



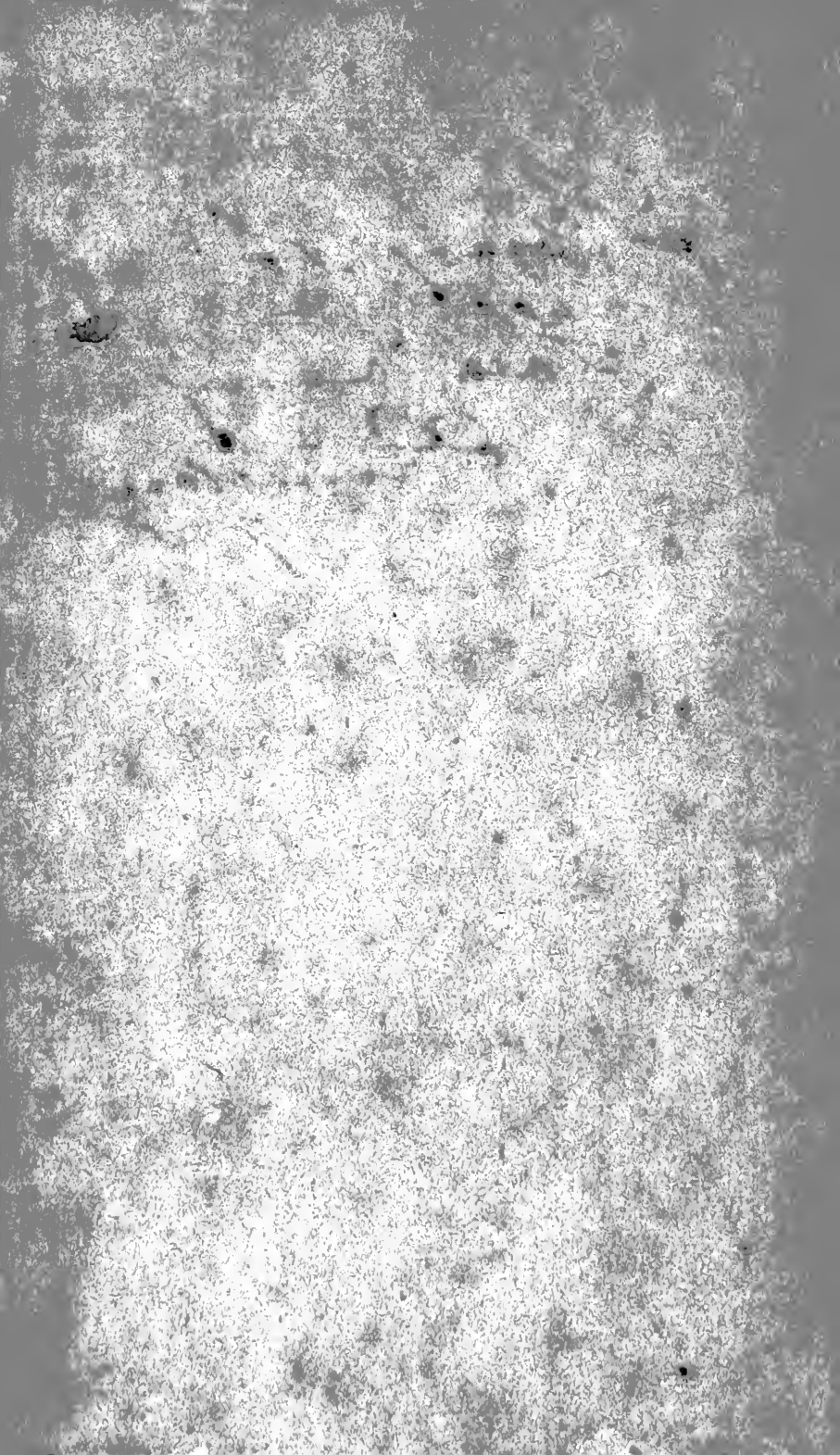
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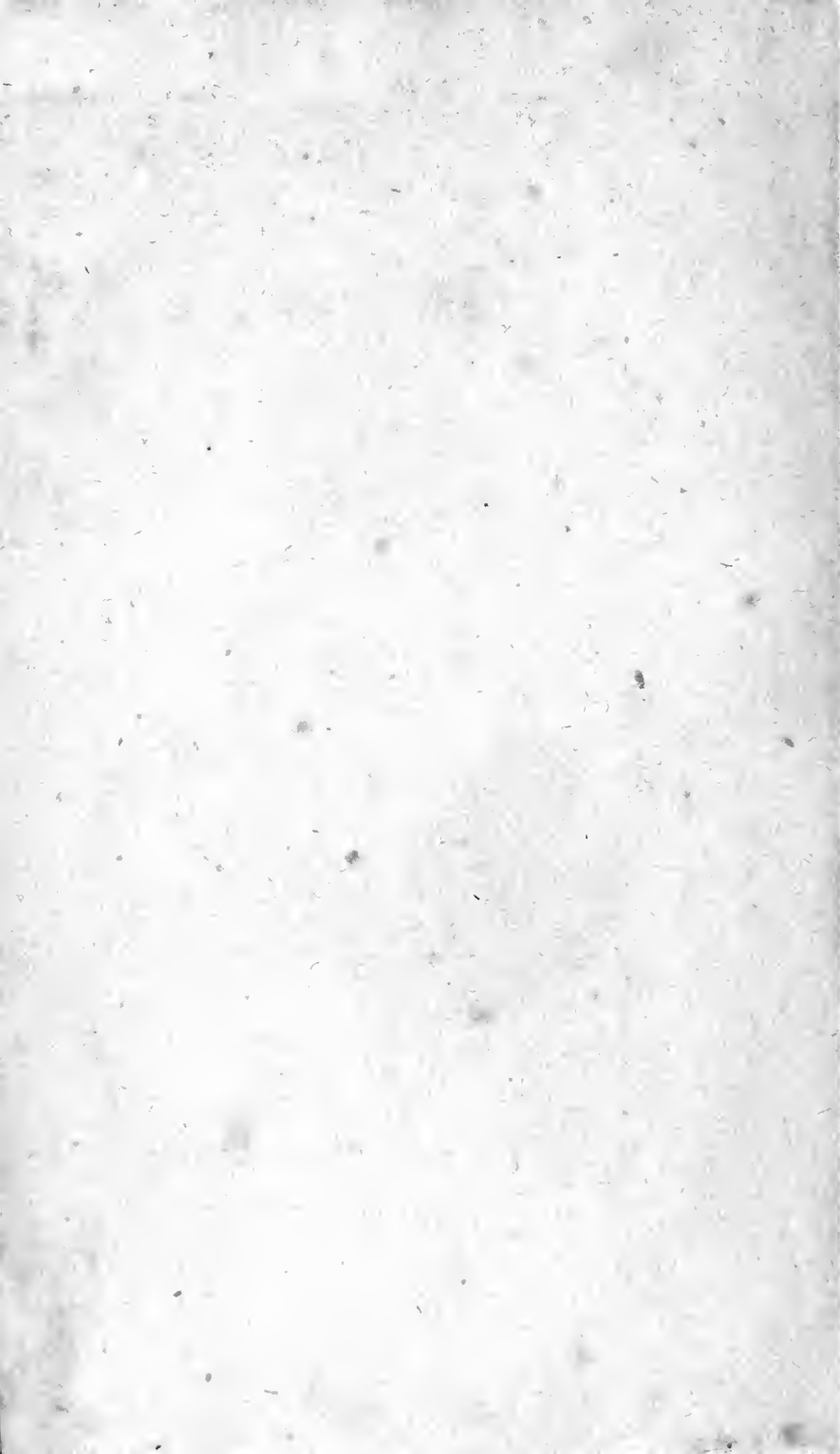
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SACRED BIOGRAPHY:

OR, THE

History of the Patriarchs.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE HISTORY OF

DEBORAH, RUTH, AND HANNAH.

BEING

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED AT THE

SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY HENRY HUNTER, D.D.

The Second American Edition.

Complete in Four Volumes.

.....
VOL. I.
.....

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.———JOHN viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.———
REVELATION i. 8.

Burlington:

PUBLISHED BY DAVID ALLINSON.

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1806.

THE SACRED BIOGRAPHY
OF
Countess
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VOLUME I.

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Sacred Biography.

LECTURE I.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.
ROM. xv. 4....

VARIOUS methods have been employed, at different periods, and by different persons, to convey useful knowledge to mankind. The knowledge most useful and most important to man, is that of morals and religion. These sciences not only afford the most pleasant and elevating subjects of meditation, but evidently possess a very powerful influence over human happiness, both in the life which now is, and in that which is to come.

The principles of morality and religion have, by some, been delivered in short, plain, and significant sentences; and have been left to produce their effect, by their own weight and evidence. Public teachers have, at other times, taken pains to explain and enforce these principles; have demonstrated their reasonableness and utility; and have exhibited the criminality, the danger, and the misery, of neglecting or transgressing them. The charms and graces of poetry have been employed to set off the native, modest beauties of truth and virtue, and allegory has spread her veil over them, in order to stimulate our ardor in the pur-

suit, and to heighten our pleasure in the discovery. The penetration of genius, the enchantment of eloquence, and the creative energy of fancy, have successfully lent their aid to those gentle guides of human life, those condescending ministers to human comfort.

The historic page, that faithful and true witness, has been unfolded. Ages and generations, elapsed and gone, have been made to pass in review; and the lessons of religion and virtue have been forcibly inculcated, by a fair and impartial disclosure of the effects, which the observance or neglect of them have produced on the affairs of men. And the pencil of history has enriched the canvass, not only with men in groups, but selecting distinguished individuals, delineating them in their just proportions, and enlivening them with the colors of nature, has exhibited a collection of striking portraits, for our entertainment and instruction. In contemplating these, we seem to expatiate in a vast gallery of family pictures, and take delight in observing and comparing the various features of the extensive kindred, as they resemble or differ from each other; and through the physiognomy piercing into the heart, we find them, though dead, yet speaking and pleasing companions.

The holy scriptures possess an acknowledged superiority over all other writings, in all the different kinds of literary composition; and in none more, than in that species of historical composition, which is called **BIOGRAPHY**, or a delineation of the fortunes, character and conduct of particular persons: and that, whether the historians be themselves the men whom they describe and record; or whether, from proper sources of information, they record the lives and actions of others.

These Lectures, undertaken at your request, and humbly submitted to your candid and patient attention; and, permit me to add, intended for your religious instruction and improvement, will, through the help of God, present you with a course of **SACRED BIOGRAPHY**, that is, the more particular and detached history of the

lives of those eminent and distinguished personages, whom Providence raised up, and whom the Holy Spirit has in the scriptures of truth represented, either as patterns for us to imitate, or as objects of disesteem and aversion. We shall endeavour to compare together those which possess more obvious and striking marks of resemblance or of dissimilitude; and they shall be brought, one after another, into comparison with that pure and perfect example of all excellence, which was exhibited by Him, who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

Happy will your Lecturer esteem himself, if he shall in any measure attain, what he ardently desires, the power of blending profit with delight, for your use; the power with which the lively oracles of God furnish him, that of rendering the errors and the vices, as well as the wisdom and the virtue of others, beneficial unto you.

In order to justify the design, for we presume not to answer for the execution, we shall endeavor to shew the propriety and usefulness of this mode of instruction in general, and the peculiar advantages which the sacred writers enjoy, in thus communicating useful knowledge; and which we of course possess, in the diligent and attentive perusal of their writings: and this shall serve as an Introductory Lecture to the Course.

We begin with attempting to shew the propriety and usefulness of conveying instruction, by means of the historical representation of the character and conduct of individuals, as opposed to the object of general history.

Now the professed purpose of all history is, without fear or favor, without partiality or prejudice, to represent men and things as they really are—that goodness may receive its just tribute of praise, and vice meet its deserved censure and condemnation. It is evident, that this end is most easily and most certainly attained, when our attention is confined to one particular ob-

ject, or to a few at most. This may be judged of by the feelings and operations of the mind, in the contemplation of other objects.

When, from the summit of some lofty mountain, we survey the wide extended landscape; though highly delighted, we feel ourselves bewildered, and overwhelmed, by the profusion and variety of beauties which nature spreads around us. But when we enter into the detail of nature; when we attend the footsteps of a friend through some favored, beautiful spot, which the eye and the mind can take in at once; feeling ourselves at ease, with undivided, undistracted attention we contemplate the whole; we examine and arrange the parts; the imagination is indeed less expanded, but the heart is more gratified; our pleasure is less violent and tumultuous, but it is more intense, more complete, and continues much longer; what is lost in respect of sublimity, is gained in perspicuity, force and duration.

Take another instance:—The starry heavens present a prospect equally agreeable to every eye. The delights of a calm, serene evening, are as much relished by the simple and unlettered, as by the philosopher. But who will compare the vague admiration of the child or the clown with the scientific joy of the astronomer, who can reduce into order, what to the untutored eye is involved in confusion; who can trace the path of each little star; and from their past appearances, can calculate, to an instant of time, their future oppositions and conjunctions?

Once more:—It is highly gratifying to find ourselves in the midst of a public assembly of agreeable people of both sexes, and to partake of the general cheerfulness and benevolence. But what are the cheerfulness and benevolence of a public assembly, compared to the endearments of friendship, and the meltings of love? To enjoy these, we must retire from the crowd, and have recourse to the individual. In like manner, whatever satisfaction and improvement may be derived from

general histories of mankind, which we would not be thought by any means to depreciate; yet the history of particular persons, if executed with fidelity and skill, while it exercises the judgment less severely, so it fixes down the attention more closely, and makes its way more directly and more forcibly to the heart.

To those who are acquainted with this kind of writing, much need not be said, to evince the superior excellency of the sacred penmen. Biographers merely human necessarily lie under many disadvantages, and are liable to many mistakes. The lapse of time is incessantly thickening the veil which is spread over remote persons and events. The materials of history lie buried, confounded, dispersed, among the ruins of antiquity; and cannot be easily distinguished and separated, even by the eye of discernment, and the hand of honesty, from the rubbish of fiction. And as they are not always furnished by truth and nature, so neither are they always selected with judgment, nor employed with taste and discretion.

Men, who only see the outside, must of necessity infer the principles of human actions from the actions themselves. And yet no rule of judgment is more erroneous: for experience assures us, that many, perhaps the greater part of our actions, are not the result of design, and are not founded on principle, but are produced by the concurrence of incidents which we could not foresee, and proceed from passions kindled at the moment.

Besides, every man sits down to write, whether of ages past, or of the present, of characters near or remote, with a bias upon his mind; and this he naturally endeavors to communicate to his reader. All men have their favorite periods, causes, characters; which, of course, they strive, at any rate, to embellish, to support, to recommend. They are equally subject to antipathies on the other hand, under the influence of which, they as naturally strive to depress, to expose,

and to censure, what they dislike. And as men write and speak, so they read and hear, under the influence of prejudice and passion. Where the historian's opinions coincide with our own, we cheerfully allow him to be in the right: when they differ, without hesitation we pronounce him to be mistaken.

Most of the writers of profane ancient history are chargeable with an absurdity, which greatly discredits the facts they relate, and reduces their works almost to the level of fable. They attempt too much; they must needs account for every thing; they conjecture when light fails them; and because it is probable or certain that eminent men employed eloquence on important public occasions, their historians at the distance of many centuries, without record, or written document of any kind whatever, have, from the ample store of a fertile imagination, furnished posterity with the elaborate harangues of generals, statesmen, and kings. These, it is acknowledged, are among the most ingenious, beautiful, and interesting of the traces of antiquity which they have transmitted to us: what man of taste could bear to think of stripping these elegant performances of one of their chief excellencies? But truth is always injured, by every the slightest connection with fable. The moment I begin to read one of the animated speeches of a hero or a senator, which were never composed, delivered, or written, till the historian arose, I feel myself instantly transported from the real theatre of human life, into a fairy region: I am agreeably amused, nay, delighted; but the sacred impress of truth is rendered fainter and feebler to my mind; and when I lay down the book, it is not the fire and address of the speaker, but the skill and ingenuity of the writer that I admire. Modern history, more correct and faithful than ancient, has fallen, however, into an absurdity not much less censurable. I mean that fanciful delineation of character, with which the account of certain periods, and the lives of distinguished

personages, commonly conclude; in which we often find a bold hypothesis hazarded for the sake of a point; and a strong feature added to, or taken away from a character, merely to help the author to round his period.

Finally, a great part of profane history is altogether uninteresting to the bulk of mankind. The events recorded are removed to a vast distance, and have entirely spent their force. The actors exhibited are either too lofty to admit of our approach, with any interest or satisfaction to ourselves; too brutal to be considered without disgust, or too low to be worthy of our regard. The very scenes of action are become inaccessible or unknown; are altered, obliterated, or disregarded. Where Alexander conquered, and how Cæsar fell, are to us mere nothings.

But on opening the sacred volume, all these obstructions in the way of knowledge, of truth, of pleasure, and of improvement, instantly disappear. Length of duration can oppose no cloud to that intelligence, with which "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." The human heart is there unfolded to our view, by Him, "who knows what is in man," and "whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." The men and the events therein represented are universally and perpetually interesting, for they are blended with "the things which accompany salvation," and affect our everlasting peace. There, the writers, whether they speak of themselves or of other men, are continually under the direction of the Spirit of all truth and wisdom. These venerable men, though subject to like passions with others, there, speak not of themselves, but from God; "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Peter i. 21. And all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thorough-

ly furnished unto all good works," 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

Having premised these things, we will proceed next Lord's day, if God permit, to the execution of our plan; and shall begin, as the order both of nature and of scripture prescribe, with the history of Adam, the venerable father and founder of the human race.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers, we are about to study the lives of other men; but it concerns us much more to look well to our own. Our forefathers were; we are. The curtain has dropped, and has hid ages and generations past from our eyes. Our little scene is going on; and must likewise speedily close. We are not indeed, perhaps, furnishing materials for history. When we die, obscurity will probably spread the veil of oblivion over us. But let it be ever remembered by all, that every man's life is of importance to himself, to his family, to his friends, to his country, and in the sight of God. They are by no means the best men, who have made most noise in the world; neither are those actions most deserving of praise, which have obtained the greatest share of fame. Scenes of violence and blood; the workings of ambition, pride, and revenge, compose the annals of men. But piety and purity, temperance and humility, which are little noticed and soon forgotten of the world, are held in everlasting remembrance before God. And happy had it been for many of those, whose names and deeds have been transmitted to us with renown, if they had never been born.

One corruption subdued is a victory infinitely more desirable, and more truly honorable, than a triumph gained amidst the confused noise of ten thousand warriors, and as many garments rolled in blood; for he "that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city," Prov. xvi. 32. Remember, my friends, that to be a child of God is far more honorable than to be descended from kings; and that a christian is a much higher character

than a hero. And let this consideration influence all that you undertake, all that you do. Act as if the eyes of Cato were always upon you, was the precept given, and the motive urged, to the Roman youth, in order to excel in virtue. The eyes of God are in truth continually upon you. Live then as in his sight; and knowing that every action as it is performed, every word as it is spoken, and every thought as it arises, is recorded in the book of God's remembrance, and must come into judgment, "keep thy heart with all diligence," set a watch on the door of thy lips, "and whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God."

We are about to review ages past, and to converse with men long since dead. And the period is fast approaching, when time itself shall be swallowed up; when Adam and his youngest son shall be contemporaries; when the mystery of providence shall be cleared up, the mystery of grace finished, and the ways of God fully vindicated to men. In the humble and solemn expectation of that great event, knowing and believing the scriptures, and the power of God, let us study to live a life of faith and holiness upon the Son of God; "redeeming the time, because the days are evil," and "working out our own salvation with fear and trembling." And may the God of our fathers be our God and the God of our offspring, and conduct us through the dangerous and difficult paths of human life, and through the valley of the shadow of death, to his own "presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore." Amen.

History of Adam.

LECTURE II.

And all the days that Adam lived, were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died....GEN. v. 5.

IF to trace the origin of particular nations; if to mark, and to account for, the rise and progress of empire, the revolutions of states, the discovery of new worlds, be an interesting, pleasant, and useful exercise of the human mind; how amusing, interesting, and instructive must it be, to trace HUMAN NATURE itself up to its source! Placed beneath the throne of God, it is pleasing to observe how the heavens and the earth took their beginning; and by what means this globe was at first peopled, and continues to be filled with men. If there be a natural, and not illaudable propensity, in individuals, to dive into the pedigree of their families; and in nations, to fix that of their princes, heroes and legislators; is it possible to want curiosity, or to miss entertainment, when the history of the venerable Father of all Men is presented to our attention—that of Adam, to whom we feel ourselves closely allied by condition and by blood, however unconnected we may seem to be with most of the collateral branches of the family; of whose nature we all partake; by whose conduct we are all affected, and in the consequences of whose actions we are all to this day involved?

In pursuing this important inquiry, we have God himself for our guide, and we plunge into the dark regions of the remotest antiquity, lighted by that gracious SPIRIT, to whom all nature stands confessed, and

with whom the whole extent of time is a single point, an unchanging now.

God having framed and fitted up this vast fabric, this magnificent palace, the earth, worthy of the inhabitant whom he designed to occupy it, and worthy of himself; having formed, arranged, and fructified the various and innumerable vegetable and animal tribes; having created, suspended, and balanced the greater and the lesser lights, and settled the œconomy of the whole host of heaven; at length, with all the solemnity and majesty of Deity, as with the maturity of deliberation, as with a peculiar effort of divine power and skill, he designs and produces ADAM, the first of men. When the earth is to be fashioned, and the ocean to be poured into its appointed bed; when the firmament is to be expanded, and suns to be lighted up, God says, *Let them be*, and they are created. But when MAN is to be made, the creating Power seems to make a solemn pause, retires within himself, looks for a model by which to frame this exquisite piece of workmanship, and finds it in himself. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them,” Gen. i. 26, 27.

Thus then was brought into existence, the father and founder of the human race. And O, how fair must that form have been, which the fingers of God framed, without the intervention of a second cause! How capacious that soul which the breath of God immediately inspired! But glorious and perfect as he is, Adam, upon his very first reflection, feels himself a dependant and a limited being. No sooner has his eye ascended to God who made him, than it returns to the earth from whence he was taken; and the very first excursion of

reason informs him that he is at the disposal of another, and restrained by a law. He receives a whole globe, over which he is permitted an unlimited sovereignty; but one tree is reserved, as a token of his subjection. Every plant in paradise offers itself to gratify his sense, every animal does homage at his feet; but the sight of one kind of fruit in the midst of the garden continually reminds him, that he himself is dependant upon, and accountable to God; and while six parts of time are allowed for his own employments and delights, the seventh is set apart, sacred to his Maker.

Behold him then taking possession of his fair inheritance, of his vast empire, in all the majesty of unclouded reason, all the beauty of perfect innocence; possessed of every bodily, of every mental endowment. His numerous vassals of the brute creation present themselves before him: at one glance he discovers their nature and qualities, and gives them suitable names. But, while he is invested in the property of a world, he receives it as a charge for which he is to be responsible: "The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to *keep* it;" and he, for whom God and nature had produced all things in a luxuriant abundance, has nevertheless employment assigned him; he is placed in the garden to *dress* it. And can any of his degenerate sons then dream of independent property; or reckon want of employment to be an honorable distinction?

Behold him accepting his charge with submission and gratitude; entering on his employment with alacrity and joy; surveying his ample portion with complacency and delight. The prosecution of his pleasant task unfolds to him still new wonders of divine power and skill. The flower, and the shrub, and the tree, disclose their virtues, uses, and ends, to his observing eye. Every beast of the field spontaneously ministers to his pleasure or his advantage; all the host of heaven stands revealed to his capacious soul; and God him-

self, the great Lord of all, delights in him, and converses with him as a father and a friend.

But yet he is alone ; and therefore, even, in paradise, but half blessed. The exulting heart of man pants for communication of satisfaction, and the rich profusion of Eden is but half relished and enjoyed, because there is no partaker with him. Being corporeal and earthly, he is unfit for the society of pure spirits ; being rational and divine, he is above the society of the most sagacious of the subject tribes. " For Adam," in the wide extended creation, " there was not found an help meet for him." But no sooner is the want felt, than it is supplied. God, who does nothing imperfectly, at length makes the happiness of paradise complete, and fills up the measure of Adam's joy. " And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept : and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man," Gen. ii. 21, 22.

What an important era in the life of Adam ! What a new display of the Creator's power, and skill, and goodness ! How must the spirit of devotion be heightened, now that man could join in *social* worship ! What additional satisfaction in contemplating the frame, order, and course of nature, now that he possessed the most exalted of human joys, that of conveying knowledge to a beloved object ! Now that he can instruct Eve in the wonders of creation, and unfold to her their Maker's nature, perfections, and will ! What a new flavor have the fruits which grow in the garden of God acquired, now that they are gathered by the hand of conjugal affection, and recommended to the taste by the smile of complacency and love !—Ah ! why were not joys like these permanent as they were pure ? Was bliss like this bestowed but to be blasted ? And must Adam's chief felicity issue in his ruin ?

We are reluctantly brought forward to that awful revolution, which at length took place in Adam's condition and character. Of the duration of his innocence and happiness we have no account. His history now becomes blended with that of the wicked and malignant spirit, who had "left his first estate" of holiness and felicity: and who, having artfully seduced our first parents from their innocence, exposed them to the wrath of God, procured their expulsion from paradise, rendered them a prey to fear, shame, and remorse, and subjected them to pain, disease and death.

The circumstances of the case, according to the scripture account of it, were these. The devil observed the serpent to be an animal of peculiar sagacity and penetration, and fixes on him as a fit instrument of seduction. Fearing a repulse from the superior firmness and discernment of the man, he watches for, and finds the unhappy moment, when the woman, being separated from her husband, opposed to his wiles inferior powers of reason and intelligence, with greater softness and pliancy. He addresses himself to a principle in her nature, the immoderate indulgence of which has proved fatal to so many thousands of her daughters, *curiosity*; curiosity, the investigator of truth, the mother of invention; curiosity, the prompter to rashness, the parent of danger, the guide to ruin. Having first gained her attention, he excites her to doubt and to reason in the face of a positive command; rouses in her a spirit of pride and ambition; and at length persuades her to make the fatal experiment. She eats of the prohibited tree, and, by transgression, acquires the knowledge of *evil*, whereas she had hitherto known only *good*.

By what arguments Adam was prevailed upon to become a partner of her guilt, we are not informed. From the apology he made for his conduct, it is to be inferred that female insinuation and address misled him from the law of his God. And thus were both ruined by the operation of principles in themselves good and

useful; but carried to excess, unchecked by reason, unawed by religion. Eve perished by a curious and ambitious desire after a condition, for which God and nature had not designed her, a desire to be "as God, to know good and evil." Adam fell by complaisance to his wife, carried to unmanly weakness and compliance, yielding to his subject, bidding defiance to his sovereign.

And what words can express, what heart can conceive the bitter change! All his posterity have experienced the melancholy transition from health to sickness, from ease to pain: very many have passed from affluence to indigence, from glory to shame, and not a few have exchanged empire itself for banishment or a dungeon. But more than the accumulated weight of all these at once, falls on the devoted head of our guilty first father. The eyes, which before met the approach of God with rapture, now are clouded with sorrow, tremble with fear, or strain with remorse and horror, at the voice of the Almighty. That tongue which was once tuned only to the accent and the language of love, has in a moment learned to reproach and upbraid. The heart which glowed at the promise and the prospect of a fair, numerous, and happy progeny, now sinks in dejection at the dismal apprehension of that guilt and woe, in which his folly had plunged all his hapless children. Where innocence sat enthroned, there fell despair broods over her own stinging reflections, and tormenting fears. Above, the awful throne of an offended God; beneath, a fathomless gulf, kindled by the breath of Jehovah as a stream of brimstone; within, a troubled conscience, like the raging sea, incapable of taking rest. "The glory is departed: the gold is become dun, and the most fine gold changed."

And now too a revolution in outward circumstances takes place, corresponding to that which had passed on his internal constitution and character.

Adam must no longer possess that paradise of which he had rendered himself unworthy. Justice drives out from Eden the man, who had cast himself out from the favor of God. A wall reaching up to heaven, and immoveable as the decree of the Eternal, prevents the possibility of return. The flaming sword of the cherubim bars all access to the tree of life. His labor, formerly his delight, must henceforward be accompanied with pain. The subject tribes throw off their allegiance, and either shun, or threaten their lord. The elements change their influence, and his fair domain becomes a vast solitude. The sole partner of his former joys, now become the cause and the companion of his guilt, becomes also the companion of his wo. Mutual reflections and reproaches embitter and increase their common misery ; and stern death stares them in the face.

But will God contend forever, will he be always wroth ? Then “ the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he had made.” Behold a dawn of hope arises, and the promise of the Most High saves from despair. The moment man becomes, and feels himself, a miserable offender, that moment is the gospel preached unto him ; as the woman was first in the transgression, so from her the prospect of salvation arises ; and it is declared that “ the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan,” who had in deceiving her, destroyed her posterity, should by one who was peculiarly her posterity, be destroyed and slain. Thus they leave Eden, supported and cheered with the expectation of triumph over their bitter enemy, and of being restored at length to the favor of their offended God. To keep alive this hope, as well as to afford present relief from shame, at this period, it would appear, *sacrifice* was instituted. The same victim shed its blood, the type of atonement ; and furnished its skin to clothe the naked, thereby presented the emblem of a perfect righteousness, to cover and shelter the naked soul.

And thus early, distinctly and unequivocally was Christianity taught to mankind.

In process of time, however, Adam has the felicity of becoming a father; and enjoys the satisfaction of seeing the blessing pronounced upon him in his better state, notwithstanding his apostacy, taking effect... Eve becomes the joyful mother, perhaps at one birth, of two sons, and the earth begins to be replenished. Behold the first parents of mankind exulting in affections unknown, unfelt before; exulting in this fresh proof that God had not forgotten to be gracious. Behold the nuptial tie strengthened and confirmed; the voice of upbraiding and reproach turned to the language of gratulation, complacency, and love.

Adam observes, with growing delight, his sons increasing in stature and wisdom. Stung with keen reflection upon the happiness which he had vilely thrown away, and the misery which he had entailed upon his hapless children, how would he exert himself to repair that loss! How forcibly inculcate, by his own fatal example, the obligations of God's holy law! With what gratitude lead them to the promised atonement! With what heartfelt delight infuse knowledge into their opening minds!

Man is destined to labor from the beginning; and, for his punishment, guilty man must labor with the sweat of his brow. But all the punishments of Heaven in reality, and in the issue, are blessings. It is the privilege and the happiness of Adam and all his sons to be employed, though to weariness and fatigue. Accordingly the heirs and possessors of the whole globe, as soon as they arrive at man's estate, betake themselves to the humble and necessary occupations of that simple state of human nature. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground."

But Adam, we find, has taught his sons to blend religion with their secular employments; nay, to make their very employments the monitors and the means

of religious worship. "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof; and the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect," Gen. iv. 4, 5. And O, how early did the different passions and affections of the human mind discover themselves! Abel brings with his offering an humble, pious, and believing spirit. Cain approaches the altar of God with a proud, selfish, murderous heart. And melancholy it is to observe, the first quarrel in the world, the first human blood that was shed, were occasioned by religion, which is designed of God to be, and is in itself, the dearest bond of union among men.

An event now took place in Adam's family by which every former grief must have been renewed and embittered; and to his inexpressible mortification he finds himself a root of bitterness, of which all his branches must and do partake. Cain, incensed at the preference given to his brother's offering, burning with envy and resentment, watches his opportunity, and finding himself alone with him in the field, puts Abel to death. Thus man becomes the executioner of the dreadful sentence of the divine law, upon man ... brother upon brother. What must have been the emotions of Adam's soul when these sad news were brought him! To lose a son, a pious promising son: almost an only one; prematurely, unexpectedly, by the hand of his own brother! The one dead! the other worse than dead; a wretch unworthy to live! How would his own transgression again stare him in the face! How would he again accuse himself as the author of his own wretchedness, and the propagator of wo on wo to his posterity! The empire of Satan over this miserable world would now seem confirmed; and the purpose of the divine grace would be apparently defeated. But God yet takes pity on fallen guilty man, being mindful

of his promise ; and Seth is given to supply the loss of Abel...Seth, in whose line the promise runs, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ should come. And thus the divine interpositions always seasonably and suitably meet our necessities and wants.

Adam's own forfeited life is prolonged to many generations, and he lives to see his posterity increased to a great multitude, inventing and cultivating the arts which support, adorn, or comfort life. But the time approaches, at last, that he must die. Mercy flew as on the wings of a dove to his relief ; justice walks with slow and steady steps to his punishment. By himself sin had entered into the world, and death must inevitably follow, and pass upon him and upon all men. He had seen the ghastly appearance of death, in the person of his murdered son ; he must now drink the bitter cup for himself : " And the days that Adam lived, were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."

This is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to his heart. And thus at length decayed the fabric which God himself had reared ; thus " the dust returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it." And thus must conclude the history of every life, though protracted to a thousand years, whether adorned with virtues, or sullied with vice, whether passed with noise on the great theatre, or obscurely spent in the shade. To this complexion the wise and the beautiful, the brave and the good, as well as the simple and the homely, the timid and the vicious, must come at last. " Here the rich and the poor meet together ; here the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

The next Lecture, if God permit, will attempt to exhibit to you, the comparison and contrast of the first and second Adam : in the former of whom all died ; and by the latter, an elect world is made alive, and " raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Let us endeavor to improve what has been said ; by learning habitually to acknowledge, adore, and serve the great Author and Preserver of our being, who has lavished so much goodness upon us ; who adorned our nature with his own glorious image, pitied us in our low and lost estate, and has laid help for us in one who is mighty to save : and who, by the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, is aiming at making us partakers of a divine nature, and delivering us from that bondage of corruption, in which we are sunk by reason of sin.

Let us learn, secondly, from the sad example of the first transgression, to rest contented with that state and condition which Providence has assigned us in life ; to use only lawful means for bettering it ; to make the known will of God the only rule of conduct ; never to reason and tamper with temptation ; but to repel or flee from it at once ; and to shun those as our worst enemies, who, on any occasion or pretence, would attempt to make us think lightly of the law of God.

Let me take occasion, thirdly, from that institution which God designed for the completion of human happiness in a state of innocence, and for the mutual assistance and comfort of the sexes, in their fallen condition, to censure and condemn that spirit and practice of celibacy, which is one of the crying vices of our own age and country, and which is equally inimical to religion, to good morals, to public spirit, and human comfort. He who says, or lives as if he thought, that it is "good for man to be alone," gives the lie to his Maker ; sins against the constitution of his nature, dishonors his parents ; defrauds another of one of the justest rights of humanity, and in a case too where it is impossible so much as to complain ; and exposes himself to commit offences against society which are not to be mentioned in this place. In truth, celibacy is a vile compound of avarice and selfishness, which would fain pass upon the world for prudence and self denial ; and

the state of our own country at present, in this respect, looks as if a single state, as in Roman Catholic countries, were established by a law, but that the laity, not the clergy, were bound by it. But alas! I am only furnishing matter for a little conversation. There must be more virtue, religion, and good sense among the young men of the age, before this crying evil be remedied.

Finally, let us take the conclusion of the book of God, and the bright prospect which it discloses to our view, to support and cherish us under the melancholy scene exhibited to us in the beginning of it. "According to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new," Rev. xxi. 5. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God, and of the Lamb, shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever," Rev. xxii. 1...5. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and

worshipped God; saying, Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 9...17.

Thus, the mercy of God, and the blood of the Lamb, remove the guilt, and rectify the disorders of sin. Thus guilty fallen man is recovered and restored. Thus the evils recorded in the first pages of the Bible, are remedied and done away in that bright revelation of a world to come, which is open to us in the close of it. Thus is Adam, and his renewed offspring, conducted from a terrestrial paradise, where the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, grew up among the trees of life, to the paradise of God, where no mixture of evil intrudes itself, where none but the trees of life find a place. And thus the several parts of divine revelation explain, illustrate, strengthen, and confirm each other; and the whole taken together exhibiting throughout one great leading object, carrying on one great design, and accomplishing, at length, the one original purpose of the ETERNAL, is gloriously perfect.

Adam and Christ compared.

LECTURE III.

And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit....1 Cor. xv. 45.

THE frame of nature, the ways of Providence, and the work of redemption, mutually illuminate, explain, and support each other. The invisible things of God are clearly understood by the things which are made : the world is evidently upheld and governed by him who made it at first ; and the suspension of the laws of nature, and the special interpositions of Divine Providence, constitute the proof, that the gospel dispensation is from Him who has the universe under his control, to continue or to change its appearance at his pleasure ; who has all hearts in his hand, and consequently, all events at his disposal. When we attempt to contemplate the providence of God, we immediately find it to be a system infinitely too vast for human capacity to take in, too complex for our penetration to unfold, too deep and mysterious for our understanding to fathom. All that we can do is to consider the detached parts of this majestic whole, as they present themselves to our senses, or to our reason ; as they are transmitted to us in the history and experience of others, or as they are discovered to us by a revelation from heaven. Without the bible, it were utterly impossible to give a tolerable account, much less one completely satisfactory, of the origin of the world, or of the appearances of nature ; of the events which are

past and are recorded, or those which are every day presenting themselves to our observation. But when reason vouchsafes to kindle her feeble lamp with fire from the altar of God, and to supply it continually with fresh oil from the sacred stores, what was formerly dark becomes clear; and what before seemed intricate and perplexed, is found to be in perfect order and harmony; and the dim and scattered fragments become both legible and intelligible.

Nay, farther, the different parts of scripture itself, taken separately and without connection, may seem to have less force, beauty and importance; but when brought together, like the magnet and the steel, they immediately attract each other and unite; like the scattered bones in the valley, bone coming together to his bone, there starts up a perfect man, nay, an exceeding great army. Type meeting the thing typified, prediction squaring with event, promise tallying exactly with accomplishment, scripture acquires a solidity which bids defiance to all created force: becomes, in its own energetic language, "as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." The persons exhibited, the events recorded, the scenes described, the institutions ordained in one age and state of the world, which were the shadows of good things to come, are not only instructive and interesting in themselves, but acquire a weight and importance which they possessed not before, when viewed in their relation to Him, to whom all the prophets give witness, and whose person, character, and work, are the fulfilling of all that was written of old time.

The history of Adam ministers both pleasure and instruction to us as men: but Christians feel a peculiar interest in the perusal of it, by considering Adam "as the figure of him who was to come."

Having, in the last Lecture, attempted a delineation of the life of the first man, according as it is transmitted to us in the holy scriptures, we proceed in pro-

secution of our plan, to institute in a few particulars, a comparison between Adam and Christ; between the federal head and representative of the human race, and the covenant head and representative of the church. But first, let us observe wherein the first man differs from, and wherein he resembles all other men, who have descended from him by ordinary generation.

First, in the manner of his production. Other men arrive at their maturity, such as it is, by slow and insensible degrees; they make a progress through infancy, childhood, and youth, to man's estate; Adam was created perfect at once; the moment he began to exist, he existed in all the dignity and strength of reason and intelligence. All other men are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; he came from the hands of his Creator, holy and blameless, the Son of God. The mental powers of the wisest and most intelligent of mankind, his sons, are narrow and contracted; we know but a few things, and them imperfectly: the whole world of nature was an open volume to his understanding. Since the fall, men are born into the world with the seeds of decay and dissolution in the constitution and frame of their nature; but Adam was created incorruptible, immortal. The property and power of the greatest of his posterity is cramped and confined; limited by mountains, rivers, and seas; liable to be encroached upon, disputed, invaded, taken away: but the dominion of the first man was uncontroled, his authority indisputable, his property universal; the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, all, all were put under his feet. But Adam, fallen and lost, is just what all his hapless children are; like them a slave to divers lusts and passions; like them liable to disease and death; like them a prey to sorrow, fear, and remorse; like them a child of wrath, an heir of hell; and like them, to be recovered, restored, re-established, only by the mercy of God, and through the atoning blood of a

Saviour: and how that Saviour was typified or held forth to the world, by the person, character, and relative connections of Adam, is to be the subject of the remaining part of this discourse.

Adam, perhaps, was not himself aware, that he was in this respect fulfilling the designs of Providence. We know that many others exhibited striking types of the promised Saviour, in their persons, offices, and actions, without being conscious that such honorable distinction was conferred upon them; and Moses, the inspired author of the history of the first man, no where hints, that he considered Adam, or that Adam considered himself in this light. But to us the matter is put beyond a doubt, by one who wrote also under the inspiration of God, the great apostle of the Gentiles, who informs us, that this first man, into whose nostrils God breathed the breath of life, and who thereby became a living soul, was "the type or figure of him that was to come," Rom. v. 14...and in many other places in his epistles, shews us wherein the resemblance consists. Following him, therefore, and the other sacred writers of the New Testament, as our guides, we observe,

First, that Adam typified Christ, as being in a peculiar sense the *Son* of God. The evangelist Luke, in tracing the natural pedigree of our Saviour, ascends step by step from Son to Father, till he comes to the first progenitor of all, "who was," says he, "the Son of God:" that is, his immediate offspring, deriving his existence without any interposition, from the great source of being. And what saith the scripture concerning the Messiah? "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Psalm ii. 7...and "when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world," he saith, "And let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6.

As the manner in which Adam was produced was new and unexampled, so the conception and birth of Christ were "a new thing in the earth:" the former created of dust from the ground, the latter formed by

the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of a virgin. But Adam the son of God, though made in the likeness of his Creator, expressed that divine image only externally, as the coin exhibits the image and impress of the sovereign: whereas Christ the Son of God displayed "the brightness of his Father's glory," and bore "the express image of his person." Adam the son of God was produced in time, on the sixth day of the creation, after all the other works of God were finished: but Christ the Son of God, the eternal *wisdom* of the everlasting Father, thus speaks of himself, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world: when he prepared the heavens I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, and rejoicing always before him: rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 22...31.

Secondly, the constitution of Adam's nature prefigured the *person* of Christ. In Adam, an immaterial immortal spirit was united to a material earthly body, to constitute one perfect, living man; in Christ, the human nature was united to the divine, to constitute one perfect life-giving Saviour. The one a mystery of nature, the other a mystery of grace. The one, though incomprehensible, yet certainly *known* by every man to be true; the other, though incomprehensible, yet by every christian *believed* to be true

Thirdly, the paternal relation which Adam bears to all the human race, beautifully represents to us Jesus the Son of God, as the spiritual father of all them that believe. The first man, Adam, says the text, was made "a living soul," that is, the source of a natural life, to them who had it not before; the last Adam was made "a quickening spirit," that is, the giver and restorer of a spiritual and divine life, to those who having lost it, "were dead in trespasses and sins." The water in the conduit will rise to the level of its fountain, but can never mount higher. Thus Adam can communicate only what he was, and what he had himself; being therefore of the earth, earthy, he could only propagate an earthly existence; but the second man, being the Lord from heaven, can, and does, make his spiritual offspring "partakers of a divine nature." As every man, upon coming into the world of nature, the instant he draws the breath of life, bears the image of the first man whom God created; so from Jesus Christ, progenitor of them who believe, all who are regenerated, or born into the world of grace, derive their spiritual existence, and bear the image of him, from whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named. But Adam is the remote, not the immediate father of our flesh; whereas Christ is the immediate source of spiritual light and life to all those "who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13.

Fourthly, Adam and Christ bear a striking resemblance in respect of *dominion* and *sovereignty*. When God had created man, "he blessed him, and said unto him, Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." "Thou hast made him," says the psalmist, "a little lower than the angels; and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the

air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas," Psalm viii. 5...8. And Christ the Lord, even in the days of his flesh, while he yet dwelt among men, not only possessed but exercised an unlimited authority over the whole world of nature, over things visible, and things invisible. The prince of the power of the air fled at his command: the boisterous elements heard and obeyed his word: disease and death, and the grave fulfilled his pleasure. How much more justly, after his resurrection from the dead, when "declared the Son of God with power," could he say of himself, "all power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth!" and the apostle also, concerning him, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 9...11. *We* see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. "And he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." The sovereignty of Adam, however, was derived, dependant, limited, and might be forfeited: and his history, and our own experience feelingly assure us, "that, being in honor he continued not;" that the crown is fallen from his head, and the sceptre dropt from his hand. His derived authority was withdrawn by him who bestowed it; his dependant power was checked and curbed, because he had abused it; his limited empire was reduced to nothing, because he presumed to affect equality with his Creator; and, having received dominion under a condition, failing in the condition, he forfeits his throne. But the sovereignty of Christ is inherent, independant, unlimited, and everlasting. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom;" and the Son himself saith, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." "And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." John x. 28. 30.

Again, the sacred and pure matrimonial union established in paradise between Adam and Eve, was intended to prefigure the mysterious union, the pure and reciprocal affection of Christ and his church: in which also we follow the apostle of the Gentiles in his epistle to the Ephesians, Chap. v. verse 23... "for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy, and without blemish. We are members of his body: of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause, shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Finally, the whole tenor of scripture teaches us to consider Adam, the first of men, as the covenant head and representative of all his posterity, according to the order and course of nature; and Jesus Christ the Lord, as the federal head and representative of all his redeemed, according to the election of grace. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And

“if by one man’s offence, death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous,” Rom. v. 17...19.

But whatever admits of comparison, by bearing resemblance, must likewise admit of contrast, on account of dissimilitude: for what so like, as to be undistinguishable? What two persons are so much the same as not to exhibit, to the least discerning eye, characteristic marks of difference? And indeed the very particulars wherein the first and second Adam coincide, evince the infinite superiority of the one above the other, as well as those circumstances which could not possibly be in common between them.

Adam was assaulted of the wicked one, by a slight temptation; yielded, and fell: Christ was tempted of the devil, by repeated, vigorous, and well-conducted attacks; resisted to the last, and overcame. Adam in paradise, became guilty, and miserable, and liable to death: Christ passed through a corrupted world, lived in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation, but preserved unspotted innocence; “he did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips.” Adam by one offence became guilty of the whole law, poured contempt upon it, and transmitted his crime, together with the punishment of it, to all mankind: Christ, by a complete obedience, “magnified the law, and made it honorable,” approved himself unto God, and conveys the merit of his obedience and sufferings to all them that believe, for their justification and acceptance. Adam, aspiring to a condition superior to that in which his Maker placed him, not only failed to obtain what he aimed at, but also lost what he had; desiring to be as God, to know

good and evil, he acquired indeed the fatal knowledge of evil, but lost the knowledge of good which he already possessed; and sinking himself, drags down a devoted world with him: whereas Christ, for the voluntary abasement of himself, is exalted to "the right hand of the Majesty on high," "for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honor," and "lifted up on the cross, draws all men unto him." The moment we exist, in virtue of our relation to the first Adam, we die for an offence we could not commit; so, we no sooner become united to the second Adam through faith in his blood, than we become partakers of a spiritual and divine nature, and heirs of everlasting life, in virtue of a righteousness not our own. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." In Adam, we are condemned for one sin: in Christ, we are justified from many offences. The history of Adam represents to us a garden with one tree of life amidst many that were good for food, and near to one that was pregnant with death: the Revelation of Jesus Christ exhibits to us a paradise, all whose trees are of one sort; whose fruit is life-giving, whose very leaves are salutary; trees of life which know no decay, never disappoint the gatherer's hope, never feel the approach of winter.

Genesis presents to our trembling, astonished sight, "cherubims and a flaming sword, which turn every way to keep the way of the tree of life." The *Apocalypse* discloses to our delighted eyes, angels ministering to them who are the heirs of salvation; and our ravished ears hear these glad accents bursting from amidst the excellent glory, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

History of Cain and Abel.

LECTURE IV.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh....*HEB. xi. 4.

A STATE of innocence was apparently of short duration. The history of it contains but a very few particulars. To plunge the human race into guilt and ruin was the work only of a moment: but to restore mankind to life and happiness, employed depth of design to contrive; length of time to mature and unfold; and irresistible force to execute. The history of the world is, in truth, the history of redemption. For all the dealings of Divine Providence with men, directly or by implication, immediately or remotely, point out and announce a Saviour. To our first parents, immediately upon the fall, a promise was given, in general, indeed, but not in obscure terms, of deliverance and recovery, by one who should be in a peculiar and proper sense, "the seed of the woman." And it is far from being unreasonable to suppose, that the skins employed to cover the shame of our guilty first parents, were taken from victims slain by divine appointment; who by the shedding of their blood were to typify the great atonement, styled in scripture "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." But admitting this to be merely a fanciful conjecture, we have the authority of God himself to affirm, that the immediate

descendants of Adam offered such sacrifices, and looked in faith and hope to such a propitiation: "For by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh." The history, character, and conduct of these two brothers, from the materials furnished us in scripture, are to be the subject of this Lecture.

Adam, with the partner of his guilt and of his future fortunes, being expelled from Eden, and tumbled from all his native honors, enters on the possession of a globe which was cursed for his sake. He feels that he is fallen from a spiritual and divine life, from righteousness and innocence; that he has become liable to death; nay, by the very act of disobedience, that he really died to goodness and happiness. But the sentence itself which condemns him, gives him full assurance, that his natural life, though forfeited, was to be reprieved; that he should live to labor; to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow; and not only so, but that he should be the means of communicating that natural life to others; for that Eve should become a mother, though the pain and sorrow of conception and child-bearing were to be greatly multiplied. In process of time she accordingly brings forth a son; and pain and sorrow are no more remembered, for joy that a man-child is born into the world. What she thought and felt upon this occasion, we learn from what she said, and from the name she gave her new-born son. With a heart overflowing with gratitude, she looks up to God, who had not only spared and prolonged *her* life, but made her the joyful mother of a living child; and who in multiplying her sorrow, had much more abundantly multiplied her comfort. Ease that succeeds anguish is doubly relished and enjoyed. Kindness from one whom we have offended, falls with a weight pleasingly oppressive upon the mind. Some interpreters, and not without reason,

suppose, that she considered the son given her, as the promised seed, who should bruise the head of the serpent; and they read her self-gratulatory exclamation thus, "I have gotten *the* man from the Lord." And how soothing to the maternal heart must have been the hope of deliverance and relief for herself, and triumph over her bitter enemy, by means of the son of her own bowels! How fondly does she dream of repairing the ruin which her frailty had brought upon her husband and family, by this "first-born of many brethren!" The name she gives him signifies "possessed," or "a possession." She flatters herself that she has now got something she can call her own; and even the loss of paradise seems compensated by a dearer inheritance. If there be a portion more tenderly cherished, or more highly prized than another, it is that of which David speaks, Psalm cxxvii. 3...5: "Lo children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed; but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." But O, blind to futurity, with how many sorrows was this "possession," so exultingly triumphed in, about to pierce the fond maternal breast! How unlike are the forebodings and wishes of parental tenderness and partiality, to the destinations of Providence, and the discoveries which time brings to light! "And she again bare his brother Abel." The word denotes *vanity*, or a breath of air. Was this name given him through the unreasonable prejudice and unjust preference of a partial mother? Or was it an unintentional prediction of the brevity of his life, and of the lamentable manner of his death? But the materials of which life is composed, are not so much its days, and months, and years, as works of piety, and mercy, and justice, or their opposites. He dies in full maturity, who has lived to God and eternity, at what-

ever period, and in whatever manner he is cut off. That life is short, though extended to a thousand years, which is disfigured with vice, devoted to the pursuits of time merely, and at the close of which the unhappy man is found unreconciled to God.

Behold this pair of brothers, then, growing in wisdom and in stature ; gladdening their parents' hearts. They arrive at the age of reason, of vigor, of activity ; they feel the law of God and nature upon them. Though the heirs of empire, they must labor for their subsistence...“ Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground,” Gen. iv. 2. The earth will no longer spontaneously yield her increase. The clods must be turned up, and the seed must be cast into the furrow, through the care, foresight, and industry of man, else in vain will the heavens shed their influence ; and in vain will the blessing of the Most High be expected. That cattle may furnish either the fleece for clothing, or milk for food, they must be protected from inclement seasons, and ravenous beasts ; they must be conducted to proper pasture, and provided with water from the brook. And this is the origin of the first employments which occupied our elder brethren in a state of nature. And here it is observable, that the different dispositions of the brothers may be traced in the occupations which they followed. Pious and contemplative, Abel tends his flock ; his profession affords more retirement, and more leisure, for meditation ; and the very nature of his charge forms him to vigilance, to providence, and to sympathy. His prosperity and success seem to flow immediately, and only, from the hand of God. Cain, more worldly, and selfish, betakes himself to husbandry ; a work of greater industry and art ; the necessary implements of which suppose the prior invention of sundry branches of manufacture ; and in whose operations, and their effects, art blending with nature, would claim at least her full proportion of merit and importance.

But it is not the *occupation* which has merit or demerit; the man who exercises it, is the object of censure or of praise. It is not the husbandry of Cain, but wicked Cain the husbandman that we blame; it is not the shepherd's life, but good Abel the shepherd that we esteem. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof; and the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering," Gen. iv. 3, 4. What is any condition, any employment, unconnected with, unsupported, unadorned by religion! How wretched a creature is the mere citizen of this world, whose views, pursuits, and enjoyments, all terminate in time! The man who sees not his comforts and his successes as coming from the hand of God; and whose heart rises not in gratitude to the giver of all good, is a stranger to the choicest ingredient in the cup of prosperity. But can God, the great God, stand in need of such things as these? "Is not every beast of the forest his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills?" Yes, verily: religion was not instituted for the sake of God, but of man: for man cannot be profitable to his Maker, as he that is wise, and good, and pious, may be unto himself. Religion is pressed upon us by the very law of our nature; and it is absolutely necessary to human happiness.

Cain observes the fruits of the earth arrive at their maturity. He knows that all his care and skill, without the interposition of Heaven, could not have produced a single grain of corn. He had observed the seed which he cast into the ground, dying, in order to be quickened; he saw from putrefaction a fresh stem springing up, and bearing thirty, sixty, an hundred fold; and a power more than human conducting this wonderful progress. Of the first and best, therefore, he brings an offering unto the Lord; not to enrich his Maker, but to do honor to himself. Abel's flocks and

herds likewise, through the blessing of the Almighty, increase and multiply; he adores the hand that makes his wealth; and presents the firstlings of his flock to the Lord. But, alas! his offering, in order to be accepted, must bleed and die. The innocent lamb which he had tended with so much care, had fed from his hand, had carried in his bosom, must by his hand be slain, must find no compassion from the tender shepherd's heart, when piety demands him...must be consumed to ashes before his eyes. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering. But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect." What made the difference? Not the nature and quality of the things offered, but the disposition of the offerers. Our text illustrates and explains the passage in Genesis, "By FAITH Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Cain came before God as a righteous man; Abel as a sinner. Cain brought an offering of acknowledgment; Abel a propitiatory sacrifice. Cain's gift bespeaks a grateful heart; Abel's a contrite spirit. Cain eyes the goodness of God; Abel his mercy and long-suffering. Cain says, "Lord, I thank thee for all thy benefits toward me;" Abel, "Lord, I am unworthy of the least of thy favors." Cain rejoices in the world as a goodly portion; Abel, by faith, discerns and expects a better inheritance. Cain approaches, trusting in an imperfect righteousness of his own, and departs unjustified; Abel draws nigh, depending on the perfect righteousness of a Mediator, and goes away righteous in the sight of God.

In what manner the divine approbation and displeasure were expressed, we are not informed; whether by a celestial fire seizing and consuming the one offering and leaving the other untouched; or by a voice from heaven, declaratory of the mind of God. But we are assured that it was sufficiently notified to the parties themselves. On Abel, undoubtedly, it had

the effect which a sense of the favor of God will always produce upon a good mind, a mind which esteems the loving kindness of the Most High more than life; sweet complacency and composure of spirit, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." On Cain it produceth a very different effect; he was very wroth, "and his countenance fell." Men are often angry when they ought to be grieved; and remorse for their own unworthiness frequently becomes resentment against their innocent neighbors; and not seldom it changes into sullenness, insolence, and rebellion against God himself. Observe the goodness and condescension of God; he vouchsafes to reason with, to warn, and to admonish this peevish, petulant man; and gives encouragement to a better temper and behavior. "If thou doest well, shalt not thou be accepted?" He promises to support him in his right of primogeniture, unworthy as he was... "To thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him;" but at the same time he points out the danger of persevering in impiety and of prosecuting his resentments... "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." But the soul, of which envy, malice and revenge have taken possession, is lost to the better feelings of human nature; is deaf to remonstrance, and insensible of kindness. The innocent are simple and unsuspecting; intending no evil, they fear none. Cain it would appear from the letter of the narration, and the scene where the action is laid, decoyed his brother into solitude, under the mask of familiarity and friendship; "he *talked* with him," they were in the *field*. What a horrid aggravation of his guilt! A deed of violence! Murder! A good man's, a brother's murder! Deliberately resolved on, craftily conducted, remorselessly executed! Was man's first disobedience a slight evil, which introduced such desperate wickedness into the world; which transformed man into the most savage of beasts! "He rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." Now was

death for the first time seen ; and seen in his ghastliest form ! Death before the time ! The death of piety and goodness ! Death inflicted by violence, and preceded by pain ! Death embittered to the sufferer by reflecting on the hand from which it came ; the hand of a brother, the hand which should have supported and protected him, which should have barred the door against the murderer, not borne the fatal instrument itself ! At length the feeble eyes close in peace ; and the pain of bleeding wounds, and the pangs of fraternal cruelty are felt no more. “ The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it.” The spirit returns to God, to see his unclouded face, formerly seen through the medium of natural objects, and of religious services ; to understand, and to enjoy the great mystery of the atonement, hitherto known only in a figure. Happy Abel, thus early delivered from the sins and sorrows of a vain world ! And thus death, at whatever season, in whatever form, and from whatever quarter it comes, is always unspeakably great gain to a good man.

Such was the life, and such the untimely end of “ righteous Abel ;” for so our blessed Lord styles him, who fell a martyr to religion. The remainder of Cain’s history ; the short view given us of the character of his descendants, together with the birth of Seth, *given and appointed* of God to preserve the sacred line, to propagate the holy seed, in place of Abel, whom Cain slew ; will, with the permission of God, furnish matter for another Lecture. Let us conclude the present, by setting up the character of Abel as an object of esteem, and a pattern for imitation.

Faith in God, and in a Saviour to come ; and the righteousness which is of God by faith, are the leading and striking features of this portrait ;” and by these, “ being dead, he yet speaketh, or if you chuse to adopt the marginal reading, “ is yet spoken of.” It is a desirable thing to enjoy a good name while we live,

and to be remembered with kindness after we are dead. But reputation is the gift of others ; it is often gained without merit, and lost without a crime. Whereas true goodness is a real, unalienable possession ; it cleaves to us in death ; it accompanies us to the world of spirits ; it instructs the world while we live ; it speaks from the grave ; it shines in the presence of God in heaven. Here, my friends, it is lawful and honorable to aspire. Permit others to get before you in wealth or in fame ; grudge not to your neighbor the superiority in wit, or strength, or beauty : but yield to none in piety, in purity, in faith, in charity ; aim at the highest honors of the christian name ; be humble, and be every thing.

Salvation, men and brethren, has from the beginning, flowed in one and the same channel. There was not one gospel to the antediluvian, and another to the postdiluvian world ; one method of redemption to the Jews, and another to the Gentiles ; but “ Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” Abel, Abraham, Moses, David, Simeon, Paul, and all who have been, or shall be saved, lived and died in the faith of Christ. “ Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” Acts iv. 12. This therefore is the great commandment of God to us in these days of meridian light and glory, namely, “ that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another.”

Was Abel a type of Christ, as well as a believer in him ? The scripture indeed saith it not expressly ; but surely, without straining, we may discern some striking marks of resemblance. What saith Moses ? “ Abel was a keeper of sheep.” What saith Christ ? “ I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” What did Abel ? “ He through faith brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof, an offering unto the Lord.” What did Christ ?

“ Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God.” Were Abel’s days cut short by the hand of violence? So “ Messiah, the Prince, was cut off, but not for himself.” Was Abel hated of, and slain by his brother? Christ “ was despised and rejected” of his own, and died by the treachery of a familiar friend in whom he trusted, and by the cruelty of those who were his brethren according to the flesh. Did the blood of Abel cry to God from the ground, for vengeance on the head of him who shed it? O, with what oppressive weight has the blood of Jesus fallen, and how heavily does it still lie on the heads of them, and of their children, who with wicked hands crucified and slew him! Could the blood of Abel atone for his sin? No: but the blood of Christ cleanseth him, and every believer, from all sin. Yet Abel died as a righteous man, Christ as a sinner. Abel a guilty creature, was justified and accepted through an imputed righteousness; Christ, who was “ holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners,” was condemned and suffered, because “ the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Abel suffered death once for all; the body of Christ was “ offered once for all,” and by that one sacrifice, “ he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.” But we pursue the similitude and the contrast no farther. May God bless what has been said. Amen. And to his holy name be praise.

History of Cain.

LECTURE V.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous...1 JOHN iii. 11, 12.

IT is a pleasant task to attend the footsteps of the wise and good, through the thorny maze of human life : to draw nigh with the devout to the altar of God : to learn patience of the meek, compassion of the merciful, and kindness of the generous : to love and admire them in life, and to regret them in death. But ah ! how painful to trace the progress, and to mark the appearances, of “ the carnal mind, which is enmity against God,” and hatred to man from the first conception of an ill design, to the final execution of a deed of horror ! “ Lust, having conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin when finished bringeth forth death.” Nevertheless, it is highly important, that even objects of detestation should be placed before the eyes of men ; that sin should be viewed in her native loathsomeness and deformity, to excite, if possible, aversion and disgust. To direct men in the journey of life, it is necessary to erect beacons, the admonition of hidden dangers and death ; as well as to set up indexes, to point out the right path. The two first men who were born into the world, are designed of Providence to answer this valuable purpose, to those who should come after them. Abel, though dead, continues to instruct men

in the excellency, amiableness, and importance of true religion; Cain stands to all generations, a fearful example of ungovernable passion hurrying a man on to blood, and plunging him into despair. Having considered the former as a pattern for imitation, we are now to consider the history of the latter, as affording an useful and seasonable warning to look to ourselves, "lest we also be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin."

Cain has now accomplished his bloody purpose. His envied, hated rival is now removed out of sight: the virtues of his brother no longer reproach him: Abel stands no more in the way, to intercept the rays of the favor of God, or of man. Is he not now then at rest? No eye saw him commit the murder. And if it were known, who shall call him to account? No eye saw him! Yes, the eye of Cain saw him: yes, the eye of God saw him: hence the whole earth becomes all eye to behold him, all tongue to accuse him. Who shall call him to account? That shall Cain; his own conscience shall avenge the murder: that shall the hand of every man, fly whither he will; for every man is concerned to destroy him, who makes light of the life of another: that shall God, from whom he cannot fly. Revenge, like "a devilish engine," recoils on him that employs it; or like the flame of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, catches hold of, and destroys the ministers of vengeance, not the objects of it.

The mournful tidings must soon reach the ears of the afflicted parents. What were now thy feelings, Eve, when he, who was expected to be a Saviour, turns out a destroyer? Which is the heavier affliction, a son prematurely and violently cut off; or a son living to present an object of horror and detestation to their eyes? A pious child dead, is beyond all controversy, a *possession* infinitely preferable to a profligate alive. Alas! what shall they do? To overlook the murder, is to become partakers in the guilt of it; to punish the mur-

derer, as justice demands, is to render themselves childless. Ah! how do the difficulties and distresses of their fallen estate increase upon the guilty men every day! The cause which was too hard for Adam to determine, God takes into his own hand. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?" Gen. iv 9. Offences committed in secret, and offenders, whose power and station bid defiance to earthly tribunals, fall properly under the immediate cognizance of Heaven. Behold the throne is set, and the judgment opened. How meek and gentle is God with this murderer! He would draw confession from his mouth, not as a snare, but as an indication of contrition. The end which God has in view, in making inquiry after blood, is, not the conviction and punishment; but the conviction, pardon, and recovery of the criminal. What a question, "Where is thy brother?" put by God himself to the wretch whose hands were yet reeking with his blood! What heart, hardened through sin, dictated the reply, "I know not, am I my brother's keeper?" Is this the eldest-hope of the first human pair? Is he not rather the first-born of that accursed being, who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning? "I know not:" Falsehood must be called in to cover that wickedness which we are ashamed or afraid to avow. "Am I my brother's keeper?" How dreadful is the progress of vice! How crime leads on to crime! Envy begets malice; malice inspires revenge; revenge hurries on to blood; blood-guiltiness seeks shelter under untruth, and untruth attempts to support itself by insolence, assurance, and pride: and haughtiness of spirit is but one step from destruction. Ah, little do men know, when they indulge one evil thought, or venture on one unwarrantable action, what the issue is to be! They vainly flatter themselves it is in their power to stop when they please. But passion, like a fiery and unmanageable steed in the hands of an unskilful rider, by one inconsiderate stroke of the spur, may be excited to such a pitch of fury, as

no skill can tame, no force restrain ; but both horse and rider are hurried together down the precipice, and perish in their rage.

The milder, and more indirect admonitions and reproofs of God's word and providence, being misunderstood, slighted, or defied, justice is concerned, and necessity requires, to speak in plainer language, and to bring the charge directly home: and that severity is most awful, which was preceded by gentleness, patience, and long-suffering. God at length awakes to vengeance; "And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," Gen. iv. 10. And mark how every creature arms itself in the cause of God. The dead earth is represented as acquiring sensibility, and refusing to cover blood: the silent ground becomes vocal, and loudly accuses the criminal: the stones of the field are at war with him who has made God his foe: nay, the earth is made not only the accuser, but the punisher of the guilty; for this new transgression it falls under a heavier curse. Adam for his offence was doomed to eat bread with the sweat of his brow; was doomed to labor, yet to labor in hope of increase; but Cain shall spend his strength for nought and in vain. The ground shall present greater rigidity to the hand of cultivation: shall cast out the seed thrown into it, or consume and destroy it; or at best produce a lean and scanty crop. Cain and the earth are to be mutually cursed to each other. *It* seems to tremble under, and shrink from, the feet of a murderer; it refuses henceforth to yield unto him her strength, and considers him as a monstrous, mishapen birth, of which she is ashamed, and which she wishes to destroy. *He* considers it as an unnatural mother, whom no pains can mollify, no submission reconcile. "A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." When the mind is changed, every thing changes with it: when a man is at discord with himself, he is eternally from home. The

spacious world, Cain's hereditary domain, is become a vast solitude; of a home is turned into a place of exile. The person whom all men shun is every where a stranger; he who is smitten of his own conscience, is continually surrounded with enemies.

The same principle which engages men in criminal enterprises, in the hope of impunity, throws them into despair, upon the denunciation of punishment. As they formerly expected much higher satisfaction from the execution of their wicked purposes, than the most successful villany ever could bestow; so now, their own guilty minds outrun the awards of justice itself; and the awakened conscience does ample vengeance upon the offender at length, amply vindicates the cause both of God and man. This is strikingly exemplified in the case of Cain. His recent boldness and insolence are a strong contrast to his present dejection and terror. He now sinks under the apprehension of intolerable chastisements, and forebodes greater evils than his sentence denounced. His banishment he considers as far from being the greatest of the calamities of his condition; he feels himself excluded, hidden from the gracious presence of God; and deserted of his Maker, liable to fall by the hand of every assailant. But God remembers mercy in the midst of anger: and the life which he himself was graciously pleased to spare, no one else must, on any pretence whatever, presume to take away. He only who can bestow life, has a right to dispose of it.

Ye over-curious enquirers, who must needs be informed of every thing, what does it concern you to know, by *what* mark God distinguished Cain, to prevent his being killed by any one who might take upon himself to be the avenger of blood? Speculation and conjecture, which with some pass for illustration and knowledge, are not the objects of these exercises; but whatever assists faith, whatever supports a sound morality, whatever conveys real information, inspires a

taste for goodness, represses inordinate and sinful desire ; whatever teaches gratitude and love to God, and good-will to men, that we would carefully observe, and earnestly inculcate. As it is no part of our intention to wander into the regions of speculation, under a pretence of elucidating the sacred history, it is still less so, to enter the lists of controversy. Your Lecturer has, no doubt, his opinions and prejudices, like other men : his prejudices, however, he is confident to say, are on the side of truth, and virtue, and religion : his opinions, he has no inclination dogmatically to propose ; he neither wishes to make a secret of them, nor expects any one, much less the world, implicitly to adopt them. He is conscious of a desire to do good ; not over anxious about fame ; happy in the affection of many friends, and unconscious of having given cause to any good man to be his enemy. Forgive a digression, suggested by the occasion, not rambled into through design ; proceeding, not from the desire a man has to speak of himself, but from a wish, by doing it once for all, to cut off all future occasion of speaking in, or of, the first person. We return to the history.

“ It shall come to pass,” says guilty, trembling Cain, “ that every one that findeth me shall slay me.” This is one of the many passages of scripture, which the enemies of religion have laid hold of, and held forth, as contradictory to other parts of revelation, in the view of invalidating and destroying the whole. Here, they allege, Moses is inconsistent with himself ; in deriving the whole human race from the common root of Adam, and at the same time supposing the world so populous at the time of Abel’s murder, as to excite in Cain a well grounded apprehension of the public resentment and punishment of his crimes. Either, say they, there were other men and women created at the same time with, or before Adam and Eve ; or else Cain’s fears are groundless and absurd. A learned and ingenious critic has taken the trouble to refute this

objection, by instituting a calculation founded on obvious probabilities at least, by which it appears, that at the time of Abel's murder, the world was sufficiently peopled, on the Mosaic supposition, That all mankind descended from Adam, to render the public justice an object of well-grounded apprehension to guilty Cain. We pretend not to assert, that the calculation of a modern author is a demonstration of a fact so remote: if it be probable, it is sufficient for our purpose, that of doing away one of the cavils of infidelity. The birth of Seth is fixed, by the history, in the one hundred and thirtieth year of Adam: it is therefore reasonable to place the death of Abel two years earlier, or near it; that is, in the one hundred and twenty-eighth year of the world. "Now though we should suppose," says the calculator,* "that Adam and Eve had no other sons in the year of the world one hundred and twenty-eight but Cain and Abel, it must be allowed that they had daughters, who might early marry with those two sons. I require no more than the descendants of these two, to make a very considerable number of men upon the earth, in the said year one hundred and twenty-eight. For supposing them to have been married in the nineteenth year of the world, they might easily have had each of them eight children in the twenty-fifth year. In twenty-five years more, the fiftieth of the world, their descendants in a direct line would be sixty-four persons. In the seventy-fifth year, at the same rate, they would amount to five hundred and twelve. In the one hundredth year, to four thousand and ninety-six: and in the one hundred and twenty-fifth year, to thirty-two thousand seven hundred and sixty eight." Now, if to this calculation we add the high degree of probability that Adam had many more sons besides those mentioned in the record;

* Dissert. Chronol. Geogr.. Critiq. sur la Bible. 1me. Dissert. journal de Paris, Jan. 1712. Tom. li. p. 6.

that families were generally more numerous than the supposition states; that simple manners, rural employments, temperature of climate, and largeness of room, are circumstances inconceivably more favorable to population, than modern facts and European customs give us an idea of, we shall have no reason to think it strange, that Cain, under the pressure of conscious guilt, and harrowed with fear, which always both multiplies and magnifies objects far beyond their real number and size, should be alarmed and intimidated at the numbers of mankind, who, he supposed, were ready, and were concerned to execute vengeance upon him. "He went out," the history informs us, "from the presence of the Lord." Some interpreters have, from this expression, concluded, that even after the fall, God continued to reside among men, in some sacred spot adjoining to Eden, and in some sensible tokens of his gracious presence: that thither gifts and sacrifices were brought, and were there offered up; and that from thence, Cain, for his heinous transgression, was banished, and excluded from the society and privileges of the faithful. Whatever be in this, we know for certain, that wicked men naturally shun God, and drive him as far from their thoughts as they can: and in the phrase of scripture, God is said to "hide his face" from wicked men, to "turn his back" upon them, "to give them up," to denote his displeasure with them. "And he dwelt," it is added, "in the land of Nod." It is the same word which is rendered in the twelfth and fourteenth verses, a *vagabond*. Why our translators, in the two former verses, give the meaning, or import of the word, and in the sixteenth verse the letters of it merely, is not easily comprehensible. Let it be *translated* throughout, the sense is perfectly clear, and all ground of idle inquiry taken away. In the twelfth verse, God denounces his punishment, Thou shalt not die, but be *Nod*, a vagabond in the earth. In the fourteenth verse, Cain recognizes the justice of his sentence, and bewails it: "I shall be

Nod, a vagabond in the earth." And in the sixteenth, Moses gives us the history of its being put in execution, "he went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of *Nod*," a vagabond flying from place to place, skulking in corners, shunning the haunts of men, pursued incessantly by the remorseful pangs, and tormenting apprehensions of an ill conscience. Though you remove all external danger, yet "the wicked is as the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt:" he is "major missabib," a terror to himself. To live in perpetual fear, to live at discord with a man's self, is not to live at all.

The posterity of Cain are represented, in scripture, as the first to build a city. The mutual fears and wants of men drive them into society; put them upon raising bulwarks, devising restraints, cultivating the arts which afford the means of defence against attacks from without, or which amuse and divert within. The invention of music, and of manufactures in brass and iron, are, accordingly, likewise ascribed to his descendants.... When men are got together in great multitudes, as their different talents will naturally whet each other to the invention of new arts of life, and the cultivation of science; so their various passions, mingling with, and acting upon one another, will necessarily produce unheard-of disorders and irregularities. Hence, in *Enoch*, the city of Cain, and in *Lamech*, the sixth from Cain, we first read of that invasion of the rights of mankind, *polygamy*, or the marrying more wives than one. In a great city, as there will be many who omit doing their duty altogether, so there will be some, who will take upon them to do more than duty prescribes. The unvarying nearness, or equality which Providence has preserved from the creation of the world, of male and female births, is full demonstration, independant of all statute law, that the Governor of the world means every man to have his own wife, and every woman her

own husband ; that to neglect his intention in this matter, is an attempt to counteract his providence ; and that to outrun it is an effort equally vain, presumptuous, wicked, and absurd, to mend his work.

How long Cain lived, and when, or where, and in what manner he died, we have no information. And little satisfaction can it yield, to attend the footsteps of a wicked and unhappy man, through a life of guilt and remorse, to a latter end of horror. Better for him he had never been born, than to have lived a sorrow to her that bare him, detested and shunned of all men, “ a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth,” a burthen and a terror to himself. Better for him his name had never been mentioned among posterity, than to have it transmitted to latest generations, stained with a brother’s blood. But it is of high importance to know, that God, in his good time, supplied the place of righteous Abel, preserved alive the holy seed, and secured a succession, which should at length terminate in that “ promised seed,” who was “ to bruise the serpent’s head,” who was “ to destroy the works of the devil.” “ And Adam knew his wife again : and she bare a son, and called his name Seth ; for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed, instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.”

This wicked man’s history is a loud admonition to all, to watch over their spirits ; and carefully to guard against the first emotions of envy, anger, hatred, contempt, malice, or revenge. And the words of Jesus Christ confirm and enforce the solemn warning, “ I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall say unto his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council : but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ;

first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. v. 22, 23, 24.

Hold thy bloody hand, son, daughter of murderous Cain ! Why should a brother, a sister fall by it ! That furious look is a dagger ; that unkind word has made the blood, the heart's blood to follow it. *Daughter* of murderous Cain ! A *female* hand armed with a sword, lifted up to slay, dipped in blood ! No, she wields a more deadly weapon, she brandishes an envenomed tongue : poison more fatal than that of asps is under her lips ; it is not the body that suffers, when that unruly member moves ; it is the spirit, it is the spirit that bleeds : the man dies, and sees not who it was that hurt him ; he perishes in the best part of himself, his good name is blasted ; and what has he left worth possessing ? The sight of a little *material* blood makes her faint ; a dead corpse terrifies and shocks her ; but she can calmly, and with delight, sit down to that horrid human sacrifice, a murdered, mangled reputation !

But the history, also, in its connection, inspires holy joy and confidence in God, by representing the constant, seasonable, and suitable interpositions of his providence, according to the various exigencies of mankind. Devils and wicked men are continually aiming at defacing his image, at marring his work ; but they cannot prevail. The purposes of the divine wisdom and mercy are not to be defeated by the united efforts of earth and hell. Abel dies, but Seth starts up in his room. Jesus expires on the cross, but " through death destroys him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." " Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain."

History of Enoch.

LECTURE VI.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not ; for God took him...GEN. V. 24.

THE regular and uniform dominion of the laws of nature, or the occasional suspension and alteration of them, are equally a proof of the being and providence of God. Whether the sun with uninterrupted speed continues to perform his daily and annual course; or whether he “stands still in Gibeon,” or “goes back on the dial of Ahaz;” the interposition of the Most High is equally apparent, and equally to be adored. And why may not He, who “has appointed unto all men once to die,” in order to make his power known, and his goodness felt, exhibit here and there an illustrious exemption from the power of the grave, and thereby vindicate his sovereign rights as the great arbiter and disposer of life and death.

To fallen Adam it was denounced, “Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return;” by one man “sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:” But, behold the mortal sentence is remitted in favor of Enoch, the seventh from Adam; behold the order of nature is altered, the decree of Heaven is dispensed with; he is “translated without tasting of death.” When an event, so entirely out of course, takes place, it is natural, and not unprofitable, to inquire into the causes of it; for when the issue is singular and uncommon, we justly conclude that the circumstances

which led to it, were likewise singular and uncommon. The holy scriptures afford us, but sparingly, materials for a life, which concluded so very differently from that of other men; but what they have furnished, is striking and instructive.

The venerable father of the human race had now himself paid the debt of nature. The curse of the broken law had been seen and felt in the unnatural and premature death of Abel; and was at length inflicted, in the departure of Adam, at the mature age of nine hundred and thirty years. The events which had hitherto taken place from the fall, were so many successive demonstrations of the *justice* of God; under the weight of which, men were, one after another, sinking into the grave. All that *mercy* had as yet done, was to grant a reprieve of forfeited life: and death, though delayed to the thousandth year, is still bitterness in the end. We may reasonably suppose the faithful themselves to have been overwhelmed at the sight of so many vials of wrath, poured out from time to time on their guilty race. and that they were incapable of discovering the promises of favor and triumph, of life and immortality, through the obscure veil of that promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." The sacrifice of Abel indeed discovered a faith in God, which raised the *spirit* above the fear and the stroke of death; and good men like him, would be led in their dying moments, with holy confidence and joy, to commit their departing *souls* to God, as unto a faithful Creator; but the *body* evidently returned to its dust, suffered corruption, and was dissolved. Religion accordingly furnished, as yet, but imperfectly, one of the most powerful motives which it proposes to bring men unto God, as "the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him." But at length he vouchsafes to unveil the invisible world; and shews it to be possible "for flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of God." Within fifty-seven years from the

time that Adam was laid in the dust, Enoch, without undergoing that change, passes immediately into the presence and paradise of God. And thus there was placed before the eyes of the church, and of the world, in that early period, an anticipated view and example of the final victory which the Messiah was at last to obtain over death, and all the other enemies of man's salvation.

Enoch, however illustrious and distinguished in his latter end, as well as by the superior sanctity of his life, came into the world in the usual manner, and fulfilled the duties of the ordinary relations of human life, while he continued in it. One great branch of holy walking with God, is useful walking among men. Having, to the proper period, lived in the obedience and subjection of a son, he in due time becomes the master of a family and a father; for Methuselah was born to him in the sixty-fifth year of his age, a period earlier than that at which any of the patriarchs, according to the record, became a parent, except his grandfather Mahalaleel. It is not the religion of God, which withdraws or excludes men from society; and teaches disrespect to the secular destinations of providence, or the relative obligations and connections of life. No, it is the religion of Satan, which would represent as impure, what God declares pure, and permits to all, enjoins upon all: it is "a seducing spirit, and a doctrine of devils;" which forbids to marry, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth." What, is a wretched solitary monk in his cell holier than Enoch, the father of a numerous family, who pleased God, so as to be rewarded with exemption from death, and with immediate admission into the kingdom of heaven? He who lives unconnected, wilfully contracts his sphere of being useful, and of doing good; he wickedly hides his talent in the ground: he robs God, his country, and his kindred, of services which they have a just right to expect from him.

Again, this holy man deserves our notice, as one of the great ancestors of the human race ; as a link in the mighty chain of providence, which was gradually bringing on that eventful period, that fulness of time, when “the first-born among many brethren,” last in order of succession, but first in dignity, should come for our salvation. Enoch was born in the year of the world six hundred and twenty-two. Adam died fifty-seven years before his translation. Of consequence they were contemporaries, or lived together, for no less a period than three hundred and eight years. Adam’s whole stock of natural and divine knowledge might accordingly have been, and most probably was, communicated, by word of mouth, to Enoch, in so long a course of years : and much did he profit by a communication so important. And this, by the way, instructs us in one final cause of the longevity of the patriarchs in the antediluvian world. As there was then no written word, no transferable record of divine truth, all religious knowledge must have been greatly marred and impaired, if not entirely lost, in the rapid lapse of generations, reduced to the present short standard of half a century. But God graciously lengthened out life then to many centuries ; whereby the father was enabled to instruct his posterity of the seventh or eighth generation, in the things which he himself had received immediately from the fountain of all truth and knowledge. Thus are the dispensations of Providence suited to the necessities of mankind ; thus can God remedy every inconveniency, and make up every defect, in a way peculiar to himself. But to proceed :

Enoch was an illustrious person, not only in the church, but among the heathen. Eusebius, the famous ecclesiastical historian, who flourished and wrote in the fourth century of the christian era, quotes Eupolemus, a heathen author of credit, as affirming, that the Babylonians consider Enoch as the author of their astrology ; and alledge, that he is the same who is called *Atlas* by

the Greeks, who, from his profound skill in natural objects, and particularly from his discoveries in astronomy, was hyperbolically said to sustain the heavens on his shoulders. The expression, "Enoch walked with God," is, in conformity to this opinion, interpreted of his close and intense application to the study of nature, and of the great additions to the public stock of acquired knowledge, which he made in consequence of it. That this may warrantably be supposed to constitute one branch of "walking with God," we are not disposed to deny. The study of nature is honorable, pleasing, and improving, and "the invisible things of God" may be clearly traced in "the things that are made." But had Enoch been merely a great naturalist, a sagacious astronomer, or a profound soothsayer, he had not been transmitted to future generations by a distinction so honorable and so uncommon; nor had his history merited so much of your attention as has already been bestowed upon it. Whether he was an adept in the science of nature or not, we know, upon the best authority, that he was a great "prophet;" for Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, in his general epistle, quotes him in that quality, in these words: "Enoch also the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all the ungodly among them of their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him," Jude, ver. 14, 15. Now it is no business of mine to inquire in what record Jude found this prophecy of Enoch; it is sufficient for my purpose that an apostle of the Lord delivers it as such. Our purpose, is not to answer the objections, and refute the cavils of unbelievers, but, humbly to attempt to illustrate, enforce, and apply scripture truth, to those who receive the bible as the word of God; as the guide of their faith, the source of their hope, and the rule of

their life. From the prophecy itself, it is of importance to observe how early, and how powerfully the doctrine of a judgment to come was taught to the world. How clearly do those men discern, whose eyes are opened by the Spirit of the living God! How vast and how profound must that intelligence be, which can communicate, even to man, the foreknowledge of events the most remote; which revealed to Enoch, in the very infancy of the world, the awful day of its dissolution!

In this holy man it is apparent, that the grace of God's Spirit accompanied his gifts; the spirit of prophecy blended with the spirit of "faith, and love, and of a sound mind." Not like Balaam, who saw in prophetic vision, the star of Jacob arising, but in unbelief shut his eyes against its light; who descried things to come by the inspiration of the living God; but sottishly yielded homage to them who are no gods; who lived a prophet, but died an idolater: not like Caiaphas, who, following the impulse of his own passions, and governed by the prejudice of a blinded mind, uttered a truth which he was not aware of; stumbled on a prediction which he was unknowingly, undesignedly helping to fulfil: but Enoch, impressed with the solemn truth which he preached to others, daily improved by it himself. How apt are men to err in this respect!.... They earnestly covet the gifts, which are dispensed but to a few, and are not always sanctified to the possessor; while they are careless about the graces which God is ever ready to bestow upon all, and which always accompany salvation. Let me possess, O God, an humble and a charitable spirit, though with the simplicity of a child, rather than "speak with the tongue of men or of angels," and be destitute of it.

This leads us to the interesting, important, and instructive part of Enoch's history, namely, his moral and religious character, expressed in these few but comprehensive words, "Enoch walked with God." Every

thing else is transitory and fading. Youthful vigor and beauty are but the short-lived flowers of the spring, which die as soon as they are born; the honorable distinctions of this world are bubbles of empty air, which burst in a moment, and disappear for ever; scientific researches and discoveries, are only the amusements of children, who know but in part, and see as "in a glass darkly:" but holy walking with God is the honorable employment of a man: it is a permanent and perennial source of satisfaction; it is the essence of life; the cure of pain; the conqueror of death; the gate of immortality; it is heaven upon earth. And wherein does it consist? "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" No. Walking with God must therefore commence in reconciliation to God: and scripture knows, acknowledges, teaches no other way of reconciliation but one. And the sacred commentator on the passage and character under review, lays down this great leading principle of religion, as the foundation of Enoch's holy conversation, and of the honors which he of consequence attained... "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 5, 6. Now, in every age of the world, faith has but one and the same object. From Abel down to the youngest of the prophets, and from the fisherman who left his nets, and his worldly all to follow Jesus, to the end of time, the being, the nature, and the will of God have been, and can be, savingly known, and the mercy of God savingly embraced, only through a mediator.

On this foundation, what a superstructure of holiness may be raised! What gratitude, love, submission, and obedience to God! What complacency and delight

in him! What kindness, compassion, forbearance, beneficence, and charity towards men! What gentleness, meekness, purity, peace; to adorn, to compose, to tranquilize, to bless the man himself! What constancy, perseverance, uniformity, increase in goodness! What venerability as a patriarch! What dignity as a sovereign! What sanctity as a priest! What respectability as a husband, a father, a master! What utility as a pattern and example! And such an one was Enoch; thus he lived and walked with God; and thus escaped death, that end of all men: "He was not, for God took him." This is the last memorable particular of his history. About the import of the words we can be at no loss, after the apostle has explained them, by his being "translated that he should not see death." With the manner of that translation we have nothing to do, as scripture is silent. If God intended it to be a public admonition or encouragement to the men of that generation, we may rest assured he gave full and satisfactory evidence concerning it. That he meant it to afford universal and everlasting instruction to mankind, it is impossible to doubt, from his giving it so honorable and so distinguished a place in his word. And what is the instruction which it administers to the world? Simply this, that a life of faith and holiness is but one remove from glory: that heaven descended to earth, will quickly raise men from earth to heaven: that death either averted, or overcome and destroyed, will at length open a passage to perfect union with God and enjoyment of him. Why should I detain you, to relate the dreams of visionaries, and the fables of impostors, respecting the manner in which God disposed of Enoch after his assumption? There is no edification, and indeed but little amusement in the bold fictions of a Mahomet, or the wild conjectures of a Jewish Rabbín. We acknowledge no other paradise, or habitation of the blessed, but that represented in scripture, as the place where God gives the brightest evidences of

his gracious presence, and communicates his glory in full splendor. That, to which Jesus on the cross promised to conduct the penitent thief. That which Paul calls the *third* heaven: and which in other places of the bible is denominated HEAVEN simply and by way of excellency. Thither was Enoch taken; thither also did Elijah, two thousand one hundred and twenty-one years afterwards, mount on a chariot of fire, and the wings of a whirlwind; and finally, thither at length, in placid majesty, ascended the captain of our salvation, "leading captivity captive."

Thus, in each of the three great periods of the church, was exhibited an instance of a man taken up into heaven, body and spirit, as a support and encouragement to the hope of believers, of attaining the same felicity. Enoch before the law was given; Elijah under the legal economy; and Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, under the evangelical dispensation. And God, in conducting these events, has gradually disclosed life and immortality, from the dawning of the morning light, to the full glory of meridian splendor. It was a soothing, and an animating spectacle, for the faithful of the first world to see a good man vanish away, and after living his period on earth, in piety, purity, and peace, lodged, not in a tomb, but in the bosom of God. It was yet a stronger presumption of immortality, to those who lived in the second period, to see the heavens opened for the reception of one of their prophets; and celestial ministers in flaming fire, not of anger, but of love, sent to conduct him to the place of the blessed. But it is a demonstration to christians, and indeed the earnest and pledge of their inheritance, to see the great author and finisher of their faith, gradually and majestically rising through those vast regions which separate earth from heaven; and to hear the church triumphant summoning the gates of the palace of glory to be opened, to receive the King of Glory, on his coming to prepare mansions of bliss for their reception,

when the days of their probation are ended. "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

Enoch, Elijah, and Christ, in certain views, can be compared only with each other; but in all things, HE must have the pre-eminence. *They* prophesied through the power and virtue of the spirit *given* unto them; *he* is the *giver* of that spirit to them; and to all the prophets. As mere men, *they* must have had their infirmities, and the infirmities of one of them are upon record; but *he* knew infirmity only by a fellow feeling with the miserable, and he is the atonement for their sins. By the power and mercy of God, they were *taken* up into heaven; by his own power he *ascended* on high; *they* as servants, *he* as the eternal Son of God. In *them*, we have a repeated instance of bodies glorified without suffering death; *he* "was dead, and is alive again," and carried to heaven a body which had been laid in the tomb. In *them* we have an object of admiration and astonishment; in *him*, a pattern for imitation, a Saviour in whom to trust, a ground of hope whereon to rest. Faith *exempted* them from death; and faith shall at length *redeem* all the followers of the Lamb from the power of the grave. *Enoch* and *Elijah* ascended as solitary individuals, *Christ* as the first-fruits of them that sleep: and "lifted up," is drawing an elect world unto him. *They* were admitted to regions unknown, and among society untried: *he* only returned to the place from whence he came.

We conclude the History of Enoch with this obvious, but we trust, not useless reflection... That those lives which deserve most to be had in remembrance, are most easily recorded, and consist of fewest articles. The history of an Enoch is comprised in three words, while the exploits of an Alexander, a Cæsar, or any other of the scourges and destroyers of mankind, swell

to many volumes. But what comparison is there between the bubble reputation, bestowed by historians, poets, or orators, on the worthless and the wicked; and the solid, sterling praise conferred on the wise and good, by the Spirit of God, by whom actions are weighed, and who will at last “bring every secret thing into judgment?” And wo be unto them, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Into what a little measure shrinks the whole history of mankind previous to the *flood*; though a period of no less than one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years! To that great revolution of the world we are now brought; and the following Lecture, if God permit, will contain the first part of the History of Noah; in whose person, the old and new worlds, through the vast chasm of the deluge, were connected together; and who is exhibited in scripture as a type of Him, in whose person heaven and earth are united, and by whom all things are to be made new. May God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

History of Noah.

LECTURE VII.

And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.... GEN. v. 28, 29.

THE fortunes and characters of men are various as their faces. What diversity has appeared in the lives, and in the latter end, of those persons whose history has already passed under our review, in the course of these Exercises! Adam experienced a change more bitter than death. Abel perished by the hand of his brother. The murderer becomes a terror to himself, lives in exile, and dies unnoticed. Enoch is gloriously exempted from the stroke of death, and carried directly to heaven. Noah survives the whole human race, his own family excepted; lives to behold a world destroyed, a world restored.

We are now arrived at that memorable revolution of which there exist so many striking marks on the external appearance of the globe; of which there are such frequent and distinct intimations in the traditional monuments and records of all the learned nations of antiquity; and of which it has pleased God to give such an ample and circumstantial detail in scripture.

Concerning Noah great expectations were formed, from the moment of his birth. The world was arrived at an uncommon pitch of corruption and degeneracy. The natural evils which flesh is heir to, were prodigi-

ously increased by irreligion and vice ; so that the earth groaned, as it were, under the curse of God, and the violence and impiety of men. Lamech, the father of Noah, with the fondness and partiality of parental affection, flatters himself that his new-born son would prove a comfort to himself, and a blessing to mankind ; and, most probably directed by the spirit of prophecy, bestows upon him a name significant of his future character and conduct ; of the station which he was to fill, and the purpose which he was to serve, in the destination of Providence. He had the satisfaction of living to see his expectations realized ; and his eyes closed in peace at a good old age, five years before that great calamity which overwhelmed the human race...the deluge.

Scripture accounts for the universal depravity of that awful period, in these words ; “ And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair ; and they took them wives of all which they chose,” Gen. vi. 1, 2. These expressions the most respectable and judicious interpreters explain, as descriptive of unhallowed and imprudent intermarriages between the posterity of pious Seth, here called “ the sons of God,” and the female descendants of wicked Cain, denominated “ the daughters of men.” Attracted by external and transitory charms, they form alliances inconsistent with wisdom, and disallowed of Heaven. The invention of the fine arts being in the family of Cain, it is not absurd to suppose, that these were called in aid to personal beauty ; and that the allurements of music and dress in particular, were employed by the daughters of Jubal, “ the father of all such as handle the harp and organ,” and of Tubal-Cain, “ the instructor of every artificer in brass and iron,” to support the impression already made by their fair looks. What ensued? That which will always happen to piety

unwisely and unequally yoking itself with irreligion and prophanity; the evil principle being much more powerful to pervert the good, than the good to reform the evil. *Giants* are said to have been the issue of those unfortunate marriages; literally, perhaps, men of huge stature, like the sons of *Anak* in latter times; certainly, men of lofty, aspiring, haughty minds; the heirs to the pride, vanity, and presumption of their mothers, more than to the decency, wisdom, and piety of their male ancestors. That corruption must have been general indeed, which comprehended all, save Noah and his household; and it must have been very grievous, to constrain the Spirit of God, to employ language so strong and expressive as this, on the occasion: "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them," Gen. vi. 6, 7. When the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, dissolution and destruction cannot be at a great distance. "But Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations: and Noah walked with God." How honorable for Noah to stand thus single, thus distinguished! Goodness supported and kept in countenance by the mode, and by multitudes, is amiable and praise-worthy; but goodness single and alone; goodness stemming the torrent, resisting the contagion of example, despising the universal sneer, braving universal opposition, such goodness is superior to all praise: and such was the goodness of Noah. He distinguished himself in the midst of an adulterous and sinful generation, by his piety, righteousness, and zeal; and God, who suffers none to lose at his hand, distinguishes him by special marks of his favour. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," Gen. vi. 8.

Of no character does scripture speak more highly than of Noah's, "he was a just man and perfect in his generations, and walked with God." In general calamities, it must needs happen that the innocent suffer with the guilty. But in some cases, Providence is pleased specially to interpose for the deliverance of good men. Rather than one worthy family should perish in the deluge, a whole world of transgressors is respited, till the means of safety for that family are provided. Is a sinful city or nation spared? We may rest assured there are some valuable, pious persons among them. According to the idea suggested by our blessed Lord, the righteous are "the salt of the earth," that which seasons the whole mass, and preserves it from putrefaction and corruption. The apostle Peter styles Noah "a preacher of righteousness." He was not carried away by the prevailing profligacy of his day. He preached by a holy descent from the prevailing maxims and practices of the times. He preached by an open and bold remonstrance against the general dissoluteness and impiety. And he preached at length by his works; by the construction and fitting up of the ark for the preservation of himself and family, and for saving alive a breed of the various sorts of fowls and animals.

It is with pleasure we once more refer you to the sacred expositor of the antediluvian history: "By faith," says he, "Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith," Heb. xi. 7. Here a crowd of ideas rush upon us at once. Behold the great God in the midst of judgment remembering mercy. He will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. But God will not vouchsafe to perform that immediately by a miracle, which may be effected by the blessing of his providence upon human foresight, industry, and diligence.

He who was pleased to save Enoch, by translating him to heaven without tasting death, thought fit to preserve Noah by means of an ark of his own building. The design and contrivance is God's; the execution is man's. He who could have transported Noah to a different sphere, and have lodged him there in safety, till the waters of the flood had abated, kept him alive and in safety, rolling in the ark, upon the face of the mighty waters. He, who in the morning of the sixth day, by the almighty *fiat*, created at first the whole animal world, and though lost, could have in a moment replaced it, by the word of his power, thought proper to preserve alive the race of animals, by providing a place of refuge, and by a special instinct of his providence, warning them of their approaching danger, and conducting them to shelter.

Behold, dreadful to think! the patience of God at last exhausted: and the decree goes forth. "The earth also was corrupt before God: and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth," Gen. vi. 11, 12, 13. God has warned, threatened, borne with men in vain; and Noah has preached to them in vain. The day of the Lord is come, and who shall be able to stand? And who hath seen, heard of, or is able to conceive, a calamity so dreadful? "The end of *all* flesh is come. I will destroy them *with* the earth." Immediately upon the fall, universal nature underwent a change. The mild influences of the heavens were changed or withheld; the earth refused to yield her increase to the hand of the cultivator: but the full extent and awful import of the curse was never felt till now. By the deluge the whole face of nature was to be altered; the solid globe dissolved and disjointed; its parts torn

asunder from each other ; its fertility diminished ; that it might present to all future generations, a magnificent palace, but in ruins ; the mere skeleton of ancient splendor.

Some ingenious men have supposed, that at this period, the position and motion of our earth, with respect to the sun, were changed : that till then it was so situated in relation to the heavenly bodies, as to possess an equal and universal temperature of air ; that hitherto a perpetual spring went hand in hand with an abundant autumn : but that then it was placed in the slanting and oblique situation, which occasions diversity of climates and seasons ; which exposes one part to the burning and direct rays of the sun : binds another up in perpetual chains of darkness and ice ; gives birth to volcanoes, earthquakes, tempests, hurricanes, and all that tribe of natural evils which afflict the wretched children of men. The effects, undoubtedly, must have been wonderful, as the event itself is altogether preternatural. I have no intention of going at present into a discussion of the question, whether the extent of the flood was universally over *all* the earth ; nor into a philosophical investigation of the means employed in producing a phenomenon so singular. Taking the bible account of the matter in its literal import, we will rather make such reflections upon it as may, by the blessing of God, promote the interests of faith and of holiness in our hearts and lives.

Behold, then, the venerable sage, at the admonition of Heaven, undertaking his great work. The foundation is laid ; the fabric advances ; and every stroke of the axe or hammer, summons a thoughtless and a guilty world to repentance : but “ they will not hear, they will not lay it to heart.” I see the good man, maligned, derided, insulted. In their gaiety of heart, they scornfully style the ark, *Noah's folly*. The work is finished, but they continue to sing, dance, and play ; and many, it is probable, have an active hand in the

construction of that machine, to which they scorn to resort for shelter from the impending danger. Noah is not to be diverted from his purpose. Neither the immensity of the undertaking, nor the length of time which it required, nor the opposition which he meets with from an unbelieving generation, discourage him in the prosecution of a design, planed by infinite wisdom, and recommended by divine mercy.

How the whole tribe of commentators have gone into the opinion, that the space of one hundred and twenty years were employed in building the ark, is strange and unaccountable. It appears not on the face of the history: it is irreconcilable to reason and experience: as without a miracle, the parts first constructed must have failed and decayed before the latter parts were finished: and it expressly contradicts the chronological detail of the facts, as delivered to us in scripture. For Noah was five hundred years old at the birth of his eldest son. When the order for building the ark was given, all his three sons were married, as we learn from the following passage: "But with thee will I establish my covenant: and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee," Gen. vi. 18. The youngest therefore may reasonably be supposed to have seen his fiftieth year; and the flood came upon the earth in the six hundredth year of Noah's life; there is left, then, a period considerably less than fifty years, for the execution of the work; and it most probably occupied a much shorter space than even that.

Some minute inquirers have taken the trouble to calculate the solid contents, and thence to estimate the burthen of this wonderful vessel. A cubit is the distance in a full grown man, from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger; for the conveniency of calculation, it has been fixed at a foot and a half of common measure. Upon this supposition the ark contained one million, seven hundred and eighty-one thousand, three hundred and forty-

six cubical feet ; which, according to the usual allowance of forty-two feet to a ton, or two thousand pounds weight, makes the whole burthen to be forty-two thousand four hundred and thirteen tons ; which is considerably more than the burthen of forty ships of one thousand tons each. Such was the vast unwieldy fabric, entrusted, without mast, sail, rudder, or compass, to the mercy of the waves ; and which contained the saved remnant of the human race, and of the animal creation, with all necessary accommodation and provision for the space of more than a year.

Behold the four footed and the feathered tribes, each according to his kind, by a peculiar instinct of Heaven, flocking to Noah, for protection from the threatening tempest, as formerly to Adam, to receive their names. The beasts take warning and hide themselves, but men, more stupid than the brutes, sin on, till they are destroyed. Every thing announced a storm gathering. Noah preaches to the last hour ; admonishes, entreats, threatens, and invites. What means that preternatural gathering together of the brute creation to one place ? How came they in a moment to change their nature ; to seek what before they shunned ; to forget all animosity towards each other ? Whence is it that the “ wolf dwells with the lamb, the leopard lies down with the kid, and the young lion and the fatling together ? ” What so brutish and incorrigible as men given up to their own lusts !

At length all is safely housed, from the dove, to the raven, and God shuts in Noah with his charge. When lo ! the face of heaven is covered with blackness. Nature shudders at the frown of an angry God ; the windows of heaven are opened ; the rain descends amain : the barriers that confined the ocean to its appointed bed are removed, and the waters from beneath start up to meet the waters coming down from above, and join their streams to avenge a holy and righteous God of his adversaries. The gradual increase of the cala-

mity is a dreadful aggravation of its horror. Thick clouds first gave the alarm. Rain uncommonly heavy, and of longer than ordinary continuance, increases the growing surprise and consternation. The voice of mirth is heard no more, and "all the daughters of music are brought low." By degrees the rivers swelling over their banks, and seas forgetting their shores, render the plains and the vallies no places of safety. But the lofty mountains will afford a refuge from the growing plague. Thither, in trembling hope, the wretches fly. The gathered tempest will surely spend itself, and serenity return. Ah, vain hope! the swelling surge gains continually upon them; all is become sea; the foundations of the hills are shaken by the tide; it advances upon them. As their last resource they climb the trees which cover the mountain tops, and cling to them in despair. Their neighbors and friends sink in the gulph before their eyes! their ears are filled with the shrieks of them that perish. All is amazement and wo. At length they are all overtaken and overwhelmed. To have lengthened their miserable existence so long by vain efforts, is only to have lengthened out anguish. To fill up the measure of their misery, they perish in sight of a place of security which they cannot reach; they perish with the bitter remorse of having despised and rejected the means of escape, when they had them in their power; like the rich man in hell, whose torment was grievously augmented by the sight of Lazarus afar off in the bosom of Abraham.

Compare with these, the feelings of Noah and his little family within the ark. They enjoy a refuge of God's providing. They have full assurance of the divine protection. Ample provision for the evil day is made. O what gratitude to their Almighty Friend! O what fervent love among themselves! O what holy composure and rest in God! O what awful reflections

on the justice and severity of the great Jehovah! O what sweet and satisfying meditations on his mercy!

The sequel of Noah's history, and the comparison between him and Adam, and between him and Christ, will, if God permit, be the subject of the next Lecture. We cannot conclude the present without reflecting

On the danger and mischief which arise from forming graceless connections. It administers a solemn and suitable admonition to the male part of my audience, who have not already contracted alliances for life, to consider a principle of religion, and a taste for devotion, as among the leading qualities to be sought after in the female character, and the only sure foundation of honorable and lasting friendship; as the basis of, and the prompter to, every domestic duty.

It administers a just, and, I am sorry to add, a *seasonable* reproof, to that spirit of avarice and selfishness, together with that criminal love of pleasure, which too much characterize the young men of the present day, and to which the higher considerations of piety, modesty, and accomplishments really useful and ornamental, are daily sacrificed.

It instructs my female hearers, too, in the knowledge of what constitutes their real worth and excellence. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised," Prov. xxxi. 30. General declaimers against the female sex have got excellent topics for their spleen, in the seduction of the first man by Eve, and the corruption of the old world by the daughters of Cain. I would make a kinder use of these sad events, by considering them as instances of the great power which women have over men; and hence earnestly call upon christian women, to cultivate with care and diligence the graces of that character, and to employ their influence, according to their different relations and opportunities, to diffuse a taste for what is decent, pious, and praise-worthy; and they may rest assured that their friends of the other

sex will at least study to appear, what they would have them to be.

The example of Noah is a loud call to aim at singular goodness. The multitude of offenders lessens neither the criminality, nor the danger of any one. Let none then think "of following a multitude to do evil." Community in vice may seem to diminish the guilt of sin, but community in suffering is a bitter aggravation of it. Dare to stand, though alone, in the cause of God and truth; knowing that wicked men themselves revere that goodness which they do not love, and secretly approve the virtue which they will not cultivate. Remember who hath said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

You have heard of the destruction of the old world by water; your eyes shall behold that which now is, destroyed by fire. The preservation of Noah by means which God appointed, is a striking type of the method of salvation from sin, death, and hell, by Jesus Christ. The present day of merciful visitation, is the precious season of resorting to that strong hold and place of defence; and to you the call is once more given, "look to me and be saved;" "come to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

History of Noah.

LECTURE VIII.

And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark : and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.... GEN. viii. 1.

THE word and the providence of God are the only infallible interpreters of his nature. The existence, and the order of the *visible creation*, evince the being of one Eternal Cause of all things, infinite in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, mercy, and truth. But the harmony, the extent and limits of the divine attributes and perfections, are to be discovered only by observing what comes to pass ; and by reading and understanding what God has been pleased to commit to writing, for our instruction. The light of nature is sufficient, for example, to instruct us, that God is righteous ; and experience assures us, that he is merciful ; but without the help of revelation, and the history of providence, we could not, we durst not say, where justice would stop, and when the tide of mercy would begin to flow. And is it not pleasant and encouraging to reflect, upon the authority of both scripture and experience, that justice, the awful and formidable perfection of the most high God, has its bounds ; whereas goodness and tender mercy swell over all limits, possessing a heighth and depth, a length and breadth, which surpass knowledge ? Justice, is the river confined within its banks, and terminating its course in the sea ; mercy, the unconfined, immeasurable ocean, in surveying the vast extent of which, the eye fails, and

thought itself is lost. It is, moreover, delightful to consider, that the very judgments of Heaven, however dreadful in their nature and effects, are upon the whole, and in the end, unspeakable blessings. The wrath of man, and judgments of which men are the authors, like uncontrolled rage of devouring flames, spare nothing; they consume root and branch together: but divine justice, like the refiner's fire, lays hold only of the dross, and bestows on the remaining ore greater purity and value.

The history of the deluge, among many other instances which might be adduced, is a plain and a striking illustration of these observations. The last Lecture exhibited the fearful triumph of divine justice. We beheld heaven from above, the earth and ocean from beneath, uniting their forces in their Maker's cause; "the windows of heaven opened," the "fountains of the great deep broken up," blending their waters, to overwhelm a world of ungodly men. What a prospect did this globe then present to the surrounding spheres! Involved in gross darkness for forty days together: and when the light returns, no dry land appears, for even "all the high hills which were under the whole heaven were covered:" And O, tremendous object of divine vengeance! "All flesh died, that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beasts, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man. All, in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark," Gen. vii. 21, 22, 23, 24. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

At length the tempest of wrath spends itself. At length, after a night so dark, so dreary, and so long, the morning light begins to dawn. Nothing but water

is to be seen, except yonder little bark floating on the mighty surge, which threatens every moment to swallow it up, or to dash it impetuously on some rocky mountain's top. It contains the sad remainder of the human race; the hope of all future generations. It is preserved, not by the power of him who constructed, but of him who designed it, and who directed it to be built. It is guided, not by the skill of the mariner, but steered by the hand of Providence. That a vessel of such construction, should preserve its upright position for so long a time, in such a wild uproar of nature, must be ascribed to a perpetual supernatural interposition.

The ark has proved the *protection* and *preservation* of Noah; but is it not his *prison* also? How gladly do we submit to a temporary inconveniency for the sake of a great and lasting good! But the inconveniences to which we submit in fulfilling the designs of Providence, shall not be prolonged beyond their needful period, nor increased beyond our strength. What an amiable view of the mercy and condescension of God is presented to us at this period of Noah's history! "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast!" And "doth God take care for oxen?" "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged." He who makes sphere to balance sphere, in the great system of nature, can make one element check and control the rage of another, in the subordinate economy of our little globe. Wind stops the progress, and diminishes the fury of water at God's command. The dominion of any one element prevailing too long, must soon prove fatal to the whole; but their powers blending with, opposing, balancing each other, produce that wonderful and delightful harmony, on which the being and the happiness of mankind depend. "The waters prevailed one hundred and fifty days, and after the end of them, they were abated."

According to the best chronological calculations, the different eras or stages of this great event, adapted to our reckoning of time, are thus fixed : A few days after the death of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, who was born two hundred and forty-three years before Adam died, and in whose person, of course, the creation of the world and the flood seemed almost to meet ; I say, a few days after *Methuselah's* death, God commanded Noah, on the tenth day of the second month, answering to the thirtieth of November, in the year of the world one thousand six hundred and fifty-six, and before Christ two thousand three hundred and forty-eight, to prepare that week for going into the ark, and to receive all the living creatures which came thither by direction of Providence, in the course of seven days.

On the seventeenth day of the second month, or the seventh of December, in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, the deluge began, after the Lord had shut him in with all his family. The rain from heaven, and the flux from the ocean, continued without intermission, forty days and forty nights, till the waters prevailed fifteen cubits above the highest mountains ; and then stayed, on the seventeenth of January. It continued flood one hundred and fifty days, including the forty days from its commencement to its full height ; that is, to the seventeenth day of the seventh month, or the sixth of May, when the flood abated, and the ark rested upon one of the mountains of *Ararat* or *Armenia*. On the first day of the tenth month, or July nineteenth, the waters still continuing to decrease, the tops of the neighboring mountains became visible from the ark. At the end of forty days from thence, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, or the twenty-eighth of August, Noah opened the window of the ark, and sent forth the raven, which never returned to him. After expecting her for seven days in vain, on the third of September, he sent forth the dove, which returned to him the same day, having found no rest for the sole of

her foot, through the continuance of the waters. After seven days more, on the tenth of September, he again sends forth the dove, which returned in the evening, with an olive leaf in her mouth, a proof that the waters had decreased below the height of that plant. After waiting yet seven days more, Noah again sends forth the dove, on September seventeenth, which returned not again to him, a proof that "the ground was dry," and that this bird could now find food to sustain life, out of the ark.

On the first day of the first month, answering to October the twenty-third, in the year of the world one thousand six hundred and fifty-seven, when Noah entered into the six hundred and first year of his age, on this first day of the new world, he removed the covering of the ark, and beheld that the ground was dry. And finally, on the twenty-seventh of the second month of this new year, or December the eighteenth, at God's command, who had shut him in, Noah came out of the ark, and all who were with him, in perfect safety; after they had been confined therein the space of one year and eleven days.

And now that he is liberated from so long confinement, what are his first sentiments; what is the first use he makes of restored liberty? It is neither a day of business, nor of pleasure, for himself, but of piety and gratitude towards God. A portion of the animals, hitherto cherished and protected with so much care and tenderness; and preserved in the general wreck of nature, must yield their lives, and pour out their blood by their patron's hand, at God's altar. Was not this a direct acknowledgment, that his own life was forfeited with those of the rest of mankind; but spared by an act of distinguishing grace? The stock of living creatures was awfully reduced by the deluge; and this consideration, with a worldly and selfish mind, might have been pleaded as an excuse for delaying sacrifice till victims were multiplied by length of time. But when

works of piety, charity, or mercy are to be performed, a gracious spirit considers the urgency of the call, rather than the largeness of means. What is saved from God and the wretched, from religion and humanity, will never make any one rich. What is bestowed on works of piety and mercy, is property laid out at more than common interest. Did Noah's six couple of beasts, and of birds, increase more slowly, that the seventh was devoted in sacrifice to his Maker and Preserver? I suppose not. In this, if in any sense, what the wise man says is true, "there is that scattereth and yet aboundeth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." O how acceptable to God are the sacrifices of an humble, grateful, faithful heart! The ground that was cursed for the offence of one, and deluged for the offences of many, by the faith and piety of one, is delivered from the curse, and forever secured from the danger of a second flood: "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done," Gen. viii. 21.

Having satisfied the demands, and received the consolations of religion, Noah and his sons are dismissed of God to their secular employments, to the possession and cultivation of their spacious inheritance. All the grants which had been given to the first man, and all the blessings pronounced upon him, are renewed to Noah and his family. The whole animal creation is afresh subjected to their power and authority. And now, for the first time, we read of the flesh of animals being permitted unto man for food. But, in the very same breath, the use of blood is forbidden to mankind. Was it intended to admonish men to be tender of the lives of the brute creation; and not to take away, wantonly and unnecessarily, what they are unable to restore? Was it to teach men not to use as common

food what was, from the beginning, the symbol of atonement? Is it that the thing prohibited is unfit and unwholesome for aliment? Was it, by placing a fence round that which constitutes the life of a beast, to guard with the greater sanctity the life of man! The interdiction undoubtedly *has* a meaning, for none of the precepts of God are merely arbitrary. Wherever he interposes by a special mandate, there we may rest assured, some end of piety, of purity, or of mercy is to be accomplished by it.

God never communicates his grace by halves. He is but half preserved, who has escaped one great calamity, if he must afterwards live in perpetual fear. Noah's family has outlived the deluge; but every dark cloud is a memorial of that grievous plague, and a threatening of its return. Every watery cloud therefore, with the sun in opposition to it, shall be an assurance, written in the most distinct characters, to them and all generations of men following, that "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." The bow in the clouds existed no doubt before this; the natural cause always and uniformly must produce the same effect; but it has now a use and meaning unknown before. It formerly manifested in its most beautiful colors, stupendous size, and exact shape and form, the God of *nature*; now it has become a witness for the God of *grace*. It was always an object beautiful to behold; but O, how much greater its excellence and importance, as the token of God's covenant! When natural appearances lead to saving acquaintance with nature's God, then they are truly valuable and useful.

We are now come to the last memorable event of Noah's life; which, though far less honorable for him than those which preceded it, the sacred historian has nevertheless recorded, with the same exactness and fidelity which he has employed in transmitting the rest of his history. Noah, though advanced to a late period

in life, and assured that henceforth the duration of human life was to be greatly abridged, engages with alacrity in the labors of husbandry. That God who thought fit to save him from the flood, by an ark of his own building, will not preserve him alive but by fruits of his own raising. He who would reap the clusters of the vine, must first plant, shelter, prop, and prune the vine. But behold the juice of the grape in a new state; possessing a quality unheard of before. Eaten from the tree, or dried in the sun, it is simple, and nutritious like the grain from the stalk of corn; pressed out and fermented, it acquires a fiery force, it warms the blood, it mounts to the brain, it leads reason captive, it overpowers every faculty, it triumphs over its lord. How often have arts been invented, which have proved fatal to the inventors! Every poison, it is said, contains, or is produced contiguous to, its antidote. Such is the care, such the goodness of God to men. But alas! must it not also be observed, that our very food and cordials contain a poison, through the ignorance or excess of man. Was Noah unacquainted with this intoxicating quality of wine, and overtaken through inexperience? Or did the faithful monitor of the old world, and the father of the new, deliberately sacrifice decency and understanding to this insinuating foe? In either case, who can help deploring his shameful, his degraded condition; and the consequences which flowed from it! We pity the dishonored father; but we detest the unnatural son, who could make sport of his parent's shame. He who intoxicates himself does ill; but he who in cool blood, can take an indecent, or an injurious advantage of the intoxication of another, does worse. The modesty and dutifulness of two of Noah's sons, exhibit a lovely and instructive example to youth; their ingenuous shame, their eagerness to conceal the infirmity of their father. They deserve to be blessed with numerous and thriving families, who have practised duty and obedience to their parents. This

accordingly is the blessing entailed upon Shem and Japhet; and Ham's disrespectful and indecent behavior towards his father, is in like manner punished in the entail of a lasting and heavy curse upon his offspring. Of all the precepts of the law, the fifth most obviously, directly, and certainly requites the breach, or the observance of itself. Noah awakes from his wine, and meets the reproof of his intemperance, in the knowledge of what his sons had done unto him, when he was not himself. And what reproof so keen and severe to an ingenuous mind like his, as the reflection, that he had made himself an object of scorn and derision to one part of his own family, and of sorrow and pity to the other?

At length the period arrives that Noah must die; and he who had seen the world in three different states as it came from the hands of the Creator, unless as it was affected by the fall....covered over with the waters of a flood....and restored again through the mercy of Heaven, at last sinks into the grave, and ceases to have any farther interest in the world. He survives that great destruction, the deluge, three hundred and fifty years; lives to instruct a new race of men in the knowledge, the love, and the worship of the true God; lives to see his progeny increased and multiplied, and spreading on every side; lives to exhibit to a short-lived race of mortals an example of patriarchal dignity and longevity; and dies at the age of nine hundred and fifty years; short of the life of Methuselah only by nineteen. From that period, the life of man began gradually to decrease, till it shrunk into its present little measure. Whether life be long or short, "death certainly is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to his heart."

Noah and Adam may be compared and contrasted in various respects. Adam the father of the first world; Noah of the second. Adam, by one wilful transgression, involved all mankind in ruin; Noah, by

many repeated efforts, in vain endeavored to save mankind from impending destruction. The unbelief and disobedience of Adam affected all; the faith of Noah preserved a remnant. The grant of the whole globe was conferred on these two alone, of all mankind. For the crime of the one, the earth was cursed; through the sacrifice of the other, the curse was withdrawn. In both, their own ill behavior was punished in the ill conduct and behavior, and in the punishment of their children. Upon the guilty son of Adam, God pronounces sentence, and executes judgment in person: the injured father himself, in the case of Noah, is made the minister of wrath, to denounce the vengeance of God upon his own guilty son.

Adam and Noah were both distinguished types of Christ; and from this they derive their chief dignity and importance. Some interpreters, who wish to find out an evangelical meaning to every the minutest circumstance in the sacred records of the Old Testament, have alleged, that the import of the names of the antediluvian patriarchs, taken in their order, contain a prophecy of the Messiah: with which I shall present you, rather as discovering an honest zeal for the prevalency of gospel ideas, than as containing a solid and satisfactory argument, in support of gospel truth. Blessed be God, our most holy faith is built on a broader, surer, and more immoveable foundation than the uncertain and arbitrary interpretation of a few Hebrew names. But the speculation is at least innocent, and may perhaps have afforded some degree of consolation to the pious minds which have adopted it. The explanation of the names alluded to is this...*Adam*, man: *Seth*, placed: *Enos*, in misery: *Cainan*, lamentable: *Mahaleel*, the blessed God: *Jared*, shall come: *Enoch*, teaching: *Methuselah*, that death shall send: *Lamech*, to the smitten, or miserable: *Noah*, consolation. But we are fully warranted by many clear, indubitable, and explicit applications of scripture, "to preach the

unsearchable riches of the gospel of Christ," from the history of Noah. Shall I encroach upon your patience, and proceed to it now? or implore your candor for an attentive hearing of it, extended to its proper length, and displayed in its minuter circumstances, in a future Lecture? I must trespass no longer upon the former; but rather trust to the latter. And the more, that I cannot but wish both preacher and hearers might bring freshness of spirits, patience of attention, and thirst of improvement, to a subject of first-rate importance in the scale of divine truth. And now may He who, by an ark of Gopher-wood, saved Noah and his household from a deluge of water, deliver us, by the grace of his Son Christ Jesus, from that more dreadful deluge of fire, which scripture assures us shall come upon the "world of the ungodly." "Flee now to your stronghold, ye prisoners of hope: behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." To the God of mercy, through the Son of his love, be ascribed immortal praise. Amen.

Noah and Christ compared.

LECTURE IX.

*For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me : For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee....*ISAIA. liv. 7, 8, 9, 10.

AS the lesser streams fall into, and are mixed with, the greater ; and as all the rivers empty themselves, and are lost in the ocean ; so the whole course of events, from the creation of the world, in their separate currents, and in their general and combined tide, flows towards one grand era, styled in scripture the *fulness* of time ; and terminates in one event, of infinitely greater moment than all the rest, “ the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh.” The patriarchal dignity, prophetic foreknowledge and penetration, the sanctity of the priesthood, and the regal majesty, all point out, all move towards, all centre, and settle in Him, who is “ the everlasting Father,” “ the Prophet who should arise,” “ the Apostle and High Priest of our profession,” “ the Prince of the kings of the earth.”

We are struck with a pleasing awe when we converse with the venerable men who lived before the flood. Adam the first of men; Enoch who walked with God; Noah the preserver and restorer of the human race.

But in tracing the history of their lives, a still small voice continually whispers us in the ear, saying, A greater than Adam, a greater than Enoch, a greater than Noah is here: a voice from heaven proclaims, sinners, attend; "Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." Some, with more zeal and honesty, than wisdom and truth, have labored to discover and to establish a resemblance between our blessed Lord and those who were types of him, in every the minutest circumstance of their lives, and in every expression they employ to describe their private and personal feelings and situations. This has been carried so far as to strain and stretch the penitential language of David in the fifty-first psalm, respecting the matter of Uriah, into expressions suitable to the character and condition of the Messiah, in certain supposed circumstances. Guarding ourselves against every thing like a forced construction and application of scripture; without hunting after fanciful resemblances, which tend to weaken and impair the truth, instead of strengthening and supporting it; we will endeavor, carefully to point out and improve those which actually exist; namely, such as the Spirit of God directs us to form, by pointing them out to us in the written word; or such as by fair analogy, that is, from known and admitted facts, or from obvious and incontrovertible reasonings, we are warranted to form for ourselves.

Happily, the history of Noah is one of those, in the use and application of which, scripture has lent us much assistance. The very *name* of that patriarch was not given him without a meaning and design, which extended much farther than to his person, and the day in which he lived. "This same," said his pious father,

“ shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed,” Gen. v. 29. *Noah* signifies *comfort, rest, peace*. And when God is bringing his first-begotten into the world, this is his proclamation by the mouth of his prophet, “ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins,” Isai. xl. 1, 2. And that we may be at no loss to what period and to what person these expressions are to be applied, it immediately follows, “ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” Isai. xi. 3, 4, 5. Was Noah an expected deliverer from the curse pronounced upon the ground for man’s disobedience? Alas! the curse continued nevertheless; nay, the very *blessings* of life become accursed to every inpenitent transgressor: but Christ “ is our peace, who hath redeemed us from the curse,” not of the ground, but of the law, “ being made a curse for us;” and under whose dominion, when finally established, “ there shall be no more curse.”

“ Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord;” and of Christ he saith, “ Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” “ Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations:” and of whom speaks the prophet, when he saith, “ he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth?” and the apostle, “ who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth?” and again, “ such an High Priest

became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Noah was a preacher of righteousness; and the spirit of prophecy puts these words into the mouth of the Messiah himself, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth, from the great congregation," Psalm xl 8, 9, 10. Noah preached, and preached in vain, to a corrupted, hardened generation, ripe for the destruction of a flood; Jesus, with similar mortification and regret, preached to an impenitent, incorrigible nation, devoted to destruction by means of a Roman army. "Noah walked with God:" Christ says of himself, "I and my Father are one;" and "my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." But Noah, though righteous, could not by that righteousness save the men of his generation from the judgments of God: his faith and holiness availed himself, and those who with him feared, believed, and prepared; but could not save another: and there is a supposed state of corruption so great, and a day of vengeance so awful, that though these *three* men, *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, were in the land, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness: but the righteousness of the blessed Redeemer is of such infinite value and perfection, as to deliver from spiritual and eternal death an innumerable multitude of transgressors.

But the most memorable incident in the history of Noah's life, was the "building of the ark for the saving of his house." Every circumstance relating to which, exhibited a figure of him who was to come. And first, they exactly coincide in respect of the design or contrivance. The plan of the ark was formed in the eter-

nal mind, long before it was communicated to Noah ; thus believers are “ chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world.” To human apprehension at first sight, and to human understanding enlightened by experience, and the astonishing improvements made in naval architecture, a vessel of such construction would be far from appearing the likeliest means of preservation from a calamity like the deluge. Not a seaman or ship-builder in Britain, but would pronounce it a clumsy piece of work, would affirm it could not possibly live at sea, and predict its foundering in the deep, even without the attack of a storm. Thus “ the cross was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but to them who believe, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” We read of no other methods of safety being thought of, or attempted, by the thoughtless men of the antediluvian world. When the evil overtook them, they would naturally flee to such wretched refuge as despair pointed out ; but whatever other means of salvation in the great and terrible day of the Lord, human imagination may have devised, the scripture saith expressly, “ Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,” Acts iv. 12...and unavailing, in that day, will be the desponding invocations of impenitent sinners, to “ the rocks to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them from the presence of God, and the wrath of the Lamb.”

As the ark was a type of the Messiah, being both designs of infinite wisdom ; so do they also coincide in the end or purpose to which they were destined, the salvation of those who fled, and who flee thither for refuge. “ Noah prepared an ark for the saving of his house ;” and “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16...and “ after that, in the wisdom of God, the world

by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," 1 Cor. i. 21. Both of them fully and perfectly answer the end of their institution. The ark was at once a place of shelter from the storm; contained all necessary accommodation and provision; furnished opportunity and means of the most delightful communion and fellowship; and constituted the dearest bond of union and love. Who does not see in this, that wonderful person of whom prophecy thus speaks, "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isai. xxxii. 2. In whom "it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell;" of whom "the whole family in heaven and earth is named;" who thus declares in his own person, "those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost," who enjoins them "to love one another," and prays for them, that "they all may be *one*, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one* in us"

The attractive influence of the gospel, and its blessed tendency to tame and subdue the high thoughts, and the savage dispositions of the human heart, were beautifully prefigured by the instinctive call of Providence to the brute creation to seek shelter in the ark, and by the placibility and gentleness of their dispositions towards each other while they continued in it. The words of Isaiah are literally a history of the deluge, and they contain a prediction equally beautiful and striking, of the peaceableness and concord of Christ's kingdom; "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the

weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isai. xi. 6....9. Under the influence of Christ's Spirit, the fierce and the proud, the cruel and the resentful, the envious and the passionate, "put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;" and learn to "forbear one another, to forgive one another."

Again; the figure shifting from the ark, to him who built and constructed it, according to the pattern given him of God, Noah himself becomes the type, and Jesus the person typified. The plan or design of the ark was of God; the execution was Noah's; in like manner, the plan of redemption, which was formed of old, even from everlasting, God was at length manifested in the flesh to execute, and in it he labored and persevered, till bowing his head, "it is finished." What shall we say? The very waters of the flood have a figurative prospect of gospel times and gospel ideas. The deluge was a purifier of the old world, corrupted and defiled by sin; and "a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water;" the antitype of which remarkable event, we are informed by the apostle Peter, is our salvation by baptism; "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter iii. 21. When we behold the same element destructive to one and salutary to another, are we not led to think of that doctrine which is "unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish? to the one it is a savour of death unto death, and to the other, a savour of life unto life:" and of that other under which the Baptist represents the power and coming of the Son of God? "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly

purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner : but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," Matth. iii. 12.

The wind or spirit which passed over the earth, and assuaged the waters, points out to us not obscurely, the power of that Divine Spirit, who in the beginning "moved upon the face of the deep," and reduced chaos into order and beauty ; and who through the whole course of providence "sitteth upon the flood ;" even "the Lord on high, who is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea." Is it not sweetly figurative of that dawn of hope, that proclamation of mercy, before which the tide of wrath begins to ebb and to subside ?

The figure of the dove declares its own meaning and import. In the natural purity and innocence of that sweet bird ; in her going and returning ; in the expressive speed of her first excursion ; in the expressive symbol she bore in her mouth at her second return, the olive-leaf ; in the clear and explicit information conveyed by her not returning again the third time, it is impossible not to observe a prefiguration of the purity and innocence of the Holy Jesus, the *Mediator* between God and man. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth *peace*, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation !" "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." As the state of the world was gradually unfolded to Noah by the different appearances and conduct of his dove ; so was the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ gradually disclosed to the world, in types, in allegories, and by predictions, till the morning light at length became perfect day, and "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us

by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds," Heb. i. 1, 2.

As the ark, after the tossings and tempest of the flood, rested safely on the top of Mount Ararat; so Christ, having suffered all things that were appointed, "entered into his glory," and established the faith of them that believe in him, upon "a rock, against which the gates of hell never shall prevail." The ark afforded protection to those only who fled for shelter under its roof, and whom God shut up within it. It was not merely the *sight* of that wonderful fabric, nor the *knowledge* and *approbation* of the plan, nor an *active hand* in the rearing of it, nor an *external adherence* to it, when the evil day came, that afforded safety to the miserable. Our Lord himself furnishes us with the application of these important circumstances, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity," Matt. vii. 21...23. And impressed with an awful sense of it, Paul says of himself, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away," 1. Cor. ix. 26, 27.

Farther; when we see Noah at the altar of God, offering the sacrifices of thanksgiving, presenting a victim of every clean bird and beast, and God smelling a savour of rest; ceasing from his anger, remitting the curse, and establishing a new covenant upon better promises, we "behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Christ the altar that is erected, the priest who officiates, and the victim which

is offered up. We behold provision made for the remission of transgressions committed under the second covenant, for which there was no remedy under the first. The passage on which this discourse is built, is a full and particular illustration of this. The whole chapter refers to the bringing in of the Gentile nations to the standard of the Messiah. "For thy Maker is thine husband (the Lord of Hosts is his name) and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord has called thee as a woman forsaken, and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee," Isaiah liv. 5..10. Expressions beautifully figurative of the strength, beauty, and duration of the christian church, and of the immoveable foundation on which the christian faith is built.

Finally, the rainbow, the token of God's covenant of peace with the earth, produced, in the course of nature, by the rays of the sun falling on a cloud impregnated with rain; without straining for a similitude, exhibits mercy rejoicing over judgment; the rays of the sun of righteousness reflected from, and dispersing the clouds of divine wrath and human guilt. It represents the dispensations of the Most High towards men, as distinguished from those spiritual beings who never sinned, and those who never shall be saved. In hell,

the gloom is not for a single instant dispelled by one beam of light, nor despair relieved by one ray of hope. The serenity of heaven is never obscured by one frown from the face of God. But our world is the theatre, on which are displayed, "mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other;" "truth springing out of the earth, and righteousness looking down from heaven." The bow in the cloud is the reverse of that described by the Psalmist: "He hath bent his bow and made it ready, he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death: he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors," Psalm vii. 12, 13. No, it is a bow unbent, armed with no deadly weapon, and its dangerous, threatening side averted from us, and turned towards heaven. The bow is never to be seen but when one side of the heaven is clear, and the sun above the horizon; unless it be by the sober, silver rays of the moon's mild reflected light. Thus every thing useful and pleasing in nature, every thing satisfying and consolatory in providence, in order to be perceived and enjoyed, must be irradiated, explained, and applied, by the eternal Wisdom, the Word of God, "the true Light which enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world;" and thus many of the objects which we are incapable of contemplating, by the direct and immediate illumination of the glorious "Father of Lights," are tempered to our perception, use, and delight, by reflection from other orbs. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Thus have we endeavored to point out those particulars in the person, character, and life of Noah, which seem more obviously typical of Christ the Lord; but I cannot conclude the parallel, without directing your thoughts to one article of resemblance more. The old world having undergone the purgation of a flood, was delivered in its renewed state to Noah and his natural posterity for a possession: and from the world that is,

when purified by fire, "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "He that sitteth upon the throne saith, Behold I make all things new! for the former things are passed away." And he that is before the throne saith, "In my Father's house are many mansions! if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Let me now exhort you in the words of Christ, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they testify of Him, who is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end:" and as you read and meditate the light will break in upon you, and the Saviour of the world will stand confessed in every page, in every line; so that ye may say one to another, in the words of Andrew to Simon his brother, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." And when you see all that is venerable in respect of antiquity, all that is sacred in office, all that is dignified in royalty, bringing their glory and honor to him, lay yourselves at his feet and say, "He is our Lord, and we will worship him;" for "surely this is the Son of God."

And here closes the first great period of the world. There next ensues a very considerable space of time, fruitful indeed in names, but barren in events. Providence has thought fit to draw a veil over it for this obvious reason, that however amusing or instructive the detail of that period might be to us, as citizens of this world, having no special relation to the history of redemption, it cannot be very deeply interesting to us

christians. And the design of the bible is not so much to convey to us natural and political knowledge, as the knowledge of "the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal." The sacred historian accordingly hastens on to the times of Abraham, when the promises and predictions of the Messiah become more clear and express, and that Saviour was explicitly announced, "in whom all the families of the earth" should at length be blessed.

When we have marked the progress of the dawn, and observed the first rays of this rising sun, through the medium of type, figure, and prediction; when we have considered the tokens of approaching glory in the east; let us look up together, and behold the splendor of the full-blown day; let us contemplate the glory spread around us, by "the sun shining in his strength." The scattered glimmerings of light....a terrestrial paradise, the first promise of deliverance by the seed of the woman, Abel's sacrifice, Enoch's translation, Noah's ark, and all that followed during so many ages, were at length collected and lost in that one great luminary, which is the light of the christian world. But alas! "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light; because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd, John iii. 19, 20. Let us endeavor to approve ourselves, "children of the light, and of the day:" and observe and follow Him, who thus speaks concerning himself, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

History of Abram.

LECTURE X.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.... GEN. xii. 1.

IT would yield neither amusement nor instruction, to lay before you in detail, the genealogical succession of the sons of Noah, from the flood to the calling of Abram. Scripture presents us with a very general view of that period. It shews us mankind engaged in pursuits common to men in every age. It exhibits the usual and natural operations, and the effects of pride, and ambition, and avarice: plans of empire formed; imperial cities founded; new discoveries made, and settlements established. For a considerable time, the recent horrors of the deluge must have laid fast hold of the minds of men, as the awful monuments of it were every where before their eyes. This would naturally, for a while, confine them to the mountainous regions of Armenia, where the ark first rested. But as their fears diminished, and their numbers increased, we find them, allured by the beauty and fertility of the plains, which were washed by the Tygres and the Euphrates, descending gradually from the heights, and spreading along the vast and fruitful valleys of Shinar or Chaldea. And he who had seen the whole human race cut off for their wickedness, his own family consisting of eight persons excepted, lived to see the descendants of that family, almost as numerous and as profligate as the generation of men which had been destroyed by the flood. He had the mortification, in particular, of seeing his poste-

rity engaged in an enterprise equally absurd, vain, and impious: that of building "a city and a tower whose top should reach unto heaven," to transmit their names with renown to posterity, to be the great seat of empire, and thereby the means of preserving them in one grand system of political union, and of securing them from discord and dispersion.

The sacred volume informs us, that the very means which they had vainly devised to keep themselves together, in the wisdom of God, separated and scattered them. But the history of that event falls not within the design of these exercises. Leaving Nimrod and his vain-glorious companions to erect the monument of their folly, and to feel the consequences of their impiety, let us attend the sacred historian in tracing, not the rise and progress of empire, but the formation, the unfolding, and the execution of the plan of redemption. Dropping the mighty founders of Nineveh and Babylon in that oblivion wherein providence has plunged them never to emerge, let us accompany the father of the faithful from Ur of the Chaldees to the place of his destination, and observe the increasing splendor of the day of grace, and adore the wisdom, truth, and faithfulness of Him who promised, and who "bath done as he had said."

It may be proper to observe, in the entrance of the history of this great patriarch, that one life, that of Noah, almost connects Adam with Abram. For Noah was born only one hundred and twenty-six years after the death of Adam, and lived till within two years of Abram's birth. In one sense, therefore, the father and founder of the Jewish nation is very little more than the third from the first man. So readily, immediately, and uninterruptedly, might the knowledge of important truth, particularly the promises of salvation, be communicated through so long a tract of time. It is farther observable, that as from Adam to Noah there are ten generations, so likewise from Noah to Abram

there are ten generations; but the latter succeeded each other much faster than the former. The first ten occupy a period of one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years; the last is shrunk down to three hundred and fifty-seven. We are henceforward, therefore, to be conversant with lives reduced nearer to our own standard. While extreme longevity was necessary to carry on the designs of Providence, men lived to the age of many centuries. When God saw it was meet to substitute a written and permanent revelation, in the place of oral tradition from father to son, the life of man was shortened.

The history of Abram's life commences at a period of it, long before which, that of most men is concluded; namely, at the seventy-fifth year of his age. It is never either too early or too late to serve and follow God. But the folly and presumption of youth is but too apt to defer matters of the greatest moment to the last hour; and this fatal waste of the seed-time of life, is the sure foundation of dishonor, remorse, and despair, in old age. But though our patriarch had arrived at a period of life so advanced, before the sacred historian introduces him upon the stage, the obscurity which lies upon his earlier years is amply compensated by the rich, instructive, and entertaining materials furnished from the divine stores, for the history of the latter part of his life.

There is something singularly affecting, in the idea of an old man giving up the scenes of his youthful days; scenes endeared to the mind by the fond recollection of past joys; foregoing his kindred and friends; and becoming an exile and a wanderer, at a period when nature seeks repose, and when the heart cleaves to those objects to which it has been long accustomed. But that man goes on cheerfully, who knows he is following God; he can never remove far from home, who has "made the Most High his habitation;" he who falls asleep in the bosom of a father, knows that he shall awake in perfect peace and safety. Accordingly,

“ Abram, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went,” Heb. xi. 8.

Abram being held forth in scripture as the pattern of a cheerful, prompt, and active faith in God, as we proceed, we shall mark the appearances and the effects of that faith in the successive trials to which it was exposed. The very first act of his obedience to the will of Heaven, proves the existence and the prevalency of this powerful principle. When called to leave his country and his father's house, “ he went out, not knowing,” not *caring*, “ whither he went.” What could have induced him to make such a surrender, but a sense of his duty to God, an entire acquiescence in the wisdom and goodness of Providence, and a full assurance that his Heavenly Father both could and would indemnify him, for every sacrifice which he was called to make ! A sacrifice similar to this every real christian virtually offers up, when he renounces the pomp and pleasure of this vain world, to the hope of “ an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” Ur of the Chaldees was become a land of idolatry. Abram's nearest relations had lost the knowledge, and deviated from the true worship of the God of their fathers. To have continued there, would have been to prefer a situation dangerous to religion and virtue. Why may we not suppose the call given him to depart, to be the impulse of an honest and enlightened mind, stirred at the sight of so many idols, and the impure rights of their worshippers ; and prompted to flee, at whatever expense, from scenes of so much impiety and pollution. When men are to receive immediately their indemnification or equivalent, the merit of a surrender is small ; but it requires the faith and trust of an Abram, to take a general promise of God as full security. But his faith had to struggle, in the very setting out, with difficulties seemingly unsurmountable. The promises made to him

were not only conveyed in very general terms, and the accomplishment removed to a great distance; but natural impossibilities also barred the way. What a slender prospect must a man entertain of a numerous offspring, when both nature and religion prevent the possibility of his having children? The Spirit of God therefore bestows a just tribute of praise on this part of his conduct, he "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," because that against hope, he believed in hope." But when we come to examine the promise more particularly, we shall find that it contained every thing which can rouse and fire a noble and generous mind: personal honor and felicity; "I will bless thee and make thy name great:" a numerous and a thriving progeny, who to latest ages should acknowledge him as their founder, and glory in their relation to him; "I will make of thee a great nation, and thou shalt be a blessing:" universal benefit accruing to the human race from him; in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Behold then the illustrious exile turning his back on home, attended only by his aged parent sinking into the grave under the weight of years and infirmity; his beloved Sarai; and Lot his nephew, who it would seem, was determined to share the fortunes of his pious uncle, and with him to sacrifice every worldly consideration to religion. With Providence for their protector and guide, and the word of God for their encouragement and consolation, they set out in confidence, and arrive at their destined habitation in safety. But God, who had provided for Abram a country, would nevertheless have him carry away from Chaldea, all his honestly acquired property; for true faith makes light of none of God's benefits: and worldly prosperity, honorably acquired, moderately and thankfully enjoyed, is an undoubted mark of God's favor.

Being arrived in Canaan, God appears to Abram again, and informs him that this was the land which he

had in view for him; and renews the declaration, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." In these words two things are remarkable. First, a farther delay of the accomplishment of the promise, I *will* give; and secondly, a transferring of the gift of it, from Abram himself, to his seed. Each of these alone, had been sufficient to have cooled an ordinary ardor, to have discouraged an ordinary spirit. But the good man discovers no symptom of dissatisfaction or disappointment, at either the delay, or the change of destination; he does not so much as inquire when or how that promised offspring of his was to arise. It is sufficient for him, that he is following the call of Heaven, and that he is blessed with the divine presence through his pilgrimage: with him, even "hope deferred maketh" not "the heart sick;" he finds he is not even now come to his rest, yet repines not. But though he finds no house nor city for himself to dwell in, he finds both leisure and inclination to erect an altar unto God; "and there builded he an altar unto the Lord who had appeared unto him," Gen. xii. 7. He who has set up his rest in the Almighty, is every where and always at home; and a truly gracious spirit will never omit a work of piety and mercy, under a pretence of wanting means or opportunity.

Why should we inquire in what *manner* God appeared unto Abram; or how much wiser should we be for knowing it? Has not the great, the almighty God, resistless power over our bodies and our minds? And can he not make every element, every creature a vehicle of his will to us? Behold the patriarch removing from place to place; "sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange land," travelling from Sichem to the plain of Moreh; from Bethel to Hai; probably through fear of the idolatrous Canaanites; who, we are told, then occupied the land. But though he sojourn, as the wayfaring man, but for a night, the altar is constituted, and the victim is offered up, Gen. xii. 8. And

Abram's altar is not built in the spirit wherein many a sacred edifice has been since reared, and many a pious volume purchased, for shew, not for use ;...having built an altar to Jehovah, "he called upon the name of Jehovah."

But a wandering life through Canaan is not the worst of his condition. His faith is put to a new and severe trial; he is driven out of that land by famine. The country so pompously promised, as a portion to his seed, when increased to the number of the sand upon the sea-shore, refuses subsistence sufficient to his family in its present diminutive state. What then? Let nature or providence raise what obstacles they may, faith removes or surmounts them. He sits not down suddenly with the peevish prophet, saying, "I do well to be angry," but employs sagacity and diligence to discover, and to obtain, the means of relief. He retires to Egypt, which the scarcity had not reached, or which it had afflicted in an inferior degree. Self-preservation is the first law of our nature; "and he that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

But where, alas, shall we find the faith that never staggered through unbelief; the confidence in Heaven that never failed? On his entrance into Egypt, Abram is seized with an unaccountable fit of distrust, altogether unbecoming his character, and equally injurious to God, to Sarai, and to the king of Egypt. He is afraid of trusting the honor of his wife, during a temporary residence in a strange country, to that God, at whose command he had given up his native country and his all. He injures the friend and companion of his youth, in supposing her capable of being allured by the splendor and flattery of Egypt, to forget her duty to her husband. He affronts a prince whom he knew not, by suspecting him of a base and criminal design against the peace and honor of a stranger, driven into his dominions for relief from famine. He has recourse to the

crooked path of cunning and falsehood, when the direct road of fairness and truth would have served his turn much better. Over caution is brother to great rashness. He who wants to shew himself over wise, soon proves himself to be a fool. The very means which Abram has devised for preserving Sarai's chastity, exposed her to danger. As his sister, she might be lawfully addressed by any one; as his wife, she was considered as sacred to himself; for the rights of wedlock were held in reverence, even by idolatrous Egyptians. What must have been his feelings when the imposture was detected? How keen his remorse, to see Pharaoh and his innocent household, plagued for his fault? The conscious shame of having acted wrong, and of thereby having brought mischief upon another, is, perhaps, the severest punishment an ingenuous mind can suffer.

The next remarkable event of Abram's life is infinitely more honorable for him, and which therefore we pursue with much greater satisfaction. Being safely brought back again to Canaan, he resorts to his former residence between Bethel and Hai, and "pitches his tent by the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first." And there again he renews his communion with Heaven; for one failing breaks not off the intercourse between God and a good man. Enjoying here a temporary repose, his worldly substance increases fast upon him: for "the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich." But every earthly good thing brings its inconvenience along with it. His brother's son has cast in his lot with Abram, and is cherished by him with singular tenderness and affection: when behold, the increase of riches becomes an increase of vexation. Though the masters are disposed to peace, the servants cannot agree. "A strife arose between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle;" and what augmented the folly of such a contention, it is remarked, that "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land:" so that their quarrel among themselves, rendered them

more vulnerable by the common enemy. For once that riches promote friendship, they ten times engender strife; by setting on fire, envy, or jealousy, or pride, or some such destructive passion. The behavior of Abram on this occasion, merits particular notice and commendation. "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen: for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left," Gen. xiii. 8, 9. An hundred sermons preached, or an hundred volumes written, in favor of a peaceable, gentle, yielding, generous, manly spirit, were far short of the plain and persuasive lesson taught us by this conduct of the patriarch. But it merits a larger place in the history of his life, than is now left for it, in what remains of your time. We willingly, therefore, reserve it, to be drawn out into greater length, and to be pressed more particularly, as an useful and striking example to believers.

Christian, you call yourself a son of faithful Abram: let me see that you are actuated by his spirit. What sacrifice, I beseech you, are you making; what sacrifice have you made, to conscience, to duty, to your christian profession? What worldly interest have you given up? What lust have you mortified? What exercise of humility, of self-denial, of self-government, are you engaged in? Faith in God, and submission to his will, were the leading principles of Abram's life: What are yours? Deal faithfully with God, and with yourselves; and know, that to be a lover of the pleasures, riches, or honors of a present world, to the neglect of religion and its joys, is to prefer Ur of the Chaldees, with its impurity, impiety, and idolatry, to the love and worship of the living and true God.

Was the faith of Abram always uniform, his obedience perfect, his conduct irreproachable? No. Then it is not always to be imitated, nor at all to be depended upon. But there is a pattern of faith and obedience which all may propose as an example, and upon which all may rest as a ground of acceptance with God. When such an one as Abram falters in his duty, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall:" "let none be high-minded, but fear:" let us account no danger small, no foe contemptible, no deviation from the path of rectitude a light thing. Let us watch most diligently on our weakest side: and let us learn from the patience, forbearance, and tender mercy of God, when "a brother is overtaken in a fault," to "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness."

Had Abram an altar for God, before he had an habitation for himself? Learn from him, O young man, how to begin the world, as you wish to thrive and prosper in it. The house in which no altar is erected to God, wants both a foundation and a covering.

The family which wants the word and the worship of God, is not yet begun to be furnished. Make room for your Maker, and he will settle you in a large place. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things shall be added to you."

Did Abram rule his own spirit, did he meekly recede from his just right, did he gently yield to an inferior, for the sake of peace? Blush, O man, to think of thy pride and selfishness; of thy positiveness in opinion, thy devotedness to interest, thy insolence in the day of power, thy contempt of the opinions, thy indifference to the feelings and the happiness of others. Look to Abram, and learn to be a conqueror. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Look to your Father in heaven, who "is kind to the evil and unthankful:" "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And thus "be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Finally : Was the word made to Abram, sure ? Has his name become renowned, did his progeny increase, were his seed planted in the promised land, and in him are all the families of the earth blessed ? Then learn to honor God by reposing confidence in him, assured that, “ though heaven and earth pass away, his word shall not pass away.”

The next Lecture will carry on the History of Abram “ the friend of God,” and exhibit the gradually opening discovery of the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ. The blessing of the Almighty we implore on what is past, and his assistance and blessing on what is to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

History of Abram.

LECTURE XI.

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen : for we be brethren.... GEN. xiii. 8.

THE history of Abram alone, occupies a larger space in the sacred volume than that of the whole human race from the creation down to his day. Hitherto we have had rather sketches of character, than an exact delineation of the human heart; we have had hints, respecting remote important events, rather than an exact and connected narrative of facts. But the inspired penman has gone into the *detail* of Abram's life, from his being called of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees, to the day of his death; a detail including the space of one hundred years. Moses marks with precision the succession of events which befel him; unfolds his character on a variety of trying and interesting occasions; and discloses the operations of a good mind through the course of a long life, adorned with many virtues and excellencies, yet not exempted from blemish and imperfection.

What renders the scripture history in general, and that of our patriarch in particular, useful and instructive, is, the exhibition of *private* life therein presented to us, and the lessons of wisdom and virtue thereby taught to *ordinary* men. The intrigues of a court, the operations of a campaign, the consequences of a battle, the schemes of a statesman, the prowess of a hero, and the like, represented skilfully, and adorned with the charms

of eloquence, may amuse or dazzle the reader. But the actors being altogether out of our level, and the scenes entirely out of the line of our experience, though pleasure may, no great advantage can, result from acquaintance with them. To perform splendid actions, and to exhibit heroic virtue, is given but to a few; and opportunities of this kind but seldom occur in the course of one life. Whereas occasions to practise generosity, justice, mercy, and moderation; to speak truth and shew kindness; to melt with pity, and glow with affection; to forbear and to forgive, are administered to us every step we move through the world, and recur more frequently upon us, than even the means of gratifying the common appetites of hunger and thirst. When, therefore, we behold men of like passions with ourselves, placed in situations exactly similar to our own, practising virtues within our reach, and discovering a temper and disposition which, if we please to cultivate, we may easily attain; then, if we read not with profit as well as with delight, it must be because we want not the power, but the inclination, to improve.

Abram has left his kindred and father's house at God's command. Multitudes do the same thing every day, impelled by ambition, by avarice, by curiosity, by a wandering, restless disposition. Happy is he, who, in removing, does not leave his religion behind him; and who in the midst of the employments, or the delights of a new situation or place of residence, is not tempted to forget or to forsake the God of his native home, and of his early years. Alas, how often does this very metropolis prove the grave of virtuous sentiments, of religious principles, and a regular education! Though Abram be but a pilgrim in Canaan, yet he thrives and prospers there. As the pious soul seeks and finds means of intercourse with Heaven in every condition and state of life, so God, who suffers none to lose by fidelity and attachment to him, can render the most untoward, unsettled and dangerous condition,

productive of real happiness; "if a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

But never do we find wealth flowing in, and increasing upon a man, without some corresponding peril or inconvenience. Either the mind is corrupted by it; or the possessor is exposed to be hated, envied, and plundered. The peace of Abram's family had like to have been disturbed, by a quarrel arising out of its prosperity; but it was preserved by the good man's wisdom, moderation, and condescension. The officious zeal of pragmatical servants has well nigh embroiled their peaceable and kindly affectioned masters. "And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle; and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land." How can any one think of security and peace in this world, when the rashness, malice, folly, or pride of a domestic, may set a man at variance with his chief friends? Indeed we are vulnerable in exact proportion to the extent of our possessions.

How great is Abram's mind, how amiable his conduct upon this occasion! "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then will I go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left," Gen. xiii. 8, 9. Abram was the elder man; he was to Lot in the room of a father. Him had God distinguished by special marks of his favor, and by the promises of future greatness and pre-eminence. If the one must give way to the other, who would not instantly pronounce, that undoubtedly Lot ought to yield. Might not the call and destination of God have been warrantably pleaded as a reason why Abram should have the first choice? Abram, no doubt, both

might and could have asserted the preference ; and he proves that he well deserved it, by giving it up. What person in this assembly but stands reprov'd or admonish'd by the example of the patriarch's humility, moderation, and affability ? It is indeed a perfect contrast to that tenaciousness of their opinions, that punctilious adherence to the last iota of their rights, that inflexibility of self-love and self-conceit, that perpetual assumption or demand of preference or superiority, which mark the conduct of most men. Were it necessary to enforce the example of Abram by the precepts of the gospel ; the whole spirit of christianity, a multitude of particular injunctions, and above all, the temper and conduct of the great pattern of all that is amiable and excellent, might be adduced, to expose and condemn, if not to cure, that selfish spirit, equally inconsistent with good sense and with religion, which exacts a perpetual sacrifice from others, without discerning the propriety or necessity of making the slightest sacrifice to others in return. Permit me to recite a few passages on the subject. " For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office ; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," Rom. xii. 3, 4, 5, 10, 16, 18. " Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves," Rom. xv. 1, 2, 3, 5. " We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and

not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me. Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ," Phil. ii. 3. Thus have we precept upon precept, pattern upon pattern, on a subject as plain as the light at noon-day, and which is presenting itself to us almost every hour we live. But alas! it is not preaching that can confer the temper of an Abram; and that can induce men to forego the claims which pride and self-conceit are incessantly urging them to advance.

Behold then Abram and his nephew at length constrained to separate. Nature, affection, religion, affliction, had all conspired to unite them; but a flow of worldly success dissolves their union; and the old adage is exemplified in them, "relations sometimes agree best at a distance from one another." The power of choosing was given to Lot, and he exercised it accordingly; "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan: and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other," Gen. xiii. 10, 11. How wisely this choice was made, we shall have occasion to remark in the sequel of the history.

So good a man, and a relation so kind as Abram, must sensibly have felt this separation from his nearest kinsman. But whatever blank was made in his happiness by the failing of this creature comfort, he has the consolation of reflecting, that it was not brought upon him through his own fault; and it is speedily and

abundantly compensated by the visions of the Almighty, by the promises of Him that is faithful and true, and by the presence and affection of that Friend, who sticketh closer than a brother. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee," Gen. xiii. 14...17. There is something delightfully soothing to the human heart in the idea of property;...one's own home, his own field, his own flock. If any thing can add to the satisfaction of this kind of possession, it is the having acquired it honorably, and the capacity of enjoying it with cheerfulness, wisdom, and moderation. Dishonest gain can never bestow contentment, and seldom descends to a remote heir. But the gratification of honest prosperity and success is capable of being still unspeakably heightened and sweetened; namely, by the heart-composing, spirit-elevating consideration, that the blessing enjoyed is the gift of God, is the pledge of paternal love, and the earnest of eternal felicity. In such happy circumstances did our patriarch inhabit the plains of Mamre; blessed in the present, more blessed in the prospects of futurity; blessed in the fulness of this world, more blessed in the favor of God, which is better than life; blessed in the promise of a numerous and prosperous offspring, infinitely more blessed in the promise of that holy seed in whom "all the families of the earth are blessed." When we find the good man abiding in tents, a pilgrim and a stranger in Canaan, do we not perceive it written in legible characters, "arise ye and

depart, for this is not your rest?" Hear we not the voice of God, saying plainly, "seek ye another country, that is an heavenly one."

But even the life of a pilgrim, and of a shepherd, is not secure; neither does any worldly condition admit of a certain or long repose. Let a man be ever so peaceably inclined, how easily may he be involved in the feuds of contentious neighbors? This was the case with Abram. In the fourteenth chapter of this sacred book, we have the history of a powerful confederacy of four kings against five; founded, no doubt, as all such confederacies are, in a lust of power or wealth; or directed by a spirit of cruelty and revenge. It issues in a bloody conflict in the vale of Siddim. Sodom, where Lot had chosen to dwell, becomes a prey to the conqueror, and he himself is made a prisoner, and his goods are plundered. These facts are related by Moses, and become interesting to us, merely from their connection with the history of Abram. What, but for this, are *Chederlaomer*, *Amraphel*, and *Arioch*, to the men of this day, but mere names? Lot must now have grievously felt the consequences of his imprudent choice of a place of residence, had it not been for the friendship and valor of his venerable uncle; who, roused by the intelligence of his nephew's distress and danger, flies instantly to his relief. Behold the good old man exchanging his shepherd's crook for the warrior's spear, and rushing with all the ardor and impetuosity of youth on the insulting victor. Which shall we most admire in this important and interesting transaction, the strength and eagerness of his natural affection; his honest indignation at violence and oppression; the skill with which he planned his enterprise: or the vigor, boldness, and intrepidity with which he executed it; the moderation with which he exercised his victory; his disinterestedness in declining any share of the fruits of it for himself; or his justice and good faith in attending to, and supporting the just right of his

allies? All, all together, constitute an unequivocal and a brilliant proof, of a mind truly noble and dignified: and his conduct on this occasion suggests a crowd of reflections both pleasing and useful.

Remember, christians, it is the same man, who for the sake of peace with a brother, gave up his just claim to a junior and inferior; that was not afraid in the cause of the injured and oppressed, to attack a numerous host, headed by princes, and flushed with victory. With whom then does true magnanimity reside?... Surely with the humble and condescending. The man who has subdued his own spirit is invincible. Behold in this the nature and the foundation of true courage. It is not to make light of life; it is not "to rush like the horse into battle;" it is not to talk high swelling words of vanity: It is to fear God; it is to be calm and composed in danger; it is to possess hope beyond the grave; it is to be superior to the pride, and incapable of the insulting triumph of success. Behold how the kindred graces and virtues delight to reside in unity and harmony, in the bosom of a good man! Neither good nor bad qualities are to be found solitary in the breast of any one. Is a man pious? Then he is humble. Is he humble? Then, meek and condescending. Is he condescending? Then bold, then just, then generous, then merciful. Is he a child of God, a disciple of Jesus? Then he is all that is amiable. Behold in Abram, a soul superior to the love of riches, and consequently greater than a king; "And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich," Gen; xiv. 21....23. That integrity is incorruptible which considers life and happiness as consisting not in "the

abundance of the things which a man possesseth :” which prizes an honest, though humble independence, above the honors and treasures which princes have to bestow.

Abram, on this occasion, is found in connection with a most extraordinary person, who bursts upon us like the sun from behind a thick cloud, unveils his splendor for a moment, and then hides himself again in the shades of night : “ Melchizedec, king of Salem, and priest of the most high God ;” whose appearance, history, and character, we could have hardly comprehended, had not a brighter day since arisen, and an inspired apostle unfolded the meaning of what one inspired prophet acted, and another has recorded. The history of Melchizedec, short as it is, with the apostolic comment upon it, will easily furnish materials for a Lecture by itself, and shall not now therefore be anticipated. The story of Abram himself shall for the present stand still, to be resumed and prosecuted in its order : it being now high time to look forward, and to bring that patriarch, with those who went before him, to the feet of Jesus ;...his “ offspring ;” yet his “ root :” later than him by almost two thousand years ; yet before him “ of old, even from everlasting :” receiving existence from him in the order of nature, and by the tenor of the covenant ; yet bestowing existence upon him, as the eternal Word, “ by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that is made.”

Abram may be first compared to Adam, being both the fathers of many nations, and especially constituted of God for that end. With both, the covenant of God was established, which included and involved their posterity, though the children were not as yet born : for with God, that is effected, which is purposed to be done ; and his promises are gifts already bestowed. Adam’s transgression transmitted evils innumerable to his offspring ; Abram’s faith entailed blessings unspeak-

able upon his family for many generations. Both of them typified Christ in their day ; and both “ saw his day afar off.” Abram may be compared with the princes and great men of the age in which he lived. And in true dignity of mind, in elevation of spirit, in generosity of sentiment, in propriety of behavior, he will be found superior to most, and inferior to none. We see kings receiving obligations from him ; while he nobly shews himself above receiving an obligation from any one. And Abram is a type of every real christian giving up the world as a portion, at God’s command, and sacrificing the dearest delights of nature to the demands of duty ; living as a stranger upon earth, and looking for “ a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

But the great venerability of Abram’s character arises from his relation to Jesus Christ, whom he shadows forth in a great variety of respects. Abram was called and constituted of God, to be the natural head of a great and powerful nation ; Jesus “ the first-born among many brethren,” to be the spiritual father of the whole vast family of believers. The covenant of God with Abram came in aid to the insufficiency of the first covenant ; which had become weak, and ineffectual to salvation, through the corruption of human nature ; and it prefigured a covenant still more sure and immovable than itself, “ established upon better promises,” even the sending of “ the Son of God, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin ; to condemn sin in the flesh.” The prompt obedience of Abram to the call of Heaven, leads us directly to Him, who says of himself, “ my meat is to do the will of him who sent me ;” and the language of whose whole life, spirit, sufferings, and death is, “ Father, not my will, but thine be done.” Abram’s appearing on the stage, and entering on the discharge of the duties of his public character, in the full maturity of his age, suggests to us, the Saviour of the world entering upon, and discharging his

public ministry, in the full vigor of life, and flower of his age. When I behold Abram sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange country, I think of him, who "came to his own, and his own received him not:" and meditate on "the Son of Man, who had not where to lay his head." Abram, chased into Egypt by famine, reminds me of Jesus flying into Egypt from the wrath of a jealous and incensed king. Who can read of Abram discomfiting confederate princes, without bethinking himself straight of the triumphs of a Redeemer over "principalities and powers, and the ruler of the darkness of this world:" Satan, sin, and death, "cast into the lake of fire?" When we behold Lot brought back from captivity by the kindness and intrepidity of his affectionate kinsman, can we refrain from turning our eyes to our compassionate elder Brother, who "through death has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were subject to bondage;" and who has restored his younger brethren to "the glorious liberty of the sons of God?" Abram nobly refuses to be made rich by the bounty of the king of Sodom; thus when the Jews would have taken Christ and made him a king, he withdrew himself: and when the prince of the power of the air presented him with the prospect of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and proffered all to him on condition of his doing homage for them, he rejected the offer with disdain, "get thee behind me, Satan." The amiable qualities of Abram's mind bear a lively resemblance to the spirit that dwelt in our divine Master. But in Abram it was a spirit imparted, in Jesus a spirit inherent; it was bestowed on the former in measure, on the latter it was poured out without measure; in the patriarch it was mingled with dross, alloyed by a mixture of human imperfection; in the Saviour it was unmixed, unalloyed, for "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips."

But the time would fail to enumerate all the marks of resemblance. Many others will occur to the careful and attentive reader of Abram's history; these shall for the present suffice from this place. The farther continuation of it shall be suspended, and give way, according to the order of the narration, and to give these exercises all the advantage of variety which their nature will admit, to the singular history of Melchizedec; which, God willing, shall be the subject of the ensuing Lecture, and to which permit me to implore your patient and candid attention. Earnestly praying, that the blessing of the Most High may crown what has been spoken, we ascribe praise to his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

History of Melchizedec.

LECTURE XII.

And Melchizedec king of Salem brought forth bread and wine : and he was the priest of the most high God.... GEN. xiv. 18.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec.... PSALM cx. 4.

..... Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec.... HEB. vi. 20.

THE eagerness and avidity with which men pry into abstruse and difficult subjects, can be exceeded only by their coldness and indifference to obvious and important truth. The religious controversies which have engaged so much attention, occupied so much time, and furnished employment for so many rare talents; which have whetted the tempers, and too often the swords of men against each other, are, in general, on points of doctrine too deep and mysterious ever to be fathomed by human understanding, too lofty to be scanned without boldness and presumption, or too trifling to merit regard. Revealed religion, like every thing that is of God, must necessarily present many difficulties to a creature so limited as man. But instead of being rejected on that account, it is the more to be prized and revered; as having this evidence, among many others, of coming from Him, whose nature, whose works, and whose ways, none "can find out unto perfection." Curiosity, guided by humility,

and aiming at useful discovery, is a laudable and useful principle. But curiosity impelled by self-conceit, and resting in mere speculation, is generally harsh and presumptuous, often trifling, impertinent, and contemptible. In every branch of knowledge, those truths are the most valuable which are the plainest, and which present themselves in the greatest abundance: just as nature produces in the greatest profusion those commodities which are most useful and necessary to man.

The subject of this night's Lecture, is one of those which have afforded ample employment to critics and commentators. Were our object amusement only, it were easy to entertain you for months to come, with the ingenious, the fanciful, the absurd, and nonsensical expositions which have been given of the person and history of Melchizedec. But as we aim at usefulness, and acknowledge no guide in sacred things but the holy scripture, Moses shall be our only authority and guide in tracing this remarkable story; David and Paul our only interpreters, in the application and use of it.

Abram, with a little band of three hundred and eighteen persons of his own household, and a few friends, has pursued, overtaken, surprised, and discomfited four confederated kings, with their victorious army; and recovered Lot, his brother's son, into liberty. Returning from this honorable, bold, and successful enterprise, he is met by a prince of a very different character from those whom he had conquered, and those whom he had delivered. *They* were sons of violence, sons of blood; *his* name was Melchizedec, and Melchisalem....king of righteousness, king of peace. It is extremely probable, that these epithets were titles conferred upon this great and good man, as being descriptive of his person and character; and might be designed of Providence as a memorial to all princes of what they ought to be; lovers, preservers, and promoters of justice, maintainers and conservators of peace.

It is pleasing to find ourselves mistaken in our calculations of the numbers of good men, and in our estimates of the state of religion in the world. For these calculations and estimates through ignorance and contractedness of spirit, are generally, if not always erroneous, by being short of the truth. Who did not conclude, when Abram was called to leave his idolatrous country, that the knowledge and the worship of the true God were entirely confined to his family? When lo! a king and priest of the most high God, of whom we never heard, of whose existence we had formed no conception before, breaks forth upon us all at once; and teaches us this most elevating, this most encouraging truth, that the number of the redeemed is much greater, and the state of religion much more prosperous, than the partial views, and the systematic spirit of even good men, will permit them to believe. Thus, in latter times, a prophet of no less dignity than Elijah, from apparent circumstances, made a most erroneous computation of the number of the faithful in his day. "The children of Israel," saith he, "have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I, only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away," 1 Kings xix. 14. But what saith the answer of God to him? "I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him," 1 Kings xix. 18. And when the ransomed of the Lord shall at length return together to Zion, they shall be "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds and people, and tongues." And what heart but must exult in the prospect of the grace of God being more widely diffused than we apprehended, and extended to regions unknown, and multitudes unthought of by us?

Though but little be told us of this extraordinary person, that little is both pleasing and instructive. In

him, we find united two offices of high dignity, and respectability...royalty and the priesthood; the majesty of the one united to the sanctity of the other; Melchizedec, "king of Salem," was also "the priest of the most high God. How truly honorable is high station, when supported by the beauty and dignity of holiness, and adorned with unaffected goodness! Is the state of a king either dishonored or diminished by attendance at the altar of God? No; it is religion that sweetens, and embellishes, and ennobles every condition: it is religion, forming an intimate and a permanent relation between a man and his God, "that raiseth up the poor out of the dust; and lifteth the needy out of the dung-hill, and setteth him with princes;" and which exalteth earthly princes to heavenly thrones. Examples are rare in history of these two characters being united. The kingdoms and the priesthood of this world fall to the lot of but a selected few; they hardly blend in one and the same person, seldom meet to crown the same head. But in the new creation of God, in "the kingdom prepared for the heirs of glory from the foundation of the world," the high lot of Melchizedec is the lot of every child of God. All are "kings and priests unto God, even the Father." And the apostle Peter, addressing, not the princes and potentates of the earth, but "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Gallacia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," thus writes, "Ye are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;" 1 Peter ii. 9.

Is this king of righteousness and peace venerable in his priestly robes, attending, in the order of his course, upon the most high God? Is he less amiable and respectable in administering to the necessities of his fellow men? A prince is never more kingly, than when he is practising the virtues of humanity, hospitality, and compassion. And the praise of these too belongs to

Melchizedec, "for he brought forth bread and wine" to refresh the patriarch and his little army, after the labor and fatigue of their rapid march and violent conflict. The great God is infinitely above the need of our services. How then can we honor him most, and serve him best? By copying his example; by doing good; by communicating to the comfort of others what he has kindly bestowed upon us. What object does this world present, once to be compared with a human being replete with benevolence, habitually studying to glorify his Creator, by alleviating the distresses, and promoting the happiness of his creatures? This is the true lustre of riches, this is the glory of greatness, this the splendor of power, this the majesty of kings.

Kindred spirits are easily and powerfully attracted to each other; and religion forms the strongest and tenderest bond of union among men. Abram and Melchizedec meet like men long acquainted. The patriarch nobly disdains to accept the spoils proffered to him by the king of Sodom; but joyfully, and with gratitude, embraces the friendship and kindness of the king of Salem. The gifts of a bad man yield a very mixed satisfaction to an honest mind, but it is pleasing to the soul to receive benefits from the wise and good. An interchange of kind offices is the life of friendship in worthy minds. In our commerce with Heaven, benefits flow continually from God to us; continually receiving, we have nothing to send back but the effusions of a thankful heart, and the humble desires of needy dependants; but friendship among men subsists only among equals, and depends on kindnesses mutually given and received. Melchizedec "brings forth bread and wine" to Abram; Abram gives him "tithes of all." So early existed in the world that mode of supporting the ministers of religion. A great prince like Melchizedec needed not to minister in holy things for hire, but he would by his example teach mankind, what God by a special constitution established under

the law, and afterwards delivered to the world in a general proposition, that "he who serves at the altar should live by the altar."

But how poor, in comparison, is the gift which the patriarch brings to the priest of God, to that which he receives from him. Abram's is an offering of acknowledgment and respect merely, by which the receiver was neither benefited nor enriched, but Melchizedec's return to him was a real benefit; he "blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth," Gen. xiv. 19. Abram *was* already blessed, in growing worldly prosperity, blessed in recent victory over his enemies, blessed in the deliverance he had wrought for his beloved nephew, blessed in possessing the respect and esteem of princes; but blessings like these have fallen to the lot of bad men, and are in themselves unsatisfactory: Melchizedec pronounces a blessing which crowns all the rest, and gives value to them all. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith;" Abram is "blessed of the most high God." with the prospect, though distant, of the Messiah's day, who should spring from himself, according to the flesh, and in whom "all the families of the earth should be blessed." Abram beheld in the very person who pronounced the benediction upon him, "the figure of him who was to come," that "king who should reign in righteousness;" "he saw it, and was glad." What selfish, solitary joy is once to be named with the pure, benevolent delight, which glowed in the patriarch's breast, every time the promise was brought to his ear, and the Saviour, his own Saviour, the Saviour of the world, was placed before his eye? "And blessed be the most high God," continues he, "which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand," Gen. xiv. 20. The blessing which cometh down from heaven, ascends, together with its fruit, to heaven again; as the precious drops which fall down to water the earth, rise upward in gales of frag-

rance, from the fruits and flowers which they produce, and perfume the air. "Mercy is twice blessed, it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes." But behold, while Melchizedec yet blesseth Abram, he is out of our sight, and is no more to be found. He burst forth upon us like the sun from behind a thick cloud; disappeared again as quickly; and is to be discerned only in that track of glory which he has left behind him. Blessed type of him, who "led out his disciples as far as to Bethany; and he lift up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven:" Luke xxiv. 50, 51. And who, "while they beheld, was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." Acts i. 9.

Thus all the men of ages past have made their escape from us, and we behold them no more: and thus we ourselves are one by one disappearing from among men. Adam, and the great majority, died. Enoch, and one more, were translated without tasting death. The latter end of Melchizedec is concealed from us. But, from his extraordinary character, we are led to imagine, it could not be in the ordinary course of humanity. In so many various ways can God remove and dispose of his creatures; and thus, through various passages, we enter into the world of spirits: and "mortality is swallowed up of life." What other of the kings of the earth is to be compared with Melchizedec? Is he not rather raised up of Providence, to reproach, and to condemn the potentates of this world; the rule of whose government, too often, is not righteousness and law, but humor and caprice; and the end of it, not to bless mankind, but to gratify some passion of their own; who, instead of preserving the nations in peace, themselves the sons of peace, have incessantly, from the beginning to this unhappy day, involved the wretched human race in scenes of war, and violence, and blood? To which of the earthly thrones shall we

look for the union of the sanctity of the priesthood with the majesty of the sovereign? Alas! kings are "set in slippery places." Their education, their station, their employments, their connections; all, all unhappily encroach upon the offices of religion; tend to weaken its impressions, and to shut out its consolations.... But there is a Prince, betwixt whom and this king of Salem, the resemblance is so striking, that he who runs may trace it.

Not a few have given in to the opinion, that the wonderful personage represented in this history, under the united character of priest and king, was none other than the Son of God himself, assuming a temporary human form, to exhibit in that dark age of the world, an anticipated view of the person, which he was, in the fulness of time, to assume, of the character which he was to sustain, and of the offices which he was to execute. The expressions which describe Melchizedec, it is alleged, are not applicable to any creature: and as, from several other passages in the books of Moses, it is probable, if not certain, that the Redeemer of the world manifested himself in the patriarchal ages, at sundry times, and on divers occasions, under the character of the *angel* of the Lord; it is apprehended, that this appearance to Abram might be of the same nature; in order to furnish the father of believers with a clearer and more distinct idea of the person of the Redeemer, according to the words of Christ himself, "your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad," John viii. 56.

I see no danger that can result, either to faith or morality, from admitting this supposition. And it must be admitted, that there are circumstances, both in the history and in the apostolical application of it, which sufficiently warrant such an interpretation. If there is not an actual identity of persons in Melchizedec and the Messiah, the analogy at least is so obvious, that we have but to bring Moses and Paul together, in or-

der to discover its exactness, and to feel its force. The likeness is presented to us in scripture, not as some others, in scanty and obscure hints, or in some leading features and lineaments only; but the portraits are drawn, as it were, at full length, by the masterly hands of a prophet and an apostle, and placed side by side for our inspection. In this part of our undertaking, therefore, nothing more is necessary than to transcribe from the page of inspiration.

Scripture is singularly expressive, both in what it speaks of Melchizedec, and in what it conceals; and in both these respects we may in some measure understand the meaning of what David in spirit says of the Messiah, "thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec." And first,

To whom can the *names* of the king of righteousness, king of peace, be applied with such strict propriety, as to him whom God hath "anointed over his holy hill of Sion," who reigns in justice and in love: who, righteous himself, has wrought out for all his happy subjects, a justifying righteousness by the merit of his blood, and continues to work out in all, a sanctifying righteousness by the grace and power of his Spirit?

But *peace* and *righteousness* are not mere external designations of Messiah, our Prince; names without a meaning, titles without merit, like many of those which are worn by the potentates of this world, *Catholic, Most Christian, Faithful, Imperial, Defender of the Faith!* Appellations calculated to excite pity or derision. No: his titles are of the essence of his nature; the display of them, is the object of his mission, and the consummation of his plan. "His name shall be called the Prince of *peace*." "Of the increase of his government, and *peace*, there shall be no end," Isai. ix. 6, 7. "In Christ Jesus, we, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our *peace*, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition be-

tween us:" "He came and preached *peace* to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh," Eph. ii. 13, 14, 17. "The chastisement of our *peace* was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," Isai. liii. 5. His gospel is prophesied of, as God's "*covenant of peace*," and "*the counsel of peace*." At his birth the melodious anthem of "*peace on earth, and good will toward men*," Luke ii. 14, ascended from the tongues of ten thousand angels, up to the eternal throne: and when he left the world, this bequest, more precious than the mantle of Elijah, fell from him, and remained behind him to bless mankind, "*peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*," John xiv. 27... *peace with God, peace of conscience, peace with all men*; for, "*being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*," Rom. v. 1. And "*the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*," Rom. xiv. 17. Acquaintance with God through him, produces inward tranquillity. "*Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee*," Job xxii. 21. And "*if God be for us, who can be against us?*" "*The peace of God passeth all understanding*." The world can neither give it nor take it away. And when his gospel shall have produced its full effect, and his kingdom is finally established; "*the work of righteousness shall be peace*;" "*and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever*," Isai. xxxii. 17.

But it were endless to enumerate the passages of scripture, which represent Jesus Christ the Saviour as the author, the purchaser, the giver, the operator of *peace*, and "*the Lord our righteousness*." They are his nature, his name; the burthen of his preaching, of his prayers: they are the fruit of his sufferings and death, the object of his intercession, the operation of his Spirit: they are the seeds of glory in his redeemed upon earth; and the perfection of glory in him and in

them, when the triumph of his grace shall be completed in heaven.

As the *names* and *titles* ascribed to Melchizedec, apply in full force, and in their utmost extent to our blessed Saviour, so the several *actions* in which we find him engaged, have their exact counterpart in what Jesus *did*, in the exercises of his public ministry. They are these three....“ he brought forth bread and wine” to refresh Abram and his weary host; he “blessed Abram;” and he received of him “titles of all” the spoils.

In the first of these we are led to contemplate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he exerted, more than once, his almighty power, in miraculously multiplying bread to refresh and sustain the fainting multitudes, who resorted to hear him: and when he instituted, by taking, blessing, and distributing bread and wine, that memorial of his death, which has been in every age, and shall continue to the end of the world, the food of the hungry soul, and a cordial to the faint; the token of a salvation already wrought out and purchased; and the foretaste of a salvation “ready to be revealed;” the communion of imperfect saints, in the church militant, and the eternal bond of union among the spirits of just men made perfect, in the church triumphant.

Again, Melchizedec *blessed* Abram. In this action of the king of Salem, we behold Jesus, “who went about doing good,” and scattered blessings wheresoever he went. “He took little children into his arms and *blessed* them.” He pronounced a *blessing*, which still rests on “the poor in spirit,” “the meek,” “the merciful,” “the pure in heart,” “the peace makers,” and those “who hunger and thirst after righteousness,” Matt. v. 3, 10. He *blessed* the bread before he brake it, and gave it to his disciples: when he ascended up on high, blessings upon blessings flowed from his lips; and in virtue of his intercession at the right hand of

the Father, "every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights," James 1. 17. If the world has any comfort; if the soul has any hope; if there be any communication between heaven and earth; if there be "good will towards men;" "if there be any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love; if any fellowship of spirit; if any bowels and mercies," Phil. ii. 1...if there be any joy purer, and more perfect than another, "the *blessing* of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith;" it is of him, whom "God having raised up" even "his Son Jesus, sent him to *bless* you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Acts iii. 26. But the grand accomplishment of the type is reserved for that day, when, together with faithful Abraham, all "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," Isai. xxxv. 10... when "the Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," shall thus welcome his redeemed to the regions of eternal day, "Come ye *blessed* of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34.

The last of Melchizedec's *actions* that stands upon record is his *receiving* the *tithe* of the spoils from Abram. On which subject I think it best to give you the apostle's commentary in his own words. "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of his spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to *take* tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose descent is not counted from them, *received* tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes: but there he receiveth them, of whom

it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also who received tithes, payed tithes in Abraham; for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedec met him," Heb. vii. 4...10. From which he justly infers, that "perfection" could not be "by the Levitical priesthood," that "there was need" of "another priest, after the order of Melchizedec, and not after the order of Aaron;" who should be "made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life;" "and that seeing the law made nothing perfect," but "the bringing in of a better hope did," "by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament:" and "this man because he continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood." Through him, therefore, let us offer, "the calves of our lips," and "present" our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service:" for "we are not our own, we are bought with a price;" therefore, "let us glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are God's."

As the *names* and *employments*, so the *united offices* and *dignity* of Melchizedec, met in all their lustre in the person of the Son of God: "*King of Salem*," and "*Priest of the most high God*." In "*derision*" of the vain attempts of the heathen, and of the impious confederacy of the kings and rulers of the earth, "against the LORD, and against his Anointed," God declares, "I have set *my King* upon my holy hill of Zion," Psalm ii. 6. He came not indeed in worldly pomp, but in lowliness and meekness, yet the powers and potentates of the earth were made subject and subservient to him. "*Wise men from the east*" were conducted by a star to Jerusalem, and thence to Bethlehem of Judah, to do homage to him at his birth; and poured "their treasures, gold, frankincense, and myrrh," at his feet. Augustus issued "a decree that all the world should be taxed." What was his motive, what his end? We cannot tell; but we know the end which

God had in view by it: namely, to bring into more public notoriety, the several circumstances of Christ's nativity, and to transmit them to the latest posterity, in all their splendor and importance. Thus the haughty master of imperial Rome was constrained of Providence, to render unknown, unintended, involuntary homage to yonder babe in the stable at Bethlehem. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done," Acts iv. 27, 28. Is he not then "the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings, and Lord of lords?" Now especially, exalted as he is, to the "right hand of the Majesty on high. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist," Col. i. 16, 17. And, into the kingdom of his glory, when finished, "the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor." Then shall angels and men join in this grand celestial chorus, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever," Rev. xi. 15.

But while his exalted rank as a *sovereign* removes us to an awful distance, his milder character, as "the Apostle and *High Priest* of our profession," allures us back to his presence, and dissipates our terrors. He is "a merciful and a faithful *High Priest*," an "*High Priest*, touched with the feeling of our infirmities:" "a great *High Priest*, that is passed into the heavens," through whom we have encouragement to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16. He has by "one offering perfected forever

them that are sanctified," and who having "washed us from our sins in his own blood," shall at length make us "kings and priests unto God and his Father. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever," Rev. i. 6.

The circumstances relating to Melchizedec, which are *concealed*, no less than those which are *revealed* to us, lead directly to similar circumstances in the person and character of our Lord. "Without father, without mother, without descent; having neither beginning of days, nor end of life:" no predecessor; no successor; no limited time of service; no derived title; a dignity not passing from hand to hand, but permanent, inherent, immutable. Such was the type. What is its antitype? "Who shall declare his generation?" "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," John i. 1. "Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, [and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father] full of grace and truth," John i. 14. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh," I Tim. iii. 16. "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen," Rev. i. 11, 18. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" "Slain from the foundation of the world!" The altar which consecrateth "the gift," the priest that presents the sacrifice; the "second temple" which eclipses the glory of the "first." All, and in all. Every thing pointed to him, all endeth in him, and all are infinitely exceeded by him.

Rejoice, christians, in this "more sure word of prophecy;" and "take heed unto it, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts," 2 Peter i. 19. Revere the unfathomable depths of the eternal mind. "Secret

things belong to God ; but things which are revealed, belong to us, and to our children." Turn all your inquiries to some good account ; remembering that " the end of the commandment is charity," is to inspire veneration and love to God, and good will to men. Seek not to be " wise above what is written : " and " be not wise in your own conceit." In reverence adore an incomprehensible Jehovah, who, by no search is to be " found out unto perfection." Rejoice in hope of that day, when all mysteries shall be unveiled, and the wisdom, the love, and the goodness of God, shall shine conspicuously in every creature and every event ; when the honors of a Melchizedec shall be communicated to all and to every one of the myriads of Christ's redeemed. When, such as is the head, shall all the members be, "*kings and priests* unto God." And let us, " by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality." Amen.

History of Abram.

LECTURE XIII.

And it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.

GEN. XV. 17, 18.

THERE is something awfully pleasant, in tracing the manners and customs of ancient times, and of distant nations; particularly in the celebration of their religious ceremonies. Religion, in every age and nation, has been the foundation of good faith, and of mutual confidence among men. The most solemn conventions, and the most explicit declarations have been considered as imperfect, till the oath of God was interposed, and until the other august sanctions of divine worship ratified and confirmed the transaction. It cannot but be a high gratification to every lover of the holy scriptures, to find in the bible the origin and the model of all the significant religious rites of latter ages and of remoter nations; to find in Moses, the pattern of usages described by a Homer and a Titus Livius, as in general practice among the two most respectable and enlightened nations of antiquity, the Greeks and Romans.

Making of covenants is one of the most frequent and customary transactions in the history of mankind. Controversies and quarrels of every sort issued at length in a covenant between the contending parties. The solemn compacts which have taken place between God and man, are known by the same name; and

have been confirmed by similar forms and ceremonies. The word translated to *make* a covenant, in all the three learned languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; that is, according to the uniform application of it in the Old Testament, and the constant phraseology of the most approved Greek and Roman authors, signifies to *cut*, to separate by cutting asunder, to *strike* down. The word translated *covenant*, in the original Hebrew according as we derive it from one or two words of similar form and sound, signifies either a *purifier*, that is, a purifying victim; and the phrase, to *make* a covenant will import, to *kill*, *strike*, *cut off*; a *purifying victim*; or it may signify a grant of favor, a deed of gift freely bestowed and solemnly ratified by the most high God. And according to this derivation it imports, that the party with whom it is made, is put into a new and happier state.* Between man and man, it denotes a new arrangement of certain concerns common to both, whereby they are put upon a clearer foundation than they were before. Now the order and form of Abram's sacrifice described in the ninth and tenth verses of this chapter, is a full illustration of the meaning of the words. "And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not." And in the text, "the Lord made a covenant," i. e. he *cut asunder* or *divided* a *purifying victim*. Abram, according to God's command, took an heifer, a she goat, and a ram, each of three years old, slew them; divided each into equal parts; placed the separated limbs opposite to each other, leaving a passage between; passed between the parts himself, according to the custom of the sacrifice; and when the sun was down, that the appearance might be more vi-

* Taylor's Hebrew Concordance, under the word כרת. 232.

sible and striking, the *Shechinah*, or visible token of God's presence, passed also between the divided limbs of the victims, as "a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp;" the final ratification of this new treaty between God and Abram. By this covenant God graciously became bound to give Abram a son of his own loins, who should become the father of a great nation, and the progenitor, after the flesh, of the great Saviour and deliverer of the human race; and Abram on his part, bound himself to a firm reliance upon all God's promises, and a cheerful obedience to all his commands. Such were the awful solemnities of this important transaction. What mysteries were contained in these sacred rites, we pretend not to unfold. They were evidently of divine institution, for God honored them with his presence, approbation and acceptance. They apparently had been long in use before this period; for Abram, without any particular instruction, prepares and performs the sacrifice; and they certainly continued long in the church of God after this; for we find the practice as far down as the times of Jeremiah, that is about the period of the dissolution of the Jewish monarchy. The passage in this prophet to which we refer, describes so minutely these ancient religious customs, and so strikingly illustrates and supports the history of Abram's covenant and sacrifice, that I trust you will forgive my quoting it at full length. "This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, after that the king Zedekiah had made a *covenant* with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them. That every man should let his man servant, and every man his maid servant, being an Hebrew, or an Hebrewess, go free, that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother. Now when all the princes, and all the people which had entered into the *covenant*, heard that every one should let his man servant, and every one his maid servant go free, that none should serve themselves of

them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go. But afterwards, they turned, and caused the servants and the hand-maids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for hand-maids. Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus saith the Lord the God of Israel, I *made a covenant* with your fathers, in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, At the end of seven years, let ye go every man his brother, an Hebrew which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor, and ye had *made a covenant* before me in the house which is called by my name. But ye turned, and *polluted* my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his hand-maid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for hand-maids. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbor: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine, and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will give the men that have *transgressed* my *covenant*, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they *cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof*, the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which *passed between the parts of the calf*; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to

the beasts of the earth," Jer. xxxiv. 8...20. Now the expressions here employed, of "polluting God's name, transgressing his covenant, and not performing it," and the threatened punishment of this violation, "their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth, explain to us in some measure the meaning of those solemn ceremonies with which covenants were executed. And here surely it is not unlawful to employ the lights which are thrown upon this subject, by the practice of the Gentile nations, and the writings of those who are styled profane authors. From them we learn, that on such occasions the custom was, that the contracting party or parties, having passed between the divided limbs of the sacrifice, and expressed their full assent to the stipulated terms of the agreement or covenant, in solemn words, which were pronounced with an audible voice, imprecated upon themselves a bitter curse, if they ever should violate it. "As I strike down this heifer, or ram, so may God strike me with death, if I transgress my word and oath." "As the limbs of this animal are divided asunder, so may my body be torn in pieces, if I prove perfidious." Permit me to present one instance of many, from the two illustrious nations alluded to. The Greeks and the Trojans, according to Homer, having agreed to determine the great quarrel between them, by the issue of a single combat between the two rivals Menelaus and Paris, the terms being solemnly adjusted and consented to on both sides, the ratification of the covenant is thus described, *Iliad*, lib. III. 338. † "The Grecian prince

† It may perhaps be amusing to the reader, to compare the simplicity of a literal prose translation, with the poetical elegance and spirit of the English Homer. The passage follows:

" On either side a sacred herald stands,
The wine they mix, and on each monarch's hands
Pour the full urn; then draws the Grecian lord
His cutlass sheath'd beside his pond'rous sword;

drew the sacred knife, cut off a lock of wool from each of the heads of the devoted lambs, which being distributed among the princes of the contending parties, he thus, with hands lifted up, and in a loud voice prayed: "O Father Jove, most glorious, most mighty: O sun, who seest and hearest every thing: ye rivers, thou earth, and ye powers who in the regions below punish the false and perjured, be ye witnesses, and preserve this covenant unviolated." Then, having repeated the words of the covenant in the audience of all, he cleft asunder the heads of the consecrated lambs, placed their palpitating limbs opposite to each other on the ground, poured sacred wine upon them, and again prayed, or rather imprecated: "O Jupiter Almighty, most glorious, and ye other immortals! Whoever shall first transgress his solemn oath, may his brains and those of his children, flow upon the ground like this wine, and

From the sign'd victims crops the curling hair,
 The heralds part it, and the princes share;
 Then loudly thus before the attentive bands,
 He calls the gods, and spreads his lifted hands:
 "O first and greatest Pow'r! whom all obey,
 Who high on Ida's holy mountain sway,
 Eternal Jove! and you bright orb that roll
 From east to west, and view from pole to pole,
 Thou mother earth! and all ye living floods!
 Infernal furies, and Tartarean gods,
 Who rule the dead, and horrid woes prepare
 For perjur'd kings, and all who falsely swear!
 Hear and be witness. If"

"With that the chief the tender victims slew,
 And in the dust their bleeding bodies threw;
 The vital spirit issued at the wound,
 And left the members quiv'ring on the ground.
 From the same urn they drink the mingled wine,
 And add libations to the pow'rs divine;
 While thus their pray'rs united mount the sky:
 "Hear, mighty Jove! and hear, ye gods on high!
 And may their blood, who first the league confound,
 Shed like this wine, distain the thirsty ground;
 May all their comforts serve promiscuous lust,
 And all their race be scattered as the dust!"

POPE'S Iliad, III. 376.

let his wife be divided from him and given to another." Thus when it was agreed to settle the contest for empire between Rome and Alba by the combat of three youths, brothers, on either side; after the interposition of ceremonies similar to those which have been described, the Roman priest who presided, addressed a prayer to Heaven to this effect: "Hear, Father Jupiter, hear, prince of Alba, and ye whole Alban nation. Whatever has been read from that waxen tablet, from first to last, according to the plain meaning of the words, without any reservation whatever, the Roman people engages to stand to, and will not be the first to violate. If with a fraudulent intention, and by an act of the state, they shall first transgress, that very day, O Jupiter, strike the Roman people as I to-day shall strike this hog, and so much the more heavily, as you are more mighty and more powerful than me." And having thus spoken, with a sharp flint, he dashed out the brains of the animal.

Thus in the three most distinguished nations that ever existed, we find the origin of their greatness in similar ceremonies; empire founded in religion, and good faith secured by the sanction of solemn sacred rites. And is it not pleasing to find the living and true God, as in respect of majesty and dignity, so in priority of time, taking the lead in all that is great and venerable among men? We find Moses, the prince of sacred writers, describing a religious sacrifice performed by Abram one thousand nine hundred and thirteen years before Christ, which the prince of heathen poets so exactly describes as the practice of his own country upwards of one thousand years later; and which the great Roman historian relates as in use among his countrymen, in the time of Tullus Hostilius, the third king of Rome, before Christ about six hundred and sixty-eight years.

The circumstances of this interesting transaction have led me much farther than I intended; I now

return to take up the thread of the narration. Abram having returned from the slaughter of the kings; having achieved the deliverance of Lot his brother's son from captivity; having paid tithes to Melchizedec, the type and representative of the great High Priest over the household of God, perhaps the Son of God himself, thus early exhibited in human nature to the world; having received the blessing from him, and bidden him farewell, retires again to the quietness and privacy of domestic life, humbly confiding in the divine protection, and patiently waiting the accomplishment of the promises. The man who habitually seeks God, is readily and happily found of him. "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," Gen. xv. 1. The din of war, and the gratulations of victory, these transitory and perturbed occupations and comforts being over, intercourse with Heaven recommences and improves: the still small voice of divine favor is again heard... "Fear not, I am thy shield." Abram was become the dread of one confederacy of princes, and the envy of another; both of them situations full of danger; but his security is the protection of the Almighty. He scorned to be made rich by the generosity of the king of Sodom; and his magnanimity and disinterestedness are recompensed by the bounty of the great Lord of all; "I am thy exceeding great reward." Why should we curiously inquire after the nature of the heavenly vision, and ask in what manner the word of the Lord came unto him? Know we not the secret, the inexplicable, the irresistible power which God possesses, and exercises over the bodies and over the minds of men? Know we not what it is to blush for our follies, though no eye beholds us; to tremble under the threatenings of a guilty conscience, though no avenger be pursuing; and to enjoy serenity and peace, in the midst of confusion and tempest? Whence is this but from the word of the Lord within us, constraining or encouraging us to hear?

This renewed declaration of the divine favor, draws from Abram a dutiful yet pathetic expostulation, on the condition of his family and affairs; in which the impatience and fretfulness of the man, mingle with the submission and resignation of the believer. He was grown rich and respected; he had been victorious over his enemies, and become a blessing to his friends; but he is sinking into the veil of years, and his great possessions are ready to descend to a stranger, Eliezer of Damascus, the steward of his household. Is it any wonder to see a proud, unmortified Haman dissatisfied, though basking in the sunshine of royal favor, because one Mordecai sits in the king's gate, when a pious Abram feels uneasy in the enjoyment of all this world could bestow, because one thing was withheld? Alas, what condition of humanity is exempted, for any length of time together, from sorrow and vexation of spirit? How much of the affliction of the remainder of Abram's life, arose from the possession of that blessing, which he now coveted so earnestly! But surely we should do but slender justice to the holy man, in supposing that the sentiments which he expressed upon this occasion were merely the effect of a natural desire of having children of his own body, to whom his large possessions might descend. The man who rejoiced in the prospect of the Saviour's day; the man who was ready, at God's command, to offer up Isaac in sacrifice; the man who had given up every thing nature holds dear, when duty called him to it; and who took the simple promise of God as a full indemnification; such a man must, in charity, be presumed to entertain the most liberal and disinterested views, in thus ardently desiring a son. We hear of no disapprobation expressed against his ardor and impatience; on the contrary, it procures from God a more distinct and decisive promise of the speedy accomplishment of his wishes...“ And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth

out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir," Gen. xv. 4. The time, though not the manner of the vision is fully conveyed to us: it was early in the morning, while it was yet dark, for "he brought him forth abroad and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be," Gen. xv. 5. Scripture allusions to natural objects, are adapted to the ordinary conceptions of mankind. The sun is represented as rising, and setting, and moving round the earth; and the stars are represented as innumerable, because this is apparently the case, and justified by the ideas and language of all nations, though the fact be philosophically otherwise. Surely the truth of God, in his promise to Abram, is little affected by the astronomical arrangement of the heavenly bodies, which latter ages have devised, and whereby the number of those glorious luminaries is determined to a greater degree of accuracy. What the promise means to give the good man full assurance of, is, that his posterity should be both numerous and illustrious beyond all conception. And, if I may be permitted to hazard a conjecture, and to anticipate an observation on this subject, the error of David, many ages afterwards, in insisting on having the people numbered in his reign, which was one of the most prosperous periods of the Israelitish history, consisted in his attempting to determine what God would have left undetermined. It being an object of much greater importance to a wise and good prince, to see his subjects thriving, numerous, and happy, than to know the exact number over which he reigns; just as it is much more delightful and beneficial to a man, to contemplate the beautiful seeming irregularity of the starry heavens, to lose ourselves, as it were, in their glory and immensity, and to enjoy their benign influences, than to fix with the utmost exactness and precision, their number, motions, and distances. Accordingly, we find, that in the days of Solomon, the son of

David, when Jewish splendor and populousness were at their zenith, no attempt was made to discover the number of the people; but in conformity to the obvious intention of God, in the passage now under review, that matter was forever left in a state of glorious uncertainty.

Abram's doubts are now entirely removed; "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness," Gen. xv. 6. As God rewards the faithful, not by halves, not sparingly, nor grudgingly; so all true believers, like faithful Abram, honor God by an entire and unlimited confidence; and believe not only *in* hope but *against* hope. The patriarch thus indulged and encouraged, presumes still farther on the divine goodness, to entreat some present token of the truth and certainty of the promises made to him. "And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it," Gen. xv. 8. Both from what goes before and follows, we must conclude, that this was not a request of diffidence, but of desire and love. We neither desire nor exact from our friends formal obligations to shew us kindness; this would imply a doubt of their attachment; but we dearly love to bear about us the tokens of their affection. In like manner Abram asked for a sign, not that he suspected any thing, but because he loved much. It was taken as it was meant; and friendship was strengthened by the request and the grant of it. The covenant which ensued, and the ceremonies by which it was ratified, have already been considered. But some farther circumstances here recorded well deserve our notice. The order for the sacrifice was given early in the morning. The former part of the day was employed in preparing it; and we may suppose all things ready at noon. Abram has done what was incumbent upon him; but the great God is not limited to seasons or forms; Abram must therefore wait and watch...wait till God condescends to appear...watch, that his sacrifice be not plundered or

polluted. At length, about the going down of the sun, the approach of Deity is felt. "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram: and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him," Gen. xv. 12. How insupportable must be the visitations of God's anger! (I tremble while I speak) if the visions of his mercy and love are so awful and tremendous! While he was in this extacy, the principal events that should affect his family for the space of four hundred years, are revealed to him; and the issue is to be, at the end of that period, the quiet and certain possession of the very land which he then inhabited; even from the Nile to the Euphrates. But we trespass on your patience too long.

...Let us, in conclusion, raise our thoughts to a new covenant, established on better promises; to a sacrifice whose "blood cleanseth from all sin;" "to a new and living way consecrated into the holiest of all, through the veil, the Redeemer's flesh." Let us look to that body which was broken upon the cross, the atonement for transgression; to that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" to that "kingdom which cannot be moved," that government and peace, of "which there shall be no end;" to that "great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, which stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands;" to that day, when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

...Is every discovery of God a mixture of light and darkness, "a furnace that smoketh, a lamp that burneth," "a pillar of cloud, a pillar of fire?" Let us rejoice and walk, and live in that light; let us revere, adore, and preserve an humble distance from that darkness. Are the visits of God's wrath intolerable to the wicked; and the approaches of his gracious presence awful

even to the good? Let us, then, think of drawing nigh to him, only through the Son of his love, in whom he is ever well pleased.

Is the covenant on God's part "ordered in all things and sure?" Are all "the promises" in Christ "yea and amen?" Is the "glory" they propose and ensure, "yet to be revealed?" "Be not faithless, but believing;" "cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you." "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known." "He who cometh will come and will not tarry." "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with your spirits." Amen.

History of Abram.



LECTURE XIV.

*He that believeth shall not make haste....*ISAIA. xxviii. 16.

THE ways of Providence and the workings of the human mind do not always keep pace one with another. In the pursuit of *their* ends, men are at one time careless and indolent, at another, over eager and hasty; but God is ever advancing towards *his*, with a steady, progressive, majestic pace. When we get sight of a favorite object, we grasp at it through possibility and impossibility; we hurry on to possession, too little scrupulous about the means. To God all things are possible; and “he is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is he.” Men ignorantly and weakly judge of their Maker by themselves, and foolishly attempt to regulate the divine procedure by their own preconceived opinions of it: “Behold I thought,” said Naaman the Syrian, “he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper;” but God had said, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times and thou shalt be clean.” It is rare to find a faith which steadily, cheerfully, and constantly walks hand in hand with the purpose and promise of Heaven. We either “stagger at the promise, through unbelief,” or impatiently strive to bring forward the accomplishment by indirect methods.

When we look into history, how unlike do events appear from the form into which they were previously shaped by the fond expectations of the persons concerned! The Jews in the person of Messiah, looked for a prince who should revive the faded splendor of David's throne; but the Messiah whom God raised up, established a kingdom "of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The disciples are dreaming of sitting at their Master's right and left hand, when "the kingdom should be restored to Israel;" he is sending them forth to "suffer shame for his name."

The sentiment of the prophet which I have now read, as the foundation of another Lecture on the history of Abram, is just and striking. "He that believeth shall not make haste." Faith neither lags behind, nor strives to outrun the word of God. "Thus saith the Lord," is its rule and measure; it endures, waits, proceeds, acts, refrains, as "seeing him who is invisible." But in the most composed, firmest, and faithfulest of believers, we find the frailties and infirmities of the man frequently predominant; and a slighter temptation sometimes prevailing, after more severe and difficult trials have been withstood and overcome. Nothing can exceed the solemnity with which God ratified his covenant with Abram, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis. Under the sanction of the most awful forms and ceremonies, a son is promised, the future father of a numerous offspring; and an inheritance is allotted to that chosen seed, by him who has all things in heaven and in earth at his disposal. Abram takes the word of God as a full security; believes and rejoices. He had now dwelt ten years in Canaan; and notwithstanding his advanced period of life, we find him discovering nothing like eagerness or impatience; he "believed" and therefore did "not make haste." But though he was not the first to devise an undue and intemperate method of arriving at

the accomplishment of the promise, we find him ready enough to adopt one of this nature when it was suggested to him.

It was now put beyond a doubt, that Abram should become a father, but it has not yet been declared explicitly that Sarai shall be a mother. With the anxiety natural to women in her circumstances, however, we may suppose her to hope till she could hope no longer. At length, her feelings as a wife gave way to her concern about her husband's glory and happiness; and she consents to Abram's having children by another, rather than that he should not have children at all. Projects formed and executed in haste, are generally repented of at leisure; and when we fly in the face either of nature or of religion, we shall speedily and infallibly find both the one and the other much too powerful for us. Sarai's was a lot to be envied by most women; beautiful and beloved even to old age; mistress of an ample fortune, and a numerous train of domestics; the wife of a prince, and, what is much more, of an amiable and excellent man. But the glory and joy of all these flattering circumstances were marred and diminished by one perverse accident, "she bare Abram no children." Not blindly and capriciously, but in wisdom and in righteousness, the great God apportions to the sons of men good and evil in this life; that none may be exalted above measure, and that none may sink into dejection and despair. During Abram's sojourn in Egypt, Pharaoh, smitten with Sarai's beauty, had made his court to her, on the presumption of her being a single woman, by the usual modes of attention, and presents numerous and costly, suitable to his rank and the manners of the times; "sheep, oxen, he-asses, men-servants, *maid-servants*, she-asses, and camels." Of the female servants probably bestowed upon that occasion, one is now brought particularly into view, and occupies a conspicuous place henceforward in this history. The deception attempt-

ed by Abram, in making his wife pass for a sister, is very little to his credit ; and his accepting presents from Pharaoh, circumstanced as he was and knowing what he did, was far from being an honorable proceeding ; indeed no good could be expected to come of it ; and though God did not, at the time, reproach him for his conduct by a verbal reproof, he is now preparing, by his righteous providence, to make him feel that he had acted wrong. Thus, the monuments of our faults become the instruments of our punishment. Sarai proposes to her husband to assume this Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, as a secondary, or inferior wife ; in hope of building up a family by her, and thus of making the promise to take effect. Unnatural as this may appear, it is far from being without a parallel. The truth is, it is very natural and very common, to try to get rid of a present pressure, though with the hazard of subjecting ourselves to an heavier burthen. Every thing was wrong here. A shameful distrust of God ; an attempt to introduce a foreign and perhaps an idolatrous mother into the family of Abram ; a most unwise and inconsiderate tampering with her husband's affection ; a foundation laid of probable, if not of certain domestic jealousies and quarrels ; evil done in vain expectation that good may come of it. Abram complies with the suggestion of his wife, and Hagar conceives. It requires not the gift of prophecy to foresee the consequence. Hagar becomes vain and insolent, and Sarai is thoroughly mortified. The handmaid now considers herself as her mistress' equal, if not her superior ; she views Abram's vast possessions, and vaster prospects, as entailed on her posterity. Little and wicked minds are soon elevated, and as easily depressed. The whole of Sarai's behavior, is that of a peevish, unreasonable, disappointed woman. The wise scheme was of her own contriving ; and now that she feels the effect of her impetuosity and rashness, she turns the edge of her resentment against her innocent husband ; " and

Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee," Gen. xvi. 5. How weak, wicked, and absurd is all this! Had the good man formed a deliberate design of injuring and insulting her, she could not have employed harsher language; and yet whatever evil has been committed, was her own devising. But the language of passion is ever contradictory and inconsistent. "My wrong be upon thee." Why should it? "My folly recoils upon myself," would have been the language of truth and justice. She dares not, even in her rage, accuse Abram of incontinency, but reluctantly discerns and acknowledges her own rashness: "I have given my maid into thy bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes." The tide of anger says not it is enough, knows not where to stop: "The Lord judge between me and thee." Who would not conclude, from an appeal so solemn, that she has the better cause? And yet, she is appealing to God in a case where she was clearly, consciously in the wrong. I like not hasty references to Heaven. A truly serious spirit will reflect twice before it interposes the name of God on any occasion, and shudder at the thought of employing it upon a false or frivolous one; an angry spirit sticks at nothing. For this reason, I will sooner believe a plain, unprofessing man, on his simple word, than ten thousand common swearers, under the sanction of as many oaths.

See into what disorder one ill advised measure has thrown a happy, well regulated family. Abram's ill-judged compliance with the precipitate advice of his wife, has embroiled him in contention with herself; it constrains him to connive at her cruel treatment of an unhappy woman, who is at least to be pitied as much as blamed; and renders the prospect of the promised seed a heavy affliction, instead of a blessing.

Sarai is betrayed by the eagerness of her spirit, first into an absurdity ; then into unkindness and undutifulness towards her lord ; then into profanity and impiety towards God ; then by an easy transition into barbarity towards a wretched slave, who was entirely at her mercy, who had been brought, without any high degree of criminality, into a condition which claims compassion and attention from all ; brought into it by herself too ; and this to the endangering, for aught she knew, of all the hopes of her husband's family, and the greater interests of the human race. Hagar, hapless wretch ! an object of commiseration throughout : led, perhaps reluctantly, to her master's bed, elevated to a transient gleam of hope, exulting in the prosperity of a moment, hurried instantly back, by all the severities which jealousy can inflict, into the horrors of slavery, and driven from visionary prospects of bliss, into scenes of real distress ; ready to perish with the innocent unborn fruit of her womb, in the wilderness, by famine, or the jaws of some ravenous beast ; for " when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face." In what deep and accumulated wo, I say, may one inconsiderate step involve the children of men ! And if good and well intentioned people suffer thus severely from one act of rashness and imprudence, who but must tremble to think of the fearful consequence of deliberate wickedness ? A thousand volumes written against polygamy, could not lead to a clearer, fuller conclusion, against that practice, than the story under review.

Mark now, how seasonably and suitably God interposes to rectify all this disorder. When we have wearied ourselves with our own devices, and snared ourselves in the works of our own hands, Providence takes up the case, subdues it to its own wise and gracious purposes, and turns evil into good. Hagar flies from the face of her unkind mistress, but happily for her, she cannot flee from God. The interest which Abram now has in her, gives her an interest in the peculiar care and protection of the Almighty.

This is the first time we read in scripture of the appearance of an *angel*; and it was to reprove, exhort, and succor an helpless afflicted woman: and thus is mercy ever more ready to come at the call of misery, than justice to pursue the footsteps of guilt. From the whole tenor of the history, we are led to conclude, that this heavenly vision was the uncreated angel, God in the form, and performing the office of a "ministering spirit:" for this angel assumes the name and attributes of God, speaks of Hagar's present condition, and future prospects, with the knowledge peculiar to Deity; and describes the extraordinary future greatness of the male child with which she was pregnant, as *his own* work. The event demonstrates *whose* the prediction was: and Hagar evidently considered the person who spake with her in this light; for she ascribes to him the incommunicable name *Jehovah*, and adores him as the omniscient, omnipresent God. "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me," Gen. xvi. 10...13.

A great multitude of striking circumstances press upon us in the careful perusal of these words. Does God condescend to exercise all this care and tenderness about a person so obscure, helpless, and unbefriended as Hagar; then who is beneath his notice, or unimportant in his sight? Are the secondary and subordinate designs of his providence of such extensive and permanent consequence to the world? Then, of

what infinite and eternal weight is his first great leading object? If an Ishmael be introduced into the world with so much pomp and solemnity, what must the birth of an Isaac be? And what must it be, when God bringeth his own first-begotten upon the scene, whom all the angels are commanded to worship? How astonishingly awful is that foreknowledge, which discovered before he was born, Ishmael's character; and that power which predetermined and affected the character and state of his posterity to the latest ages, while as yet their progenitor was in his mother's womb? How are all the designs of the Most High, in the course of his adorable providence, and the execution of them, rendered subservient to one glorious purpose, which rises superior to, and absorbs all the rest...the plan of salvation by a Redeemer! How wisely are the children both of the bond woman and of the free, reminded of the lowness and helplessness of their original! "A Syrian ready to perish was my father," says the one; "an Egyptian bond maid ready to perish was my mother," says the other.

What a happy circumstance it was for Hagar to have lived so long in Abram's house! Liberty in Egypt had not proved a blessing so great, as slavery in Canaan. To be exalted to the dignity of a mother to princes! To be introduced to the knowledge of the living and true God! How different are the appearances of Providence, considered at the moment, and viewed through the medium of reflection and experience! Under the impulse of sorrow or of joy, we cry out, "all these things are against me," or "it is good for me to be here;" but when the account comes to be arranged, after the transport is over, we find ourselves necessitated to transfer many articles to the opposite pages, and to state that as favorable, which once we called adverse; and that a misfortune, which once we accounted a blessing.

The history informs us of Hagar's flight, but leaves us to draw our own conclusions respecting her return. Indeed, we may now suppose all parties to have been brought a little to themselves. The solitude and dangers of the wilderness, and the apparition of the angel, awful, though in mercy, have, of course, greatly diminished in Hagar's mind the rigor of her mistress' treatment, and she is glad to return to her former habitation. The sudden disappearing of her maid ; the just apprehension of the evil which might have befallen a desperate woman in her delicate situation ; time, serious reflection, and remorse for her cruel and unjust behavior, must surely have humbled the spirit and mollified the heart of Sarai, and disposed her to receive the returning fugitive, if not with marks of external complaisance, at least with secret and silent satisfaction. And Abram, always wise, and gentle, and good, would now necessarily rejoice in the restored peace of his family ; in this fresh demonstration of the divine tenderness towards himself and all who belonged to him ; in the farther enlargement and extent of the blessing promised ; and in the prospect of the final and full accomplishment of all that the Lord had spoken.

According to the word of the angel, Hagar in due time bears a son to Abram, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and the eleventh after his departure from Ur of the Chaldees. To preserve forever the memory of the divine interposition, the name given to the child by the angel in the wilderness, is put upon him by his pious father, to whom, no doubt, Hagar had carefully related the whole transaction, *Ishmael*, "God shall hear," because God heard, pitied, and relieved her affliction. And such was the origin of the father and founder of the Arabian nation ; a people who, in their character and manners, through every period of their history, evince from what root they sprung, and verify the prediction concerning their progenitor, "he will be a wild

man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." And history illustrates the expression of the angel, "and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." For whereas the slavery and subjection of all other nations make a considerable part of their history, that of the Arabs is entirely composed of a relation of their conquests, or their independence. They are at present, and have continued through the remotest ages, during the various and successive victorious expeditions of Greeks, Romans, and Tartars, a separate, free, an independant, and an invincible nation; a mighty band of illustrious robbers, united among themselves, and formidable to all the world; inhabiting a vast country of one thousand three hundred miles in length, and one thousand two hundred in breadth...one region of which, from the purity and salubrity of its air, and the fertility of its soil, is deservedly denominated *the happy*; it produces the finest fruits, spices, and perfumes in the world, and is remarkable for breeding the most beautiful and useful animals of their kind, horses, camels, and dromedaries.

We hasten to conclude this Lecture, by adding to the reflections already made, this farther one, that we are not to judge of the greatness and importance of the designs of Providence, by any worldly marks of distinction and pre-eminence. The posterity of Ishmael was much earlier, and has been much longer established, and existed in a much higher degree of national dignity and consequence, than the posterity of Isaac. But in the line of Isaac, not that of Ishmael, run the promises of life and salvation. To Isaac and not to his elder brother, pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," and of him "as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." The things which are highly esteemed among men, are often of no price in the sight of Him, who "hath chosen the foolish things of the world

to confound the wise, weak things to confound the mighty, base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." With Ishmael *we* have nothing to do, nor with his posterity: they are to us only a wild man and a wild people, inhabiting such a region of the globe. But in Isaac and the fortunes of his family we are deeply interested indeed, as the apostle Paul writing to the Galatians clearly evinceth: and his words shall be the evangelical illustration of the subject. "Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free woman, but he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise: which things are an allegory," (that is, one thing is expressed, and another hinted at or signified) "for these are the two covenants: the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar; for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to," or is in the same rank with, "Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise: but as then, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are children not of the bond woman, but of the free," Gal. iv. 22...31.

Behold the two prime branches of Abram's family from their birth down to this day, separated, supported, distinguished from the rest of mankind, and from each other, a standing proof of the power and provi-

dence of God, and a demonstration of the authenticity of that revelation which we acknowledge as divine, and on which we build all our faith and hope. "Behold, the counsel of the Lord shall stand forever, and the purpose of his heart to a thousand generations." God grant us wisdom to understand and do his will, to the glory of his great name, and our own eternal salvation. Amen.

History of Abram.



LECTURE XV.

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers ; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares...HEB. xiii. 2.

WHEN men are disappointed in their expectations, it is natural for them to become negligent about the performance of their duties. Irritated or grieved at one thing, they grow careless in every thing ; and because another has failed in affection or respect to us, we suffer ourselves to behave unkindly and disrespectfully to others. The effect which mortification, disappointment, or injuries, have upon truly good minds, is, however, the reverse of this ; the vexation or distress they themselves have endured, is the strongest of incentives to prevent, as far as they are able, similar occasion of affliction to their brethren of mankind.

Men stand continually in need of each other, and therefore every man is bound to give his countenance, to shew kindness, and to grant support to every man. We cannot move a single step through the world, without being brought into connection with strangers, and of course, without having opportunities afforded us of doing or receiving some instance of hospitality. To be careless or unkind in this respect, then, is to be at once unwise, inhuman, and unjust. Christianity has taken into its service every valuable and worthy principle of our nature, and calls the whole catalogue of human virtues its own. As we are continually remind-

ed, in the course of providence, of our being pilgrims and strangers upon earth, so we are strictly and repeatedly enjoined by the laws of the gospel, to be attentive and kind to strangers. "Be given to hospitality," says Paul. "Use hospitality one to another, without grudging," says Peter; and in the words I have read, the apostle recommends the same duty of humanity, "be not forgetful to entertain strangers," which he enforces by a motive which every heart must feel, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." It is of this motive, and of the history to which it refers, that we are now to discourse.

After a delay of ten years, the promise of a son is made good to Abram. But as he consulted not God in the means of obtaining that blessing, so God consults not his views and expectations in the character and destination of the son given to him. For it is one thing to be blessed and to prosper in the gifts of Providence, and another to be blessed in the course of the promise, and according to the tenor of the covenant. The seed which the Most High swore that he would raise up, was to prove an universal benefit to mankind; but the son whom Hagar bare, was to be "a wild man; whose hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him:" Abram therefore is apparently as far as ever from his favorite object; and as a farther trial of his faith, perhaps to punish him for deviating from the strict line of his duty, though with an honest intention, thirteen years more are permitted to elapse, and yet no symptom of the expected mercy appears.

At that period, while the improbability, in the course of nature, was daily increasing, Abram is again visited with the visions of the Almighty. Our attendance upon God must be constant and assiduous, and it is equally our interest and our duty to wait upon him; but if he makes himself known to us at all, at whatever season, in whatever manner, it is infinite grace and conde-

scension. Jehovah's appointed time is now at length come to enter on the performance of his own work in his own way. The very first word that proceeds from his lips removes every difficulty, though natural obstacles might seem increased: "I am the Almighty God," Gen. xvii. 1...or *God all-sufficient*; fear therefore no failure of the covenant on my part, for what truth hath spoken, that shall omnipotence bring to pass: and see that there be no unfaithfulness on thine, "walk before me, and be thou perfect." The former declarations concerning a numerous offspring are renewed, and an alteration is made in the patriarch's name, importing his relation to a multitude of princes and nations who should spring from him. To the eye of nature the title is premature; but faith considers that as done which is promised. Observe Abraham's posture while God talks with him; "he fell on his face," Gen. xvii. 3. The presence of the Almighty is the loudest call to humility, and the more any one knows of God, the more he must fear before him. Behold Abraham fallen to the ground, and angels covering their faces with their wings, and tremble thou, O man, before him!

But the trial of Abraham's faith and obedience is not yet over. God has appeared, not to fulfil the promises under the first covenant, but to enter into a second: and, instead of receiving the long expected son, he is commanded to perform an unpleasant and painful operation upon his own body, and upon all the males of his family. To qualify, however, the bitterness of this prescription, the promise becomes more express, and brings the darling object closer to the eye; it is now declared that Sarai, whose name too was changed, as a witness and token of the event, should bare a son, and that next year should at length crown all his wishes, and evince the truth and faithfulness of God. Abraham acquiesces with gratitude and joy. He had believed and trusted God, when the event was more obscure and remote, and now that it is more distinctly

seen, and brought to the very eve of accomplishment, his heart exults with purer and more sensible delight. This the scripture expresses, by saying, he fell on his face and *laughed*; a circumstance which Providence instantly lays hold of, and perpetuates to every future generation the memory of Abraham's faith on this occasion...the son that should be born, shall by his name, *Isaac, he shall laugh*, express that emotion, which his pious, believing father felt, when the will of God was revealed to him. Abraham laughed in faith, and is rewarded every time he beholds his son, or hears his name pronounced, by the approbation of God and his own conscience: Sarah afterwards laughed in incredulity, and was as often reprov'd for her unbelief.

We hear not Abraham inquiring into the reasons or meaning of God's covenant of *circumcision*; and we will imitate his pious reserve and submission. It was sufficient to him, and be it so to us, that thus God would have it be. That the great Jehovah should have distinguished the descendants of that family from all the families of the earth, by this token, and continue to the present hour thus to distinguish them, after almost every other badge of difference is obliterated and lost; that the posterity of Abraham should persevere in this practice, through a period so extended, and that no other nation should ever have adopted it as an established rite of their religion, is one of those apparently unimportant circumstances which are ready to escape the hasty eye, but which, in connection with other proofs, established the truth and certainty of the scripture revelation, and the constant interposition of Divine Providence in the affairs of men, beyond the power of contradiction. Behold then the rite of *circumcision* is performed; and Abraham sits down in the patient expectation of the appointed hour of merciful visitation.

One day, while he was enjoying the coolness of the shade at his tent door, in the heat of the day, three men,

under the appearance of travellers, presented themselves to his view. These were three angels, say some of the Jewish Rabbins, and without hesitation, they furnish us with their names too, *Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael*. A few of the christian fathers, on the other hand, contend that here was a visible representation of the most holy Trinity, exhibited to Abraham as three, addressed and acknowledged by him as one. That something more than created excellence was there, cannot be doubted, after a careful perusal of what Moses has related upon this occasion. But whether the mystery of the Trinity was thus, and then, revealed to the church in the covenant head of it, we presume not to affirm. It is apparent that the patriarch did not, during the former part of the interview, comprehend the nature and quality of his guests, as he neither performs the worship due to the most holy God, nor preserves that awful distance, which even the presence of an angel must inspire; and the apostle, alluding to him in the text, says, he “entertained angels *unawares*,” that is, not knowing he did so.

The scene that follows is a beautiful picture of ancient manners, and wonderfully coincides with the customs of the other nations of remote antiquity, as transmitted to us by their historians and poets, particularly Homer, that careful observer and masterly painter of nature and human life.

Abraham immediately starts from his seat with all the agility of youth, at the sight of the strangers; and with all that glow of affection which is natural to a good man, who had himself known the heart of a stranger, he tenders them every accommodation and refreshment which his simple habitation could afford. Sweetness of temper, easiness of behavior, and kindness of disposition, are peculiarly engaging in old people, because these qualities do not so frequently adorn life's decline. The invitation hospitably given, is cheerfully accepted.

True kindness, which is true politeness, attends to the *little* wishes and wants of those whom we entertain. *Water* to wash the feet of the weary traveller is a refreshment, though not so necessary as a morsel of *bread* to comfort his heart, yet, in a sultry climate especially, not less grateful. We remember slight attentions after we have forgotten great benefits. The proud man makes a feast to gratify himself; the hospitable man, to rivet the bonds of friendship, or cherish the soul of the stranger. What a delightful simplicity runs through the whole story! The fare, “cakes of fine meal, baked upon the hearth” by the hands of Sarah herself; a “calf from the herd,” of Abraham’s own choosing; butter and milk, the produce of their own pasture; their canopy, the spreading branches of an old tree; their attendants, the man who had in former days put kings and their armies to flight; the subject of their conversation, Abraham’s family affairs. Contrast with this the madness of a modern fashionable entertainment; the profusion of far-fetched luxury, the emulation of wealth and pride, the ingenuity employed in contriving and administering incentives to excess, the gibberish of compliment, the restraints of ceremony, the tinsel of false wit, the noise of mirth without joy, to the expulsion of truth and nature; a costly and painful collection, where nothing is wanting, but the very things which constitute a feast, plenty of wholesome fare, unaffected friendship, moderation, good humor, and good sense.

When we are doing our duty, we are in the way of procuring for ourselves gratification; and if there be a virtue which is its own reward, hospitality is that virtue. Abraham now enjoys it to the full. But little does he think what a repast his divine guest is providing for him in return. Sarah, according to the manners of the times, had remained invisible, confining herself to her own separate tent. The angel now inquires concerning her, on purpose to introduce a conversation

respecting the object of this visit; and assuming his proper character of Jehovah, subjoins a direct promise, that within the course of a year from that day, Abraham should have a son by her. Sarah, whom curiosity had drawn towards the door of the tent to listen, overhears this conversation, and not knowing the promise or the power of God, treats it as a thing impossible, and laughs, not in joy, but in derision. She is observed, detected, and reprov'd of Him who is at once faithful, good, and merciful; holy, just, and severe. But why is Abraham called to answer for the infirmity of his wife? Was it to render the reproof more pointed to Sarah? As, indeed, what can be so galling to an ingenuous mind, as to hear an innocent person called in question for our fault? The criminal now stands discovered; she is dragged from her lurking place, and stands abashed and confounded, to make her defence. Ah how dangerous it is to have deviated once from the path of rectitude! How one false step leads to another, and another, and another, till conviction and shame close the scene. The first wrong step here was the indulgence of an idle curiosity, a dangerous if not a sinful principle. People who listen generally hope or fear to hear something about themselves, and it seldom happens that they are entirely gratified with what they hear. The next error was her secret disbelief of a promise so frequently and so solemnly repeated: this is followed by the weakness of thinking to escape the notice of one who beheld her, though unseen, and could read her heart, though her person was not in view; and finally, deliberate falsehood attempts to conceal her preceding faults.

God neither overlooks nor forgets the errors of those towards whom he has thoughts of love; and happily the purposes of his grace are not to be defeated by the forwardness and folly of men. Sarah, in spite of her incredulity, shall become the joyful mother of a son, and that son shall be the source of blessings innumera-

ble, unspeakable, to mankind. God in his holiness hath sworn it, and "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" The business of this important visit being settled, the strangers rise, to depart, and look as if they would go towards Sodom; and Abraham, not satisfied with having performed one instance of hospitality, follows it up to the last with kindness and attention, "he went with them to bring them on the way." Two of the three, it would seem, now disappeared, and Abraham is left alone with the third, and from the conversation that ensues, we have no room left to doubt that he was the Son of God, come down to execute the vengeance of Heaven upon the sinful cities of the plain. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord," Gen. xviii. 17...22. The same person descends to bless Abraham, and to destroy Sodom: thus the same gospel is "a savor of life unto life, and of death unto death, in them that believe, and in them that perish;" and thus shall the same divine person be revealed in the end of the world, in "flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel," and "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," 2 Thess. i. 8, 10.

Abraham having obtained mercy himself, becomes an intercessor for his sinful neighbors. The judgments of God are very awful to a serious mind; fools only make a mock at sin, and its fearful consequences. But the whole scene is too interesting and instructive to be brought forward in the close of a Lecture, especially as it is necessary, before dismissing you, to make some reflections of a practical tendency from what has been spoken.

....You see, my friends, of what moment the salvation of a lost world is in the sight of God. At how many times, in how many different manners, did God speak of this subject unto the fathers? How many embassies of angels; how many appearances of the mighty Angel of the covenant himself? As if the great God had been carrying on no design from the beginning, but one, a design of love to guilty fallen men: that one, which of all others guilty fallen men treat with the greatest slight and contempt. What! shall that purpose and plan which occupied the eternal mind from everlasting; to mature and execute which the world was created; which has been declared to man by so many signs in heaven above, and on earth beneath, by the tongues of so many prophets, by so many oracles; to announce which angels and archangels have descended from their thrones; and to accomplish which, God was made manifest in the flesh, tabernacled among men, and proclaimed the great salvation... shall it be announced, unfolded, executed in vain? And will thoughtless, inconsiderate creatures, continue to treat it as a thing of nought? O when shall we cordially enter into the views of God our Maker and Redeemer, and earnestly pursue the same object with him, the salvation of ourselves and others!

God is not sensibly present with us as he was with Abraham, but he is as really so, as if the eye beheld him, and as if we conversed with him face to face. O man, God is in thy heart and conscience; God is in this

place ; in this book : and he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The visions of the Almighty to Abraham are visits of mercy to you. How easily could he draw aside the veil which conceals him from your eyes, and where we see nothing but empty space, discover to us a martial host of "chariots and horsemen of fire." But he is to be now discerned only by the eye of faith, and we must be satisfied to "see in a glass darkly." The awful period approaches when the veil shall drop, and we ourselves, disembodied spirits, shall see, and feel, and converse with the Father of spirits. Let, "thou God seest me," O man ! be the leading, commanding idea of thy life, in the city and in the field, in society and in solitude, by night and by day, and when you come to die, you will find you have not far to go ; to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord." Is it so pleasant and improving to contemplate the detached fragments of the plan of providence and redemption, which is all we can attain in this state ? What will it be in yonder world of bliss, to be endowed with a capacity of comprehending the whole vast design, and to have the harmony, connection, and dependance of the several parts revealed to us by Him who is both the author and finisher of it. Eagerly hungering after the fruit of this tree of life, "which grows in the midst of the paradise of God," this tree of knowledge of good but not of evil, let us be humbly and modestly, but carefully and constantly searching the scriptures, in which alone the way of eternal life is declared, and that life is in the Son of God. And may God give us understanding in all things ; and to his name be praise. Amen.

History of Abraham.

LECTURE XVI.

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God....
JAMES ii. 23.

OF all the temporal blessings which God in his exuberant goodness hath bestowed upon mankind, one of the greatest, if not the chief, is a sincere and virtuous friend. Into the composition of this character enter all the amiable and excellent qualities which our nature possesses; and in a commerce of virtuous friendship, we find the exertion of the noblest principles, and a display of the worthiest actions. The person who is approved and esteemed of wise and good men, must himself be wise and good. To what a pitch of dignity then is the patriarch Abraham raised? Venerable in possessing the esteem of men; infinitely more venerable, as distinguished by the approbation and friendship of God. Volumes written in his praise, and containing a particular enumeration of his virtues, could not say more than the few words of the apostle which have now been read. All that is necessary, in order to explain them, is to have recourse to his history, to mark his character, to observe his conduct; and on the other hand to trace the dispensations of the Divine Providence towards him, and to attend to the manner in which it pleased God to treat him, in order to learn how this sacred friendship was constituted, and in what it consisted. And, on the part of Abraham, we shall

find cheerful and prompt obedience, unbounded trust and confidence, profound reverence and fervent love; on the part of God, the most winning condescension, the tenderest affection, the most unshaken constancy. One essential quality of true friendship entered particularly into this, namely, communication of purpose and design. Abraham indeed could have no view or intention but what lay open to the eye of God, as soon as formed within his own breast; but the designs of the Most High could be known to him only as they were revealed.

We are presented with a very remarkable instance of such gracious communication, in the close of that interview, the commencement of which has already passed under review. God having confirmed the faith of Abraham, and reprov'd the infidelity of Sarah respecting the promised seed, unfolds a farther design he had in this solemn visit to our world. He has come to execute judgment as well as to shew mercy; for "our God is a consuming fire." But the hands of Omnipotence are as it were bound up, till Abraham the friend of God is made acquainted with what is meditating. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" As afterwards he said to Lot, when he wished to hasten his flight from the midst of destruction, "Escape thither, for I cannot do any thing until thou be come thither."

The character given of Abraham well deserves the attention of every father, of every master. "For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him," Gen. xviii. 19. The secret divulged under this sacred seal, is God's determination speedily and signally to destroy Sodom, and the neighboring cities, whose profligacy was arriv'd to such a height, as suffer'd not justice to rest. Whatever thoughtless men

may think of sin, it can be no light thing which reaches the eternal throne, calls forth the terrors of Almighty Power, and brings down the Most High from heaven to earth. Abraham, justly alarmed at this intimation, with the sympathy and tenderness natural to a good mind, takes upon him to intercede in behalf of his unhappy neighbors, now placed on the very brink of ruin. A truly gracious spirit is never harsh and unmerciful. The vilest criminal, when delivered up to the punishment he justly merits, excites compassion in the feeling and humane. The persons who themselves most need forgiveness, are generally the most unrelenting, and make lightest of the judgments of God upon others.

Lot, allured by the beauty and fertility of the plain of Sodom, had chosen to fix his residence there, when he parted from his uncle, and is now ready to pay dearly for the imprudence of that choice. When we view an object but in one light, that which strikes us first, and flatters us most, and when we make choice of it for a few more obvious and attractive qualities, we are laying up for ourselves sorrow and remorse in the day when experience has opened our eyes to the discovery of circumstances, unheeded or overlooked before. In Abraham's place an ordinary mind would have enjoyed, at least, a temporary triumph, when Sodom was threatened; the triumph of sagacity and ease, over rashness, imprudence, and danger. But far different concerns occupy Abraham's breast; concern about the interests of God's glory, and about precious souls ready to perish. The whole intercessory scene is affecting in a very high degree, and needs no commentary to illustrate its force and beauty. I shall simply read it: "And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou also destroy, and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do

after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked: that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes. Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there: and he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said unto him, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall be thirty found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake," Gen. xviii. 23...32.

It was thus that God, and Abraham the friend of God, lived and conversed together; it was thus this sacred friendship was mutually expressed. The fearful catastrophe that presently ensued, falls not within the design of the present Lecture, which is to trace the history and character of the patriarch Abraham. The next time he is brought into our view, we behold him at an awful distance contemplating that destruction which he could not by entreaty and intercession avert. Dreadful change! That beautiful plain which had allured the eyes of Lot, in one eventful day converted into a vast smoking furnace. Cities and their inhabitants swallowed up in a deluge of fire. "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble."

Abraham had lived sixteen years in the plain of Mamre; but now, whether by the particular direction of Heaven, or prompted by a natural desire to withdraw from a neighborhood rendered unwholesome and unpleasant by the change which had passed upon it, and which incessantly presented such a tremendous monument of divine wrath to his eyes, he removes to the south-west corner of Canaan, between Kadesh and Shur, near the wilderness, and sojourned in the kingdom of Gerar, the country of the Philistines, and which afterwards was by lot assigned to the tribe of Judah. And here again Abraham, through fear and suspicion, is induced to employ the same deceit which he had practised in Egypt, respecting his relation to Sarah, and thereby runs into the very danger which he meant to avoid. His conduct on this account is undoubtedly very reprehensible. He was to blame for judging so dishonorably of mankind, as to think ill of a people whom he knew not...“Surely the fear of God is not in this place: and they will slay me for my wife’s sake,” Gen. xx. 11. Surely the fear of God was not before his own eyes, when he had recourse to a subterfuge so mean, to preserve the honor of his wife, and his own life. He was to blame for employing artifice a second time; after God had extricated him so mercifully from his first error. Had not God said, “I am thy shield?” and yet he fears where no fear was. Had not God said, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect?” and yet he yields to a slight temptation. The very apology which he makes for his conduct, when the truth was brought to light, discovers a mind not perfectly satisfied with itself. “And yet indeed she is my sister: she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife,” Gen. xx. 12. O, how lovely, how majestic is simple truth! It seeks no retirement, stands in need of no defence, is ever consistent with itself, ever inspires with courage him who practises it. Falsehood strips the mind of its

conscious dignity, keeps a man perpetually in fear, puts invention continually on the rack to prevent the means of detection. But the weakness of man shall not make the purpose of God of none effect. Sarah, now pregnant of the promised seed, is miraculously protected of Heaven, and the truth of God in Abimelech's dream exposes Abraham's waking deception. "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee."

Abimelech, by the various uncommon circumstances which had affected his family and kingdom, from the time that Abraham had come into it, being fully persuaded that he was a favorite of Heaven, endeavors by presents and courtesy to attach him closely to himself, and prevails with him to accept a habitation in his country. There, it was so determined of Providence, Sarah was delivered of the long expected son of promise. Time creeps or flies to us, according to our hopes or our fears, our sorrows or our joys; but with God, there is no quickness or slowness of progression, no distance of place or time. Our eagerness and impatience cannot accelerate, our reluctance or aversion cannot retard his progress a single instant of time. The joy of such an event is rather to be imagined than described. The birth of a child is always matter of unutterable satisfaction to the mother at least; what then must have been the solid, the heartfelt joy of Abraham and Sarah, on the birth of a son, the heir of great possessions, the father and founder of a mighty nation, the progenitor, according to the flesh, of the Saviour of the world; given by promise, and raised up by a miracle!

Sarah herself, it would appear, performed the material office of suckling this precious child; neither her high rank, nor abundant affluence, nor advanced period of life, are pleaded to exempt her from this task of nature. According to the custom of the times Abraham made a great entertainment on the day that Isaac was weaned, when probably he was solemnly recognized as

Abraham's heir, and by some public act invested with his rights as such. This would naturally excite the envy and displeasure of Ishmael, and produced that insolent or contemptuous behavior, which our translation renders by the word "mocking," and by which Sarah was so much incensed, that she insisted on the immediate banishment of Hagar and her son. No created joy is either pure and unmixed, or of long continuance. Sarah's comfort is marred by the brutality and insolence of Ishmael to her son, and not improbably by the fear she entertained of one so much advanced in age, stature, and strength, above Isaac, and of such a wild untoward disposition. Abraham's peace is destroyed, and his life embittered by the necessity he is under of driving from his house his own child and the unhappy mother. Whether the good man were criminal or not, in the assumption of Hagar as his concubine, sure I am, first and last, he smarts severely for it. And Isaac, the covenant head and representative of the church, begins at an early period of life indeed, to suffer persecution from the jealousy and malignity of the serpent's issue. Thus, in every state and condition of human life, God sets one thing against another, that we may still and ever be brought to the recollection, that "this is not our rest." We are more surprised at the slender provision with which Hagar and Ishmael are dismissed, than at the dismissal itself. That the patriarch, for the sake of peace at home, should consent to part with the bond-woman and her son, is very conceivable; but that they should be turned adrift into the wide world, without protection, without attendant, without provision, except so much bread and water as the wretched mother could carry upon her own shoulders; these are circumstances which, on the usual principles of human conduct, appear altogether strange and unaccountable. But in God, the fatherless and the friendless ever find mercy. Lost in the wilderness, outcast from society, disowned and rejected, ready to

perish with hunger and thirst, they meet with attention from Him who feeds the ravens, and without whom a sparrow falleth not to the ground.

We may well suppose that Ishmael's expulsion from his father's house and fortunes, and the way of life into which it forced him, would greatly increase his natural ferocity of temper, and contribute to form and fix that character which was given of him by the angel before he was born, "he shall be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." God brings his predictions to pass, not always, nor generally, by miraculous interposition, but by the operation and concurrence of natural causes. "He became an archer," lived by declaring war on the beasts of the field, and gradually brought himself to bear, and even prefer that way of living, which had at first been obtruded upon him by the strong hand of necessity. So happily is our nature framed, that use at length reconciles the mind to what was in prospect insupportable, and, at first, galling and distressful. Hagar, in resentment probably of the treatment she had met with, in order to widen the breach, and to bar the way to reconciliation, forms a marriage for her son with a woman of her own country: from which we may conclude that they went back headlong into idolatry.

The vexation arising from this domestic dissention has scarcely subsided, when Abraham finds himself embroiled with his host and protector the king of Gerar. The servants of Abimelech take violent possession of a well of water which the servants of Abraham had digged, and the quarrel is taken up by the principals themselves. Such is human nature: such is human life. From the beginning to this day, miserable mortals have been contending and striving, and shedding each other's blood about a well of water, or some such ground of dissention. The whole world is a possession

too small for ambition and avarice, and selfishness considers that as taken from us which another enjoys. Happily, moderation and good sense prevented this offence from coming to an open rupture. When men are disposed to peace, punctilio is easily overlooked; but where there is a disposition to quarrel, it is easy to magnify the most petty neglect into an affront, and to make an unmeaning look the occasion of a breach. The convention between Abraham and Abimelech is ratified in the most solemn manner, by the making, that is, the *cutting* or *dividing* of a covenant, according to the form observed on a much more important occasion, and which has been described in a former Lecture: namely, The ratification of the covenant between God and Abraham. But why should covenants, promises, oaths, be necessary in the commerce of human life? Alas! because men are false, treacherous, and perfidious. The awful manners and customs of times that are past, only serve to convince us, that in every age the corruption of man has been so great upon the earth, that ordinary obligations will not bind; that without the sanctions of religion, the sense of honor, regard to the rights of mankind, and the supposed rectitude of human nature, are feeble and inefficacious. No other argument is necessary to prove that our nature is depraved, and that religion is necessary to man, than the necessity to which men have been reduced, in every age and nation, to secure and preserve the interests of truth and justice, by explicit compacts, and solemn appeals to the Deity: by making "an oath for confirmation an end of all strife." Abraham dreads Abimelech as not having the fear of God before his eyes. Abimelech stands in awe of Abraham as under the special protection of Heaven: they agree in one thing, in revering the sanctity of a solemn oath; which being interposed, they both sit down secure and happy; Abimelech rests satisfied that Abraham will do nothing to disturb his family or

government, or injure his person ; Abraham, that Abimelech will not encroach on the rights of private property, or invade those of conscience.

This transaction seems to have brought our patriarch to a resting place. He is not himself to be a potentate in the earth, but a great prince courts his alliance, and forms a league with him. The possession of Canaan is postponed, but Isaac is born. The son of the bond-woman is banished, but the son of the free-woman lives in his house, grows, and prospers, and increases in stature, and in favor with God and man. We see the good man now in the serenity of a vigorous, placid old age, enjoying all that this world can bestow on a virtuous mind, united to a wholesome constitution ; unimpaired by intemperance or disease, failing only by the gradual imperceptible decays of nature ; capable of enjoying life to the last. I behold the venerable man planting his oaks in Beersheba, solacing himself with the thought, that though his head was soon to be laid low, his Isaac would in due time repose under their shade. How contemptible is the spirit which considers self only in all that it does ! How I honor the man who lives to the end of life, nay, strives to prolong existence, and succeeds in the attempt, by engaging in pursuits through which posterity is to be benefited ! We will now leave him in this happy tranquillity of life ; and may his trees quickly rise to shelter his aged head from the sultry heat of the noon-tide sun ; and be his Isaac a comfort greater than ever parent knew ; and let the tide of benevolence from his honest heart, roll back to its source, increased with overflowing fulness from the ocean of everlasting love. But the grove which he planted was not merely an amusement for old age, or an embellishment of his habitation, it was dedicated to God, and destined as a seat of devotion ; there “ he called on the name of the Lord.”

We bid him adieu then at this pleasant resting place of life, rejoicing in the past, and calmly waiting the

hour of dismissal from all his trials and sorrows. But I dread this treacherous tranquillity. Bodes it not an approaching storm? the event will shew. I shall not anticipate, but hasten to conclude this Lecture with inviting you to a participation in that divine friendship which Abraham enjoyed, and from which none are excluded; for "the secret of the Lord is with all them that fear him, and he sheweth to them his holy covenant." What is the birth of an Isaac compared to the manifestation of God in the flesh! "To us a Son is born, to us a Saviour is given," and "in him all the families of the earth are blessed." Let the history of Abraham teach us how vain it is to expect unmixed happiness in a world of vanity; and to dread the approach of a calamity when we possess uncommon ease. Let us adore and admire the wonder-working hand of God, which unseen directs, controls, subdues all creatures and all events to its own purposes. Let us trust in the Lord and do good, and love, and speak, and practise truth. When we see the father of the faithful failing and faltering, let none be high minded but fear, and "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Did Providence take Ishmael the outcast, the wild man under its protection? Let poor and virtuous parents take encouragement to cast the care of their helpless offspring on the Father of the fatherless and the Judge of the widow. Did one hasty ill-advised step involve the patriarch in such acute and lasting distress? Ponder, then, O man, the paths of thy feet, and beware of doing evil, in expectation that good may come of it.

By casting your eyes upon the sacred page, you will see what is to form the subject of the next discourse. It is a topic well known, and which has been frequently handled, but it is one of those that will ever please and ever instruct. May God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

History of Abraham.

LECTURE XVII.

By faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac : and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called ; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead : from whence also he received him in a figure....HEB. XI: 17, 18, 19.

THE parts of history which please and instruct us most, are those which exhibit to us illustrious persons in trying situations, holding fast their integrity, conducting themselves with wisdom, and overcoming great difficulty by patience, and fortitude, and trust in God. The passages of our own lives which we recollect with the greatest satisfaction, and which we find ourselves most disposed to relate to others, are those which, while they passed, were involved in the greatest danger and distress. The memory of past joys is generally insipid and disgusting, but the recollection of the perils which we have escaped, the obstacles which we have surmounted, the miseries which we have endured and overcome, is in truth the chief ingredient in the happiness of our more tranquil days, and the consolation which a life of fatigue, exertion, and calamity provides for the inactivity, feebleness, and retirement of old age. No man thinks of calling to his own remembrance, or of describing to another, the festivity of an entertainment, a month after it is over ; but the horrors

of a battle or a shipwreck, are thought and talked of with delight, as long as we are capable of thinking or speaking. What a feast was Abraham preparing for his remaining years, by the sacrifice he tendered upon Mount Moriah! What a subject of useful meditation, what an example of praise-worthy conduct, has he furnished to mankind to the end of the world! This is one of the peculiarly happy portions of history which at once awaken and interest our feelings; fire the imagination; seize, restrain, exercise, improve the understanding, and powerfully tend to affect and influence the conduct. As a scene in private life, we contemplate it again and again, with new and increasing admiration and delight; as entering into, and connected with the great, the divine plan of providence and redemption, we regard it with religious veneration.

Most men, during the bustling period of human life, amuse themselves with prospects of retreat and tranquillity in its close. And so most probably did Abraham. He had arrived, through much tribulation, at that period when nature wishes for, and expects to find repose. All that a wise and good man could reasonably propose to himself, he had, through the blessing of Heaven, happily attained. Religion crowned his multiplied temporal comforts, and opened the celestial paradise to his view. Isaac, the joy of his joy, the essence of all his other felicities, is born, has grown up, is become amiable, and wise, and good. His eyes have seen the salvation of God, and he is ready to depart in peace whenever the summons comes. But ah, how vain to think of rest till the scene be closed indeed, and death have sealed the weary eyes forever! All the trials which Abraham had hitherto endured, are merely superficial wounds, compared to the keen stroke of that two-edged sword which now pierced him, even "to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." To suffer banishment from his country and friends at the age of seventy-five years; to be driven

by famine from the land of promise into a distant country ; to have the companion of his youth, and the affectionate partner of all his fortunes, repeatedly forced from him ; to have his domestic quiet disturbed, and his life embittered by female jealousy and resentment ; to be reduced to the necessity of expelling his elder son from his house, with the slender provision of a little bread and water : these, taken either separately or in connection, and compared with the usual afflictions to which man is exposed, presents us, it must be allowed, with a lot of great severity and hardship, but they are lost in the severity of the greater wo yet behind. For "it came to pass after these things," in addition to all foregoing evils, and apparently to the defeating of the great designs planned by God himself, and in part executed, "that God tried Abraham" in this manner : "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah ; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of," Gen. xxii. 2.

We mean not to go into the unnecessary criticism which has been employed with perhaps a good intention, to vindicate the divine conduct on this occasion. Surely the infinitely wise God is equal to his own defence. He has transmitted to us this part of his procedure without rendering a reason, without making an apology ; and it is presumption, not piety, which shews on every occasion an eagerness to reason in his behalf. Is it not sufficient at present to say, that men are very incompetent judges of the divine conduct ; that a view of the detached parts cannot enable us to form a just and adequate conception of the whole ; and that without knowing the ultimate end and design, we must of necessity have a very imperfect idea of the means and instruments employed ?

It were easy to declaim on the horrid idea of demanding a human sacrifice, and of employing the hand of a father in a service so unnatural ; on the mischief which

might arise from an example so dreadful ; on the manifest contradiction between this mandate and other laws, both general and special : and perhaps it were as easy to refute all such declamation, and to prove it nugatory and absurd. But let any man, learned or unlearned, read the story throughout, and if he is not both pleased and instructed, he must either be stupid or fastidious in a very high degree.

In what manner the command of Heaven was communicated to Abraham we are not informed. It was unquestionably conveyed with so much clearness and certainty, as left him no possibility of doubting from whom it came. And it again leads us to reflect on the irresistible power which God possesses and exercises over our bodies and minds, whereby he can communicate himself to us in a thousand ways, of which we are able to form no conception, and against which we should in vain attempt to arm ourselves. It appears to have been in the night season : probably when, as on a former occasion, God had “ caused a deep sleep, and a horror of great darkness to fall upon him.”

What a knell to the fond paternal heart ! Every word in the oracle seems calculated to awaken some painful feeling, and to increase the difficulty of compliance. A person of humanity like Abraham might naturally be supposed to revolt from the idea of a human sacrifice, had the meanest slave of his household been demanded, and had the choice of a victim been left to himself. What then must have been the emotions of his soul, from the moment its darling object was mentioned by the voice of God, till the mandate was completed ? “ Take now thy son ; ” this must have at once produced eagerness of attention in a mind ever awake and alive to the welfare and prosperity of Isaac. The tender manner in which God is pleased to describe that favorite child, would undoubtedly excite the most pleasing hope of some new mark of the divine regard to him : “ Take now thy son, thy *only* son, *Isaac*, whom

thou lovest,"...and invest him with all the honors of the promise, put him in possession of his destined inheritance? Ah no!...Turn him out a wanderer after his brother Ishmael, with a loaf of bread and a bottle of water for his portion? That had been severe; but more dreadful still, "and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Abraham hesitates not, argues not. He who before staggered not at the promise, staggers not now at the precept through unbelief. As a proof of his being in earnest, he rises immediately, while it was yet early; he makes all needful preparation for this heavy journey and costly sacrifice, with the utmost serenity and cheerfulness; he communicates to no one the order given him, lest the wickedness of others might have shaken his own firmness, or interrupted his progress. Having saddled his ass, for it was in this simple style that the great men of the East, in these better days of the world, used to travel; having summoned two of his young men to attend and assist in the preparation, having called Isaac, and cleft the wood for the burnt-offering, they proceed together from Beersheba for the land of Moriah.

Josephus represents Isaac at this time as in his twenty-fifth year, and describes him, with much appearance of truth, as a young man of singular accomplishments, both of body and of mind. The trial was, without doubt, greatly increased to Abraham by the delay, and the distance of the place of sacrifice. Had the oracle demanded an instant offering, the immediate impression of the heavenly vision would account for the suddenness and dispatch of the execution. But leisure is afforded for reflection; parental affection has time to strengthen itself; the powerful pleadings of nature must in their turn be heard; the oppression of grief, of fatigue, of old age; the sight, the society, the conversation of Isaac, combine their operation to make him relent, and return. But though nature knows

faith, such as Abraham's knows not what it is to relent. With steady steps, and unshaken resolution, he advances to the fatal spot, now first distinguished by the choice of God, for the scene of this wonderful sacrifice; distinguished in the sequel, as the seat of empire and of religion among Abraham's chosen race; and, finally, distinguished most of all by a sacrifice infinitely more valuable and important, and of which this of Isaac was but a shadow.

Being arrived at the foot of the mountain, which was pointed out by some sensible token, the servants are left behind, and Abraham, armed with the fire and the knife, and Isaac bearing the wood destined to consume the victim, ascend together. And now, had his faith been capable of failing, could his purpose have changed, the question which Isaac, in the simplicity of his heart, proposed, must have triumphed over his resolution, and decreed the victory to flesh and blood. "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son: and he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering: so they went both of them together," Gen. xxii. 7, 8. The heart that feels not this is lost to sensibility. Every endeavor to illustrate or enforce it, were idle as an attempt to perfume the rose, to paint the tulip into richer tints, or to burnish the sun into a brighter lustre.

At length with weary steps they arrive at the place which God had told him of. The mighty secret, which had hitherto labored in the anxious paternal breast, must at last be disclosed, and "the lamb for the burnt-offering" must be produced. It is not the sacrifice of a bullock or a sheep, which are able to make no resistance; nor of a child unconscious of its situation; but of a man, whose consent must be obtained; and who, either by entreaty, by argument,

by speed, or by force, might have delivered himself. The Jewish historian presents us with the dialogue which passed between the father and son on this occasion, striking and pathetic indeed, but far inferior to the beautiful simplicity of Moses. Having built an altar, having laid the wood in order upon it, and made all other necessary preparation, the unhappy father is thus represented as communicating to the devoted victim the will of the Most High: "O my son, begged of God in a thousand prayers, and at length unexpectedly obtained; ever since you were born, with what tenderness and solicitude have I brought you up! proposing to myself no higher felicity than to see you become a man, and to leave you the heir of my possessions. But the God who bestowed you upon me, demands you again. Prepare then to yield the sacrifice with alacrity. I give you up to Him, who at all seasons, and in all situations, has pursued us with loving kindness and tender mercy. You came into the world under the necessity of dying; and the manner of your death is to be singular and illustrious, presented in sacrifice by your own father to the great Father of all: who, we may presume, considers it as unfit and unbecoming, that you should depart out of this life by disease, in war, or by any other of the usual calamities to which human nature is subject: but who waits to receive your spirit, as it leaves the body, amidst the prayers and vows of your affectionate parent, that he may place it in perfect blessedness with himself. There, you shall still be the consolation and support of my old age, not indeed by your presence and conversation, but bequeathing me, when you depart, the presence and the blessing of the Almighty." Isaac, the worthy offspring of such a father, cheerfully complies, and piously answers... "I should be unworthy of life, were I capable of shewing reluctance to obey the will of my father and my God. It were enough for me that my earthly parent alone called me

to the altar, how much more when my heavenly father re-demands his own."

He accordingly submits to be bound, and to be laid as a victim upon the wood. And now behold a sight from which nature shrinks back, and stands confounded;...a father lifting up his hand armed with a deadly weapon, to slay his only son. He is already made the sacrifice: for with God intentions are acts; and he receives his Isaac a second time from the hand that gave him at first. The voice of God is again heard. It is ever welcome to the ear of faith: welcome when it announces heavy tidings, welcome when it demands an Isaac; and O, how welcome when it brings glad tidings of great joy; when it says, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me!" Gen. xxii. 12.

Abraham prophesied without being conscious of it, when he said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:" for lo, behind "him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son, Gen. xxii. 13. *We* know but in part, and *we* prophesy in part, but God sees the end from the beginning; he is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he," Deut. xxxii. 4.

With what different feelings does the patriarch descend from the mountain! his Isaac lives, and yet his sacrifice is offered. He came to yield his dearest earthly delight at the call of God, and he goes away enriched with new blessings and fresh promises. Who ever sacrificed to God and was a loser? "Who ever hardened himself against God and prospered?"

It is impossible that any one can be so inattentive as not to observe, through the whole of this wonderful history, the mystery of redemption shadowed forth!

Is the divine conduct, in this trial of Abraham, dark and inexplicable to human reason? Angels desire to look into the plan of gospel salvation, and are unable to comprehend it. Was Abraham ready at God's command to offer up his only son for a burnt-offering? "God himself so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. God had pity upon an afflicted earthly father, and a devoted child, and sent his angel to deliver him: but God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," Rom. viii. 32. Isaac was *ready* to be slain, Jesus was actually put to death. Isaac cheerfully submitted to the will of Heaven, and offered his throat to the sacrificing knife; and of Jesus it is written in the sacred volume, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart," Psalm xl. 6, 8... "he gave himself for us, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God."

Isaac having first typified the Saviour, passes into a type of the elect sinner, bound and stretched upon the altar, in trembling apprehension of the fatal blow. *He* is reprieved by a voice from heaven; and thus, when there was no eye to pity, nor hand to save our sinful devoted race, a voice is heard from the most excellent glory, "deliver from going down to the pit, I have found out a ransom." "I have laid help on one who is mighty to save." Behold the ram caught in the thicket, conducted and detained of Providence, and substituted as a sacrifice in the room of Isaac, and think of Him of whom it is written, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" Isai. liii. 5, 6. From the tendered sacrifice of Isaac arose new prospects and new promises to his family:

from the death of Christ sprung up the hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," to all them that believe. The substituted sacrifice was of God's appointment, providing and acceptance, both in the figurative and the real history, and by both we are instructed, that when men have the wisdom to submit to, and follow God their Maker, they may safely commit the issue of all to him.

To view the history of Abraham in detached parts, is to involve ourselves in difficulty and distress...to read patiently to the end, is the road to light and peace and joy. The prejudiced Jew, and the self-conceited Greek, look at the cross and pronounce it foolishness, or fall over it as a stumbling block; but to them that believe, who wait the issue, who look to the end, "Jesus Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." Presumptuous men will take it upon them to judge of a plan which is not yet executed, and will apply to the narrow and erroneous scale of their own reason and understanding, the infinite and eternal designs of the only wise God. When the fabric of creation was completed, God pronounced all to be very good, and then "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy:" when the plan of redemption is executed, then, and not till then, let men or angels presume to judge of the fitness or unfitness of it. Determine nothing before the time. The Lord, and the day of the Lord, is at hand.

In meditating on this history, may it not be asked... Who among you is with Abraham sacrificing, I do not say, his lawful joys, but his sinful lusts? Who among you is rising up early, and, with a resolute hand, slaying his sloth, his pride, his avarice, his lust, his malignity, before the altar of God? Who among you is rising betimes to "offer unto God thanksgiving;" to contemplate the glories of nature; to adore and admire the wonders of providence: to look into the mystery of redemption, and to meditate with new and in-

creasing delight on that love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

The little good which we do, we wish to be seen of all men: not like Abraham, who would have his devotion neither witnessed nor interrupted by any one. But glory pursues true goodness notwithstanding its own modesty and humility. Why should I suffer myself to be teased and vexed with the cavils of an unbeliever? Let him start ten thousand objections, if he will, to the frame of nature, the conduct of Providence, or the method of salvation. I will thus simply reply: Do *you* comprehend the whole? Are you of the privy council of Heaven? Can you account for any thing you behold? Do you know to what all these things tend, and in what they are to issue?

Rest, christians, in general, obvious, useful, practical truth; and know that devotedness to God is the essence of religion, and the sum of human happiness. Look forward to that day when light shall arise out of obscurity, when all mysteries shall be unveiled; when the faculties of the human mind shall be strengthened and increased, and the objects contemplated shall be brought nearer the eye, placed in a fairer point of view, and irradiated with a fuller glory; when God shall in the most complete and satisfactory manner vindicate his ways to men.

The next Lecture will conclude the history of Abraham, and the proposed course for this season. If to your former attendance and kind attention, you will indulge me with one audience more, it will increase the affectionate regard of a grateful heart, and afford an opportunity of expressing that gratitude at greater length. May God bless all the means of knowledge, of piety, and of improvement. Amen.

History of Abraham.

LECTURE XVIII.

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises ; but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned : but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city....*HEB. xi. 13, 14, 15, 16.

WHAT is the amount of human life? Vanity and vexation of spirit. All our wanderings tend towards the grave. The anxieties and solicitude, the hopes and fears, the disappointments and successes which alternately occupy and agitate the mind, at length come to one issue, and all-conquering death settles the account. The time is at length come that Sarah must pay the debt of nature. That beauty which conjugal affection doated on, and which princes coveted, becomes deformed with wrinkles; the cold hand of death chills the fond maternal heart, and even the delight of an Isaac is enjoyed no more. The Jewish Rabbins, fruitful in legends, affirm, that grief for the sacrifice of Isaac shortened her life. For that the devil, who had exulted in the prospect of seeing Isaac perish by the knife of his father, to revenge himself for

the disappointment which he felt upon his deliverance by the angel, conveyed intelligence to Sarah that the sacrifice was actually performed; which news speedily proved fatal to her. As if the oppressive weight of one hundred and twenty-seven years did not sufficiently account for the death of a frail woman, without the necessity of a preternatural interposition.

Affecting change! The eyes of Abraham himself cannot now endure to look upon her, whom once he shuddered to think that the eyes of another should behold with too much desire; and he is now as eager to bury her out of his sight, as he formerly was to retain the possession of her wholly to himself. Let the beautiful and the vain, the gay, the admired, and the flattered, think of this and be humbled. The latter end of her life, however, is better than the beginning. Tormented with the unaccomplished desire of having children, subjected to all the hardships of a pilgrimage state, and stung with the keen pangs of jealousy, almost up to her ninetieth year, life at length subsides into a delightful calm of thirty-seven years more, cheered and cherished by the unabated affection of her beloved lord, and blessed with the progress and accomplishments of the son of her womb, Isaac, the favorite of God and man. But she must finally make one remove more; not to that country from which she came out, but to that land "from whose bourne no traveller returns." A partaker as of the fortunes, so of the faith of Abraham, she sees the promises afar off, is persuaded of them and embraces them; desires and looks for another country, that is, an heavenly.

God had promised to Abraham and his seed the possession of Canaan, and lo, it commences in the purchase at their full value, of a little field and a cave, for a burying place. He had been threatened with a severe stroke in the demanded sacrifice of Isaac, he is made to feel one in the loss of Sarah. The mellowed friendship of so many years, and union cemented at last by

so dear a pledge, could not be dissolved without pain. Abraham is sensible of his loss, and bewails it. His religion is not of that sort which values itself on doing violence to nature; he knows nothing of that vain philosophy which affects to deny what it feels: neither has an old age of one hundred and thirty-seven years extinguished in the heart those tender emotions, which the deprivation of an object, once fair, and ever dear, naturally excites. He who does not weep on such an occasion as this, is something more or less than a man. But to persevere in bewailing the dead, to the neglect of our duty to the living, is both folly and impiety. Abraham's sorrow encroaches upon none of the valuable principles of a good mind. His whole conduct in the purchase of the field of Ephron the Hittite, and the cave of Machpelah, exhibits a soul replete with the most amiable and respectable virtues. Tender and affectionate, he is desirous of honoring in death the remains of what he prized in life. Noble-minded, generous, and independant, he refuses to shew respect to the memory of Sarah with that which cost him nothing. Civil and polite, he repays the courtesy of his neighbors with affability and condescension. Scrupulously just and honest, he will give nothing less than the full price, and in full tale, weight, and purity, for what was frankly tendered him as a gift. The dialogue of the twenty-third chapter is a masterly picture of the beautiful simplicity of ancient manners, and exhibits a strife of unaffected kindness, good-nature, and civility, which at once pleases and instructs. Let me beseech you to peruse it carefully when opportunity offers. Would to God such contentions were more frequent in the world. The purchase is made, the price is paid, possession is made sure, and then was Sarah buried. And thus, first, Abraham became seized of the land of promise. So differently does Providence shape events from our preconception of them.

It is worthy of observation, that this is the first *money* transaction which we read of in the world. Till then, and long after, both among the posterity of Abraham and other nations, wealth was estimated by the number and quality of cattle; and cattle were the principal instruments of commerce. Thus we read in many places of Homer, of a coat of mail worth an hundred oxen; a caldron worth twenty sheep; a cup or goblet worth twelve lambs; and the like. The words belonging to commerce or exchange of commodities, in the Greek language, are mostly derived from the names of certain animals, by means of which that exchange was originally carried on. Thus the word itself which signifies *to truck* or *commute* one kind of goods for another, is derived from that which signifies a *lamb*; * the verb which is translated *to sell*, comes from the noun, which translated signifies a *colt* or young horse; † the Greek word, which in our language is *to buy*, comes from that which signifies *an ass*: ‡ the term that denotes *rent* or *revenue*, and that which signifies a *sheep*, are of kindred composition and import. || A criminal, according to the magnitude of his guilt, was condemned to pay a fine of four, twelve, or an hundred oxen. ** A *wealthy person* is called a man of *many lambs*. †† Two rival brothers are represented in Hesiod, as fighting with each other about the *sheep* of their father; that is, contending who should be his heir. But even so early as the time of Abraham, we find silver employed as a more commodious mean of traffic; and the concurrence of all civilized and commercial nations to this day, in employing the precious metals for this purpose, is a proof how early men learned the wisdom of this world; and discovers to us how readily they invent, how accurately they reason, and how prudently

* ἀρυσθαι from ἀρνος. † πωλειν from πωλος. ‡ ἀνεισθαι from οἶος.

|| Προβάσαις and Προβάτων. ** Τμήμα τεσσαράβιον, δωδεκάβιον, εκατομβιον. †† πολυαρνος.

they act, in matters that are conducive to their temporal interest and advantage. But to return...

By the death of Sarah, the care and anxiety abated, the dear object of their common affections becomes naturally much increased to the surviving parent. Isaac was now arrived at man's estate, and it is fit that the heir of the promise should be established in a family of his own. For how are the promises of God brought into effect, but by the intervention of the means which nature and providence have appointed? Abraham, with the solicitude of a good father, is desirous of matching his son, rather prudently and piously, than nobly or wealthily. In these days of simplicity and nature, the partner for life was sought after, not for the largeness of her possessions; but gold, and silver, and jewels, were employed to court beauty and virtue to their proper sphere of importance and usefulness in life. Abraham judges it unwise to marry his son into a Hittite family, because they had deviated from the worship of the true God. He could esteem their hospitality, kindness, and civility, as they deserved, without falling in love with their religion. And he who cannot make this distinction must either be unfaithful to God, or unfriendly to man. Affecting view of the corruption and degeneracy of human nature! that Isaac, the son of faithful Abraham, should be deemed in greater danger of being perverted by an idolatrous wife, than that a woman of Canaan should be converted to the worship of the living and true God, by a believing husband.

Isaac, it would appear, devoted to retirement and contemplation, little attached himself to the concerns of this life; the management of his affairs and his settlement in the world, he leaves to the wisdom of his father, and the fidelity of an ancient domestic. The journey of that servant into Mesopotamia, and the success of it belong more properly to the history of Isaac. As far as Abraham is concerned in it, we behold a holy man acknowledging God in all his ways, and making

the ordinary concerns of life a religious service : and we see God, in return, directing every step to a happy issue.

Having seen his beloved son settled entirely to his satisfaction, he enters again himself into the honorable state of marriage, and is blessed in it by a progeny of six sons and ten grand-children born in his life-time. In order to prevent strife after his death, as far as human sagacity and foresight could do it, and knowing that property is the great source of contention among men, he settles his worldly affairs, bequeathing the great bulk of his fortune to Isaac, the son of his first and principal wife ; following in this the destination of Providence, and fulfilling the condition of the covenant under which Rebekah was induced to become Isaac's wife. He makes a suitable provision for the younger branches of his family, and sends them, by dint of his paternal authority, into a distant part of the country, while he yet lived, that the quiet and peaceable temper of Isaac might not be exposed to disturbance and trouble, from the neighborhood of ambitious, violent, or avaricious brothers, after his death.

That fatal period at length overtakes him also, and he comes to the grave, "like as a shock of corn cometh in his season," in a good old age, "an old man, and full of years," at the age of one hundred three-score and fifteen. A life shorter by far than any we have hitherto studied, but much fuller of incidents and events. A life checquered with uncommon trials, and blessings as extraordinary. A life distinguished by the most brilliant virtues which adorn human nature, but not wholly exempted from its frailties and infirmities. Abraham purchased a grave for Sarah. Alas ! he was only providing a habitation for himself ! How short, how unimportant the distance between the funeral rites which we prepare, and those which are prepared for us !

But can this be all that God intended to bestow upon our patriarch by promises so lofty, conveyed in language so solemn? Was it for this he was called to leave his country and his father's house? Did vision upon vision, covenant upon covenant, promise upon promise, conduct only to a little cave in Hebron? Was the favor of the almighty, the all-bountiful Jehovah, expressed to the man whom he dignified by the title of his friend, only by such things as are the common gifts of his providence to all, and which are often bestowed on the vilest and most worthless of mankind? If the grave were to terminate the existence of man, such questions would be indeed of difficult solution. But the difficulty of them scatters and disperses before one word of God, spoken three hundred and thirty years after the patriarch's death, even to Moses at the bush in Horeb. *I am* the God of Abraham. His relation to God was as entire three centuries after his body was consumed in dust in Machpelah, as when he was entertaining angels at Mamre, or sacrificing upon Mount Moriah. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." To Him, and for Him, and with Him, now live the faithful of all past ages; and precious is their very dust in his sight. Judge nothing then before the time, till the day come which shall unfold the purpose of Heaven, which shall clear up the mystery of providence, and fully vindicate the ways of God to man.

It appears that some intercourse between Ishmael and his father's family had been kept up; for we find him apprized of Abraham's death, and assisting at his funeral. He must be a wild man indeed, not to have been tamed, at least into a temporary sorrow, by such an event, and melted into forgetfulness of all past resentments, by the death of a father. Providence wisely produces this good effect, by the common calamities wherewith families are visited; they tend to reconcile the alienated, they extinguish bitterness and

strife, they re-kindle the dying embers of filial duty and brotherly love. Isaac and Ishmael, men of different natures, of opposite interests, rivals from the womb, forget all animosity, and mingle tears over a father's tomb.

It remains, in conformity to our plan, that we point out, in a few particulars, the resemblance betwixt Abraham and Christ, that we may see wherein the former typified the latter.

Abraham, at God's command, leaving his country; and his father's house, points to us obviously, Jesus, at the fulness of time, leaving heaven's glory and the bosom of the Father, and coming into our world and living a pilgrim and a stranger in it. Abraham, in a land which was his own by the gift and promise of God, nevertheless obtained no fixed residence in it, but wandered about from place to place; Jesus, in a world which he made and upholds, which is *his* by the most undeniable title, was without a place where to lay his head. Abraham was called the friend of God, and to him God communicated his purposes of mercy and of judgment; Jesus, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and knows intimately the mind of the Lord, he hath declared him. With Abraham God established the political covenants which secured to him and his family the possession of Canaan, and all the temporal and spiritual blessings of a transitory and preparatory economy; Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises; even the covenant of redemption, whereby the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life, are made sure to all his spiritual seed; for thus it is written of him, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations;" and "according to his abundant mercy he hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by a resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and

that fadeth not away." In Abraham we venerate the natural head of a great family, raised up, multiplied, preserved, and extinguished by the hand of Providence to this day. Of Christ, "the whole family of heaven," and all the families of the earth "are named," "and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Abraham stands forth the typical representative, father, and pattern of believers; Christ is "the head of the body, the church," the real source of a spiritual and divine life to all them who believe.

Abraham's intercession in behalf of Sodom, and Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem, are a beautiful and striking counterpart to each other. The sacrifices which Abraham and Christ respectively offered up unto God, wonderfully illustrate and explain one another.

But in the midst of so many marks of resemblance, who does not by a glance discern as many characters of dissimilitude; and an infinite superiority claimed by Him who "in all things must have the pre-eminence?" Who shall declare *his* generation, who saith of himself, "before Abraham was, I am?" Abraham was a man of like passions with us, and even the father of the faithful stumbled and fell; Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," and the prince of this world himself, when he came, found nothing in him. Abraham was ready to offer up Isaac; Christ actually offered himself "a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God." The faith of Abraham could not redeem him from death; the power of Christ triumphed over the grave. The first covenants, being of a temporary nature, having fulfilled their design, are passed away. The New Testament in the blood of Christ being for everlasting, continues in full force, and shall last while sun and moon endure, nay, when "all these things shall be dissolved."

Being arrived at one of the great epochs in the history of the world, we shall just for a moment look back, and mark the link which connected this period with the flood, and even with the antediluvian world; giving you only names and dates for the sake of brevity. **SHEM**, the second son of Noah, and father of **Arphaxad** and of all the children of Heber, to whom the family jewel, that is, the promise of the Messiah, was committed, who saw two of the great calamities of the world and outlived them, the deluge, and the confusion of languages, and who lived no doubt to see and rejoice in Abraham and Isaac as the heirs of the promise; Shem, I say, is the great link of these two eras of the world. For, he lived before the flood ninety-eight years, and after it five hundred and two; of consequence he died only twenty-five years before Abraham. His life accordingly may be calculated thus, with regard to the great persons and events with which he was connected. Before the flood he lived ninety-eight years. After the birth of his own son **Arphaxad** five hundred. After the death of **Arphaxad** sixty-one. After the death of Noah one hundred and fifty-two. After the confusion of tongues three hundred and forty-eight. After the death of **Sarah** thirteen. Before the birth of **Jacob** ten. Before the birth of **Moses** two hundred and seventy-five. When **Abraham** was one hundred and fifty years old, **Isaac** fifty, and before the descent into Egypt one hundred and forty. The chronology of **Abraham's** life, according to the scripture account, stands thus. He died in the one hundred and seventy-fifth year of his age, and of the world two thousand one hundred and eighty-three. Before the birth of **Christ** one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one. After he discomfited and slew **Chedelaomer** and the other kings ninety-one. After the intended sacrifice of **Isaac** fifty. After the death of **Sarah** thirty-eight. After his marriage with **Keturah** thirty-five. After

the death of Shem twenty-five. Before the descent into Egypt one hundred and fifteen. When Isaac was seventy-five years old; Esau and Jacob fifteen; Ishmael eighty-nine, and Heber his great grand-father, from whom the name of Hebrew comes, four hundred and sixty. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise," and when he gave up the ghost, was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Manre, by his sons Isaac and Ishmael.

And thus, my dear friends, we have, through the help of God, finished the first part of the plan of these Lectures. And the season of interruption and separation being now come, permit me, with a heart overflowing with affection and gratitude, to return you my sincere thanks, for your regular attendance and patient attention. You were invited hither with much humility and diffidence; you have come hither with much alacrity and steadiness, and you must not depart hence, without bearing along with you the grateful acknowledgments of the Lecturer. He has the consolation of believing, that as neither he, nor his undertaking, are the creatures of party, or of human system, nor aim at any interests but those of virtue, good sense, and religion; so they have been encouraged by wise and good men of various sects and denominations. He humbly hopes he has interfered with the happiness, fame, or usefulness of no good man whatever. If he has led any one to read the bible more carefully, to trace the connection betwixt the Old and New Testament characters, institutions, and events, more accurately; to trace the ways of Providence more closely; or to feel the powers of a world to come sensibly, verily he has his reward.

But he affects not fastidiously to undervalue some considerations of inferior importance: he dwells with secret delight on the disinterested attachment and gen-

erous services of his private friends: his heart glows at the public marks of regard he has received; and the temporal emolument arising from his labors he receives with much thankfulness to you, and to that kind Providence, which is pleased to smile upon another effort to rear up a numerous family. May the kindness you have shewn the preacher return a thousand fold upon your own heads. The God of love be with you all. Amen.

END OF THE FIRST COURSE OF LECTURES.

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Sacred Biography.

BY HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

SECOND COURSE OF LECTURES.

ANNUAL REPORT

1887

The Board of Directors of the American...
has the honor to acknowledge the...
of the various departments...

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors of the American...
has the honor to acknowledge the...
of the various departments...

Sacred Biography.

LECTURE I.

Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? And they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so he hath dealt with us....ZECH. i. 5, 6.

REFLLECTIONS upon the shortness of human life, and the uncertainty of sublunary enjoyments, naturally present themselves, in the various changes which we daily observe, and daily feel. But alas, our reflections are too superficial and transitory, to produce habitual superiority to the world, uniform submission to the will of God, and efficacious impressions of eternity. Wasting and decaying every hour, we form and prosecute schemes for futurity, as if "our strength were the strength of stones, and our bones brass." Reasoning and reflecting as men, we live and act as children; and pursue the "bauble of the moment, as if it were "the pearl of great price." When the drama of human life

is ended, and the curtain drops, lo, it has shrunk to a measure so small, and contains events of so little importance, that it is difficult to render a reason why man should have existed at all; and we are constrained to cry out with the psalmist, "Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity; surely every man walketh in a vain shew; surely they are disquieted in vain," Psalm xxxix. 6, 7.

But my text greatly relieves this apparent insignificance of our fleeting existence in this world, by conveying to us this important idea, that the Divine Providence is carrying on its great and wise designs, by feeble, short-lived, and even worthless instruments. And the date of our latter end is wisely and mercifully hid from our eyes; and every man is taught to consider himself, his life, his actions, as of importance, that we may exert ourselves to the last, and "do with our might whatsoever our hands findeth to do." Though our *fathers* are no more, and the *prophets* do not live *forever*, yet the *words* and *statutes* which God commanded his servants the prophets, "took hold of our fathers, and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so he hath dealt with us." This leads us, in a direct road, to make a just estimate of the lives and actions of other men; and to consider seriously how we ought to order our own conversation, how we ought to spend our own days and years.

In the preceding Course of these Lectures, we endeavored, beginning at Adam, and ending with Abraham, historically to delineate, and practically to improve, the lives of those venerable men, by whom the world was first peopled, instructed, and governed: and who, in their persons, by their actions, or the events which befel them, successively typified, or foretold to their contemporaries, the great Saviour and Deliverer of the human race, during a period of more than two thousand years. By entering into the spirit of the

prophet Zechariah, in the words now read, we shall be enabled to review that period with profit and delight. And this review shall serve to introduce the history of the other lives, which the sacred volume, in succession, presents to our observation, and has sketched for our information and improvement.

In Adam, we behold at once our natural first father, and our federal head : from whom, as men, our existence is derived, and by whose conduct our character has been deeply affected, and our state in some respects determined. “ Our father *Adam*, where is he ? ” He fulfilled his day, he accomplished the purposes of the eternal mind, he then fell asleep, and is now seen no more. But however remote the date of his formation, and of his death ; however distant from us the region in which he lived ; however apparently unconnected with us in interest, in fame, or fortune, we are, we know, we feel ourselves deeply involved in what he was, in what he did. In Adam, we all died ; we all forfeited a natural, and lost a spiritual and divine life : and, in Adam, we received the promises which have since been fulfilled, and to him first were opened prospects, which the course of providence has realized, even the restoration of our fallen nature, by one “ greater man,” who has regained for us seats more blissful than those from which by transgression he fell ; namely, the “ seed of the woman, who has bruised the serpent’s head.” Our first father, where is he ? Lost indeed to us, but not to God. All traces of him, excepting those only which perpetuate the memory of his guilt and its woful consequences, are effaced and forgotten ; but his station before God remains unchanged, his importance undiminished. Dead to us, he lives to Him, with whom “ a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.”

Can we meditate upon the first man who *was created* upon the earth, without rising in our thoughts to Him who *created* him out of the dust of the ground, and

“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life? And who has of one blood formed all nations of men to inhabit upon the face of the whole earth.” Can we think of our father after the flesh; and not connect with him the idea of our Father who is in heaven? Is not the painful recollection of him in whom *all died*, happily relieved and done away by reflecting on the glorious second Adam, in whom an elect world is *made alive*! And O, how is the loss of an earthly paradise compensated by the promise of “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;” that paradise of God, in the midst of which grows the *tree of life*, always blossoming, always bearing fruit, and exempted from the dangerous neighborhood of the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*.

Our brother *Abel*, where is he? Cut off in the bloom of life; fallen, fallen by the hand of a brother; but immortal by his faith and piety, qualities not liable to the stroke of death. “By faith he offered to God” an excellent and an acceptable sacrifice. In presenting the firstlings of his flock, he had a respect to the great Lamb of atonement, and thereby, “being dead he yet speaketh.” Prematurely taken away, but not for a crime; a victim to malice and envy, he typified, “Messiah, the Prince, cut off, but not for himself,” crucified and slain in the prime of life, by the impious hands of his nearest kindred. And, living under the influence of the same principle, we too shall become immortal, shall “endure as seeing Him who is invisible, and present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service,” Rom. xii. 1.

In the life, and more particularly in the exit of the patriarch *Enoch*, life and immortality were more clearly brought to light. Hitherto, men had terminated their earthly course by descending into the grave and seeing corruption. But, when we come to inquire concerning *Enoch*, “where is he?” The scriptures reply,

“ By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God,” Heb. xi. 5. “ He was not, for God took him.” Our thoughts here settle, not on the gloomy mansions of the dead, “ the house appointed for all living,” but on the regions of eternal day, irradiated with the glory, and beatified with the presence of God. We rise in faith and hope to that bright world from which Christ descended, and to which, having finished his work, and achieved his victory, he afterwards re-ascended, leading captivity captive. And all who are partakers of the same precious faith contemplate with joy that same mansion of everlasting rest, “ prepared for them from the foundation of the world,” and “ ready to be revealed in the last time,” when the body shall be redeemed from the power of the grave, and the Saviour, lifted up on high, shall “ draw all men unto him.” In Enoch “ walking with God,” and passing immediately, soul and body, from earth to heaven, the world that then was, saw, in a figure, Him that was to come, whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his heavenly Father, and who has opened a passage, through the very gates of death, into the heavenly world, and that not for himself only, but for all who believe on his name, and who love his appearing. Enoch, our father, where is he? There, O my soul! there, O my christian friend, where, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus, we have everlasting consolation, in the good hope of arriving also. “ O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord,” 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

Advancing to the times of Noah, we behold the world first deluged with an overflowing flood of sin, and then with an inundation of waters. The measure of human iniquity full, and the vials of divine wrath filled, in order to punish it, up to the brim, and poured

out upon an impious generation, to its utter extinction and ruin. Nevertheless, a remnant is saved, and mercy rejoices in the midst of judgment. Animated by the same principle which inspired his venerable ancestors, that principle which gave value to Abel's sacrifice, which strengthened Enoch to walk with God, and through which he was translated without tasting death, Noah "prepared an ark for the saving of his house." The history, and method of redemption, by the Lord Jesus Christ, are so clearly prefigured in every part of this wonderful event, that he who runs may read them. Noah, "a just man, and perfect in his generations;" Noah, who "walked with God," and was "a preacher of righteousness;" Noah, who, "warned of God of things not seen as yet, and moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house," is evidently in all these characters and actions, a type of the *Holy* and *Just One*, whom the world despised and rejected; a type of "the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared him" unto men; a type of the great "teacher sent from God," to warn a guilty devoted race to flee from the wrath to come, and to conduct them to a place of safety; a type of him who, chosen of God, and moved by pity and affection, prepared a present refuge, and an everlasting habitation, for perishing sinners. Of Noah, his pious prophetic father, when he imposed his name, exultingly exclaimed, "This shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed," Gen. v. 29...and, in the blessed Redeemer of mankind, all his pious, believing children, enjoy the prospect of a period, and a world, wherein "there shall be no more curse;" and on whom the eternal Father, by the tongue of an angel, imposed the name of *Jesus* because he should "save his people from their sins." Noah, our father, where is he? where is the man who was Enoch's contemporary, who conversed with the sages of the old world, who saw the globe

one vast ocean, whom all the waters of a deluge could not drown, who received a grant of the whole renewed earth for an inheritance? All these successive changes led but to the grave, and we see him no more: "All the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died." Let the possessor of a continent think of this, and check his pride. Let florid, vigorous youth think of three-score years and ten. Let him, who is rearing a mansion of one thousand feet by five hundred, meditate on one of six by two, and learn to die.

The ark which Noah prepared for the saving of his house, where is it? It fulfilled its destination, it escaped the wreck of worlds, it preserved, and rendered up, its precious deposit, then fell into decay. It exists but in description, it has no form but what fancy has bestowed upon it in a picture; or upon a coin. But its fame, its use, its end, its antitype are immortal. That magnificent vessel, not the contrivance of man, but the appointment of God; constructed according to the pattern, formed and prescribed by infinite wisdom; preserved, in the wild uproar of conflicting elements; by the almighty power of God;...resting at length on solid ground, and unloading its precious treasure, without the loss of a single life...are so many successive, distinct, pleasing, and instructive views of the plan formed, followed, and, in due time, perfected, of man's deliverance from sin, and death, and hell, by the Lord Jesus Christ; who thus speaks of his redeemed, and of himself, in his last solemn address to his Heavenly Father, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost," John xvii. 12... and in another place, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," John x. 28, 29.

The emblems of the raven, the dove, the rainbow, the altar, the sacrifice, and others which enter into the history of this patriarch, are beautiful and significant illustrations of the same interesting, all-important subject. And the whole taken together, satisfingly demonstrate, that if "death reigned from Adam to Noah," and the "offence abounded," yet "grace did much more abound;" and that out of the ruins of human apostasy, guilt, and misery, the hand of Heaven was gradually rearing that glorious fabric of salvation which, when completed, an enraptured universe shall contemplate with astonishment and delight. "This is the day which the Lord hath made: this is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." The sight of the world restored, renewed and blessed to Noah, the second father of the human race, leads us forward, borne on the wings of promise, to the still more magnificent prospect of the "restitution of all things;" to the day, when he who sitteth upon the throne shall say, "Behold, I make all things new;" when, according to his word, a new, more splendid, and more durable system of the universe shall arise, under the plastic, purifying hand of the great Author and Finisher of the christian faith, from the wreck of worlds consumed by fire; when Jesus shall bring all his ransomed ones to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; when sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Sailing down the current of sacred history, the plains of Mesopotamia and Ur of the Chaldees appear in sight; and we behold an illustrious exile and his family on their way from their country, kindred, and father's house, like the first pair expelled from Eden,

.....All the world before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.

We behold Abram, at God's command, going out, "not knowing whither he went;" Abram, the respected father of all them that believe, raised up of Providence, in the same important view, to carry on

the same grand design. In the declarations which were made to him, we behold the plan of redemption assuming a clearer and more distinct form ; unfolding its nature, and arranging its several parts. The glorious person who was promised to Adam, immediately upon the fall, under the more obscure description of the "seed of the woman," who should "bruise the head of the serpent," was now announced to the world, as "the seed of Abram," in whom "all the families of the earth should be blessed." And, henceforward, we have prediction upon prediction, ordinance upon ordinance, promise upon promise, event upon event, leading to, rising above, improving, enlarging upon one another, like the light of the ascending sun, gradually increasing from the early dawn to the perfect day. We observe types, shadows, ceremonies, sacrifices, disappearing by little and little ; patriarchs, priests, prophets, lawgivers, and kings, retiring one after another, and giving place to "the Lord, our Judge, our Lawgiver, our King, to save us:" as the twinkling fires of the night hide their diminished heads, and the vapors disperse before the glorious orb of day.

But, Abraham our father, whither is *he* also gone ? Even the faith which surrendered an Isaac at God's command, and which has forever preserved his name from death, could not rescue his body from the power of the grave. It sleeps, and is dissolved in the cave which was purchased from Ephron the Hittite. He had not a principle of life in himself, nor the power of communicating it, to either his natural or spiritual posterity. But "the words and the statutes, which God commanded him and his other servants the prophets, took hold of them," and continue to lay hold of us. In the midst of all this mortality and change, one thing is immutable and eternal, the word, the purpose, the decree of the Most High. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but *it* shall not pass away." Our father Abraham, where is he ? Behold him in, yonder world of

bliss, with "Lazarus in his bosom," resting from all his own troubles; and cherishing the poor, the outcast, the afflicted, the tormented; enjoying "the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul," and waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of his body;" beholding him face to face, whom once he beheld afar off, and as in a glass darkly.

Who is this that breaks in upon us at once in meridian glory? What bright day dazzles the wondering eye, preceded by no dawn, succeeded by no evening? It is Melchizedec, that "king of righteousness and peace," that "priest of the most high God," whose generation none can declare, whose nature and person none is able to describe. Is he but as one of the prophets, or is he the Lord of the prophets himself, pronouncing the blessing which he alone can confer; celebrating in an early age that eucharist which should be the memorial of his office and glorious achievement, till time expire? In him, whatever he were, a type, or the Son of God revealed; a shadow, or the substance; in him we behold the great leading object of Providence disclosed to our view; that priesthood which is unchangeable, that kingdom which shall never be destroyed, that Prince of peace, who has reconciled guilty men unto God, that righteousness through which we have access with humble confidence to the throne of grace. "Abraham rejoiced to see that day." It strengthened him to wait patiently for the promised seed; it cheered his wanderings from place to place; it fortified his heart to the sacrifice of his Isaac; it laid his hoary head with hope in the dust."

....Having from this eminence surveyed the ground through which we have travelled; a delightful landscape, terminating in the distant hills of Eden, and watered by the fair river of PROMISE, meandering through its whole vast extent...we look forward in hope and desire, to the happy plains where Isaac pitched his tent, and Jacob fed his flocks; to the nations

which Joseph saved by his wisdom, and ruled by his power. And, in our intended progress, eternal Spirit of wisdom ! vouchsafe thou to be our instructor and our guide : point out to us the objects which deserve our notice : enlighten thou our eyes, guard our hearts, direct the paths of our feet. What we know not, that do thou teach us ; what we do know, help us wisely to improve. Following thee, “ the crooked shall become straight before us, and the rough places plain. The sun shall not smite us by day, nor the moon by night. We shall go from strength to strength,” after them who “ inherit the promises, till every one of us also, in Zion, appeareth before God.”

Have you ground of pride and joy, my friends, in the acknowledgment or recollection of your forefathers ? Were they wise and good ; blessed in themselves, and a blessing to the world ? Take care that ye degenerate not from their virtues, that ye dishonor not their name, that ye swerve not from “ the good old way ” of piety, in which they trode. Is there in the line of your ancestry, any circumstance humiliating and painful ? Efface it, annihilate it, sink it, in a new existence, derived from a celestial stock. Change the tainted, corrupted current of an earthly pedigree, for the adopted honors, the gratuitous inheritance, the ennobled spirit of your Heavenly Father’s love. Strive to be the first of your race ; and leave to your heirs a possession infinitely better than the demesnes of princes, even the savour of a good name, a pattern worthy of imitation, the remembrance of qualities which are not subject to the stroke of death.

You see, christians, what is the leading, the commanding object, in the eye of eternal Providence. The salvation of a lost world by Jesus Christ. Adopt the same object, cleave unto it, keep it continually in view. All things else are vain and worthless ; for they are passing quickly away. Our interest in, our hold of the world is diminishing every hour. Our consequence,

as candidates for immortal bliss, as the heirs of glory, is rising in proportion. When we cease from importance, as the citizens of this world, our real importance begins to be felt and understood. I recommend not sullen distance from your fellow creatures, nor peevish discontent. Live in the world, associate with mankind, enjoy your portion which God allotteth you. But "use the world so as not to abuse it;" and while you are cumbered about *many* things, never forget that *one* thing is needful; and make choice of that "good part which shall not be taken away from you."

While we speak and hear, we change; and the hand of the executing angel hastens to number us with the dead. We are going to join the venerable men whose memory we revere, whose faith we profess to follow, whose virtues we are bound to copy. Yet a little while, and time shall be no more; and we shall be contemporary with our fathers who have preceded, and with our children who are to follow us, until the dissolution of this system. We look back to Adam, the father of us all, and we look forward to his youngest son. We look up, and "see heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." We look around, and behold "the nations of them that are saved" bending before the throne. We hear the Saviour's voice, "Hear am I, and the children thou hast given me." We hear the word of the ETERNAL FATHER proclaiming aloud; and the myriads of an assembled universe, angels and men, joyfully echo it back, "All is good, yea, very good." Amen. Hallelujah!

History of Isaac.

LECTURE II.

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

THOSE scenes in human life which make the greatest figure in history, are far from being the most beneficial to mankind; neither were the persons, whose names have been transmitted to us with the most renown, and whose actions have dazzled posterity with their lustre, either the happiest in themselves, or the greatest blessings to the age in which they lived. To make one man a hero, how many garments must have been died in blood? And what are the acclamations of a triumph, but the miserable echo of the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying?

We are this night to trace the history of a man of peace: the history of one, who was not indeed exempted from his share of the ills which flesh is heir to, but whose afflictions being private and domestic, were patiently borne by himself, and disturbed not the repose of others; the history of one, who, by the example of his piety and virtues, did more to instruct and to bless mankind, than all the conquerors which ever existed, from Nimrod of Assyria, down to Frederic of Prussia. The life of Isaac, for seventy-five years of it, is blended with that of his illustrious father. For though upon the face of the narration, the birth of Esau and Jacob does not appear till considerably after the death of Abraham, yet, by comparing dates, we

find, that the lads must have been fifteen years old when their grandfather died. And we may justly consider it as no slight trial of the faith both of the father and son, that Isaac, the heir of the promise, should live twenty years childless, from his marriage with Rebekah. But their patience of hope, their importunity of prayer, and their confidence of faith, are at length rewarded by two sons at once.

I mean not to recapitulate the extraordinary circumstances of Isaac's conception and birth, as they have already been considered in the history of Abraham. We shall only take up those particulars of his story which are more personal and peculiar; in which, Isaac himself was either an agent or a sufferer. And, we find him at an early period indeed, feeling distress and suffering persecution. The day he was weaned, how was the festivity of that joyful occasion embittered to his childish, innocent heart, by the cruel taunts and mockings of his brother Ishmael! It is remarkable that almost all, at least the severest trials, which this patriarch endured, arose from his nearest and dearest relations. Hated and scorned from the womb, by his brother; devoted in sacrifice, of his father; called early to mourn the loss of his affectionate mother; afflicted for twenty years with the barrenness of his only and beloved wife; vexed, from their very conception, with the strife of his jealous sons, struggling for superiority; mortified and grieved to the heart, with the inconsiderate, unwise, idolatrous marriages of his favorite Esau; practised upon, and deceived in old age and blindness, by the address and cunning of his wife, and younger son; involved in quarrel upon quarrel, with his powerful neighbors, through the rashness and contentiousness of his servants: never faulty, yet throughout unfortunate. Indeed, a man's liableness to distress and disappointment is in exact proportion to the number and quality of the good things which he possesses. Do we enjoy peculiar delights? We are on the brink of danger.

At the partiality of Sarah to such a son as Isaac, we need not be at all surprised. It is pleasant to observe, however, that this partiality neither corrupted his understanding nor his heart. Neither the indulgence which he met with, nor the prospects to which he was born and brought up, seem to have rendered him, on any occasion, insolent or assuming. And maternal fondness met with its dearest best reward, in filial duty and tenderness. Sarah lived respected, and died lamented, by her only and beloved son.

In reviewing the sacrifice of Isaac, that I may not encroach on your time, I shall only make this remark, that this memorable transaction was not less a proof of the faith of Isaac, than of Abraham himself. As the obedience of the father was prompt and cheerful, so was that of the son. If the resignation of Abraham merits praise, the submission of Isaac claims no less; for his consent must undoubtedly have been obtained. In both it was "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, and a reasonable service;" and the blessing pronounced from heaven on that occasion, applied to both equally, and in the same manner.

The next important event of Isaac's life upon the sacred record is his marriage. Swallowed up of sorrow for the loss of his mother, or absorbed in devout meditation, he leaves all concern about his future fortunes and establishment in the world to the care and wisdom of his father. And he thereby reproveth the forwardness and self-sufficiency of our young men, who presume to think for themselves in every thing before they have learned to think at all; who attempt the works of men with the knowledge and the strength of children. In the various particulars of this transaction, we have a beautiful and interesting picture of the simplicity of ancient manners and customs. Is it not a custom rather ancient and obsolete, to see all parties piously acknowledging God, upon such an occasion as this? Is it not rather uncommon, to see a prudent father,

anxious to match his only son with virtue and religion, not with rank and affluence, to the endangering of his moral and religious principles? With us, the most valuable accomplishments, whether bodily or mental, go for nothing, unless set off with gold; but Rebekah, without a dowry, was with jewels and gold courted to the arms of Isaac. Has the female heart alone in all ages been the same; perpetually accessible to the allurements of finery, presents, and praise? Where shall we now look for servants such as Abraham's, at once affectionate to his master, faithful to his trust, and filled with reverence to his God? This part of the history is an excellent commentary upon that injunction of the wise man, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Prov. iii. 6. Abraham's servant has hardly finished his address to Heaven, when lo, Providence, which works unseen, unknown, unobserved by us, has brought the subject of his prayer already to his eye.

And in what place, in what employment is the destined bride of Isaac found? Indolently reclined under a canopy of state, or issuing forth to breathe the evening air, accompanied by a numerous and splendid retinue of domestics? No, my fair hearers, look at Rebekah, beautiful, and young, and high born, bearing her pitcher on her shoulder to the well, to draw the evening's water for the family,...and learn, that the humble, yet useful employments of domestic life, are a virtuous woman's most honorable station; that whether in virginity, wedlock, or widowhood, God and nature have destined you to occupations, not perhaps highly honorable in the eyes of unfeeling wealth, or giddy dissipation, but highly consequential to the happiness of others, and therefore essential to your own. Look yet again to Rebekah, and learn affability, and kindness, and condescension...learn at once to perform your duty, and to promote your interest. It suits the early bloom of life, it suits your sex, it is congenial to your natural

propensities, to be gentle, to be courteous; and, believe me, it is equally conducive to your honor and advantage. The obliging deportment of Rebekah to the servant, paved the way to her advancement to the rank of his mistress. And can you think the dignity of Isaac's future wife in the smallest degree impaired, by her civilities to his servants, or by her humanity to the poor dumb brutes which followed him? Believe me, an insolent, unfeeling, uncomplying young woman, is an odious, contemptible, unnatural, ... a monstrous thing. Look at Rebekah yet once more, my beloved daughters, and learn openness, frankness, sincerity. Was she deficient in virgin modesty, that most attractive of all female graces, if, when asked, "wilt thou go with this man?" she ingenuously replied, "I will go." No; but the honest simplicity of nature was not then corrupted and disguised by modes of behavior, the beggarly refinement of modern education. Then, what the heart and conscience dared to avow, the cheek blushed not at hearing, the tongue scrupled not to utter. I cannot yet cease to speak of that sweet, that amiable creature. Mark again, I beseech you, as she approaches her destined lord, how female delicacy, how maiden diffidence and reserve, resume their empire! "She alighted off the camel, she took a veil and covered herself."

And where, and how was Isaac found of his fair spouse? He had gone out "to meditate, or to pray in the field at the even-tide." This is the leading, prevailing lineament in the good man's character: a heart turned to devotion, an eye continually directed towards heaven. Meditation and prayer are the proper improvement of all mercies past, and the best preparative for mercies yet expected; a cordial balm for the woes which we already endure, and an infallible antidote to the poison of those evils which we have yet to fear. What is not to be hoped for, from an union built on such a foundation? The fear and love of God on

both sides ; calmness, wisdom, fidelity, and affluence, on the part of the husband ; humility, decency, meekness, frankness, and discretion, on the part of the wife ; a mutual desire of pleasing, and of being pleased. “ Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife ; and he loved her : and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death,” Gen. xxiv. 67. So wisely and so graciously hath God provided a suitable relief from every human calamity. And thus Providence prepares us, in one form of the school of relative duty, for a higher and a higher still, till we have filled every station with some degree of comfort and of credit. The transition from a dutiful and affectionate son, to a kind and indulgent husband, is natural and easy. And here, my young friends, you are furnished with a plain, but important rule, for forming the great choice of life. Is an undutiful child likely to make a good husband or wife ? Have I reason to expect that one who has violated the first law of nature, of morality, of religion, will fall at once, and without preparation, into the more complicated and more difficult duties of the conjugal state ?

But what lot of humanity is free from anxiety, free from disappointment, free from pain ? The heir of Abraham’s wealth ; but what signifies Abraham’s wealth ? The heir of the promise goes childless. Who is so foolish as to look for perfect happiness in a world of vanity, in a valley of tears ? Those, to whom the blessing of children is denied, are fretful and discontented ; and those on whom it is bestowed are in terror, anxiety, and vexation every hour. Happily, I hear of Rebekah’s suggesting no dangerous, no unwarrantable expedient as a remedy for this sore evil ; and holy Isaac thinks of seeking relief there only, where he was accustomed to seek, and to find the cure of all his ills. “ Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren : and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children

struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the other," Gen. xxv. 21, 22, 23. He asked a child, and his prayer is answered by the gift of two sons. And thus Providence, often slower than our wishes and desires, frequently compensates that delay by greatly outdoing our requests and expectations. But lo again, how care and sorrow arise out of our greatest comforts! The children are hardly conceived when their strife begins; and Isaac has as much reason to entreat the Lord, that his wife might be spared in the pangs of an unnatural labor, as he formerly had, that she might be delivered from the infelicity of barrenness. Indeed, "who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" But this we know, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28.

The strife which thus began in the womb, becomes visible at the birth, and continues through life: nay, is transmitted to posterity. The remark of the fanciful and ingenious bishop Hall on the passage is to this purpose: "Before Rebekah conceived, she was at ease: so before spiritual regeneration, all is peace in the soul: but no sooner is the new man formed in us, but the flesh conflicts with the spirit. There is no grace where there is no unquietness. Esau alone would not have striven; for nature will ever agree with itself. Never any Rebekah conceived only an Esau, or was so happy as to conceive none but a Jacob: she must be the mother of both, that she may have both joy and exercise. This strife began early: every true Israelite begins his war with his being. How many actions which we know not of, are not without presage and signification.

In this contest, Esau got the right of nature, Jacob of grace: yet that there might be some pretence of equality, lest Esau should outrun his brother into the world, Jacob holds him fast by the heel, so his hand was born before the other's foot. But because Esau was some minutes the elder, that the younger might have better claim to that which God had promised, he buys that which he could not win. If either by strife, or purchase, or suit, we can attain spiritual blessings, we are happy. Had Jacob come out first, he had not known how much he was indebted to God for his advancement." Thus far the bishop. And thus, at the age of three-score years, and after twenty years from his marriage with Rebekah, Isaac became the happy father of two hopeful sons. And here the expiration of your time obliges me to interrupt the story. But I must not conclude the Lecture till I have, in a very few short hints, endeavored to shew you the analogy of Isaac the son of Abraham, and Jesus Christ the son of God.

They were both raised up for one and the same purpose; even to manifest the mercy and love of God to fallen men; the one as the bright and morning-star to usher in the day, the other as the meridian sun, "travelling in the greatness of his strength." Isaac the natural root and progenitor of Christ: Christ the spiritual author, root, and head of Isaac. Isaac was the son of much expectation, the subject of many prophecies. The set time of his birth was determined and foretold by almighty Power, by unerring Wisdom, long before it happened: thus the birth of Christ, the desire of all nations, was announced to the world by a cloud of witnesses, not years, but ages, centuries, many centuries before the time. The time, the place, all the circumstances attending it, were written as with a sun-beam, so as to render mistake impossible. Both Isaac and Christ were conceived out of the usual course of nature, that the finger of God might be seen and acknow-

ledged in both events; Isaac of a mother beyond the natural possibility of having children, Jesus of an immaculate virgin. Isaac was early hated and persecuted of his brother, the son of his own father; and the persecution of Jesus from the sinful world he came to save, began at his birth, continued through the whole of his life, and issued in a shameful, painful, and accursed death. "He came to his own, and his own received him not. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

But, what was seen in the mountain of the Lord forms the closest resemblance, and affords the sublimest instruction. In the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, we behold the father and son like-minded in presenting it cheerfully at the command of God. Abraham withheld not his son, his only son, and Isaac voluntarily surrendered himself as a lamb for a burnt-offering. And on Mount Calvary what do we behold? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. And Jesus gave himself for us "a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God." He "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood." Here also the Father and Son like-minded, and in the same view, and for the same end, the redemption of an elect world. "O the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God: it passeth knowledge!"

The private personal character of Isaac, a man of calmness, contemplation, and peace; the dutiful son of his affectionate mother; the respectful observer of his father's will, might, without doing violence to the subject, be brought into comparison with the pure and perfect character of his antitype, whose spirit nothing could discompose, whose nights were spent in prayer, and his days in doing good; whose "meat and drink

it was to do the will of his Heavenly Father, and to finish his work," and whose dying breath uttered the accents of filial affection, and provided a son, a protector, and a home, for his desolate afflicted mother. O the glorious excellency of that character, which exhibited the example of every personal, every relative virtue: which comprised the essence of all that is amiable in every other character, and left all created goodness at an infinite distance behind! Look to Isaac and be instructed. Look to Jesus and "grow in grace," and go on towards perfection, and "press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The next Lecture, with the divine permission, will contain the remaining part of the life of Isaac, from the death of his father to his own. May God communicate saving knowledge to us all, by every mean of instruction: and to his name be praise in Christ. Amen.

History of Isaac.

LECTURE III.

And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father ; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there : and there Isaac's servants digged a well.... GEN. xxvi. 23, 24, 25.

IT is a pleasing and an instructive view of the Divine Providence, to consider one and the same great design as carried on to maturity, in periods, and by persons the most remote from each other, without communication of intelligence, without concurrence or exertion among themselves ; to behold the great God moulding, guiding, subduing the various passions, purposes, and private interests of men, to his own sovereign will ; to behold the building of God rising in beauty, advancing towards perfection, by the hands of feeble workmen, who comprehend not the thousandth part of the plan which they assist in executing, and who, instead of co-operating, frequently seem to counteract one another. One digs his hour in the quarry ; another lifts up his axe, and strikes a stroke or two in the forest ; a third applies the square and the compass to the stone which his neighbor had polished. But their labors, their views, their abilities, however different, all promote the same end ; and though they and

their endeavors be frail and perishing, the work in which the Almighty employs them is progressive, is permanent, is immortal... Here a shepherd, there a king; here a little child, there a sage; here a legislator, there a conqueror; here a deluge, there a conflagration, fulfils the design of high Heaven: and the glorious fabric of redemption rises and rises, though patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles sink, one after another, into the dust. Man often begins to build, but is unable to finish, because he had not counted the cost; but God "seeth the end from the beginning." He can never want an instrument who has heaven, earth, and hell at his disposal. "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee," Satan is thy chained slave, and "ten thousand times ten thousand mighty angels minister unto thee." How then can thy aim be defeated? How can thy counsels fail?

The personal characters of the three leading patriarchs of the house of Israel, differ exceedingly in many respects, and their manner of life differs as much, while their ruling principle is the same. The faith of Abraham, ardent and intrepid, was ever ready to encounter the most threatening dangers, to undertake the most difficult employments, and to render the most painful and costly sacrifices at God's command. The faith of Isaac, placid and contemplative, sought the happiness of communion with God in calmness and solitude, and satisfied itself with the secret, untumultuous delight of beholding his family built up, and the promises of God advancing to their accomplishment. The faith of Jacob, active and persevering, wrought upon and excited by the peculiarities of his ever-varying condition, supported a life of much bustle and industry, and surmounted disappointments and afflictions the most mortifying and oppressive. For it is the office of this divine principle, not to alter, to suppress, or eradicate the natural tempers and dispositions of men, but to guide, impel, or control them, in conformity to their proper destination.

Abraham, sensible of the ungovernable, encroaching spirit of Ishmael, of the numerous and pressing claims of his younger children, and of the gentle, yielding, unresisting nature of Isaac, had, with the prudent foresight of a good parent, made such a disposition of his temporal affairs in his life-time, as was most likely to prevent contention and mischief after his death. Ishmael had been dismissed many years before, had already become the head of many numerous and powerful tribes, "twelve princes according to their nations," Gen. xxiv. 13..16; and from habit, inclination, and necessity, had contracted a fondness for a roving, erratic course of life. He had been brought into a transient connection with his brother Isaac, by an event which softens the most rugged and obdurate dispositions, the death of their common father; and their resentments, for a time at least, perhaps forever, are buried in the tomb of him to whom they owed their birth. But difference of interest, affection, and pursuit, speedily separates them again. Ishmael betakes himself to his favorite occupations in the desert, and Isaac abides quietly in his tent, and tending his flocks, by the well Lahai-roi.

The sons of Abraham by Keturah had been more recently removed, with a suitable provision, into a distant part of the country," Gen. xxv. 6. So that upon his father's demise, Isaac found himself in the quiet possession of by far the greatest part of his immense wealth, but excluded from the society of those whom his own sweetness of temper and sense of duty, and the proximity of blood, would have led him to cultivate and cherish. And thus riches, the object of universal desire and pursuit, create more and greater wants than those which they are able to remove. By exciting envy, jealousy, and suspicion, they separate those whom nature has joined; friendship is sacrificed to convenience; and, to enjoy in suecricity what Providence has given him, the unhappy possessor is constrained to be-

come an alien to his own brother. We cannot refrain from bestowing, in this place, a posthumous praise upon Abraham, who, uninfected by the tenacity of old age and selfishness, cheerfully surrendered, while he yet lived, a considerable part of his property, in order to insure the future peace of his family, and wisely left his principal heir a poorer man, that he might leave him happier and more secure. How unlike those sordid wretches, who will scatter nothing till death breaks into the board; and who care not what strife and wretchedness overtake those who come after them, in the very distribution of their property, provided they can keep it all to themselves, were it but for one day longer!

Isaac had hitherto trusted every thing to the wisdom and affection of his kind father, and to the care of an indulgent Providence, even so far as to the choice of his partner for life. But his father being now removed by death, and his own children growing up fast upon him, he is under the necessity of arising and exerting himself. For the blessing of Providence is to be asked and expected only when men are found in the way of their duty, and wisely employing lawful and appointed means of prospering. We accordingly find him, with the prudent sagacity of a good husband, father, and master, directing the removal of his family from place to place, as occasion frequently required; forming alliances with his powerful neighbors, for their mutual security; and presiding in the offices of religion, his favorite employment. And though Providence has deprived him of the counsel and protection of an earthly parent, he finds, in his happy experience, that the man whom God continues to protect and bless, has lost nothing. "Father and mother have forsaken him, but the Lord has graciously taken him up," "hedged him round on every side," and put the fear and dread of him into all the neighboring nations, who, though they envied, durst not hurt him.

The distresses which embittered the remainder of Isaac's life, were chiefly internal and domestic; and, alas! had their source in his own infirmity, namely, a fond partiality in favor of his elder son; the mischief of which was increased, and kept alive by a partiality, equally decided, which Rebekah had conceived in favor of Jacob. "Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob," Gen. 25, 28. Most of the evils of a man's lot may be easily traced up to some weakness in which he has indulged himself, some error into which he has fallen, some opportunity he has let slip, or some crime which he has committed. Of all the infirmities to which our nature is subject, none is more common, none is more unreasonable, unwise and unjust, none more easily guarded against, none more fatal in its consequences to ourselves and others, than that of making a difference between one child and another. It destroys the favorite, and discourages those who are postponed and slighted; it sows the seeds of jealousy and malice, which frequently produce strife, and end in violence and blood. It sets the father against the mother, and the mother against the father; the sister against the brother, and the brother against the sister. It disturbed the repose of Isaac's family, and had well nigh brought down Jacob's hoary head with sorrow to the grave. Parents ought to examine, and to watch over themselves carefully on this head. If they are unable to suppress the feeling, the expression of it, at least, is in their power; and policy, if not justice, demands of them an equitable distribution of their affection, their countenance, and their goods. For, if there be a folly which, more certainly than another, punishes itself, it is this ill-judged and wicked distinction between equals. One is ashamed to think of the reason which is assigned for Isaac's preference of his elder to his youngest son, "Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison." The original language expresses it

still more forcibly, "because his venison was in his mouth." By what grovelling and unworthy motives are wise and good men often actuated! And what a mortifying view of human nature is it, to see the laws of prudence, and justice, and piety, vilely controlled and counteracted by the lowest and grossest of our appetites! It was not long before the effect of parental partialities appeared. A competition for precedency, and the rights of primogeniture, engaged the attention of the two brothers, and whetted their spirits against each other, from their earliest years. The pretensions of each were supported respectively by the parents according to favor, to the disregard of every maxim of good sense, and of the destination and direction of the Divine Providence. Who it was that prevailed in this contention, and by what means, will be seen in the sequel.

While the family of the patriarch was thus torn with internal dissention, Providence was pleased to visit him with a grievous external calamity. "There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham," Gen. xxvi. 1. This, for a while, represses animosity. Distress, common to all, teaches them to love one another; and, instead of a struggle for precedency, the weightier concern, "Where shall we find bread?" now occupies their thoughts. This dispensation was probably intended as a reproof and correction to all parties. The parents were admonished of the folly of aiding and increasing the unavoidable ills of life, by wilfully sowing discord among brethren. Esau, ready again to perish with want, is stung with remorse to think, that in one hasty, impatient moment of hunger, he had sold, for the transient gratification of a low appetite, what no penitence could undo, no money re-purchase. And Jacob, feeling himself the cravings of hunger, was chastised for taking an unkind advantage of his brother's necessity; and, ready in his turn to perish, might be constrained to

adopt the words of starving Esau, " behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birth-right do to me," Gen. xxv. 32. For, although God serves himself of the weaknesses and vices of men, he approves them not, nor will suffer them to pass unpunished.

Isaac, warned of God, removes not into Egypt, the land which had afforded his father shelter and subsistence in a similar storm, and which has often proved an assylum to the church; but retires to Gerar, one of the cities of Palestine, situated between Kadesh and Shur, Gen. xx. 1. Abimelech was the prince who at that time reigned over the Philistines. The same person, according to Josephus, with whom Abraham had formed a connection so friendly, Gen. xx. 14, 15...and with whom, for that reason, Heaven now directed Isaac to sojourn, till the famine should be relieved. This conjecture of the Jewish historian, though not insupportable, from a physical impediment seems highly improbable; if we consider that seventy-five years have elapsed since Abraham resided at Gerar: and history furnishes few, if any examples, of reigns of so long continuance. It is more probable that Abimelech was then the general appellative name of the princes of that part of Palestine, as Pharaoh was that of the kings of Egypt. When we behold the patriarchs thus removing from place to place, a feeble, unwarlike, encumbered band, through nations fierce, envious, and violent, their safety is to be accounted for only from the restraining power of God over the hearts of men. The dreadful judgment of Sodom, where lot dwelt; the blindness which punished the attempt to violate his guests, and the more tremendous destruction which avenged just Heaven of their ungodly deeds, might operate powerfully, so far as these events were known, and their memory was preserved, to overawe the neighboring nations, and to procure for Lot's family and kindred, the attention and respect which fear, if not

love, inspires. And, as a proof of his supremacy, that God, "in whose hand the heart of the king is, and who can turn it which way soever he will," has frequently constrained the enemies of his church and people to be their friends and protectors.

This repeated visitation of Canaan by famine, was a repeated trial of the patriarch's faith. The promise of a land, so frequently unable to sustain its inhabitants, could have little value in the eye of a worldly mind. But faith in God discerns the principal worth and importance of temporal blessings, in their being connected with, and representing spiritual objects; and examines events, not by their agreement with preconceived opinions, and extravagant expectations, but by their moral effects and consequences. A region uniformly and unfailingly plenteous, might betray its possessor into the belief that its fertility flowed solely from natural causes, and God might be forgotten and neglected. A year of scarcity is calculated to teach man his dependance, and to force him to implore "the blessing which maketh rich, and causeth the earth to yield its increase."

While he sojourned among the Philistines, Isaac falls into the same infirmity which dishonored his father in Egypt. Mised, by suspicion unworthy of an honest man, and fear unworthy of the friend of God, he violates sacred truth, and sins against his own conscience: for when interrogated concerning Rebekah, "he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife, lest, said he, the men of this place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon," Gen. xxvi. 7. The criminality of this mistrust is greatly aggravated, by the clearness and fulness of the heavenly vision, whereby he had been admonished to bend his course to the court of Abimelech. "And the Lord appeared unto him and said, Go not down into Egypt. Dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee:

for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father. And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries: and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws," Gen. xxvi. 2...5. Slight temptations frequently prevail, after trials more formidable have been successfully resisted and overcome. The wise, therefore, will reckon no danger small, no foe contemptible, no condition perfectly secure. The faithful will learn to speak truth, to do good, to trust in the Lord, and fear nothing.

Virtue is not hereditary in families, it descends but in rarer instances; whereas frailty, alas! descends from every father to every son. Virtue is the water in the particular pool; vice the torrent in the river, which sweeps every thing before it. The moderation, honor and good sense of Abimelech, are the severest imaginable reproof of the disingenuousness of the prophet, Gen. xxvi. 9, 10, 11, and happily prevented the mischief which Isaac, seeking by improper means to shun, had well nigh occasioned.

Under the protection and friendship of this prince, he has now obtained a settlement in the land; and by the blessing of Heaven upon his honest industry, he prospers and increases in the midst of difficulties. "Isaac sowed in the land, and received in the same year an hundred fold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew, until he became very great. For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants," Gen. xxvi. 12, 13, 14. But we are by no means to imagine, that worldly success is ever proportioned to promising means and favorable opportunities. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." Some men's sails seem to gather

every breath of the wind : they get forward in spite of every obstacle. Others feel the tempest continually blowing in their faces. All things are against them, and though they set out with the fairest, most flattering prospects, unaccountably thwarted and disappointed, they “wax poor, and fall into decay.” Let not prosperity, then, be deemed an infallible proof of wisdom or worth, or of divine favor. Neither let want of success be always derived from folly, or vice, or the curse of Heaven ; for in this mixed, imperfect, probationary state, “time and chance happen to all men,” neither can a man tell “what is good for him all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow.”

Every temporal advantage has a corresponding infelicity. Isaac grew rich and great, but “the Philistines envied him.” And, “who can stand before envy ?” That dark, malignant passion, prompted his surly, jealous foes to cut off one source of his wealth, “for all the wells which his father’s servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth,” Gen. xxvi 15. This was in effect to destroy the flocks and the herds. For without water, “the cattle upon a thousand hills” are a poor, perishing, commodity. Envy considers that as gained to itself which is lost to another : and not only delights in destruction, from which it hopes to draw advantage, but enjoys the mischief which it works merely for mischief’s sake. Envy will even submit to hurt itself a little, to have the malicious satisfaction of hurting another much. Abimelech himself, more liberal-minded than meaner men, grows at length weary of his guest, feels hurt at his growing prosperity, envies his greatness, and dismisses him with cold civility. “And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us : for thou art much mightier than we,” Gen. xxvi. 16. Grandeur admits not of friendship ; and friendship disdains to dwell with profligacy. Of all the men in a nation, the king is most certainly excluded from this

blessing; and surely, his lot contains nothing to be once compared with it, or which can supply its want.

Isaac prudently gives way. He withdraws the hated object from before the eyes of envy, and, leaving the city, pitches his tent in the valley of Gerar. Apprehending he had a hereditary right to the wells of water which were his father's, and which the Philistines had maliciously obstructed, he digs again for them in the valley. And from respect to the memory of Abraham, as well as to keep alive the remembrance of the gracious interpositions of the Divine Providence in his behalf, he revives the ancient names by which the wells were distinguished. Particularly the name Beer-sheba, or, the well of the oath, is preserved, the memorial of the covenant ratified upwards of seventy years before, between the king of the Philistines and Abraham; and which was known by that name for many ages afterwards, as one of the extreme boundaries of the holy land. But the unrelenting jealousy of the Philistines pursues him from the city into the field. No sooner has he by industry procured for his family that important necessary of life, water, than the herdmen of Gerar endeavored by violence to possess themselves of it. Isaac, fond of peace, chooses rather to recede from his just right, than support it by force; and still retires, seeking relief in patience and industry. He finds himself still pursued by the pride and selfishness of his neighbors; but at length conquers by yielding. A victory the most certain, the most honorable, and the most satisfactory. And the tranquillity and ease of *Rehoboth*,* amply compensate the troubles and vexation of *Esek* † and *Sitnah*. ‡ Finally, to prevent, as far as in him lay, every ground of quarrel, he fixes his residence at a still greater distance from Abimelech. "He went up from thence to Beer-sheba;" where feeling himself at home, after so many removals, he at

* Room.

† Contention.

‡ Hatred.

once pitches his tent for repose, and builds an altar for religion; and the hatred and violence of man is lost and forgotten in communion with God.

The expression, " he called upon the name of the Lord," seems to import, that when his altar was built, it was consecrated to the service of God, with certain extraordinary solemnities; such as sacrifice, and public thanksgiving, at which the whole family assisted, and in which the holy man himself, the priest as well as the prince of his family, joyfully presided. His piety was speedily acknowledged and crowned with the approbation and smiles of his Heavenly Father. For, " the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father, fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and will multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake," Gen. xxvi. 24. His meek and placid deportment, together with his increasing power and wealth, and the favor of Heaven so unequivocally declared, have rendered the patriarch so dignified and respectable in the eyes of the world, that the prince, who from an unworthy motive had been induced to treat him with unkindness, and to dismiss him from his capital, now feels himself impelled to court his friendship, and to secure it by a solemn compact. Abimelech considers it as no diminution of his dignity, to leave home, attended with the most honorable of his counsel, and the supreme in command over his armies, in order to visit the shepherd in his tent. The expostulation, Gen. xxvi. 27, of Isaac is simple and natural, and his conduct, verse 28, 29, exhibits a mind free from gall, free from resentment. The reply of Abimelech discloses the true motive of this visit. And we are not surprized to find, that fear has at least as large a share in it as love, verse 28, 29. The worst of men find it to be their interest to live on good terms with the wise and pious: and good men cleave to each other from affection.

The covenant being amicably renewed, and the oath of God interposed, and, "an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife," the king of Gerar and his retinue return in peace, and leave Isaac to the retirement which he loved, and to that intercourse with Heaven, which he prized infinitely above the friendship of earthly potentates. And now a delightful calm of eighteen years ensued, of which no traces remain to inform or instruct men, but which, from the well-known character of this patriarch, we may well suppose were spent in such a manner, as to be had in everlasting remembrance before God.

At this period, his domestic tranquillity was again cruelly disturbed, and by his favorite son; who, in the fortieth year of his own life, that is, the hundredth of his father's, introduced two idolatrous wives at once, into the holy family. This was two great evils in one. It was being unequally yoked with infidelity; and carrying on a practice which has ever been and ever will be fatal to domestic peace. The daughter of an Hittite would naturally be disposed to interrupt the religious harmony which prevailed in Isaac's habitation, and two wives at once would as certainly be disposed to annoy each other, and to embroil the whole family in their quarrels. Isaac was well acquainted with the solicitude of his pious father on his own account, in the important article, marriage; and was conscious of a similar anxiety respecting the settlement of his sons. We may easily conceive, then, how he felt at this accumulated irregularity and imprudence of Esau. He was wounded there, where as a man, a father, and a servant of the true God, he was most vulnerable. To be neglected, unacknowledged in a matter of the highest moment to his comfort, by that son whom he had cherished with the fondest affection, and on whom he rested his fondest hopes; how mortifying to a father! But besides, the holy descent was in danger of being marred by an impure heathenish mixture; and the minds of his grand-

children likely to be perverted from the knowledge and worship of the God of their fathers. Such is the ungracious return which parents often meet with, for all that profusion of tenderness and affection which they lavish upon their offspring; such their reward for all their wearisome days, and sleepless nights. The ingrates dispose of their affections, their persons, their prospects, their all, in a hasty fit of passion: as if the father who brought them up with so much toil and trouble, as if the mother who bore them had no concern in the matter. The ungrateful disorderly conduct of their elder son, and no wonder, “was a grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebekah.”

Whether it was from the vexation occasioned by this event, from disease, from accident, or some natural weakness in the organs of sight, we are not informed, but we find Isaac, in the one hundred and thirty-fifth year of his life...in a state of total blindness; and he was probably visited with the loss of that precious sense at a much earlier period. But forty-five years, at least, of his earthly pilgrimage were passed in this dark and comfortless state. All men wish to live to old age; but when they have attained their wish, they are apt to repine at the infirmities and the discomforts which are necessarily incident to it. They would be old; but they would not be blind, and palsied, and feeble. They would be old; but they would not be neglected, wearied of, and forsaken. They would be old; but they would not be practised upon and deceived. But, old age certainly brings on all these, and many more inconveniences; and vain it is to dream of the benefit, without the care. We read but of one, that is Moses himself, whose “eye, at the age of one hundred and twenty, was not dim, nor his natural force abated.”

This dark period of Isaac's life, containing many interesting and instructive particulars, will furnish matter for a separate discourse. In reviewing the past, we are under the necessity of again admonishing pa-

rents, on that momentous article...Impartiality in the distribution of their attention, their tenderness, and their property, among their children. The trifling circumstances of name, of personal likeness, of beauty and deformity, and the like, over which parents had little power, and the children none at all; and which in themselves have neither merit nor demerit, and are the objects of neither just praise nor blame, have been known to establish distinctions in families, which destroyed their peace, and accelerated their ruin. Children unborn have often felt the dire effects of a silly nick-name, imposed on a progenitor, whom they knew not, and whose relation to them was thereby rendered a curse. Men are often deemed unfortunate, both by themselves and others, where they deserve to be reckoned unwise. They themselves do the mischief, and then wonder how it came about. They spoil their children, and then complain that they are so perverse. I know how difficult it is to bring up youth; how difficult to bear an even hand between child and child, to counteract the bias of favor and affection, to conceal and disguise the strong emotions of the heart. But it is only the more necessary to be prudent, to be vigilant, "to walk circumspectly," and, to ask "wisdom of God."

History of Isaac.

LECTURE IV.

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son. And he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold, now I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now, therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son: and Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.... GEN. xxvii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

THERE is a generous principle in human nature which commonly disposes us to take part with the weakest. We feel an honest indignation at seeing weakness oppressed by might, honesty over-reached by cunning, and unsuspected goodness played upon by selfishness and knavery. God himself feels the insults offered to the destitute and the helpless; declares himself “the judge of the widow, the protector of the fatherless, the shield of the stranger.” He aims his thunder at the head of him who putteth a “stumbling-block in the way of the blind, and planteth a snare for the innocent.” And though in the sovereignty of his power, and the depths of his wisdom, he is sometimes pleased to employ the vices of men to execute his pur-

poses of goodness and mercy, he loves and approves only "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," Phil. iv. 8. and the persons who love and practise them.

It is not the least profitable part of the study of both providence and scripture, to trace the conduct of a righteous God in punishing the offender, though he has subdued the offence into a servant of his own will; chastening his children by a rod of their own preparing; tumbling the wicked into the pit which themselves have digged, and bringing backsliders again to himself, by making them to eat the bitter fruit of their own doings. Happy it is for the children of men, if their deviations from the path of rectitude meet their correction in a temporal punishment. But wo to that man, whom justice permits to thrive in his iniquity, and to grow hardened through impunity; whose retribution is deferred till repentance can produce no change. Chastise me, O Father, as severely as thou wilt. Let me not fall asleep under my transgression, and thy hot displeasure. Dispose as thou wilt of my body, my estate, my worldly comfort; but let my soul live before thee. Let me see my sin, and purge me thoroughly from it.

....We are now to attempt the illustration of these reflections, from history.

The life of Isaac may be divided into three periods. The first, containing seventy-five years, from his birth to the death of Abraham; during which, being under parental government, and of a meek, unassuming disposition, his history is blended with, and included in that of his father. The second, commencing at his father's death, and ending in his one hundred and thirty-seventh year: when it pleased God to visit him with extreme weakness, or total loss of eye-sight. This contains the space of sixty-two years, which may be

termed his active period. To it succeeds a heavy period of forty-three years, up to the day of his death. During which we see a poor dark old man, at the disposal of others, moving in a narrow sphere; "knowledge" and comfort "at one entrance, quite shut out." We behold a man, who, when, "he was young, girded himself, and walked whither he would; but now become old, stretching forth his hands, and another girding him, and carrying him whither he would not." This portion of his history, accordingly, is blended with, and swallowed up in that of his two sons.

At the beginning of this period, we find Isaac sensible of his growing infirmities, feeling the approach of death, though ignorant of the day of it, and anxious to convey the double portion, the patriarchal benediction, and the covenant promise, according to the bent of his natural affection, to his elder and more beloved son. He calls him with accents of paternal tenderness, and proposes to him the mingled gratification of pursuing his own favorite amusement, of ministering to his fond father's pleasure, and of securing to himself the great object of his ambition and desire, the *blessing*, with all its valuable effects.

Behold of what importance it is, that our propensities be originally good, seeing indulgence and habit interweave them with our very constitution, till they become a second nature, and age confirms instead of eradicating them. We find the two great infirmities of Isaac's character predominant to the last, a disposition to gratify his palate with a particular kind of food, and partiality to his son Esau. Time has not yet blunted the edge of appetite; and the eye of the mind, dim as the bodily organ, overlooks the undutifulness which had pierced a father's heart, by unhallowed inauspicious marriages with the Hittite; and Isaac discerns in his darling, those qualities only, in which misguided affection had dressed him out. Thus, a strong and lively principle of grace may consist with much natural weakness.

Rebekah, equally attentive to the interest of her younger son, happened to overhear the charge which Isaac gave to Esau, and immediately, with the quickness of a female, determined, at all hazards, to carry a favorite point, she builds upon it a project of obtaining, by management and address, what she despaired of bringing about by the direct road of entreaty or persuasion. Unhappy it is for that family, the heads of which entertain opposite views, and pursue separate interests. One tent could not long contain two rival brothers, whose animosity was kept alive and encouraged by those, whom wisdom and authority should have interposed to suppress it. It is affecting to think how little scrupulous even good people are, about the means of accomplishing what their hearts are set upon; how easily the understanding and the conscience become the dupe of the affections. The apologists of Rebekah charitably ascribe her conduct on this occasion to motives of religion. She is supposed to be actuated throughout by zeal for supporting the destination of Heaven, "The elder shall serve the younger;" a destination which she observed her husband was eager to subvert. I am not disposed to refuse her, to a certain degree, the credit of so worthy a principle; for the piety of her spirit, on other occasions, is unquestionable. But I see too much of the woman, of the mother, of the spirit of this world, in her behavior, to believe that her motives were wholly pure and spiritual. Religion, true religion, never does evil that good may come.

Admitting that Isaac was to blame, for misunderstanding, forgetting or endeavoring to contradict the oracle which gave the preference to Jacob; surely, surely, it belonged to the wife of his youth to have employed means to undeceive and admonish him. Was the deception which she practised upon his helplessness and infirmity, the proof she exhibited of the love, honor and obedience which she owed her lord? Was it consistent with genuine piety, to take the work of God out of his

hands? as if the wisdom of Jehovah needed the aid of human craft and invention. And, could a mother, not only herself deviate into the crooked paths of dissimulation and falsehood, and become a pattern of deceit, but wickedly attempt, to decoy, persuade, constrain her own son, to violate sacred truth? "It is not, and it cannot come to good."

Having planned her scheme, and over-persuaded Jacob to assist in the execution of it, Rebekah loses not a moment; and Isaac's favorite dish is ready to be served up, long before the uncertainty of hunting, and the dexterity of Esau could have procured it. Jacob, arrayed in goodly raiment of his elder brother, disguised to the sense of feeling, as much as art could disguise him, and furnished with the savoury meat which his father loved, advances with trembling, doubtful steps to his apartment. In the conversation that ensued, which is most to be wondered at...the honest, unsuspecting simplicity of the father; or, the shameless, undaunted effrontery of the son? But, in thinking of the one, our wonder is mingled with respect and esteem; the other excites resentment and abhorrence. It shews the danger of getting into a wrong train. One fraud must be followed up with another; one injury must support and justify another; and simple falsehood, by an easy progress, rises up to perjury. Who is not shocked, to hear the son of Isaac interposing the great and dreadful name of the "LORD God of his father," not to confirm the truth, but to countenance and bear out a wilful and deliberate lie? What earthly good is worth purchasing at such a price? Surely his tongue faltered when it pronounced those solemn, those awful words.

The good old man's suspicions were evidently alarmed, either by the tone of Jacob's voice, or by the hesitating manner in which he spoke. And, apprehending he had an infallible method of detection, if a fallacy there were, he appeals from the testimony of his ears

to his feeling. But behold, craft is too deep for honesty. Rebekah and her son have not contrived their plot so ill, as to fail at this stage of the business; and Isaac is too good himself to imagine that others could be so wicked. He suffers himself, therefore, to be at length persuaded; and, refreshed with meat and drink, pronounces the blessing which he had promised. Had he not been blinded, when he saw, with ill-judged favor to Esau, and seduced by the flavor of his venison, he had not been exposed to this imposition in his helpless state. Could Jacob have trusted in God, and waited to be conducted of Providence, he had arrived at his end no less certainly, and with much less dishonor. But "God is true, though every man be found a liar."

It is worthy of observation, that though Isaac, by the spirit of prophecy which was in him, foresaw and foretold the future fortunes of his family; though he could clearly discern objects at the remotest distance, his natural discernment was so small, and even his prophetic knowledge so partial, that he could not distinguish the one branch of his family from the other; and, impelled by a will more powerful than his own, he involuntarily bestowed dominion and precedency where he least intended it. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the *will of man*: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Peter i. 21. Thus Balaam afterwards prophesied, not what he would, but as the Spirit of God constrained him; and thus, Caiaphas predicted the death of Christ for the sins of the people; but "this spake he, not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation," John xi. 51.

Thus was Isaac deceived, in having Jacob imposed upon him for Esau. Nor was Rebekah less disappointed. For the blessing which she had surreptitiously obtained for her favorite, instead of producing the immediate benefits expected from it, plunged him into an

ocean of distress, exiled him from his country and his father's house, exposed him, in his turn, to imposition and insult; and, but for the care of a superintending Providence, the success which he had earned by the sacrifice of a good conscience, must have defeated and destroyed itself. But "the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations," Psalm xxxiii. 11. "His decree may no man reverse." "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God; but the wisdom and righteousness of God, can easily bend the wrath of man to their purpose.

Jacob has hardly departed with his ill-gotten benediction, when Esau arrives in the triumph of success and hope; his heart overflowing with filial tenderness, and panting for the promised reward of his labors. The feelings of both the father and son, when the cheat was discovered, are more easily conceived than described: the shame of being over-reached, resentment against the impostor, the chagrin of disappointed hope, of disappointed ambition; bitter reflection on the folly and danger of resisting the high will of Heaven, and on the hard necessity of submitting to the irreversible decree. Nothing can exceed the tenderness of Esau's expostulation, when he found the blessing was irrecoverably gone from him. The name of his brother; the occasion of its being given him; his conduct since he grew up; the repeated advantage he had taken, of his necessity at one time, of his absence at another, all rush upon his mind at once, and excite a tempest of passion which he is unable to govern. "And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father; and Esau lift up his voice, and wept," Gen. xxvii. 38. The ability and the good will of an earthly parent have their limits. He has but one, or at most, a second blessing to bestow. What he gives to this child is so much taken away from that other. But the liberality

and the power of our heavenly Father are unbounded. "In our Father's house there are many mansions." With him "there is bread enough, and to spare." Isaac discovers, at length, that he has been fighting against God; and while he resents Jacob's subtilty, and the unkindness of Rebekah, he acknowledges and submits to the high will of Heaven. The blessing which he had pronounced unwittingly, and which he finds to be irrevocable, he now deliberately and cheerfully confirms.

And now, behold the little spark of discord between the brethren blown up into a flame, which threatens destruction to the whole family. And, dreadful to think, Esau looks forward with desire to the death of his old kind father, that he might prosecute revenge against his brother unto blood. Hitherto we have seen in Esau an object of compassion; we now view him with detestation; and we find the righteous judgment of God prosecuting this murderous disposition in his posterity, to their utter ruin. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever," Obad. verse 10. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. Thus I will make Mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out, and him that returneth," Ezek. xxxv. 6, 7. "Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and kept his wrath forever. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah," Amos i. 11, 12. Rebekah too, now that "a sword pierces through her own soul," ready "to lose both her children in one day," too late discerns how imprudently she has acted, and is glad to purchase the safety of her favorite at the price of his

banishment. So uneasily do those possessions sit upon us which we have acquired by improper means.

The threatening words of his elder son, must have speedily reached the ears of the aged patriarch also. And he has the inexpressible mortification of learning that the ungrateful wretch whom he had cherished in his bosom, and to whom his fondness would have given every thing, was enjoying the prospect of his approaching death, because it would afford a safer opportunity of practising his meditated revenge. This indeed was the bitterness of death, to "feel how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." And, thus severely the unwise attachment of both the parents punished itself, by the effect which it produced.

To prevent the dreadful mischief which hung over his hoary head, all his prospects concerning Esau, being now blighted by the heathenish alliances which he had formed, by his diabolical character, and by the rejection of Heaven, he gladly consents to the dismissal of Jacob: and all his hopes, at length, settle on him whom he loved less. But, to part with the heir of the promise, at the age of one hundred and forty years, to send him away into a far country...was it not to part with him forever? The fervor of his farewell benediction, pathetically expresses his despair of meeting him again, "God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people: and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham." Gen. xxviii. 3, 4. These are the last words, this the last action of Isaac's life upon record. But his latter end was at a greater distance than he or than Esau apprehended. He survived this event forty years. He lived to lose in communion with God, the disorder and dispersion of his family. He lived to shelter and to bless by his prayers, him whom the paternal roof could shelter and protect no

longer. He lived to be refreshed with the good tidings of the success of the blessing, and the happy increase of Jacob's family. He lived to "see him" again "in his touch," and to embrace his grand-children. This period of his life is a mere blank to posterity. But if we are ever admitted to read in "the book of God's remembrance," O how will these forty years of silence and oblivion arise and shine!

At last, old and full of days, Isaac drops into the grave. "The days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years, and Isaac gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people," Gen. xxxv. 28, 29. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Time, and a better spirit, and the death of a father, have happily extinguished resentment between the brothers. Esau thinks no more of slaying Jacob. They mingle tears, as did Isaac and Ishmael, over their parent's tomb, and their angry passions sleep in the dust with him.

Thus lived and died Isaac the son of Abraham, a man of contemplation, piety, and peace. A man of few and slight infirmities; of many and eminent virtues. A man whom Providence tried with multiplied and severe afflictions; and whom faith strengthened to bear them with patience and fortitude. His story comes home to the breast and bosom of every man. His excellencies are such as all may, by due cultivation, acquire; his virtue such as all may imitate. His faults are those, to which even good men are liable, and which they are the more concerned to avoid, or to amend.

To young men, we would hold him up as a pattern of filial tenderness and submission. Isaac possessed in an eminent degree, that most amiable quality of ingenuous youth, dutiful respect to the mother who bare him. He cherished her with pious attention while she lived, and sincerely lamented her in death; till duty called him to drop the grateful and affectionate son, in

the loving and faithful husband. So long as Abraham lived, Isaac had no will but the will of his father. The master of a family may learn of him domestic piety and devotion, conjugal fidelity, prudent foresight, persevering industry. The selfish and contentious are reformed by the example of his moderation, by his patience under unkindness and injustice, by his meek surrender of an undoubted right, for the sake of peace. Let the aged consider him well, and imitate his sweetness of temper, his resignation under affliction, his gentle requital of deception and insult, his superiority to the world, his composure in the prospect of dissolution, and the faith which triumphed over death and the grave. Let the affluent and the prosperous learn of him, to adorn high rank and ample fortune, by humility and condescension; and the wretched, to endure distress with fortitude and resignation. Let his faults be forgotten, and his infirmities covered; or remembered only as a reproof and admonition to ourselves. And let us be followers together of him, and of all them who "through faith and patience inherit the promises."

History of Jacob.

LECTURE V.

And the boys grew ; and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field : and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison ; but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage : and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint : therefore his name was called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birth-right. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die : and what profit shall this birth-right do to me ? And Jacob said, Sware to me this day : and he swore unto him : and he sold his birth-right unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles, and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way : thus Esau despised his birth-right.... GEN. xxv. 27...34.

THE importance of the personages, to whose acquaintance we are introduced in the sacred pages, is to be estimated, not by circumstances which catch and engage the superficial and the vain, and which constitute what is called greatness among men. No ; “ God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.” When great men are to be sought for, the mind that is governed by worldly ideas

rushes straight to the palaces of kings, or enters into the cabinet where statesmen assemble, or attends the footsteps of the warrior over the ensanguined field. But reason and religion conduct us in far different paths, and present us with far different objects. They discover to us, many a time, true greatness under the obscure roof of a cottage, or the spreading branches of a great tree. They exhibit dignity and consequence, affixed, not to the royal sceptre, but to the shepherd's crook; and feelingly teach us, that what is highly prized among men, is of little estimation in the sight of God.

The person on whose history we are now entering, is the third in order and succession of the illustrious three, who are distinguished in scripture as the covenant friends of God, and the ensamples of all them who in after ages should believe. "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Thus it is spoken of the men, whom the King of kings delighteth to honor. And what is rank and title, among men, compared to this?

Jacob was, by the ordinance of Heaven, destined to pre-eminence and superiority before he was born.... And he who could have raised him to the rights of primogeniture, in the ordinary course of nature, was pleased, such is divine sovereignty, to bestow this advantage upon him, by the concurrence of various providential events. That men may adore, and submit to the God "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will."

The struggle between the twin brothers began early, and lasted long. With more than ordinary reasons for loving each other, the ill-judged partialities of parental affection, and the lust of precedency and power, inflame them to uncommon rancor and animosity. The strife, which was at first accidental, or instinctive, becomes at length wilful and deliberate. And the name of Jacob, imposed in the beginning, from the slight

incident of his laying hold with his hand of his brother's heel, comes in process of time to be a mark of his character, and a record of his conduct. Events unimportant, incidental, contingent, in the eyes of men, are often matters of deep design, of mighty and lasting consequence with God. The natural disposition of the two brothers early discovered itself. Esau betakes himself to the active and laborious sports of the field. Jacob, formed for social and domestic life, abides at home in the tents, attending to family affairs, cultivating filial affections, and living in the exercise of filial duties. The Chaldee Paraphrast gives a translation of the words of Moses, rendered in our version, "dwelling in tents," considerably different in sense, "He was a minister in the house of teaching," understanding by the word *tents* or *tabernacles*, the place appointed for divine worship.

The first action of Jacob's life, which we find recorded by the sacred historian, is by no means calculated to give us a favorable impression of his heart. The young men were now in their twenty-fifth year. The elder entirely devoted to his favorite pursuit: the younger, ever on the watch to obtain that by art or industry which nature had taken from him. It happened on a certain day, that Jacob had employed himself in preparing a plain dish of pottage of lentiles, for his own entertainment. And here, let not the fastidious critic, who measures every thing by modern manners and maxims, consider this as an employment beneath the dignity of Isaac's son. It is, in truth, one of a multitude of instances, of the beautiful simplicity of ancient customs. The greatest heroes, and proudest princes, whom Homer has exhibited, are frequently found engaged in similar occupations. Esau, returning from the field, and having been either unsuccessful in hunting, or being too impatient to delay the gratification of his appetite till his venison were prepared, entreats his brother to give him a share of the provi-

sion which he had made for himself. Jacob, taking advantage of his hunger and eagerness, proposes, as an equivalent for his pottage, no less a price than the favorite object of all his ambition and desire, the birth-right. Unconscious or regardless of its value, and in a haste to satisfy the craving of the moment, he inconsiderately parts with that which nature had given him in vain, and which a father's fondness strove to secure for him; but which a conduct so "profane" and precipitate, proved him altogether unworthy of possessing.

But, was the conduct of Jacob pure and praiseworthy in this transaction? It cannot be affirmed. Providence had indeed ordained him to the blessing which he so ardently coveted; but Providence neither appoints nor approves of crooked and indirect paths to the ends which it has proposed. Weak and erring men may perhaps not be displeased, to have part of their work taken off from their hands; but if we presume to take the whole or any part of the work of God upon ourselves, it is both with sin and with danger. "His counsel indeed shall stand," but the offender shall pay the price of his rashness. It is a dreadful thing to get into a course and habit of acting amiss. When once we have got a favorite object in view, how every thing is made to bend to it! The birth-right, the birth-right was the darling object of Jacob's fondest wishes; and, as if the decree and the prediction of Heaven had not been security sufficient for the attainment of it, he seeks to confirm it to himself by a deed of sale with his brother, and the interposition of a solemn oath; and finally, is eager to have the bargain ratified by the solemn benediction of his father's prophetic lips. "He that believeth shall not make haste." But, alas! I see in Jacob an earnestness to obtain his end, that borders on diffidence and suspicion; and indeed, whom or what can that man trust, who has not confidence in his Maker? The vile scene of imposition

and fraud practised upon his blind and aged parent, as forming an essential article of Jacob's history, rises again to view. I like his taking advantage of his father's blindness still less than his attempt to carry a favorite point, by taking advantage of his brother's hunger and impetuosity. The latter was but the skill and address of an open adversary; the former was the cunning and deceit of a crafty and undutiful child. Observe how cautiously, and fearfully, and slow, the footsteps of the deceitful must proceed. The moment that the conscience swerves from truth and rectitude, the man becomes jealous, and anxious, and timid. But integrity advances with firmness and intrepidity. "And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing," Gen. xxvii. 11, 12.

But, what could make Rebekah and her favorite son so anxious to attain this superiority? What was there in the birth-right, to make it thus fondly coveted, and unremittingly pursued? The answer to these questions will at least plead some excuse for their zeal, if not wholly do away the guilt of their falsehood. First...The gift of prophecy was known to reside in the patriarch Isaac; and the parental benediction, in certain circumstances, was considered as having the force of a prediction. Secondly...Pre-eminency and power over the rest of the family in patriarchal times, were affixed to priority of birth; thus God speaks to Cain concerning Abel, "Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Thirdly...A double portion of the paternal inheritance appertained to the first born. And this perhaps explains the meaning of Elisha's request at the rapture of Elijah, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me:" not as if he meant to ask, or expect, twice so much as Elijah had, but the share of an elder brother. Fourthly...The honor of priest-

hood resided then, and for many years after, in the first born, and was justly considered as the first of privileges: Finally...The promise of the Messiah, "the first born among many brethren," was entailed upon the eldest son: and this was justly understood to confer a dignity and lustre infinitely superior to all temporal blessings. The guilt of Esau consisted in undervaluing and despising an advantage so distinguished. The offence of Jacob's fraud is greatly extenuated, if not wholly extinguished, in the nobility and worth of the prize for which he contended. Behold him then, retired from the presence of his deluded father, who had prescience sufficient to discern, at the distance of ages, the future fortunes of his family, without sagacity capable of discerning the imposture, which was, at that very instant, practising upon his credulity and want of sight. Behold Jacob retired, in possession indeed of the blessing, but haunted with the terrors which eternally pursue the man, who is conscious to himself, that he has acted wrong. He has gained the birth-right, but he has lost a brother. He has by subtilty stolen away the prophetic benediction, but he has raised up against himself an implacable foe. The possession of nothing yields that satisfaction which we promised ourselves in it beforehand; and conscience will not permit us to enjoy peaceably that which we have acquired unworthily. His father's blessing announced every kind and degree of prosperity, "the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, the servitude of nations and people, lordship over his brethren." But he is instantly constrained to become an exile and a wanderer from his father's house. And when he himself comes to make the estimate of his own life, in the close of it,...what is the amount? "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." His elder brother is declared his inferior, but he has by much the stronger arm of the two. And, while he is practising deceit upon his nearest relations in Canaan, Providence is silently preparing the

means of requiting him in Padan-aram, in the person of one already a near relation, and about to be much more closely allied to him, Laban the Syrian, a man much more cunning and selfish, and much less scrupulous than himself. As this is a character which the inspired painter has delineated with peculiar felicity and skill, it may now be necessary to look back for a few moments, and observe the first opening of Laban's spirit and temper, as they appear on the face of the sacred drama.

Abraham's servant being arrived at Mesopotamia, in search of a wife for Isaac, his young master, providentially conducted, lights on Rebekah, the sister of this Laban, by the well of water. Having briefly unfolded his commission, and made her a present suitable to his master's rank and affluence, she runs home to acquaint her relations of the adventure. Laban, instantly attracted by the sight of the gold, and by the account he had heard, of the state in which Abraham's servant travelled, very prudently concludes, that such a connexion might be improved to very great advantage. Hence that profusion of civility and kindness to an entire stranger, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house, and room for the camels, Gen. xxiv. 53." Did we not afterward discover him to be grovelling, greedy and mercenary, this might have passed for the language of kindness and hospitality. But when the whole is taken in connexion, we see a man from first to last invariably attached to his own interest, employing his very daughters as mere instruments of commerce, and prizing nothing, but in proportion as it ministered to his own advantage.

Of all the passions of our nature, there is none so steady, uniform and consistent as this is. Avarice never tires by exercise, never loses sight of its object; it gathers strength by gratification, grows vigorous by old age, and inflames the heart, when the vital fluid can

hardly force a passage through it. — What a feast for such a spirit, the concluding scene of the marriage treaty for Rebekah! “The servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things,” Gen. xxiv. 53. Such was the man with whom Jacob was now destined to spend a very considerable part of his life; and whose treatment of him, in the eyes of the severest judge, may pass as sufficient punishment for the little fallacies which he had practised in his father’s house.

Behold then, in the covenant head and representative of the holy family, “a Syrian ready to perish,” leaving the paternal roof without an attendant, without a guide, without a companion; more forlorn than his grandfather Abraham himself. For the bitterness of *his* exile was alleviated by the company and conversation of his beloved Sarah; whereas, the affliction of Jacob’s banishment was greatly increased, by the consciousness that he had brought it upon himself; and from the bitter necessity of enduring its wearisome days and nights by himself alone. What could have supported a man in such circumstances? A man, who was attached to domestic life; a plain man, “abiding in tents;” a man who had fondly flattered himself with the hope of power and tranquillity; who had dreamed of superiority over his brother, but had not attained unto it? I can think of but one thing, that could have rendered his lot supportable, as it then stood. Jacob, after all, was a good man. His conduct was not indeed pure and perfect, but his heart was right with God. He had once and again been mistaken in the means which he had employed, but he had all along aimed at the noblest and most important end: and, from the chagrin and disappointment which ever attended the plans of his own devising, he had always a sure and a satisfying refuge, in the wisdom and mercy of God. In truth, he had not attained the knowledge

of true, practical, vital religion, in the house of even his father Isaac, in Lehai-roi : but he learns it in silence and in solitude, in the plains of Luz. It is a good thing for a young man to feel his own weight, "to bear the yoke in his youth." At ease, and in a multitude we forget God...in retirement and danger, we learn and feel our dependence, and call to remembrance a long-forgotten God.

This is also a proper stage for resting on our way. We cannot lead our traveller from home, till we have found for him a place where to lodge. We cannot bear to see him from under the protection of the paternal wing, till we are secure that he has got another protector and friend, that "friend who sticketh closer than a brother."

Conformity to the plan we have proposed, and regard to the analogy of scripture, would now lead us to exhibit the patriarch Jacob, as a type of the Messiah, to whom patriarchs and "prophets all gave witness," and who was specially prefigured by the son of Isaac. But his story is not yet sufficiently advanced, to afford a foundation broad and solid enough to support a comparison, such as a more extended view of the subject will furnish, and such as might more rationally conduce to the ends of edification. We deem it of more importance, at this period, to submit to your consideration a few general observations, respecting typical representation, and the proper use to be made of it.

First. In order to constitute a proper type, it is by no means necessary, that the person who answers this important purpose should possess perfect moral qualities. Were this requisite, who ever was worthy to represent the son of God, the holy Jesus, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips?" But, as "the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity," though the law gives no countenance to error or infirmity; so Providence, "at sundry times and in

divers manners," raised up men to prefigure to their contemporaries an immaculate Saviour, who were themselves "compassed with infirmity, of like passions with others," and, whose faults are but the more conspicuous, from the honorable station and employment to which they were called. It will follow,

Secondly, That the comparison is not to be stated and pursued through every particular incident of the life, and every feature of the personal character of the person who is the type. Men of very different characters, and in very different situations, typified the Saviour of the world. To suppose every article of their history, condition and character to be typical and prophetic, would therefore, in many instances, involve absurdity and contradiction. Sampson, David, and many others who might be mentioned, were eminent types of Christ; but then the resemblance holds only in certain great leading circumstances: the miraculous conception, for example, the Nazaritic sanctity, the invincible strength, the solitary, victorious achievements, the triumphant death of the former; the divine appointment and elevation, the royal dignity, the providential success of the latter, the subduing all the church's enemies; these and the like, are the typical circumstances. But to pursue the resemblance throughout, to make every action of Sampson's or of David's life typical of something correspondent in the Messiah, would lead far beyond absurdity; it would issue in impiety and blasphemy.

Thirdly. Scripture, by direct application, or by fair, unstrained analogy, ought therefore to lead, to regulate and to correct all our inquiries of this sort. We shall else be in danger of rearing a baseless flimsy structure in the clouds, which can afford neither shelter nor rest. When pleasant amusement alone is the object, invention and fancy may be allowed their full exertion. But when we aim at religious instruction, we must be contented to take the spirit of God for our

guide. And here too, men ought to be jealous and watchful over their own spirits; lest, in endeavoring to establish a favorite system, and to justify or support pre-conceived opinions, they give to their own wild imaginations the solidity and weight of divine truth, and departing from the simplicity of the gospel, presume to stamp the poor trash of their own brain with the sacred impress of God. It has often, and with too much justice, been lamented, that many apply to the Bible for a justification of the opinions which they have already formed, and which they are determined, at all risks, to maintain; and not to receive the information which they need, and to rectify the prejudices under which they labor.

Finally. To determine the nature and propriety of typical representation, it is of importance to inquire, Whether or not the resemblance, which we mean to pursue, has a tendency to promote some moral, practical pious purpose? Does it inspire reverence, wonder, gratitude, love to God; dependence upon, and trust in him? Does it engage us to study, to search, to love the scriptures? Does it impress on the heart a sense of our own weakness, ignorance and guilt; and, of the deference, respect and good will which we owe to others? Or, is it made a ministering servant to vanity and self-conceit? Leads it our attention from practice to speculation, to theory from real life? Does it place the essentials of religion in modes of opinion and forms of worship; and, neglecting the heart, content itself with playing about and tickling the imagination? The answer to these questions will decide the point. By its fruit, the tree is known.

Should all or any of these remarks seem to bear hard on any of the comparisons which we have endeavored to establish, we are disposed cheerfully to relinquish the most favorite analogy, rather than seem, in the slightest degree, to represent, disguise or prevent the truth. We mean not to wrest scripture to our

purpose : but would make our purpose with reverence bend to that sacred authority. We would not with sacrilegious hands force out of the bible, by violence and art, a scanty and unnatural crop ; but by diligent cultivation and assiduous care, draw from it a plentiful harvest of what the soil naturally produces. And, we now return from this digression, to pursue the history of Jacob.

History of Jacob.

LECTURE VI.

And Isaac sent away Jacob, and he went to Padan-aram, unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went towards Haran.... GEN. xxviii. 5, 10.

AT what stage, or in what condition of human life, can a man say, Now my heart is at rest, now my wishes are accomplished, now my happiness is complete? By what unaccountably untoward circumstances is the comfort of the worthiest, best ordered, most prosperous families, oft-times marred and destroyed! Not through vice only do we suffer, but up to some piece of imprudence or inadvertency; up to some trifling infirmity in our nature, or some petty fault in our conduct, our greatest calamities may easily be traced. One man has made his fortune, as it is called, but he has impaired his health in the acquisition of it, or made shipwreck of a good conscience. Another inherits a fine estate; but goes childless. There we behold a numerous and promising family of children; but the wretched parents have hardly bread to give them: and here, both progeny and plenty; but hatred, and jealousy and strife, banish tranquillity and ease. The heart of this child is corrupted through indulgence; the spirit of that one is broken by severity.

Isaac is wealthy, but his eyes are dim that he cannot see. God has given him two sons at once, but they are the torment of his life. He is fondly partial to Esau; and Esau does every thing in his power to mortify and disoblige his kind and indulgent father. He is unwittingly drawn in to bless Jacob; and, the very next breath, feels himself constrained to pronounce sentence of dismissal and banishment upon him. "The whole ordering of the lot is of the Lord," but "men themselves cast it into the lap." Providence only brings that out, which, with our own hands, we first put in.

Jacob has by skill and address pushed himself into the birth-right and by subtilty insinuated himself into the blessing. And how do they sit upon him? Very uneasily indeed. His father's house is no longer a home for him. Grasping at more than his right, he loses what he already had. Eagerly hastening to preferment, without waiting for Providence, he puts himself just so much further back. And, seeking rule and pre-eminence in his father's family, he finds servitude and severity in the house of a stranger. If men will carve for themselves, they must not charge the consequence of their rashness and presumption upon God.

Behold the pilgrim then, on his way, pensive and solitary; without so much as a favorite, faithful dog, to accompany and to cheer his wanderings. His whole inheritance, the staff in his hand. Now, for the first time, he knows the heart of a stranger. Now he feels the bitter change from affluence to want, from society to solitude, from security and protection to anxiety and danger. More forlorn than Adam when expelled from paradise, than Abraham when exiled from his father's house, he has no gentle mate to participate and to soothe his anxieties and cares.

The scripture assigns no reason, why Isaac's heir, and Rebekah's favorite son, the hope of a powerful and

wealthy family, was dismissed with such slender provision, wholly unattended, and unprotected too, upon a journey, according to the best calculations, of about one hundred and fifty leagues, or four hundred and fifty miles, through a country in many places desert and savage, and in others no less dangerous, from the hostile tribes which inhabited and ranged through it. But the reason, though not directly assigned, is plainly hinted at in the sixth verse of this chapter, which informs us that Esau knew of this journey, as well as of the cause and intention of it. Jacob therefore may be supposed to have stolen away secretly, and without any retinue, and to have shunned the beaten and frequented path to Padan-aram, in order to elude the vigilance and resentment of his brother, who, he had reason to apprehend, would pursue him to take away his life. And besides this, we may justly consider both the errand on which he was sent, to take a wife from an allied and pious family, to propagate a holy and chosen seed; and the homely, solitary style of his travelling, as a very illustrious instance of faith in God, and obedience to his will, and that not in Jacob himself only, but in his parents also, who could thus trust the sole prop of their family hopes, and of the promise, to dangers so great and distresses so certain, with no security but what arose from the truth, mercy and faithfulness of God.

The uneasy reflections arising from solitude, and inspired by a gradual removal from the scenes of his youthful and happy days, must have been greatly embittered to Jacob, by the consciousness of his having brought all this upon himself; by the keenness of disappointment, in the very moment when the spirits were wound up to the highest tone through success; and by total darkness and uncertainty with respect to his future fortunes. However, the cheerfulness of light, the pleasing change and variety of natural objects as he journeyed on, the ardor and confidence of youthful

blood and spirits, carry him with confidence and joy through the day. But ah! what is to become of him now that the sun declines, and the shadows of the evening begin to lengthen? Overtaken at once by hunger and fatigue, and darkness and apprehension, where shall he seek shelter, how find repose? Happily calamity strengthens that soul which it is unable to subdue. The mind forced back upon itself, finds in itself resources which it new not of before, and the man who has learned to seek relief in religion, knows where to fly in every time of need. The strong hand of necessity is upon our patriarch; submit he must, and therefore he submits with alacrity.

And now behold the heir of Abraham and of Isaac, without a place where to lay his head; that head which maternal tenderness had taken pleasure to pillow so softly, and to watch so affectionately. "He lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep," Gen xxviii. 11.

..... "Sweet are the uses of adversity;
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

Jacob, removed from his earthly parents, is but the nearer to his heavenly father; a stranger in the waste howling wilderness, he is at home with God. Cares perplex his waking thoughts, but angels in bands lull his perturbed breast to rest; they guard, and instruct, and bless his slumbering moments. Who does not pity Jacob, as the evening shades gather and close around his head? Who does not envy his felicity when the morning lights appear, and with it, the recollection of a night passed in communion with God? Jacob sleeps, but his heart wakes. What had been most upon his mind through the day, continues to occupy and to impress his thoughts after his eyes are closed. Wonderful, awful, pleasing power of God! which in the city

and in the field, at home and abroad, awake and asleep, moves, directs, governs our bodies and our spirits as it will. What lofty heights is the mind of man capable of attaining! What wonders of nature and of grace is the great God capable of unfolding to it, when delivered from the grossness of this clay tabernacle, or when joined to a spiritual body; when we consider the astonishing flights it is even now capable of taking, when the duller senses are laid to rest, and their influence suspended!

Dreams are generally frivolous, meaningless, or absurd. But here is a dream worth repeating, worth recording; whether we attend to what was seen or what was said. What was *seen*? “Behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” Gen. xxviii. 12. The circumstances of the dreamer, partly interpret the vision. Jacob’s holy desires, his faith and his prayers, had ascended, as on angels’ wings, up to the throne of God. Protection, and favor, and comfort descend from the eternal throne, as through the ministration of angels, on Jacob’s head. The top of the ladder reacheth unto heaven, but the Lord on high is *above* it. It standeth upon the earth, but the eye of Jehovah is at its foundation, and his almighty arm giveth it stability. The cherubim and the seraphim are not above his control and authority; a poor benighted pilgrim is not beneath his notice.

Thus, the great plan of Divine Providence, upholding all things, observing all things, subduing all things to his will, was feelingly conveyed to Jacob’s mind in this vision of the night. And in it, the world is instructed, that however great the distance between heaven and earth, however inaccessible that bright abode may be to flesh and blood, to celestial spirits it is but a few steps of a ladder; before an omnipresent God intervening space is swallowed up and lost; and, condescending mercy, sovereign grace keep that communica-

sion ever open which the malice of hell and the apostacy of man, had well nigh interrupted forever.

But I should have given you a very imperfect interpretation of this mysterious dream, did I stop short in it, as merely a symbolical representation of the plan of Providence. For, in looking into another part of the sacred record, I find the same expressions and ideas, applied to a subject of peculiar concernment to the christian world. Christ, when entering on the discharge of his public ministry, having given Nathaniel a personal and convincing proof of his divine knowledge, adds, "Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man," John. i. 51. Here then, is the true mystery of the ladder which unites heaven and earth. The Son of Man first descending to assume our nature, to achieve in it the work of man's redemption; and then, having finished the work given him to do, ascending triumphantly, in glorified humanity, up to heaven again. And, behold here too, "the Lord standing above." The plan of salvation, as of Providence, is the design of him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will." "Who in Christ Jesus hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence," and who "in bringing many sons unto glory, hath made the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10.

And who are they that ascend and descend along this mysterious scale? "He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire," Heb. i. 7. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation?" Ver. 14.

If what by Jacob was *seen* in vision at Bethel be worthy our attention, no less memorable and important are the things which he *heard*. It was much to hear a repetition of the covenant of God with Abraham, and Isaac, his fathers, ratified and confirmed to

himself. It was much to hear the blessing lately pronounced over him by the prophetic lips of his earthly parent, conveyed to his ear by a voice infinitely more sacred. It was much to hear that the land which he then occupied with his weary limbs, as a wayfaring man who continueth but for a night, should afterwards be given to him and to his seed for a possession. It was much to hear, from the mouth of God himself, the blessed assurance of protection through his journey, of success in his undertaking, and of a safe return to his native home. It was much to hear of a posterity, innumerable as the sand upon the sea shore, and spreading to the four winds of heaven. But the essence of all these promises, the joy of all this joy, was to hear the renewed, the reiterated promise of a seed descending from him, in whom "all the families of the earth should be blessed." What could Jacob ask? What had God to bestow, more than this?

Here then the vision ends, and Jacob awakes. After the obvious, natural, and, we trust, scriptural view, which we have attempted to give you of the subject, I shall not use your patience so ungratefully as to trespass upon it by going into a detail of the wild, waking dreams of paraphrasts, and Rabbins, and pretended interpreters, on this passage of the sacred history. It is of more importance to attend to our patriarch, restored, with the morning light, to the perfect use of his rational faculties, and making use of the admonitions and consolations of the night season, as a help to piety, and a spur to duty through the day. There was something so singular, both in the subject and external circumstances of his dream, that he immediately concluded, and justly, that it was from heaven. And is it not strange, that he who felt no horror at the thought of laying himself down to sleep in a desert place, under the cloud of night, and alone, is filled with a holy dread when morning arose, at the thought of being surrounded with God. "And he was afraid, and

said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God: and this is the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 17. And, if the visits of the Almighty, as a father and a friend, be thus awful even to good men, what must be the visitations of his wrath to the ungodly and the sinner?

Jacob arose immediately, and erects a monument of such simple materials as the place afforded, to the memory of this heavenly vision, which he was desirous thus to impress forever on his heart. The difference of the expression in the eleventh verse, "he took of the *stones* of the place, and put them for his pillows," and in the eighteenth, "he took the *stone* that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it," Gen. xxviii. 18, has given occasion to one of the Jewish Rabbins to attempt a reconciliation by a fiction of his own brain. Jacob he says, having chosen out just three *stones* over night, to support his head, found them all joined into one the next morning; which he pretended to allege, was a signification of the strict and solid union which subsisted between God and Jacob. And some later interpreters, though aided by the superior light of the gospel dispensation, have been simple enough to adopt this fable, and to explain it, some, of the ineffable union of the three persons who are the object of our worship; others, of the conjunction of the soul, body and deity in the person of Jesus Christ.

It appears that Jacob intended simply to record, in such characters as his situation afforded, that night's important transaction. He sets up the stone, or stones, upon which his head had reposed when visited with the visions of the Almighty, in the form of a rustic pillar, and solemnly anoints, and thereby consecrates it, to the honor of God, by the name of Bethel, that is, "the house of God;" and over it, thus dedicated, he afresh and voluntarily enters into solemn covenant with God, obliging himself by a sacred vow, to acknowledge

and worship none but him ; committing himself with filial confidence to the protection of his gracious providence ; trusting the time and manner of his return to the care of infinite wisdom ; promising ever to consider this monumental pillar as an altar devoted to the service of God ; and binding himself, by an explicit declaration, to devote to pious uses the tenth part of whatever he should through the divine blessing acquire. By the way, the oil wherewith he consecrated his pillar was undoubtedly part of the slender provision made for his journey ; and apparently a little bread and oil was all he could possibly carry with him. But of that little he cheerfully spares a portion for the purpose of religion ; for the possession of a truly pious soul is small indeed, if it bestow nothing when charity, mercy or devotion give the call.

With what alacrity does he now prosecute his journey ! What a change in his condition produced in one short night ! When “ the heart is established by grace,” difficult things become easy ; the valley is exalted, and the hill laid low ; the crooked becomes straight, and the rough places plain.” Nothing that the sacred historian deemed worth recording, occurred during the remainder of this pligrimage. Jacob at length arrived “ in the land of the people of the east.” And now, no doubt, he flatters himself that all his troubles and mortifications are at an end. His grandfather’s servant El-eazer, had been happy enough to finish a marriage treaty for his master’s son in a few hours conversation ; surely then the heir of the same family may be equally successful when making personal application for himself. Ah, blind to futurity ! Strange, unaccountable difference in the divine conduct towards different persons ! Jacob must earn that by long fourteen years servitude, which Abraham’s servant was so successful as to accomplish in the pronouncing of almost as many words.

But here we must make another pause, and leave

the next sweet scene of Jacob's life, and the sequel of it, to another Lecture. But we must no longer defer, the beginning at least, of that parallel which is one object among others, if not the chief, in these exercises.

Jacob was destined of Providence to power and precedency before he was born. Jesus is declared the son of God, and the heir of all things, by the angel who announced his miraculous conception and birth to his virgin mother. Jacob, the last in order of nature, but first in the election of grace, prefigures him, who, appearing in the end of the world, is nevertheless "the first-born among many brethren." Jacob hated and persecuted of his brother, is an obvious type of him who was to come, "despised and rejected of men;" crucified and slain by the impious and unnatural hands of those who were his bone and his flesh. Jacob, dismissed with blessings by his father from Beer-sheba, points out to us Jesus leaving heaven's glory, and the bosom of the Father, in compliance with the eternal decree, to become a wanderer in our world; "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The object of Jacob's journey and of Christ's is one and the same. Jacob, to procure for himself a believing spouse, to become the fruitful mother of an elect off-spring; Jesus to purchase for himself, at the price of his own blood, "the church, which is his body, to espouse it to himself as a chaste bride," united to him in everlasting bands of interest and affection. Jacob, deserted and solitary in the plain of Bethel, is a shadow of Christ forsaken of all in the wilderness of this world, yet not "alone, but his heavenly Father always with him." The vision of the ladder has already spoken for itself. What then remains but to add, Jacob's covenant, consecration and vow are so many different representations of Christ's covenant of redemption; his unction by the spirit to the execution of his high office; and not the tithe, but the whole of his vast and glorious acquisition rendered unto God even the Father: when the king-

dom is finally delivered up to "him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, that God may be all in all."

I add no more but my most fervent prayers to Almighty God... That by night and by day, alone and in society, when you sleep and when you wake, in prosperity and in adversity, you may be still with God; and that "the Almighty may be your refuge, the Most High your habitation," and "underneath" and around you "the everlasting arms." Amen.

History of Jacob.



LECTURE VII.

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.... GEN. XXIX. 20.

THE great author of our nature has wisely and wonderfully adapted the various objects which successfully solicit our attention and engage our pursuit, to the different periods of our life, the different and successive affections of our heart, the different stations which we have to occupy, and the duties which we are bound to perform. Human life, in so far as nature predominates over it, does not consist of violent and sudden transitions, but of calm, gentle, imperceptible changes: like the gradual progress of the day, from the morning dawn to meridian splendor; and thence gradually back again to the glimmering twilight of the evening, and the shades of night. We emerge not at once from infancy into manhood; we sink not in a moment from manhood into old age. We grow, and we decline, without perceiving any alteration. Betwixt the giddiness and inconsideration of childhood, and the serious cares and employments of mature age, there is a middle and an important stage of life, which connects the two. And there is a passion happily suited to it, which contains and unites the spirit of both; a passion which blends the vivacity and impetuosity of the boy with the gravity and thoughtfulness of the man: that noble, ge-

nerous passion, which the great God has implanted in our nature, to attract, unite and bless mankind; and which, therefore, the pen of inspiration has not disdained, in its own inimitable manner, to describe. It was this passion which speedily compensated to Jacob the loss of his father's house and the pains of a tedious journey; which sweetened and shortened seven long years of hard and mortifying servitude; but which, at the same time, anticipated both the cares and the delights of future life.

Jacob, cheered and supported by the recollection of his vision at Bethel, and animated with the hope of a happy meeting with his friends and relations at Padan-aram, goes on his way rejoicing; and, guided, protected and sustained by an indulgent Providence, he arrives in safety. It was that simple, innocent and happy age of the world, when the chief occupations and enjoyments of human nature were seen in the shepherd's life; while as yet, gold had not settled the price of every other production of the natural world, nor determined the importance of all intellectual endowments; while as yet, commerce had not opened her ten thousand channels of luxury, to enervate, corrupt and destroy mankind. His conversation with the shepherds of Haran, Gen. xxix. 1...8, must always afford exquisite delight to those, whose taste, undebauched by the frippery of modern manners, and the affectation of ceremony and compliment, can relish the honest simplicity of nature, and the genuine expression of unaffected, unsophisticated kindness and benevolence. From them he has the pleasure of hearing that his kinsman Laban lived in the neighborhood, and was in health; and that his daughter Rachel was every moment expected to come to the watering-place, with her father's flock. While they are yet speaking, Rachel, beautiful as the opening spring, and innocent as the lambs she tended, draws nigh with her fleecy charge. With what admirable propriety and skill do the holy scriptures

represent the most distinguished, exalted and amiable female characters, engaged in virtuous, humble, useful employments! Sarah, baking cakes upon the hearth, for the entertainment of her husband's guests; Rebekah, drawing water for the daily use of her brother's family, and the refreshment of the weary traveller; and Rachel, feeding her father's sheep. O that ye knew, my fair friends, wherein your true dignity, value and importance consisted! They consist in being what God from the beginning intended you to be, "an help meet for man;" not the mere instrument of his pleasure, nor the silly idol of his adoration.

Jacob, with the ardor natural to a manly spirit, and the zeal of an affectionate relation, runs up to salute and assist his fair kinswoman. Little offices of civility are the natural expression of a good and honest heart; they often suggest the first sentiments of love, both to those who confer, and to those who receive them; and they keep love alive after it is kindled. The meeting of that day, and Jacob's natural, easy, officious gallantry, in relieving Rachel, on their very first rencounter; of the heaviest part of her pastoral task, inspired, I doubt not, emotions very different from those which the mere force of blood produces; and were, I am sure, recollected by both, with inexpressible satisfaction, many a time afterward. And little do I know of the female heart, if it would not much rather be wooed with the attentions and assiduities of an agreeable man, than by the prudent and disgusting formalities of settlements and deeds and reversions. Rebekah was courted by proxy, with presents and promises; Rachel, by her destined husband in person, with the looks, and the language, and the service of love. Betwixt the union of Isaac and Rebekah, that match of interest and prudence, no obstacle, except the trifling distance of place, interposed; but many difficulties occurred to retard, to prevent and to mar the union of Jacob and Rachel, founded in esteem, and prompted

by affection. They become insensibly attached to each other. For love does not give the first warning of his approach to the parties themselves. But it did not long escape the penetrating, selfish eye of the crafty father and uncle; who, from the moment he observes this growing passion in his nephew and daughter, casts about how best to convert it to his own advantage.

Jacob had frankly told him his whole situation, and laid open all his heart. He informed him, that he had indeed purchased the birth-right, and obtained the prophetic blessing; but that through fear of his brother he had been constrained to flee from home, and to seek protection in Syria. This was, by no means, a situation likely to engage the attention and to procure the kindness of a worldly mind. An empty, nominal birth-right, and a blessing which promised only distant wealth, were very slender possessions, in the eye of covetous Laban. He could not help comparing the splendid retinue of Eleazer, seeking a wife for his master's son, with the simple appearance of Jacob come a courting to his family, with only a staff in his hand; and he finds it greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. But it is the interest of avarice to put on at least the appearance of that justice which it secretly dreads and hates, if not of that generosity which it despises. Jacob had, unsolicited, and without a stipulation, hitherto rendered Laban his best services for nothing. Indeed he was thinking of but one thing in the world, and that was, how to render himself agreeable to his amiable cousin. When, therefore, Laban, who must clearly have foreseen the answer, under an affected regard to the interest of his relation, inquires into and proposes the condition of his future services, he without hesitation mentions a marriage with his younger daughter. And, having no marriage portion to give the father, as the custom of the times and of the country required, he offers, as an equivalent, seven years

personal servitude and labor. What is loss of ease, loss of liberty, loss of life, to love? When I behold Jacob, at such a price, ready and happy to purchase the object of his affection, whether shall I pity or condemn the cold, timid, selfish hearts of the young men of the present generation, who persist in the neglect of nature's clearest, plainest law, from, I know not what, pretended reasons of caution and wisdom, which would feign pass for virtue; but are in reality the offspring of pride and luxury, pusillanimity and self-love.

The proposal is no sooner made than accepted. And Laban has the satisfaction of at once betrothing his daughter to wealthy Isaac's son and heir, and of securing for himself the present emolument of Jacob's labor, care and fidelity for seven good years. Thus, the rights of humanity, the laws of hospitality, and the ties of blood, are all made basely to truckle to the most sordid and detestible of all human passions. And behold the free-born grandson of Abraham sinks into abject servitude, and, the worst of all servitude, subjection to a near relation.

But as every blessing of life has its corresponding inconvenience, so every evil has its antidote. Jacob is contented and happy, while his pains and fatigue are alleviated by the conversation of his beloved Rachel; and, what is it to him, that the stern, discontented father frowns and chides, so long as the beautiful daughter receives him with complacency and smiles? He bears with patience and cheerfulness the ardor of the meridian sun, and the cold chilling damps of the evening, in the hope of that blest hour, when tender sympathy shall soothe his distresses, and every uneasiness shall be lulled to rest, in the bosom of love. In this sweet commerce, the years of slavery glide imperceptibly away; and, what absence would have rendered insupportably long, the presence of the beloved object has shortened into the appearance of a few days. Such is the inconceivable charm of virtuous love. "Ja-

cob served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her," Gen. xxix. 20.

Jacob, having faithfully fulfilled his part of the covenant, now calls on Laban to fulfil what was incumbent upon him. The better to conceal the fraud which he was meditating, he feigns compliance; and believing Jacob is amused with all the usual apparatus of a marriage feast. In conformity to the custom of those eastern nations, the bride was conducted to the bed of her husband, with silence, in darkness, and covered from head to foot with a veil; circumstances, all of them favorable to the wicked, selfish plan, which Laban had formed, to detain his son-in-law longer in his service. Leah is accordingly substituted in room of her sister. And he who by subtilty and falsehood stole away the blessing intended for his brother, is punished for his deceit, by finding a Leah where he expected a Rachel. He who availed himself of an undue advantage to arrive at the right of the first-born, has undue advantages taken of him in having the first-born put in the place of the younger. He, who could practise upon a father's blindness, though to obtain a laudable end, is in his turn practised upon by a father, employing the cover of night to accomplish a very unwarrantable purpose. Laban was base, treacherous and wicked; but Heaven is wise, and holy, and just. Let the man who dares to think of doing evil in the hope that good may come, look at Jacob, and tremble. The shame, vexation and distress of such a disappointment, are more easily imagined than described. And, what are all the votaries of sinful pleasure preparing for themselves? Treasuring up shame and sorrow, when the delirium of passion is over, and the returning light of reason awakes them to reflection and remorse. They thought it "to be Rachel, but in the morning behold it was Leah."

The next day, as may well be supposed, exhibited

a scene of no pleasing kind ; expostulation, upbraiding, and reproach. Laban, as avarice seldom chooses to avow its real motives, endeavors to justify his treachery and breach of faith, by a pretended regard for the laws and manners of his country, which permitted not the younger to be given in marriage before the first-born. An honest man would have given this information when the bargain was first proposed. It was an insult, not an indemnification, to produce it now. What will not this base passion make a man do ? To deceive the unsuspecting and unwary ; to oppose the weak ; to practise upon the stranger, are among its simpler and more customary operations. 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, Satan, there be a purpose 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 and parricide in the other and the work of hell is done.

Mark how easy and flexible the conscience of a miser is. Let interest blow the gale, from whatever quarter it be, and lo, with the rapidity of thought, the understanding and conscience of the covetous wretch are veered round with it ! The man, who last night shuddered at the thought of violating a foolish and absurd fashion of the country is not ashamed, the very next morning, to propose polygamy and incest ; and to make his own children the instruments of them. Whence this strange inconsistency ? It was for his advantage to adhere to the custom of the country ; and to dispense with the laws of God and nature. What does it concern him, that disorder and distress are introduced into his daughter's family, so long as it can any how redound to his private benefit ? If another man have what may be called a weak side, avarice is quick-sighted

as the eagle to discern it, and not more penetrating to discover than dexterous to convert it to its own emolument. Unfortunately, Jacob's infirmity was clear as the sun at noon. His unextinguished, unabated passion for Rachel was well known to her rapacious father; who had, with a joy which the worldly mind alone can feel, seen his flocks multiply, and his wealth increase, under Jacob's care. Unsatisfied and insatiable, he builds upon this well-known attachment the project of a further continuation of Jacob's servitude, with all its accumulation of riches and consequence.

The proposal which avarice made without a blush, love accepted with perhaps too much precipitation. We are not framing an apology for Jacob's conduct, but delivering the features of his character, and the lines of his history, from the sacred record. But this much we may venture to affirm, that Jacob, left to himself, and to the honest workings of a heart inspired by the love of an inestimable object, would never have dreamt of a plurality of wives; much less of assuming the sister of his beloved Rachel, to be her rival in his affections. It does not appear, that the solemnization of Jacob's marriage with Rachel, was deferred till the expiration of the second term of seven years. Provided Laban got sufficient security for performance of the agreement, it was indifferent to him when the other got possession of the bride. It is probable, therefore, that he gave way immediately to Jacob's wishes; and the more so, that his business was likely to be executed with greater fidelity and zeal, by a servant and son gratified, indulged and obliged, than by one soured by disappointment, dissatisfied and irritated by unkindness and deceit. Behold then Jacob, at length, at the summit of his hopes and desires. After much delay, through many difficulties, which have strengthened, not extinguished affection, Rachel is at last his wife.

But alas, human life admits not of perfect bliss! The seeds of jealousy and strife are sown in Jacob's fa-

mily. The wife who enjoyed the largest share of the husband's affection, is doomed to sterility; the less beloved, is blessed with children. Thus, a wise and gracious Providence, by setting one thing against another, preserves the prosperous from pride and insolence, and the wretched from despair. Twenty years did Isaac and Rebekah live in wedlock without a child, though the inheritance and succession of all Abraham's wealth and prospects depended upon it; whereas the family of Jacob, a simple shepherd, earning his subsistence by the sweat of his brow, the servant of another man, is built up and increases apace. The good things of life seem, to the superficial and discontented, to be unequally divided; but there is no balance so exact as that in which all conditions and all events are weighed. The great Governor of the world does not indeed conform himself in the dispensations of his providence, to the misconceptions and prejudices of short-sighted, erring men; but he is affording ignorant, erring men, if they will but be attentive, perpetual cause to adore and admire his wisdom and justice, his mercy and faithfulness. Leah bears to Jacob, as fast as the course of nature permitted, four sons one after another; and, what is remarkable, not only is the hated wife first honored with being a mother, but with being the mother of the two tribes destined to the priesthood and to royal dignity; nay, the mother, remotely, of the chosen seed; a dignity after which every mother, since the first dawning of the promise, eagerly aspired.

The fruitfulness of her sister violently excites Rachel's envy. The partiality of Jacob to her, and all his profusion of tenderness, avail her nothing. She is unable to suppress her chagrin and mortification; and, in the bitterness of her heart, forgets both the respect which she owed her husband, and the submission she ought to have paid to the will of God. "And she said unto Jacob, Give me children or else I die," Gen. xxx. 1. How odious, how pitiable are the sentiments,

the looks and the language of passion, to the calm and dispassionate; nay, to the passionate man himself, when the fit is over, and passion has spent itself! And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead; who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" Verse 2. What! and can the anger of Jacob be kindled against his Rachel, his first his only love; to obtain whom he cheerfully served fourteen years! My fair hearers, presume not too far on the fondness of the men who love you. Be calm, be moderate, be unassuming, be reasonable, be submissive, and ye are every thing. Be arrogant, impetuous, self-sufficient, imperious, unreasonable, and ye sink into nothing. I tremble to think of the dreadful length a woman will go to gratify her own spleen, and to mortify a rival. In truth she ceases to be a female, where certain feminine points are to be carried; and the leading, distinguishing characteristics of the sex are lost and sunk in the feelings of the individual. What! the jealous, envious Rachel, who found her beloved husband had already one wife too many, to think of throwing another into his bosom! But her too happy sister and rival is to be mortified; and she cares not what pangs it cost her own heart. O my gentle friends, you are yourselves the framers of your own fortunes. Be yourselves, and I will answer for my own sex. But quit the ground on which God and nature have placed you, and you are indeed to be pitied. If I might venture to hazard an opinion, not altogether unwarranted by the history, and which I am convinced by experience to be well founded...you much oftener lose your object by over eagerness than by inattention. You may, now and then, succeed by address, or vehemence, or force; but you will succeed more certainly, and much more pleasantly with God and with man, by meekness, and gentleness, and submission.

Thus was Jacob most grievously wounded, there,

where he was most vulnerable ; most violently disturbed there, where he promised himself perfect repose. Thus, our heaviest crosses arise out of our dearest comforts ; and the pursuits of “ vanity,” issue in “ vexation of spirit.” Thus all things conspire to give full assurance to the children of men, “ that this is not their rest ;” and invite them to seek “ another country, that is an heavenly,” where “ there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain,” and “ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

History of Jacob.

LECTURE VIII.

And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives, and my children for whom I have served thee, and let me go : for thou knowest my service which I have done thee. And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry, for I have learned by experience, that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake. And he said, appoint me thy wages, and I will give it. And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. For it was little which thou hadst before I came : and it is now increased unto a multitude ; and the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming : and now, when shall I provide for mine own house also ?....GEN. xxx. 25...30.

THERE is no subject of contemplation more pleasing, more instructive, more composing to the mind, than the wisdom and goodness of the Divine Providence, in adapting and adjusting, with such consummate skill, the understanding, the dispositions, and the exertions of men, to their various and successive situations, relations, employments and fortunes. What so feeble, so helpless, so necessitous, as a newborn infant ? But its proper aliment has accompanied it into the world. Its first cry has awakened ten thou-

sand fond affections in one, who, at the hazard of her life, brought it forth, and at the hazard of her life, is ready to preserve it. What so giddy, rash, inconsiderate, as youth? But the father is proportionably thoughtful, serious and attentive. Man, of all animals, stands longest in need of support and protection; therefore, natural affection in man is more intelligent and of greater duration than in any other creature. Instinct and reason unite their force, in aid of the lengthened infancy and childhood of the human race. Parents often, and unjustly, complain, that their care and tenderness meet not with reciprocal returns of attachment and affection from their children; not considering, that this current sets continually downward, and that the love which we bear to our offspring, nature has intended they should repay, not to us, but to *their* offspring. Do our children grieve and vex us with their levity, and thoughtlessness, and folly? let us have a little patience. By and by they shall become fathers and mothers; and then shall they be cured of what now gives us so much uneasiness; and then shall they be grieved, vexed, and mortified, in their turn.

The anxieties which Jacob's dissension with his brother occasioned to their fond parents are now thickening upon his own head. In the last period of his life, we saw the honest shepherd following his simple employment with cheerfulness and joy; drinking delicious draughts of love from the approving eyes of his amiable sheperdess; and beguiling the tedious months of servitude in converse with his Rachel, and with the prospect of that bright hour, which was to crown his hopes, and to reward all his toil. But those soft moments have passed away, and vanished like a dream; their flight was not perceived; their value is understood and prized, after they are forever gone. The cares, and troubles, and apprehensions of a father now occupy his mind. Jealousy and strife disturb his repose. Why multiply elaborate arguments against the prac-

tice of polygamy? Look into the wretched disorder and discord of those families which have been built upon that unnatural system, and be assured it is not, cannot be, from Him, who loves the children of men, and all whose institutions aim at making them happy. The rival sisters, rather than not mortify each other, voluntarily mortify and degrade themselves, by raising their handmaids to a participation of their husband's bed. Envy and revenge, if they can but hurt an adversary, regard not the wounds which they inflict at home. Unhappy Jacob! my heart bleeds for him. His time, and labor, and strength, are at the disposal of a selfish, hard-hearted, insatiable father-in-law; his very person and affections are insolently settled, disposed of, and transferred at the pleasure of two jealous, wrangling sisters: while, behold a family rising and increasing upon him, without the power or means of making any provision for it. The mind of his beloved Rachel, whom he had earned at the hard price of fourteen years painful service, is soured and chagrined by the want of one blessing. The labors of the field through the day, are not relieved at night by the tenderness of sympathy and love, but embittered and aggravated by womanish altercation and strife. What could have supported him but religion?

Leah has, at various intervals, borne Jacob six sons and a daughter: and Rachel's grief and despair are at their height, when God, whose counsels move not, nor stand still, in complaisance to our desires or caprices, thinks meet to remove her sorrow and reproach; and she becomes the joyful mother of a son. What ingenious pains the silly mothers take, to perpetuate the memory of their jealous sentiments and contentions, in the names which they impose upon their children; impiously presuming to drag in Providence as a party to their quarrel; foolishly and wickedly transmitting their contemptible hatred and animosity to the disturbance and distress of their posterity; and madly sowing the

seeds of a plague, which might one day break out and consume them! O how different the jealous spirit, which at first dictated the names of the twelve heads of the tribes of Israel, from that prophetic spirit which foresaw and predicted their future characters and situations, as it breathed from the lips of their dying father; and from the mind of God, who was employing female spleen and passion, to declare his own purposes and designs.

About the time of Joseph's birth, it would appear, the term of Jacob's servitude had expired. He now therefore naturally thinks of the home which he had left so long before, and of the obligations which he lay under, to exert himself in the maintenance and provision of his numerous family. He therefore modestly applies to Laban for his dismissal. That greedy kinsman, well aware of the advantages which had accrued to him from Jacob's diligence, fidelity and zeal, expresses much regret on hearing this proposal. But it is not regret at the thought of parting with his daughters and grandchildren: it is not the tender concern of bidding a long farewell to a near relation and faithful servant. No, it is regret at losing an instrument of gain: it is the sorrow of a man who loves only himself.

Hitherto, the profits of Jacob's industry had been wholly his uncle's. He had most ungenerously taken advantage of his nephew's passion for his daughter, to reduce him to a mere drudge for his own interest. From a sense of shame, as well as a regard to interest, he is at length constrained to consent to Jacob's sharing the fruits of his own labor with him. Laban's craftiness had proved to hard for Jacob's candor and integrity; but the wisdom of Heaven, at last, proves more than a match for even the cunning of a Laban. Jacob, whether prompted from above, or instructed by natural sagacity, aided by experience, proposes as his hire, such a part of the flocks which he fed, as should

be, in future, produced of a certain description, "the ring-straked, speckled, and spotted," ...which were so few in number, that they might rather be reckoned the sportings than the regular productions of nature. Laban acquiesces without hesitation in this proposal; wondering in himself, I doubt not, that Jacob should be so simple as to make it. An entire separation is accordingly made, without delay, between the cattle of the description which had been stipulated, and the rest of the flock. They are removed to prevent all occasion of suspicion and complaint, to the distance of a three days journey; and delivered into the custody of Laban's sons, men too like their father to throw any thing into Jacob's scale, either through good-will, neglect or carelessness. Jacob continues to tend the remainder of the flocks, pure from all mixture, and they were by far the greatest part of the stock, for his father-in-law.

The device which he employed, and which seems to have been suggested to him in a dream, is well known to all who read the scriptures. It has been disputed, whether the success of it was in the ordinary course of natural cause and effect, or was entirely produced by a miraculous interposition in favor of our patriarch. Indeed, there seems in it a great deal of both the one and the other. That the female in the moment of conception, should be more than usually susceptible of strong and extraordinary impressions, and capable of transmitting that impression to her young, so as clearly to mark and distinguish it, is too fully proved by experience, to be denied. But this happens too seldom in the usual walk of nature, to permit us to suppose that the extraordinary increase of Jacob's cattle was in the mere current of things aided a little by human sagacity and skill. That one lamb or kid, should be marked with "the streaks of the poplar, hasel, and chesnut rods," or, that one here and there through the flock should be thus distinguished, we can easily believe to

happen without a miracle. But that the great bulk of the young should bear this signature; that as the impressing object was exhibited or withdrawn, the dams should conceive uniformly and correspondently, is, on no principle of nature or of art, to be accounted for. The finger of God is therefore to be seen and acknowledged in it. Thus was the condition of Jacob speedily and wonderfully changed to the better: "And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses." Gen. xxx. 43. And thus, the world is instructed that he who fears and follows God, will sooner or later find his reward.

But it seems determined of Providence, that Jacob should never find a place of rest. Lately, he was poor and dependent, and thence anxious in his own mind, and liable to insult, and unkindness, and oppression from others. Now, he is rich and prosperous, and thence exposed to hatred and envy. And envy, like a plague or a torrent, sweeps every thing before it. We may easily conceive with what watchful jealousy Jacob's carriage and his charge were observed by such men as Laban and his sons. With what astonishment and indignation did they behold the best and most beautiful of the ewes and she-goats bringing forth nothing but "speckled and spotted!" Their rage and discontent are, for a while, expressed by sullen looks and secret murmurs only. At length they become too violent to be suppressed, and break forth into open scurrility and abuse. The tongue of the gloomy father indeed says nothing...What can he say? But his averted looks, his glaring, dissatisfied; indignant eyes, fully declare the anguish that preys upon his heart. I confess I am malicious enough to enjoy it. I love to see the envious man goaded and stung by the lashes and snakes of his own dark, empoisoned conscience; because I love to see mankind happy. It gives me pleasure to see the generous rival of a sordid miser, surpass-

sing him in wealth, eclipsing him in estimation and success; galling him by his prosperity and liberality.

Jacob, however, is unable to stand it. And, judging it better for all parties that they should separate, to save himself the distress of encountering the bitter words and sour looks of unkind relations, and to spare them the misery of witnessing his growing prosperity, he proposes to return to his aged kind parents, from whom he was certain of meeting with a cordially affectionate reception.

The dialogue which passed between Jacob and his wives upon this occasion, Gen. xxxi. 4...16, lets us deeper into the distresses and discomforts of his present condition; and exhibits the picture of a covetous man in still livelier, but therefore the more odious colors. From it we learn, that the sordid father, not contented with exacting of his son-in-law, the rigorous performance of his hard bargain, according to the rules of strict justice, (and the justice of a miser is stern, unfeeling, and severe indeed) frequently had recourse to trick and chicanery to over-reach and defraud him. No fidelity could please, no submission mollify, no attachment subdue, no tie of justice bind, no call of nature awaken his impenetrable, selfish heart. "Ye know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, but God suffered him not to hurt me," Gen. xxxi. 6, 7. "And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money," ver. 14, 15. Whom do men commonly cherish and love with peculiar tenderness? Their daughters and grandchildren. For whom do men usually save, and gain, and lay up in store? For their daughters and grandchildren. But behold, here is a father who has sold his daughters for hire, who treats them as strangers to his blood, defrauds them of

their undoubted right ! Behold a grandfather taking pleasure, not in the innocent prattle, not in the dawning genius, not in the increasing stature of the young ones who descended from his own loins ; not in smoothing for them the rugged path of life, not in extending and brightening their prospects, not in rearing and establishing their fortunes ! but, in diverting the streams of their subsistence ; but, in grasping to himself the hard-earned fruits of their father's industry ; but, in undermining, counteracting, destroying their interests and their hopes ! How happy it is for the world, that this vile passion is neither immortal nor omnipotent !

God is, in spite of Laban, fulfilling to Jacob the covenant and promise which he entered into at Bethel. Jacob had stipulated but moderate things for himself, " bread to eat and raiment to put on," whilst he was from home ; and a peaceable and safe return to his father's house ; and lo, an indulgent Providence has far exceeded his expectations, and even his desires. But if he be increased, he is also encumbered ; if his stock be larger, so is also his care ; have his comforts multiplied ? he is but the more vulnerable. A retinue, consisting of two wives and as many concubines ; twelve children, the eldest but thirteen years old, and the youngest under seven ; of the servants necessary to a family so numerous ; of a live stock so extensive, to be removed, and of the attendants absolutely needful for that purpose ; a family such as this, was in a condition very unfavorable to the journey which they are about to undertake, especially, liable as they were to be pursued and overtaken by incensed Laban ; or, intercepted and cut off by the way, by the equally incensed Esau. But, Jacob is following the direction of Heaven, and therefore proceeds with humble confidence. What a destroyer of human comfort is wealth, that universal object of pursuit ! See, it has alienated the affections of one man from his own family ; it has driven another to flee from that person as an enemy, whom

he had once sought unto as a friend. In one shape or another, this evil affection, the love of riches, is, I am afraid, at the bottom of most of the ill we do, and of most of the ills which we suffer.

Jacob, having communicated his intention to his family, and obtained their hearty concurrence, takes advantage of Laban's occupation in the business of his sheep-shearing, to steal away homeward. And he has the felicity of gaining three days journey, before the news of his flight have reached the uncle. But encumbered as he was, this is but a slight advantage, if a pursuit were attempted; and he must be indebted for his safety, after all, to the protection of that God whom he was following, and not to his own wisdom, foresight, speed or force.

Jacob, I dare say, was scrupulously careful to remove nothing but what was, by a clear and undoubted title, his own. He who had repeatedly and patiently submitted to imposition and oppression, for the sake of quietness, was not likely to provoke enmity, and justify vengeance, by robbery and plunder. But Rachel, in what view, and for what reason, it is not easy to determine, has "stolen away the images which were her father's." Many solutions have been attempted, of this strange and unaccountable piece of theft. Some of them I shall just mention, leaving you to form your own judgment of the matter. It is alleged by some Rabbins, that she carried off the Teraphim or idols, lest her father by consulting them, should discover the route which Jacob had taken, and so pursue with the greater certainty of overtaking him. Some ascribe her conduct to piety and natural affection, as if she meant to make Laban sensible of the weakness of deities which would suffer themselves to be stolen away, without giving notice of such a design, and were incapable of making any resistance; thereby hoping to detach her father from the absurdity and impiety of idol worship. Others, less charitably disposed towards her, re-

present her as a true daughter of Laban, instigated by covetousness, to purloin the deities, for the value of the precious materials of which they were composed, or whereby they were ornamented. And Chrysostom, with almost equal severity, accounts for the robbery from her predilection in favor of idolatry.

Thus Jacob left his father-in-law: or, to use the marginal reading, which is sufficiently warranted by the Hebrew words, “stole away the heart of Laban the Syrian;” that is, either he acted with so much prudence and caution, that Laban suspected not, fathomed not his design; or, he stole away that which was dear to him as his heart and soul, his precious, precious wealth. The sequel abundantly justifies this latter interpretation. For Laban is no sooner informed of his son-in-law’s escape, than without the shadow of a pretence to molest him on his way, or to force him back, makes after him with a powerful body of his friends, if not to plunder and murder him, at least to oblige him to return. After seven days hasty marching, he overtakes him and his cumbersome train, in Mount Gilead; and he is ready to seize on his defenceless prey. But, the God in whom Jacob trusted, plants around him a fence more impenetrable than the adamantine rock. Laban’s gods could not hinder themselves from being stolen away by a simple woman, and packed up among other lumber, to be conveyed off: but Jacob’s God is watching and protecting him night and day; nay, watching his enemy too, to check and repress him. For the vision of the Almighty, is not only with them that fear him, to direct and comfort them, but sometimes also with them that fear him not, to restrain, to threaten, and to terrify them.

God, in a dream by night, charges Laban, in a manner which he could not but understand, feel and remember, charges him at his peril to offer Jacob any injury in word or deed; “for when a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemy to be at peace

with him." Thus warned, he comes up with his nephew next morning; and, like many, who, when they are galled by an ill conscience, endeavor to ease themselves of its reproaches, by transferring the blame from themselves to the persons whom they have wronged; he reproaches Jacob with a conduct, which, he well knew, had resulted entirely from his own harshness and severity; and upbraids him with unkind behavior to his daughters, fully convinced all the while, that they had no ground of complaint against any one, so much as against their own unnatural, unkind father, who had counted them as strangers: "for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money."

It is pleasant to hear a miserly wretch talk of the liberal and generous things which he *intended* to have done, after the call and occasion are over, and his generosity is in no danger of being brought to the test. "Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me? and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp? And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Thou hast now done foolishly, in so doing," Gen. xxxi. 27...28. But truth will appear through the closest disguise. With all this pompous parade of kindness and affection, he is weak enough to avow the violent purpose with which he had undertaken the pursuit, and, from his father-in-law's own lips, Jacob has the satisfaction to learn that he owed his safety to the kind interposition of a heavenly, not to the altered mind of an earthly parent.

But, figure to yourselves Jacob's surprise, when charged by Laban with having stolen his gods. If there was a thing about Laban's house more odious and contemptible than another in his eyes, it was his Teraphim. He would justly have reckoned such an impure mixture among his goods as the corrupter and destroyer of the whole. His defence therefore is simple, yet forcible; because it is the language of genuine

truth, and of conscious innocence and integrity. I like Jacob's speech throughout, Gen. xxxi. 36...42. It is the language of a good and honest heart. Your time permits me not to make any commentary upon it. Indeed it needs none. Observe only, in general, how generous is the fear which he expresses, lest Laban should violently resume the wives whom he had given him. Some of them had been obtruded upon him by fraud, others by persuasion; but they are the mothers of his children, and therefore he cannot bear to think of parting with them, though he might have been permitted. How noble is the disdain and indignation which he expresses, on being charged with the theft of Laban's gods! How manly the recapitulation of his past services and sufferings! How bold the defiance he bids to malice and resentment!

But, it discovers too much of a great and generous spirit, to be passed over thus slightly. I must therefore take the liberty to resume it, and to enlarge a little upon it,....and now hasten to conclude, with this single idea, of the analogy which we never wish for a moment to lose sight of. Jacob, leaving Canaan, solitary and poor, banished from his father's house, and degraded into slavery: and Jacob, returning, loaded with the spoils of churlish Laban, and blessed with a numerous, prosperous and increasing family, without a violent stretch of thought, prefigures to us...Jesus, descending from heaven, and the original splendors of his nature; voluntarily depressing himself into the form of a servant, and meekly submitting, for a season, and to accomplish a great and important purpose, to the want of the smiles of his heavenly Father's countenance; and "the glory that followed"...his triumphant return to heaven, adorned with the spoils of death and hell, and attended by an innumerable train of spiritual sons and daughters, *acquired* in a strange land, adopted into the family of God, constituted the heirs of

glory, and in due time to be exalted, together with their glorious Head, to heavenly thrones. May we, beloved, swell the triumph of that day, and find eternal rest from the toils and dangers of the way in the bosom of our Father and our God....Amen.

History of Jacob.

LECTURE IX.

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: 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. 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, GEN. XXXII. 9...10...11.

THE man who is instructed to “acknowledge God in all his ways,” and he only, has found out the road that leads to true happiness. The cup of prosperity wants its choicest ingredient when the love of our heavenly Father is not tasted in it. The bitterest potion, when mingled by his hand, we can drink with confidence and cheerfulness. It is pleasant to a man to see his own sagacity and diligence crowned with success. But very imperfect is that pleasure unless he can look up and say with submission and gratitude, “the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith.” There is a virulence in the ills which we bring upon ourselves, or which flow from the unkindness and injustice of others, that corrodes the heart, and depresses the spirit. But calamity the appointment of Heaven, calamity the discipline of a

Father's care and wisdom, brings its own relief along with it. The very poison, if administered by his hand, becomes its own antidote, and what threatened to kill, effects a cure.

It would greatly tend to improve our wisdom, to promote our piety, and increase our pleasure, to take frequent and particular reviews of our own life; and to observe the changes which have taken place in our circumstances from time to time, in connection with the means and instruments which Providence more clearly or more obscurely has employed, and through which our enterprizes have succeeded or failed. Many, very many, have arrived at situations to which once in their lives they durst not have presumed to aspire. But their present elevation and prosperity want their brightest ornament and their firmest support if they be destitute of that spirit which good Jacob breathes in the words which I have read...that spirit which ascribes every acquisition, every blessing to the wonder-working hand of indulgent Heaven.

Few men have experienced greater varieties, greater reverses of condition than our patriarch. * But we find him perpetually gathering strength from the hardships which he endured, supporting a life of uninterrupted, unutterable affliction with patience and fortitude, suffering and feeling as a man but enduring and overcoming as a saint, and at length closing the extended scene of woe with the triumph of a believer exulting in the bright, unclouded prospects of immortality.

One general remark may be applied to his whole history. His deepest distresses sprung out of his choicest comforts; his most signal successes took their rise from his heaviest afflictions. The attainment of the birth-right and the blessing drove him into banishment; the labor, watchfulness and anxiety of a shepherd's life conducted him to opulence and importance. The elevation which he too eagerly grasped at was the cause of his depression; the humiliation to which he

voluntarily and patiently submitted became the foundation of his future greatness. The partial fondness of a mother exposed him to the unnatural unkindness and severity of an uncle ; the jealousy and envy of malevolent and selfish brothers-in-law forced him back to the calm delights of his father's house.

After twenty years hard service under Laban, which that ungenerous kinsman repaid with harshness, injustice and deceit, but which God was pleased bountifully to reward by a numerous and thriving progeny and large possessions, he sets out secretly, in order to shun the mortification which he daily endured, for the land of Canaan. He is hotly pursued, and with hostile dispositions, by his father-in-law, and overtaken, encumbered as he was, on the seventh day in Mount Gilead. Providence once more interposes in his behalf, and protects him from Laban's fury. Charged with undutifulness and disrespect, and accused of a robbery which he would rather have died than commit, he defends himself with the spirit of a man, with the dignity of conscious innocence, and the awful superiority of truth and virtue. Those who have a taste to relish the modest, manly, simple, pathetic eloquence of a good and honest heart, will, I am persuaded, find much pleasure in the perusal of Jacob's reply to Laban's accusation. " And Jacob was wroth and chode with Laban ; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass ? What is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me ? Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff ? Set it here before my brethren, and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. This twenty years have I been with thee ; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee ; I bare the loss of it ; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was, in the day

the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus I have been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction, and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight," Gen. xxxi. 36...42. The power of truth is irresistible, and even Laban, though with an ill grace, is constrained to yield to it; and matters are at length amicably settled to their mutual satisfaction. To prevent as much as possible all future ground of fear and suspicion, a covenant of peace and good will is ratified between them, with all the solemnities of a sacrifice, an oath, a monumental pillar, and a feast of love. In the whole of which transaction we cannot help remarking that Laban, the party who had the wicked intention and the guilty conscience, is the first to propose, and the most eager to employ the awful formalities of compacts, and promises and oaths. He knew that he himself needed to be thus bound, and therefore judges it necessary thus to bind the other. Laws are made for the violent and injurious, covenants for the false and perfidious. The light of an upright heart is its own law, the conscience of an honest man his own faithful witness, his own tremendous judge. What is the opinion of the world to conscious integrity? "The conscious mind is its own awful world." Guilt is timorous, jealous and suspecting; innocence bold, believing and generous. Laban employs the most words; Jacob has the purer and more righteous intention. Laban does justice, not from a regard to duty, but through fear of detection and punishment; Jacob speaks and practises truth because he loves it. The form of religion is employed by Laban to perfect the security which he wanted; Jacob scru-

ples not to superadd the form where he felt the force of the obligation. Laban swears that he might hold the other fast; Jacob, because he fears an oath, and is willing at once to satisfy the other and to bind himself. Laban, an idolater, calls to witness the gods whom the ancestors of Abraham and Nahor served "beyond the flood;" Jacob, a worshipper of the living and true God, swears by "the fear of his father Isaac," the God who has power to save and to destroy.

The agreement being thus solemnly ratified, and the hour of separation at length come, they part with mutual satisfaction...Laban, with the self-gratulation of having made a virtue of necessity; and Jacob, well pleased to have escaped so happily from a danger so threatening. Laban returns with his train to Haran, and we hear of him no more. And little does it signify what became of an old miserly knave whose name had been better blotted out of every record than transmitted to posterity with so many notes of infamy upon it. Jacob goes on his way rejoicing toward Canaan, beloved of God, and respected of men.

He has hardly bidden his father-in-law farewell, when we find the angels of God pressing forward to meet him, Gen. xxxii. 1. The history of these superior beings, and of their commerce with mankind, is so brief, so obscure, and so figurative, as rather to excite curiosity than to gratify it. It serves rather to furnish matter for speculation than to convey distinct, full and exact information. By the *angels* of God who are said to have met Jacob on this occasion, some understand merely human messengers, whether deputed from among his own attendants to examine the country through which he was to travel, or some friendly strangers directed that way of Providence to warn him of the approach of his brother Esau. But we cannot materially err by taking the words of Moses in their literal acceptation and according to the more obvious sense which they convey. "Wherefore should it be

thought a thing incredible," that the same merciful God who condescended to visit Jacob's sleep at *Bethel* with a vision of angels ascending and descending from heaven to earth, to cheer and encourage his solitary progress to *Harau*, should vouchsafe to bless his waking thoughts at *Mahanaim* with a visit of these ministering spirits in a bodily form, to be the image and the assurance of the divine favor and protection in every hour of danger, in every time of need? What had that man to fear from the rage of an incensed brother, though that brother were followed by an armed host, around whom "the angels of the Lord encamped" in two hosts or bands.

Whether the history in this passage is to be understood literally or figuratively, whether these angels were human or supernatural beings, this, in either view, well deserves remark, that Jacob was not induced, in confidence of the vision, to neglect any duty of piety or of prudence. Piety dictates the address and recommendation of himself to the God of angels and of men, which we read in the opening of our discourse; and in this he chiefly rested his safety. And prudence made such a wise arrangement of his affairs, as might either gain a brother by kindness, melt him by submission, or oppose him with success. The religion which, aiming at things uncommon, miraculous or preternatural, neglects or despises the plain tract of reason and revelation, is dangerous, and to be suspected. It ministers too much to human vanity; it would establish a standard vague, variable and capricious as the wild imagination of man; and, making every one in matters of faith a law unto himself, would depreciate the "sure word of prophecy," which yields a steady, uniform, and certain light, to illuminate a dark world.

The disposition of his company, which Jacob made, in the view of meeting his brother either as a friend or an enemy, discovers the deepest wisdom and penetration. Every thing that might revive the memory of

their ancient grudge is artfully suppressed. If there appear any ostentation of wealth, it is wealth devoted to the use and service of a brother. The message which was put into the mouths of the servants who conducted the droves of cattle, to be successfully delivered to Esau, is wonderfully calculated to turn away the wrath of an angry man, "my Lord Esau," "thy servant Jacob." And the present, judiciously intended to disarm and mollify him, is, with equal judgment, exhibited and tendered not all at once, but slowly and gradually; insensibly to steal upon his heart, and imperceptibly to lull all his resentments asleep. He appears voluntarily paying a tribute of duty and affection as to his sovereign, not haughtily exacting submission and acknowledgment as from his vassal. Fear for his own life had driven him, twenty years ago, from the face of Esau, and now that his being is, as it were, multiplied in the persons of so many, dear to him as his own soul, his apprehension increases in proportion.

We cannot but observe, though we need not much wonder at, the partiality discovered in settling the order of this domestic procession. The beloved wife and her darling son are placed in the rear, farthest from danger, if danger there were, because first in the attention and respect of the fond husband and father. Unhappy Jacob! whether shall we pity or blame thee? In this management, I see the dawnings of that unwise and unfortunate preference, which afterwards raised such a tempest in the family, and pierced through the paternal heart with so many sorrows.

The thirty-second chapter of this sacred book concludes with the history of an event in Jacob's life, so very singular and mysterious, as to baffle interpretation, and defy criticism. I mean, his wrestling with a person unknown, in the form of a man, whom he afterwards describes as God, and against whom he prevailed in the contest. If this transaction is to be understood according to the letter of the narration, the

Spirit of God has seen meet to withhold the knowledge of some particulars which are necessary to a clear and distinct comprehension of it ; and the inquirer is stopt short, with the reply of the angel who wrestled, to Jacob's request, " Tell me I pray thee thy name ;" Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name ?" Gen. xxxii. 29.

The figurative meaning, and the practical intention and application, are more obvious : and it is this indeed with which we have chiefly to do. Jacob was that very morning to meet Esau, his brother, who was advancing toward him, at the head of four hundred men. Uncertain of his disposition and intentions, conscious of having given him much cause of offence, and apprised of the menacing and resentful language which he had formerly held concerning him, he shudders to think of the consequences of this formidable rencounter. And, having first poured out his soul to God in such a dreadful emergency, and then adopted the measures for safety which wisdom and the necessity of his situation suggested, he again, it is natural to suppose, might have recourse to earnest prayer and supplication, and continue in it during a great part of the night and morning. This, in the forcible and figurative phrase of oriental language, might be expressed " by his wrestling" with God " to the dawning of the day ;" and is at length prevailing so far as to obtain from God some sensible sign or token, to assure him he should be carried through this, as through his other dangers and distresses, undestroyed, unhurt. The sign given him was calculated at once to express approbation of his faith, fortitude and perseverance ; and to convince him of his inferiority and weakness. The unknown wrestler, though seemingly foiled in the combat, by a simple touch dislocates a joint in the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and thereby disables him from continuing the struggle. Might not the wisdom of God be employing such mystical representation and expression to instruct men in the nature of prayer, and to enforce

the obligation of it? "To the end that we should pray always and not faint." Do we prevail in our applications at the throne of grace? It is because our heavenly Father is disposed to yield, and stands out only to heighten our exertions, and call forth our importunity, Have we "power with God, and prevail?" Then, what is man who shall die, and the son of man who is a worm?" Did Jacob sink and fail in the very moment of victory? We are just what God makes or permits us to be.

Whatever were the real circumstances of this extraordinary scene, it procured Jacob a new and an honorable name, which obliterated to his posterity, if not altogether to himself, that less honorable appellation which commemorated a little, though significant incident attending his birth, and which recorded the infamy of his unfair dealings with his father and brother; *Jacob, the supplanter*, is transformed into *Israel, a prince with God*.

The vision of the Almighty is scarcely at an end, when the interview with Esau takes place. And we are then fittest for every service, for every trial, when we have settled matters with Heaven. He, who by a touch disjointed Jacob's thigh, could by a word have scattered Esau's host. But behold a greater miracle! By a simple act of his sovereign will, he has in a moment changed Esau's heart. They meet, they converse, they love, as brothers ought to do. And "O how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" We apprehended a strife of fierce and angry looks, of reproachful words, of violence and blood. But how joyful the disappointment! Behold a contention of kindness, a blessed contest of affection; the honest, heart-melting triumph of nature, the noble victory of goodness. Let the proud and the resentful peruse, with care, this inimitable scene of tenderness, painted in colors so bright and so touching by the pencil of inspiration, Gen. xxxiii. 4...15, and say,

whether it be possible for any gratification of revenge, any depression of a hated rival, any triumph of violence and blood, to yield any thing that deserves the name of joy, compared with the sweet satisfaction which must have filled the bosoms of this pair of brothers, burying animosity and discord in mutual endearments, and expressions of good will. Ah, why should so many wretched brothers as there are of us, pass through a world in which there is so much unavoidable misery, estranged from one another; or madly, wantonly, wickedly interrupt and disturb each other's passage, by bitterness and wrath! What wretched things are wealth, and pomp, and state, and power, which will not permit brothers to live together in love as they might, and as, but for one or other of these disturbers of human quiet, they would do!

Such scenes as that which now passed between Jacob and Esau ought to have been perpetual. But alas it cannot be! Esau must return to his possession in Mount Seir that very day; and Jacob pursue his journey to Canaan. The paternal roof must no more cover their heads again at one time, nor the affectionate parents enjoy the supreme felicity of witnessing their reconciliation, and of strengthening it by their blessing and their prayers. Let the lower ranks of mankind rejoice, that a gracious Providence, in withholding from them affluence, and station, and distinction, has left them a blessing greater than all put together, friendship, and the means of exercising and enjoying it. Parents, as you love your children, and wish to have them near you, and to bless you with a sight of their health and prosperity, be moderate in your views and efforts concerning them. Prospects of ambition, or of avarice, will of necessity banish them from your sight, will separate them from each other, will scatter them upon the face of the earth.

Jacob, by slow movements, as the delicate condition of part of his retinue required, advances homewards

in a south-west direction from the ford of Penuel, on the south bank of the Jabbok, towards Jordan; and arrived safe at the ford of Succoth. So called from the *booths* which he erected there, for a temporary repose to himself and family, in the plains of Jordan, about twelve or fifteen miles from Penuel; ten miles south of the sea of Galilee; and five south of the Jabbok, where it runs into Jordan; a city afterward assigned by lot to the tribe of Gad. After resting at Succoth about a month, he proceeds to travel from Jordan west and by south about thirty-five miles, and arrives, in peace and safety, according to the promise and covenant of the God of Bethel, which was ratified more than twenty years before, at Sechem, the city of Hamor the Hivite; of whom he bought a field, in the same place where Abraham first pitched his tent upon coming into Canaan. And there Jacob erected an altar, and dedicated it by the name of *El-Elohe-Israel, God, the God of Israel*. Now this event happened in the year of the world two thousand two hundred and sixty-six; before Christ, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight; after the flood, six hundred and ten; from the peregrination of Abraham, one hundred and eighty-three; before Jacob's descent into Egypt, thirty-two; before the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt, two hundred and forty-seven; and in the year of Jacob's life, ninety-eight. Isaac, his aged father, living then at Beer-sheba, one hundred and fifty-seven years old. And this naturally furnishes another resting place in the history of our patriarch.

The next Lecture, if God permit, will resume the subject, and carry it forward to a conclusion. We detain you only for a moment or two, to suggest a few thoughts on the analogy of Jacob and Christ from this portion of the scripture history. How beautifully and how exactly does the account which Jacob gives of himself as a shepherd correspond to the character of "the good shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep!"

“This twenty years have I been with the : thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee : I bare the loss of it. Of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes,” Gen. xxxii. 38...40. “And he said unto him, my lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me : and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant : and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me, and the children, be able to endure ; until I come unto my lord unto Seir,” Gen. xxxiii. 13...14. “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd : he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young,” Isa. xl. 11. Angels, thus ministering to the heir of the promise, at *Bethel*, at *Mahanaim*, lead our thoughts directly to the *annunciation*, the *nativity*, the *temptation* in the wilderness, the *agony* in the garden, the *resurrection*, the *ascension*, the *second coming* of our blessed Lord. The wrestling at Peniel, is a strong figurative description of the powerful and prevalent intercession of the Prince with God, Messiah himself, whose language is not “Father I beseech thee,” but “Father I will.” Jacob’s safe and happy return to Canaan, and to his father’s house, every enemy being subdued either by fear or by love, accompanied with two bands of sons and daughters wherewith God had enriched him in the land where he was a stranger, and where he had been humbled, and oppressed....prefigures, as has been suggested in a former discourse, the triumphant return of the great Captain of salvation, to his father’s house above, loaded with the spoils of principalities and powers : the power of hell vanquished by force, an elect

world redeemed and rescued by love. "His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory:" "he shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet," "sing praises to his name, sing praise". "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," Psal. lxxviii. 8. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him by glory and dominion for ever and ever," Rev. i. 5..6. Amen.

History of Jacob.

LECTURE X.

And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children : Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away : all these things are against me. And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee : deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. And he said, 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 grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, GEN. XLII. 36...37...38.

IT is a pleasing and an useful employment to trace important events up to their sources ; to mark the gradual progress of human affairs ; to observe the same persons at different periods of their existence, and in different situations ; to discover on what delicate hinges their fortunes have turned ; and to contemplate the wisdom, power and goodness of Divine Providence, in producing the greatest effects from the slightest and most unlikely causes. There is no greater error in conduct, than to reckon certain actions relating to morals, trifling and insignificant. When revolutions in private families, and in empires, are pursued up to the spring : from whence they flow, they are often found to commence in some little error, inadvertency, or folly, which, at the time, might have been despised or neglected. Just as mighty rivers begin their course in

some paltry obscure stream, which the peasant could dry up with the sole of his foot. The past is infinitely less perspicuous to the eye of human understanding, than the future is to divine intelligence. God "seeth the end from the beginning, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure." The periods which make the most brilliant figure in the page of history, were periods of anxiety and trouble to the men and the nations who then figured on the scene. A life of many incidents is a life of much distress. When the writer has got a great deal to relate, the person whose life is recorded has had a great deal to suffer.

Much more is written of Jacob than of any other of the patriarchs. Alas! it is only saying that his miseries were much more numerous and severe. In a life shorter than his father's by thirty-three years, calamity so crowded upon calamity, that it seems extended to the utmost stretch of even antediluvian longevity. What hour of his mature age is free from pain and sorrow? Not one! In what region does he find repose? No where. Canaan, Haran, Egypt, are to him almost equally inclement. As a son, a servant, an husband, a father; in youth, in manhood, in old age; he is unremittingly afflicted. And no sooner is one difficulty surmounted, one woe past, than another and a greater overtakes him. Formerly he had youthful blood and spirits to encounter and to endure the ills of life. Hope still cheered the heart, and scattered the cloud. But now, behold the hoary head sinking with sorrow to the grave; the spirit oppressed, overwhelmed, with a sea of trouble. Keen recollection summons up the ghost of former afflictions, and past joys recur, only to remind him that they are gone forever; and black despair obscures, excludes the prospect of good to come. What heart is not wrung, at hearing a poor old man closing the bitter recapitulation of his misfortunes, in the words I have read, "All, all these things are against me?"

Perhaps the life of no other man affords a like instance of accumulated distress. The mournful detail of this evening will present, collected within the compass of not many months, a series of the heaviest afflictions that ever man endured; and all springing up out of objects, in which the heart naturally seeks and expects to find delight. An only daughter dishonored...his eldest hope stained with incest...Simeon and Levi polluted with innocent blood...Judah joined in marriage to a woman of Canaan, and a father by his own daughter-in-law....Joseph torn in pieces by wild beasts...his beloved Rachel lost in childbirth...his venerable father removed from him in the course of nature...the miserable wreck and remains of his family ready to perish with famine...Simeon a prisoner in Egypt...and Benjamin, the only remaining pledge of his Rachel's love, demanded and forced to be given up. What sorrow was ever like this sorrow? "This is the man who hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." And does all a partial mother's fondness; do all a father's blessings, wishes and prayers; do all the promises and predictions of Heaven issue in this? "If in this life only there were hope," who so miserable as God's dearest children? Whose lot is so much to be deplored as that of the son of Isaac?

Jacob, after an absence of more than twenty years, has returned to the land of his nativity. A guardian Providence has protected and delivered him from his avowed enemies, from Laban, and from Esau; but the most dangerous enemies of his repose are still nearer to him, they "are those of his own house." He has purchased an estate, he has spread his tent, he has erected his altar; "his mountain stands strong," what can move him? From what slight beginnings do great events arise! Dinah, the daughter of Jacob prompted by female vanity, curiosity, or some other motive equally deserving blame, ventures, unattended, beyond the verge of the paternal superintendance and protection, and falls into

danger and shame. She went out, says the scripture; "to see the daughters of the land." Josephus affirms, that she was attracted by the celebration of a great public festival, according to the manners of the country. Her youth, innocence and inexperience inspire confidence; novelty awakens curiosity; beauty tempts, opportunity favors, and virtue is lost. From the first transgression, down to this day, female disgrace and ruin have begun in the gratification of an immoderate desire to see, and to know, some new thing; from an inclination to exhibit themselves, and to observe others. One daughter of Israel is much more likely to be corrupted by communication with many daughters of Canaan, than they are to be improved by the conversation of that one. There is much wisdom, my fair friends, in keeping far, very far within your bounds. There is danger, great danger, in advancing to the utmost limit of liberty and virtue. For, the extreme boundary of virtue is also the extreme boundary of vice; and she who goes every length she lawfully may, is but half a step from going farther than she ought, or perhaps than she intended.

Desire is commonly extinguished by gratification; but it is also sometimes inflamed by it. And so it was with Shechem. The first disorder of his passion and its effects, are not more to his shame, than the reparation which he intended and attempted, is to his honor. Indeed, if we except the leading step in this transaction, the whole proceeding on the part of the young prince is noble and generous to a high degree; and loudly reprovcs and strikingly exposes the cool, the cruel, the remorseless seducers of a Christian age, and of a civilized country.

The unhappy father receives the news of his daughter's dishonor with silent sorrow. And how often does he wish in the sequel, that he had forever buried his grief in his own heart? Hamor readily adopts the views of his son, disdains not the alliance of a shepherd, courts

Dinah, though humbled, with all the respect due to a princess, and all the munificence becoming one who was himself a sovereign. Those who are fathers, who have daughters for whom they feel, or for whom they fear, will judge of Jacob's satisfaction at this proposal. To have the wound which had been made in the fond paternal heart, instantly closed up; the stain cast upon his name, wiped clean away; his darling child's peace and reputation restored; an honorable alliance formed with a wealthy, virtuous and generous prince; a whole people proselyted from idols to the God of Israel. How many sources of exquisite satisfaction! Is the black cloud over Jacob's head going for once to descend in refreshing drops, is it going for once to burst, and disperse itself into calmness and serenity? Alas, alas! the tempest is only gathering thicker around him; and dreadful must the discharge of it be. I shudder as I proceed.

Simeon and Levi, two brothers german of Dinah, and who, on that account, think themselves peculiarly concerned in the vindication of their sister's honor, affect to receive Shechem's overtures with complacency. They have no scruples but what arise from religion. Let these be removed, and the way is cleared at once. Deep, designing, dissembling villains! The ordinance of God is in their mouths, the malice of the devil lies brooding in their hearts. They recommend a sacrament, and they are preparing a sacrifice, a horrid human sacrifice, of many victims.

There is not a more singular fact in all history, than the ready compliance of the whole inhabitants of Shechem with the proposal of changing their religion, and of receiving, at a so late a period in life, the painful sign of circumcision. Great must have been the authority which Hamor had over them, or great the affection which they bore him. Unhappy man! he practised a little deceit in stating the case to his people, but was himself much more grossly deceived.

And I greatly question whether he had prevailed, had not the temptation of Jacob's cattle and other substance been held out as a motive to obtain their consent. Comply however they did....and it proved fatal to them. For on the third day, the two sons of Jacob already mentioned, attended probably by a band of their friends and servants, rushed upon them, and put them all to the sword. "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel," Gen. xlix. 7. We no where meet with an instance of more savage, indiscriminating barbarity. For the offence of one, a whole nation is mercilessly cut off, and rapine closes the scene of blood. For they plundered the city, and carried off the wretched women captive whose husbands they had murdered. Horrid, infernal passion! And how is Dinah's honor repaired by this? And these simple, easy, believing men, these harmless, unoffending women, what had they done? Daughters of Canaan, dearly have ye bought the favor of a visit from Jacob's daughter. Idle and unhallowed was the opening of the scene, and dreadful has the conclusion been. I should not have been surprised to hear of a confederacy among all the neighboring states, to exterminate such a band of robbers and murderers from the face of the earth. Jacob is justly alarmed with the apprehension of this, and, warned of God, removes from the neighborhood of Shechem to Bethel; a spot that brought to his recollection, calmer, happier days...when he was flying indeed from his country, without wealth, without a friend; but free also from the anxiety, vexation and care, which an increased family and abounding wealth have brought upon him. How much better is it to go childless, than have children to be the grief and plague of a man's heart?

Being arrived at Bethel, where he had been blessed with the visions of the Almighty on his way to Padan-

aran, he deems it a proper time and place to purge his family of every vestige of idolatry. It is no easy matter to live in an idolatrous, or irreligious country, without losing a sense of religion, or acquiring a wrong one. This is one of the great evils which attend travelling into distant lands. Our young men who reside long abroad, whatever else they bring back to their native country, generally drop by the way the pious principles which were instilled into them in their youth. Some very nearly related to Jacob, I am afraid, had a violent hankering after the gods beyond the flood. Why else did Rachel steal away the images which were her father's? However that may be, Jacob now disposes of them in a proper manner, and buries every shred that could minister to idolatry, under the oak that was by Shechem. The conduct of Jacob's sons had, of necessity, awakened a hostile spirit in the country against him, which, had it not been providentially restrained, must have proved fatal to him. But "the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob," Gen. xxxv. 5.

About this time, a breach was made in the family by the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse; the threatening and forerunner of a much heavier stroke. For, just after they had left Bethel, as he was on his way finally to join his father with all his family, with a heart exulting, no doubt, in the prospect of presenting to his venerable parents the wives and children which God had given him: Rachel, his much-loved Rachel, is suddenly taken in labor by the way side and dies, after bearing another son: Unhappy woman! She falls a victim to what she had coveted so earnestly. "Give me children, else I die," in her haste, in the bitterness of her heart, she exclaimed. She obtains her wish, and it proves fatal to her. God, a righteous God, gives her children, and she dies. Resent-

ment at her vehemence and impatience is lost in sorrow for her loss.

The history does not expand itself here, but simply relates the fact. Some causes are injured, not assisted, by a multiplicity of words. The feelings of the patriarch on this occasion are rather to be conceived than described. Rachel early, constantly, tenderly loved; earned with long and severe servitude; endeared by knowledge and habit, and rendered more important and valuable by fruitfulness, could not be lost without pain. It was natural for the dying mother to think of perpetuating the memory of her mortal anguish, by giving the son whom she brought into life at the expense of her own, the name of *Ben-oni*, "the son of my sorrow." It was wise and pious in the surviving father, to preserve rather the memory of the benefit received, than of the loss sustained; and by the name of *Benjamin*, "the son of my right hand," to mark and record submission to, and trust in Providence, rather than seek to perpetuate his grief, by retaining the maternal appellation, which seemed to murmur at and to reflect upon the dispensations of the Almighty. Dying in childbirth, it was found necessary to bury her with greater expedition than the removal of the corpse to the cave of Machpelah permitted; though there the precious dust of Sarah and of Abraham reposed. And, as it is happily ordered by nature, Jacob amuses, soothes and spends his grief, which might otherwise have oppressed and spent him, in erecting a monument to Rachel's memory. Thus, what the heart in the first paroxysms of its anguish, intends as the means of rendering grief lasting or continual, gradually, imperceptibly, and most graciously extinguishes it altogether.

While this wound was still bleeding, the patriarch's heart is pierced through with another stroke, if not so acute, perhaps more overwhelming, Reuben, his eldest hope, raised and distinguished by Providence, placed

in the foremost rank among many brethren degrades and dishonors himself by the commission of a crime which modesty blushes to think of, and "such as is not so much as named among the Gentiles;" a crime, which blended the guilt and shame of another with his own; which could not make the usual apologies of surprise, temptation or passion for itself. But let us hasten from it. We can sit and weep a while upon the grave of Rachel; but from the incestuous couch of Reuben, imagination flies away with horror and disgust. What a dreadfully licentious, irregular and disorderly family is the family of pious Jacob! Each of his sons is worse and more wicked than another. Accursed Laban, I see thy infernal avarice at the bottom of all this disorder and wickedness! It was that which first introduced a multiplicity of wives into Jacob's bosom. It was that which created and kept up jarring interests in his family; and gave birth to those unhallowed, disgraceful, headstrong passions, which disturbed his peace, pierced his heart, and dishonored his name.

An affliction more in the order of nature, and whose certain and gradual approach must have prepared the heart to meet it, at length overtakes him. After an absence of more than twenty years, he rejoins his aged father, now in his one hundred and sixty-third year, at Arbah, afterwards called Hebron, "the city where Abraham and Isaac sojourned." It does not appear whether Rebekah yet lived, or not. If she did, what must have been her feelings at embracing her long-lost, darling son; and at finding him so abundantly increased in children and in wealth? Pure and perfect is the delight of a grandmother, as she caresses the young ones of a beloved child, the heirs and representatives of the husband of her youth, the supporters of his name, prospects and dignity.

In presenting his family to his father, Jacob must have been agitated by various and mixed emotions. It

was natural for the old man to inquire minutely into the events of his son's life, during the tedious years of their separation; into the character and qualities of his grandchildren: into the state of Jacob's worldly circumstances; much more, into the state of his mind as a believer, and the heir of the promise. The answer to these parental inquires must of necessity have awaked in the bosom of the wretched sufferer ten thousand melancholy and painful sensations; and torn open afresh those wounds which the lenient hand of time had began to close up. The hardships endured in Padan-aram; the severity, churlishness and deceit of Laban, would rise again to view. And almost every child, as he presented them one by one to his sire, must have suggested some mortifying and distressful circumstance to wring his heart. Dinah, not in the bloom and dignity of virgin innocence, but humbled and dishonored, robbed of that which makes youth lovely, and age respected...Simeon and Levi, her brothers, polluted with innocent blood; and Reuben, his "first-born, his might, and the beginning of his strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power," stained with incest...Judah, his fourth son, who had began to build up a family of his own, but it was by a Canaanitish woman, Gen. xxxviii. 2...18...24...25...26, whose progeny involved him in complicated guilt, and covered him with shame...Joseph and Benjamin, fair as the opening blossoms of the vernal rose, and precious as the purple fluid which visited his sad heart...But alas! the highly valued stock which had shot forth these two lovely branches, is prematurely cut down and withered. His beloved Rachel is no more; and he is deprived of even the poor consolation of reflecting, that her sacred dust slept in the same tomb with that of his venerable ancestors. But to have the privilege of pouring his sorrows into the bosom of a father, was the alleviation if not the cure of them. And he, who by meditation, and faith, and prayer, had over-

come the world; and lived so long in heaven, was well qualified for administering the vivifying cordial to the fainting soul, to apply the sovereign balm to the aching heart of a son, who had been a still greater sufferer than himself.

But the calamities of neither the father nor the son are as yet come to a period; and they have still to interchange sorrows for a loss more bitter and oppressive than any which they have yet endured. For, in little more than six years from their re-union; while Isaac, now one hundred and seventy years old, was patiently looking for his dismissal from this scene of trouble, and preparing to enter the harbor of eternal rest...he is driven back upon the tempestuous ocean, and doomed to toil and grieve ten years more of a weary life, deploring an affliction which admitted of no consolation, and which at length brought his white head with sorrow to the grave. At this period it was, that Joseph, beautiful and young, Joseph, the delight of God and man, Joseph, the memorial of Rachel, the pride of Jacob, the prop of Isaac's old age, disappeared, and was heard of no more, till many years after his venerable grandsire slept in the dust.

Jacob, sinking himself into the dust, under the pressure of a burthen which nature was unable to sustain, is at length called to perform the last sad office of filial affection, and to lay his hand upon the already extinguished orbs of his honored father; willing, and longing, I am persuaded, to have descended with him into the grave. But not the least eventful part of his history is yet to come. It will hence forward be blended with that of Joseph, which now solicits our attention. O could we but bring to the study and display of it, a small portion of that native simplicity, that divine eloquence, that celestial energy, which glow and shine upon the page of inspiration! with what delight and success should we then speak, and with what pleasure and profit should ye then lend a listening ear!

The story of Jacob, as it proceeds, teaches many useful lessons for the conduct of life; and opens many sources of religious instruction. Who would not rather be honest, unsuspecting, believing Jacob, than dark, designing, selfish Laban? And yet, who does not see the necessity of blending the wisdom of the serpent, with the harmlessness of the dove? We mourn to think on the prevalence of those fiery and ungovernable passions which separate, and scatter, and alienate those whom God and nature designed to live together, and to love one another; and which robs human life of many instances of felicity which might have been in it. Why should Isaac and Jacob have lived twenty years asunder, to their mutual discomfort and distress? The vile spirit of this evil world arose; the spirit of pride, emulation, ambition, avarice, fear, revenge, drove Jacob into a miserable exile; and left his father a forlorn, forsaken, anxious, blind old man. Happy that poverty, which permits the parent and his child to cherish each other, till the cold hand of death chill the heart. Happy the obscurity which excludes envy; and forces not a man to be an enemy to his own brother!

We have seen in the patriarch, a man like ourselves, "bruised and put to grief;" the image of "one greater man," "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," whose woes commenced in the *manger*, and ceased not till they were lulled to rest in the *tomb*. "The Son of Man" who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "The heir of all things" who emptied himself, and voluntarily assumed "the form of a servant." "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem," Gen. xxxv. 4. "And Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting. And when he had made

a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen, and poured out the changer's money, and overthrew the tables: and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence, make not my Father's house an house of merchandize," John ii. 13...16. Jacob presented to his father a numerous and thriving offspring; but many of them children perverse and corrupted, their father's shame and sorrow. But when our spiritual Head shall present his redeemed to "his Father and our Father, to his God and our God," saying, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me," the paternal eye shall discern in them "neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing." Our Father in heaven ever lives, "exalted that he may shew mercy;" our "Redeemer liveth," "he is risen again, he is even at the right hand of God, he also maketh intercession for us."

History of Jacob and Joseph.

LECTURE XI.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age : and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him, GEN XXXVII. 3...4.

THE history of mankind exhibits an unceasing contention between the folly and wickedness of man, and the wisdom and goodness of God. Men are continually striving to outdo, to mortify, and to hurt one another ; but a gracious providence, by opposing spirit to spirit, interest to interest, force to force, preserves the balance and supports the fabric. His sovereign power and matchless skill, produce exquisite harmony from the confused, the contending, the discordant tones of human passions. He controuls and subdues a diversity, which threatened disorder, separation and destruction, into a variety which pleases, which unites, which cements and preserves mankind. And a more consolatory, a more composing, a more satisfying view of the divine Providence we cannot indulge ourselves in, that this merciful superintendence which it condescends to take of the affairs of men, and of every thing that affects their virtue or their happiness. The disorders which prevail in the natural world, under the subduing hand of Heaven, range themselves into order and peace. The

convulsions which shake and disturb the moral world, directed, checked, and counterbalanced by a power much mightier than themselves, subside into tranquility, through the very agitation and violence they had acquired. "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain." When the tumult is over, and the noise ceases, religion rears up her head, and says, in the words of Joseph to his brethren, "but as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive," Gen. l. 20.

We are now come to a passage of the sacred history of uncommon beauty and importance. Whether we consider the simplicity and grace of the narration, the affecting circumstances of the story, the interesting and instructive views of the human heart which it unfolds, the many plain and useful lessons which it teaches; and the mighty consequences, both near and remote, which resulted to the family of Jacob, to the Egyptian monarchy, and to the human race, from incidents, at first insignificant and seemingly contemptible, but gradually swelling into magnitude, embracing circle after circle, extending from period to period, till at length all time and space are occupied by them.

Isaac was now as good as dead; calmly looking forward to his latter end; alive only to sentiments of piety and of pain. And Jacob was, through much difficulty and distress, at last settled in the land where in his father was a stranger; increased in wealth, rich in children, rich in piety, but advanced in years, and loaded with affliction. Jacob's family, the salt of the earth, was itself in a very putrid and corrupted state; and the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel were themselves very bad men. The unhappy father endeavors to soothe the anguish arising from the ill behavior of his grown-up sons, by the pleasing prospects which

the more amiable qualities of his younger children opened to him.

The sacred historian introduces to us the favorite character of Joseph with wonderful art and skill. From the very first moment we become interested in him. He is the long expected son of beautiful Rachel...his mother was dead...he had now attained his seventeenth year...and he was the darling object of his father's affection. Jacob's affection, however, has not blinded him so far, as to bring up even his favorite in idleness. Little does that man consult either the credit or the comfort of his son, who breeds him to no useful employment: for indolence is the nurse of vice, the parent of shame, the source of misery. Unfortunately for him, however, Joseph is associated in employment with persons whose conversation was not likely greatly to improve his morals, and whose dispositions toward him did not promise much to promote his happiness; "the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives;" who alas! seem to have inherited much more of the spirit of the bond-woman who was their mother, than of the free-man who was their father. What were the particulars of their ill conduct we are not told; but Joseph observed it, was grieved and offended, and reported it to his father.

Jacob is not wholly irreprehensible in this. It was imprudent to trust a well-inclined young man, at that delicately dangerous season of life, far or long out of his sight, and in such company. It was wrong to encourage in Joseph a spirit of censoriousness and self-conceit. It was madness to add fuel to those resentments, which his ill-disguised partiality to this son of his old age had already kindled in the breasts of his other children. But his understanding seems quite blinded by love for the boy; and he proceeds from weakness to weakness. As if he had not raised up enemies enough to him, by countenancing in him the

odious character of tale-bearer, he goes on to expose him to the hatred of all the family, by dressing up his darling in "a coat of many colors."

What a foundation of mischief was here laid! The brothers must have been much less inflammable than they were well known to be, not to have taken fire at this indiscreet, this ridiculous distinction. And Joseph himself must have possessed a mind much more firm and more enlightened than seventeen generally discovers, not to have felt at least some transient emotions of vanity, insolence and self-sufficiency, in being thus favored above the rest. The father was therefore injurious to all, but most to himself. His house is now in flames, and he himself has fired the train. Parents as ye love your repose, as you value your children, as you would have them dwell together in unity, as ye would not put a dagger into a brother's hand to shed a brother's blood, guard yourselves well against partial affections: or if unhappily you have conceived them, conceal it from every eye; let not the favorite see it, let not his rival suspect it. Let reason, let religion, let that very partiality itself, teach you to be wise and just. Parents, as ye prize the understanding, the virtue, the true dignity of your children, let them never be taught to think that dress confers consequence, that finery implies worth, that the body deserves more attention than the mind. Let not even your daughters be led, through your silly vanity, to believe that any part of their excellence consists in the splendor of their appearance. But still inculcate upon them, that a mind stored with virtues, with modesty, meekness, gentleness, patience, humility, is, both to God and man, a sight infinitely more pleasing than the most beautiful person adorned with jewels and lace, if these, or any of these be wanting. Let them know early, and hear frequently, that cleanliness and decency are virtues which they ought to acquire and practise; but that a curiously ornamented body is, to a discerning eye, no-

thing but the indication, and the wretched tawdry covering of a naked soul.

I think I see the ill effect of Jacob's fondness on Joseph himself. What could have suggested those dreams of his own superiority, the recital of which was so offensive to his brothers, and which drew from his father himself check and reproof? Nothing but the petulency of his waking thoughts, buoyed up by confidence in paternal preference and favor. It will be said, that they were intimations from above of his future greatness and eminence. It is readily admitted. But of what stuff does the foreknowledge and power of God frame prognostics and predictions? Sometimes, perhaps often, of the violent propensities and desires of men's minds. And many events seem to have been predicted, not because they are to come to pass, but they come to pass because they have been predicted. The dreams themselves are the natural working of a young mind, inflated by indulgence. The repetition of them, where they were sure to occasion disgust, marks a simplicity, an innocence, a boyish thoughtlessness and indiscretion, which it were cruel severely to censure, but which wisdom can by no means approve. And, the whole taken together, the prognostic with the realization, the cause with the effect, the prophecy with the event, form a wonderful and instructive contrast of the weakness of man, and the power of God; the meanness of the materials, and the magnificence of the fabric; the feebleness of the instrument, and the force of the hand which employed it.

Though Jacob was not altogether pleased with the spirit which these dreams and the rehearsal of them discovered, yet they had a very different effect upon him and upon his sons. They envied and hated him the more; he "observed the saying." Whether from a father's partial fondness, or instructed by that Spirit, who afterwards disclosed futurity to him, down to the gathering of the people to *Shiloh*, he considered the

doubling of the vision, and its coinciding purport, as portending something great and good to his beloved child; and he sits down patiently to wait the issue. And we shall presently find it was hastening towards its conclusion in a course much more rapid, and by means much more extraordinary than any which he could possibly apprehend.

By this time the power of Jacob's family was grown so great, or the terror inspired by the cruel murder of the Shechemites was so far effaced, that his ten eldest sons adventure into the neighbourhood of that city to feed their flocks. The distance from *Beer-sheba*, where Jacob dwelt, being considerable; their absence being extended to a length of time that created anxiety, and though *their* apprehensions might, a solicitous father's anxiety not being quite laid to rest, he thinks proper to send Joseph from Hebron, to inquire after their welfare and to bring him word again. Unhappy father and son! little did they think the parting of that day was to be for such a length of duration. Blind that we are to futurity! We "cannot tell what a day may bring forth." The last meeting, the last parting; the last coming in and going out; the last time of speaking and of hearing; the last of every thing must soon overtake us all. Joseph accordingly leaves his father's house, never, never to return to it more, and goes forth in quest of his brethren.

Our tender affections are now strongly excited for the hapless youth. A lad of seventeen, who had never till now been from beneath the protection of paternal care and tenderness; whose face "the wind of Heaven" had never hitherto "visited too roughly;" whose spirit mortification had never galled, whose heart affliction had never yet pierced....thrown at once into the wide world, missing his way in an unknown country, exposed to savage beasts, or mere savage men: coming at length to the place of his destination, but disappointed of finding what he looked for there;

and finally falling into the hands of butchers, where he expected brothers. If ever there were an object of compassion, it is now before us. I observe his young heart flutter with joy, when, after all his wanderings and anxieties, he descries his brothers, and their tents, and their flocks afar off. I see the tear of tenderness rush to his eyes, while he delivers his father's greeting, and tells the tale of his youthful sorrows and mistakes upon the road. I see his blooming countenance flushed with delight and satisfaction, at the thought of being again among friends, of having once more a protector. Ah cruel, cruel disappointment! They have been plotting his ruin, they have devoted him to death. He comes to them with words of peace, with kind and affectionate inquiries after their health and prosperity. They meet him with looks of aversion, with words of contempt and hatred, with thoughts of blood.

The history of Jacob's family exhibits a shocking view of manners and of society at that period. They digest and execute a plan of murder, with as much coolness as we would an improvement in agriculture, or an adventure in trade. It is no wonder the poor Shechemites found no pity at their hands, when they are so lost to the feelings of nature, humanity and filial duty, as to deliberate and determine, without ceremony or remorse, upon their own brother's death. The trifling incident of the dreams lies rankling in their bosoms. "Behold," say they, "this *dreamer* cometh." Well has our blessed Lord cautioned his disciples against the use of contemptuous expressions one to another. For however slight and insignificant a hard or ridiculous name at first sight may appear, it proceeds from an unkind heart, and partakes of the nature of murder.

It is no uncommon thing for men who have quite got over every scruple of conscience, and all sense of duty, still to retain some regard to decency; and to respect opinion and appearances after the heart is be-

come perfectly callous. Though they can remorselessly resolve on shedding blood, they have not confidence enough to avow their violence and barbarity, but craft and falsehood must be called in, to cover their villany from the eye of the world. "Come now therefore, and let us slay him; and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams," Gen. xxxvii. 20. That there should have been one of the ten capable of conceiving and suggesting such a deed of horror, had been wonderful; but that only one of the ten should rise up to intercede for the unhappy victim, exceeds all belief. We almost lose the remembrance of Reuben's filthiness in his good-natured attempt to save his brother. If there were something of deceit in the proposal which he made to the rest for this purpose, it was on the side of virtue, and calls at least for pardon, if not for commendation.

Joseph was now at hand. And O how different his reception from what he fondly expected! "They stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him. And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it," Gen. xxxvii. 23, 24. With truth has the wise man said, "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." The demons of envy and revenge have taken possession of their hearts. In vain he weeps, in vain he prays, in vain employs the tender names of father and brother, to win their pity. The coat, the odious coat, the badge of a partial father's fondness, steels their breasts. They strip it off with more of savage joy than ever the doating parent felt of satisfaction in seeing him put it on, or the hapless youth himself in wearing it. The horror of being cast alive into a pit to perish with hunger, is not to be conceived, much less expressed. What must it then have been to a heart like Joseph's, tremblingly alive to the keenest sensations of pain; acquainted, till then, only with

gentleness and indulgence, and now dreadfully awakened to perceive the full extent of his misery? Instant death had been mercy to one in such a situation. As if they had done nothing, they sit down unconcernedly to eat bread. Savage monsters! Could the moderate cravings of their own appetite fail to remind them of the wretched state of their poor brother; fail to suggest the misery of perishing for want, and to awaken compassion in some gentle bosom? Yes; with his piercing shrieks yet sounding in their ears, with his piteous supplicating looks yet before their eyes, they indulge the commonest, lowest cravings of their own nature, and calmly consign him to a lingering death; the bitterness of which was every instant increased by the slowness of its approach. And now, behold the darling of Jacob on the very brink of despair; when Providence, wiser than they were cunning, and more powerful than they were wicked, interposes for his deliverance.

It was so ordered of Heaven, that a travelling company or caravan of Ishmaelitic merchants passed by, while they were at dinner, in the course of their traffic to Egypt. A thought occurred to Judah, whose heart now began somewhat to relent, that an opportunity offered of ridding themselves of their hated rival, without incurring the guilt of shedding his blood; namely, that of selling him for a slave to the Ishmaelites; who he knew would carry him along with them into Egypt, sell him over again for profit, and thereby for ever prevent the possibility of his return, to detect their villany, and renew his pretensions to superiority over them.

No sooner was this proposal made than it was assented to. And they, who a little while before made nothing of taking away their brother's life, with less scruple and ceremony still, take upon them to rob him of his liberty; and, as if he had been a bullock, or a kid from the flock, sell him for twenty pieces of silver

into the hands of strangers. O the wonder-working hand of God! The circumstances which lately seemed to poor Joseph so untoward and unfavorable, were working together for the preservation of his life, and paving the way to glory. Had he not wandered in the field, his arrival had happened too early for the passing by of these merchants to save him. Had he found his brethren in Shechem, as he expected, instead of Dothan, he had been out of the track which his deliverers took. "Who can tell what is good or evil for a man," till the end come, and the mystery of providence be unfolded? These, to the eye of man, are little accidental circumstances. But they are a part of a vast arrangement, made by Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," to bring about a great purpose. There are wheels almost imperceptible in the great machine, which the untutored eye is apt wholly to overlook, but which are indeed as necessary to motion as the largest and most obvious.

Thus was the jewel of his father's heart vilely bartered away as a thing of little value. Behold Joseph in the hands of the descendants of him whose "hands were against every man, and every man's hands against him," and he is safer with wild Ishmaelites, than with bloody unnatural brothers. From avarice, if not from pity or affection, they will treat him kindly, that they may dispose of him to advantage. So much better is a merciful, or even a mercenary stranger, than an envious and cruel brother. Reuben, it appears, was not present at this consultation, bargain and delivery. He probably stole away, when the rest sat down to meat, that by a round-about path he might arrive at the pit where Joseph was hid, and assist him in effecting his escape, while the rest were otherwise employed. But he had made so large a circuit in order to avoid suspicion, that the sale was transacted before he came to the place, and his benevolent intention was

thereby frustrated. He is the only one of the brothers who seems to have felt a single spark of pity for the unfortunate youth, or of concern for the distress of his aged parent. What then must his anguish have been, when he came to the pit, and found no Joseph there? From his worst fears however he is soon relieved, and bad as it was, rejoices to hear that Joseph was only sold for a slave.

By common consent it is agreed to conceal, if possible, the whole of this dark scene. They must meet their father again, and to him something must be said for the non-appearance of his amiable, his beloved son. I am not more shocked at their first purpose of blood, than at their artful device to cover it, and their awful steadiness and fidelity to each other in guarding so well the dreadful secret. It proves what deep, what determined, what thorough-paced villains they were. And from such men does the Jewish nation glory to have sprung! They stain the variegated coat, the cause of so much jealousy, with blood, which they intend shall pass with the wretched father for the blood of him that wore it; and they send it to Hebron as accidentally found in the field in that state, to carry its own doleful tidings with it.

I cannot accompany this fatal pledge to the place of destination. Who can bear to witness the anguish of a miserable old man, sinking under the weight of accumulated woe? All his former griefs admitted of consolation. They were more directly from the hand of God, they were in the course of nature, they might be cured or endured. But this stab was mortal; it defied medicine, it mocked at length of time. He himself has had the principal hand in this great evil; and I fear, I fear he suspects the truth, though he says it not. Beautiful, too much beloved, ill-starred Rachel! once I pitied, now I congratulate thee. A gracious Providence has in kindness taken thee away from the evil to come. The sight of Joseph's vesture dip-

ped in blood, must have proved fatal to thee, hadst thou lived to that day. To have lived till now, must have been to endure pangs more frightful than the agonizing throes of child-birth, or the last dying struggles of dissolving nature. We hasten from a scene which the heart is unable long to contemplate, to land Joseph safely in Egypt....where being arrived, he is transferred like a bundle of spicery, from the Midianites to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, and captain of the guard.

And here your time warns me to stop. And here, in the hands of that God who "delivered him from the paw of the lion and the bear," we deposit this precious trust, confident of its being restored, like all that we commit to God, increased in value, importance and utility. If the subject be pleasing to you, as it is to me, I shall hope to have the pleasure of resuming it with you next Lord's day.

Jesus, the well-beloved Son of God, came from his Father's house above, to bring to us, his brethren after the flesh, the gentle and affectionate commendations of his Father's love. Instead of welcome, he met with reproach and scorn. "He came to his own and his own received him not." "He was despised and rejected of men." "His familiar friend in whom he trusted, which did eat of his bread, lifted up his heel against him." Judas, one of his own house, sold him for thirty pieces of silver. He was stripped of his vesture, his raiment was stained with blood. "He looked and there was none to help." "He trod the wine-press alone." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," Isa. liii. 7. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10. Men "thought

evil against him, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive," Gen. 1. 20. "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations," Psalm. xxxiii. 11. To the attentive reader of the scriptures, these, and many such applications as these, of the history of Joseph, to the person, the character, the office and undertaking of the Messiah, will readily occur. To the careless and unbelieving, more has been said than they will understand, regard, or approve. We commend them to the mercy of God, and we implore a blessing on what has been spoken, for Christ's sake. Amen.

History of Joseph.

LECTURE XII.

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man, and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass, from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake: and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat: and Joseph was a goodly person, and well-favored, GEN. xxxix. 2...6.

UNLESS “the heart be established by grace,” in prosperity it will be elated above measure, and in adversity will be ready to sink under the weight of its woe. A principle of religion preserves the balance of the soul, and guards it equally from rising into insolence, or falling into dejection. It has been disputed whether prosperity or adversity be the severer trial of the two. In order to determine the question, it is necessary to know the character of the party who is tried.

In some persons we meet with a stupidity, an insensibility of nature, on which change of circumstances

makes no apparent impression. This endeavors to pass upon itself, and actually does pass upon superficial observers, for moderation in success, and patience in affliction. But the rock is not patient, because without murmuring it bears the incessant dashing of the raging sea; neither does the snail deserve the praise of humility, because it attempts not to fly. That moderation is estimable, which, awake to all the advantages of rank, and fortune, and success, offends not God by levity and ingratitude, nor man by haughtiness and pride. That patience merits admiration and praise, which feels, yet complains not; which sighs, yet submits.

It is very natural for men to flatter themselves that they could support prosperity with wisdom and propriety. But I believe experience will evince, that while success tends to relax, weaken, and extinguish the religious principle, calamity, by teaching us our own weakness and dependance, awakens, strengthens and keeps it alive. The lot of most men alternately furnishes occasion for exercise in both ways. It is the office of genuine and solid piety, to instruct us "in whatever state we are, therewith to be content;" "to exercise men unto godliness, which is profitable unto all things, having the promise both of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."

The amiable and illustrious person on whose history we entered in the last Lecture, and which we are now to continue, affords a shining and affecting example of a mind unsubdued by the deepest distress, and uncorrupted by the highest degree of elevation. His affliction commenced at an early period of life. It was, of its kind, peculiarly bitter and severe. It came from a quarter whence it was least to be apprehended; and the transition was instantaneous, from a tranquillity and indulgence which knew no bound, to anguish which no language can express, no imagination conceive. As he was to be an eminent type of Him, who

“ as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, not opening her mouth,” scripture represents Joseph submitting to the barbarous treatment of his brothers, as doomed to perish of hunger in an empty pit, and sold into slavery to the Ishmaelites, without arguing, without upbraiding, without repining.

Were it possible to form a stronger idea of the hard-heartedness of Jacob’s sons than that which their cruelty to Joseph affords, it is to see them the calm witnesses of the anguish of their father’s soul, without being moved by all his misery and tears to divulge the important secret, and to pour into the fond parental heart the cordial balm, which even the knowledge of his son’s being a slave in Egypt would have administered. As a dawn of hope would thence have arisen, that by some blessed revolution of events, the precious hour might perhaps at length arrive, which should restore him to his father again. What a dreadful thing it is to embark on a sea of vice ! To return is difficult, if not impossible.... To proceed is ruin.

Joseph meanwhile lives and prospers in a strange land. He has not lost all, he has lost nothing, who enjoys the divine presence and favor. The amiable youth is indeed from under the shadow of his father’s wing, but the protection of Heaven is not withdrawn ; “ the Almighty is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” A young man brought up like him, in fulness, liberty, indulgence and ease, might have been supposed sullen and stubborn under a change of condition so sudden and so severe ; or to have sunk into melancholy and despair. But with Joseph it was not so. With true magnanimity and spirit, he cheerfully accommodates his mind to his situation, and without murmur or reluctance, addresses himself to the discharge of his duty as a diligent and faithful servant. We have not power over our lot, to carve it out as we please ; but the mind has power over itself ; and happiness has its seat in the mind, not in external

circumstances. The favorite son of Israel seems degraded and dishonored, even when raised to the first rank of servitude in Potiphar's house; but Joseph, pious, modest, wise and faithful, is equally respectable whether as a son or as a servant.

Never did Potiphar make so fortunate a purchase. The blessing of God enters into his house, from the moment Joseph becomes a member of the family. In many various ways are servants curses or comforts to those with whom they dwell. Let a servant have a conscience, and you have a certain pledge of his fidelity. Divest him of that and where is your security, that either your property or your person is safe in his hands? Joseph demeaned himself as a good servant; Potiphar as a wise and a kind master. In vain do we look for affection and attachment in our inferiors, if we treat them with insolence, unkindness or neglect. The great and affluent are much more in the power of, much more dependant upon their meanest domestics, than they are willing to understand, or to acknowledge. And surely, it is much more prudent to secure their affection, as humble friends, by condescension and good nature, than to provoke their resentment or revenge, by pride and severity.

Joseph has been faithful over a few things, he is made ruler over many things. "He made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand." His personal accomplishments keep pace with his mental endowments, "he was a goodly person, and well-favored." Beauty like every other gift of nature, is good of itself, and therefore to be received with thankfulness. But alas, how often does it prove a snare to the possessor, and a temptation to others! This quality of Joseph's had like to have proved more fatal to him than even the envy of his brothers. This last threatened only his body, but that endangers the soul. The one sold him into bondage, the other would have plunged him into dishonor. His mas-

ter's wife looked upon him with eyes of unhallowed affection, and attempts to make him a partaker of her impurity. To expatiate on the nature of this temptation, would be as indecent as it is unnecessary. It is a fearful example of the dreadful length which the human mind is capable of going, when the restraints of shame are once broken through.

Some kind of temptations are boldly to be encountered, and resolutely overcome. There are others only to be conquered by flight, and disarmed by removing to a distance. Joseph dwells only on one circumstance, in order to settle and determine his conduct....the all-seeing eye of God, and the danger of offending him; "how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God," Gen. xxxix. 9. Pleasure, and interest, and passion, blind the eyes; but conscience, with scrupulous attention, always and every where reveres an omnipresent Jehovah. The lower principles of our nature respect and are regulated by consequences. This great principle is moved only by a sense of right and wrong. Interest and desire are contented with inquiring, "is there no danger of being found out?" But conscience is only to be satisfied, by ascertaining, "whether it be sin or duty."

The consequence to Joseph, was such as might be expected from the temper of a shameless woman, false, lascivious and resentful. The demon of lust turned into those of rage and revenge, she accuses of an attempt to seduce her, the man, whom no consideration of pleasure, or of advantage, could for a moment seduce from the right path. This accusation, however false, being uncontradicted, is admitted as true; and Joseph, as the reward of faithfulness almost without example, is immured in close custody, to be dragged forth at a proper opportunity to severer punishment. And here again we have a fresh instance of the greatness of his mind. He chooses rather to incur his master's groundless displeasure, and to sink under

the weight of a false accusation, than to vindicate his own honor, by exposing the shame of a bad woman; and he leaves the clearing up of his character, and the preservation of his life, to that God with whom he had entrusted still higher concerns, those of his immortal soul. And thus, the least-assuming, the shame-faced, feminine virtues, temperance, and chastity, and innocence, and self-government, are found in company with the most manly, the heroic qualities, intrepidity, constancy and contempt of death.

No place is frightful to a good man but the dungeon of an ill conscience. Free from that Joseph is at large, though in prison. It is the favor or displeasure of God that makes this or the other spot comfortable or irksome. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" but to the guilty, the whole world is a place of confinement. God, who delivered him out of the pit, accompanies him also to the prison. And what heart so savage that goodness cannot mollify, what nature so obdurate that the power of the Almighty cannot reach? The profession of a gaoler is unfriendly to benevolence; it is a character which implies sternness and severity. But whether this man were formed of gentler clay, or whether the meekness and modesty of Joseph had wrought even upon a rocky heart; or whether Providence specially interposed to further its own deep designs, so it is, we find our good young man in high favor with his keeper. Wherever we find Joseph....in Potiphar's house, in prison, or at court, we find a man faithful, and diligent, and trusty; and we find a man honored, esteemed, and confided in, by all with whom he has any connection. Let a man be inflexibly honest and true, and he will never have reason to accuse the world of want of confidence. But it is no wonder if the dishonest knave find men full of doubt and suspicion. As his master's house before, so the prison now, prospers on Joseph's account. The world is not always sensible of its obligation to

the presence of good men. But Sodom was in a fearful state the moment righteous Lot went out of it; and when the people of God, "the salt of the earth," are all removed from it, the end of the world cannot be at a great distance.

By a strange concurrence of circumstances, which the Divine Providence alone could have brought together, Joseph has for his fellow prisoners two of the chief officers of the king of Egypt, who had fallen under their master's displeasure; and had been for some time in confinement, uncertain of their doom. The great God is whetting his instruments, making his arrangements, marshalling his forces, at very different times, and in very different places. The envy of Jacob's sons, the lasciviousness of Potiphar's wife, the disobedience of Pharaoh's servants, the anger of the king himself...all, all meet, strange to think! in one point, the elevation of Joseph to the right hand of the throne. Remove but one link, and the chain is broken asunder. Take away but a single stone, and the fabric falls to the ground. But "this work and counsel is of God, and therefore it cannot be overthrown." "He willeth, and none can let it."

It is not at all surprising, that he who had been preparing his work in places and in minds so remote from, so unlike to, and so unconnected with each other, should bring it to a conclusion by means somewhat uncommon and supernatural. It happened, that in one and the same night, the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh dreamed each a dream, which laid fast hold of their minds and memory. And being men, like the rest of their country, strongly tinctured with superstition, and at that time in circumstances which peculiarly disposed them to receive superstitious impressions, their spirits are considerably affected by the vision of the night; not doubting that it portended the speedy approach of some great good or evil. Joseph attending them in the morning, in the course of

his duty, observed the deep concern which was engraved on their countenances; and sympathy being always one of the native effusions of an honest heart, he kindly inquires into the cause of it.

By the way, how pleasant it is to observe this excellent young person, with so much cheerfulness and good nature performing the humble offices of a gaoler's servant? He was accustomed to be waited upon, to be ministered unto; but duty calls, and with alacrity he ministers to the necessity of others. But what do I see? An under gaoler starting up all at once into an interpreter of dreams, possessing a sagacity that reaches into fatality, directed and taught by a Spirit whose piercing eye penetrates into eternity, and discerns all the wonders of the world unknown! How much wiser, how much more noble, how much more excellent, are they who live in communion with God than other men! For though they do not all attain the gift of prophecy, the gift of working miracles, the gift of speaking with tongues; yet they all are dignified by the spirit of prayer, the spirit of adoption, "the spirit of faith, the spirit of love, and of a sound mind."

Joseph, from the different complexion of their several dreams, and inspired no doubt by wisdom from above, predicts their approaching doom; the speedy restoration of the one to his former trust and dignity; a sudden and ignominious death to the other. Nothing but inspiration could have borne Joseph through a declaration so bold and decisive, and which was to be brought to the awful test of confirmation or disappointment in so short a space as three days. So confident is he of the certainty of his interpretation, that he founds all his hopes of enlargement upon it. And there is something inexpressibly tender and pathetic in his application to the chief butler to that effect, "but think on me when it shall be well 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 the land of the Hebrews : and here also have I done nothing, that they should put me into the dungeon," Gen. xl. 14, 15.

The event justified the prediction ; and it is an awful and affecting illustration of the observation of the wise man, "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water : he turneth it whithersoever he will," Prov. xxi. 1. A youth, a stranger, a prisoner, could have no power over the councils of Pharaoh. But the power which controls all the potentates of the earth, and marshals the whole host of heaven, is bringing his own word to pass, and performing his own pleasure. The chief butler, we may suppose, readily promised Joseph his best services when he should be again restored to place and power ; but, like a true courtier, he thinks no more of his promise, nor of his fellow prisoner, after his own turn was served. So selfish, so thoughtless, so ungrateful is man ! Had he been under no personal obligation to the young stranger, for his tender assiduities while in confinement, and for the agreeable and certain intelligence which he received from him of his approaching deliverance, common humanity, awakened by the simple tale of innocence and misery which he had told, ought to have prompted his immediate and most earnest exertions in his behalf. And yet he suffers two full years to linger away, without caring to reflect whether such a person existed or not. And when he thinks of him at last, it is not the generous recollection of kindness and attachment ; but the selfish remembrance of courtly adulation, eager to gratify his prince, not to rescue talents, and innocence and worth, from unmerited oppression. Pharaoh hanged him not for the offences which he had committed against his sovereign, but for his forgetfulness and ingratitude to Joseph, let him be hung up an object of detestation and contempt to all generations of mankind.

How very differently do God and men often judge of one and the same object ! If there be in all Egypt

a person more forlorn and inconsiderable than another, it is an Hebrew slave in a dungeon. But "God raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes." Pharaoh himself now begins to act a part in this wonderful drama. For kings, in the hand of God, are only instruments of an higher order, and of more extensive operation. Kings are liable to hunger and thirst like other men; kings must sleep, and may be disturbed by dreams like other men...and thus it happened to the mighty sovereign of Egypt. With vision upon vision, in one night, was his rest troubled; the strange coincidence and mysterious import of which greatly perplex his waking thoughts. In a country teeming with gods, and over-run with superstition, no circumstance was overlooked which in any manner seemed to portend a future event. No wonder then that the prince, who has not always the best informed nor the firmest mind of any man within his dominions, should be rendered uneasy by a repetition of dreams, so singular in themselves, so similar to and yet so unlike one another. It is not less wonderful, that in a country so prolific of magicians and soothsayers, not one should be found bold enough to affix a meaning, or guess at an interpretation. Was it that the true God confounded and silenced their vain imaginations? or that Pharaoh, dissatisfied with their idle conjectures, and prompted from above to make farther inquiry, rejected the usual modes of solution, that, heaven-directed, Joseph might emerge out of obscurity to save a great nation, to preserve his father's house in famine, and to fulfil the prediction and promise made to Abraham, concerning the future fortunes of his posterity?

The king's vexation interests and affects the whole court. And then for the first time the chief butler bethinks himself of his faults, and of his promise, and of his obligations to his fellow prisoner, and relates

in the hearing of the king, the very extraordinary circumstances of his own imprisonment and enlargement; of his dream, the interpretation and the issue. He is of consequence led to mention the character and situation of the interpreter. This instantly effects for Joseph, what his friendship, had it been exerted, perhaps would not have produced...an immediate order to set the prisoner free, and to bring him without delay into the royal presence. When men can be subservient to the interest, the pleasure, or the ambition of princes, they are in the sure road to preferment; and a man is often more indebted for success to a fortunate incident than to a righteous cause. Joseph's affairs are now in a train such as his warmest friends could wish; and again we see another saying of the wise man verified; "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men," Prov. xxii. 29.

Pharaoh's expectations are not disappointed. He relates his dreams; and God, the author of the visions, and who had sent the interpreter and the explanation, by the mouth of Joseph unfolds its meaning and import. Pharaoh's dream had puzzled himself and all Egypt by its first aspect; but now that it is explained, how easy, how simple, how applicable, how natural every thing appears! The greatest discoveries, after they are made, appear so obvious and so plain, that every one is ready to wonder he did not hit upon it first; and this instead of diminishing, greatly enhances the merit of the first discoverer. Upon the manifestation of the import of Pharaoh's redoubled vision, it is found, God, who had given formerly to two of the servants an intimation of their approaching fate, was now giving to the sovereign a premonition of the visitations of his providence, to this great, populous and wealthy empire. A previous notice of good renders it a double blessing; a warning of evil prepares us to meet it, and thereby diminishes its weight.

Joseph's interpretation carried conviction along with it; and Pharaoh immediately resolves to act upon it. There is a certain undescribable charm in true wisdom, in unaffected goodness, that forces approbation, and carries the heart captive at once. There is a native dignity in virtue, which, while it never assumes, nor pushes itself forward, is never timorous, embarrassed or awkward. Joseph possesses unaffected ease and composure in the presence of Pharaoh and all his court; and the court on this occasion, we have reason to think, was a very splendid, public and crowded one. So good a thing is it to have the heart established by the fear of God. It casts out every other fear. But the days of his depression are now ended, and every step he has trod through this valley of humiliation, is a progress made to the glory that follows. And here we break off, having conducted Joseph to the right hand of the throne; and beholding him ready to mount the sacred chariot, while admiring nations proclaim before him, "bow the knee."

The next Lecture will exhibit the son of Jacob in all the splendor of high life; armed with all the authority of a minister of state, possessing a plentitude of power over the whole kingdom of Egypt.

Turn for a moment from Joseph, and behold a greater than him. "The prince of this world came, and found nothing in him." Temptation addressed to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," had from his lips an instant repulse, "it is written, it is written." "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away;" he suffered as a malefactor, though "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips." He was condemned and put to death upon a false accusation. From the triumphant ignominy of the cross, he dispenses life and death to his fellow-sufferers; paradise to the one, everlasting shame to the other. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?"

“The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” “No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him.” “He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” Phil. ii. 7...11. “Fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” Luke xxiv. 25, 26. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne,” Rev. iii. 21. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,” Rev. ii. 10.

I conclude all in the words of the beloved disciple, who thus describes a more august vision than ever appeared to Pharaoh: “And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain: having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and

thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing honor, glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth forever and ever," Rev. v. 6...14.

History of Joseph.

LECTURE XIII.

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one 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: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck: and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had: and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh; and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.... GEN. xli. 38...44.

IF it be pleasant to observe, in particular instances, the providence of God justifying its own procedure, by relieving and vindicating oppressed innocence, or by precipitating prosperous guilt from its lofty seat; what must be the satisfaction and delight of beholding the whole plan of Providence unfolded, every mystery in the divine conduct explained, and all the ways of God to men completely vindicated! A very considerable part of our present distress arises from hastiness

and impatience of spirit. We are for rushing to the end at once; we will not afford our Maker and Ruler leisure to open his own designs, to illustrate his own meaning. We would have the work of Heaven performed in our way; we have settled the whole order of things in our own minds; and all is wrong that ignorance, fretfulness and presumption are pleased to dislike. Cloudy, rainy weather is much less agreeable than serenity; yet it requires but a moment's reflection to be convinced that eternal sunshine would be the reverse of a blessing to mankind. Now the alternate succession of day and night, of fair weather and rain, have not greater beauty and utility in the world of nature, than the successive shades of adversity, and sun-beams of prosperity, which appear on the face of the moral world.

Of this unceasing succession of mixture, the lot of individuals, the fortune of nations, the state of the globe, perhaps the system of the universe is composed. Nothing is permitted to continue too long: no being is suffered to go too far out of his station. The balance eternally depends from the hand of a Being possessed of infinite wisdom; and after a few slight vibrations, the scales speedily bring each other into equilibrium again. The swelling of a wave, the rolling of the ship, nay the finger of a child may for a moment derange the compass; but after trembling an instant or two from point to point, immediately the needle resumes its steady, stated northern direction.

If there be in history a passage, which more than another encourages us patiently and submissively to wait for the end, to follow and submit to the conduct of Providence, it is the story of Joseph the son of Jacob. What man of humanity would have refused to lend his helping hand to rescue the innocent youth from the fury of his unnatural brothers, to pull him up out of the pit, and to restore him to his father again? Who would not gladly have sacrificed a part of

his substance to purchase his release from Egyptian servitude? What friend to truth and virtue but would have rejoiced to vindicate his character from the vile aspersions of his infamous mistress, and to save him from undeserved punishment? What heart, alive to the feelings of gratitude, but would have seconded the application of "the chief butler," for his immediate enlargement? But all this would have been precipitate, rash and absurd. His fond father himself could not have conducted his favorite son to the honors which he attained, by a way so certain, so safe, and so honorable. Whether we regard Joseph himself or the interests of his father's family, or the welfare of Egypt, or the good of the human race, Providence, when we come to the issue, it is found, has secured, promoted and succeeded them all, in its own wise and gracious method, infinitely better than they possibly could have been by all the sagacity and foresight of man.

By the wonderful steps then which we have seen, behold Joseph exalted to the right hand of Pharaoh, made lord over all Egypt, the lives, the conduct, the liberties, the property of millions entrusted to his care, subjected to his authority. Behold him married to a princess, arrayed in vestures of fine linen, a gold chain about his neck, the royal signet in his hands, riding through the land in the second chariot, while admiring nations bow the knee before him. Behold the dream which boyish vanity, perhaps, at first suggested, which fraternal jealousy so keenly reprobated, and so sternly avenged, which a father's wisdom was constrained to check and reprove, and which incredulity, no doubt, would treat as the idle chimera of a disturbed imagination, is verified and brought to pass. When we observe so many of the important events of Joseph's life turning upon the hinge of dreams and their interpretation, we are taught to think respectfully of every method by which God is pleased to communicate the

knowledge of his will to mankind. And, when our own dreams, as they sometimes do, either call us to duty, or convince us of sin; when they recal to our memory what is past, or admonish us of what is to come, so that we may profit thereby, we ought to consider them as warnings from Heaven, and the voice of God. But to attend to and seek a meaning in every wandering of a sleeping fancy is silly and childish; and to suffer them, of whatever complexion they be, to influence the conduct of life, so as to induce us to neglect our duty, to vex and disquiet ourselves, or disturb others, is absurd, superstitious and wicked.

There are three particulars in this part of the history of Joseph, which have exercised the learning and ingenuity of critics and commentators. First, whether the Hebrew word, *Abrech*, translated in our version, "bow the knee," had not better have been rendered, as the word will bear, "tender father;" an appellation descriptive of his office and character; dignity and gentleness united. Secondly, it is inquired, what is the exact import of the name which Pharaoh gave to Joseph upon his promotion? It was customary for eastern princes and nations to distinguish by new titles, persons who had rendered themselves illustrious by superior abilities, or splendid and important actions; as in the case of Daniel and the three other children of the captivity. That which was given to Joseph, according to some, is an Egyptian expression which signifies "Saviour of the world," and this, if just, conveys a high idea of the importance which the king ascribed to Joseph's information and advice. Others contend that it signifies no more than "revealer, or expounder of secrets." This last interpretation has the most numerous, perhaps the most respectable support. The third particular alluded to, involves in it something like a censure of Joseph, as if, hurried away by motives of ambition and pride, he had been eager to form an improper and dangerous matrimonial con-

nection with an idolatrous woman, nay the daughter of a man who by profession, as a priest of *On*, or *Heliopolis*, the city of the Sun, was concerned to support and promote an idolatrous worship. The critics who advance and maintain this opinion, represent Joseph as a mere time-serving sycophant, imbibing in a moment the spirit and manners of a court, and sacrificing principle to conveniency. I confess myself so partial to this amiable and excellent man, that without hesitation I undertake to meet this charge; and would alledge in his behalf, that, as the Spirit of God no where reprehends this conduct, which in cases deserving blame is done freely and without reserve, so we ought not, without just cause, and perfect knowledge, to find fault; charity obliging us "to think no evil," where we can think well; to put the best construction on what is doubtful, and to judge of what is not clear and explicit, by that which is. When I see Providence blessing this union by the birth of two sons, raised in process of time to a double rank of dignity and importance in Israel, it is impossible for me to think uncharitably of the union itself, which was the origin of that blessing. What, did Joseph acknowledge God so closely in every thing, even to the very naming of his children, correspondently to the aspects of the Divine Providence towards him, and can we suppose he neglected God in a matter of so much higher consequence? Let me rather say, and say it without reserve, that the piety, the chastity, the fidelity, the self-government of Joseph, in flying from an illicit commerce with his master's wife, was thus rewarded of Heaven by a virtuous and lasting union with a chaste virgin and a prince's daughter. But we dwell too long on a vindication, which was perhaps altogether unnecessary. To proceed:

Joseph has arrived at a station of very high honor, but it is not to him a post of emolument and ease merely; and I rejoice to see the same person who

diligently and humanely served the goaler as a deputy, and who faithfully managed the affairs of Potiphar as a steward, attentively, humbly, industriously conducting the interests of a great king, and a mighty empire, as a minister of state. On which I found an observation frequently made already, I care not how often, that the fear of God is the best security of a man's good behaviour in every situation; and that "he is to be trusted in nothing, who has not a conscience in every thing.

Joseph was but thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, seventeen of which he had passed under the wing of a fond indulgent parent, and the other thirteen, at that period of life when the heart is most devoted to pleasure, he had lingered away in all the vanity of human wretchedness; but in all the dignity of virtue, all the superiority of wisdom, all the delights, pure and sublime, of true piety. And now, at an age when most men are only beginning to reflect and act as reasonable beings, we see him raised, not by accident, nor cabal, nor petulance, but by undisputed merit, to a situation, which one part of mankind looks up to with desire, another with awe, and a third with despair. And happy was it for Egypt, that ever this youth, this stranger, this Hebrew was sold for a slave into its bosom, for "God sent him to save much people alive."

Egypt gloried that she was not, like other countries, dependant on the clouds of Heaven for the fertility of her soil, and the exuberance of her crops, but, that she derived her rich harvests from the flux and reflux of her own river. But in vain had the Nile risen to the desired height during seven successive years of uncommon plenteousness, had not the prophetic foresight of a Joseph taught both prince and people to take advantage of the favor of Providence, and to lay a good foundation for the time to come. Nothing do men so much abuse as plenty; nothing do they so soon and so severely feel as want of bread. These seven prosperous years seem to compensate to Joseph

all his former ills. His honor is cleared, his predictions are accomplished. What seldom meets, the sovereign and the subject strive who shall exalt him most; his domestic felicity keeps pace with the public prosperity; conscience approves; and God, the great God, smiles. If there be a condition of humanity to be desired, to be envied, it was this.

Shall I stop to express a wonder, that during all this period, with all the power of Pharaoh in his hand, with a heart so tender, and a spirit so dutiful, he should make no attempt to convey to the wretched old man in Canaan, intelligence concerning his preservation and his present condition. But I check myself, when I consider that the whole was of the Lord of Hosts, "who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

It is worth while to observe, how the style of scripture is adapted to experience, and the nature of things. Years of tranquility and success glide away imperceptibly; but every moment of pain is observed and felt, as it halts along. Accordingly, the history of seven prosperous and abundant years is dispatched in a sentence or two; whereas seven years of famine, as they were more sensibly felt in their progress, so they afford more abundant materials to the pen of the historian; and the detail is lengthened out to the reader, as the distress was to the unhappy sufferers. Little do we think of this in the days of health, and ease and joy; and therefore little thankful are we to God for our multiplied comforts. To instruct us in their value, he is constrained to put forth his hand, and either to withdraw or to mar them; and we awaken, alas too late, to a sense of our obligations to an indulgent Providence! The seven years of famine are now commenced, and the honor of Joseph's sagacity is established, but by a very different proof. When either the promises or the threatenings of the word are fulfilled, we have equally a demonstration of the truth and faithfulness of

God : venerable when he blesses, and venerable when he punishes a guilty world. Happy the prince, who, circumstanced like Pharaoh, can roll the cares and anxieties of government upon a minister of ability and integrity like Joseph. Happy the people, governed by a ruler, who, himself educated in the school of affliction, has learned to succour the distressed.

The beginning and progress of scarcity is described in this part of the sacred history with wonderful exactness and energy. It represents men first parting cheerfully with their money for food. By and by they are reduced to part with their lands, their hope and security, for years to come, in exchange for the subsistence of a day. And, at length, reluctantly and slow, we behold them surrendering liberty itself for the support of life.

The neighboring nations feel, with Egypt, the rod of God's anger ; but every neighboring nation is not blessed with a Joseph, capable of foreseeing the evil, and of applying the remedy. Canaan, in common with others, is visited with the general calamity ; and Jacob, who lived there, Jacob, the heir of the promise, is ready to perish with his family for lack of food. But he ill understands the promises, and the power of God, who, under the pressure of any affliction, trusts to a miracle for relief, when honest and lawful means are in his power.

After an interval of more than thirteen years, we revisit poor Jacob's melancholy habitation, and find him what he was from the beginning " a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Behold a wound which time could not cure, festering in his bosom. Behold him sinking into the grave under a load which reason could not alleviate, nor religion itself totally remove. His family indeed, greatly increased by a multiplicity of grandchildren ; but that great blessing embittered and converted into a curse, by the dreadful pressure of famine. What a dismal condition ! Children crying for bread, and none to give them ; the

wretched parents looking at their perishing offspring, and then at one another in silent astonishment and despair. Conscience, which had probably slept quietly in better days, would now, no doubt awaken the bitter memory of guilt long past, and which they had endeavored to forget. The sight of their own children ready to die of hunger, could not but revive the dreadful recollection of the time, when, in cold blood, they resolved to starve a brother, an innocent brother, to death.

In Jacob himself, we behold a moving and instructive picture of every child of God, and of that church whereof he was then the living head and representative, "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." He "heard there was corn in Egypt." He had silver and gold in abundance. Despondency was only adding to the evil; he therefore rouses his astonished sons from their lethargy and dejection, and proposes a journey into Egypt to buy food. There is no necessity so cogent as that of eating. It eagerly catches therefore at every prospect of relief, believes things incredible, attempts things impossible. The ten elder sons of Jacob therefore, set out for the land of Egypt on this errand, and into Egypt they came.

On making the necessary inquiries respecting the purchase of corn, they are directed, as all buyers, both natives and foreigners were, to Joseph; without whom "no man lifted up his hand or his foot in all the land." The change produced in a youth of seventeen, by the addition of thirteen years; his new name, his dress, language and manners; his high station and his stately demeanor, have effectually disguised their brother from their knowledge; and Providence determined to abate them not a single iota of the humiliation predicted by the dreams, prostrates their "ten sheaves before the sheaf of Joseph," levels the ten proud spirits at their unknown brother's feet. Want makes men wonderfully submissive and com-

plying: and they who fight against God will sooner or later find themselves dreadfully over-matched. Unknown by them, they stand well known and confessed to him. At sight of them natural affection resumes its empire in his heart, and the tide which had long forgotten to flow, now rushes impetuously from its source. He beholds ten; but where are the two, more beloved and endeared than all the rest? It is impossible to conceive, much more to describe, the emotions of Joseph's soul on hearing tidings of his father's family: to learn that his dear, his tender parent was still in the land of the living; surviving so long misery so dreadful; that this dear brother, his own mother's son, was alive with him also, and in health. The sovereignty of Egypt I am persuaded never yielded him satisfaction half so sincere.

The singularity of his situation evidently suggested to Joseph the experiment which he now resolved to make of the temper and character of his brothers; and particularly of their disposition in an hour of trial, toward their father and Benjamin. I cannot suppose him for a moment actuated by sentiments of revenge. Had he been under the influence of such a passion, the means of gratification were certainly most amply in his power. But the whole tenor of his conduct shews that he was governed by a very different spirit; his severity is altogether affected, the better to carry on the design which he had formed; and the peculiarity of his behaviour toward some of the brothers, is to be ascribed to some peculiar circumstances in the history of the family, which the sacred penman has not thought proper to record. Some rigid critics, however, while they acquit Joseph of cruelty and revenge, severely accuse him of impiety and profanity in swearing, and swearing repeatedly, "by the life of Pharaoh," and that, to a charge which he well knew not to be founded in fact. It is not our design to undertake a justification of Joseph in every particular. What character can

stand throughout the test of a rigid examination? Sacred history exhibits men just as they are, not what they ought in all respects to be. Dark spots are most easily discerned in the whitest garments, and foul blemishes in the fairest reputations. But let no sanctity of character presume to shelter the slightest deviation from the path of God's commandments. No; the smallest sin, if any sin be small, is a degradation and disgrace to the most sanctified and exalted character.

While Joseph, the better to conceal himself, talks and acts like a true Egyptian, God employs his affected sternness and severity to awaken the slumbering consciences of his brothers, and to shew the sons of Jacob to themselves. Treated as spies, roughly spoken to, their most solemn protestations disregarded, put in prison and bound....their treatment of Joseph in the evil day which put him in their power, rushes upon their memory, in all its guilt and horror, and they mutually upbraid and reproach each other with their barbarity, "saying one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold also, his blood is required." Gen. xlii. 21, 22.

This mutual and self-accusation excites in the tender heart of Joseph, emotions which he is unable to conceal. Hearing himself mentioned with so much tenderness and regret, by persons once so cruel, and in a language which he had been long unaccustomed to hear, the pretended Egyptian becomes in spite of himself a real Israelite; his bosom swells, his visage warms, the tear starts to his eye. To prevent a premature discovery, he is constrained to retire and recompose himself. He returns and renews the conversation, and again assuming the lord of Egypt, sets nine at liberty, binds Simeon before their eyes, and commits him to close confine-

ment, as a hostage for their return, together with Benjamin their brother. He then dismisses them loaded with corn for their families, and provision for the way: having secretly given orders to his steward, in making up the bags of corn, to deposit each man's money in the mouth of his respective sack. This was not discovered till they were considerably advanced on their journey homeward; when one undoing his sack to give his ass provender, observed his money in his sack's mouth. Upon their arrival in Canaan, the same thing is found to have happened to them all. Comparing this singularly strange circumstance with the rest of their eventful journey to Egypt, they discern the hand of God in it, and observing such an unaccountable mixture of flattering and of mortifying events, they remain, upon the whole, perplexed and confounded. When the mind is sore, and the conscience seriously alarmed, dispensations of every complexion, both mercy and judgment, are viewed with a fearful eye. When we know we are deserving of punishment, every thing becomes a punishment to us, either felt or feared.

And now again, the unhappy father reckoning his long expected sons, as they arrive, finds their number short by one. "Simeon too is not;" and the account given of his absence, instead of pouring balm into the wound, is "as vinegar upon nitre." "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not," and Benjamin is demanded. To recover what he has lost, he must risk still more. Simeon is not what he should be, but his kind forgiving father cannot think of giving him up, worthless as he is. To lose a pious, promising child by death, is painful: but the death of a thoughtless, graceless profligate, to a parent of piety and sensibility, is much worse. We see the distressed old man putting off, and still putting off the evil day. He has more than one reason for sparing the corn which had been brought from such a distance, and procured at such a risk. Before a fresh supply can be obtained, and Simeon

restored, "the son of his right hand" must be surrendered, Benjamin must be taken away; and the thought of this plants a dagger in his heart. But the famine continues, necessity presses, and a second pilgrimage must be undertaken. The account of it, however, must for the present be deferred. The history swells upon us, and we shall rather entreat your patient attention to another Lecture on the subject, than hasten over a story so much calculated at once to please and to instruct. But behold a greater than Joseph is here.

Behold Jesus, "for the suffering of death," highly exalted," distinguished by "a name that is above every name," "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 10, 11. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," Matt. xxviii. 18. "The Father himself judgeth no man: but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him," John v. 22, 23. "I am the bread of life that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: -and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," John vi. 50, 51. "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. And all that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 35, 37. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price," Isa. lv. 1. "It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19. "And of his

fulness have all ye received, and grace for grace." "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," John vi. 55. "Your fathers found corn in Egypt." "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead, but he that eateth of this bread shall live forever." "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," John vi. 54. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. "Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. viii. 11. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also," John xiv. 2, 3. "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they, and the children of Judah together, going, and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten," Jer. l. 4, 5. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Luke xxii. 28....30. "Eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved." "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace: In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," John xvi. 33.

History of Joseph.

LECTURE XIV.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph ; doth my father yet live ? And his brethren could not answer him : for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph saith unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you : and they came near ; and he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither : for God did send me hither before you to preserve life.... GEN. xlv. 3, 4, 5.

THE productions of human power and skill afford but an imperfect and short-lived pleasure. The delight of the artist himself is over long before his work is completed, and the wonder of the spectator lasts only till he is let into the secret, and admitted behind the scenes. It is not so with the works of God. When the mighty fabric of the universe was finished, God surveyed his work with perfect complacency and satisfaction, for "behold it was all very good." And such, to this day, it appears in the eye of every beholder. No frequency of contemplation, no closeness of inspection, no keenness of investigation, or success in discovery, ever bring on weariness or disgust. The eye is eternally delighted with the magnificence and splendor of the azure vault, with the verdure and variety of the fertile earth. The music of the grove never fails to charm the listening ear ; the perfume breathed from "the flower and the shrub, and the tree," never palls

upon the sense. The whole order, harmony, majesty and beauty of nature, forever astonish, compose, elevate, inform and instruct the soul.

The same may, with truth, be said of the word of God. What human composition so exquisite as always to please? What human composition have we patience to turn over a tenth or a twentieth time? The stores of human wisdom are quickly exhausted; the eye speedily reaches forward to the end of created perfection. But though the charm of novelty may have passed away, though memory may have stored itself with the very words, and the heart have felt the impression a thousand and a thousand times, yet the beauty, the force, the excellency, the importance of scripture composition remain in undiminished lustre. That sun in the firmament of grace, which has irradiated, cheered and blessed ages and generations past, is also our light and our glory, and shall, with unimpaired strength, with unconfined liberality, diffuse light, and life, and joy to the final consummation of all things.

If serious minds be disposed to think thus of scripture in general, all persons of sensibility and taste will, I am persuaded, agree in forming such a judgment of the history of Joseph in particular. The unlettered man and the scholar; the child and the grown man; the ingenious and the simple; the believer and the infidel; Greek and Jew, have in all ages admired, delighted in, and edified by a story, which, clothed with all the graces of eloquence, exhibits the most uncommon, surprising, affecting and important events; and conveys the purest and sublimest lessons of piety and morality.

The famine continued to rage with unrelenting severity in Egypt and the countries adjacent, and dire indeed must have been the pressure of that calamity, which compelled a father, tender and affectionate like Jacob, after losing two sons by a stroke heavier than that of death, to part with his youngest, darling hope, at the risk of never seeing him more. How horrid

that plague which can force a fond mother to devour her own child for food! Let this awful reflection, in a year of scarcity, and at a season of waste and luxury,* check profusion, awaken our compassion to the poor and wretched, and temper our joy. The old man yields up his Benjamin, as if his own body were dismembering limb by limb. "If it must be so now" "take your brother, and arise, go again unto the man. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved," Gen. xliii. 13, 14.

With double money in their hands, then, with a present consisting of the choicest productions of Canaan, for the governor of Egypt, and with the heart and soul of their aged father in their custody, they set out on a second pilgrimage to buy food. What is a land producing "balm, honey, spices, myrrh, nuts, and almonds," compared to a land of corn! What worthless things are gold and silver compared to bread. If our own country be less fertile in the wine and oil, the drugs and perfumes, the gems and gold of other regions, it is more abundantly productive of the staff and the protection of life....the "finest of the wheat," the oak more firm and durable than cedar, and iron more precious than rubies.

Their arrival being announced to Joseph, and his brother Benjamin appearing with the rest; Benjamin, whom having parted with a child, he could not have known, but from the company in which he was found, he gives orders to make preparation for a great entertainment in honor of these strangers. The men were not more distressed at the harshness of the treatment which they met with at first, than they are perplexed and confounded at the excessive kindness and hospitality of their present reception; for an ill conscience is ever timid and suspicious. Against the time of

* December 25th, 1782.

Joseph's arrival they make ready their present, and being admitted into his presence, they again prostrate themselves to the earth before him. In vain do men set themselves to counteract the decrees of Heaven.

After the customary salutations, with a mixture of anxiety and hope, he inquires after the life and welfare of their father, and, to his inexpressible satisfaction, learns that he was alive and in health. But the sight of Benjamin awakens too many tender recollections to be resisted, too many fond ideas to be suppressed. The premature loss of their common parent, the partial affection of their kind father, the present anxiety and distress of the venerable man, his own strange eventful history, Benjamin's tender youth, his distance from home, his separation from paternal care and protection, his exposedness to dangers which had almost proved fatal to himself; all, all rush upon his mind at once, and excite emotions too powerful to be concealed. He is obliged to retire in order to throw a veil over those feelings which must have betrayed him; and gives vent to his heart in secret. Having recomposed himself, he returns to the company, and, resuming the Egyptian, commands the entertainment to be served up. Three tables are set out, one for himself apart, as governor of the country; another for his guests, by themselves; and a third for the Egyptians of his household, or such as might be invited on the occasion. For the Egyptians, either from religious scruples, or political pride and aversion, abhorred a communication with other nations in convivial or sacred entertainments.

And here was presented a fresh source of wonder to the sons of Jacob. By Joseph's direction they are arranged at table in the exact order of their birth, without inquiry or information. This, in connexion with the account which it behoved them to have heard concerning such an extraordinary person, must have conveyed to them an idea of a sagacity altogether preternatural. Nor would their surprise be diminished by

the distinguished mark of respect shewn to their youngest brother ; for the mess sent from the governor's table to him, was " five times " the quantity of any of the rest ; and it was thus that in ancient times, among eastern nations, superior deference and esteem were expressed. However, the increasing festivity of the banquet gradually dissipated all their terrors. " They drank and were merry. " The Hebrew word unquestionably insinuates that they drank to excess. It is natural for men to rush from one extreme to another, and it is not improbable that Joseph threw this temptation in their way, in order to obtain a more thorough insight into their temper and character, by observing them attentively, in a situation when the heart overflows, and the tongue conceals and disguises nothing. Whatever be in this, he is preparing a trial for them more severe than any which they had as yet experienced, and which in some measure compensated the anguish they had occasioned to their father, when they impressed him with the belief of his son's death.

Loaded with civilities, provided with a supply of corn for their starving families, Simeon restored, Benjamin not detained ; they set out on their journey to Canaan, with a merry heart, talking one to another of the strange things which had come to pass. But scarcely are they got clear of the city when they are pursued and overtaken by Joseph's steward, charging them with theft, and commanding them instantly to return to his master to answer for it.

With terror and astonishment, though in the confidence of innocence, they deny the charge, and reason upon the improbability of it. Search is made among their stuff for the goods alledged to be stolen ; ten are acquitted with honor, and they are just beginning to exult in the detected falsehood of such a scandalous imputation, when, to their utter confusion, Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Overwhelmed with shame and terror, they are again conducted to his

presence. The crime is proved. To deny it were vain, to excuse it nugatory and absurd; and to account for it is impossible.

Judah, who had been the most urgent with his father to send Benjamin, and had solemnly pledged himself for his safe return, feels himself now called forth: and, in a strain of the most pathetic eloquence that ever flowed from an aching heart, attempts not to extenuate or exculpate, but to raise compassion, and to obtain mercy. The piece is of exquisite beauty and elegance, and, being in every one's hands, may be re-perused at your leisure. The Jewish writers take delight in dwelling upon, and expanding it. Philo in particular, in his treatise entitled, "Joseph," has given a paraphrase of this speech of Judah, which possesses wonderful elegance and propriety of expression, and force of thought. Some of you, perhaps, may not be displeased with having an opportunity of comparing the diffusive, laboured eloquence of the paraphrast, with the energetic simplicity of the sacred text. The former puts into Judah's mouth the following address.

"When we appeared, Sir, before you the first time, we answered without reserve, and according to the strictest truth, all the questions which you were pleased to put to us concerning our family. We acquainted you, that we had a father heavily laden with years, but still more heavily with misfortunes; a father, whose whole life had been one continued struggle with adversity. We added that we had a brother peculiarly dear to him, as the children born towards the end of their life, generally are to old men, and who is the only one remaining of his mother; his brother having come in early youth to a most tragical end. You commanded us, as the proof of our veracity and innocence, to bring that brother unto you, and your command was delivered with such threatenings, that the terror of them accompanied us all the way back to our country, and embittered the remainder of our journey. We reported every thing mi-

nutely to our father, as you directed us. Resolutely and long, he refused to entrust us with the care of that child. Love suggested a thousand causes of apprehension upon his account. He loaded us with the bitterest reproaches for having declared that we had another brother. Subdued by the famine, he at length reluctantly consented; and putting his beloved son, this unhappy youth, into our hands, conjured us by every dear, every awful name, to guard with tenderness his precious life, and as we would not see him expire before our eyes in anguish and despair, to bring him back in safety. He parted with him as with a limb torn from his own body; and in an agony of grief inexpressible, deplored the dreadful necessity which separated him from a son, on whom all the happiness of his life depended. How then can we appear before a father of such delicate sensibility? With what eyes shall we dare to look upon him, unless we carry back with us this son of his right hand, this staff of his old age, whom alas you have condemned to slavery? The good old man will expire in horrors dreadful to nature, as soon as he shall find that his son is not with us. Our enemies will exult over us under these misfortunes, and treat us as the most infamous of parricides. I must appear to the world, and to myself, as the perpetrator of that most horrid of crimes, the murder of a father; for it was I who most urgently pressed my father to yield. I engaged by the most solemn promises, and the most sacred pledges, to bring the child back. Me he entrusted with the sacred deposit, and of my hand he will require it. Have pity, I beseech you, on the deplorable condition of an old man, stripped of his last comfort, and whose misery will be aggravated by reflecting that he foresaw its approach and yet wanted resolution to prevent it. If your just indignation must needs have a sacrifice, here I am ready, at the price of my liberty, or of my life, to expiate this young man's guilt, and to purchase his release? Grant this request, not so much for the sake of

the youth himself, as of his absent father, who never offended you, but who venerates your person and esteems your virtues. Suffer us not to plead in vain for a shelter under your right hand, to which we flee, as to an holy altar, consecrated as a refuge to the miserable. Pity an old man, who, during the whole course of a long life, has cultivated arts becoming a man of wisdom and probity, and who, on account of his amiable qualities, is almost adored by the inhabitants of Syria and Canaan, though he profess a religion, and follow a mode of living totally different from theirs."

This address, it must be acknowledged, possesses uncommon grace and tenderness. But it is evident from whence the modern, pretended Jew, has copied his tenderest and most delicate touches. And when the copy and the original are brought close together, it will be apparent to a discerning eye which is the most finished piece. If Philo has made Judah speak well, it will hardly be disputed that Moses has made him speak better.

The words of Judah penetrated the heart of Joseph. The affectionate manner in which his father was mentioned, the unfeigned earnestness expressed to save him from the impending blow; the generosity of his offer to put himself in Benjamin's place, to purchase a parent's comfort and a brother's release, at the price of his own liberty; all this satisfies him, that time, and affliction, and a sense of duty, and the powerful constraint of returning nature, had introduced another and a happier spirit into the family. He finds himself incapable of any longer deferring the pleasure which he should both receive and communicate by making a discovery of himself. The curiosity of his domestics must have been greatly raised by the unaccountable peculiarity of his behaviour to these strangers, but he does not choose to have any spectators of that scene of nature which he was meditating, except those who were to be actors in it. The heart likes not to have its stronger emotions seen of many witnesses. "The heart knoweth its own

bitterness, and a stranger intermeddled not with its joy." He therefore commands every Egyptian out of the apartment, and being left alone with his eleven brothers, whose consternation must have been greatly increased by the orders which they had now heard given, he bursts into an agony of tenderness, and in words inarticulate and indistinct through tears, declares in one breath who he was; and in the next, with accents that pierce the soul, pours out his heart in a tender inquiry after his old kind father. Two short words unfold the whole mystery of this strange conduct.

But what language can convey an adequate idea of Joseph's feelings at that moment; the feelings of a heart glowing at the thought of once more beholding his venerable sire, of being pressed to his bosom, of cheering and cherishing his declining years; a heart melting into sympathy, forgiveness and brotherly love, exulting in the joy of rendering good for evil; a heart lost in wonder and overflowing with gratitude, while it contemplated the wisdom and goodness of all-ruling Providence, in producing such events by means so incomprehensible.

The feelings of the brothers too, are rather to be conceived than described. Thunderstruck with astonishment, oppressed with shame, stung with remorse, petrified with terror:....no, not terror; the words, the looks, the tears of their relenting brother, assure them in a moment that they have nothing to fear. But unable to make any reply, they afford the noble-minded, the condescending Joseph, an opportunity of so far recovering himself, as to be able to administer this strongest of all consolation, that their unkindness to himself had been intended, ordered and over-ruled of God, to answer the most valuable and important purposes to him, to themselves, to their father's house, and to many nations. "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you, to preserve life," Gen. xlv. 5. In this address of Joseph, I know not which to admire

most ; his magnanimity in pardoning offences so atrocious, losing sight of the criminals in the brothers ; his wonderful skill in adapting the style of his consolatory arguments so exactly to the circumstances of the case ; his invincible humility in carrying the spirit and temper of the lowliest condition and relations of humanity, into the loftiest, most envied, and most corruptive station of courtly grandeur ; or his pure, fervent and sublime piety, in considering and acknowledging all that had come to pass, as the design and operation of Heaven.

With infinite judgment and propriety, the sacred historian has put no reply whatever, into the mouths of the brothers. There are certain situations which defy description ; certain emotions which silence best, which silence only, can explain. And such was theirs. Joseph however is not so lost in joy, as to forget that it was far from being perfect till one more became a partaker of it, nor so much swallowed up in the present, as to neglect the future. With gladness of heart would he have flown to Hebron, and been himself the messenger of his own life and prosperity, to the good old man. But the duties of his station forbid. This is one of the taxes which greatness is doomed to pay. It must learn to repress the inclinations and forego the pleasures of the private citizen. Princes live not to themselves but to the public ; and the happiness of millions, is a felicity infinitely superior to every sordid, every selfish gratification. He could not, must not go to his father ; but it was not impossible to remove his father into Egypt. The excellence of his disposition appears in every thing. In characters like his, we do not find duty justling duty out of doors, but every one in its proper place. Passion tempered by prudence ; and wisdom animated by passion. To render the projected removal of his venerable parent as easy and comfortable as possible to his advanced age, and increasing infirmities, he proposes for his residence the land of Goshen, which was a province of the lower Egypt,

on the east side of the Nile, bordering upon Arabia, and a frontier to Palestine. This province was fit for feeding cattle, the profession which his father and brethren followed; and it was not far from the city where the Egyptian monarchs usually resided, and where Joseph's stated habitation of course was. It is called *Zoan* in the seventy-eighth psalm, and *Tanais* by profane authors. This nearness of situation, Joseph alledged as one motive to induce his father to undertake the journey; and there he engaged to maintain him and all his family, in affluence and comfort.

In Pharaoh we have an amiable instance of qualities rarely to be found in the character of princes....attachment and gratitude. He cheerfully confirms all the engagements of his minister, though they extended to disposing of a whole province of his empire. He outruns the wishes and desires of even filial duty and affection, and strives to repay the kindness of Joseph, whom God had made a father to him, by becoming a shield and protector to his father's house.

But what shall we say, what shall we think of Joseph himself? Men suddenly and remarkably elevated, are apt to forget themselves, to forget those from whom they sprung, and the means by which they rose. But behold the prime minister of a mighty empire, the favorite of a great and powerful prince, the lord of Egypt, attending to the conveniency and comfort of an old shepherd, whose person was unknown in the country which he governed, his religion abhorred, and his occupation despised. O nature, nature! How honorable is thy empire, how glorious are thy triumphs!.... Joseph is now as eager to hasten the departure of his brethren, as he was before artful to detain them. And at Pharaoh's command, dismisses them with a retinue suitable to the rank and dignity of the man who was next the throne. But it is with pleasure we observe, that the splendor of this retinue was not the silly ostentation of wealth and power, but the display of much

better passions, the kindness, the liberality, the gratitude of a good and honest heart.

And, is the sun indeed at length going to arise upon Jacob's hoary head? And shall the heart so long dead to joy, yet once more awakened to transport? And shall his eyes at last close in peace? Alas, alas! are we not all dying to the world, before we begin to live to comfort? Is not the drama of life over, before we are well sensible that our part in the scene has commenced? Is it not rather too late in life to purchase a blessing so transitory, by a change so great? What will a man not do to save his family from perishing, and to be joined to such a son as Joseph? It is indeed too late in life, before we die to hope; and wisely and well it is ordered, that we should hope to the end. The man who has suffered so much, who has died so often, has not much more either to feel or to fear.

This dawning of happiness upon the head of the aged patriarch, is to himself so new, so unlike the common complexion of his lot, opens so many interesting views of Providence....that I trust you will deem with me the prosperous period of Jacob's history deserving of a Lecture by itself. Here then we break off, after having suggested to your minds a few texts of scripture, tending to illustrate and to apply our subject.

....And....“there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his field to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father: but when he

was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," Luke xv. 14...20. "Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. xi. 28, 29. "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive: and let thy widows trust in me," Jer. xlix. 11. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not," Matt. xxiii. 37. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together: for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done," Acts iv. 27, 28. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men: and the weakness of God is stronger than men," 1 Cor. i. 25. "This cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," Isa. xxviii. 29. "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his ways," Psalm xxxvii. 3, 4, 5, 6...23. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee," Job xxii. 21. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Prov. iii. 6.

History of Jacob and Joseph.

LECTURE XV.

So he sent his brethren away, and they departed : and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father ; and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph which he had said unto them : and when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough : Joseph my son is yet alive : I will go and see him before I die....GEN. xlv. 24...28.

IF there be such a thing as pure and perfect joy upon earth, it is that which fills the heart of a parent, when he hears of the wisdom, the virtue and the prosperity of a darling child. If there be sorrow that admits not of consolation, it is the sorrow of a father, for the vice or folly of an ungracious, thankless son, and for the misery in which he has plunged himself. The patriarch Jacob felt both these in the extreme. He had now lived to the age of one hundred and thirty years ; and had proved all the bitter variety of human wretchedness. Every change of condition he has hitherto undergone, is only the sad transition from affliction to affliction. The burthen at length becomes too heavy to bear, and we see a miserable old man

sinking into the grave under the accumulated weight of woes insupportable. In parting with Benjamin he had yielded up his last stake, and renounced all hopes of happiness in this world; calmly looking forward to that peaceful region, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

But the full estimate of human life cannot be made till the scene be closed. The shades of the night at last begin to disperse, and the day dawns. While he is tormenting himself in Canaan, with the apprehension of never seeing more his last, his only remaining hope, Providence is maturing in Egypt, a gracious design in his behalf, which is in a moment to turn his sorrow into joy.

Joseph having discovered himself to his brethren, hastens their return homeward, and dismisses them provided with every accommodation for the safe and comfortable removal of their aged father, and their tender children. What a triumph was Joseph's! What a glorious superiority! The triumph of Heaven, the superiority of God himself, who "overcomes evil with good." But he is unable to conceal the partiality of his affection to Benjamin. As he distinguished him at table by a five-fold portion, he distinguishes him at parting with a more splendid and costly present than the rest, consisting of three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. In a wardrobe of great value and variety, a considerable part of ancient magnificence consisted. This we learn both from scripture, and from profane authors. Sampson proposed as a reward to him who should expound his riddle, "thirty changes of garments." Naaman the Syrian, among other valuable commodities, carried "ten changes of garments," as a gratification to the prophet from whom he expected the cure of his leprosy. Under the first Roman emperors, this vanity and extravagance were carried to such an excessive pitch, that the Prætor Lucullus, according to Plutarch,

his biographer, had two hundred changes of apparel; and Horace insinuates, in one of his epistles, that by some, the luxury was carried to the enormous extravagance of five thousand suits. And it is, without doubt, to this ostentatious profusion the apostle James alludes, when he thus censures the abuse of wealth, "Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries; your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten."

But was it wisely done, sage governor of Egypt? was it wisely done, thus to scatter the seeds of jealousy and envy in hearts so susceptible of these dreadful passions? Have you forgot the coat of many colors, the dangerous badge of your father's fondness to yourself? Have you not rendered your own advice necessary, "See that you fall not out by the way?" Happily, the recollection of past disasters, and the kind behaviour and gentle admonition of their affectionate brother, have subdued their boisterous spirits, and attuned their hearts to love. The anxiety of the old man for their return is better to be conceived than described. How often in a day would his fond eyes turn to the way by which Benjamin was expected back? How would the tardy hours linger, as the heart languished with hope deferred? At last the blessed moment arrives, the train appears; the number complete, Benjamin safe, Simeon restored. But what can this mean? Instead of eleven men driving their asses laden with corn, a splendid retinue, the glory of Egypt, the waggons of Pharaoh! The heart that has been long injured to affliction, interprets every appearance against itself. Some things are too good, others too evil to be hastily credited. The utmost height of Jacob's expectation was to behold his youngest son again, with a supply of corn for his starving family. But to hear that his long-lost, his much lamented Joseph was still living, that he was the ruler of all Egypt, the saviour of a great nation, the father of a mighty prince,

O! it is, it is too much. Nature tottering under a load of woe, now sinks and faints under an excess of joy. Such tidings are too flattering to be believed.

Did the brothers now disclose the whole of the mighty secret, and take shame to themselves for their vile conduct to so excellent a father, to so amiable a brother? Or, trusting to Joseph's generosity, did they conceal the part which they had acted in this strange mysterious drama? Probably the latter is the truth. The soul shrinks back from the discovery of its own wickedness. To confess, and condemn themselves, could do now no good, and must greatly have marred and diminished their aged parent's satisfaction, if indeed he had no suspicion how the case stood. The good man has been so long a stranger to felicity, that the possibility of it is called in question; that slowly and cautiously he yields to the sweet demonstration. Convinced, satisfied at length, what joy is equal to the joy of Jacob? Is it not worth wading through a sea of trouble, to come to such a shore at length? The blessings of Providence are well worth waiting for. They may seem to linger; they are not always such as we wished and expected: but they are ever seasonable, ever suitable, and they compensate in a moment the pain and misery of a whole life.

But is it not late in life to undertake such a journey? No; it is to see Joseph, to be joined unto him; to be an eye-witness of his grandeur, and a partaker of his liberality. How often has Egypt sheltered and nourished the church of God! Abraham, Joseph, Jacob, Moses, Jesus Christ himself, there successively found protection. The same place, according as Providence ordains it, is either a trying furnace, or a refuge and sanctuary. A king that knows Joseph is a nursing father to Israel; another rises who knows him not, and he wastes and destroys. But our patriarch was not merely following the impulse of natural affection, though that had been warrant sufficient for even a still

greater removal; he is also obeying the dictates of wisdom, in making a prudent provision for his numerous and increasing family, and he is listening to a special call and encouragement from Heaven. Before he leaves Canaan, probably forever, he visits Beer-sheba, the chosen and favorite residence of his father; and there he renews his covenant with God by a sacrifice. Those enterprises are most likely to succeed, those comforts to afford most genuine satisfaction, in which God is seen, acknowledged and enjoyed. The sacrifices of the devout by day, are answered by the visions of the Almighty in the night season. A man can proceed with cheerfulness and confidence, when he has got his Maker's permission.

The vision assures him that he should arrive in safety, should prosper in Egypt, should embrace his son, and that "Joseph should put his hand upon his eyes," that is, perform the last offices of filial duty and humanity. We meet with the same expression and idea in many passages of the heathen poets. Penelope, in Homer, prays that Telemachus her son may close her eyes, and those of his father Ulysses. The mother of Euryalus in the *Æneid*, among many other bitter expressions of sorrow over her dead son, laments that she was denied the wretched consolation, since he must die before her, of pressing down his dying eyes. Human nature thus strives to outlive itself, and the heart, while it is yet capable of feeling, consoles itself with the hope of receiving marks of tenderness and attachment, after it can feel no more. The old man's heart is now at rest, he is acting in obedience to the command of Heaven, he is complying with one of the worthiest propensities of nature. He is indebted for the commodiousness with which he travels, to the person whom on earth he most dearly loved, and to whom, of all others, he would most willingly be obliged.

How different the patriarch's situation, every differ-

ent journey he undertakes? He was first to Padanaram, when he fled from the face of an angry brother. Then he was solitary and friendless, but free from care, free from sorrow. The second, flying from unkind relations back again to Canaan, rich in children, rich in cattle, but troubled in spirit, oppressed with anxiety. And now we see him the third time in motion towards Egypt richer than ever, both in possessions and prospects, but bending under the pressure of old age, and its concomitant infirmities, worn out with calamity, and almost dead to joy.

The family of Jacob, including the addition of what Joseph had gotten in Egypt, now amounted to seventy souls. And the priest of On's daughter, whose alliance was doubtless intended as an honor to Joseph, is honored and ennobled by being ranked in the family of Jacob, and by having become a mother in Israel.

Scripture describes in its own inimitable manner, the meeting between the father and son. "And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and presented himself unto him: and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive," Gen. xlvi. 28...30. This is honest nature, this is the genuine language of the heart.

In Joseph we see filial piety and fraternal affection happily blended with wisdom, humility and discretion. His will was law in Egypt. To what honors, preferments and emoluments might not the brothers and nephews of the governor-general have aspired? But he consults their true happiness, by guarding them at once from the languor of idleness, and the madness of ambition. Shepherds they were bred, and shepherds let them continue. Violent transitions ill suit the staid and serious periods of human life.

His behaviour as a subject of Pharaoh is equally amiable and praise-worthy. He never loses sight of the duties of his station, never becomes arrogant and assuming, in the confidence of royal favor. "Without him no man lifted up his hand or foot in all the land;" but without Pharaoh's consent he will not dispose of a single field to his nearest relations. He is too wise, and too good, to make the mad attempt of some upstart favorites, to overcome national prejudices by dint of power and authority. The Egyptians held the profession of a shepherd in contempt, and he is not silly enough to dream of *forcing* it into respect.

We have already taken occasion to praise the gratitude, generosity and attachment of this prince, and with pleasure we repeat it. We see him nobly striving to discharge some part of the mighty obligation which had been laid upon him and his whole kingdom, by the son of the patriarch, by shewing all possible kindness to his father's house. "And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: the land of Egypt is before thee, in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell, in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle," Gen. xlvii. 5, 6. The interview between the venerable man himself, and this good prince, is highly interesting and instructive. Old age and virtue are honored with the kind regard and attention of a king. Royalty is instructed, admonished and blessed by the wisdom of the sage, by the miseries of the man, by the piety and prayers of the prophet. Who gains by this visit? Pharaoh to be sure. His kingdom is strengthened by the accession of seventy good subjects, with their skill, industry and wealth: and "the effectual fervent prayers" of holy Israel were surely, Pharaoh himself being judge, compensation sufficient for the poor subsistence which a decayed, dying old man received from his bounty.

It is with a mixture of shame and sorrow, that we bring forward the next passage in the history of Joseph. It exhibits him indeed as a most exquisite politician, who thoroughly understood the interests and the passions of mankind; who knew perfectly well how to take advantage of the occasion; but, over-devoted to the prince who had advanced him, employing his exorbitant power, his superior skill and address, in planning and perfecting a system of despotism, by which the whole property of Egypt, together with the persons and liberties of all that mighty empire, were transferred to the sovereign. We behold him most ungenerously seizing the opportunity, which the growing distress of a lengthened famine afforded him, to aggrandize one at the expense of millions. He first conveys all the money in the land into the royal treasury. The cattle speedily follow. The increasing miseries of another unfavorable season, determine the wretched proprietors to part with their lands for food, and even reduce them to the dreadful necessity of offering to sell themselves for slaves, that they might live by their master's bounty. It is true, the prime minister of Pharaoh did not push his advantage to the extremest length. But it must be acknowledged, he carried it much farther than became the friend of misery, and of mankind. With so good a man as this Pharaoh, perhaps absolute power might be lodged with some degree of safety; but who shall answer for other Pharaohs who may arise, with the awful ability of doing mischief; possessing authority unfettered by legal restraint; possessing power not prompted by goodness, nor tempered by mercy, not deigning to stoop to the sacred rights of mankind? Do we not see, in the hardships which under the following reign the posterity of Israel endured from Egyptian despotism, the danger of extending regal authority beyond the limits of reason? And thus, in the justice of Providence, the family of Joseph first felt the rod of that tyranny,

which, with his own hands, he had established and aggrandized. Absolute sway can never be deposited with safety in any hands, but in his, who is constantly employing his power for the salvation of men, not their destruction. But we turn from a scene, which it is impossible to contemplate without both regret and resentment; happy to reflect, that we live in a country, where law, not will, is the rule of government; where the strong voice of royal prerogative is drowned and lost in the sterner, louder proclamation of, "Thus it is written." We hasten from the vast, depopulated regions of state politics, to the pleasanter, fairer fields of private life.

Jacob's last days are by far his best. Seventeen years of unruffled tranquility he passed in Egypt, enjoying the most pure and complete of all human gratifications....that of witnessing the prosperity, and experiencing the attachment of a favorite and dutiful child. But how comes it to pass, that periods of happiness shrink into so little a measure in description, while scenes of woe lengthen themselves out both to the sufferer, and to the relator? We record our mercies on the sand of the sea shore, which the washing of every wave smooths again, and the perishing memorial is obliterated and lost. Calamity we engrave upon the rock, which preserves the inscription from age to age.

But the famine has long been over, and why has not the patriarch thought of returning again to the land of his fathers? Young men love to ramble from place to place; but old age is steady and stationary. Removal was attended with increasing difficulty every day, from the increase of his age and infirmities, and from the number of his family. Besides, Joseph's presence was become necessary to the government of Egypt: and to part with him again, had been much worse than death. In a word, the whole was of the Lord, who was now laying the foundation of a fabric of wonders which should astonish the next generation, and every

future age of the world, by the report of them. One hundred and thirty years of woe, and seventeen of comfort and happiness, come both at length to a period. Let the wretched think of this, and bear their affliction with fortitude; let the prosperous consider it well, that they "be not high minded, but fear." How dreadful is that misery which issues in despair of change! How exquisite is the happiness which fills every faculty of the soul, and whose measure is eternity! But though Jacob be satisfied to live and to die in Egypt, he feels and expresses the natural desire of all men, that his ashes should rest in death with the venerable dust of his forefathers. Perceiving therefore in himself the decay of nature, and the approach of dissolution, he sent for his beloved son, and bound him by a solemn oath to carry his dead body to the cave of Machpelah; that he too, in death, might become an additional pledge to his family, that God would in due time make good to them that possession of Canaan which he had promised.

Having obtained this security, his heart is at rest; and for himself he has no further worldly concern. But the symptoms of approaching dissolution are now upon him, sickness, weakness, and loss of sight. All the authority and wealth of Egypt cannot repel these irresistible invaders. Old age is a disease which death only can cure. But, even in old age and death, Jacob's early affections are his constant and remaining ones, Rachel and Joseph, and *his* two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. So long as the vital fluid visits his heart, the memory of his beloved Rachel vibrates upon it. The last beams of his expiring eyes seek for her image and representative, her son and grandchildren; and even Benjamin seems, for a while, forgotten. Soon that wounded heart shall beat no more, and those weary eyes shall close in everlasting peace.

The sickness of his father being reported to Joseph, he instantly quits every other employment, and, at-

tended by his two sons, hastens to visit him to receive his last dying commands, his dying paternal benediction, and to cherish and soothe his departing spirit with that cordial of cordials, filial tenderness and love. Though nature was come to its lowest ebb with our patriarch, grace was in full spring-tide. The eye of the body could not discern the nearest objects, could not even distinguish the sons of Joseph, but the eye of the spirit, the spirit of prophecy that was in him, penetrated through the shades of night, and contemplated with clearness and accuracy, ages the most remote; persons, situations and events the most distant.

In this last and tender interview with his beloved son, he declares his intention to raise the children who had been born to him in Egypt, to their hereditary rank and honor in Israel; and he bequeaths to Joseph a particular possession which he had acquired by conquest in Canaan: "Moreover I have given to you one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite, with my sword, and with my bow," Gen. xlviii. 22. Deeming him entitled, and not without much appearance of reasons to the double portion of the first-born. For *this* mother alone was the wife of Jacob's choice. And had the course of reason and justice taken place, he should have had no children but by her. The posterity of Rachel, then, had an undoubted claim of preference, considering that in strict equity the whole would have belonged to them. At the same time he predicted the future fortunes of his grandchildren by Joseph; and, Heaven-instructed, foretells, that the younger should in time obtain the pre-eminence in rank, populousness and importance over the elder.

And now nothing remained but to declare and publish his last will, or rather the will of God respecting his posterity, for many generations to come. But this would require a much larger space than is now left for it. And we cannot conclude our discourse without

having brought Jacob and Joseph somewhat nearer to the times which they foresaw and foretold ; and to the glorious and exalted person, from resemblance to whom they derive all their dignity and consequence.

Joseph sold into Egypt, degraded into the condition of a servant, exalted from the dungeon to the right hand of the throne, invested with power, drawing his perishing kindred unto him, and bestowing upon them a possession "in the best of the land," still prefigures to us, Jesus "humbled and made of no reputation," "betrayed and sold into the hands of men," "lifted up," on the cross, and thence to a throne above the skies : "ascending on high, receiving gifts for men," attracting an elect world unto him, to give them "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

"Their eyes were holden, that they should not know him." Luke xxiv. 16. "And it came to pass as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures," Luke xxiv. 30:..32.

"And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread ; and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph : what he saith to you, do," Gen. xli. 55. "The Father judgeth no man : but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him," John v. 22, 23. "God did send me before you," says Joseph to his brethren, "to preserve life." "I go," says Jesus to his disciples, "to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am,

there ye may be also," John xiv. 2, 3. Joseph dispatches chariots and waggons to convey the feeble and infirm part of his father's family to the land of Goshen; and supplies them with all necessary and comfortable provision by the way. It being expedient for Christ to go out of the world, he promises, and he sends "the Comforter the Holy Ghost to shew his people things to come;" "to lead them into all truth," saying of him, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you," John xvi. 14, 15. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," Psalm lxxviii 18. "He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors, and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 10...13.

Is your heart, O christian, like Jacob's, ready to faint, through unbelief, or through an excess of joy? Let your spirit with his revive, as you ponder "the exceeding great and precious promises" of the gospel in your soul, as you consult the sacred record, as your evidence brightens up, as the first fruits of the Spirit are given and tasted. From Canaan there is a going out, from Goshen a going out, as an entering in; but from Canaan that is above, there is "no more going out:" "they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither

shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 15...17. "He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely, I come quickly, Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen," Rev. xxii. 20, 21.

History of Jacob and Joseph.

LECTURE XVI.

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people....GEN. xlix. 1...33.

IT is the wise ordinance of nature, that men should wish and endeavor to live as long as they can. A life even of pain and misery extinguishes not the love of life. Nay, the mind, by a sort of pleasing delusion, creates to itself an imaginary immortality, and strives to extend its mortal interest and existence beyond the grave. Hence the anxiety of men to provide for their families and friends that subsistence and comfort, which they are never to see them enjoy. Hence the trembling forebodings of paternal solicitude about his surviving offspring. Hence the hope that glistens in the dying eye, the blessing and the prayer that quaver on the faltering tongue, and the last gush of joy that visits the scarcely palpitating heart.

At every period of existence, we are thinking of some future period of existence; and we fondly carry the feelings of the present hour into the distant scenes of life; as if we could be susceptible of pleasure and pain after we have ceased from feeling. The child connects, in idea, the amusements of his inexperienced age with the attainments of maturer years; the dying father continues to live in his offspring; and, till we

are indeed gone, we dream and dream of being longer here.

We have attended the progress of the patriarch Jacob through the various stages of a life unusually long, if we reckon woes for years, and compare it with the present standard of longevity ; but, short, if we consider the antediluvian scale ; short, if we consider to what a span the history of it shrinks ; short, if we compare it with eternity. The sun has shone upon his head at length, but not till it is covered with grey hairs. He has found his Joseph again, and even embraced *his* sons ; but not till the hands are reduced to do the office of the eyes. He walks down the steep of life in tranquility, but his limbs tremble under him. His favorite son is wise and good, exalted to deserved honors ; but his advancement has its foundation in the unexampled villany of nine of his brothers. He is now arrived at that point to which the sorrows and joys of life equally tend, in which all events of whatever complexion must finally issue. Feeling in himself the approach of dissolution, and warned by that Spirit who had been his comforter in all his tribulations, he summons his children to his presence, and, with a mixture of paternal severity and tenderness, anxiety and confidence, administers his last dying counsels to them.

It belongs to another province than that of history, to illustrate and expound this address of the expiring patriarch to his sons. Indeed, it is a passage of perhaps as much difficulty as any in scripture. The imperfect knowledge we have of the sacred language, the abundant use made of metaphorical and figurative expression, allusion to historical facts, which are either not recorded at all, or rather hinted than related, together with the natural ambiguity and obscurity of prophecy, all concur here to render Jacob's meaning in many places hard to be understood, if not totally inexplicable. Instead therefore of spending your time, and abusing your patience, by dry unprofitable criticism on points which we frankly acknowledge we

do not comprehend, we shall endeavor to look through the passage just as it stands in the common translation, into the dying patriarch's heart, and observe how the affections of the man blend themselves with the sagacity and penetration of the prophet.

Following the order of nature, he addresses himself first to Reuben, and fondly recollects the first emotions which filled his heart on becoming a father. He speaks to him as raised up and destined of Providence to birth-right honors and privileges, but as having degraded and dishonored himself by a base unnatural crime, and therefore rejected of God. And thereby men are instructed, that no superiority of birth, of fortune, of abilities, can counterbalance the weight of atrocious wickedness. In this censure, the shame, sorrow, resentment and regret of a dying father seem to mingle their force.

The two next sons of Jacob had associated together for the perpetration of an unheard-of piece of cruelty, impiety and deceit. Jacob had sharply reprov'd them at the time it was committed, and now gives his dying testimony against their barbarous and perfidious conduct, in terms of just indignation and abhorrence, and prophetically threatens them with division and dispersion. But this, which was, and intended to be a severe punishment to themselves, turned out in the accomplishment of the prediction, as the punishments of Heaven often are, an unspeakable honor and benefit to their posterity. Levi in particular, "divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel," was thereby rendered only more illustrious and important, being dignified as the priests and ministers of the most high God, in the presence of all their brethren. The crime of Reuben affected his descendants to the latest posterity. For they never regained their original advantage of birth; never furnished judge or general, priest, prophet or prince to Israel; but the offence of Levi was expiated in his own person, and reached not in its effects to his offspring. The moral consequences of guilt ought in

justice to extend to the guilty themselves alone ; but the civil effects may and often do involve the innocent ; and that without any imputation of justice. The son ought not to suffer death for the murder which his father has committed ; but he may forfeit forever his hereditary honors by his father's treason.

By what apparent title was Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, raised to supremacy over his brethren ? Neither his moral character, nor intellectual abilities, neither natural pre-eminence nor parental partiality seem to confer upon him this high distinction. It must therefore simply be resolved into the will of Him who "doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou," Dan. iv. 35. It was of Providence, who raiseth up one, and bringeth another down. But how came Jacob acquainted with this ? The son on whom he conferred the double portion of primogeniture ; the son whom he early dressed out in a coat of many colors ; the son of Rachel ; the son of his old age ; the son already so near a throne, and still nearer to his heart, would undoubtedly, could a father's fondness have disposed, succeeded to the royal dignity, or the sanctity of the priesthood, or the still higher dignity of giving birth to the promised Messiah, or to all the three. But the purposes of Heaven do not always keep pace with the destinations of men. They conform not themselves to the conclusions of human reason, or the propensities of the human heart. Not gentle and forgiving Joseph, but stern, unrelenting, merciless Levi gives birth to a race of priests. And lewd, incontinent, incestuous Judah, not chaste, modest, self-denied Joseph, becomes the father of kings, and the progenitor of Shiloh. For what with men is all essential, all important, is with God only some little petty circumstance. And what human understanding treats as merely a casual, accidental circumstance, Provi-

dence exalts into the mighty hinge on which the fate of empires and of worlds depends. Men bend before a throne, and despise virtue ; God pours respect upon goodness, and tramples upon a throne.

I must now express a wish, which I ought to have done earlier in my discourse, namely, that those who attend the Lecture of this evening, had with attention previously perused the whole of this forty-ninth chapter of Genesis. As without at least a general knowledge of it, much of what has been said, and still may be said, will possibly be unintelligible ; and one great, perhaps the principal end of the Lecture, will be obtained, if any are thereby induced to search the scriptures more carefully, and to compare spiritual things with spiritual more diligently.

Jacob then, guided by the spirit of prophecy, as lately in preferring Ephraim to Manasseh, and not following his own spirit, which would gladly have given the preference to Joseph, as his father's partiality would have set Esau before himself, assigns the *kingdom* to his *fourth* son, with a profusion of images and emblems significant of power, authority and plenty. "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise : thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies : thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp ; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up : he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion : who shall rouse him up," Gen. xlix. 8, 9. "A lion's whelp, a lion, and an old lion ; garments washed in wine, and clothes in blood of grapes ; eyes red with wine, teeth white with milk," is the strong figurative language employed by a prophetic father, to represent the invincible force, the secure dignity and majesty ; the rich abundance, allotted of God the disposer of all things, to this prerogative tribe.

But the prediction of importance above all the rest, is that which we have in the tenth verse, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from

between his feet, unto Shiloh come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Now, whatever difficulties may occur in the solution of particular words and phrases in this prophecy, it is certain the patriarch has his mind filled with an object peculiarly great; that he foresees regal and legislative power conferred on this branch of his family, for a long succession of ages, and until the arrival of a certain distinguished person or event, expressed by the term *Shiloh*, who should make a remarkable change in the state of Judah's family, and of the world in general. And of all the persons and events that have appeared from the death of Jacob to this hour, to none are the words, with any degree of propriety, applicable, but to Jacob's Son and Lord, in whom the royal line terminated; in whose trial and condemnation the posterity of Jacob solemnly renounced all regal and judicial authority, and voluntarily submitted to Cæsar as their sovereign; and to whom Providence, by a chain of miracles at first, and an uninterrupted interposition, for almost one thousand eight hundred years, has drawn and united the nations of the earth, according to the letter of the prophecy, "to him shall the gathering of the people be." We pretend not to say, that the dying patriarch had a clear and distinct foreknowledge of the object; or that his words are a full historical description of the period to which they refer. It is sufficient for our purpose, if events which have certainly come to pass, are such as warrant a sober application of them to a prediction so singular, in circumstances so peculiar, and at a period so remote.

A very close investigation of the history, character, and local circumstances of the six tribes whose fathers are next named in order, would probably be found to justify what their prophetic parent here foretold concerning them. But, with him, we hasten them by, with him to come at a nobler, dearer object; where parental affection fixes with peculiar delight; which the

understanding, the heart and the prophetic soul unite to establish, to exalt, to enlarge.

The only way to do justice to the prophet, to the prophecy, and to the Spirit which inspired the one to utter the other, is simply to read the words, and then to ponder them in our hearts. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him. But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob: from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the Almighty who shall bless thee, with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breast, and of the womb. The blessings of thy father have prevailed, above the blessings of my progenitors: unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren," Gen. xlix. 22...26. Is there an appearance of inchoance here, is there a redundancy of expression, is there a mixing of metaphor? It is but the more emphatically expressive of the meltings, the overflowings of an affectionate heart, collecting its last remains of vigor, retarding for a moment the stroke of death, returning yet once again but to return no more....to ancient feelings and propensities; expiring in the contemplation of the lasting felicity of a dearer self: the lover, the husband of Rachel, before his nerves are forever unstrung, his eyes forever closed, his tongue forever silent, dwelling on the name of her beloved offspring, turning the almost extinguished orbs towards his amiable countenance, and straining his darling Joseph in his last embrace

He has hardly strength left to mention the name of Benjamin. But nature, while death leaves to Jacob any remainder of her empire, continues possessed of a

fond memory, a discerning judgment, and glowing affections. But she can no more; the voice fails, the limbs contract, the breath departs, the artery beats no more; the heart of Jacob is at length at rest.

The death of a parent is an event peculiarly affecting. The source of our own life seems thereby as it were dried up. While our parents live, we think we have a barrier betwixt us and the grave: but that being removed, the bold invader appears advancing upon us with hastier strides. If we look forward, behold no bulwark to defend us; if backward, our very children are warning us of the necessity of our departure; they press upon our heels, they are ready to lay their hands upon our eyes. Death ever so long expected, ever so visibly approaching, nevertheless shocks and surprises when it comes at length.

Joseph, having given way to a burst of sorrow over the lifeless clay of his honored father, sets about the speedy execution of his solemn trust, in discharge of the oath which he had taken. The highest respect we can pay the dead, is to fulfil their living desires. He accordingly gives commandment to have the body embalmed according to the manner of the Egyptians. This practice, which had its origin in necessity, degenerated in process of time into the grossest ostentation, and the most absurd vanity. During the inundations of the Nile, it was necessary to employ art to preserve dead bodies from putrefaction, till the waters subsided. But what was at first merely a temporary expedient against the inconveniency of heat, moisture and corruption, at a season when sepulture was impossible, by degrees....refined, shall I say? in the hands of that ingenious people, into a work of infinite skill and expense. For so silly and vain-glorious is the human mind, that it strives for the gratification of pride, in objects the most humiliating and mortifying. We are far from charging Joseph with acting from a motive so wretched. The journey to Canaan was

long; it was needful to use the common methods, to keep the corpse from becoming offensive; perhaps he deemed it decent and wise to conform, in a matter not directly sinful, to the practice, and to yield to the prejudices of the people among whom he dwelt. Whatever were his motives, certain it is, that in embalming persons of distinction, a considerable time was employed, and large sums expended. Threescore and ten days at least were necessary; forty days in filling the body with aromatic drugs and spices, and thirty in hardening and drying it with salt and nitre. Some Jewish writers, fond of magnifying in every thing their extraction, give out, that Jacob, by express order of Pharaoh, was embalmed after the manner of the princes of Egypt, as a farther mark of gratitude and respect to Joseph; and that this explains the account we have in scripture, of the general mourning of the Egyptians for him, during the seventy days of the embalming.

At the end of that period, Joseph makes application to the king for liberty to go to Canaan, to bury his dead father. And here we have another not unamusing picture of the ancient manners of an Egyptian court. Joseph the saviour of Egypt, the second man in the kingdom, might not go into the royal presence in a mourning habit. At such pains has the world been, and such pains it still takes, to keep truth from the eyes and the ears of kings. Unhappy wretches! How can they be wise and good? Every creature with whom they are connected is in a conspiracy to keep them from the knowledge of themselves. The poor man called a monarch must not see a memorial of death, because death brings him to the level of other men. Pity it is, so well conditioned a prince as Pharaoh should want any help to wisdom. Studious of the honor and comfort of so good and faithful a servant, he grants an immediate assent to his request, and permits him to employ the whole pomp of Egypt, if it

might testify respect to the memory of the honest patriarch. Mark, my friends, how short the transition, how sudden the change. It is but a few short years since the waggons of Pharaoh were sent, with much pomp, to carry Jacob into Egypt; and now the same pomp is employed to convey his breathless clay back to Canaan again. Alas, alas! the ceremonies of a coronation, and of a funeral, differ only in a few trifling circumstances. Jacob is embalmed by the physicians; but behold he is preserved by a more precious perfume than all the spices of Egypt...the pious tears of a dutiful and affectionate child; and his memory preserved on this never-dying record, sends forth a fragrance which time cannot waste, nor use diminish.

The account is now at length closed, and the balance struck. And how does it stand? A life of one hundred and forty-seven years in all; of which not above a ninth part passed in any tolerable degree of peace and comfort, and that portion of it at a period when the heart has scarcely any taste of pleasure at all. The early, the susceptible part of his life was filled with a succession of distresses of the most disastrous and overwhelming nature; he was stricken, smitten there where the heart most sensibly feels. But let us turn the page, and examine the articles which make for him. An early declared, and continually supported favor and preference of Heaven in his behalf....Early, constant, habitual impressions of piety....The covenant promise and presence of the Almighty....The testimony of a conscience void of offence....The aggrandizement, and the virtues of his beloved son....Seventeen years of uninterrupted quiet, with daily growing prospects of prosperity to his family; and the consolation of expiring at last in the arms of Joseph....O, the balance is greatly in his favor! Who shall dare to say God has dealt hardly with him? We shall make Jacob himself judge of the case now, and defy him to say, "All

these things are against me." The patriarch makes a greater figure in death than ever he had done in his life. The house of Israel, the seed of Abraham is now beginning to make a considerable appearance in the world. Egyptians forego their prejudices to do honor to the remains of the old shepherd of Beersheba; and the nations of Canaan are awakened to attention and respect, to a family which they hated or despised.

But, while the world is conferring empty, unavailing respect on the insensible dust, the immortal spirit has winged its flight to those bright regions, where the faithful repose in perfect and everlasting peace; where the smile of God obliterates all recollection of the favor of princes, and buries in eternal oblivion the pains and sorrows of a few transitory years. If saints in glory have any recollection of what passed upon earth, as undoubtedly they have, what satisfaction must it afford the glorified patriarch to call to remembrance the various stages of his pilgrimage state, the dark and dreary paths through which Providence led him, and which he once feared were leading him to destruction and death, now that he finds them all certainly and directly tending to his Father's house above? If saints in glory have any knowledge of what passes upon earth, as perhaps they may, what must it have been to Jacob, from the lofty height of a throne above the skies, to mark the order and course of Providence, in bringing to pass upon his family the things which were seen in prophetic vision, darkly, and at a distance, and spoken in much weakness and obscurity? What must it be to see the Gentile nations gathered together to Shiloh; to see the glory with the sceptre departed from Judah, but a crown, whose lustre shall never fade, put upon the head of Messiah the Prince? If saints in glory have any intercourse with their fellow-partakers in bliss, what must it have been to Jacob, after treading in the footsteps of Abraham and Isaac

his fathers, to overtake and be joined to them in that world, where men are as the angels of God in heaven; and to see his faithful children, his Joseph in particular, gathered unto him, every one in his own order, their day of trial also over, and their warfare accomplished? What must it have been to all the ransomed of the Lord, to see their common Saviour returning on high, leading captivity captive, triumphing over principalities and powers? If there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what must have been the joy of that day, when an elect world, in the person of their divine Head, took possession of a throne eternal in the heavens?

The next Lecture will conclude the history of Joseph, and the book of Genesis, and bring down that of the world to its two thousand three hundred and ninth year, one thousand six hundred and ninety-five years before Christ.

...Jacob, like his forefathers, died, and was buried, and saw corruption; but he whom God raised up died indeed, and was buried, but saw no corruption. Jacob could observe, be offended with, and reprove the faults of his children, but Christ has power to forgive sins, and to change a sinful nature. The day which Jacob saw afar off, is that which arose under Jesus in all its meridian splendor, and continues to shine unto this day. The body of Jacob, by the skill of physicians, was for a while saved from petrefaction; the body of Christ, by the almighty power of God, was preserved, so that not a bone of it was broken on the cross, not a particle of it lost and left in the grave. The corpse of the patriarch deposited in the cave of Machpelah, in Canaan, was a token and pledge to his family, that in due time they should return thither, and enjoy lasting possession; the resurrection and ascension of Christ's glorious body, gives full security to all his spiritual seed, that "those who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him;" "Christ the head first, afterwards they

that are Christ's at his coming." The possession, of which Jacob's burial was the pledge, was itself partial and transitory, was long ago forfeited, and has long ago expired; but the succession ensured by the ascension of Christ, is "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Egyptian art might keep together the dust of Jacob for a while; but the power of God, through the grace that is in Christ, guards every fragment and shred of it even until now, and "will raise it up again at the last day." The afflicted man Jacob saw the end of all his troubles in the friendly tomb; Jacob, the believer, the saint in bliss, sees no end to his joy, but a still beginning, never-ending eternity. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." To me to live let it be Christ, and then to die it shall be gain. Let us be followers of them "who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." "Be faithful unto death, and ye shall receive a crown of life." "The hour cometh, when all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall live." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years," Rev. xx. 6.

History of Joseph.

LECTURE XVII.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die ; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old : and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.... GEN. l. 24...26.

THE events of a short and uncertain life upon earth, derive all their importance from the relation which they bear to a future and eternal state of existence. Remove the prospects of immortality, and what is left worthy the attention and pursuit of a man? What is reputation? A breath of empty air: honor, a bubble; riches, a bird eternally on the wing; youth, beauty, health, fading flowers of the spring; the splendor of kings, childish pageantry; a crown, a toy. That alone is valuable which time cannot impair, nor mortality destroy; that which, though the man die, continues to live and speak; that which, despised or neglected of men, is of high estimation in the sight of God. If in this life only there were hope, the happiest of mankind were a wretched, dark, comfortless being. But for the consolations of religion, Jacob must have sunk under the accumulated weight of calamity upon calamity: and Joseph destitute of a principle of grace in the heart, had fallen in the hour of temptation, or

despaired in the day of adversity ; had risen into pride when exalted to honor, or deviated into resentment and revenge when armed with power. But, directed and supported by this celestial guide, he descends into the pit undejected, undismayed : spurns with holy indignation the solicitations of illicit desire ; preserves moderation in the height of prosperity, and sinks the resentments of the injured man, in the meekness and gentleness of the affectionate brother. A character so near perfection seldom occurs ; we have therefore been tempted to dwell upon it the longer, and now that we must part with it, we bid it farewell, with no little regret.

The last office in which we left Joseph employed was the burial of his venerable parent. In this he at once acquitted a solemn obligation ; fulfilled the law of humanity, gratitude and filial duty ; and acted faith in the covenant and promise of God given to his forefathers. He is never so much an Egyptian, as to forget he is an Israelite ; but, engaged in the duties of a son of Israel, he remembers he was a naturalized Egyptian. Having deposited the sacred pledge in the cave of the field of Machpelah, he and his brethren and all his retinue return into the land of Egypt.

Terror ever haunts the guilty conscience ; and men, whether they be good or bad, are apt to judge of others by themselves. The brothers of Joseph considered the life of their father as the only bulwark betwixt them and their brother's anger. Knowing themselves to be criminal, they conclude he must be resentful ; knowing he had the power, they suppose he must needs have the inclination to punish them. O how guilt degrades, debases the spirit of a man ! In bad minds how quick the transition from extreme to extreme ! How nearly allied to each other, vices seemingly remote, contradictory and opposite ! These reflections are all strikingly exemplified and illustrated in the conduct of Jacob's sons. We see malice and cruelty passing into suspicion and timidity ; insolence but a single step re-

moved from fawning, flattery and submission; and bold defiance of Heaven changing in a moment into superstitious horror. They had before done obeisance to Joseph, not knowing who he was, and so fulfilled the dreams of his early youth, which had given them such mortal offence. With a meanness equal to their former haughtiness, they now voluntarily prostrate themselves in his presence, and humbly deprecate that wrath which they had so unjustly provoked. What a pitiable, what a contemptible figure a man makes, overtaken and reproved by his own wickedness!

A little mind would have enjoyed this triumph of acknowledged superiority, if it did not resort to retaliation. But a great soul like Joseph's gives only into emotions worthy of itself. Seeing his father's children thus humbled before him, he dissolves into tears. Had he been ever so much inclined to vengeance, adjured by the awful names of his father and his God, his heart must have relented, and anger must have turned to pity. But in truth, he had never harbored one thought of revenge, and the offenders possessed an infinitely better security in the generosity and compassion of their brother, than in the protection of their father's feeble arm, parental authority, or frail life. Being at no variance with them, entertaining no grudge, mark what pains he takes to reconcile them to themselves; "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them," Gen. l. 20...21.

Such is the exalted triumph of true goodness. Not satisfied with merely bestowing forgiveness, it strives to close the wounds which guilt has made: it aims not only at bettering the external condition of the penitent, but also at meliorating his inward frame; it not only proclaims peace to the offender, but likewise generously studies the means of restoring him to peace with his

own conscience. This is the glorious triumph of God himself, who overcomes evil with good, turns enmity into love, and obliterates the foul traces of undutifulness and ingratitude, by painting over them the fairer, softer features of filial tenderness and dutiful submission. And in no one respect can human nature so nearly resemble the divine, as in pardoning transgression, in shewing mercy, in bestowing on the guilty outward and inward peace, and burying and effacing painful and mortifying recollections in total and everlasting oblivion. Thus Joseph comforted his brethren, and spake kindly unto them. This spirit, a greater than Joseph, by precept, by example, and by the model which he prescribed for our devotions, has recommended and enforced; and thus, by habitually drinking into it, "men shall at length become perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect."

At the death of his father, Joseph was fifty-six years old. The history of the remainder, containing a period of fifty-four years more, shrinks into a few short sentences. But they exhibit a beautiful and instructive picture of a generous spirit, of great and growing domestic happiness, of a capacious prophetic soul, and of a faithful, obedient and believing heart. He had the satisfaction of living to see his posterity of the fourth generation, by Ephraim his younger son, and of the third, by Manasseh his first-born. He had the felicity of beholding Israel greatly increased, and the promise of God hastening to its accomplishment; resigned to die in Egypt, but looking and longing for a sepulchre in Canaan. Jacob's, a life of almost uninterrupted misery, is lengthened out to the hundred and forty-seventh year; Joseph's, with the exception of a very few years, a scene of splendor, usefulness and prosperity, is cut short at a hundred and ten. But the difference dwindles into mere nothing before Him, with whom "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." Grief has its cure, usefulness its period, glory its decay, and pride its destroyer in

the grave. As his dying father held him engaged by a solemn oath not to bury him but in Canaan, so Joseph binds his posterity by a similar obligation to carry his remains, when opportunity offered, to the sacred spot where the sleeping dust of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob reposed. Whatever had been his power or possessions in Egypt, this is all he bequeaths to his children: his last, dying will, disposes of nothing but his bones. But it is not merely the natural desire of the man, to rest in death with his fathers; it is the zeal, piety and wisdom of the believer, leaving to his family a solemn pledge of his dying confidence in the truth and faithfulness of God. Accordingly, the dead body of Joseph becomes no inconsiderable object in the history of Israel, from this time forward, to their final establishment in Canaan. With much pomp it was now embalmed; with much care it was preserved in their deepest distresses and affliction; in all their wanderings it accompanied them, and never, till they rested in the peaceable possession of the land of promise, did it rest in the peaceful tomb.

But had the credit of Joseph declined before his death? Had Pharaoh died, and Egypt forgotten to be grateful, that no royal mandate is issued for a splendid public interment; that an affectionate nation accompanies not, with tears, the son, as they did the father, to his long home? Miserable would Joseph have been, had not his happiness rested on a surer foundation than the smile of kings, or the applause of a multitude, Who shall be vain of any thing, when such a man as Joseph must be content to obtain that by entreaty and permission, which once he could have enjoined by authority. His pious attention to the dead is now requited by the pious attention of the living. And thus of all the debts contracted by us, none is so certain of being repaid, as the last solemn offices of humanity. Here, we only give and receive a little short credit; and the day of our burial hastens on, with rapid wings, to bring the account to a balance.

Thus lived, and thus died, Joseph the son of Jacob,

A man, whom all nations, and every description of mankind, have united to praise and admire. Whose character and fortunes the pen of inspiration has vouchsafed to delineate with singular accuracy, and with uncommon strength of coloring. Who in every stage of life, in youth, in manhood, and even to old age, interests, instructs and delights every reader of taste, virtue and sensibility. Who, in adversity preserved inflexible constancy; and, in elevation next to royalty, adorned his high station by unaffected simplicity, incorruptible integrity, native, unassuming dignity, fervent piety, invariable moderation, and uniform modesty and humility. Who, as a son, a brother, a servant, a father, a master, a ruler, is equally amiable and praise-worthy. Who, to the sagacity of the statesman added the penetration of the prophet, the firmness of the believer, and the purity of the saint. Who, by the blessing of Providence, was saved through dangers the most threatening, to pity, to forgive, and to preserve those who meant to have destroyed him; and who, in a word, was miraculously raised up by God from an obscure station, to be an instrument of much temporal good to nations; to mature and execute the plans of eternal Wisdom, and to tipify to a dark age, Him who is fairer than the children of men, and through whom all the blessings of nature, of providence and of redemption are communicated to mankind. We cannot therefore, as christians, conclude his history better, than by considering it somewhat more particularly, as a typical representation of the person, the character, the offices, and the work of the Messiah.

We know the generation of Joseph the son of Rachel, and the well-beloved of Jacob....but "who shall declare the generation" of the well-beloved Son of God, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?" Early, unambiguous prognostics foretold the future greatness of Joseph. Thus the tongues of a thousand prophets; signs in heaven and signs in earth; the disposition of angel singly, and of a multitude of the heavenly host together, before and at his birth, conduct

the babe of Bethlehem from the manger to the throne. Some allegorists, who inquire rather curiously than wisely, have carried the analogy so far as to represent Joseph's coat of many colors, the distinguishing badge of his father's partial affection, as typical of the body prepared for Christ, "curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth." When imagination, unrestrained by reason, and uncondacted by scripture, is set to work, any thing may be made to resemble any thing. But if the interests of true piety be prompted, we must give, as we need and expect, much allowance; and so long as a metaphor presumes not to pass for a text or an argument, let metaphorical language be examined with candor, and the bold flights of an honest heart be treated with tenderness and respect. While we thus plead indulgence for others, we are perhaps making an apology that is necessary to ourselves; and far, very far from this place be the vanity of thinking that "surely we are the people, and that wisdom shall die with us."

We remarked of Joseph, that in making his observations upon, and in giving the report of his brother's conduct, a mixture of self-sufficiency, malevolence and presumption might possibly insinuate itself; but in the censure and reproof administered by the Brother and Friend of mankind, we always discover unmixed benevolence and gentleness; severity against the offence without acrimony towards the offender; slowness to condemn, readiness to forgive; a disposition to palliate and excuse the worst of crimes, instead of eagerness and zeal to detect, magnify and expose the least. Jacob's affectionate embassy to his sons in the wilderness, by the mouth of his beloved Joseph, in all its circumstances, has already been noticed as exactly typical of the message borne from the compassionate Father of men, to his wandering exiled children, by the Son of his love. Who can think of Joseph following his brethren from place to place with thoughts of peace, and meeting in return with hatred and violence, without reflecting the next moment on the words of the evan-

gelist, "he came to his own, and his own received him not." "Not this man, but Barabbas." "Away with him, crucify him, crucify him." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not," Matt. xxviii. 37.

Joseph was sold at the suggestion of Judah to the Ismaelites for a few pieces of silver. The counterpart of this forces itself upon our imagination. "The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men;" "mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me," Psalm xli. 9. Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? Joseph faithful and just to Potiphar and to Pharaoh; Joseph in the form of a servant, and the business and affairs of his master prospering in his hand, lead us directly to him of whom it is spoken in prophetic vision, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high," Isaiah lii. 15. Joseph assaulted with temptation, resisting and overcoming, conducts us with our tempted Saviour to the top of the exceeding high mountain, to the pinnacle of the temple, and shews us all the fiery darts of the wicked one falling harmless on the ground, because striking on the shield of faith; and "the sword of the Spirit, the word of God," like lightning penetrating and piercing the armor of the adversary. Joseph unjustly accused, condemned and punished, without straining for an illusion, points to Jesus, "numbered with transgressors," charged with crimes which he never committed, and upon a trial, a mockery of all legal proceeding, condemned with the vilest of mankind to the death of a slave.

But we see Joseph even in prison and disgraced, preserving dignity, exercising usefulness, disclosing futurity to his fellow prisoners, restoring the one to the presence and favor of Pharaoh, leaving the other to

perish under the weight of the royal displeasure. Thus we see Jesus, from the exalted infamy of the cross, dispensing more than life and death, opening and shutting the gates of heaven, assuming to himself the right of disposing of seats in the paradise of God; carrying the penitent with him to the presence of his Father and his God; leaving the impenitent to die in his sins. But there is here this remarkable difference, Joseph besought the chief butler to remember him, hoping to owe his enlargement to the powerful, compassionate and grateful intercession of that officer; but Jesus, as Lord of the worlds visible and invisible, as the sovereign disposer of all things, by his own power exalts his fellow sufferer from the cross to a throne above the skies. Behold Joseph translated from the dungeon to the palace, from the condition of a prisoner and a slave, to that of a mighty prince; and in that, behold Jesus emerging from the tomb, ascending above all height, exalted to the sovereign administration of all things in heaven and in earth. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory," Luke xxiv. 26. "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10. Joseph revealed to Pharaoh and to all Egypt what was the will of Heaven concerning them for many years to come: thus Jesus revealed to a guilty, perishing world the will of God for their salvation, and made timely provision, not for the transient and ineffectual support of a few fleeting years, but for the eternal entertainment and felicity of men, who were devoted to death, and threatened with everlasting misery. Joseph employed the pressure of famine to enslave Egypt, and to subject a whole people to the will of the sovereign: but Jesus, armed with all power for our destruction, employed it only for our deliverance; and instead of sinking and degrading the subjects of his government, such is his love, he raises them all to the dignities, privileges and possessions of the sons of God.

He is the true prophet, "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world," "in whom the Spirit of God is; none so discreet and wise as he," Zaphnathpaaneah, the true revealer of secrets, who "is worthy to take the sealed book," which contains the secrets of the eternal mind, and to open its seven seals. The clemency of Joseph to his unkind, unnatural brothers, is a lively and affecting representation of the patience, gentleness and mercy of Christ to his brethren after the flesh, in the first instance, and to guilty ungrateful men in general. "Father forgive them," said he, as he was expiring on the cross, "they know not what they do." And not many days after that with wicked hands men had crucified and slain him, many thousands of these very men were made to taste of his grace, were admitted into his family, and exalted to a place with him on his throne. But we must not pursue the similitude through every particular; it would protract our discourse to an immoderate length. Finally then, Joseph piously referred every thing that befel him to the provident, wise and gracious destination of the Almighty: and what saith Jesus? "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

And thus have we finished the history of the patriarch Joseph: the various stages of whose life may be thus calculated. He was born in Haran, in the year of the world two thousand two hundred and fifty-nine, where he lived till six years old. He was then removed with the rest of his father's family into Canaan, where he lived eleven years; at which period he was by his brethren sold to the Ishmaelites, and carried into Egypt, where he served Potiphar ten years, and remained in prison three: so that he was thirty, when he first stood before Pharaoh, and was raised immediately to the dignity of viceroy. Supposing the seven plenteous years

to commence immediately, he was thirty-seven when they ended: and the second year of famine being ended, he being then thirty-nine. Jacob and his family descended into Egypt; and the aged patriarch lived there cherished by his son seventeen years, which brings himself forward to his fifty-sixth year. After his father's death he lived fifty-four years more, in all one hundred and ten. So that Joseph lived in Egypt full ninety-three years: a slave and a prisoner thirteen: a prince and ruler eighty: under several successive monarchs; being justly esteemed a necessary minister of state in all reigns. He died before the birth of Moses sixty-four years, and before the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt one hundred and forty-four. And with the account of his death and embalming, ends the book of Genesis, containing the most ancient, authentic, instructive history extant; during the space of two thousand three hundred and sixty-nine years: from the deluge seven hundred and thirteen; and before Christ one thousand six hundred and thirty-five.

These things seem as a tale that is told. But time is hurrying on a period and an establishment of things, under which Adam and his youngest son shall be contemporaries; in which intervening ages shall be swallowed up and lost; and that only remain, which time and death and the grave cannot affect, when the cave of Machpelah shall surrender up its precious deposit; when Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and all the faithful shall live again and reign forever and ever. "Blessed are they who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." "Blessed are they who shall come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel," Heb. xii. 22...24.

History of Moses.

LECTURE XVIII.

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son; and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river, and her maidens walked along by the river's side: and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrew's children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Go. And the maid went, and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages: and the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son: and she called his name Moses; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.... EXODUS xi. 1...10.

IF the ingenious fictions of ancient bards afford an innocent and rational amusement, and be therefore held in high estimation; what superior obligation is the

world under, to that divine Spirit who has vouchsafed to draw into light the most remote antiquity, to preserve from oblivion the venerable men who first cultivated and peopled the earth; and, in the language, not of fiction, but of truth, has delineated the ways of Providence, and unfolded the deep and intricate recesses of the human heart? Were it not for the sacred pages of divine revelation we should have been entirely ignorant of what happened in the world for at least one half of its duration. But borne on the wings of inspiration, we fly back to the very birth of nature, we behold the first dawning of light scattering the gloom, and converse with the first man whom God created upon the earth. And how much more pleasant, as well as profitable, is it, to expatiate in the field of real history, than to wander and lose ourselves in the idle regions of romance! If we owe much to the illustrious poet of Greece, for his amusing pictures of early life and manners, how deeply are we indebted to the more illustrious Jewish historian and poet, who has furnished us with so much juster and more exalted ideas of Deity, more faithful and instructive pictures of human life; and who has so successfully interwoven the history of redemption with that of mankind.

The sacred book which has afforded us during the year past, so much pleasing instruction, is altogether extraordinary in its kind, whether we consider the beauty of the composition, the importance of the information which it contains, the internal marks of authenticity which it bears, or the noble purposes to which it has been, and may be made subservient. Moses, its inspired author, who has with so much accuracy, elegance and force, described the characters and lives of the patriarchs from Adam to Joseph, is now entering on his own wonderful and interesting story. The man who henceforth acts, is the same who writes: the events which he is about to record come, not from the information of others, but from his own im-

mediate knowledge ; and the simplicity and candor of his narration are sufficient vouchers of its truth and faithfulness.

Sixty-four years had now elapsed from the death of Joseph, and one hundred and thirty-four from the descent of Jacob into Egypt : and what surprising changes have taken place ! A little band of seventy persons is multiplied into a gréat nation : the mild and gracious prince who took pleasure in cherishing and protecting the father and brethren of Joseph, is exchanged for a jealous and sanguinary tyrant, determined to depress and extirpate their descendants : the country which once gave them support and shelter, is now moistened with their tears, and with the blood of their infant offspring ; and favored guests, made to dwell in the best of the land, are turned into odious slaves condemned to the furnace. Such are the alterations which time is continually producing in human affairs, such the impotency of man to secure blessings to his posterity, such the misery of a people subjected to the will of a despotic sovereign.

In vain do men dream of national generosity and gratitude....they exist not : in vain do the claims of humanity and justice oppose themselves to the interest, the ambition or caprice of princes. Joseph had very unwisely contributed to the aggrandizement of the Egyptian monarchs, and his own family is the first to feel the rod of that power which he had helped to raise. Injustice in princes is always bad policy. A nation so certainly favored of Heaven as Israel was, must have proved the strongest bulwark to Egypt, if treated as friends. Increased from seventy souls, to six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, it was dangerous to irritate them, and difficult if not impossible to subdue. Too proud to enter into treaty with them as allies, too timid to attempt their extirpation by open force, and too suspicious to confide in their gratitude and attachment, Pharaoh adopts the barba-

rous policy of undermining their strength by excessive labor; of breaking their spirit by severity, and of preventing their future increase, by putting to death their male children as soon as they were born. Such a state of things was very unfavorable to marrying and giving in marriage. Nevertheless marriages were contracted, and children procreated; for it is absurd as it is wicked, for any earthly power whatever to set itself to counteract the great plans of God and nature. God has said "increase and multiply;" in vain has Pharaoh said "abstain." Anram of the family of Levi accordingly, in these worst of times, takes to wife Jochebed of the same tribe, indeed his own father's sister, by whom he had three children; Aaron, probably born before the bloody edict for destroying the males was published; Miriam, whose sex was a protection from the rigor of it, and Moses, who came into the world while it was operating with all its horrid effects.

Josephus in his Jewish antiquities relates, that about the time of the birth of Moses, one of the Egyptian seers informed the king that a child was about to arise among the Israelites, who should crush the power of Egypt, and exalt his own nation to great eminence and splendor, if he lived to the years of maturity: for, that he should distinguish himself above all his contemporaries by his wisdom and virtue, and acquire immortal glory by his exploits. He farther alleges, that the king, instigated by his own fears of such an event, and by the cruel counsels of the seer, issued the bloody decree which must be an eternal blot upon his memory.

The distress of Jochebed upon finding herself pregnant, is to be conceived, not described. The anxiety and apprehension naturally incident to that delicate situation, must have been aggravated by terrors more dreadful than the pangs of child-birth, or even the loss of life itself. As a wife and a mother in Israel; she was

looking and longing for the birth of another man child; but that sweet expectation was as often checked and destroyed by the bitter reflection that she was subject to the king of Egypt; that if she bare a son it was for the sword, or to glut some monster of the river. The Jewish antiquarian informs us, that the anxiety of the parents was greatly alleviated by assurances given to the father in a vision of the night, that the child with whom his wife was then pregnant should be miraculously preserved, and raised up by Providence to the glorious and important work of delivering the seed of Abraham from their present misery. And indeed, this fact is countenanced and supported by the short hints which scripture has given us of the subject. Among the other instances of victorious faith recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, that of the parents of Moses is marked with honor and approbation by the apostle. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment," Heb. xi. 23. It is not unreasonable to suppose, that their faith might have some particular promise or intimation from Heaven to rest upon.

The time at length came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son, according to the same historian, without the usual pains and consequent weakness of child-bearing; by which means no foreign aid being required, concealment was rendered more easy, and the exertions of the mother in behalf of her child, were scarcely, if at all, interrupted. "A goodly child" is the modest language which Moses employs in describing himself: "exceeding fair," or fair to God, that is, divinely fair, is the stronger expression of St. Stephen, in his recapitulation of this period of the Jewish history. From which, without the fond encomiums of profane authors, we may conclude, that Providence had distinguished this illustri-

ous person from his birth, by uncommon strength, size and beauty. Every child is lovely in the partial eye of maternal affection: what then must Moses, the wonder of the world, have been to his enraptured parents! But the dearer the comfort, the greater the care, and that care increasing every hour. Not only the child, and such a child, was continually in jeopardy, but certain and cruel death was hanging every instant, by a single hair, over the heads of all who were concerned in the concealment; nay, the salvation of a great nation was at stake; nay, the promise and covenant of God was in question.

In the conduct of these good Israelites, the parents of Moses, we have a most instructive example respecting many important particulars of our duty. They teach us, that no circumstances of inconveniency, difficulty or danger, should deter us from following the *honest* impulses of our nature, or from complying with the manifest dictates of religion; and, at the same time, reprove that would-be-wise generation of men among us, who, from I know not what reasons of prudence, or others which they dare not avow, defraud their country, the world, and the church of God, of their due and commanded increase. Their faith in God, employing in its service secrecy, vigilance and circumspection, admonishes us ever to connect the diligent use of all lawful and appointed means, with trust in and dependance upon Heaven, as we wish to arrive safely and certainly at the end proposed. In them, as in a glass, we see confidence without presumption, diligence, zeal and attention free from incredulity; we see Providence firmly, undauntedly resorted to, with the consciousness of having done their utmost to help themselves. Without this trust and this consciousness, yielding their joint support, what must the wretched mother have been, compelled at length, by dire necessity, to expose the son of her womb on the face of the Nile, in a basket of rushes?

I love to see a perseverance of exertion that leaves nothing undone which is possible to be done; and a faith that holds out as long as hope exists. Why not cast the whole burden on Providence? Is not he who preserved the child floating in an ark of bulrushes, able to save him naked in the stream, or even in the jaws of the hungry crocodile? If an ark must be prepared, it is also necessary to employ all this curious attention in daubing it with slime and with pitch, to prevent the admission of the water? What, leave nothing to him who has marked the infant for his own, and solemnly charged himself with his safety? Yes; after we have done our all, much, every thing depends on the goodness of Heaven. But the careful mother did well when she pitched every seam and chink of the frail vehicle as attentively as if its precious deposit had been to owe its preservation solely to that care and diligence. "Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you," I Pet. v. 7. Mark it well, it is our *care*, not our work, which we are encouraged to cast upon that God who careth for us, and who hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Mark yet again the diligent use of means, and the interpositions of Providence; how they tally with, unite, strengthen and support each other. The anxious mother does not yet think she has done enough. Miriam her daughter must go, and, at a distance, watch the event. And here ends the province of human sagacity, foresight and industry; and here begins the interposition of providential care. The mother has done her part. "The rushes, the slime, and the pitch," were her prudent and necessary preparation. And the great God has at the same time been preparing his materials, and arranging his instruments: the heart of a king's daughter, the power of Egypt, the flux of the current; the concurrence of circumstances too fine for the human eye to discern, too complex for human understanding to unravel, and too mighty for created power to control.

We pointed to the interposition of Heaven; but, we beseech you to observe, it interposed not by working a miracle, but by the seasonable, simple and natural disposition of second causes, opening to one and the same end, without any design, consciousness or concert of their own. And, be it ever remembered, that the wise, gracious, almighty Ruler of the world, pleases not himself, nor amuses his creatures, by a profuse, ostentatious exhibition of wonders, but by an intelligent and dexterous management of ordinary things. He carries on his righteous government not according to new and surprising laws, but by the surprising, unaccountable, unexpected methods in which he executes the laws which he has established from the beginning.

Let us dwell a little on the minuter circumstances of the case before us: as they illustrate a subject of all others the most comfortable and tranquilizing to a race of beings, beyond measure wretched and pitiable, if there be not a God who rules in wisdom and in loving kindness all the affairs of men. We are first led to the humble cottage of Amram, and mingled in the tender solitudes of an obscure family, in one of the most common situations of human life. From thence, we step immediately to the palace, to attend the humors, caprices and pleasures of a princess. Jochebed, the wife of Amram, and Termuthis, the daughter of Pharaoh! What can they have in common with one another, excepting those particulars in which all mankind resemble all mankind: and yet Providence brings them together, gives them a mutual concern, a mutual charge, a mutual interest. By how many accidents might this most fortunate coincidence have been prevented? A day, an hour earlier or later, in the active care of the one, and the contingent amusement of the other, and the parties concerned had never met. The slightest alteration in the setting-in of the wind or the tide; the particular temperature of the fleeting air, or the more variable temperature of a female mind, apt to

be corrupted by unbounded gratification and indulgence, unaccustomed to contradiction, governed by whim, following no guide but inclination, and occupied only with the object of the moment: the operation of all, or any one of these, might have defeated the design. But these and a thousand such like contingencies unstable as water, and unchangeable as the wind, subdued by the hand of Omnipotence, acquire the solidity of the rock, and the steadfastness of the poles of heaven. The mother could not part with her child a moment sooner, durst not retain him a moment longer. The princess could betake herself to no other amusement or employment, could pitch upon no other hour of the day, could resort to no other part of the river, could divert her attention to no other object; the tide could not run, nor the wind blow in any other direction, nor with greater or less rapidity. Moses was not safer when king in Jeshurun, encompassed with the thousands of Israel, was not safer in the mount with God, is not safer within the adamantine walls of the new Jerusalem, than Moses in the flags, Moses at the mercy of the waves, of the monsters of the Nile, and of men more merciless than wild beasts. What power threatened the life of Moses? The king of Egypt. What power preserved it? The king of Egypt's daughter. What were the steps which led to his elevation? Those which foreboded his destruction. What circumstances forwarded the accomplishment of the oracle? Those which attempted to defeat it. Could all this have been the work of man? No; it must have proceeded from "the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." "Who doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou," Dan. iv. 35.

The usual train of common events led Pharaoh's daughter to the river side; the ark in which little Moses

was laid happened to catch her eye ; curiosity prompted her to examine its contents, and pity at the sight touched her heart. If there be an object in nature more interesting and affecting than another, it was that which now presented itself to this great lady's eye. A beautiful infant, of three months old, deserted by its own parents, exposed to ten thousand dangers, and expressing by the tender testimony of tears, its sense of that misery of which it had not yet acquired the consciousness. "Behold the babe wept." Pity is a native plant in a noble heart. The story told itself. The situation in which the child was found explained the cruel occasion. The sacrament he carried engraven on his flesh, declared to whom he belonged. Compassion was fortunately connected with power, and Providence wisely balanced one thing with another, the jealousy and severity of the father, with the tenderness and generosity of the daughter.

Josephus, with whom Moses is justly a favorite object, has recorded many little particulars relating to this part of his history. And, among others, that when the child was applied to the breasts of several successive Egyptian nurses, he turned from them with signs of much disgust and aversion, and that this encouraged his sister Miriam, who was anxiously attending the event, and observed the eager concern of the princess about her little foundling, to propose calling a nurse of her own nation, and thereby artfully introduced the mother herself to the tender office of suckling her own child. Whatever be in this, one useful lesson is taught us, on better authority than that of Josephus, namely, that perseverance in difficult and painful duty is the shortest and safest road to the attainment of our just and reasonable desires. What a blessed change ! The mother of Moses is permitted to do that for princely hire, and under royal protection, which she would have purchased with her life the privilege of doing for nothing, could she but have done it

with safety to her child. Moses finds shelter in the house of Pharaoh, from the wrath of the king, and he who was destined to be the plague of Egypt, and the deliverer of Israel, is trained to power, wisdom and consequence, by the Egyptian Magi, and the favor of her who was next the throne.

But, the Providence which saved him amidst so many perils, is pleased to record and to perpetuate the memory of his deliverance in his name. It was customary to name the child on the day of circumcision, the eighth from its birth. Perhaps the anxiety and distress of their situation might have broken upon some of the ceremonies practised upon that occasion: or, if a name had been given him by his parents, he has not thought proper to hand it down to posterity. It being his own design and the will of God, that he should be known to all generations by the appellation which Pharaoh's daughter gave to the babe whom she saved from perishing; *Moses*, "drawn out," "because," said she, "I drew him out of the water."

The Jewish writers take delight....and who can blame them? in expatiating on the extraordinary accomplishments, external and mental, natural and acquired, of their great law-giver. They ascribe to him the most perfect symmetry of features, uncommon height of stature, a noble commanding demeanor, the most engaging sweetness of disposition, the most winning address and eloquence, the most undaunted courage, the most profound erudition. Indeed the singular beauty of his person is hinted in no obscure terms in many places of scripture, and the additional lustre which it afterwards acquired by intercourse with Heaven, lustre which remained unimpaired to the latest old age, convey to us a very high idea of his external appearance. But he stands in no need of the pen of a Philo or a Josephus to make his panegyric. His own actions and writings are his noblest monument; and will live to instruct, delight and bless mankind, as long as good sense and

good taste, virtue, patriotism and religion exist, and are held in estimation in the world.

The parallel between the Jewish and the Christian legislators is so striking, and supported by so many scripture authorities, that he who runs may read it. Previous to the birth of Moses, the Israelitish state was reduced to the lowest ebb of distress and despondency; the birth of Christ found a lost world sunk into the most deplorable corruption, guilt and misery. Of the appearance of Moses there was a general expectation over all the land of Egypt. Christ, "the desire of all nations," was earnestly looked for by "all who waited for the consolation of Israel," who searched the scriptures, and observed the appearances of the times; and by infalible signs was his approach announced to mankind. The deliverer of the seed of Jacob was no foreign potentate, with a strong hand and stretched out arm, but a child of their own nation. And who is the Saviour of perishing sinners? "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," Heb. ii. 16, 17. "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. ii. 14. The extraordinary circumstances attending the birth of Moses were ascertained to the world, and transmitted to posterity, by means of an edict of the king of Egypt. The birth of Christ, in like manner, as to the time, place and situation, was marked out for the knowledge of mankind by a decree of Cæsar, the emperor of Rome. Both the one and the other, but for the special interposition of Heaven, had fallen victims to the jealousy and apprehensions of two bloody and ambitious princes. Moses escaped the hands of

Pharaoh by falling into those of his daughter. Christ avoided the cruelty of Herod by retiring for a while into Egypt. All history agrees in representing Moses as a person of extraordinary grace, wisdom and comeliness; and of whom is the prophet speaking, when he says, "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee forever," Psalm xlv. 2. Moses was brought up in all the learning of the Egyptians. Christ was anointed with the Spirit without measure. Moses stands distinguished by a name which commemorates a temporal deliverance. Christ by two names, descriptive of his high and important office, "Jesus," the Saviour, and of the manner in which he was set apart to it, "Christ," the anointed of God. Moses began not to exist till the day that his mother Jochebed bare him in Egypt, but Christ says of himself, "Before Abraham was, I am." Moses from the beginning was faithful as a servant to Him who appointed him; but "Christ as a son over his own house: for in all things he must have the pre-eminence." Now to God in Christ be ascribed, by all nations, and generations of men upon earth, and by every angel in heaven, kingdom, power and glory forever. Amen.

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 END OF VOLUME. I.





