod, and draw down the severest plagues upon the land of Egypt. Nine different plagues had not been sufficient to humble the proud and impious monarch. Frequently he had been affrighted, and, affected for a season, had cried, “I have sinned,” and had promised to liberate Israel. But when delivered from the pressure of misery, he had constantly violated his engagements. The Lord then resolves by one final and decisive stroke to display his power and justice, and compel the Egyptians to comply with his orders. At the silent hour of midnight, an exterminating angel flew to avenge the woes of the Israelites: death came to trouble the repose of their oppressors; waked from their slumbers by the cries of distress, each family, from that of the prince to that of the meanest of his subjects, beheld its first-born in the pangs of dissolution or in the coldness of death. Afflicted by so terrible and unexpected a wo, fearful that the work of desolation had only begun, and that they themselves would be the next victims, they were divided between the care of providing for their own safety and attempting to restore to life their beloved offspring. Through the whole of Egypt the silence of the night was disturbed by shrieks and by groans. They remembered that this

misery had been procured by their own injustice and impiety: they remembered that they had plucked from the embraces of the Hebrew mothers their children, and slain them without remorse; and under a conviction that God had measured to them only what they had meted to others, their shrieks became more shrill and their groans more deep. While Egypt was thus punished, the Israelites were safe. "A thousand fell at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand; but" the affliction "came not near them." Only "with their eyes they beheld and saw the reward of the wicked." They were protected by the blood of the passover, which sprinkled upon the door-posts and the lintel, shielded them from the sword of the destroying angel. In faith and expectation of deliverance they were eating the flesh of that paschal lamb which had been slain according to the divine command, and which was to be annually offered as a memorial of their deliverance, a sacrament of their church, and a type of the Messiah.

The effect of this last judgment upon the Egyptians may easily be imagined. Pharaoh, though not humbled, was confounded; and both he and his subjects were urgent with the Hebrews to depart even before the morning light. By the command of God, they *asked* or *demand*ed (for it is thus we should, according to its ordinary signification, translate the word that is rendered *borrowed*) "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; and the Lord gave them favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted unto them such things as they required, and they spoiled the Egyptians." Not to remark, that what they received was only the wages properly due unto them, it is plain that the Egyptians readily parted with their possessions that they might pre-

serve their life. Thus the Israelites departed in triumph, and the promise made to Abraham was fulfilled precisely four hundred and thirty years after the call of this patriarch.

There are two points connected with the history which we have reviewed that it is proper more fully to explain.

1. The miracles wrought for the deliverance of Israel display not only that divine *power* which can in an instant suspend the laws of nature, they also manifest the divine *wisdom* in their admirable adaptation to the situation and religious opinions both of Israel and Egypt. Although among any other people,—among the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, these prodigies would have been indubitable proofs of supernatural power, yet in no other place than on the banks of the Nile would they have had that significance, that fitness, that pointed opposition to prevailing superstitions and execrable idolatries, which make them appear so worthy of the Deity. Pharaoh, confiding in the protection of his idol divinities, uttered his blasphemies against the God of the Hebrews. To punish him for his injustice, to force him to deliver the oppressed posterity of Abraham, to show the Egyptians the impotence of their pretended gods, and to cure the Israelites of that attachment to the false worship of this nation which they had insensibly contracted by so long residing among them—these were the objects which God had in view in the plagues he inflicted. Let us briefly review them, and we shall see how admirably adapted they were for these ends.

The waters of the Nile were converted into blood, and all the fish which it contained, of consequence died. This was the first plague. This river was

adored by the Egyptians as the parent of all their gods; they gave to it the most magnificent titles; they paid to it supreme adoration, and performed in its honour the most splendid rites. All the fish contained in it were considered as its offspring, and regarded as inferior deities. What then could be more calculated to show this nation the vanity of their worship and the necessity of confiding in another God, than to see their boasted deity utterly unable to defend himself, his offspring, or his worshippers against the despised God of the Hebrews!

A second plague ensued. The inability of the canonized Nile to preserve itself from pollution was again displayed. His waves, as well as the other waters of the country swarmed with frogs, which coming up covered the face of the land, and died in the villages and the cities, in the fields and the houses. Wherever the Egyptians went, they met with the dead bodies of these animals. This miracle also was directed against their worship. By touching any dead body they were legally impure, and could not without profanation join in the worship of their gods till after they had used a prescribed number of ablutions. Since then they could not avoid the touch of these dead bodies, and since they were deprived of water for these ablutions, the temples of their divinities were necessarily deserted, and their altars ceased to smoke.

A third plague followed. The dust of the earth was converted into loathsome vermin which infested man and beast. It was one of the tenets of the Egyptians that a single one of these animals resting on the worshipper polluted his sacrifice, and caused the gods to be offended instead of conciliated by his services. The immediate effect therefore of this

plague was to suspend in an instant the whole worship of Egypt, and thus to prove in the plainest manner the superiority of Jehovah over the gods that it adored.

The fourth plague succeeded. Innumerable swarms of flies infested the whole country. In Egypt the fly received divine honours, and while they forgot the God who made the heavens, this insect was solemnly adored. But Jehovah manifested his power, by forcing their own divinities to become the instruments of his vengeance, and the punishers of their idolatry.

The fifth plague was the destruction of all the cattle. What astonishment must have seized the Egyptians when they saw their gods unable to rescue their representatives from the stroke of the God of Israel! The goat consecrated to Pan, and adored as his symbol; the heifer, before which they prostrated themselves in honour of Isis; the bull, which they worshipped as the representative of Osiris; and the ram, the emblem of Ammon, were on every side dying around them. Could they view this, and doubt of the insufficiency of their divinities?

The sixth plague was as directly opposed to their superstitions. In the cities of Heliopolis, Idithya, Abarei, and in several others, the Egyptians at certain seasons offered to their gods human victims. These having been burnt alive upon a high altar, the priests gathered their ashes, and scattered them in the air, believing that wheresoever an atom of this dust was wafted, a blessing would follow. Moses also took the ashes from these altars, and wafting them in the air, brought biles and blains upon all the people. Wherever the least portion of it fell, it produced not a blessing, but a curse, on this cruel



nd deluded nation. Nothing could be a stronger reproof to this barbarous superstition.

In the two next plagues their own deities were again caused to afflict them. All the elements were adored in Egypt—they were constrained by Jehovah to punish the people for their iniquity. Hail and fire descending from heaven destroyed man and beast and the fruits of the earth; and the few plants which escaped this calamity were devoured by the locusts which their deity, the wind, wafted in clouds to their land.

The ninth plague was a preternatural darkness which continued for three days. It was believed by the Egyptians, as by almost all the ancient world, that there were two independent principles or anti-gods, who were perpetually contending with each other—*light*, or the principle of good; and *darkness*, or the principle of evil; the first of which was constantly superior to the other. They supposed that with respect to themselves especially, the boasted children of the sun, the principle of light had uncommon advantage over the principle of darkness. With how much propriety then did God, to show them the folly of these sentiments, involve them in a preternatural darkness, which could not be dissipated by their adored principle of light, nor expelled by the rays of their fancied parent, the sun.

Having thus used every means to teach them the impiety and folly of their idolatry, and having thus manifested his infinite superiority over their deities, he brings upon them the last plague, the destruction of the first-born, not so much to show the absurdity of their worship, as to punish them for their guilt, and force them to deliver his people.

After this brief retrospect, must we not acknowledge that these plagues were admirably calculated to attain the ends for which they were designed; and confess that the wisdom of God was manifested in their selection, as well as his power in their performance?\*

2. Another question. Who were the magicians who opposed Moses, and what was the nature of the wonders which they performed? To these inquiries different answers have been given. Some have supposed that *God* himself enabled the magicians to work real miracles, and gave them an unexpected success. But it is incredible that the Deity should act in opposition to himself; that he should work some miracles to confront the authority of Moses at the same time that he was working other miracles to establish it. According to this opinion, Pharaoh could not know whether it was his duty to dismiss the Israelites or to detain them; since God by a miraculous interposition would require him *to do* and *not to do* the very same thing.

Others have supposed that the magicians performed real miracles by the assistance of *Satan*. This opinion is however utterly inconsistent with the Scripture. The Scripture uniformly attributes to God alone the power of working miracles; and in numerous passages distinguishes him by this power from all other beings. The Scripture in a thousand different places brands all pretended magicians as shameless impostors; reproaches them with an utter inability of discovering or accomplishing any thing supernatural; speaks of those who exercised the arts of sorcery or divination as *liars*, and of the arts

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\* See Bryant's Observations on the Plagues of Egypt.

themselves as *lying vanities*, the most absurd and groundless delusions imaginable. Besides, the design of Pharaoh in sending for the magicians was not to out-do Moses or control him by superior or opposite acts of power, but barely to *imitate* him, in order to invalidate the argument which he drew from his miracles in support of the sole divinity of Jehovah, and his own mission. The question to be decided was not, "Can evil spirits perform greater miracles than those which Moses performed by the assistance of Jehovah?" but, "Are the works of Moses proofs of the sovereignty of Jehovah, and of the divine mission of the prophet; or are they merely the wonders of nature, and the effects of art?" To resolve this question, Pharaoh sent for his magicians, who undertook to prove that the works of Moses lay within the compass of their art, and therefore were no proofs of the high claims of the God of Israel, or of the divine commission of Moses.

It is observable also, that Moses never alleges as a proof that he was sent by God, that on the whole he performed more and greater miracles than his opposers; but urges his miracles in an absolute, and not in a comparative view, as full proofs of his mission from Jehovah. But surely he could not do this, if other miracles were actually wrought to prove the falsity of his mission. The original word which Moses uses in speaking of their arts, and which we translate enchantments, has no reference to the interposition of spiritual agents, but signifies only *secret sleights* or *jugglings*; a circumstance which plainly shows that he attributed their works to human art and imposture. Their perfect discomfiture and defeat, so soon as they were prevented from making the preparations necessary to impose upon

others, prove the same thing. When first sent for to Pharaoh, they knew that Moses had changed his rod into a serpent, and the prophet publicly gave previous notice of the nature of the first two plagues: they had therefore time to contrive expedients to imitate him. But the nature of the third plague was not previously imparted to Pharaoh, and the magicians, not having time to prepare to imitate it by their artifice and dexterity, were constrained to acknowledge their defeat, and to cry, "This is the finger of God." For these and similar reasons I suppose that the wonders wrought by the magicians were in no sense supernatural, but merely feats of art. Moses in speaking of them, it is true, uses popular language, by which persons are said to do what they pretend or appear to do. But such language is used in a thousand instances, both by profane and sacred writers, without danger of misconstruction; especially when, as in the present case, the nature of the subject, the circumstances of the narrative, and the opinion which the historian has often expressed of the inefficacy and imposture of magic, conspire to guard us from error.\*

May I trespass a few moments longer on your time, while I glance at some of the practical instructions that are given us in this portion of history.

I. See in Pharaoh the folly and the danger of contending with God. There are many whose conduct loudly expresses what his lips dared to utter; many who in their hearts cry, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" many who treat with scorn his commands, who affect independence of him, who say, "Our lips are our own, who is Lord

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\* See Farmer on Miracles.

over us? Who is Jehovah that we should obey him?" Who is Jehovah? The God who made thee what thou art—who givest thee all that thou possessest—who will shortly summon thee to his tribunal—who can cast both thy body and soul into hell! Who is Jehovah? The God who gave his Son to die for thee—whose goodness to thee has been ineffable—who offers thee the riches of his grace and the splendours of his glory. Feeble worm of the dust! "Canst thou stand before this holy Lord God?" Ungrateful mortal! Canst thou still neglect this tenderest of Fathers?

2. Are there none who, by the conduct of Pharaoh under affliction, are reminded of their own? None who, in the hour of calamity or dangerous sickness, have cried like him, "I have sinned—forgive my sin this once—save me from this death only?" But who, like him, though terrified, have not been converted; whose convictions have ceased on the removal of affliction; whose confessions of guilt, and resolutions of amendment, have been "like the morning cloud and the early dew?" See in Pharaoh your danger. Jehovah trifles not with us, and does not permit us to trifle with him. Beware, lest a heavier calamity overtake you; for God wants not instruments to punish his enemies. He needs not send legions of angels, his thunders, or his lightnings. The reptile or the insect at his command can distress you, as it did Pharaoh, or destroy you, as it did Herod. Or should God withhold any further punishment on earth, and cry, "Why should ye be stricken any more?" and give you up like this impious king to final impenitence and hardness of heart, you shall through eternity mourn over those murdered convictions and neglected calls of grace, that urged you to holiness and glory.

3. Finally: let us look a moment from the paschal lamb to that Lamb of God, whom it prefigured. "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us," to deliver us from a bondage infinitely more painful than that of Egypt, to introduce us to an inheritance infinitely more precious than the land of Canaan. Come to this divine Lamb, and bathing yourselves in his blood by an humble faith, pass by its efficacy from the curse to the favour of God, from bondage to liberty, from death to immortality. The time is approaching when a more dreadful midnight cry than that which alarmed Pharaoh and his subjects shall be heard by us; when, not merely a single angel, but myriads of the angelic host shall fly to execute the vengeance of the Almighty; when a more solemn separation than that between Egypt and Goshen shall take place between the enemies and the children of God; when the shrieks and groans of thousands, who are becoming the victims of eternal death, shall rend the air. In that day, what will be our security? Nothing but the blood of our Passover, that "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Flee then to this refuge—flee in time—it will be too late to think of it when the avenger has gone forth.

## SERMON XXI.



LIFE OF MOSES.

No. V.



EXODUS xiii—xix.

FOUR hundred and thirty years had elapsed since Abraham, in obedience to the call of God, had gone from Mesopotamia into Canaan. For two centuries, his descendants had groaned in bondage in Egypt, when the predetermined and predicted period for their deliverance arrived. They were rescued from the oppression of Pharaoh by those tremendous miracles which we illustrated in our last lecture. Before departing from the country, they sacrificed and ate the passover, which prefigured that greater victim, through the effusion of whose blood an infinitely greater deliverance was to be effected. They were required to observe this ordinance till the coming of Messiah should substitute for it a sacrament commemorating, not merely a temporal, but an everlasting salvation. To this command they have been obedient in all their national changes; when dwelling in Canaan, or dispersed over the earth; when their temple was in its glory, and since its smoking ruins have in vain warned them of the

abolition of the Mosaic œconomy, they have still observed this ordinance of the passover. What a reproof does their conduct give to many who call themselves christians; who, notwithstanding the explicit and unequivocal command of their Lord, neglect that ordinance which was appointed as a memorial that “Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.”

Notwithstanding their afflictions, and the cruelties which had been exercised towards them, the Israelites, blessed by the God of their fathers, had greatly multiplied in Egypt. In leaving this country, there were six hundred thousand men, able to bear arms; while their whole number probably amounted to three millions. In conformity with the oath they had taken to Joseph, when dying, they carried with them his bones. Though he had lived so long in Egypt, surrounded with honours, still he regarded Canaan as his country, and by his dying injunction testified his assurance of the fulfilment of the divine promises. It is probable that at the same time the bodies of the other patriarchs were carried from Egypt to Sychem, (Acts vii. 15, 16.) These cold remains of their fathers must have produced a thousand precious recollections in the Israelites—must have reminded them of the covenant which God had made with them, and by recalling the many gracious interpositions of the Lord in their behalf, and his faithfulness to them while they were upon earth, must have inspired them with a firm belief that he would execute the promises that he had made to their descendants.

Children of holy parents who have departed to glory, when you contemplate the spot where lie the mouldering bodies of your father, of your mother, do not content yourselves with weeping at the loss of such dear friends, but retrace the kindness and



faithfulness of God to them during the whole of their pilgrimage on earth; and breathe out a solemn and fervent prayer, that he who was your parents' covenant God, may be your God also. I doubt not that the glorified spirits of the patriarchs hovered round their descendants, who bore their mortal remains to the promised land. I doubt not that on that occasion they were permitted to behold the faithfulness of the covenant-keeping God, and that with heavenly warmth they poured forth their gratitude and adoration to him. And who can tell but that the spirit of your father, of your mother, may be near you, when you lift up the heart-felt prayer to your parents' God, and implore grace from on high like them to live to the Lord: so that, whether your ashes mingle in one common tomb, or rest, separate from each other, in remote countries, your spirits may be united in the heavenly Canaan.

The Israelites were numerous; but unarmed, undisciplined, with spirits broken by long servitude, they would have been unable to have resisted their enemies. But Jehovah was with them, and they had therefore no cause to fear. "The Lord went before them by day, in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night, in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and by night." This was the Shechinah—the symbol of the peculiar presence and the guardian providence of God; who, having by the illustrious display of his power, delivered the Israelites, not only exercised an unseen providence over them, but thus visibly showed them that he would not desert them. It appeared in the form of a pillar descending from heaven, and spreading itself below, to cover the host of Israel. It not only conducted them during the day, through the trackless wilder-

ness, but also overshadowed them, shielding them from the scorching sun in the burning desert; and at night becoming lucid, it still directed them. It was the same which afterwards rested upon the ark in the tabernacle, and which, hovering over the mercy-seat, between the cherubim, was peculiarly the throne of grace. Notwithstanding their rebellions, their murmurings, and ingratitude, it remained with them from the time of their leaving Egypt, till they came to Jordan, and was the oracle whence God declared his will, the residence of the Lord, and the imperial signal to the host.

My brethren, we have no longer this visible symbol attending the people of God:—But in Jesus who dwelt in it, we have all the blessings it afforded to the Israelites; in Jesus, of whose incarnation, in which were united the lustre of divinity, and the darkness of humanity; this pillar at once of fire and of cloud, was an expressive type. He, like this pillar, is our *guide* through this barren wilderness, so plainly teaching us the path in which we should walk, that we need not be more uncertain as to the course we should pursue than were the Israelites when their eyes were fixed upon this their director; so full of grace and compassion, that he never forsakes us, notwithstanding our unworthiness, till we arrive at the shores of Jordan—till we enter into the heavenly Canaan. He is our *guard*, affording us security at every moment, and in every place. When the enemies of God and of our souls rise furiously against us, like this cloud which shed darkness and terror on the pursuing Egyptians, he can appal the foes of his people, and disappoint their designs. He gives us *light*, celestial light, in the season of darkness and of gloom. He *refreshes* us with dews of hea-

venly grace and consolation as we pass through this world. And in him, as from his oracle, God speaks to us in accents of grace and mercy. Christians, if such are the privileges you enjoy, and the blessings bestowed on you, how great are your obligations to praise, gratitude, and love.

The distance between Egypt and Canaan was so small that only a few days were requisite to pass from the one country to the other. But in order to discipline, instruct, and prepare the people, they are conducted by a circuitous route. Yet, says the Psalmist, Ps. cvii. 7. the Lord "led them forth by the right way;"—not perhaps the smoothest, certainly not the shortest, but still the *right* way, since it was chosen by unerring wisdom, and infinite love.

Christians, ever be content with the guidings and appointments of God. Though when you are delivered from the power of satan, and the bondage of corruption, you are near the Jerusalem on high,—though in a day, in a moment, God, by his messenger, could carry you thither, yet wait patiently, and submissively, while he detains you many years in this wilderness. It is his wise appointment, in order that you may see the wonders of his providence, and the miracles of his grace; that you may learn much of him, and of yourselves, and may be prepared for glory.

One reason that is particularly given for thus conducting the Israelites, is, that they might not, immediately after their liberation, meet with war. And it is thus that he still ordinarily deals with his children, with regard to their spiritual conflicts. The young convert, who has just been rescued, by the mighty power of God, from the kingdom of darkness, and liberated from the chains of guilt, generally is

full of peace and joy, and seldom is immediately called to severe spiritual conflicts; he is ready instantly to sing the song of victory. He imagines that his battles have almost terminated, and he is surprised at the language that he hears from older christians. Let him bless God that restrains his enemies, and saves him from severe assaults while his graces are feeble. But let him at the same time anticipate many a contest to which he shall be called when he is more able to sustain it. Let him remember that he is entering upon a warfare that shall be terminated only with his expiring breath.

By the plagues brought upon Egypt, Pharaoh had been affrighted, but he was not humbled. In a paroxysm of fear he had consented that the Israelites should depart; but hearing that they were entangled in the wilderness, he resolved to pursue and bring them back. He was impelled by avarice, by revenge, by fury, perhaps by a supposition consistent with the sentiments of Paganism, that the power of the God of Israel was bounded, and could be exercised only in certain places. He overtook the Israelites, in a situation which apparently ensured him success:—In front of them rolled the Red Sea; on each side were high and impassable mountains, and the haughty and threatening tyrant with his host in their rear. They could not flee,—they were not versed in war, and had no arms with which to resist. Without the miraculous interposition of God, they must perish.

What then was their conduct? Did they not humbly and fervently implore the aid of that God, the visible symbol of whose presence was before their eyes? Did they not feel hope and confidence spring up in their hearts, when they recalled the terrible

proofs of his greatness and power, which had already been experienced by their enemies?—No: ungratefully forgetful of the recent divine interpositions in their behalf, they are discouraged and desponding. Some cry to the Lord, not however with the prayer of faith, but with the shrieks of despair; while the greater part vent their fury upon Moses, as though he were the author of their affliction. “And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou thus dealt with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.” How illustrious does Moses now appear! He is calm and collected,—inspired at once with confidence and humility—not terrified by the power of Pharaoh,—grieved indeed at their reproaches, since we see him pouring out his cares into the bosom of God, but not angered. Knowing that the moment of distress, the period when all human power is inefficacious, is the time of divine interposition, he says to them, in the holy assurance of faith, “Fear ye not: stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again” alive “no more for ever.—The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

The cloud changes its position from the front to the rear,—while it affords light to the Israelites, to direct and encourage them, it is dark and terrible to the Egyptians. Moses stretches forth his wondrous rod: the waters immediately separate; an impetu-

ous wind blows; a passage on dry ground is opened for the Israelites, who commence their march at midnight, and safely arrive at the opposite shore. The Egyptians presumptuously follow. Moses, at the command of God, again stretches forth his rod; the waters instantly return to their channel; thunder, lightning, and earthquake, (as we are taught by the inspired Psalmist, lxxvii, 18.) attest the presence of the avenging God. Affrighted at the wonders wrought by that divine justice which cites them to its tribunal, filled with horror, they shriek for help, but shriek in vain. They had cast the children of the Israelites into the waters, and the waves swallowed them up. They had hoped that their bodies should be embalmed with care and costliness:—they are left naked on the shore. They had defied Jehovah:—they feel his power. “Thus shall thine enemies perish, O God.” The people of Israel were filled with gratitude at this deliverance. They promised never to disobey, never to distrust the Lord; and with united voice, sang the sublime song of gratitude and praise.

Christian, how well calculated is this history to increase thy confidence in thy covenant God! Secure scriptural evidence of thy interest in his love, and then distrust him not till thou meet with an enemy too strong for him to subdue, a Red Sea too deep for him to divide, an affliction too heavy for him to remove, an Egyptian too powerful for him to crush. Renounce not thy faith, till God hath renounced that power which he has so often displayed in the deliverance of his people. Thine enemies may rage and be furious; but in a moment, He who has all creatures in his hands, to punish his foes and protect his friends, can rescue thee, and overwhelm them. Only

believe and obey; and in all thy perils and distresses thou mayest confidently cry, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord: awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Is. li. 9—11.) Only believe, and obey; and thou shalt at last be united with those whom John saw in prophetic vision; who raise a nobler hymn than that which resounded on the shores of the Red Sea; who "have the harps of God, and sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thy judgments are made manifest." (Rev. xv. 2—4.)

Let the presumptuous enemy of God and his people read this history, and tremble! Let him feel the unutterable folly of contending with the Almighty, of "unfurling the standard of defiance against the Lord of life and glory." Sinner, in so unequal a contest, can even the illusions of self-love for a moment flatter thee with the hope of conquest, or the expectation of fame? Yield in time, or you will perish under the stroke of Him who here crushed the pride of Egypt. A day is coming, when a more important separation shall take place than that between the ransomed children of Israel and the destroyed Egyptians; when the followers of the Redeemer shall experience ecstasies as far superior to the joys of

those who were here delivered by God, as heaven is superior to earth; while his enemies shall call for seas to open, and mountains to fall, to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Oh! bring not such woes upon yourself, by presumption, by hardness of heart, and impenitence!

Who would not suppose that the gratitude of the Israelites would be unceasing; that their whole subsequent history would be marked by constant obedience, and the most sublime devotedness? Alas! it is almost entirely a record of their rebellions, and of the forgiving grace of God! Departing from the Red Sea, they go three days' journey into the wilderness. They found no water; and when they arrived at *Mara*, the waters of which place, impregnated with the *natron* which abounds in that country, were bitter, they murmured against Moses; as though he were the cause of their distress, or could remove it. It was near *Mara*, that Hagar, ready to expire with thirst, had supplicated God, who sent his angel to her relief. Instead of imitating her example, they reproached their generous leader. Moses poured out his prayer to God, who listened to his cry; and, to show how easily he could produce the greatest effects by the simplest means, pointed out to him a tree, which, cast into the waters, rendered them sweet.

Shortly after, in the desert of *Sin*, we behold the same discontented spirit, and see a new trial producing a new crime. Their provisions failing, they lament that they are not again in their state of servitude, forget the past kindness of God, and reproach Moses and Aaron. Moses was insensible to any censures cast upon himself; but was tenderly alive to every thing connected with the honour of his God. He, therefore, instead of defending his own charac-



ter, cries to them, "What are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." God, in infinite condescension, declares that he "will prove them," will see whether they will better perform the duty of gratitude in prosperity, than they had that of submission in affliction. He promises, that he will not only satisfy their necessities, but give them all that they can desire, at least for a certain time; and that he will constantly grant what is necessary to support them. The promises are accomplished. The ground around the camp is covered with birds, that afforded them flesh; and in the morning, with manna, which served them as bread. This last, which was their food for the forty years they continued in the wilderness, till the use of it was superseded by the corn of Canaan, is frequently represented as typical of our Redeemer. He himself declares, "Moses gave them not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the bread of life." (John vi. 32, 33.) I have not time minutely to trace the resemblances between the type and the Antitype. They are numerous and striking. The manna descended from above; and Christ came down to earth from the regions of heaven. The manna was given to those who, without it, must have perished—to those who were rebellious, and who deserved fire, instead of this food from heaven—to those who laboured not for it; and without Christ we must have perished for ever, and been utterly undone; "in this God commendeth his love to us, that while we were rebels, Christ died for us;" and he was a free gift bestowed upon us "without money and without price," without our labour or con-

currence. The manna that fell was sufficient for all the host; and there is enough in Christ to satisfy the wants and fill the desires of all the children of men. In vain had the manna fell, if it had not been gathered; in vain has Christ come to those who do not receive him. The manna was to be gathered day by day; we need to live constantly upon Christ, and daily to receive new supplies from him. The manna fell for all, of every character and description: "in Christ there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, learned Greek nor barbarous Scythian, but he is all in all." The manna was to be gathered early. Young persons, it is your duty in your early years to receive the Saviour. The manna was to be bruised and baked; a circumstance which pointed out the woes that should crush the holy Jesus, and the fires of divine justice, with which, in his sufferings, he should be encompassed. Why must I add another point of resemblance? The manna, notwithstanding the mercy displayed in bestowing it, was undervalued and despised by many of the Israelites. Alas! how many who neglect the precious Saviour, the "unspeakable gift" of God—who reject the bread of life, and who must perish for ever!

From the wilderness of Sin, the Israelites passed to Dophkah and Alush. These encampments are not mentioned in the book of Exodus, in which it is the object of the historian to record the most important events which occurred in the wilderness, but are recorded in Numbers, (xxxiii. 12, 13.) which contains a more regular journal of their various marches. Hence they went to Rephidim, where two memorable events occurred. Of these, the first was, not their murmuring, for in what place were they not guilty of this? but the benevolent miracle that God wrought. They

had, because of their want of water, risen with violence against Moses, and used language which showed that they were unaffected by their past experience of the divine goodness. God ordered Moses to take that rod, at raising which so many miracles had been wrought, and, while the elders of Israel were witnesses, smite that rock, on which the divine glory should visibly rest. Moses obeyed: water gushed forth, which supplied their present necessities, and followed them in their encampments for thirty-eight years. This history is more important, because we are told by the apostle (1 Cor. x. 4.) that this "rock was Christ," i. e. typified and represented him. On this point, also, I have not time to enlarge. Christ is often termed *a rock*, to denote the immutable firmness of his nature; to show that he is a durable foundation, on which we may safely build our everlasting hopes; and to point him out as a shelter and refreshment, grateful as the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He was smitten by that law, of which Moses was the minister, and bruised by the rod of divine justice. He was smitten at the express command of Jehovah, while the special presence of the Deity was illustriously manifested, and before a faithless and rebellious people. The streams flowing from the smitten rock, and reviving the languishing camp, afford but a feeble emblem of the blessings that proceeded from the wounded Saviour—blessings that save from eternal death, that quench hell and sin, and that purify the soul. The abundance of the waters at Horeb, for all who were present, and for their children and descendants, points us to the fulness of salvation for all the sons of Adam—for us, as well as for those who beheld the Saviour "bruised for the iniquities" of man.

Happy for us, if we seek a refuge from no other rock, nor refreshment from no other streams! They shall then follow us, not only while we are in this wilderness, but throughout eternity. But wo unto those, who, like Jeshurun, "lightly esteem this rock of their salvation!"

The other interesting circumstance which occurred at Rephidim, was the defeat of the Amalekites. Here the Israelites, for the first time, engaged in battle. Moses, in repelling the attacks of a warlike nation, united military skill and fervent prayer. He gave the command of the army to Joshua, whom his subsequent exploits rendered so famous; and himself, with the rod of God in his hand, stood upon the mount, and interceded with God. The conquest was complete; and an altar was gratefully reared to the Lord of hosts, inscribed *Jehovah-Nissi*, The Lord my Banner.

To this event succeeds one which exhibits Moses in domestic life. Jethro, with whom the wife and children of Moses had been during his contest with Pharaoh, advances to meet his beloved son-in-law. "The tender feelings of friendship, fervent gratitude and love to God, appear in both of them, while the astonishing display of the divine power and goodness in behalf of Israel, was the delightful subject of their conversation. They join together in worship to testify their devout acknowledgment of what God had done; the priest of Midian offering sacrifices, and Moses and the elders of Israel uniting with him. How rare is such intercourse as this! And yet only those visits in which God is honoured, yield any true satisfaction or advantage."\* Jethro having given wise counsel to Moses, these two excellent men se-

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\* Robinson.

parated from each other. They have since met in that world where the union of the pious never is dissolved.

Here we pause in the history, having brought it down to one of the most awful and important scenes ever exhibited upon earth—the giving of the law from Sinai. This, if God permit, shall occupy us on the next Lord's day.

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## SERMON XXII.



LIFE OF MOSES.

No. VI.

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EXOD. XIX.—XXXI.—THE HISTORICAL PARTS OF THESE CHAPTERS ARE XIX. XX. 18—22. XXIV. XXXI. 13.

WHEN our blessed Redeemer descended from heaven to earth, to introduce the last and best dispensation of mercy to the children of men, every thing connected with his advent and ministry was conformed to the *spiritual* and *gracious* nature of the religion which he taught. No external pomp and visible splendour were employed to affect the senses: the understanding, the heart, and the conscience, were directly addressed; and the glory of the gospel was derived from spiritual sources, from the sublimity of its origin, the purity of its morals, the excel-

lence of its doctrines, the sweetness of its invitations, and the greatness of its miracles; from its accordance with the nature and situation of man, from its ability to relieve his woes, to pacify his conscience, and to give him present joys and future hopes adequate to the capacity of his soul, and able to quench the thirst of his heart for felicity pure, exhaustless, eternal. His gospel, thus spiritual in its nature, was announced with gentleness and love. The entrance of Messiah upon the earth was marked not by "blackness and darkness and tempest," but by the song of the angels, and the raptures of the shepherds. His instructions, laws, and promises were given, not in circumstances to excite terror and alarm, but with the tenderest grace, the most attractive gentleness, the most touching kindness. "His doctrine dropped as the rain; his speech distilled as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." The prediction of the prophet was accomplished in him: "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." Instead of bearing in his hands thunders to crush the rebellious, he *strove* not, except by the sweet and invisible influences of his Spirit; he aimed at no conquests but those that are unbloody. He *cried* not in the accents of wrath and denunciation: his "*voice was not heard in the streets,*" pronouncing woes, tribulation, and anguish on the children of men. If he cried out, it was only to invite the weary and heavy-laden to rest. If he lifted up his voice, it was only to point the perishing to everlasting glory; to give the most precious consolations to the wretched and forlorn; to exhibit himself as the refuge of the penitent, the support of the feeble, the consolation of the desponding.

Thus, "grace came by Jesus Christ." Thus his "glory was beheld; the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Far different were the circumstances under which the Mosaic dispensation was established. The senses of a stubborn and indocile people were addressed by every object that could inspire reverence and terror; and the most awful and tremendous scene was exhibited that ever was beheld upon earth, or that ever shall be witnessed till the "voice of the archangel and the trump of God" shall resound through the universe.

To the consideration of this solemn event we have arrived, in prosecuting the history of the great legislator of the Jews.

Forty-five days had elapsed from the period when the destroying angel had passed through Egypt and smitten the first-born, till the arrival of the Israelites at Sinai. Here Moses had received his commission, as the deliverer of Israel, and had been told by Jehovah, "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." [Ex. iii. 12.] He now witnesses the accomplishment of this promise. By the power of the Most High the nation has been delivered. Miracle succeeding miracle, and mercy following mercy, have attested the presence of the Lord with them; and the people have safely arrived at Sinai, there to receive revelations, and to join in services that give additional propriety to the name, whereby it is designated "the Mount of God."

On the forty-sixth day Moses was first called alone into the Mount, and ordered to retrace to the people the kindness of God to them, and the tremendous miracles which he had wrought to liberate them, and

to punish their enemies; and to announce to them that the great and glorious Jehovah, who, as their Creator and the Sovereign of the universe, might unconditionally demand their obedience without promising any reward, would nevertheless enter into covenant with them; and if they were obedient, would engage to continue his blessings, and surround them with his favours.

Moses descended, and having assembled the heads of the tribes and families, declared to them the message of God, who graciously asked their assent to that which it would have been impiety and rebellion not to have performed. With one voice they immediately and joyfully cry, "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do."

For more solemn and near approaches to God, he requires peculiar preparation. He therefore ordered the three succeeding days to be spent in serious preparation for the great and awful day when Jehovah should declare his law to them, and enter into a national covenant with them. Besides that internal sanctification which is necessary to stand acceptably before the Searcher of hearts, external acts were enjoined to represent the holiness and reverence of soul that become us when we draw near the Lord. To increase this veneration, barriers were placed around the mountain, beyond which the people were forbidden to pass, under penalty of a certain, instant, and tragic death.

The three days are thus employed. With a reverential awe upon their spirits, the Israelites observe the injunctions that are given them, assured that if they had dared to neglect this preparation, they would have experienced the vengeance of an



insulted God, and death would have been the punishment of their impiety.

On the fiftieth day from that memorable night when the blood of the paschal-lamb saved them from the stroke of the destroying angel, Jehovah promulgates his law with an awful pomp, calculated to display his holiness, purity, majesty, and power; to inspire them with a reverent esteem for those commands that were given in a manner so tremendous; and to show the dreadfulness of that wrath which would punish their violation.\* “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 the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. 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.” (Ex. xix. 16—19.) What Moses now said is not here mentioned; but probably he then uttered those words which the inspired apostle has recorded: “So terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.” The Lord probably answered him with those assur-

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\* Another reason is added (xix. 9.) for this pomp: “That the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever.” This effect was produced. The divine mission of Moses was fully confirmed, and henceforth never called in doubt amidst all the rebellions of the Israelites. “We know that God spake unto Moses,” (John, ix, 29.) has ever since been their language.

ances that enabled him, during the remainder of these awful scenes, to stand fearless and unappalled. On this occasion the Lord was attended by myriads of holy angels; for this is the time to which Moses refers in the blessing pronounced upon the people just before his death, (Deut. xxxiii. 2.): “The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands (קָרָט) of his holy ones: from his right hand went a fiery law.”

No wonder that the Israelites were penetrated with awe at the terrible majesty in which God was clothed. Whose heart would not have been chilled with fear, at viewing the mountain encircled by barriers which death stood to guard, and covered with blackness of darkness, and enveloped with gloomy clouds which appear still more dreadful, from the frequent flashes of lightning bursting from their bosom? Whose heart would not have been chilled with fear, at hearing the rolling of the thunders, the deep shrill sound of the trump—at the agitation of the earth, which trembles at the presence of its Maker and the voice of its God, and which communicates its terrors to three millions of people, and even to Moses himself?

Moses is again called to the top of the mount. The assurances he has received from God have dissipated his apprehensions, and filled him with holy confidence: and we shall henceforth see him who once on this mount hid his face with reverence, when the Lord gave him a mild representation of his presence in the burning bush; and who lately has trembled at the display of his greatness;—we shall see him henceforth on this very mount, between heaven and earth, in thunder, lightning, smoke, and earthquake.

speaking with open face and fearless to the Infinite, the Almighty. He is now commanded to repeat the prohibitions given to the people, and to order the priests to show an example of peculiar sanctification. Having done this, he ascends with his brother Aaron, and the voice of God is heard pronouncing his law.

He retraced to the people the *moral law*, and gave them the general articles of the *ceremonial* and *judicial law*, the particulars of which were afterwards in detail enjoined upon them. In the *moral law* he not only gave them a rule of life, but also by the clear annunciation of it with ceremonies so awful, taught them their guilt, the impossibility of standing before the Holy Lord God with no other plea than their own works, and the necessity of an atonement. By the *ceremonial law*, they were pointed to the Messiah as the only hope of the sinner. There had been events and ordinances before this time typifying the Saviour; but now, instead of a few scattered intimations, the whole ceremonial law had this object—all the great doctrines of grace were taught under shadows—and every year, every month, every day, Christ was exhibited to them in expressive types and affecting figures. And in the *judicial law*, a body of civil institutions and political regulations was given them, by the observance of which they would, instead of the undisciplined company that they were when they came out of Egypt, be converted into a great and happy nation.

Were it consistent with the design of these lectures, it would be easy and pleasant to show you the excellence of these institutions—to prove to you that the moral law which was here announced, is “holy, just, and good,” conformed to the nature of

God and man, and the relations that subsist between them, and therefore of eternal obligation—to follow the steps of the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, and show you how clearly the Gospel was preached, and the Saviour presented in all the rites and observances of the *ceremonial* law; and, by a minute examination of the character, circumstances, and situation of the Israelites, and of the end designed to be accomplished by their civil regulations, to illustrate the wisdom which shines in their *judicial* law. But such an examination would too much interrupt our progress in the history.

When the Lord had distinctly proclaimed the precepts of the moral law, the people, struck with awe at the dread voice of the Eternal, cried to Moses, “Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Moses henceforth acted as a mediator. He “drew near to the thick darkness where God was,” and received those general parts of the ceremonial and judicial law of which we have spoken. When, returning to the people, he repeated to them the ordinances of God, they again exclaimed with one voice, “All that the Lord hath said, will we do.” After they had thus signified their assent, the covenant was ratified by all those significant ceremonies used in covenant transactions. An altar was built to denote the presence of Jehovah, and twelve pillars were reared to denote the twelve tribes of Israel, the other contracting party. Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were sacrificed; and then of the blood of these victims, by which the covenant was ratified, half was sprinkled upon the altar, the seat of the divinity, and half upon the people. This expressive action is accompanied by the declaration of Moses—“Behold

the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you." In covenants a feast was made on the sacrificed victims. In conformity with this custom, Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, representing all the people, "ate and drank before God;" while the Lord gave a peculiar manifestation of his presence, not in the terrors which had shaken Sinai, but in mild majesty and glory. "They saw the God of Israel," not a personal representation, but a symbol of his peculiar presence; "and there was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were, the body of heaven in his clearness."

These ceremonies being terminated, Moses and Joshua were ordered to ascend higher up the mount, to the spot where was the cloud, still above which rested the glory. Ignorant of the time he might be detained, Moses committed the government of the people during his absence to Aaron and Hur. Having remained six days with Joshua in the cloud, on the seventh the Lord called him alone up to the glory. This glory was visible to those below, and appeared "like devouring fire." Here, in intercourse with God, needing not earthly food, he remained forty days and forty nights. Here he received the laws contained from the twenty-fifth to the thirty-first chapters; and also the two tables of the moral law, engraved by the "finger," that is, by the immediate power "of God;" and containing the substance of what he had impressed on the conscience of man at his creation, and what he would still more clearly develop to Christians under the Gospel, supported by tenderer motives, and founded on better promises.

Of the numerous inferences from this portion of sacred history, I select only a few.

1. How great and how glorious is our God; and with what solemnity should we always come into his presence!

The same Jehovah who thus manifested himself on Sinai, is “the God with whom we have to do”—is our Creator, our Ruler, and our Judge. He every where encompasses us. He is intimately present with every atom of our frame—with every fibre of our heart—with every thought of our soul—with every instant of our life. He is especially present with us when we enter his courts, or engage in the ordinances of religion. He is in this house, with all his glories and with all his mercies. Though there are fewer objects here than on Sinai to manifest him to the senses, yet there are not less to manifest him to the soul. Though in compassion to human weakness he veils the lustre of his glory, lest we, like the terrified Israelites, should cry out, “Let not God speak to us, lest we die;” yet he has not withdrawn himself. He addresses us not from the impetuous wind, the earthquake, and the fire; but still he gives the most unequivocal proofs of his presence, by here speaking to your hearts, believers, in “the still small voice,” and shedding through them a thousand consolations. He is here; and, for the same purpose as he was on Sinai, delivering his law to you, pronouncing his high and sovereign commands, and offering to form with you an everlasting covenant. Wo to those who, in such circumstances, under the immediate inspection of God, are insensible, careless, trifling. They rush, with a crowd of sins, still loved, still unmortified, to the smoking mountain, where is Jehovah with his thunders. Oh! let us al-

ways come before him, not indeed with the same terror, but with the same holy awe and reverence with which the Israelites stood at the foot of Sinai; remembering that he is the same God, ordering the same adoration and love, and having the same authority and majesty.

2. Can we review this subject without feeling our need of a Mediator, and rejoicing that we have one in whom we may confidently trust? The majesty of God, and the severity and terrors of the law, drove the Israelites to Moses, the type of Christ. And when we have a proper conception of the holiness and greatness of God; of the purity, the extent, and spirituality of the law; of our frequent transgressions of it and its awful sanctions,—we shall be driven to that blessed Redeemer whom Moses typified—to that Saviour, who alone can stand between the majesty of a holy God, and guilty, polluted man, fearful and unable to approach into the presence of the divine glory—to that Saviour in whom God was, as in his ambassador, reconciling the world unto himself, and in whom man was, as in his substitute and surety, making atonement for his sin. Interested in this Mediator, who not only reported the law to believers, but fulfilled it for them, this “fiery law is for them turned into a directing light.”

3. Can we behold the Israelites entering into covenant, without remembering that we also are invited to “join ourselves to the Lord, in an everlasting covenant, never to be broken;” in that covenant which is “all the salvation and all the desire” of every child of God? A sacrifice has been offered to confirm and ratify this covenant. This sacrifice, “slain from the foundation of the world” in the counsels of God, and which alone gave efficacy to the types that prefigur-

ed it, was the blessed Redeemer! He reaches forth to you, he solicits you to be sprinkled with this "blood of the new covenant which was shed for many, for the remission of sins." He invites you externally and symbolically in the sacrament, and by faith internally, to "eat the flesh and drink the blood" of this victim of love, and thus to feast upon the sacrifice. Can you neglect these merciful invitations? Can you be insensible to the offer which God makes you, to give you, in covenant, his Son with all his graces, his Spirit with all his influences, his heaven with all its glory, himself as the abundant and eternal portion to your souls? Can you trifle with this offer, and not tremble lest, in righteous indignation, he should for ever "cut you off from the people" of his love? And ye who have observed the external forms of the covenant, look at those who perished in the wilderness; look at the awful death of Nadab and Abihu; and rest not in outward forms and external symbols, but see that your hearts be right before God.

4. Awful as were the scenes on which we have meditated, there are more awful scenes in which we must bear a part. Full of terror as was the giving of the law, still more terrible shall be the judgment according to that law. What, ah! what will be our emotions, when we shall hear that trump which shall not merely chill the living with terror, but awaken the dead; when, not Sinai only, but the world shall be wrapped in flames; when, not a single nation, but all who have ever lived, shall appear before the Great Tribunal, not to receive a law, but a sentence that shall decide their everlasting state; when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on



all that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel!" From what crowds then shall burst the agonized cry, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" Who? Those on whom is sprinkled the blood of the atoning sacrifice—those who are in covenant with God, and interested in the great Mediator: these shall stand before God; and, happier than Moses, shall behold him, not merely for a few days, but eternally, "there where he darts forth the full rays of his brightness, and causes his glory ever to appear, without any interposing cloud or veil."

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## SERMON XXIII.



LIFE OF MOSES.

No. VII.



EXODUS xxxii. xxxiii. xxxiv.

IN our last lecture we beheld the Israelites standing at the foot of Sinai, trembling at that awful display of the divine majesty which they witnessed, and crying with one voice, "All that the Lord hath said we will do." This language was not hypocritical; they were sincere in these purposes of obedience; and they thought that nothing could henceforth turn them from their attachment to their God.

But the Lord knew the frailty and the treachery of their hearts; he saw in the future the rebellions, the violations of their promises and professions of which they would be guilty; and he said to Moses, "I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever." (Deut. v. 28, 29.) Nothing can be more tender than these words, which at once express the complacency which God would have in their obedience, and the danger in which they were of breaking their engagements. An affecting commentary on them is given in the history which succeeds.

The thunder had ceased to roll; the lightning no longer flamed before them; the deep, shrill sound of the trump was no longer heard; the symbol of the divine presence rested on the top of the mountain; Moses who had so often ascended and returned to them, had not come back from that glory of Jehovah into which he had entered, and which had appeared to them like devouring fire. Under these circumstances, the resolutions formed under the impression of terror, and the promises extorted by fear, are forgotten; since the pillar of cloud descends not from the mountain. Too gross to adore an invisible God, they resolve to form another symbol of the presence of the divinity with them; they therefore cry to Aaron, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses we wot not what is become of him." Not that they wished entirely to renounce the service of Jehovah; not that they supposed that their hands could give being to a divinity; but that

they might have an idol that would be the medium of worship, and at whose feet they might lay those services that had as their ultimate object the God of Israel. This is evident, since in announcing its worship, Aaron proclaimed, "To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah;" and since in the services that were performed before it, those sacrifices were used that were appointed by God. Still it was an express and daring violation of those commandments that had just been announced to them.

Aaron required of them their golden ornaments; perhaps supposing that avarice or vanity would prevent them from parting with these ornaments to form an idol. But they cheerfully bestowed them; and of them a molten calf was formed, probably in imitation of Apis the Egyptian divinity, whom they had seen worshipped under the form of an ox. How could they forget the impotence of this idol to defend himself or his worshippers from the plagues which at the command of Jehovah descended upon Egypt?

An altar was built on which this idol was placed, and the Israelites "rose up early in the morning," anxious to commence those services, the result of which was so dreadful to them, "and offered those burnt-offerings and brought those peace-offerings" due only to Jehovah.

They "ate and drank" before the idol; thus expressing their wish to have the same communion with it that Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel had with the Lord, when they feasted on the sacrifice before him; and then rushed to those excesses that have always attended on idolatry.

This whole history fills us with astonishment; but it can appear incredible only to those who have

never reflected on the ingratitude of man, and the treachery of the human heart. How many circumstances equally surprising, equally criminal, have occurred to those around us—have occurred to ourselves. How many, affected by some striking providence, or peculiar manifestation of the greatness or power of God, have been all zeal, all fire for his worship, and have made him the most solemn promises, but who have been as ready to violate these promises as they were bold in forming them. How many on the bed of sickness, in communion seasons, have cried, “All that the Lord hath spoken will we do;” but who have almost immediately forgotten all their resolutions of amendment and obedience. In reproaching the Israelites, do not then many of us condemn ourselves?—“But they resisted miracles which we have not beheld?” Yes, but is their conduct more inconceivable, more criminal, than ours; who, believing in these and in far greater miracles wrought by our Redeemer; enjoying a purer and more brilliant light than the Israelites possessed; beholding in the sublime spectacle of nature the display of the divine attributes; witnesses of his works around us; and sensible that our lives and happiness depend only upon his good will, dare yet to violate his laws, to give to creatures that place in our hearts which belongs only to the Creator, and to defy his thunders? Such conduct in us shows as much guilt, and blindness, and insensibility, and rebellion, as was displayed by the Israelites when they bowed before the molten calf.

One great purpose of God in separating the Israelites from other nations and giving laws to them, was to preserve that fundamental doctrine of the unity of the Godhead, which was in danger of being lost

through the idolatry of the nations. The great, the fundamental article of the covenant into which the Israelites had just entered, was, that they should worship God alone and reject the adoration of him by images. No wonder then that the divine indignation was excited against them. He proposed to destroy them, and to accomplish in Moses the promises which he had made to Abraham, that his descendants should equal in multitude the stars of heaven. Nothing can be more striking, more encouraging to fervent prayer and holy intercession, than the language of the Lord on this occasion: "Let me alone, that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." That arm, that invincible arm, which has smitten Egypt with so many plagues, which has exterminated the first-born of the Egyptians, and cast Pharaoh and his courtiers into the Red Sea; this arm feels itself bound by the prayers of Moses, and God waits for the signal of his servant to destroy this rebellious people.

What then is the conduct of Moses? Does he display revenge for the ingratitude and unkindness which he had so often experienced from the people? Does he seize with avidity that offer which would have been so captivating to an ambitious heart? No; full of that love which "is not easily provoked, and which seeketh not her own," he renews his supplications, he redoubles the fervour of his prayers, he intercedes with more importunity; he pleads with God from the honour of the divine name, from his gracious promises and covenant with their fathers, not to destroy this faithless nation. Thus, in the words of the Psalmist, (cvi. 23.) "Moses, his chosen, stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath." God yielded to his supplications; sus-

pended the deserved punishment; -- and *repented* of the evil which he thought to do unto the people." You are too well acquainted with your Scriptures, not to know, that this and similar expressions, ascribing human passions and affections to the Infinite and All-perfect, though figuratively spoken after the manner of men, are to be understood in a sense worthy of God. From the feebleness of our minds, and the imperfection of our faculties, we are unable to form precise and definite ideas of the mode of existence or action, of the nature and attributes of the Being of beings. The word of God, to accommodate the truths of revelation to our capacity, selects some earthly analogy, and gives an imperfect explanation of heavenly subjects by a reference to the earthly subjects with which they best admit of being compared. Thus God is said to *repent*; not to express a painful change of mind or affection, but to denote a difference in the manner of his conduct similar to that observed in men when they repent. He is said to repent of the evil or good which he had threatened or promised under a condition expressed or implied, when he does not inflict the one or confer the other.

After pleading for the guilty, Moses descends by the command of God to inflict punishment upon them. Though as a nation the Israelites shall not be exterminated, yet the honour of the violated law must be avenged. Moses bears in his hands the tables on which the moral law was inscribed by God. It was a token of the covenant that had so lately been formed between Jehovah and the people. As he approaches the camp, he beholds the idol and its sacrilegious worshippers. In the anguish of his heart, with holy indignation, and as a symbol of their

forfeiture of all the blessings of the covenant which they had violated, he breaks before their eyes these tables of the law. He reduces the idol to dust, and strewing it on the brook of Horeb, compels the idolaters to drink of it—thus showing them how impotent and contemptible was the object of their impious worship. With special severity he reproves Aaron; but while he warmly censures, he tenderly prays for him; and in answer to his supplications, Aaron is spared.

A more painful office succeeds. That the authority of the law might be maintained, a sin committed under such circumstances, displaying such aggravated contempt of the Lord, must be severely punished, that a barrier may be erected against future idolatry. Moses therefore, not from any private impulse, but at the express command of God, called upon all who remained faithful to Jehovah and were zealous for his honour, to inflict upon the transgressors the penalty of the law. The tribe of Levi, which appears not to have united in the idolatrous act, came forward, and three thousand were slain by the hand of justice. Under the Jewish theocracy, Jehovah was not only the object of worship, but also the chief magistrate and king of the nation. Under such a form of government, idolatry was not merely an offence against the divinity; it was besides, an open rebellion against the sovereign, and a rejection of him;—an explicit act of high treason against the supreme magistrate; and therefore by the law punishable with death.

It was still uncertain whether those who survived would all be spared. Moses, whose heart was full of tenderness, notwithstanding he was thus inflexi-

ble in obeying the command of God in punishing the idolaters, returned to plead for the pardon of those who remained. He cried, in accents that breathed the very spirit of charity, "Oh! this people have sinned a great sin; yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book." I am astonished that some ancient and some modern mystics have quoted this prayer in confirmation of a sentiment, that is alike revolting to reason, and opposed to revelation; and have brought the example of Moses to prove that a pious man should be willing to renounce his salvation, and should consent to be damned, for the glory of God. This is not the place to consider this shocking sentiment; to show how contrary it is to the whole spirit of the Scriptures, which every where aim to make the believer long for heaven, and regard it as his country; to prove that this opinion separates what God has indissolubly united, his own glory and the salvation of the believer. It is sufficient to remark here, that no possible support to this sentiment can be found in the words of Moses. He does not ask to be blotted out of the book of life, provided God should pardon the people. Were this his language, it might be imagined that he was willing to sacrifice his salvation for theirs. But, on the contrary, he asks to be blotted from this book, provided they must perish. His meaning evidently is, If thou hast resolved to destroy the people, spare me the grief of surviving them; of hearing the reproaches and the blasphemies of thy enemies. Take me also from a world, in which life, under such circumstances, would be bitterer than death.

Some intimations of returning favour were given in answer to his prayer; but the full pardon of the people is not pronounced, and their punishment, though



deferred by the divine patience, still impends over them. To show the divine indignation, God threatened to withdraw from them the peculiar manifestations of his presence, which they had hitherto enjoyed in the midst of them; and in token of it, the tabernacle was removed to a distance from the camp. Yet the Lord was not entirely withdrawn. Access was given to every humble worshipper, and particularly to Moses. He here still pleaded for the people; for their full pardon and restoration to their former privileges. He received a gracious promise for himself: "My presence shall go with *thee*, and I will give *thee* rest." But this could not satisfy his generous heart. He still desired that the whole nation should enjoy the divine protection and conduct. He perseveres, and receives a gracious answer from the Lord: "I will do this thing also."

Encouraged by the condescension of God, he makes another request. He desires to see the divine glory, the fulness of the perfections of God. He here asked more than could be granted to a mortal, more than a mere man could behold and live. The request was not, however, rejected as presumptuous; but was granted so far as it could be borne by Moses. An external view was given him of Jehovah-Jesus, of Him who is "God manifest in the flesh." Hid in the cleft of the rock, he, like his orefather Abraham, "saw the day of Christ, and was glad;" and was taught that in this manner only could he have an external view of the glory of God, since, if not presented thus tempered and softened, the powers of nature would sink under the dazzling effulgence. "Thou shalt see," thus the last verse of the thirty-third chapter would be literally translated. "Thou shalt see (את אחר) my latter state," i. e. as man; "but my face," i. e. the glory of Jehovah unveiled,

“shall not be seen.” Thus was fulfilled the precious declaration made to Moses: “I will make all my goodness pass before thee.” This goodness shone more brightly in this display of the redeeming grace and infinite love that should produce the incarnation of Immanuel, than if heaven had been opened to Moses, and he had beheld the divine goodness crowning the angel and beatifying the seraph.

After this privilege, Moses, at the command of God, again ascended the mount with two tables of stone, on which the commandments were again to be written. There the Lord manifests himself to him in a more spiritual manner, and teaches him that the bright assemblage of divine perfections, and particularly his sovereign authority, the riches of his grace, and the terrors of his justice, constitute the divine glory. “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.” I regret that I have not time to illustrate in detail this sublime and tender passage. The heart of the believer will comment upon it. Let me just remark, with respect to the last clause, that these words are annexed to the second commandment; that they almost always refer to the punishments attending on idolatry; and that, without exception, they apply to temporal judgments. That God, by these, does visit children for the iniquity of their fathers, is a fact that cannot be doubted by one who looks around him. There is no

reference to eternal punishment. With regard to these, it is everlastingly true, that the "son shall not bear the iniquity of the father," but that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," and "every man shall bear his own burden."

A manifestation of God, though in mercy, must strike a sinful creature with awe. We are not surprised, therefore, that even Moses, who had so long enjoyed the visions of God, "made haste and bowed his head and worshipped." Oh! what a change must take place in our whole frame, before we can bear to stand with unveiled faces, in the immediate presence of God, round the throne of his glory!

Thus beholding the displays of mercy, Moses again intercedes for that people so dear to his heart; and supplicates that if he himself has found acceptance, Israel also may be forgiven fully, and favoured with the tokens of his gracious residence among them. An answer of peace is returned, and happiness is again restored to the heart of the generous Moses.

Again he continued forty days and forty nights upon the mount. He was taught all the ordinances of God. In descending, his countenance shone with a bright lustre, partaking, as it were, of the effulgence of that Deity with whom he had conversed. This was a new proof of his divine mission; and when he drew near to the people, with such evident proofs of being an immediate messenger from heaven, they feared to approach him till he had covered his face with a veil. This he constantly wore in giving them the instructions which he had now received, and laid it aside only when he entered into the tabernacle of God, before whom the highest splendour of a creature is utterly obscured.

This portion of history,

1. Strongly teaches us the *efficacy of prayer*, and the duty of intercession. Had not Moses fervently and perseveringly prayed, Israel would have been destroyed. What cannot prayer effect? We have seen, in the striking expression used by the Lord, that it has a kind of omnipotence, since it has an interest and a prevalence with the omnipotence of Jehovah. It opens the door of mercy, and keeps out an inundation of judgments. Be importunate, then, in your supplications. In the exercise of prayer you will receive strength, light, and consolation. By it, in every age, the pious have been supported, the afflicted comforted, the martyr cheered. By frequent converse with God in prayer, the soul will shine, as did the face of Moses after his converse with the Lord upon the mount.

And while you supplicate for yourselves, like the generous law-giver of the Jews, bear others on your hearts before the mercy-seat. Like him, intercede for those who have injured, reproached, and exercised ingratitude towards you: you may have the Christian revenge of seeing them melted in penitence, and warmed with love. Like him, implore, with tears implore, the compassion of God upon the violaters of his law, upon those who are exposed to everlasting ruin. You may have the joy of beholding them humbled for their guilt, and fleeing to the grace of the Most Merciful, and the sacrifice of the Redeemer for pardon. Like him, plead for your relatives who have sinned. Is there no Aaron, whom you must censure, but for whom you also should pray—no irreligious child, no unrenewed partner, no thoughtless friend? Oh! let the voice of intercession rise in their behalf from the centre of your soul:

and, in answer to your petitions, God may pluck them from death, everlasting death!

2. Let us turn our eyes for a moment from Moses to that great Intercessor whom he typified; to that glorious High Priest, who appears, not merely upon the mount, but in the heaven of heavens for us, and whom "the Father heareth always." We admire the disinterested love of Moses; what was it to the ineffable charity of Jesus, who not only fasted and prayed, but bled and died for us, and then ascended into heaven, giving us the consolatory assurance, that "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Moses had no ground of intercession but undeserved mercy and abounding grace; Jesus pleads the merit of his blood, the full ransom he has paid for his children, and through him the tribunal of justice itself becomes a throne of grace, where absolutions are pronounced, and whence blessings flow. Moses interceded, not only for Israel in general, but also for Aaron in particular. Jesus pleads, not only for his whole church, but also for every single member of it; for Peter, that his faith fail not. The Son of God is at prayer in heaven for thee, believer, for thee in particular, with as much tenderness and care as though thou wast the only happy creature throughout the universe under his guardianship and dominion. But recollect also, my brethren, that the same Moses who interceded for the rebellious, punished the incorrigible. And it is the same Jesus who now intercedes for sinners, that "shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." That in that day the "despisers" who have continued to slight his mercy, shall behold and wonder, and perish."

3. Finally : we are taught by the apostle Paul, (2 Cor. iii.) to consider the veil on the face of Moses as emblematical of the nature of that dispensation, comparatively dark, concealed in types and shadows, so that they could not clearly see the end. Let us rejoice that the veil is removed by the gospel of Christ ; that “the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” Let us live as children of the light, and then “we all, beholding with open face the glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of our God :” and beyond the grave, shall be encircled with a brightness greater than that which shone on the face of Moses at Horeb ; lustrous as that which encircled his whole body upon Tabor. “The Lord himself shall be our everlasting light, and our God our glory.”

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## SERMON XXIV.

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LIFE OF MOSES.

No. VIII.

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EXODUS xl. 29. LEVITICUS vii. 9, 10. NUMBERS ix. 1—5.

IN our last lecture, we beheld the Israelites, forgetful of their solemn protestations, and of the commands of God, bowing down to the molten calf ; and at this humbling view, we deplored the ingratitude

of man, and the treachery of the human heart. We listened to the fervent intercessions of Moses, and to the merciful promises which were granted to his holy importunity by the Lord, and we admired the grace and patience of God, and the efficacy of prayer. Moses, having obtained the pardon of the people, descends from the mount, promulgates the laws that he had there received, and then hastens to erect a tabernacle for the place of worship, and as the peculiar residence of Jehovah.

As the Lord condescended to be the temporal King and Ruler of the Israelites, and the Leader of their hosts, the tabernacle was considered as his royal tent, and was therefore furnished with guards, servants, a table, and every thing requisite for this purpose. But it is principally to be regarded as a religious edifice, a place solemnly devoted to the service of the Lord, a portable temple. (*Φορεῖον ἱερόν Philo.*)

To teach us that God alone can institute the ordinances of religion, and point out the acceptable mode of access to himself, as well as to prevent the Israelites from mingling with the worship of Jehovah the superstitious ceremonies of the idolaters with whom they had lived, it was ordered to be finished exactly according to the pattern divinely shown to Moses in the mount. Exodus xxv. 40. Acts vii. 44. Hebrews viii. 5.

The materials of which it was formed were voluntarily contributed, and the expense of erecting it was cheerfully defrayed by the liberality of the Israelites. So thankful did they now appear to the God who had pardoned them, and so desirous to behold, in the midst of them, a suitable place for his worship, that, notwithstanding the magnitude of the expense, from

the splendour and costliness of the materials, Moses was obliged to stop their contributions, by proclaiming that a sufficiency had been bestowed to finish it.

It was reared under the care of Bezaleel and Aholiab, two artists, whose uncommon skill and wisdom proceeded immediately from God, and were devoted to the decoration of his house. It was finished, together with its utensils, in about half a year; being begun in the sixth month after their departure from Egypt, and dedicated on the anniversary of that great event.

Every thing connected with it is most minutely described by Moses. But instead of entering into particulars, it will be sufficient for the purpose of these lectures, briefly to mention, that it was surrounded by a spacious court, into which all might enter, and in which stood the altar of burnt-offerings, where the typical sacrifices for sin were presented, and the brazen laver where those ablutions were performed, which signified the necessity of inward purity in our approaches to God. Thus, under shadows, were taught the extent of the atonement that should be offered in the fulness of time, and the indispensable need of sanctification for our acceptance with God.

The building itself consisted of the *holy place*, into which none but the priests could enter, and they only during the time of service; in which were the altar of incense, the golden table, and the golden candlestick; and the *most holy place*, which was separated from the former by a rich and costly veil, and into which it was lawful for none to enter but the high priest, and he only once a year, on the great day of expiation. Here were preserved the most sacred symbols of the divine presence, and the most pre-



cious monuments of the mercies and miracles of God: the ark of the covenant, on which was the mercy-seat, covered by the cherubim, between which rested the Shechinah, the divine glory. Here also were kept as memorials, the golden pot of manna, and the rod of Aaron that had miraculously budded.

On the first day of the sacred Hebrew year, the tabernacle was reared and devoted to the Lord, who testified his acceptance of it, by filling it with his glory, the splendid symbol of his peculiar presence.

It was removed to a variety of places before it was succeeded by the temple. While the Israelites were wandering in the desert, it constantly attended them; and after they had passed Jordan, it was set up at Gilgal. Having remained here some years, it was removed to Shiloh. Afterwards it was carried, probably by a prophetic direction, to Nob, a city of priests, in the tribe of Benjamin. Its next station was at Gibeon, where it continued till four hundred and seventy-two years after its erection, when the temple was built by Solomon. In this temple the ark and the chief ornaments of the tabernacle were placed; and having performed its appointed office, it was laid aside.

Of the typical reference of the tabernacle we are left in no doubt. We are taught in various passages of the New Testament, by the inspired writers, that it prefigured the incarnate Redeemer, that gospel church, of which he is the head, and that heavenly world, where this church will attain all its felicity and glory.

Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, viii. 2. and John, in his gospel, i. 14. (in the original,) teach us that the tabernacle was typical of the person and in-

carnation of our blessed Redeemer. Like the tabernacle, the human nature of our Saviour was formed according to the counsel and decree of God; was consecrated by the special residence of the divinity, since "in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." It was in the tabernacle that God X communed with the Israelites, revealed his will, and accepted their services and prayers: It is through Jesus alone that we have fellowship with the Lord: It is through him that the gracious counsels of the Father are revealed to us: It is only through him that the services of guilty creatures can be acceptable in the sight of infinite purity, and unspotted holiness. The rich and numerous ornaments of the tabernacle but feebly shadowed forth that attractive combination of human virtues and divine excellences, that shone in him who "is altogether lovely," altogether glorious. The holy, and most holy place, forming but one tabernacle, direct us to that human nature which was spotless, and that divine nature which was thrice holy, forming but one person, in our glorious Mediator. It was his blood that was here sprinkled before the Lord, to make atonement: It was his intercession that was represented by the cloud of incense: He was the bread of life, giving nourishment to the souls of men, more precious than that manna which supported their bodies, and which was preserved in the most holy place: He was the mercy-seat, covering the law in the presence of God, since, if judged by it as a covenant, we must be undone; the mercy-seat, gazing upon which the cherubim who once flew, the ministers of God, to execute punishment upon fallen man, and prevent his access to the tree of life, now drop the fiery, flaming sword, and behold all in heaven and on earth recon-

ciled and brought under one head, since in Christ the original curse of the law is removed. In short, as the very act of erecting the tabernacle, showed that God could be reconciled with men, so every thing connected with it showed such a reference to the person, the grace, or some act of the mediation of Christ, as was suited to the state of the church, before his actual appearance in the flesh.

Look again from the tabernacle to that *gospel church*, which is the mystical body of the Redeemer. It was planned by the same divine wisdom that gave directions for the tabernacle. All the parts of this spiritual building are formed, not according to the fancies of men, but according to the commands of God. "Thus saith the Lord," is the seal annexed to its ministrations, its doctrines, its ordinances, its privileges. It was reared by inspired men, endued with richer gifts, and more precious influences than the Spirit communicated to Bezaleel and Aholiab. It is the place which the Most High has chosen for his favourite residence on earth, where he causes his glory to shine forth; where pure worship is paid unto him, and holy prayers, and spiritual sacrifices are presented before him. It is the place where by faith we behold the blood of atonement flowing, and the victim offered for sin; where we find the "laver of regeneration;" where we see the light perpetually shining, and feast on the "hidden manna."

But it is not merely to the church militant upon earth, but also to the *church triumphant*, that the tabernacle points. "Our High Priest," says the apostle, Heb. ix. 24. "is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." It is there that Jehovah especially un-

veils his glory, and establishes his dwelling place, his palace, his throne. It is there that those who, "washed in the blood of the Redeemer," have been made "priests unto God," perform their ceaseless services, with humility and love. The costly ornaments of the tabernacle are forgotten in comparison with the splendours that irradiate that happy country. Cherubim more numerous than those that were every where represented around the sanctuary, unite with the redeemed in the worship of the living God. There, in their plenitude, we find those spiritual blessings, shadowed forth by the tabernacle, tasted in a degree in the church on earth, but enjoyed in their excellency and abundance only above. It has been consecrated by richer blood than that which the high priest bore when he entered into the most holy place; and through the efficacy of this blood we may enter with holy confidence into that world of purity, that dwelling-place of God.

The tabernacle having been consecrated, God ordered Moses to consecrate ministers for it. Aaron, at this time eighty-four years of age, was immediately appointed by God, as the high priest, and his sons as inferior priests; and in his family, these offices were to continue till the coming and death of Messiah. The ceremonies attending the consecration, are minutely described in Exodus xxix. and Leviticus viii. They were performed publicly, at the door of the tabernacle, before the congregation; and consisted of mystical ablutions, of investment with the pontifical garments, of anointing with the holy oil, which it was death to counterfeit, and of the solemn offering of various kinds of sacrifices. These ceremonies continued for seven days; during which time, the Levites, the altar, and the various utensils of the

tabernacle were also consecrated to God. The Lord testified, in a solemn manner, in the sight of Israel, his approbation of these transactions, and his acceptance of Aaron as his priest; for his first sacerdotal offices, after his installation, were sealed by a miracle: "A fire from before the Lord," (proceeding either immediately from heaven, or from the bosom of the cloud which continually rested upon the tabernacle,) consumed the flesh of the victims which Aaron offered as a burnt-offering, immediately after his installation. No wonder that the people, at this spectacle, which attested the favour and the presence of God, "shouted and fell on their faces," and worshipped. They were, doubtless, filled with joy, when they recollected that God had thus shown his acceptance of the sacrifices of Abel, of Noah, and of their father Abraham. This celestial fire, which was to them an invincible proof of the divinity of the Levitical worship, was carefully preserved, and not suffered to be extinguished, till the dedication of the temple of Solomon, when the miracle was renewed. Then also the spectators were filled with humble thankfulness, "for when the people saw it, they praised the Lord, saying, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." 2 Chronicles, vii. 3.

It was almost immediately after these events, that the Israelites had a new source of gratitude and joy in the celebration of the passover. A year only had passed since its institution. But by how many important occurrences had that year been marked, and with how many tender and solemn remembrances must they have been affected, when partaking of the paschal lamb, they looked back to that memorable night, when Egypt was in tears, while they, shielded by the blood of the sacrifice, were safe from the

sword of the avenger. Their deliverance from servitude, the passage through the opening waves of the sea, the destruction of their enemies, the bread from heaven, and water from the rock, the uninterrupted mercies and countless miracles, and their frequent rebellions against him, the law given with such pomp, the covenant that displayed the divine condescension and mercy; all these, and a thousand other circumstances recurring to their memories, must have filled them with thankfulness, humility, and love; must have constrained them again to cry out, "All that our Lord hath spoken we will do."

But the joy which they felt in the services of religion was soon interrupted by the awful and tragic deaths of Nadab and Abihu, who had so lately been consecrated to the Lord, and who so soon violated their duty. God has ordered that the celestial fire, which had descended upon the sacrifice of Aaron, should be preserved, and that with it the incense should be offered. (Lev. xvi. 12.) With this command they were well acquainted; but from thoughtlessness or presumption they burned the incense, which in their priestly character they were morning and evening to present to God in the holy place with fire, which was not taken according to the divine command from the altar of burnt-offerings, but which was common and forbidden; "strange fire, which the Lord commanded not." It was necessary that the honour of the law, thus daringly violated, should be maintained; and that the people and the priests should be taught not to alter those institutions and ceremonies that were appointed by infinite wisdom, and that were prefigurative of the work and office of the Redeemer. It was especially necessary to teach them this lesson at the first establishment of

the law, that future generations might learn the danger of irreverence in sacred ordinances: for this reason, at the commencement of the levitical economy, Nadab and Abihu are punished; at the commencement of the gospel dispensation Ananias and Sapphira are smitten by the divine indignation.

Every thing aggravated the crime of the sons of Aaron. Their knowledge of their duty; the sanctity of their office; the ill effect that would be produced by their example; the peculiar privileges they had enjoyed when on the mount they saw the symbols of the divine presence, and were not consumed. Their punishment therefore was exemplary. "There went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." The same fire which before descended as a sign of divine acceptance, and consumed the sacrifice, again descends as a fearful sign of divine displeasure, and destroys the sacrificers. This event, according to the remark of Moses, was an affecting comment on that declaration of Jehovah, "I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and before all the people will I be glorified." Solemn words! that should never be forgotten by every minister of the sanctuary; that should be impressed upon the heart of every worshipper; that should fill with terror those that carelessly enter into the courts of the Lord, and without holy dispositions engage in the services of religion, forgetting that in these sacred occupations God does not trifle with us, and does not permit us to trifle with him.

Who will not sympathize with the unhappy Aaron? The morning dawned brightly upon him. He saw himself surrounded with children who, he hoped, would cheer him by their virtues, would adorn their high and holy office, and would remain the priests of

God upon earth when he should be "gathered to his fathers." Of Nadab and Abihu, his eldest sons, he probably formed peculiar hopes: they only of his children had been admitted to the high privilege of ascending the mount, and feasting before God on that sacrifice by which the covenant with Israel had been ratified: from this distinction the fond parent would naturally draw a presage of their future dignity and glory. He sees them breathless corpses; not gradually led to the tomb, but cut off suddenly and unexpectedly, with no interval between their deaths, so that the anguish caused by the death of one is not healed, before the heart bleeds over the other: taken from this world, not while employed in holy supplications and fervent devotions, not while their souls were warmed with the love of God, and with the assured anticipations of glory irradiating their last hours, but perishing in the very act of crime, the monuments of the indignation of an insulted God. Who does not sympathize with the unhappy father? Every one who has been bereaved of those whom he loved, feels for him. Every one especially who has been called to weep over the corpses of near and dear, but wicked relatives and friends, feels for Aaron; and can well imagine what "a sword pierced through" his soul, when looking to the future world he could perceive for his children nothing but what was dark, dismal, and appalling.

Yet he bore the stroke as became the priest of God. "Aaron held his peace." It was the silence, not of amazement or sullenness, but of patient and humble submission. Acknowledging the divine justice and holiness, he murmurs not at this severe dispensation. He adores in silence the divine hand, which he sees is not less worthy of his homages be-



cause it has been armed with thunders. He recalls his own transgression in forming the golden calf, and feels that "it is of the Lord's mercy that he also is not consumed."

While his soul is thus submissive, all those exterior marks of mourning that might appear to display more love for his children, than zeal for the glory of God, are prohibited to him. Neither he nor his surviving sons were permitted to rend their garments, nor to remove from their heads the holy sacerdotal ornaments, as was usual in great afflictions, nor to depart from the tabernacle, till they had finished those sacred functions for which they had entered it. They stood ministering for the living, while others interred the dead.

Yet the claims of nature as well as of religion, were regarded on this solemn occasion. Those of the family of Aaron, who were not actually engaged in the services of the sanctuary, were allowed to express their sorrow; and Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar, were permitted to dispense with the law which ordered them to rejoice when they had offered peace-offerings; and instead of eating the flesh of the victim, it was allowed to be consumed, as though it had been an expiatory sacrifice.

This awful catastrophe, doubtless, produced a more scrupulous regard to the ordinances of God. When these ordinances were fully established; when all the civil and religious institutions of the Israelites were settled, the divine signal was given for their departure. Having remained for a year at Sinai, they left it on the second month of the second year. In our next lecture we shall attend them in their journeyings. Let us conclude this by looking a moment from Aaron and the Levitical priesthood, whose con-

secration we have considered, to the "great High Priest of our profession."

He was solemnly inaugurated into this office, by the appointment of the Father, and the unction of the Holy Spirit. More splendid, far, than the pontifical dress of Aaron, are his robes of righteousness, and garments of salvation. He bears his people on his heart, and makes them "holiness to the Lord." He has offered an all-sufficient sacrifice for them, and interceding for them, has carried the blood into the holy of holies. He mediates with God in their behalf; blesses them; prays for them; instructs them. But unlike Aaron and his sons, He was the Holy One, and needed not to present a sacrifice for his own sins before he offered the victim for the people. Aaron and his sons have long since mouldered into dust. Their priesthood has been abolished. But Jesus lives, and shall continue "a priest for ever." The law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest, while those priests were made without an oath, by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but he, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them, to the uttermost, that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not, daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's, for this he did once, when he offered up him-

self. For the law maketh men high priests, who have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." Hebrews vii. 19—28.

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## SERMON XXV.



LIFE OF MOSES.

No. IX.



NUMBERS x. xi. xii. xiii. xiv.

ON the last three Sabbaths we have stood with the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, and with varied emotions have considered the important events that there occurred. With holy solemnity we contemplated the awful pomp and terrible majesty in which God descended and announced his law. With indignation and wonder we beheld the Israelites forgetful of the covenant into which they had so lately entered, bowing down to the molten calf. We were encouraged to approach the mercy-seat, by seeing the efficacy of intercession in the prayers of Moses, who "stood in the breach, and turned away the indignation" of the Lord. We marked, in the ceremonial worship of the Jews, the shadows of the better blessings which we enjoy. We attended the consecration of Aaron, and rejoiced while we looked from him to our more

glorious, more holy, more merciful high priest. By the flames which consumed Nadab and Abihu, we were taught the necessity of reverence and sincerity in our approaches to Him, who “cannot be deceived, and who will not be mocked.” At length, all the civil and religious institutions necessary to form the Israelites into a powerful nation, were settled; and the cloud rising from the tabernacle gave the signal for their departure.

The Israelites had remained at the mount of God for eleven months and twenty days; a period marked by the most stupendous miracles and most solemn transactions. From Sinai they are conducted into the wilderness of Paran. For three days the cloud rested not on the tabernacle; though it occasionally paused to give them time for refreshment and sleep. It then descended as a signal for them to encamp.

On this occasion, as in all their future wanderings, Moses addressed a solemn and appropriate prayer to God, when they commenced and when they paused in their march. It is an example which we should imitate in all our journeyings. Let us never commence them without committing ourselves in the exercises of devotion to the guardian providence of God; we should never conclude them without blessing Him who has protected us, and imploring him to remain with us, and give us rest and comfort.

The place at which the Israelites first encamped, is distinguished by two names, *Taberah* and *Kibroth-hattaavah*; both of which were given it as memorials of their guilt and punishment. They had been accustomed to a life of ease during their continuance at Sinai; and now, fatigued by their journey, they display again that discontented spirit which they have so often manifested, and murmur against God.

Before the publication of the law, and the clear annunciation of the divine attributes and will, the Lord had often threatened them; his arm had often appeared raised to punish them; but after it had been suspended over them, and excited their apprehensions, it was graciously removed before they felt the severity of its stroke. After the giving of the law, the conduct of God towards them is different; he punishes their guilt with a severity proportioned to the new light and instruction which they had received, and which they contemned. This is a remark, my brethren, that should inspire us with solemnity: if it be true (and reason concurs with revelation in proving that it is true,) that the punishments of God have a severity proportioned to the light which is resisted, then how inexpressibly dreadful must be the misery of those who close their eyes against the light of the gospel, and perish from a land illuminated by the beams of the Sun of righteousness! Have mercy upon thyself, despiser of gospel light, and draw not down upon thy soul this aggravated condemnation. Among the murmuring Israelites, a supernatural fire, proceeding immediately from the Lord, burnt, and many of the rebellious were consumed.

Those of the guilty who had not yet been smitten, filled with terror, cried unto Moses. They had often experienced the efficacy of his prayers; and though they ceased not to treat him with ingratitude and insult as soon as the divine judgments were removed, yet now that they are in danger of death they entreat him to intercede for them.

Have none but the Israelites ever acted in a similar manner? Are there none of you, my brethren, who can see in their conduct a portrait of your own?

Are there none of you who in health and prosperity treat with scorn and neglect the children of God; but who, when the judgments of God are impending over you, when you are stretched upon the bed of sickness, and anticipating the stroke of death, then entreat their prayers to their Heavenly Father; then acknowledge the blessedness of those who have an interest at the throne of grace; but who, like the Israelites, when your fears are removed, immediately forget all your salutary impressions? Moses intercedes for the people, and those who still survive are spared; but from the number who had been consumed by fire from the Lord, the place is called *Taberah*, "a burning."

Immediately afterwards we behold this people, alike unaffected by mercies and judgments, murmuring again. They had before complained of the fatigue of their journey; they now ungratefully express their disgust of the manna that is afforded them by the special providence of God, and weep for flesh and for the food which they had in Egypt. Their conduct and their language display the highest degree of undutifulness and irreverence towards God. Is it incredible that they should so soon rebel after their past punishment and deliverance? It might appear so to the inhabitant of another world, who had but a faint conception of the depravity and treachery of the human heart, and who had not observed the conduct of men. But it can easily be believed by him who knows himself, and who has seen the sad spectacles of a similar nature that are daily presented among us; who has seen the sick man trembling, praying, vowing, resolving henceforth to live to God and his Redeemer; but forgetting every pious purpose so soon as health begins to re-

flow in his veins; who has heard the solemn engagements of those who have been terrified by alarming providences, but has also witnessed the violation of these engagements so soon as their immediate apprehensions were removed; and has sighed when he perceived that they left no more permanent impression than “the morning-cloud, and the early dew, which vanish away;” that they were only the cries of the affrighted mariner in the storm, no longer recollected when the calm succeeds. Ah! brethren, how many of us must acknowledge that in the Israelites we see an image of what we ourselves have too often been!

The Lord observes the murmuring and rebellion of the people; he declares that their desire shall be granted; that they shall eat that flesh which they have asked for with so unthankful a spirit, and the want of which they have lamented with so many rebellious tears; that they shall partake of it, not merely for a single day, as when a similar miracle was wrought a year before, (Ex. xvi. 12, 13.) but for a whole month. Yet he assures them their desire shall be granted in his righteous displeasure; not to satisfy their lust of food, but to punish it. His declaration was fulfilled: “He rained flesh upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea; and he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled, for he gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust: but while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.” (Ps. lxxviii. 27—31.) From their deaths, the place was termed *Kibroth-hattaavah*, “the graves of lust.”

It is a history that should teach us to bless God that he not only often bestows what we ask, but frequently refuses what we wish. Nothing would more certainly undo us than for the Lord to grant all that we desire. We are here like feeble and short-sighted children, often longing for the things that would tend to our destruction. Recognise then, believer, the mercy of thy Father in what he withholds as well as in what he gives, and rejoice that thy interests are in His hands, whose paternal love is regulated in its operations by unerring wisdom.

In the conduct of Moses during the transactions we have just considered, we see at one time a proof of the imperfection of the virtues of the holiest men; and at another, an affecting evidence of the generosity and disinterestedness of his heart. We are pained, (though not surprised, when we consider his constant trials and the unceasing perverseness of the people,) to observe in the address which he makes to God, expressions that can scarcely be reconciled with that entire submission and resignation which we owe to the Lord. Wearied out with the ingratitude and rebellions of the people, he laments in the anguish of his soul the many hardships of his office, and entreats that God would interpose for his assistance, or instantly terminate a life that was so full of sorrow.

Let us not too severely censure Moses. He who "knoweth whereof we are made," who "is not extreme to mark what is amiss" in his children, who saw the zeal for the divine glory and the love of Israel that was in the heart of Moses even when "he spake unadvisedly with his lips," answered him with mildness; ordered him to select seventy elders and bring them to the tabernacle, where they should be



endued with some portion of the gifts of that same Spirit that had rested on Moses himself when he was appointed the leader of the people; and should thus be qualified to assist him in the government. Moses complied with this order; those who were thus brought to the tabernacle received the Spirit, and prophesied. Two of them, however, Eldad and Medad, were detained in the camp by reasons which are not assigned. They received nevertheless the same gifts as those at the tabernacle, and like them prophesied. Joshua, animated on this occasion by an ill-directed zeal, fearful that the glory of these two new prophets might obscure that of Moses, besought him to restrain them. The answer of Moses displays a spirit that we must love: "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" How different from that proud and selfish temper so often to be found in every class of society, which considers itself injured by the attainments of others; which fears the loss of applause because others are commended; which knows not how to rejoice that useful men are rising around us, for fear they should obscure our reputation. The temper of Moses should be cultivated by all who have regard to their duty or their felicity. It should especially appear in the ministers of the sanctuary, whose hearts must glow with joy, if they have the spirit of their office, to see others rising to carry on with success the work of the Lord.

Having remained more than a month at Kibroth-hattaavah, the Israelites were led by the conducting cloud to *Hazereth*, another place in the wilderness of Paran, but at what distance from the former we know not.

Here Moses had another severe trial from those who, instead of wounding him, should have supported him under his afflictions. Miriam and Aaron regarded with envy and jealousy the superior authority of Moses: and displayed a temper directly opposite to that which their brother had shown towards Eldad and Medad. Miriam, who watched her infant brother when exposed in the frail ark of papyrus on the Nile, and who led the hymn of praise to God on the shores of the Red Sea; and Aaron, whose life was spared at the intercession of Moses, and who by his hands was consecrated to the holy office of high-priest; united in opposition to him whom by every motive they were bound to defend. How often at such views of the frailty even of the pious are we constrained to cry, "Lord, what is man!" and compelled under a recollection that it is only the grace of God that preserves us, to cry out, "Hold up my goings in thy path, that my footsteps slip not."

The seventy elders of whose choice we have just spoken, were appointed by Moses alone. This offended Miriam and Aaron, who had both received the prophetic spirit. Their pride was probably hurt that they had not been consulted, and they cried, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not also spoken by us?" But ashamed to avow the real motive of their opposition, they sought a pretext for their murmuring, and "spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman that he had married." The word rendered Ethiopian, is literally a Cushite; a term including the inhabitants of an extensive district of country, including among other places Arabia.\* The wife of Moses, as you recol-

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\* See Patrick on Gen. x. 6.

lect, was a Midianite. As it was by the advice of her father that the civil judges had been chosen to assist Moses, they may have supposed that it was by her suggestion that he chose the seventy elders without their concurrence; and they probably represented him as improperly influenced by a wife of foreign extraction.

It is comparatively easy to bear reproaches from the enemies of God or from strangers; but the wounds of the heart are deep that are inflicted by the friends of religion, by relatives, and those whom we love. Yet though Moses no doubt severely felt, he replied not; and by his silence he illustrated that meekness which forms so striking a trait of his character. When the honour of God was assailed, his lips were always opened, and with undaunted courage he defended the cause of the Lord against every enemy. But when his own honour was attacked, he was content to leave the vindication of it to Him who hath engaged to all his persecuted children who "commit their way to him and trust in him," that he "will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day." (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6.)

Thus the Lord interposed for Moses. He summoned Miriam and Aaron before the tabernacle. He declared the dignity and superiority of Moses above other prophets; and, as a proof of his displeasure, smote Miriam, who appears to have been the chief offender, with the leprosy. Aaron trembled, and acknowledged his guilt; and supplicated for himself and his sister the prayers of him whom they had reproached. The forgiving spirit of Moses is again displayed. There are some who, while they abstain from acts of revenge against their enemies, yet ap-

pear to be pleased that God should avenge them. But Moses has entirely forgiven, and cries to the Lord, "Heal her now, O Lord, I beseech thee!" Her offence is pardoned; yet she is not immediately admitted into the camp. The Lord declares, that an expression of an earthly parent's indignation for her provocation of him, would cause her for some time to be removed from his presence; and that the punishment of one who had obliged her heavenly Father to manifest his displeasure, should be severer. She is therefore for seven days excluded from the camp and the tabernacle of God.

Can the slanderer, the reviler of his brother, be unaffected by this history? The Lord has heard you; and, though you may escape punishment in this life, yet he does not hold you guiltless. "Were similar punishments instantly to follow the vices of the tongue, as in the case of Miriam, I shudder to think how many a fair face, now lovely to the sight, must, by to-morrow morning, stand in need of a veil; but not for the same reason that the face of Moses did on his descending from the mount, to temper its lustre, but to shroud its loathsomeness and deformity."

On the return of Miriam to the camp, the cloud rose, and conducted the Israelites to Rithmah, (Numb. xxxiii. 18.) which is probably the same as *Kadesh-barnea*, whence their next removal would have been to the promised land, had not their unbelief prevented it. Thus arrived at the borders of Canaan, the Lord commanded Moses to exhort the people to go up courageously, and possess it;—but, full of apprehension, they desired that they might first send out some persons to spy out the land. On this request, Moses consulted the Lord, who gave permission thus to act; although their request indi-

eated a distrust of the divine promise, and a temper far different from that of their great ancestor Abraham, who, at the command of God, went forward regardless of all difficulties, "not knowing whither he went," but assured that "He was faithful who had promised." Twelve rulers, men of authority and influence, were selected, one from each tribe. They executed the commission given to them. On their return, they gave a correct account of the fertility of the land, but at the same time represented the inhabitants as so numerous and warlike, that the Israelites could not hope to conquer it. Caleb and Joshua alone, relying upon that almighty arm which had so often been exerted in behalf of Israel, and animated by faith with a holy courage, urge the people to advance, and cry, "Let us go up and possess it: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not." But the desponding multitude, instead of lifting up their ensigns and marching to Canaan, utter seditious cries, and pour forth pusillanimous tears. They lamented their departure from Egypt, and resolved to choose a new leader and return thither. This was not merely a rejection of Moses, but of God. The holy man, terrified at their guilt, in vain threw himself on his face before them, entreating them to renounce their criminal designs, and supplicating God in their behalf. In vain did Caleb and Joshua, with the most undaunted firmness, expostulate with them. Growing more violent, the frantick multitude were about to recompense the affection of their best friends, the wisdom of their advisers, by stoning them to death.

The Lord, in this season of extremity, interposes. He manifests himself in terrible glory, and inspires the rebels with awe. He declares them unworthy

of pardon. He offers in their stead, to fulfil in Moses the promises made to the patriarchs, and to make of him a mighty nation.

Moses has recourse to the buckler with which he has so often warded off the strokes of divine displeasure, fervent and humble prayer. Free from ambition or revenge, he desires not his own advancement; he pleads against the destruction of the people. He draws arguments from the divine glory and the divine mercy. With inexpressible beauty and energy he draws an argument from the divine power, which is more shown in restraining the merited indignation of the Eternal, in holding in his own omnipotence, than in creating worlds. He cries not, "Let the mercy, the grace, the compassion;" but, "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 sin."

There are times when, to use the expression of the prophet, (Jer. xv. 1.) "Though Moses and Samuel stood before God," to ask of him the preservation of a nation that has filled up the measure of its iniquity, they would ask in vain. Such, in a degree, was the situation of this ungrateful people. But though the Lord would not pardon them, he was not inflexible to the prayer of Moses. Instead of cutting off the whole nation by a sudden destruction, the ten faithless spies alone were thus exterminated. He however declared, that none of the men above twenty, belonging to the tribes that had been numbered, should enter into Canaan, except Caleb and Joshua; and that even those who should finally possess the land, should not enter till after forty years wandering in the wilderness. As we prosecute their

history, we shall see the accomplishment of this denunciation. Let me just remark in passing, that in this history our translators, who in general are so excellent, have rendered a sentence in a manner inconsistent with almost all other versions, with the meaning of the original word, (תְּנוּאָתִי,) and with the divine attributes. "Ye shall know my breach of promise." It should have been rendered, "Ye shall know or experience my indignation." The promise made to Abraham, that his descendants should possess the land of Canaan, was accomplished; and there was no breach of any promise made to this generation since the Lord had declared to them, that if they kept his statutes and commandments, then they should enter into Canaan. But they had a thousand times violated their engagements, and forfeited all the blessings of the covenant.

Moses announced to the people the declarations of God, and his orders to turn back into the wilderness which led to the Red Sea. They mourned at this news, but did not beseech him to pray for them, knowing, from the interposition of the oath of God, that the decree was irrevocable. Yet, rising early in the morning, they profess their readiness to follow that advice of Caleb which they had rejected; they profess to rely upon the aid of God; and hope that the tears which they have shed have obtained their pardon. In vain does Moses admonish them, and point to the cloud, which is stationary. As presumptuous now as they were before timid, they advance, except Moses and the Levites, who remain with the ark. The Amalekites and Canaanites discomfit them, and pursue them to a place, which the slaughter of the Israelites now, and the desolation after-

wards of the cities of king Arad, was called *Hormah*, that is, *destruction*.

The great inferences that we should draw from this melancholy history, are pointed out to us by Paul, who more than once refers to it, and declares, that "all these things happened unto them for examples, and are written for our admonition:" that they warn us "not to lust after evil things, as they also lusted; not to tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted; not to murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed." (1 Cor. x. 6. 9, 10, 11.) Holding up to us this awful example, he cries, "They could not enter in because of unbelief. Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Harden not your hearts as in the provocation and the day of temptation in the wilderness." Let us, on the contrary, have, not a desponding, but a holy, reverential, circumspect, and animating "fear, lest a promise being made us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." (Heb. iii. 8. 12. 19. iv. 1.)

Yes, we are called to enter into "a better country, that is, a heavenly." There are, it is true, many and powerful enemies in our path to it: but let us only believe in the promises of God, and obey his precepts, and we can overcome them. Weak in ourselves, the shield of Omnipotence shall be thrown before us, and the power of the Most High offered for our assistance. Resting upon the unshaken truth and promises of the faithful and covenant-keeping God, we may safely pass through a sea and a wilderness, through perils and temptations, through fiery serpents and sons of Anak. Let us only, like Caleb, secure "another Spirit," the Spirit of God, and



“ follow the Lord fully ;” and then we shall enjoy the heavenly Canaan, while “ the fearful and unbelieving shall be without.”

And suppose not, that after rebelling against God during your lives, you may secure heaven by a vigorous effort at your last moments. Tremble, lest the God whom you have abandoned, should then abandon you ; should leave you to sink under the assaults of your enemies ; and to be driven to that place which, with dreadful emphasis, may be termed *Destruction!*

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## SERMON XXVI.



LIFE OF MOSES.

No. X.



NUMBERS xvi. xvii. xx. xxi. 1—10. DEUTERONOMY  
xxxiii. xxxiv.

SOME of the most affecting parts of the scripture were written when the inspired penmen were either themselves suffering affliction, or contemplating the judgments of God upon others. The Psalms composed by David, under the pressure of sorrow, are peculiarly touching, and full of devotional feeling ;

and the ninetieth Psalm, which was written by Moses. in consequence of the events we considered in our last lecture, is calculated deeply to affect the heart. The Israelites, for their rebellion, were condemned to die in the wilderness. Moses directs his prayer to Him who even in the desert can be the dwelling-place of his people, and supplicates him that the Israelites may seriously lay to heart the punishment that was inflicted on them, and wisely number their days.

But alas! notwithstanding the prayers of Moses, and the judgments of God, they soon rush to new crimes. *Korah*, of the tribe of Levi, and *Dathan* and *Abiram*, of the tribe of Reuben, were at the head of a rebellion, which became so extensive as to include two hundred and fifty of the "princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown." They opposed the civil authority of Moses. Could they forget with what reluctance he had assumed it; with what difficulties and distresses it had been attended; how often he had wished to relinquish it; by what splendid miracles his divine commission had been confirmed? But they principally raged because the priesthood was confined to Aaron and his family; as though this were his own act, and not the appointment of God. Perverting the divine promises and declarations, that Israel should be holy, and a nation of priests, they endeavoured to support their rebellion by so interpreting these declarations as though they authorized all, whether regularly called or not, to exercise all ecclesiastical functions. Moses prayed for them, expostulated and reasoned with them; warned them that they were rebelling, not against him and his brother, but against the Lord, and referred the matter to the immediate decision of

God. On the next day, while the two hundred and fifty stood with their censers before the door of the tabernacle, performing the offices of that priesthood, to which they had not been called, fire from the Lord consumed them. Among them probably Korah perished. Moses and Aaron, who were with them, remained unhurt. The doom of the other rebellious leaders was no less dreadful. The opening earth swallowed up Dathan and Abiram, with their families and possessions, and many of the connexions of Korah, though his sons yielded to the exhortations of Moses, and escaped the destruction in which their parent was enveloped. This we are taught in Numbers xxvi. 11. We have also the genealogy of these descendants of Korah in 1 Chronicles, vi. 22. 37. They are afterwards mentioned among those who presided over the music of the temple; (2 Chron. xx. 19.) and we find their names in the title of several of the Psalms. (Psalms, xlii. xlv. xlvi. xlvii. xlviii. xlix. lxxxiii. lxxxv. lxxxvii. lxxxviii.)

The lot of Moses and Aaron, standing safe and unhurt in the midst of the fire which consumed the rebellious, was happy. But let us remember, my brethren, that there is another great assembly of which we must constitute a part, in which it will be still more desirable to have such a proof of the divine acceptance, such an exemption from the woes that shall light on rebels against God. At that great day, when the Lord will show "who are his and who are holy, and will cause them to come near unto him," when the devouring fire that goes before him, shall consume the earth, and melt down the heavens; when the flames that never shall be quenched, shall seize upon his enemies; then happy indeed shall be those who shall be openly accepted and acknowledged by him: who, uninjured by the awful conflagration, shall

rise to that world where they shall be kings and priests unto our God for ever.

The sons of Korah give an instructive lesson to the children of unholy parents. We pity such children; we tremble at their situation; for there is more probability, that like the offspring of Dathan and Abiram, they will perish with their parents, than that, like the sons of Korah, they should escape destruction. Yet consent not to be undone for ever, by imitating those who ought to set before you a holier example. If a thoughtless father, if a careless mother, will have no mercy on their own souls, oh! do not you consent to follow them to eternal wo. Imitate the example of good Hezekiah, the son of the wicked Ahaz. Imitate the example of these children of Korah; and happier than they, you may, perhaps, by your piety, be the means of softening the hearts of your parents; be the instruments of plucking them from eternal anguish.

Who would not have supposed that the disposition to rebellion would for ever have been destroyed among the Israelites, by these terrible judgments? On the very next day, when the shrieks of the perishing had scarcely ceased, when the yawning earth had scarcely closed, those who had escaped these judgments, charge Moses and Aaron with the death of those who had been destroyed. At such an instance of obduracy and guilt, the symbol of the divine presence again appears, and is the presage of a new and terrible chastisement. Moses and Aaron prayed for their enemies, for those who were reproaching them as murderers. But "wrath had gone out from the Lord," a desolating plague had commenced. Aaron, fearless of danger, took his censer with incense, which he lighted from the altar

of burnt-offerings, and ran and stood between the dead and the living. At this intercession the plague was stayed, but not till fourteen thousand seven hundred had expired.

If such was the efficacy of the intercession of Aaron, what may not believers expect from the intercession of Him, of whom Aaron was but a type; of Him who prayed for his enemies; who, to deliver us from eternal death, not only offered his supplications, but was stricken by the wrath of God, which he bore as our surety, while he stood between the dead and the living, that all who believe in him should not perish; who appeared to the beloved disciple, as the "angel" of the everlasting covenant, "standing at the altar, having a golden censer, while much incense was given to him, and the smoke of the incense ascended up before God, out of his hand;" (Revelations viii. 3, 4.) who, in the language of another apostle, "is able to save unto the uttermost, those who come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The Lord having thus punished this rebellion, vouchsafed to give, during the continuance of the Israelitish government, a perpetual monument of the prerogatives granted to Aaron and his descendants. From the princes of each of the twelve tribes (that of Joseph being reckoned as two, those of Ephraim and Manasseh,) Moses received a rod, probably the sceptre or staff of authority. Upon each of these he wrote the name of the tribe to which it belonged. To these he added the rod of the tribe of Levi, on which, by divine command, he wrote the name of Aaron, and then deposited them all in the tabernacle before God. On the morrow there were found on the rod of Aaron, buds, blossoms, and ripe fruits

of almonds at the same time. By this miracle the people were convinced, and never again doubted the divine institution of the Aaronical priesthood. Fearing, however, that this new miracle was the forerunner of a new judgment, they were filled with terror; and rushing to an opposite extreme, they who lately contended that all might exercise the functions of the priesthood, now supposed that none could draw near the tabernacle without danger of death. The rod of Aaron was laid up before the Lord, and continued flourishing in the sanctuary to future generations.

It is a beautiful emblem of the "rod of God's strength," borne by his faithful servants, of the effects of the ministry under the gospel, as well as under the law. We see it producing those buds which inspire hope in the serious impressions made upon our hearers, putting forth blossoms, fragrant and promising, in the youthful believer, and bearing the fully ripe fruit in the matured piety of those who, having long been benefited by the culture of God upon earth, are waiting to be transplanted to the paradise on high. These precious productions shall remain before God, in his sanctuary, when the ministers of the gospel, like the great high priest under the law, shall descend to the tomb.

All the events we have hitherto considered, happened in the first two years after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. Of the occurrences during the thirty-seven succeeding years we are ignorant. We are merely informed, in Numbers xxxiii. 18—36, that the people were led back, by the cloud, from Kadesh to Ezion-geber, on the Red Sea, and the names of eighteen of their encampments are there given. In the first month of the fortieth year, we

find them conducted back to Kadesh. During the preceding years, the threatening of God, that those who were above twenty years of age at the departure from Egypt, should perish in the wilderness, was gradually executed. The greater part of them had been removed by various diseases; and the very few old persons who remained, resembled some aged trees, standing almost alone, stripped of their honours, and ready to yield to the first storm.

Among these was Miriam, the sister of Moses; she had attained the age of nearly one hundred and thirty, when she sunk into the grave. Moses, doubtless, was pained at her dissolution. It is always distressing to have the ties which connect us with a friend snapped asunder by death; it is doubly distressing when this is an old friend, with whom we have experienced much adversity, and a relative so near as a sister.

It is possible that the grief which Moses felt on this occasion was excessive, and led him in the next event of his life to act in a manner inconsistent with that faith and submission which he had so often displayed. The water that had hitherto followed the Israelites from the rock at Rephidim now ceased to flow. This new generation imitated the spirit of their fathers, and uttered the language of rebellion. They approached Moses, who was already grieved at the death of his sister, and instead of condoling with him, and comforting him, poured forth their reproaches on him. "They provoked his spirit," says the Psalmist, (cvi. 33.) "so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." With his anger and indignation was mingled a secret unbelief, so that when God ordered him to take his rod and speak to the rock, he entertained some doubt whether God would grant the

people the favour which he had done before ; or perhaps distrusted God's promise that the people should enter into Canaan at the end of forty years, imagining that if water was again brought out of the rock, it must follow them as long as the other had done. The Lord, who read the heart of Moses and of Aaron, pronounced sentence upon them for their conduct on this occasion, that they should not enter into the promised land, but should die in the wilderness.

It is a history that should excite the circumspection and care of those who enjoy high spiritual privileges, or occupy distinguished stations, in the church. If such persons sin, their temporal punishment is generally severer than that of those who "have their portion in this life." To prevent the abuse of covenant mercy, to show the holiness of the divine nature and law, to beget watchfulness in the pious, and as a reproof and warning to the impenitent, God visits his children with peculiar outward severity for their sins, and causes "judgment to begin at his own house." His rule of proceeding towards them is laid down in his word : "Thou art a God that forgivest them, though thou takest vengeance of their inventions." (Ps. xcix. 8.) His conduct to the objects of his special love is such as to excite an awful sense of his holiness in all their walk before him ; and the outward provocations or internal offences of his choicest saints shall be followed by the tokens of his fatherly displeasure. The conduct of Moses in any other individual would not have appeared so highly blameable. For offences far greater, committed by the people, he had often, by his prayers, obtained pardon ; but now, the ardent supplication for a revocation of the sentence on himself, which is recorded Deut. iii. 23. &c. is



unavailing. Many of the Israelites, who had often rebelled, enter with songs of triumph into the promised land. Moses is excluded from it for a single act of unbelief. This history, then, surely presents a solemn warning to all the pious. But it confines not its instructions to them. It admonishes all of the evil of those sins which we are too much accustomed to regard as venial. It teaches us that our God searches the heart; that his law condemns the unholy thought, the improper temper, the unadvised word. It should humble us, by causing us to reflect how often we should have been cut off, had the Lord dealt with us with the same strictness as he here did with his servant Moses.

The sentence of God, so far as it related to Aaron, was executed at their next encampment. Having in vain asked permission from those descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Kadesh, peaceably to pass through their country, the Israelites, by another course, went to Mount Hor. There Moses is commanded to announce to Aaron that the time of his dissolution has arrived. Aaron, who had long seen the people to whom he ministered falling around him, immediately obeys the summons without repining. He has attained the age of one hundred and twenty-three years; has survived almost all the friends of his youth; and though for his sin he cannot enter into the earthly Canaan, yet assured of his pardon, he looks forward with confidence to the heavenly Canaan, that "better country," into which the patriarchs have preceded him. He dresses himself in the rich pontifical garments which he wore when he entered into the most holy place; thus showing that he was about to enter into the immediate presence of that God who dwelt only in a

symbolical manner in the tabernacle. He ascends the mount in the sight of the people, on whom he doubtless pronounced the sacerdotal benediction with all the warmth of his soul. Arrived at a convenient height, his brother despoils him of the pontifical garments, which he places upon Eleazar, thus investing him with the office of his dying father. He thus shows the imperfection of a priesthood in which those who exercise it have need of successors; he shows the necessity of a high priest, who, "because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; and is therefore able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Having thus transferred the insignia of his office to his son, he "is gathered to his fathers," and interred upon the mountain.

Happy he who can thus, with faith and resignation, lie down in the tomb, and expire in the arms of tender relatives and friends, supported by the endearments of affection, and the hopes of immortality! Happy the father who thus, in departing from earth, can fix his closing eyes upon a pious son, in whom he will still survive! Happy the believer, who, in his last hours, can look to that great "High Priest of our profession," whom Aaron prefigured; to that Jesus who, though "he was dead, is alive again, and liveth for evermore:" and who says to all his children, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Moses was doubtless affected by this death of one to whom he was so nearly related; with whom he had passed through such wonderful events; who died for that offence in which he had participated; and whose departure from earth was a signal that his own dissolution was nigh. "The whole congre-

gation also mourned for Aaron thirty days." Their grief was increased by remembering their rebellions, their calumnies and reproaches on the departed servant of God. Revengeful, censorious man, the object of thy malignity and reproaches will soon be in the grave; and when thou beholdest his cold corpse, or standest by his tomb, the recollection of thy reproaches and cruelty shall, if thou art not utterly destitute of feeling, pierce thee to the soul!

Let the recollection that our friends must die, cause us to sanctify the bonds of blood and of affection, and form our attachments so that they may be renewed beyond the grave. Let the recollection that our enemies must die, save us from those revilings, censures, hatreds, of which we shall repent when they are no more.

The Israelites, prosecuting their journey, devoted to destruction the cities of king Arad, who had treacherously attacked them, and then encamped at Zalmonah. Here they again murmured against God and Moses. The divine judgments silenced these murmurs. Fiery serpents (so called either from their colour or the inflammation caused by their bite) were sent among them, and many of the people died. The survivors, convinced of their guilt, and alarmed at their danger, have recourse to the charity of that same Moses against whom they had just rebelled. He intercedes for them, and obtains deliverance. At the command of God he places upon a pole, [𐤀𐤍] standard, or ensign, a serpent of brass, to which every one that was bitten might look, assured, by beholding it, to be healed. This incident is rendered deeply interesting to us from the language of our Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus: (John iii. 14, 15.) "As Moses lifted up the brazen

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." The comparison is not between the Saviour and the serpent, but between his crucifixion and its elevation; between the manner in which we are healed from the malady of sin, and that in which the Israelites were cured of the venom of the serpents.

Sin, more poisonous and deadly to the soul than the venom of the serpent is to the body, has diffused its influence through the race of man. We have no ability to heal ourselves. There is no mode of deliverance, except through him who said, "And I, if I be lifted up upon the cross, will draw all men unto me;" through him who was thus elevated "by the determinate counsel of God;" who was subjected to death by that law of which Moses was the minister; who was suspended between heaven and earth, that whosoever beheld him by faith might live for ever. From that station he cries, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." The Israelite, however deadly were his wounds, by obeying the divine command, was restored to health: the perishing sinner, however dangerous his situation, by raising his eyes to the Saviour on the cross, and trusting in him, shall be rescued from everlasting death. The Israelite who neglected the divine command, and turned his back upon the means of deliverance appointed by God, or who declined to look at it from a sense of his own unworthiness, died without resource. The sinner who contemns the Saviour, or from unbelieving fears will not approach him, is for ever undone.

Since then in the gospel "Jesus Christ is set forth visibly crucified before your eyes," look to him and live. He invites you all: however deeply infected

with the venom of sin; however near the gates of death; yet raise a believing view to him, and you may shout, "O, Satan! where is thy victory? O, Death! where is thy sting?"

It was revealed to Moses, when he had attained the age of a hundred and twenty, that he must die for the offence at Meribah. Having arrived at the borders of Canaan, having suffered so much in conducting the Israelites to it, nothing was more natural than that he should desire to pass over into it before his departure from earth; for this he earnestly prays unto God: "I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." (Deut. iii. 23, 24, 25.) But when his request was denied, he acquiesced without murmuring; and knowing that in a month he is to be removed from earth, employs this time in a manner that beautifully harmonizes with his holy and exemplary life.

His thoughts are first fixed upon Israel, the church of God; and he prays that a fit successor to himself may be appointed, so that the cause of God may not suffer by his removal: "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them; and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd." (Numb. xxvii. 16, 17.) And such will ever be the emotions of the dying saint, and especially of the faithful pastor when about to terminate his labours upon earth. He will still be solicitous for the welfare of the church below; and in the midst of his anticipations of his own glory, he will pour

out his prayers to raise up others to conduct his redeemed into the heavenly Canaan.

In answer to the prayer of Moses, Joshua was appointed. Moses did not, however, because he was soon to be dismissed from earth, desist from his exertions to benefit Israel. He was anxious to fill up the short time that remained to him in doing good. He delivered all those affecting and importunate exhortations contained in Deuteronomy; he recapitulates to the generation the conduct of God to himself and their fathers; he rehearses the commandments of God, and persuasively urges them to obedience by every pathetic and solemn motive; and causes the people to renew their covenant with the Lord.

Aged Christians, behold your model: desist not from your labours till your strength utterly fail. In the Christian warfare, the trembling hands of old age can still wield the sword of the Spirit: heaven only is the place of rest.

Especially learn from the conduct of Moses to retrace to the young the dealings of God with you during your pilgrimage; and if among these youth there are those whose parents were your former companions, tenderly exhort and warn them.

The very day on which he had terminated his exhortations, he was commanded to ascend to Pizgah, the highest point of Nebo. Notwithstanding his advanced age, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated;" but the period is arrived when he must lay down his earthly tabernacle. He takes an affecting farewell of the people; he passes through the different tribes, and pronounces a solemn benediction upon each. We attempt not to describe the emotions of the Israelites; they were

like those of the elders of Ephesus, "who fell upon the neck of Paul, and wept, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more."

Moses leaves us his dying testimony, as his last recorded words, a declaration of the excellency of the God of Israel, and of the happiness of his people: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun. Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!"

In this joyful triumphant spirit, he ascends the hill. He is permitted to behold the promised inheritance—and, gently closing his eyes on the land of promise, soars to the heavenly Canaan.

While in other instances "the dead bury their dead," Moses was interred by the Lord, who used the ministry of angels. The place was concealed, lest the Israelites should worship at his sepulchre, and make his body an object of adoration. Happy we, if, with the redeemed, we shall be permitted to "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

## SERMON XXVII.



## LIFE OF BALAAM.



## NUMBERS xxii. xxiii. xxiv.

WE have attended the Israelites in their wanderings through the wilderness, and sought instruction from considering the conduct of Divine Providence towards them. At last their journeyings are almost terminated: they are encamped opposite the city of Jericho, on the plains of Moab, near the banks of Jordan. While they are here waiting for the miraculous signal to pass into the promised land, a person is introduced in their history, whose life is full of fearful interest, and presents us with events painful but instructive. This person is *Balaam*, in whom were united qualities the most opposite.

He dwelt at Pethor, in Mesopotamia, the country whence Abraham came, and where Jacob had so long dwelt. Although his nation was plunged in idolatry, he knew and acknowledged the true God, and was endued with the prophetic spirit. This is evident from the whole of his history. He calls the Lord his God; he sacrifices to Jehovah; he seeks answers from him; he foretells future events; and is termed by inspired men a prophet.



Yet with his worship were mingled superstitious observances. He went "to seek after enchantments," and pretended to the arts of divination. To an enlightened understanding was united a deeply corrupted heart; and notwithstanding he possessed the gift of prophesy, he was destitute of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit. Nor is his a solitary case of a man who received miraculous gifts while he remained unholy. Saul was once among the prophets. Judas, who was also the victim of covetousness, preached the Gospel and wrought miracles, as well as the other disciples of the Saviour. And our Lord expressly declares, that at the last great day, he will reject many as "workers of iniquity," who have prophesied, cast out devils, and done many wonderful things in his name.

Yet notwithstanding the impiety of Balaam, there were times when he formed the most holy resolutions, and expressed pious desires; when, from a fear of God, and by divine restraints, he was kept from many outward acts of disobedience; when he spoke the language of piety, and pronounced a blessing upon Israel.

Such is the man whose history we are to review in the ensuing lecture.

Balak, the king of Moab, was alarmed at the approach of the Israelites. He had heard of the splendid victories they had lately obtained over the cities of Arad, the armies of the Amorites, and the troops of Bashan. They had no design to attack the Moabites; but Balak, without waiting to ascertain whether their intent was pacific, resolved to oppose them. It was customary with the ancient nations, before they actually engaged in war, to devote their enemies to destruction in using religious rites and

solemn imprecations. Such was the reputation of Balaam, that it was supposed among the neighbouring nations, that his curses or benedictions were always efficacious. The kings of Moab and of Midian entertaining this belief, sent messengers to him, inviting him to come and pronounce, with the usual ceremonies, a blessing upon their arms, and a curse upon the children of Israel. These messengers bore with them presents, and promised rewards that were calculated to secure the compliance of a covetous man. Balaam detained them till he had consulted the Lord. We know not in what manner he intended to inquire what was the divine will. God, however, revealed himself to him; as for the accomplishment of his purposes he has often done even to the wicked, to Pharaohs and to Nebuchadnezzars; and explicitly forbade him to go with these messengers, or to pronounce a curse upon a people that was blessed by Jehovah. Balaam was obedient to the order, and refused to go. Had his history here closed, we should have supposed him a holy man, seeking to know and desirous to obey the will of God. It is not by single acts, but by the general disposition and habitual conduct that the character is decided. For a short time an Ahab may humble himself, a Saul act as a penitent, and a Balaam appear to possess tenderness and delicacy of conscience.

A new application is made to him. Balak more strongly tempts both his pride and avarice, by sending ambassadors in greater number and of higher rank, who are authorized to offer him preferment and wealth equal to his highest wishes. Nothing can be more heroic or disinterested than the language with which the prophet addresses these messengers: "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 more or less." But does his conduct correspond with this firm and pious language? Knowing what is his duty, does he immediately dismiss the ambassadors, and reject their offer? No; "his heart goes after his covetousness." He is anxious to obtain the rewards of iniquity, though he dare not explicitly disobey the plain command of God. He therefore asks them to stay, declaring that he will again consult the Lord. He hopes that he may find some pretence whereby to satisfy his conscience; some plea to do what he knows to be wrong. There is little difficulty in predicting what will be the result of this conduct. He that deliberates when tempted, is already half undone. He that suffers himself to gaze with desire upon the forbidden fruit, will soon pluck and eat.

The Lord in his providence permits many things which he does not approve. He manifests his displeasure against sinful courses; but if we obstinately persist in them, he throws no invincible obstructions in our way; he imposes no insuperable restraints upon us. He read the heart of Balaam; he saw that he was wishing for a license to gratify his covetous temper. He therefore, in righteous displeasure, permitted him to go, but at the same time ordered him to act and speak according to the directions which he should receive.

My brethren, nothing can be more awful than the situation of him who is given up to follow "the devices and desires of his own heart;" to whom God, in punishment for his obstinacy, says, "He is joined to his idols; let him alone." Yet how many, instead of weeping and shuddering, felicitate themselves, when by perseverance in guilt they have arrived at

this dreadful state; when, after longing to indulge a sinful temper without disturbance, the obstructions that had been in their path are removed. Ah! they foolishly, they madly felicitate themselves on that which is the token of divine displeasure, the presage of eternal despair.

Balaam in haste commenced his journey. From the subsequent history, it is evident that he went with the resolution to curse the Israelites, whether the Lord gave him permission or not, and thus to obtain the promised rewards. God, who beheld this impious resolution and covetous temper, manifested his displeasure. "The angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against" Balaam. After vainly endeavouring to proceed, "he was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass, with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet." (2 Pet. ii. 16.) It was a miracle calculated to show him the folly of the resolution, and the vanity of his hopes, to curse the Israelites, contrary to the command of God; since he saw in it a proof "that the mouth and tongue are under God's direction; and that the same divine power which caused the dumb ass to speak, contrary to its nature, could make him, in like manner, utter blessings contrary to his inclination."\* There was also, in this miracle, that pointed opposition to prevalent idolatry and superstition with which we were struck in reviewing the plagues of Egypt. The chief deity of Moab and Midian was Baal-Peor, to whom the ass was consecrated, and of whom it was esteemed the sacred representative. Balak and his people, who were accustomed to this worship, send for Balaam to curse those whom the Lord had taken under his pro-

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\* Bishop Newton.

tection. In what way could the divine power better be manifested, the vanity of such imprecations and the folly of their idolatry be shown, than by forcing the ass, the sacred representative of the deity of Balak, to rebuke the man whom he had employed to injure the Israelites? Viewed in this manner, we see a peculiar fitness and propriety in this miracle, and behold in it a proof of the wisdom, as well as of the power of God.\*

Still Balaam was resolved to pursue his journey, and attain preferment and riches. But "the Lord opened his eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand." Struck with terror, he fell to the ground, acknowledged the criminality of his intention, cried "I have sinned," and offered to return, if the Lord required it. He probably, while under the influence of fear, renounced his criminal design, and resolved (alas! how soon were these resolutions forgotten,) henceforth to do nothing but by the order of God. He is therefore permitted to pursue his journey; but at the same time the angel admonishes him, by the terrors of the flaming sword which he holds before him, to utter nothing except what the Lord should inspire.

Ah! how many have here imitated Balaam. In seasons of affliction, under awful providences, they have cried, "We have sinned." But these impressions have been transitory; have vanished with the objects that excited them. They have returned again to sin; they have, by their guilt, driven away the angel that so often checked them; till at last they

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\* See Bryant's Observ.

felt, not his salutary admonitions, but the stroke of the angel of death and of destruction.

Balak advanced to the borders of Moab to meet the prophet, who perhaps still preserving his good resolutions, addressed the king in the language of piety. The king having offered sacrifices in his principal city, on the ensuing day conducted Balaam to one of those high places devoted to worship, from which he might see the whole camp of Israel. While the sacrifices smoked upon seven altars, God revealed himself to Balaam, who faithfully uttered the oracles which he was charged to announce. Instead of cursing, he blessed the Israelites, and prayed that he himself might "die the death of the righteous, and that his last end might be like his."

Did Balaam then, convinced that Israel was blessed by God, abstain from any further attempts to imprecate curses? On the contrary, he sought by enchantments, by repeating his sacrifices, by changing the place from which he viewed Israel, to gratify Balak, and obtain "the wages of unrighteousness." Yet his efforts were unavailing. He was constrained by the power of God, constantly to pronounce blessings upon the Israelites, and to predict their future glory. The anger of Balak was excited; and, smiting his hands, he drove Balaam from his presence, crying, "I called thee to curse mine enemies; and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place. I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo! the Lord hath kept thee back from honour." Though pained at the disappointment of all his hopes of wealth and honour, he was compelled still to celebrate the happiness of Israel; to declare the future situation of Moab and the adjoining countries;

and even to predict that "bright and morning star" which, "through the tender mercy of our God," hath risen upon the world.

But Balaam, before his departure from Balak, showed the depravity of his heart in a manner far more striking than if he had poured the bitterest curses upon Israel. By his detestable advice the Israelites were ensnared, and allured into impurity and idolatry. The consequences were most awful: God punished their guilt by a destructive pestilence; and twenty-four thousand were victims of the impious plot of Balaam.

At the command of God, the Israelites made war upon the nation that had seduced them. The Midianites were utterly destroyed; and Balaam, who had remained with these enemies of God and goodness, instead of "dying the death of the righteous," perished with them. His body lay exposed on the field of slaughter, a monument of the divine vengeance, and his soul went to its "own place."

Having thus rapidly reviewed the life of Balaam, let us consider some of the important lessons we are taught by it.

I. It shows us *the danger and the guilt of covetousness*. This was the passion that led Balaam to those crimes which cause his name to be uttered with reproach in this world, which have conducted him to eternal misery. And is he the only person recorded in history, who has been the slave of this vice? Alas! it prevails in every age and in every nation. Its victims descend in crowds from earth, to join the unholy prophet in the regions of despair! Now, as in the days of Peter, there are many "who forsake the right way and go astray, following the way of

Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

We are permitted to seek and possess riches. Abraham, Job, Barnabas, and many others, whose souls were full of love to God, were surrounded by temporal enjoyments. But they obtained their riches innocently; they employed their wealth in works of charity, their hearts were not supremely fixed upon it, and they “said not to the gold, thou art our trust, and to the fine gold, thou art our confidence.” How different from those covetous men whose great object is to increase their treasures; who give them their supreme affection; and who sacrifice to them honour, justice, charity, and the love of God.

There is no vice against which we are more frequently warned in the scriptures. By the prophets, the apostles, and the Saviour himself; in every possible form, by striking parables and direct assertions, we are taught that an inordinate love of riches is inconsistent with the Christian character; and that the covetous man cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Yet such is the awful deceitfulness of this vice, it insinuates itself under so many plausible forms, it so clothes itself in the garb of œconomy, prudence, foresight, that those who are the slaves of it hear unconcerned the threatenings of God against it, and know not their own character even when the world points at them with contempt and indignation. Nay, so deeply are they deceived, that they frequently act as did those Jews in the time of Ezekiel: “They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” (Ez. xxxiii. 31.) Thus outward-



ly attentive to the ordinances of religion, they hope for heaven while they are under the curse.

Guard then against a vice thus deceptive; especially since, unlike many other passions, it grows with your years, and becomes more inveterate as we advance in age. If you yield your heart to it, you know not to what crimes you may be led. Leaving no room in the soul for God and for religion, it will gradually call in to its aid the arts of oppression or of guile, till at last it forms perfect Balaams, or complete Judases, capable of any infamy or crime, if thereby riches may be amassed or retained.

Suppose not for a moment that he who is covetous can be a child of God. "No covetous man who is an idolater," says the apostle, "hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Eph. v. 5.) Yes! it is idolatry; Mammon is his end, his life, his confidence, his happiness, his god; his heart the altar where he is adored; his affections the offerings which he presents; the ardour with which he pursues riches the incense which he burns; and his conscience, his religion, his salvation, the victims which he immolates. These were the dreadful sacrifices made by Balaam: flee from the crime which led to them.

2. The history of Balaam teaches us that in an unregenerate and unholy man there may be an internal conflict, in many respects resembling the combat between "the flesh and the spirit" in the soul of the believer.

In the child of God there are two principles diametrically opposite to each other, which are constantly struggling together. They are termed in the scriptures, the *flesh* and the *spirit*: the flesh is that principle of corruption with which we are all born.

which leads us into sin, and which is not so entirely mortified and extinguished in the believer but that it sometimes endeavours to push him into sin and recover its supremacy. The *spirit* is that new principle which is implanted in all the regenerate; which destroys the dominion, though not the existence of sin in their hearts; and which is the source of all holy desires, of all good thoughts, of all pious actions. These two principles, (which are also distinguished in scripture by the appellations of the “old and new man, the law of the members and the law of the mind,”) are directly contrary in their nature, their tendencies, and their actings; and from this contrariety all those inward combats result, which are so frequently described in the scriptures, and which the most pious Christians sometimes experience here below. Though the unregenerate are strangers to this struggle between the flesh and the spirit, since they are not partakers of the Spirit in his sanctifying influences, yet they experience something which at first view resembles it. Even the impious Balaam, without the least true love for holiness, has strong internal struggles whether to obey his passions which make him desire the wages of unrighteousness, or to comply with the dictates of an enlightened conscience, which teach him the danger of disobeying God. There are many impenitent men who, because they cannot sin without this inward conflict, suppose they are the children of God. But in every essential respect this differs from the internal combat of the believer. It differs in its *motives* and *principles*. Balaam, and the unregenerate, struggle against sin merely from a dread of the vengeance of the Almighty, and from their hatred of future misery. But the believer would still resolutely and earnestly fight

against sin from a principle of love to God, even if all anticipations of hell, all fear of wrath, if all workings of the spirit of bondage were removed. The conflicts differ in their *seats* and stations. In Balaam, as in all natural men, it was only a schism or rupture between different parts of the soul. Sometimes the understanding opposes the passions; sometimes conscience combats the will; sometimes one passion forbids the gratification of another. But in the regenerate, the struggle is not between different, but in the same faculties; the wisdom of the flesh and of the spirit counter-working in the same understanding, the desires of the flesh and spirit in the same will. They differ in their *extent*. Balaam will oppose some iniquities and retain others; the believer makes peace with no sins. They differ in their *effects*. No victory follows the natural combat, and no new strength is derived from it. Balaam still loves the sin against which he struggles, and yields to it; his iniquity is only repressed; it is not dead but sleeps. The spiritual conflict diminishes the power and strength of sin, and fortifies the believer.

I have but glanced at a subject that deserves a fuller development; but even these slight observations will assist you in examining what is your real character.

3. The history of Balaam leads us to reflect on the restraints which God in his providence lays upon men, preventing them from doing all the evil that they desire. For these restraints, what gratitude should be exercised by us! Have they been laid upon ourselves? Have we plotted or contrived some ambitious, or fraudulent, malicious, or voluptuous design, which God, though not by the appearance of his angel, yet by some unexpected intervention of

his providence, hath overthrown? Have we never, like Balaam, resolved and prepared to sin, when he has pulled us away from the pit into which we were plunging, as he pulled Lot out of Sodom; and kept us from executing our design by terror of conscience, by fear of danger, by removing opportunities, by casting impediments in our way, or by various other means? Surely, in recalling these circumstances, we should cry, in the language, but with very different feelings, of this impious prophet, "The Lord would not suffer me to do it."

And if we should be thankful for the restraints laid upon ourselves, so also should we for those imposed upon others. Had it not been for them, we had long since been in misery, in death. Enemies, as desirous to curse us as Balaam was to pronounce his imprecations upon the Israelites, have been restrained. Were it not for the shackles that God imposes upon the passions of men, the whole earth would be an Aceldama, a field of blood.

4. This history teaches us, that with splendid gifts, with much knowledge of divine truth, with confident professions of our resolution to obey God, with partial obedience, and with a sincere desire, whenever our thoughts are directed to the grave, to die with the righteous, we may yet be the enemies of God. Oh! let us sincerely inquire whether we have advanced further; whether our knowledge is reduced to practice; and whether, in our daily walk, we act like those with whom we would wish to die, and have our portion for ever! Let us unreservedly dedicate ourselves to God; follow him with an undivided heart; living the lives, that we may "die the death of the righteous."

## SERMON XXVIII.



LIFE OF JOSHUA.



JOSHUA XXIV. 29.

*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."*

THE death of Moses was calculated not only to inspire grief in the Israelites, but also to fill them with apprehension and dismay. He who had been the honoured instrument of their deliverance from Egypt, who had so long conducted them in the wilderness, whose prevalent prayers had so often averted the divine indignation from them, was removed from earth at that critical season when they most needed a leader and commander; when they were just entering into the promised land, and about to oppose numerous and powerful enemies. But though Moses was taken from them, the God of Moses remained. By the death of their great legislator, it was shown to the Israelites, that not by a human arm, but by divine power, were they led into Canaan; and by the

appointment of a fit successor they were taught the unremitting care that the Lord would ever exercise over his church.

Christians, we need not “tremble for the ark of God,” while the throne of Jehovah is established in the heavens. When those who have been eminently pious and useful rest from their labours and receive their crown, others shall be raised up to grasp the sword of the Spirit, which has fallen from their lifeless hands. Moses passes to glory; but Joshua is qualified to conduct Israel into the promised land.

He was of the tribe of Ephraim; his name originally was *Oshea*,\* (Num. xiii. 8. 16.) a term denoting *salvation*; but by divine direction it was changed to *Joshua*,† a word signifying “Jehovah himself shall save.” He was the friend and companion of Moses, by whose piety and prayers he was animated, by whose wisdom he was directed. In prosecuting the history of Moses, we have already considered several events in the life of this his successor. We have beheld him signalizing his valour in the war against the Amalekites, over whom he gained a complete victory. (Exod. xvii.) We saw him, full of holy reverence, ascending the mount with Moses, to converse with God. (Ex. xxiv. 13.) We admired the union of courage and piety in him who in the field of battle had “discomfited Amalek with the edge of the sword;” and on his return to the camp, “departed not out of the tabernacle,” there maintaining communion with God. If we were constrained to blame him for his reproof of Eldad and Medad, it was evident, however, that his reproof sprung from a true though misguided zeal for God, and affection for

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\* השעה.

† הושע.

Moses. We admired the courage and firmness with which he and Caleb urged the rebellious people to go up and possess the promised land. We beheld Moses, before his death, laying his hands on this his divinely designated successor, and communicating to him part of his spirit and glory, that the people might hear and obey him.

Appointed to this high office, Joshua, though he saw all the difficulties with which he would have to contend, yet exercised an unshaken faith; for he rested on the power of the Almighty, and relied on the inviolable faithfulness of the divine promises. He knew, however, that these promises are not inconsistent with human prudence and the use of means. He therefore sent spies to examine the city of Jericho. When they had returned, and declared the terror which had seized the Canaanites, he immediately led the host of Israel to the banks of Jordan.

There he paused; and as peculiar solemnities require peculiar preparations, the people were ordered to sanctify themselves that they might reverentially behold the miracles that God was about to work. After these solemnities, the priests bearing the ark of the covenant, (which in their ordinary marches was carried by the Levites in the centre of the camp) went at the head of the people. As soon as their feet touched the waters they divided; the ark was borne to the middle of Jordan, where the priests remained with it till the people had all passed over. This circumstance was intended to increase their faith; the Lord thus pledged himself for their protection; since his ark must perish, before an Israelite could be destroyed. This miracle, like the division of the Red Sea before Moses, was the divine seal to

the commission of Joshua, and the fulfilment of the declaration of God unto him, "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I have been with Moses, so I will be with thee." (iii. 7.) As a memorial of this event, Joshua ordered twelve stones to be taken from the midst of the river, which were put up in Gilgal; and twelve others to be placed in the midst of Jordan, where the feet of the priests had stood.

Christian, thy covenant God will display equal kindness to thee: He that hath supported, that to the end will support thee in thy passage through this wilderness, will not suffer thee at last to be swallowed up by the floods of death. Even now, if thou art following the ark, when thou meetest with difficulties formidable as the opposing waves of the Red Sea, or of Jordan, thou mayest rely on his gracious promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee;" (Is. xliii. 2.) and when thou art brought to the verge of the heavenly Canaan, thou shalt pass over Jordan certainly in safety, perhaps in triumph: and in the promised land to which thou art advancing, and which thou shalt then inherit, thou shalt raise a monument to the divine goodness more durable than the stones of Gilgal.

No sooner had Joshua entered into Canaan than he sought by the services of religion to secure the favour and protection of God. The offices of devotion, at all times proper, are especially requisite in seasons of difficulty and danger. The two sacraments of the Jewish church had been neglected during the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert. They are now solemnly observed; and the covenant with God is renewed. God has mercifully granted



to us also two sacraments, the seals of the covenant. Can we now be justified at the bar of conscience, can we hereafter be justified at the bar of the Lord, if we neglect them; and if we do not in the means of his appointment unreservedly surrender ourselves to God?

The manna, which had so long sustained the Israelites, now ceased to fall. God does not multiply miracles without necessity; and as they had arrived at a cultivated land, they needed no longer this supernatural supply of food.

When Joshua had gone out to reconnoitre Jericho, he beheld a personage who claimed and received from him divine honours: it was the blessed Redeemer; "the captain of the Lord's host," who appeared in the form which he was to assume in the fullness of time. He assured Joshua of success: "See, I have delivered Jericho into thy hand." But to teach the Israelites that the victory was given by God alone, they were forbidden to employ the common arts of war. The priests were ordered to encompass the city, blowing on the jubilee trumpets, (for thus the word *יְרִבָּאִים* which we render *rams' horns*, should be translated,) and followed by the ark of the covenant. The armed men preceded; in silence meditating on the promise and power of God. Having thus acted for six days, on the seventh they seven times successively passed round the walls; and on the seventh time, at the command of Joshua, the people shouted, and the walls fell. The Israelites immediately entered into the city, and utterly destroyed all the inhabitants with their possessions. To this destruction there were only two exceptions; the silver and gold, with the vessels of brass and iron, were reserved; and after purification were con-

secrated to the use of the tabernacle. Of the inhabitants, Rahab and her family alone were exempted from the general slaughter. She was a woman who had been a sinner; but who had been convinced of her guilt; of the vanity of the idols whom she once worshipped; and of the power and authority of Israel's God. She proved the truth of her repentance by the purity of her subsequent life; and had displayed the strength of her faith by risking her own life for the preservation of the spies. For her benevolence she is now recompensed.

Joshua wished that the ruins of Jericho might remain a perpetual monument of the interposition of God for his people. He therefore predicted that he who should undertake to rebuild it, should "lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son should set up the gates of it." The accomplishment of this prediction is related 1 Kings, xvi. 34. In the impious reign of Abaz, *Hiel*, who was one of those who at Bethel paid an idolatrous worship to the images erected by Jeroboam, reared again the devoted city. Since five hundred and fifty years had elapsed from the time that the prediction was uttered, he probably regarded it with unbelief, and supposed that he might safely violate it. But the death of Abiram, his first-born, at the commencement of his work, and that of Segub, his youngest, at the termination of it, proved that God is faithful to his declarations; and that no length of time can impair the certainty or the severity of his threatenings.

It was by the express command of God, that the inhabitants of Jericho, and the Canaanitish nations in general, were slain by the Israelites. In order to be convinced that this command displayed the divine justice and wisdom, and was not inconsistent with

the divine mercy, we have only to take a rapid view of the character of those nations.

The Lord had *long* borne with their wickedness. Even in the time of Abraham they were infamous for their impiety; yet God delayed to punish them, and mercifully granted them a period of four hundred years, in which by repentance they might avert his indignation. During this time he favoured them with many means of instruction, and motives to virtue. Abraham, Lot, Isaac, and Jacob, were sent by divine providence to reside among them; and by precept and example these holy men endeavoured to reclaim them, and lead them to the worship of the true God. Instead, however, of profiting by this delay of the divine indignation, and improving by these mercies, they added crime to crime, till they had reached a depth of wickedness at which we shudder. No sin was too black, no deed too foul to be committed by them; even their worship consisted of a monstrous union of cruelty and impurity. Human sacrifices were frequent among them; and their own children were offered up to Moloch.

No one who acknowledges the difference between moral good and evil, and who does not exclude God from the government of the world, will deny that such crimes deserved the severest punishment, and that God was authorized to inflict this punishment. Had he employed for this purpose natural judgments, pestilence, famine, or earthquake, no one would have dared to have said that he was unjust. But it was on several accounts proper that he should use the *instrumentality of the Israelites*, rather than natural judgments. Natural judgments would have been imputed only to natural causes; the nations would not have looked beyond the instruments to the hand of God

that directed them; or if they were constrained to acknowledge a divine agency, they would have supposed this to have been the agency of their own idols. But when they were destroyed by those who were inferior to them in number and military skill, and superior to them only in this: that they combated in the name and by the authority of Jehovah, who attested his presence with them by the most splendid miracles; a reverence for the true God; contempt of idols; and a conviction of the guilt and danger of sin; would be more strongly produced than by any other means. Besides this eternal truth, that national depravity is the forerunner of national ruin, would be more strikingly impressed on all the surrounding nations, and on all succeeding generations, than it could be by those natural judgments that would soon have been forgotten.

Since therefore these nations deserved punishment; since they could be punished only in *this world*; (because, though the individuals who compose a nation exist hereafter, yet the nation itself does not exist, and cannot, *as a nation*, receive eternal reward or punishment;) since the most beneficial effects would result from selecting the Israelites as the ministers of divine vengeance, instead of employing natural judgments; we see the propriety of the command given to them.

It is true, that children who had not yet partaken of the sins of their parents were involved in the common destruction; but is not this the case also when God sends earthquake, pestilence, or any other judgments upon a sinful nation? And is he unjust or unmerciful because he does not exempt children? In both cases, he is able to rectify all apparent irregu-

larities of his providence, in that world to which death conducts these children.

Let me add to these considerations, that the Israelites first offered peace and safety to every city on certain conditions; the leading one of which was the renunciation of idolatry; and it was only after the rejection of these offers that the inhabitants were destroyed. (Deut. xx. 10—18.)

The conquest of Jericho was regarded by the Israelites as the commencement of an uninterrupted series of victories. How great then was their surprise when they were repulsed in their attack on Ai. The people passed from the extreme of confidence to the deepest despondency, and Joshua lamented before the Lord. The cause of this discomfiture was explained to him; sin, the only thing that could oppose an obstacle to the success of their arms, was in the camp. The solemn anathema which had devoted to destruction the wealth of Jericho, had been violated. Covetousness, which has led so many to everlasting despair, had been the means of bringing distress into the camp of Israel; and Joshua is assured that the army shall not be victorious till this crime is punished. The people were assembled; the sacred lot was used; it fell upon Achan, who acknowledged his crime, and was condemned to death, as a warning to others.

Secret sinner, though thou art confident that thy transgressions are hidden from the world, yet there is an eye that seeth thee in thy most private retirements, that looks upon thee when thou art shrouded in midnight darkness; that reads the inmost recesses of thy heart. The God whose eye thus beholds thee can reveal thy transgression as he did that of Achan; and even if it continue covered from the world du-

ring thy life, yet "be sure thy sin will find thee out." By cherishing it, thou makest an assignation with terror on thy bed of death, and preparest horrors for that great day when the mask shall fall, and present thee in thy true character, not merely before a single nation, but before the assembled universe.

After the punishment of Achan, Ai was immediately taken and destroyed. The victorious general forgot not his dependence upon God. He paused after this conquest, and, rearing an altar, offered sacrifices to the Lord; and then, assembling all the people, read to them the blessings and the curses of the law, and exhorted them to obedience. Think not that goodness derogates from greatness: Joshua is never more interesting than when, in the midst of his triumphs, he shows the humility and zeal of the believer, as he leads and directs the worship of Israel. Plead not the multitude and importance of your avocations as an excuse for your neglect of God and of the services of religion. In the midst of more numerous duties, Joshua found leisure to bow before the Lord, and esteemed it a sacred obligation to employ the influence which he possessed from his high office, in recommending religion to others.

While the greater part of the nations of Canaan combined to resist the people of Israel, the Gibeonites secured their lives by an act of deceit. Though their fraud was discovered in a short time, yet Joshua too much regarded the sanctity of the oath that had been interposed, to violate his engagements. The Canaanites, irritated at their conduct, resolved to destroy them. Adonizedec, who then reigned over the city which was afterwards so celebrated by the name of Jerusalem, united with four neighbouring kings; their troops invested the capital of the

Gibeonites. These had recourse to Joshua, and supplicated him to come immediately to the assistance of a city that was attacked only because of its alliance with him. Joshua consulted only his generosity and courage. He was confirmed in the design which he formed to succour Gibeon by a divine revelation, which assured him of the defeat of the kings. As the peril of the Gibeonites was extreme, his succour was prompt. With the part of his army that he selected for this expedition, he marched during the whole night; and, suddenly attacking the combined kings, utterly routed them. During the pursuit, numbers of the Canaanites were destroyed by "great stones from heaven." It is uncertain whether these were *ærotiths*, of the fall of which we have so many authentic narratives, or hail-stones of an unusual size. But by a greater miracle God showed the Israelites that their victories were owing not to their own strength and valour, but to the providence of God. The sun and the moon stood still at his command; that is, "either the earth (and with it the moon) was stopped in its diurnal course; or perhaps the light of those celestial luminaries was miraculously protracted on the scene of action till the victory was complete." In this miracle there is nothing incredible to those who believe the omnipotence of God. The machine of the universe is in the hand of God; he can without trouble, and without any danger of injuring it, stop the whole or any part of it. To Him that is Almighty, all things are alike possible; and he can as easily check the course of a planet, as arrest a mote floating in the air. There was a propriety in this peculiar miracle: the sun and the moon were objects of adoration to the Canaanites: and it was now evidently shown that

these imaginary deities were under the control of the God of Israel, and could be employed by him at his pleasure.

It is a history which teaches us the power of that God whom we serve; the wisdom of securing the protection and favour of him who governs all worlds, and can change the course of nature at his sovereign pleasure; and the efficacy of faith in him.

I have not time to trace, step by step, the conquests of Joshua. Victory constantly attended him, because "the Lord fought for Israel." Frequent confederacies were destroyed; the strongest cities were taken; thirty-one kings were defeated and slain. In the whole history, we see the faithfulness of God to his promises; and should learn to dismiss all undutiful fears and unbelieving despondency, if we are interested in the covenant that was ratified by Him of whom Joshua was the type. And on the contrary, if we have hitherto been unaffected by his threatenings, and have abused his long-suffering, we should learn, in the tremendous displays of his vengeance upon the Canaanites, the impossibility of finally escaping his punishment, if we continue impenitent; and the dreadful woes that shall crush the sinner when he has filled up the measure of his iniquities.

When at last Joshua could lay down the sword, we behold him as great in peace as he was in war; no less admirable as a magistrate than he had been illustrious as a general. He divided the country by lot, according to the divine injunction, among the different tribes of Israel. Having undergone so many labours, performed so many illustrious exploits, been exposed to so many dangers, he was certainly authorized to demand some splendid por-



tion in a country to the conquest of which he had so much contributed: he contented himself with Timnath-Serah, a barren spot in the tribe of Ephraim. He regulated the civil government; he caused the tabernacle to be reared with great solemnity at Shiloh; he showed the utmost zeal and fervour in the concerns of religion; he dismissed the two tribes and a half who were about to return to their possessions beyond Jordan, with that devout spirit which appears in all his conduct: "Take diligent heed 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."

Of the events in the life of Joshua for some succeeding years, there is no record, except in the book of God's remembrance. There doubtless are inscribed many acts of piety and devotion that will be announced to us in the last great day, and that through eternity will be joyfully remembered by him. His last days harmonized with the faith, the dependence upon God, the zeal for the divine glory, the love of Israel, which were displayed during his whole life. At the advanced age of one hundred and ten, when he was daily looking for his departure from earth, he twice assembled the elders, rulers, and people of Israel; and, in his farewell address to them, points out the mode in which their felicity may be established upon the firmest foundations, and extended to the remotest posterity. Behold this veteran warrior, this patriotic statesman, venerable for his years and his hoary locks, venerable for the scars which he has acquired in his country's service,

more venerable for the piety and virtue which ennobled him; behold him surrounded by the thousands of Israel. Age, which has bent his body to the ground, has not chilled the warmth of his attachment towards his God and his people. With an energy and feeling which gratitude inspires, he retraces to the Israelites the long course of miracles which God had wrought in their favour since the time of Abraham; he recalls to them the wonders performed in the wilderness; he shows them how God had fulfilled his promises; he places before their eyes the mercies they may yet expect from the divine munificence, if they continue obedient, and the woes they must endure if, after such favours, they prove ungrateful. Having presented to them these powerful motives, he adds, to show that God accepts only voluntary homages, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." "As for me," my choice is already made, and nothing can induce me to change it; "as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The people were deeply affected by the address made by Joshua in circumstances so solemn. At his request, they sealed their vows, by entering into an express covenant with the Lord. He himself, shortly after, passed to glory; and it is recorded to his praise, that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua."

Happy those, who, after a life devoted to God, can look to death with the complacency of Joshua, when he cried, "I am this day going the way of all the earth;" who like him, in their last hours, can counsel and encourage their surviving friends to cleave to the Lord: who with their dying voice can

testify that the Master whom they have served is faithful and gracious; that all his promises have been fulfilled; and that "not one good thing has failed." Would we thus finish our course with joy? we must, then, devote our days to God; cultivating the temper that Joshua displayed, we shall, both in life and death, enjoy happiness, and benefit those that are around us.

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## SERMON XXIX.



LIFE OF RUTH.



RUTH i. ii. iii. iv.

THE domestic circumstances of a small family are under the watchful care of providence as well as the fates of mighty nations. The neediest widow is as really an object of the paternal government of God as a sinking realm. The hand of the Lord may appear to us more full of majesty when it regulates the rise and fall of extended countries, but not more full of love than when it wipes the tears from the eyes of the afflicted widow. The one exalted and gracious

ruler of the universe attends to the smallest as well as the greatest events. As nothing is so vast as to be beyond his control, so nothing is so minute as to escape his observation. These truths, so consolatory to the heart, and so abundantly confirmed by reason and observation, are perpetually recalled to us while we retrace the histories recorded in the scripture, and by few more strikingly than by the history of Ruth.

Under one of the earliest of the judges that ruled Israel there was a famine in the land. It drove many of the Israelites from their once fruitful country, and obliged them to seek bread in the neighbouring lands. Among these was Elimelech, of the princely house of Nahshon, an inhabitant of Bethlehem, that spot, interesting to the pious for so many reasons; for the sepulchre of Rachel, for the hymns which David here chanted, and which still animate the devotion of believers; for the song of the angels, when they descended to felicitate the earth upon the birth of the Saviour; and for the incarnation of our adorable Saviour. From this place Elimelech went with his wife and two sons, into the adjoining land of Moab, to rescue himself and his family from hunger. If at all times it is painful to leave our native land, it was peculiarly so for a pious Israelite, since he passed from the country where alone the true God was known and worshipped. But, doubtless, the heart of Elimelech, if, as is probable, he was a good man, like that of David, when he was in the tents of Kedar, in the city of Gath, or in Ziklag, was often directed to the sanctuary of the Lord. Ah! christians, are we as grateful as we should be for those ordinances of religion which we so abundantly enjoy, while so many countries are still unvisited by the heavenly light

which directs and cheers us, and are as dark as was the idolatrous Moab.

Elimelech went to sojourn but a short time, and expected again to revisit his native land. But a longer removal awaited him: he passed into another world, and his body was laid in the earth far from the tomb of his fathers. How frequent are such instances of frustrated plans, and disappointed expectations! How many have come to reside among us for a short time, but have here found their graves! How many of you, who are anticipating, at some future time, a removal, who will here lie down in the dust! Ah! why do we not remember that we are continually exposed to death? Why do we not more seriously ponder those impressive words of St. James, (v. 13, 14.) "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that."

The two sons of Elimelech had married two Moabitish females. This was the means which providence employed to lead at least one of them, Ruth, to the knowledge and service of the true God. But after ten years the sons also died. Naomi, such was the name of the mother, was now far from her country, without husband, without children, without wealth to alleviate the common distress of herself and her daughters-in-law. They were three desolate widows in one house.

They heard at last that the famine had ceased in Israel. With what gratitude was the return of plen-

ty hailed after ten years of famine! But, brethren, how much warmer gratitude should we feel, who have never known such a famine. Yet, alas! is it not true that the very circumstance which should inspire us with thankfulness, I mean the uninterrupted continuance of blessings, makes us regardless of our obligations to our constant Benefactor?

Naomi resolved to return to Judah, to pass the remainder of her life where God was known and adored, and to die among her kindred. She could not indeed hope to appear in as splendid or happy circumstances as before her departure from Bethlehem, but she had cultivated a state of mind suited to her situation. The widows of her sons would not suffer her to go alone. One of them, Orpah, was probably still a heathen, but her tenderness and sympathy with the afflicted Naomi were such as should make many a christian relative blush. Never let us forget that our religion must be interwoven with all our actions and concerns; that it must appear not only in the church, and the more solemn and immediate worship of God, but also in our families, by our firesides, and in our daily employments; and that by the careful and conscientious performance of the ordinary duties of life "we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." Next to the development of the great plan of Salvation through Jesus Christ, there is scarcely a subject on which Paul is so frequent, so earnest, so pressing in all his epistles, as our common and daily duties, resulting from our relations in life: and in vain do you talk of your zeal, your faith, your love to God, if you are inattentive to these duties, or inferior to heathens in your performance of them.

Naomi had reached the borders of the land of Judah. Both Orpah and Ruth still accompanied her.

She turned and bade them farewell, and blessed them in the name of the Lord. Imitate her example. Let your parting benedictions, and your last directions, when separating from your friends, always direct them to God. Solemn wishes and pious advices, uttered on such occasions, like the expressions of dying persons, frequently reach the heart.

When she gave them the farewell kiss, "they lifted up their voices and wept;" wept at the recollection of past sorrows and joys endured together, and at the thoughts of a final separation. Such was their attachment to her, that they could not consent to part from her, and they refused to return. Orpah, as well as Ruth, when she expressed this resolution, doubtless, designed to change her religion as well as country, for she knew that idolatry was not allowed in Israel. But her good resolutions were transient, and when Naomi again spoke of her poverty and affliction, which she regretted for their sakes more than her own, Orpah kissed her and departed. She was attached to Naomi; her conduct had been exemplary to her deceased husband, and to his sorrowing mother. She had some desires after the God of Israel; but the prospect of the penury and distress which she would endure, shook her resolutions; she returned to the land of idolatry; she mingled with the worshippers of Chemosh. Who does not think of the amiable young ruler, who went away sorrowful from our Lord? In him, as in Orpah, "one thing was lacking." Loveliness of temper, even when combined with occasional good desires and resolutions, will not be sufficient to secure our eternal felicity; notwithstanding many attractive and endearing qualities, we may perish for ever; without that firm and steady devotedness to God and the Redeemer.

which will induce us to sacrifice every enjoyment, and encounter every peril at their command, we in vain hope for heaven.

Naomi again addressed Ruth: "Behold thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people and her gods. Return thou after her." She, doubtless, did not wish Ruth to bow down to idols; she knew and approved her zeal for the God of Israel. But her words are to be regarded as a test of the sincerity of this Moabitess; an opportunity afforded her to make a deliberate choice. Like the Redeemer in his addresses, she wishes not to deceive Ruth by false hopes, but bids her "count the cost" before she professes the true religion. Ruth answers in language of so much energy and tenderness, that the heart alone can comment upon it: "entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: The Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Naomi no longer resists the soft violence of Ruth, who was henceforth to supply to her the place of husband and sons. How many of us, my brethren, are condemned by this conduct of Ruth! What were her advantages of instruction from pious friends, from the word of God, from the public ordinances of religion, in comparison with those which we possess? How many sacrifices had she to make, which are not required of us. Yet she was steadfast and decided, while so many of us, like Orpah, have turned our back upon the only true God, upon the only means of salvation.



Naomi, attended by her faithful companion, arrived at Bethlehem. The inhabitants crowded to see her; but what a change had ten years made in her situation and prospects! Alluding to it, they cry, "Is this Naomi?" The course of human events is not more fixed; our connexions and enjoyments are not more stable, than they were in her days. What a change have ten years made in our families! what alterations in our circumstances, what fatal bereavements! What a change will be made in ten years to come! Happy for us, if the fluctuations of earth cause us to secure the love of that heavenly Friend whom death cannot wrest from us, an interest in the promises of that covenant which is everlasting, a title to that kingdom which cannot be moved.

Under the pressure of grief, and at the recollection of the happiness which she had once enjoyed, this poor widow cries out, "Call me not Naomi," or, the pleasant one; "call me Mara," or, bitter; "for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" Apparently, little circumstances sometimes aggravate our grief, the repetition of her name produced a burst of grief that was pardoned by Him who saw the acquiescence of her heart, who "knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are dust." She looked to God as the author of her trials, and it was this consideration that prevented her from being overborne by sorrow. Little did she think of the blessings in reserve for her, of the period so rapidly hastening, when the name of Naomi would again be appropriate to her situation, and to the joy of her countenance.

Never despair, child of God, under the most gloomy aspect of providence, while the throne of thy Friend is established in the heavens, and while he regulates all the events of earth. Cry not with Job, "I shall never more see good." He who restored joy to the patriarch of Uz, and the poor widow of Bethlehem, can restore it to thee.

It was the season of harvest when they returned to Bethlehem. Ruth profits by this circumstance to procure a subsistence for herself and Naomi. She entered into a field to glean after the reapers. She united in herself the claims of all those, who, by the benevolent provision of the Mosaic law, were permitted thus to glean; for she was at once a widow, a stranger, and poor: yet she insists not on her right, but asks permission. Providence had conducted her. It was in the field to which she came, and in no other, that she was to find felicity. It belonged to Boaz, in whom we see the sincerest piety and the most generous kindness. On his addressing her in the language of benevolence, she expresses her astonishment at this favour to an unknown stranger. He informs her that he has heard of her faithful discharge of her duties to her relatives; and that he has been affected with her devotion to the Lord. He exclaims, "The Lord recompense thy work; and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." This last beautiful expression, which is several times repeated in the book of Psalms, has probably an allusion to the cherubim, which, in the tabernacle and temple, extended their wings over the mercy-seat, the symbol of divine grace through the Redeemer. God was said to dwell between the cherubim; and

those who sought protection from him, to trust under the shadow of his wings. Who that is a real Christian does not, like Boaz, love to see others fleeing to that refuge which we have found so safe and secure? Who does not rejoice in the display of their graces, and feel disposed to receive, not with the cold reserve of strangers, but with the warmth of friendship, those who have proved that they are friends to our Lord? The mode of conferring benefits frequently doubles their value. Boaz privately commands his reapers to drop some of their sheaves, that Ruth may without shame gather them, and not be oppressed by the weight of a more direct obligation. After labouring with diligence, she returned to Naomi, who poured forth her prayers to God in behalf of that benevolent man, whose name was yet unknown to her. Such is the recompense, rich men, which you may secure by your benevolence to the pious poor. They give you those prayers that are not disregarded by Him who hears the sighing of the needy, and the grateful thanks and supplications of the heart made glad by your kindness. When the name of Boaz is mentioned, the gratitude of Naomi is increased. She recalls his former friendship to Elimelech and Mahlon, and rejoices that he still shows kindness to their surviving relatives, after they have descended to the tomb. How beautiful a picture! Ruth, the modest, meek, humble, contented gleaner; Boaz, the generous, affectionate, delicate kinsman; Naomi, the pious, thankful believer, beholding God in all these acts, and blessing him!

Naomi was desirous to recompense Ruth. The laws of Moses, which were intended to preserve inheritances, and perpetuate families, (Lev. xxv. 24,

25. Deut. xxv. 5—9.) and the piety of Boaz, which led him to observe these laws, made her hope to attain this object. She advised Ruth to remind him of the law, in a manner that indeed is not conformed to our habits of society. Whether she was right in the advice she gave, is a question that, perhaps, we are not qualified to decide. To answer it, we must be more intimately acquainted with the customs of the time when they lived. The same actions, that in one period and country are associated with certain dispositions and sentiments, have no such association in other times and places. This is the only history of the practical application of these laws of Moses that we have. Naomi judged correctly of the character of Boaz, when she supposed that he was only to be reminded of the duties enjoined by the law, to execute them. She either did not know, or recollect, that there was a kinsman nearer than Boaz, or was persuaded that he would not perform the office of kinsman to Ruth. It is certain, from the language of Boaz, that he did not consider the conduct of Ruth as inconsistent with that virtue for which he commended her. On the refusal of the nearest kinsman, Ruth became the wife of Boaz. She had a son, who gladdened the old age of Naomi. From her the royal line of David sprung, and she became a progenitor of Him in whom the nations of the earth are blessed, and who calls Gentiles, as well as Jews, into his church. Of the remainder of her life, and of the circumstances of her death, we have no information; but we may know them in their principle; we may judge of them from her temper and disposition. Without the express declaration of Scripture, we are persuaded, that, after a life of

gratitude and piety, blessed herself and a blessing to all around her, she died in the faith, and, according to the prayer of Boaz, found an abundant recompense of grace from the God of Israel, under whose wings she had come to trust.

Naomi and Ruth are long since dead; but their God still lives: He still exercises the same watchful providence as he did over them: He still has the same compassion which he manifested to them. Look up to him with love and with faith, thou afflicted widow, thou poor female who art treading in the same dreary path that was trodden by these holy women. He will either deliver thee from thy trials, or give thee grace to support them. Be careful to imitate the resignation of Naomi and Ruth; to exercise, like them, those dispositions that will endear you to your friends and relatives, and that will be recollected with joy should your situation be changed; instead of indulging that impatient, querulous temper, which is too often exerted by affliction.

While we admire Boaz, let us think of Him to whom we are under infinitely greater obligations than Ruth was to this generous man; let us remember that Jesus, one of whose titles is our *God*, our *Kinsman-Redeemer*. We had forfeited our inheritance; we were strangers and foreigners, forlorn and afflicted. He became our kinsman; he took upon him our nature; consented to be the Son of man, as well as the Son of God. He redeemed our lost inheritance; we became his purchased people; he betrothed us to himself; he bestowed upon us dignity and happiness. For such unspeakable condescension and grace, shall we be thankless? Ought we not to form, with regard to our Saviour, the reso-

lution which Ruth expressed to Naomi, and declare to him, that we will “never return from following after him?”

END OF VOLUME I.

















