

THE
C O N T R A S T

BETWEEN

Good and Bad Men,

ILLUSTRATED BY THE BIOGRAPHY AND TRUTHS
OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY M. W. DODD,
Corner of Spruce St. and City Hall Square.

1855.

C 1352.42.65
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and
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Boston.

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New York.

THOMAS E. SMITH,
STEREOTYPER AND ELECTROTYPY,
82 & 84 Beekman St., N. Y.

BILLIN AND BROTHER,
PRINTERS,
20 North William St.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE are not wanting those who consider Christianity as a weak religion, and who regard the disbelief of it as proof of superior intellect and attainment. On the other hand, there are those who look upon irreligious and ungodly men as unwise. In their view there is no greater mark of folly than to live and die an irreligious man.

The following pages are designed to furnish some opportunity to the reader of deciding this question. We have endeavored to look at good men and bad as they are, and in what we hope is an impartial view of their character and destiny ; their honor and dishonor ; their peace of mind and their mental distress and agony ; their life, their death, and their eternity ; and to submit the inquiry, *On which side does the advantage lie ?* Good men have their weaknesses and faults ; wicked men, too, have their excellencies. But which is in the right and which in the wrong ; which is the wise, and which the unwise ? There is no folly in the truths

which the Christian believes, the duties he practices, the motives which govern him, and the end he aims at, the preferences which decide his character, and the hopes that animate him, the life he lives, the death he dies, the heaven he gains. It is no proof of wisdom to be "wise to do evil," and to "do good to have no knowledge." There is a clearness and cogency in the claims of the Gospel of the Son of God, that must extort the acknowledgment that to fall in with them is to choose the good and wise part. He is a madman who idolizes that which is of the least importance ; he plays with straws as though he were wielding sceptres, and throws bubbles as though he were scattering crowns. It is an egregious mistake, a gross blunder in a clear-sighted, far-sighted man to turn his back upon the "crown of righteousness." His sagacity forsakes him, and he is his own worst enemy when he forsooth not the evil, nor hideth himself. These volumes are but one of the numberless voices which urge him to "apply his heart to understanding." The youthful Solomon prayed for "a wise and understanding heart," and God answered his prayer. Let this be the reader's request, as it is the author's for him, as he now sends these volumes into the world. G. S.

NEW YORK, BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL, April 1855.

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CHAPTER I.

The Antediluvian World.

DIFFERENT ages of the world have been distinguished for different degrees of wickedness. A safe, though not perhaps an unerring guide in judging of this comparative degeneracy, may be found in the judgments which have been inflicted upon it by a retributive Providence. The records of the past teach us the lesson, that pervading and strongly-marked wickedness foreshadows a coming retribution ; while flood and fire, tempest and earthquake, famine, pestilence and the sword are but the shadows condensed in clouds, black with indignation, and pouring down their unmitigated fury.

Of no age of the world do we read of such aggravated wickedness as that which pervaded the earth immediately before the Deluge. We have no record of it except in the Book of Genesis, and in some incidental allusions to it in a few other parts of the sacred Volume. Our object in

the present chapter is to advert to this degeneracy itself, to its causes, and its consequences.

Of *this degeneracy itself*, it may be remarked, in the first instance, that it was wickedness *deeply rooted and intense*. The language by which it is described is plain and simple; it has none of the figures of rhetoric; but it is exceedingly emphatic and strong. "And *God saw* that the wickedness of man was *great* in the earth, and that *every imagination* of his heart was *only* evil, *continually*." This was his estimate of their character, who "sees not as man sees." It was great wickedness, unmingled wickedness, uninterrupted wickedness. It was a community conspicuous in crime, and that stopped not short of *every sort* of crime; a community where there was no religion, and therefore no morality; a community where there was no moral restraint, and therefore where wickedness was rank and exuberant.

Where public opinion is hostile to moral virtue, and where wicked men, instead of being restrained by a sense of character, are stimulated to evil-doing by the consideration that wickedness is honored, there is no motive to be virtuous, and no barrier against crime. It is like the raging flames amid the dry stubble, unchecked by a single rivulet, unretarded by the dew of heaven, and every where progressive and wide-wasting. It is like a contagious disease from which there is

no protection, where there is no healer, and none to stand between the living and the dead.

“The earth was *filled with violence* ;” every where it was the sound of the trumpet and the clangor of arms, the tumult of conflict and the rushing of ruthless invaders to the prey. “There were *giants* in those days ;” men of gigantic stature, and gigantic character and crime. Not only did they possess the spirit of evil, and the power and talent for it, but their opportunities and temptations were such as have rarely if ever been equaled. Human life was long, too long for such a generation of men ; nor is it any marvel that it weakened their sense of dependence and responsibility. We often see this result of man’s presumption even now, when human life is reduced to its poor “threescore years and ten.” *Then* it was dimly seen through a vista of five, eight, nine hundred years. It extended to centuries, and these centuries were employed in filling up the measure of their iniquity. Not only had men all opportunity for invention in wickedness, but for extended combinations ; and such were their powers of endurance that they could better afford to become bold and sturdy transgressors than any other race. Whatever difference of rank and station then existed was the effect of “violence.” If there were men of power, it was power gotten by “violence.” If

there were men of wealth, it was wealth gotten by "violence," protected by "violence," and dissipated in "violence." If any among them were poor, it was a poverty to which the strong consigned the weak, and which the weak accepted with sottish indifference; content, since they could not riot in blood and rapine, to riot in sloth and debauchery. It was a poverty unmeliorated by effort, unembellished by honesty and virtue; a poverty made wretched by wickedness, squalid and filthy, and stained by many a deed of dishonesty and licentiousness. It was a horrid and revolting scene for the eye of Heaven to look upon. Men were wicked on principle and by common consent. Impiety was the law of the world; no other law seems to have existed, or at least to have possessed effective sanctions. Force was law, and in a community that said unto God, "Depart from us." Shame sought no refuge; profligacy brought no disgrace; violence pleaded no excuse, and suffering excited no sympathy. Falsehood lost its guile where all were alike false; ingratitude its sting where all were ungrateful; there was no treachery, for there was no trust. Never did the sun shine upon such a combination of deeply-imbedded and various and vigorous wickedness.

To add blackness to the shades of this dark picture, we must also bear in mind that the wick-

edness was *universal*. It is a revealed fact concerning this generation of men that there was but *one individual* who did not partake of this intense degeneracy. This earth had been in existence almost sixteen hundred years, and contained millions of inhabitants; yet of all this multitude, one man only was found who was righteous before God. Pious men there had been; but the last generation of the worshipers of God had died out; their names and example, if remembered at all, were remembered only to reproach their descendants. This perfectly universal degeneracy of this dark age is a fact not to be lost sight of in its subsequent and melancholy history. Sodom was corrupt; yet, if there had been "ten righteous" found in her, she would have escaped her terrible overthrow. Yet the "cities of the plain" formed but a small portion of the entire earth, and Lot himself but a small fraction of its pious men. The city of Paris, during the French Revolution, was almost as destitute of pious men as of Bibles; yet were there godly men and women within its walls not a few; while in other lands they could be numbered by millions. At no period since the creation of the world to the present hour, except that of which we are speaking, has it ever been known that there was but *one* righteous man. Look where he would over the broad earth, with this solitary ex-

ception, the observer could see nothing but wickedness. Its villages and its cities, its plains, its hills and its rivers, its dense and its sparse population, its various callings and its various ranks, its men, its women and its children all discover essentially the same vile character. There were old men, venerable for age and detestable for crime; hardened and shameless scoffers, who had long been pioneers in sin, and who remained on the earth only to be its corrupters. And there were middle-aged men, vigorous and prurient in wickedness; and there were the buoyancy and sprightliness of youth lending all their enchantment to evil. The temples were desolate; their fires had gone out, and impious rites and ceremonies had thrust aside the worship of the true God. The sanctuaries of justice had become haunts of fraud and rapacity, where weakness was brought to the bar, and vice and violence were both judge and accuser. There was no refuge from injury, no relief from oppression: "I saw under the sun the place of judgment that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness that iniquity was there." All classes, all times, all places, all employments had become vile. Every thing was impious. Iniquity, unrelieved, unceasing, reigned and covered the whole earth, and overlaid it as with the pall of death. Imagine, if it is possible, that this metropolis in which we dwell contained within its

crowded population but *one righteous man*; then transfer the picture to the whole existing generation on the face of the earth. What a *hell* must be such a community! What a diabolical world! how truly to be abhorred—blotted out! Who would wonder if it were swept by the pestilence, or consumed by fire from God out of heaven, or deluged by some burning volcano, or sunk by an earthquake? Yet such was the world before the flood. The whole structure of its society was imbued with wickedness; there was nothing to retard its progress, or avert its destiny; all things were working loose from their old fastenings toward the most fearful catastrophe on the records of time. It had become one great compound of fermenting iniquity, the dense exhalations and stench of which were going up like the smoke of the pit.

With this view of the character of the antediluvian world, it may be instructive to direct our thoughts, for a few paragraphs, to THE CAUSES of this unexampled degeneracy. These had long been accumulating, and secretly exerting their influence. Sin is deceitful; it works its way silently. It strikes its roots deep, until its deadly branches overshadow and poison every green thing. It has its charms, and artfully insinuates itself into the mind. Men do not see the precipice even when they deliberately take the first

step that leads to it. The most abandoned were once moral, and would have shrunk with horror from deeds and courses of wickedness which they have afterward committed and pursued without compunction. They are creatures of impulse and habit; they take courage in evil-doing as they become proficient in crime. This doomed generation did not sink into this abyss of wickedness by a single plunge; it is not man's nature to do this, even though his "heart is fully set in him to do evil." It was an artful as well as a bold stroke of the adversary, which thus aimed at destroying this entire earth, and inducing its Maker to become weary of the work of his hands. We doubt not there were widely-extending and coöperating causes of this degeneracy, which spread themselves like net-work over the entire face of that corrupted community. We shall dwell only on those two which are revealed to us.

The first of these was the *corruption of the social relations*. To appreciate this remark, we must go back to an early period of the world's history. Cain's tragical deed in murdering his brother had separated him from his father's family, and made him an exile in a remote land, where he and his descendants, severed from the more virtuous posterity of Seth, formed a community by themselves. This was the first colony of the human race, and had this base and degenerate

origin. Little could be hoped from the descendants of a man whose hands were reeking with the blood of his "own mother's son," and who were thus separated from the household of faith. It was a colony founded in unbelief of God's truth, in contempt of his institutions, in hatred of him and his people, and in disregard of all those religious instructions which he had revealed. It was an atheistical, or a polytheistic community; a pagan colony composed of the offscouring of the world, and was the disgrace and shame of the patriarchal age.

The descendants of Seth were a different race of men; a choice vine planted by the hand of God. To them pertained the promise of Him who was to be "the woman's seed;" and from them descended those illustrious patriarchs who were the adornment and glory of the first ages of the world. In the language of the sacred writings, they were called "the children of God;" God's family and people; while the separated, exiled, and antagonist descendants of the murderer were emphatically *human*, bore the image of the earthly, and were appropriately designated "the sons and daughters of men." One object of Cain's exile was, in the wisdom of Divine Providence, the separation of these races. There was as yet no revealed law forbidding them to amalgamate, such as was subsequently given to

the descendants of Abraham interdicting their intermarriage with the heathen nations; it was rather an intimation, a clear and significant indication of the Divine will that the descendants of Seth should not become contaminated by matrimonial alliances with the descendants of Cain.

This wise and benevolent arrangement, though respected by the earlier patriarchs, was gradually disregarded, until, toward the close of the antediluvian period, it was altogether countervailed by the general immingling of these two races. "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, that they took them wives of all which they chose." Impulse and passion banished sound discretion and infringed the dictates of heavenly wisdom; the descendants of the godly became one with the descendants of the murderer; and the heirs of promise were no longer distinguished from the pagan world. The barrier which had been erected against the flood of immorality and crime was broken down, and the melancholy record was made for the first time, "and the wickedness of man was *great* in the earth." The work of degeneracy had begun. The progeny of these unhallowed alliances were men of enormous wickedness—"mighty men which were of old, and men of renown;" chieftains, men

of violence, cruel oppressors and destroyers. The end was not foreseen; nor is it ever foreseen where sense and Satan are the prompters. The few righteous men that were scattered through the medieval period of the patriarchal age, and who were so sadly diminished toward its close, did not probably perceive the evil until it was too late to stem the torrent, and "all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth."

The social relations are designed to hold in check, to subdue and refine the rougher and more revolting features of human depravity; where they fail of doing this, they become prolific sources of crime. Wickedness may be the gainer by its alliance with moral virtue; but moral virtue is more likely to be the sufferer. By bringing them into contact you do not always bring them into collision; and even where they come in collision, so strong are the tendencies to evil in the human heart, that they are very apt to be the conquerors. Man's nature may always be counted on as on the wrong side of the question. They were not "the daughters of men" who were won over to piety by the sons of God; but rather "the sons of God" who were confirmed in impiety by the daughters of men. They became degenerate; the little remnant of their moral virtue was lost in the immorality of their pagan companions. Woman's influence is greater than man's authori-

ty ; and woe be to the man of religious training and promise who allies himself to an infidel woman ! Every where sin is infectious ; here its contact is incessant ; the very atmosphere is poisoned. Its mission is to tempt and destroy ; and here it is ever employed in its deadly work. Society is polluted at its fountain-head. Wickedness gathers strength from this alliance ; every charm and custom of domestic life cements the league of iniquity ; every household tie draws closer a confederacy which sets God at defiance. This was one of the causes of the unexampled degeneracy of the antediluvian world.

But there was a still more powerful reason for it in the fact, that *this wicked generation was abandoned of God*. It is not easy to account for this intense and universal degeneracy by the ordinary influence of moral causes ; nor without the suppression of those common agencies of the Spirit of God which are enjoyed even by wicked men. God left that vicious generation to "their own heart's lust ;" nor is there any greater judgment than this, this side the lake that burneth with fire. He had cared for them ; but they had so resisted his restraints and counsel, that he cared for them no longer. He saw their wickedness, and "it grieved him at his heart ;" it "repented him that he had made man upon the earth ;" he loathed the work of his hands. Humanly

speaking, it seemed labor lost; and he gave utterance to those fearful words, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man!"

If we do not err in our interpretation of this announced purpose, it reads a most affecting lesson to the professed people of God. That which most offended him was the debased character of the descendants of Seth, whom he had set apart for himself, and whom he had taken so much pains to preserve and elevate as the light of the world. So long as these professed children of God retained their integrity, there was a seed that might take root even in the most barren soil. All around it might be like the heath in the desert; yet it might grow and cover the earth. But now that this chosen seed of Seth had become no better than the exiled and accursed race of Cain, it was a forlorn hope. There were no means and no prospect of reform, and the Father of mercies resolved to abandon the world he had made. There is peculiarity in the language of this sentence of abandonment: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for *he also* is flesh!" *All* had become alike corrupt; even the national and family character of God's professed children, this last and only hope of the world, was lost; *all* were flesh, carnal and sold under sin, and abandoned of God.

We may look now upon that corrupted generation without hope. They had enjoyed solemn and

impressive teachings; there had been eminent prophets in the midst of them; tradition had preserved among them the facts which have been so instructive to subsequent ages; returning Sabbaths had visited them with their altars, and sacrifices, and worship; restraining providences had interposed to obstruct them in their downward progress; and the solemn remonstrances of conscience, seconded by the "still, small voice" of Him who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, had been commissioned to expostulate with them, peradventure they would turn and live. But all these were now withdrawn, and they pursued their way unhindered. There were none to reprove them, none to pray for them. God himself departed from them, and left them to enjoy the pleasure, and yield to the temptations of the world, unimportuned, and without one startling reproof, or one inward whisper of warning. And onward they went, in confused and gorgeous procession, some toward honor, some toward wealth, some toward sensual joy, some toward conflict and power; but all working to their overthrow. In righteous judgment God "sent upon them strong delusions:" they felt the full burden of the denunciation, "Woe be unto them when I depart from them!" Such are the revealed causes of this fearful degeneracy.

We proceed then, in the last place, to take a

view of ITS CONSEQUENCES. These were not less strongly marked than their degeneracy. We would honor God as the Rewarder. Unrestrained wickedness produces exemplary suffering ; this is the unfailing law of his government. The antediluvian world was any thing but a happy world, any thing but a world desirable to live in. With all their enjoyments, and all their possessions and triumphs, its vile and wretched inhabitants could no where find unmingled joys. The cup which they drained so eagerly was impregnated with wormwood. It was a bitter fountain at which they slaked their thirst, while they had hewed down the only tree which could heal its waters. They were the joys of sin : every thing within them and around them was not only tainted with sin, but sin was its only ingredient. It is a beautiful feature in the divine government, that sin and true happiness can not dwell together in the same bosom, nor in the same world.

Yet is this but a faint foreshadowing of the just recompense of reward ; nor have we any thing more than a faint foreshadowing in this present evil world. The great God declares with memorable tenderness, "Fury is not in *me* !" He is "slow to anger ;" there is a clemency in his nature that constrains him to keep back the sword of justice, even though it be for more expressive

manifestations, and a more fearful settlement of wrath against the day of wrath. Instead of marveling against the sentence denounced against this great cumberer of the universe, we may only marvel that it was so long delayed, and that, after having revealed the purpose to "destroy the earth by a flood," he should still give them so long a space for repentance. For *one hundred and twenty years* his long-suffering endured their provocations, nor did he unseal the vials of his indignation until amid all these scattered millions there remained but *one* who feared him.

God's ways, both of mercy and judgment, are not as man's ways. The patriarchal age was a great experiment upon the human character. It was the first experiment subsequent to that which was made in the Garden of Eden; and while it demonstrated that man is vile, also demonstrated that he was an abuser of God's long-suffering, and scoffer at his justice. Most affecting were the admonitions of their approaching doom, and more affecting, if possible, was the proof of their obduracy. There stood "Noah, the preacher of righteousness," and there stood the mighty fabric which, by God's command, he was preparing as his refuge from the storm. Every plank that was fastened in its place, every nail, and every stroke of the hammer sounded some new note of alarm. Higher and higher the ark rose before the eyes

of these abandoned men, while they wondered at the folly of the builder, and still amused themselves with their impious and sardonic smiles. The one hundred and twenty years were drawing to a close. It was the last year. The last month was passing away ; till at length, of those thirty days, a *single week* only remained for Noah and his household to embark for their voyage over a desolated world.

It was a solemn week ; to millions it was the last week of time. The ark was completed ; its door was still open ; while God was graciously employing these last seven days of respite in making one more, and most touching appeal to these despisers of his forbearance. There was indeed no visible sign in the heavens, no audible voice, and no bellowing of the approaching tempest ; yet were there more emphatic, though silent premonitions every where gathering from the broad earth. "Of *clean beasts*," heaven-directed, "they came by sevens, and of *unclean*, two by two"—a long and crowded and docile procession—and "went unto Noah into the ark." Was there ever a more thrilling spectacle ! Yet this extraordinary miracle seems to have made no impression on the hardened spectators ; "they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until *the day on which* Noah entered the ark." It was the last day of forbearance when

“Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, entered into the ark, and THE LORD SHUT THEM IN.” There was nothing now to suspend the blow. His hand had shut the door, and no man nor angel could open it. The time had come to execute the sentence, “Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven.”

The day dawned gloomily that began this work of desolation. Over all the earth no sun was seen in the heavens. Thick clouds enwrap the globe as with a funeral pall; there was no delay now: the storm burst upon a devoted world with all its fury. “The *same day* were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” The immense bodies of water which were contained in the lakes, seas, and oceans, swollen by those subterranean waters which occupied the center of the earth, at God’s command broke forth, and left the solid earth to sink in the mighty chasm. The waters above the firmament, no longer separated from the waters below the firmament, rushed together, space answering to space, loud and still louder in the ravages of the tempest that was commissioned to destroy all flesh. “And the *rain* was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.” It was an un-

broken torrent of waters. From beneath, from above, from earth and heaven, from pole to pole, and from the center to the circumference—a perfect deluge swept the entire globe. There this huge earth lay, laboring, and tossing, and revolving, still a mighty globe of waters. There were “times and seasons” still; the sun shone in the heavens, and the moon still pursued her wonted path; but not a ray from either pierced the dense veil of clouds that enwrapt a perishing world. “The waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered.” Such was the scene for *one hundred and fifty days and nights*, when the light of heaven broke at last upon the stupendous ruin.

What days, what nights were these, as the heavy flood rolled round the earth, and the infuriate foam dashed from sky to sky above the mighty mountains! Beasts of prey, paralyzed with fear, laid aside their fierceness, and uttered their frantic moans. Lowing herds and bleating flocks wailed out their grief, and sunk into the foaming waters. The fowls of heaven echoed the voice of the storm, and dropping their wearied wings, mingled with the waves; even the eagle sunk from his aerie, and the fierce raven shrieked and fell. And *man*, unbelieving man—where was

he now? Where were those "mighty men of old," those giants of the antediluvian world? And where, too, was *woman*, those "daughters of men," that were so fair to look upon? There must have been touching scenes amid that indiscriminate and unmeasured desolation. At the first presence of the tempest, there were doubtless some who still scoffed; some who doubted; some who already trembled. But as the waters buried valley after valley, and ascended steadily about the mountains, higher and still higher, every emotion gave way to terror, and all acquiesced in despair. And now the waves began to select their victims. Helpless infancy sank with scarce a struggle. The sick and the aged became an easy prey, and reeled under the shock; while the young and the vigorous, taking refuge in the hills, or chased to the mountain-tops, dropped one after another into the abyss below. Some, more courageous, climbed the highest peaks, and there, in groups, contended for the poor privilege of being the last to die, till the waters engulfed them in one common grave. Others, still bolder and more frantic, seized the jutting crag, or cliff, or caught some overhanging bough, and there hung with convulsive grasp, till the surge lapped them away, and they sank without hope.

We have no annals of that overthrow, except the mere record of the universal overthrow. No

marble tells where the victims lie ; nor were there any that escaped to weep over their grave. The winds alone sighed as they swept over the earth. Nor was the silence broken, except by the echoing cadences of the mountain wave, or some peal of thunder as it boomed its knell at the funeral of a departed world. There is but this one inscription on that gloomy sepulcher, nor could it have been written in fewer or more emphatic words: "AND ALL IN WHOSE NOSTRILS WAS THE BREATH OF LIFE DIED."

Such was the character and doom of that departed world. And how mournful the lesson which it reads to us of man's universal apostasy from God! "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin." If the evidence of this fact meets us more abundantly in such an age of the world as that to which our thoughts have been now directed, it also meets us every where. History, observation, experience every where demonstrates it. The foundations of the mountains are fraught with the proof of it. The depths of the ocean utter the truth that "the wickedness of man is great on the earth, and that every imagination of his heart is only evil continually." The only reason why the world is not *now* as bad as it was before the flood, is, that God restrains its wickedness.

We may not therefore overlook our obligations

to the Divine forbearance while contemplating the character and end of the ancient offenders. If God "should mark iniquity," and withdraw his supporting hand, what multitudes in the midst of us would drop into perdition! Many a time does he "turn away his anger, and not stir up all his wrath." Let us adore that patience which thus "holds back the face of his throne." Verily "there is no God like unto thee, which pardoneth iniquity, and retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."

None may predict the limits to which his forbearance will be extended, though all may know that it will not be extended beyond the period when their iniquity is full. They are solemn inward questionings which become us as we look back upon the past, and as we anticipate the future. It may be the eleventh hour with some of us, even now.

Take heed, therefore, lest by abusing the day of God's forbearance you are left to doubt his coming wrath. Trifle not with his veracity when he tells you of that wrathful day. So trifled the antediluvian world to the last; yet the flood came and swept them all away. It is true that no future flood shall pass over the earth; while that very bow on the cloud which gives us this assurance, assures us also that he is as true to his justice as to his mercy. This world shall yet remain its

appointed time, and untold generations of men shall yet pass over it, not only because God has a people "to take out of it for his praise," but because the "heavens and the earth which now are, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of *ungodly men*." O ye ungodly men! hear this, both high and low, rich and poor together! As the Lord liveth, and as your souls live, "except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." Ye may put far off this evil day; but rest assured that your judgment lingereth not, and your damnation shall not slumber. Unbelievers you may be; and with the scoffers of other times may say, "My Lord delayeth his coming;" but your unbelief shall not vitiate the divine veracity, while your scoffing shall only make you the fairer mark for his arrows. "The end of all things is at hand." "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Time diminishes the further we recede from it, and eternity magnifies as it draws near. This restless pursuit of the things of time, neutralizing your belief in the realities of eternity—where will it end when the end shall come? This unwearied activity of hope, of desire, of effort, which prompts you to "say unto God, depart from us"—what is it but the spirit of them "who were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed by the flood?" Your

hopes may be crushed and bruised when they bud the fairest, and you may linger around the spot where they blossom only to see them wither. It is this protracted impenitence that is sealing your perdition. It is at the peril of your immortality that you thus refuse to come into the ark. Destruction hovers over you, and its dark cloud overhangs your guilty path. The skies are gathering blackness; the impatient murmur of the tempest may even now be heard, and you may perceive the gleamings of its restrained wrath. Oh, what will you think of this neglect of the great salvation when the hour of mercy is past, and He that shutteth and no man openeth shall have shut the door of the ark for ever?

CHAPTER II.

NOAH.

IT was not the divine purpose, in destroying the world by the flood, that the race should become extinct. The sacred writers furnish no detailed enumeration of the virtues of the man who was rescued from this overthrow, and of whom we propose to speak. They rather leave his character to shine by its own light. Of all the men of his age, with the single exception perhaps of Enoch, the patriarch NOAH was preëminent for his greatness and his goodness. Our method shall be to speak of *his character*, and to advert to some *particulars in which he was greatly honored of God*.

In speaking of *his character*, we are left in darkness so far as it regards his early history. We read nothing of his *conversion*; nor indeed of the conversion of any of the saints of the patriarchal period. He was the great adornment of the most degenerate age; yet human example and influences accomplished little in the attain-

ment of that spirit, and in the cultivation of those virtues for which he was distinguished. How *early* he became a pious man we are not informed, although it is quite obvious that it was long before the antediluvian world had attained its excess of wickedness. It was under the most unfavorable auspices, and probably in early life, that strong religious impressions were made upon his mind that proved permanent, and that evinced his indebtedness to renewing and sanctifying grace.

It is recorded of him that *he was righteous before God*. His piety was of no doubtful kind; it was distinguished for his godly sincerity. He who draws aside the curtains of the heart, and "weigheth the actions of men," bears witness to his religious integrity. There was no more doubt of it than there was of the impiety of those whose "wickedness was great on the earth," and whose character was distinguished by their enmity to God, and their scandalous vices.

Not a few are righteous *before men*, who before God are not righteous. They are righteous in their own eyes; righteous by profession and in all the form of godliness; but there their righteousness stops. Their piety consists, on the one hand, in the variations of animal excitement, and on the other, in the monotony of a prescribed ritual. With some it is emotion without thought; with

others it is mere religious mechanism without emotion. They never believe, because they reject the testimony of God and confide in the commandments and traditions of men; they never hope, because their hopes are founded on the changeful assurances of beings more wicked than themselves; they never pray, because their prayers are dictated by others, and in an unknown tongue. Amid all their simple or gorgeous externals, there is no inner and spiritual life; their professed devotions are but the mockery of "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Right conduct is the fruit of right principles and affections. The external rectitude which God requires and approves, flows from a rectitude that is internal; a godly heart and a godly life constitute a godly man. The external is nothing except as it is the expression of the internal; while the internal is nothing if it have not sufficient impulse to produce the external. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt: the tree is known by its fruit." It is a beautiful character where the internal and the external are thus combined, and present a true and visible conformity to the law of God. Such was the character of Noah. He was righteous, not in form merely; not in his own eyes; not merely in the eyes of men; he was "righteous before God."

To this comprehensive description must be added the fact that he was distinguished for *habitual and intimate intercourse with his Maker*. Wickedness hates God, and shuns his presence. Such was the wickedness of the antediluvian world; it was practical atheism. Piety loves God, and seeks his presence and love; such was the piety of Noah. Centuries after he was gathered to his fathers his biographer was divinely directed to write his epitaph in those few and emphatic words, "And Noah walked with God." To render the contrast between himself and the world around him the more striking and impressive, his piety was of the sweetest kind; it was the steady and delightful habit of his soul. He was acquainted with God, familiar with God. He realized the divine presence. God was his companion, his friend, his guide, his refuge, his portion. There was no being in the universe with whom he had so much to do as with God; none whom he thought of so much; on whom he so constantly felt his dependence; with whom he had such unembarrassed intercourse; to whom he looked with such expectations, and on whom he so implicitly relied; from whom he received all that relieved the burden and gladdened the sadness of his pilgrimage; and whose favor and love were his "shelter and shade," his "glory and the lifter up of his head." His piety must have been thus

preëminent, to have existed at all. In that world of wickedness he must have lived near to heaven, or near to hell. He did live near to heaven; and this was his security. There was wondrous condescension in God in his personal interviews with this holy man. He who held that shoreless deluge in the hollow of his hand, laid aside his glorious, his awful majesty, and held intercourse with a worm. Noah was admitted to "the secret of his tabernacle." Worm as he was, he was God's consecrated servant and much-loved child. "He walked with God;" and they were paths of righteousness; pleasant and peaceful paths, where truth flourishes and exceeding great and precious promises grow; joyous paths, where are smiles, and blessings, and fullness of joy; bright paths, cheered with heavenly light and love, overhung with unearthly glories, and ever opening new vistas of increased beauty and loveliness.

He was also distinguished for his *implicit faith in God's word*. Coming events were told to him, not at first told to others—events which, to the eye of sense, were the most improbable in the world, which indeed seemed impossible. It did not seem likely that God would destroy the earth he had so recently made; nor were there any outward and visible indications of this overwhelming calamity. Yet when, one hundred and twenty years before the event, God told him that

he would bring a flood of waters upon the earth, he did not stop to argue the improbability of the event, nor did he admit a doubt of the fulfillment of the threatening. He understood its frightful import, and was "moved with fear." From the hour in which the lips of heavenly truth uttered this prediction, to the year, the day, the hour when he saw "the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven opened," the belief of this overwhelming judgment was inwrought into his soul. His *faith in God* formed the most prominent feature in his character. It solved many a dark dispensation during that prolonged period of the divine forbearance, and gave his mind the clue to labyrinths which human wisdom could not have threaded out. It was a fearful, unheard-of thing which God had threatened, and the world around him did not believe it. But it drew his attention more and more, till it became the absorbing theme, and his faith anticipated it with an assurance which the reality itself could not make more sure.

His *prompt and unwearied obedience to the Divine command* forms also a prominent feature in his character. He might have reasoned as ancient and modern infidels have reasoned on the subject of the deluge; but, instead of doing this, or employing his time in refuting the cavils of unbelief, no sooner did God command him to

build the ark than he set himself in earnest to obey his will. He justified and vindicated the reality and strength of his faith by his obedience. It was an arduous enterprise ; but God had commanded it ; he had indeed originated and minutely dictated the plan of it. Noah was but the under-builder, the humble workman, and felt that he had nothing to do but implicitly obey the divine directions. He needed no other prompting ; no other rule of conduct. Nothing was omitted or overlooked, and nothing was delayed. "Thus did Noah : *according to all that God commanded him*, so did he." His religion was a practical religion, and his obedience the crown of his piety. Mighty interests were dependent on this watchful and diligent observance ; it would have cost him shame, agony and death if he had not been true to his trust, and if he had been governed by any other rule of action than God's will.

We must add to these excellencies of his character his *unshaken firmness*. Public opinion and example control the world both for good and for evil. Interest, pride and social bonds allure men to moral virtue ; none dispute their power to harden them in sin. There is little apparent evil in wickedness, and no reproach where wickedness is fashionable and universal. Noah was a righteous man, in opposition to the

strong and overwhelming current of the whole antediluvian world. His incipient purposes of godliness were protected by no sacred alliances and influences; he had no retreat from the snares and scoffs of the ungodly, even in the more retired circles of domestic love. He stood alone, the only example of piety in the earth. "*Thee* have I found righteous before me in *this generation*." He was God's witness, chosen, called, faithful. He was a consistent witness, wondered at for his boldness amid powerful and inveterate foes, for his perseverance in the midst of hardships and perils, and for his all-conquering faith and zeal amid stupid carelessness, sottish ignorance and degrading profligacy.

We can imagine such piety in Christian lands, and amid the sequestered influences of Christian families and churches; but habitual piety, where the whole world lieth in wickedness, belonged only to this remarkable man. His solitary piety stands on the sacred record as the admiration of every succeeding generation of men. It was a noble example of Christian heroism when the youthful Stephen, assailed by the flower of five Jewish synagogues and an exasperated mob, stood firm, at every hazard, for God and righteousness, and remained undismayed amid the terrors of martyrdom. It was a noble spirit in Luther, when Rome gnashed upon him with her

teeth, and, like Hercules, he boldly attacked this Nemean lion in his lair. It was a splendid testimony when Patrick Hamilton, a youth of royal lineage, renounced his hereditary honors for the sake of rekindling in Scotland the smoldering beacon of God's truth, though he himself was the first victim to the flames. But it was a still nobler spectacle to see that venerable patriarch standing for centuries, unpatronized and unprotected, where "all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth." These wondrous men, and others like them, were bright stars in the moral firmament; but they were not, like him, the only light amid the pervading darkness. It was proof of piety that was never, before or since, put to so severe a test. All men and all visible things were against him; yet had he hope against hope, and tranquil endurance amid "great swelling words of vanity." Scoffing unbelief and cutting irony did not move him. Such was the loneliness amid which he lived, that it seems to us a visionary and unearthly existence. There was no kindred spirit on earth to cheer him; his consolation and his courage were all from worlds unseen. Wonderful man! Not naval or military hero, amid the stormy scenes of battle, ever gave proof of greater heroism than the ardent and steady mind of this man of God. Solitary piety—what is it?—where is it? We learn what it was, when

we think of Noah ; we know where it was, when we think of that giant race of wicked men. Beautiful was it, inexpressibly beautiful : a single flower blooming in the scathed forest, and breathing its fragrance amid desert sands ; a single temple rescued from the ravages of time, where the Shekinah dwelt ; a solitary heart filled with his love where " every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually."

Such was his character, and it was *honored of God*. Such a character is praiseworthy. It is God's image reflected upon the soul of his creature and child. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." He could not do otherwise than approve of such a character. The mediatorial interpositions of the Son of God was known before the time of Noah, and justice and mercy had already harmonized their claims in the promised seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head. Noah had availed himself of this great sacrifice, and his person was accepted of the Most High. His high-born *character* was not veiled from the All-seeing eye ; nor were its glories obscured by any law of justice, or any acts of all-controlling sovereignty. Men scoffed at it, but God smiled. Humble as this godly man was, and disdaining, as he did, every thing in the form of meritorious righteousness, he had not only an approving conscience, but an approving God.

The manner in which God expressed his approbation is seen, in the first place, in the fact that *he preserved him from the universal overthrow of the antediluvian world.* A fearful change was about to be effected in this sublunary creation by the complete destruction of every living thing on the face of the earth. Yet it was not consistent with the divine rectitude to “destroy the righteous with the wicked.” This favored servant of God never so needed the divine protection as at this fearful hour; and never was it so signally vouchsafed as when he was hidden within those secret chambers, so wonderfully arranged by divine wisdom and love. The narrative is a familiar one to our ears; yet it is a wonderful narrative. God directed him to *build an ark in which he should float securely until the waters of the deluge should pass away.* It was not an ark of bulrushes, like that in which Moses was deposited on the river’s brink; nor a frail bark in which a single rescued family might float upon the waters. It was an ark of safety—a vast fabric *eighty-one thousand and sixty-two tons* in burden, and fitted with mathematical precision to its contents. This immense fabric was to be his home as long as the flood prevailed. There it was that “God shut him in.” The foundations of the great deep were broken up, and the waters came swelling in incessant torrents upon the earth; but he was safe. The

hand that held the tempest had closed the door upon him—had “shut him in.” What an awful hour, as the last vestiges of human and animal life disappeared, and the cries of a dying world were hushed in the surging billows! Yet what an hour of triumph! Sweet thought—“God shut him in!” His faithful love shut him in. He was housed from the tempest. The billows might surge, and the earth reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man; but there was *that* within the ark which Almighty Love protected as the apple of his eye. The church was safe. All was turbulence without; within all was perfect and sweet repose. There was no solicitude, and there were no bewildered thoughts; never was man more composed, and never were hopes in brighter bloom. There were no lights in the heaven to shine upon the mingling elements. Nothing could be seen upon that dark and solitary waste but the single light glimmering from the window of the ark as it floated upon the universal flood. There this honored man of God dwelt for three hundred and seventy days, fearing no evil. There he rose morning after morning; there he slept, lulled by the murmurs and awakened by the rushing of the troubled deep, realizing the promise, “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.”

In the next place, God not only thus extended his preserving care toward Noah himself, but *also preserved others for his sake*. The comprehensive command given to him was in these words: "Come thou and *all thy house* into the ark: *thy sons and thy sons' wives with thee*." We have already had occasion to notice the unhallowed influences which result from the perversion and degeneracy of the social relations; we have the converse of this picture in the consequences of Noah's piety upon his descendants. The command is in beautiful accordance with the general scope and design of the sacred writings in relation to the families of God's people; they are "the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." This is the parental privilege, as well as the chartered inheritance of their children. Precious inheritance! though often bartered for a mess of pottage, and though often lost by parental unfaithfulness, still it remains the great promise of the church of God. Many a parent's heart has been relieved from depression, and refreshed in its despondency, by this pregnant promise. Even when God *first* gave the command to Noah to build the ark, he did not leave him in suspense and agitation in relation to those he loved; the threatening to destroy the earth was scarcely uttered, when God said to him, "But with thee will I establish *my covenant*." His children were

not infants; they had reached maturity; and though they were not then righteous before God, there were blessings in prospect for them, because it is the method of his grace thus to sanctify and reward the natural affections, and because he would not wither the heart of the parent by blasting the hopes of his children. And when the hour of trial came, and the ark was finished, it was made the depository of the righteous and his seed. This was the reward of the patriarch's faithfulness; but for their father's piety they would have perished in the flood; for his sake, they were safe from the desolations where the dove could not find a green leaf, nor a rest for the soles of her feet. All his children were preserved from the flood, and Shem and Japheth became pious men. Parents need not seek higher honors from God, than to be thus honored in the safety and piety of their children. Happy household! thus "dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty!" We love to think of such honored families all gathered in the great ark of safety, not one dear heart away, as we love to think of that venerable patriarch surrounded by his children, recounting God's covenanted mercies, and mingling all their voices with the wild notes of the storm, in praise to him who holds the waters in the hollow of his hand.

It was also a distinguished honor put upon this man of God, *that he was constituted the father and founder of the new world.* Of all the antediluvian race, he was selected to repair the desolations made by the Deluge; the only man on the earth who was the medium of its past history, and the presiding genius over its future progress. He was its owner, the single and alone possessor of this great earth. God himself, its great Proprietor, in all due form and solemnity, bequeathed to him this restored earth, to be occupied and peopled, and divided among his sons. He installed him as its teacher, and by his instructions, example and influence, was the true religion to be perpetuated, its truths and precepts made known, and its institutions molded and established. He, too, was its anointed priest, and offered its gifts and sacrifices. And he was its only legitimate prince and governor, invested with patriarchal authority, and endowed with wisdom to discern, ability to guide, and goodness to practice. The earth was young from the creation to the flood; but it had just emerged from its second birth. Washed from its wickedness, and enrobed in new-born beauty, it was commencing its new career, and to travel on till the final consummation of all earthly things. With Noah and his family were deposited all its traditions, all the knowledge of its arts, all its stock of improve-

ments and science, all the supernatural revelations made to the great progenitor of our race, and all the knowledge, secular and religious, that had been accumulating for nine antecedent generations. What revelations were made to him in the ark we do not know. Doubtless they were such as fitted him for the high service to which he was designated, and to bear testimony for God to every generation that came, and shall come after him. He was a man honored of God, and stands abreast with the few whom Providence has raised up as burning and shining lights, and the effulgence of whose character is reflected on all subsequent times.

It was likewise a strongly-marked token of the divine favor toward this patriarch, that God *gave him the assurance that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh*. In view of the fearful desolation he had witnessed, this was no ordinary expression of regard. No eye ever beheld the ravages of that flood as they were beheld by him from the window of the ark, and during that long year of mingled consternation and confidence. The sea poured through vallies, and every where dashed over the mountain tops. From above, from beneath, it broke over this young earth, and broke through it, from east to west, and from north to south; and there it hung in the deep abyss, like a foundered and abandoned ship in

the midst of the ocean. And when he surveyed it from the top of the mountain where the ark rested, and before the waters began to abate, what an area of desolation spread itself out before him! Then again, when, as the waters gradually retired, and the earth became thoroughly drained, he at length removed the covering of the ark, what a melancholy yet magnificent scene, and what unimagined tokens of destruction rose before him! When he entered the ark, the earth was full of inhabitants. Infancy and youth, manhood and age were there; bloom and vigor every where greeted his eye, and pleasure and song fell on his ear. It was now empty and waste. It was the silence of one vast sepulcher; no living thing dwelt in it. Pride and wealth, power and wickedness were all buried in the boundless flood. Every palace and idol temple, every mart of business, cottage and tent, every place of labor, and every arena of strife and pleasure, every monument of man was swept away. This once sylvan and beautiful and busy earth was a vast lake, an unmeasured ocean of swelling and murmuring waters.

Noah was the eye-witness, both of the character and doom of that ill-fated world. Fifty-seven days after the ark was uncovered, in the second month, and in the sixth hundredth year of his life, he went forth by the divine command. For

a full long year, now for the first time, the earth felt the foot of man. Science may not hastily limit or define those remodifications to which both the surface and internal structure of the globe we inhabit were subjected by the action of the flood. Submerged as it was, it still revolved on its axis, and maintained its annual revolution round the sun. And what marvel, if in these rapid and labored revolutions, this conflict with the rushing elements, and this upheaving of materials from the sea, portions of it still lie at the bottom of the ocean, and other portions have formed new combinations, and have themselves become transformed? Noah did not occupy the same earth when he came forth from the ark which he occupied when he entered into it. Every thing was changed. Solid land was turned into ocean, and ocean into solid land. Mountains were moved out of their place; the bowels of the earth were formed anew; forests were overthrown, and the bones of man and beast, no longer floating in the waters, or bleaching on the shore, were deposited in inaccessible strata, while the productions of the ocean were transferred to thousands of feet above the level of their own element. All nature had been convulsed, showing that a mighty deluge had rested upon land and sea, and still indicating its agitated surface, and the gradual cadence of its waters.

This was the world which God gave to Noah. It had emerged from a second chaos, prepared for a shorter-lived and more widely-dispersed race, and better fitted for their habitation. The rising sun cheered it, the fresh air of heaven breathed upon it, it was clothed with new verdure, and was as it were a new creation. The rescued and adoring patriarch went forth upon it, and for what? To erect his altar, and offer his sacrifice. It was the first offering of his pure heart upon the shores of this renovated earth; as fitting and acceptable a sacrifice as ever the morning breeze wafted to heaven. And what was the answer to it from the heavenly court? Hear it in the words of the sacred narrative: "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor, and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." Never again shall its foundations be overthrown by a flood. The decree shall never alter: "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed!" And now when storms beat, and rivers are swollen, and lakes overflow, and torrents come down from the mountains, and man trembles; there is *God's bow in the cloud*, beautiful beyond all other things, still the token of his covenant with Noah, and between God and the earth, "that the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Such was the character of Noah, and such the honor conferred upon him by the great Lord of heaven and earth. We may not suppress the two following reflections in view of this narrative and statement.

1. It furnishes, in the first place, *a delightful exemplification of God's care for his people*. He "taketh pleasure in them that fear him and hope in his mercy." They are a "peculiar treasure unto him above all people." He nourishes them in his bosom, and underneath them are the everlasting arms. Noah, safe housed within the ark, and looking out with composure upon the commingling elements, had not more reason for confidence in God than the meanest of his children. It is the privilege of every Christian to say, "At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee!" He who fills all things permits you to repose on his boundless love. He establishes the foundations of the earth, and makes the sea a swaddling band for it; but he also numbers the hairs of your head. He guides Arcturus with her sons; yet does he turn every leaf and write every line of your earthly pilgrimage. Even down to old age, he watches over you more tenderly than ever loving father cared for the son that saveth him. His power and love, Christian, are pledged for thy safe-keeping. Malice, subtilty, enemies, poverty, reproach, flood, fire, death, hell shall not

harm you. "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet." Why, with promises like these, O why should men be so slow of heart to trust in God!

2. This piece of biography furnishes in the second place *a beautiful illustration of the provisions of the divine mercy for perishing men.* That solitary *ark*, with its glimmering light and its Bethel flag—of what does it remind us, and what an emblem is it of Him who is a "hiding-place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest!" It will be a fearful hour when God comes to mark iniquity. Yet is he coming on this work of death, as certainly as the flood was coming, in the days of Noah, to desolate the earth. Nor will he be long in coming, nor will the blow be a great while suspended before it falls. And there is one refuge from it, and only one. That ark—that ark Christ Jesus is the only refuge from the storm. And now it is accessible. The door is open. The most thoughtless, the most obdurate, and the most desponding are now prisoners of hope, and may flee to the stronghold. The atmosphere that envelops them is the atmosphere of mercy. Its balmy breezes are the breath of heaven, and its admonitory voices are like those sounds of busy labor in the ark, still lingering on the ear until the windows of heaven are opened,

and the foundations of the great deep are broken up. God from his throne pleads with you, and the still small voice of his Spirit is yet saying to you, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark!" God's ministers bid you come. His silent Sabbaths bid you come. Ministering angels repeat the message, Come into the ark. The gathering clouds all cry, The storm is coming on; come away, come away into the ark! That ark that floated so securely on the waters of the flood was not a more safe refuge to Noah, than Christ and his offered salvation are to *you*. Millions have repaired to them, and not one has ever been confounded, or refused. No wrathful storm can reach you there. When the foundation of all earthly things shall be broken up, and the last tempest shall lay waste every other hope of man, this one refuge shall be an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Knock then at this door of mercy and enter in. Few and uncertain are the days during which it will remain open. They are like the shadow that declineth; the wind passeth over them and they are gone; none can tell what the next may bring forth. Sad hour! when the last day of mercy is gone, and the door of hope is closed! Like as in the days of Noah, you may crowd its gateway and knock in vain, when once it is shut. We would not utter these sad thoughts, did we not assuredly know that these days of

mercy abused, your dwelling must be with those who were "cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed by the flood." O what will be thought of this unconcern, this stupidity, this halting between two opinions, when the last hour of the divine forbearance is exhausted, and the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies, and the waters shall overflow every other hiding-place but this ark of God!

CHAPTER III.

Abraham.

NOT only has a succession of godly men been preserved in the world, but among them have here and there been those whose memorial endures to all generations. Of the lineal descendants of Shem, and separated from him in the seventh, eighth, and ninth generations, we find Nahor, Terah, and Abraham. This was the selected stock on which, "in the fullness of time," was to be engrafted "the Man whose name is the Branch," the "Root and offspring of David." Amid all the declining tribes of Shem, this family was to arrest the torrent of declension, to become the last asylum of piety in the earth, and the only depository of human hopes. This son of Terah was destined to be the great reformer of the world. Well may the scattered Jews, even at this distant day, with high and honest exultation in their great ancestor, utter the words, "We have Abraham to our father." "Salvation is of

the Jews." If they have lost their primeval faith and virtues, and if the sun now every where rises on them, spoiled of their hereditary crown, it may not be forgotten that no nation on the earth is so illustriously descended.

The destiny and character of great men are for the most part controlled by great moral causes; they are the creatures of the times and circumstances in which they live. Early separated from idolatrous ancestors, and placed under heavenly teachings and discipline, young Abraham was the child, not merely of a special, but a miraculous providence. His *history*, like that of not a few eminent statesmen and religious reformers, would comprise a history of the age in which he flourished. From the dawn of his manhood to his grave, we have the rise and progress of that infant colony which became the renowned Hebrew State, the broad and deep foundations of which were laid in the character and influence of this single man.

That he possessed *natural endowments* of a high order may be presumed from the position he occupied as the great progenitor of the Hebrew race, as well as from those notices of him which are interspersed throughout his biography. Chaldea, the land of his nativity, was not only the first great monarchy of which any records are to be found in history, but a land where philosophy held

her first throne, and the exact sciences were the study and adornment of its temples. We know nothing of his early years except what is fabulous. When he is first introduced to us, it is as a burning and shining light, and, like Noah, standing alone in the firmament, while all around him was darkness.

The first and great distinction of his character was *his piety toward God*. It was his veneration and fear of God, his love to God, and his faith in his word that laid the foundation of his excellence and greatness. He “was called the *friend of God*,” than which no higher distinction can be conferred on mortal man. Beyond all the men of his age, his mind was linked by indissoluble bonds to the Great Author of his being; moved in a sphere where it held habitual intercourse with his Maker, and received its strongest impressions and most vivid and permanent impulses from this hallowed correspondence. We are not always sensible of the intellectual and moral elevation that are consequent on this high intercourse. If it is the law of man’s nature, and confirmed by observation and experience, that the mind and character correspond to the objects about which his thoughts and affections are most, and most directly and intensely employed, what must be the intellectual and moral elevation that accompanies this habitual intercourse with God!

If "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise," does not that man become wise who walks with God? Abraham's character obviously bore this coloring and these hues of heaven. He had acquainted himself with God, and well knew how worthy he was of his entire confidence. Though educated in an idolatrous land, and where the sottish and infatuated mind of man sought its decisions from the oracles of the heathen, he sought and became imbued with the teachings of unerring wisdom. It is recorded concerning him, *Abraham believed God*. This is a compendious but a true description of his character, and no doubtful index of the man. Such indeed was his *faith in God*, that even under the Christian dispensation, the Apostle Paul awards him the honor of being "the father of believers." From the hour when God first called him from Chaldea, to the day of his death, *God's word* exerted more influence over him than all his previous conceptions, all the habits of an ungodly world, all sight or sense. Such was the religious discipline of his thoughts, that no opposing testimony, no delusion, no reasoning, no personal inclinations or interest, and no persuasion nor influence of others, could countervail the word of God. He was no enthusiast, but he was a believer in God's word. There was no weakness and no credulity in his nature, yet was he a believer in God's word. He

was no ascetic, and no despiser of "the things that are seen," but his whole character was subjected to his deep convictions of the truth and importance of God's word. No matter what the divine promise was; whether it were to make him a great nation, or to give the land of Canaan to his posterity, or to be "his shield and exceeding great reward," or that Sarah should have a son in old age, or that Ishmael should become a great nation as well as Isaac; Abraham was assured that the event would be the counterpart of the promise, and the history of its fulfillment. Obstacles to the fulfillment there might be—obstacles in providence—obstacles in nature—obstacles, in one instance, in the revealed command of God himself—yet Abraham did not doubt the predicted result. "Against hope, he believed in hope." Miracle might be demanded after miracle, and revolution after revolution, if all that God had promised were fulfilled, yet in not an instance did this holy man "stagger at the promise through unbelief." The single fact that "*he believed God*," made him what he was. He had something to rest upon; something that was unchanging and uniform, and something more impulsive than all other considerations, because he had this firm and unshaken confidence in God. He was the man of his age, and the great reformer, because he was the man of faith. He saw distinctly what

was true and right, because he was the man of faith. His mind and heart were in unison with God's, and fixed on Christ in heaven, because he was the man of faith. He was heir "of the righteousness that is of faith," and of all its covenant-ed blessings, because "he believed God." Noble man! and worthy to be set forth as the example and father of them that believe! What a teacher to himself, to his now degenerate and dispersed descendants, and to Gentile lands, was Abraham's faith in God! How many enigmas did it unravel for him, and how many could it unravel for them and for us? How many changes would it effect in human affairs, and what a godly character and joyful hopes would it impart to men, did they, truly and from the heart, give implicit credence to the voice of God!

His *practical obedience* also stood abreast with his inward piety. With his religious principles and emotions, and believing as he believed, he could not act otherwise than as he acted. The world was an idolatrous and disobedient world. God's object in calling him out from it was to raise up a different and an obedient community,—"a peculiar people above all people." It could have been for no useful purpose to himself that God had thus made these revelations, unless he designed to mold his character and control his conduct. They were not lessons in moral science

which his Great Teacher was reading to him; they were not merely abstract and theological truths; they were commands and promises, words to be verified by facts, and directions to be complied with. They were self-denying precepts, and such as brought his own heart and will and conduct to the test. They were to "get out of his country and kindred," and go he knew not where; they were to subject himself to an outward and bloody rite, the import of which he could not understand; they were to cast out of his house those whom he was bound to love and care for. Yet Abraham did not hesitate to obey. And when that fearful command fell upon his ear, "Take now thy *son*, thine *only* son whom thou *lovest*, and get thee unto the land of *Moriah*, and offer him there for a *burnt-offering* upon one of the mountains that I shall tell thee of;" he rose up early in the morning, went to the mountain, built his altar, bound his son upon the wood, and stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. This was obedience. He saw no reason for it in the world, but God's sovereign will; but God's will was the highest reason. He might have expostulated with God; but he was silent. He might have urged strong reasons against the command; but he had none to urge against the will of God. It was not for him to reply when God had spoken; he obeys without murmuring or

complaint. This was unearthly obedience, and resembles more the God of heaven when he gave up his son than any other act of man. It was a dark path. Wondrous thoughts were revolving in the patriarch's bosom. Every thing about him is serious and solemn ; every action and word are significant of his steady purpose. He would not prolong the conflict, nor be embarrassed in the final deed. And as he stretches out his hand and takes the knife, that voice from heaven reaches him : " Now I know that thou fearest God, since thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." In opposition to sense, to nature, and to every earthly hope, this was obedience. It is easy to persuade ourselves that we possess an obedient *spirit* ; it is easy to anticipate the actual performance in view of difficulties and trials ; it is easy to bind ourselves to obey by solemn covenant engagements ; but to obey when the trial comes, and persevere with unfailing hearts when mountains of difficulty oppose—this shows that we have counted the cost of piety, and that it is " our meat " to do God's will.

There is also a trait of great excellence in Abraham's character which was a very remarkable one for the age in which he lived. He *was a man of uncommonly enlarged views, and the great object of his life was to promote the interests of true religion in the world.* His thoughts were

far-reaching thoughts ; they were not so much the generations of men then on the earth, or any proximate generations, which were uppermost in his comprehension, but the distant and remote future. At the head of a series of seventy resolutions which he intended should govern his conduct, the elder Edwards placed the following remarkable words : “ Resolved that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God’s glory and my own good, profit and pleasure, *on the whole* ; without any consideration of the *time*, whether now or never, so *many myriads of ages hence*.” This was very much like the spirit of Abraham. He went forth from Chaldea as the first missionary to the Holy Land, there to establish the true religion, and to set up the standard to which “ the outcasts of Israel shall gather, and the despised of Judah shall assemble ” in distant times, from the four quarters of the earth. He did not believe the world was always to remain in its degrading bondage to idolatry and wickedness ; it was the great maxim of his life that the time was coming when it should be converted to God. His eye and heart and arrangements were fixed upon the coming Messiah, as the “ light which should enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.” The Saviour declares concerning this remarkable man, “ Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.” In

that memorable scene on Mount Moriah, where his own son prefigured the only son of God, offered up for the sins of men, when no ram caught in the thicket averted the fearful blow, he saw the two revelations of the Old and New Testaments thus bound together. The great thought in his mind was that he was called to deeds which should show forth the promised Redeemer, and prefigure the foundation and advancement of his kingdom in the world. This was his mission, and this his high impulse. His endowments, his attainments, his dignity and energy of character, his influence, his piety and prayers, were all devoted to this great end. His whole life was that of a man who was conscious that he was under the divine direction, and that his vocation had a special relation to this lost world. There was a greatness and sublimity in his course which indicated no selfish motive, no dreamy sentimentalism, but an object utterly above and beyond the things of time. It was the daily offering up of himself to God, with all the solemnity of a religious sacrifice; it was the intensity of a redeemed sinner living not to himself; of a redeemed and consecrated intelligence, sensible of its high responsibility, conversant with lofty themes and high hopes. The character of the Apostle Paul and his mission to the Gentiles are the only characters and mission that can be compared with those of

Abraham. It formed a remarkable epoch in the history of the world and in the history of redemption, when God called this patriarch to these high responsibilities. We have read of men and missions in earlier and later times, but of none whose character and object and development can bear a comparison with his. He was the great apostle of his time, and wore the crown of apostleship.

In addition to these great and noble characteristics, it is a pleasant service to speak of this remarkable man in the humble spheres and daily walks of human life. Good men there are, who are great only in great actions, and splendid scenes and enterprises. Abraham's character was formed upon a different model. He knew how to adjust the apparently conflicting claims of heaven and earth, without doing injustice to either. He felt his obligation to his fellow-creatures, and was indeed the greater saint for being so accomplished and dignified a man. It was not the coarseness of savage life to which he was accustomed, but to a state of society whose refined intercourse often brought out the generosity and delicacy of his character. With the single exception of his want of ingenuousness toward the king of Egypt and Gerah, we do not find an instance either of faulty or negligent deportment. There was nothing ill-judged or ill-timed, nothing

offensive, nothing out of place, and nothing that might have been better done. There was no arrogance or ostentation; no unbecoming elation of mind, and no air of haughtiness; no embarrassment, and no expression of gratified or mortified pride. In his conduct toward others he was the pattern of propriety and decorum, and to an extent which minds of less generous and delicate texture do not always appreciate. His noble bearing toward Lot, his nephew, furnishes an example of generosity that is rarely imitated in this selfish world, and which the Canaanite and the Perizite, that then dwelt in the land, might long have recited in remembrance of his gentle nature. The same liberal and elevated spirit was also expressed toward the king of Sodom, when, after having rescued him from his enemies, he declined retaining any part of the spoils. His courteous demeanor to the three angels who appeared to him on the plains of Mamre is even referred to in the New Testament as the great example and incentive to Christian hospitality. That beautiful scene also between him and the sons of Heth, when, on the death of Sarah, he was in treaty with them for the field of Ephron, the Hittite, for a burying-place for her and her family, presents one of the finest pictures recorded in history. I am altogether too coarse a painter to portray it. Abraham was now an old man; a stranger in a

strange land ; yet he could not forget what was due to himself and to the memory of her he loved. Though he well knew that God had destined his posterity to be the sovereigns of that land, he had not as yet a spot upon it large enough for a sepulcher. The singular address and dignity which marked his conduct, when, in the day of his mourning, "he stood up before his dead, and bowed himself to the people of the land," honoring, yet declining their courtesy, was in every view characteristic of this noble man. It is not every incident that would have thus brought out his character, and showed the dignity of his grief. Nor is it every good man that would have demeaned himself thus. It is *Abraham* throughout. The striking feature throughout the whole is the delicacy and wisdom of a great mind, bowed under the weight of sorrow. The marks are strong of an accomplished and venerable man. Those who are most acquainted with the workings of a mind like his will best perceive its beauty. Next to the scene where he offers up the child of promise, it is perhaps the finest moral lesson of the patriarchal age, neither overacting, nor, at an hour when much was likely to be forgotten, leaving any thing undone. The church and the world are enriched by such examples of piety, honored and beloved alike in youth and old age.

We find the same well-disciplined and accom-

plished piety expressing itself in his *domestic relations*. Like other patriarchs he was a polygamist; nor was there at that period of the world any revealed law, either against polygamy, or against marriage within the nearer degrees of consanguinity. He had married his half-sister; Sarah, the wife of his youth, was the daughter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother. She was distinguished for her personal beauty, and well deserved to be the mother of one of the most distinguished races. And who does not see that his attachment to her was strong and ardent, and that nothing quenched the flame? In youth, in middle-age, in advanced life she was never separated from him; wherever he wandered and whatever his trials, she was his helper, his comforter, his earthly hope. He had her affection, her respect, and even reverence; while his love for her was exalted by his piety. He participated in her joys and sorrows; and if she had weaknesses and faults, his gentle spirit had learned to bear with them, and to consult her wishes whenever he could do so without sin. She was the keeper of his heart, and the depositary of his secret thoughts; nor was it an ordinary trial when he received communications from God which he did not deem it wise to intrust to her sensitive bosom. His marriage with *Hagar* was at her suggestion; nor do we read of his marriage with

Keturah until after Sarah's death. When the bond-woman and her son became a grief to her he sent them away; nor did he allow any thing to infringe upon his devoted love *to her*. Sterility and age did not wean his heart from her; and when in their advanced years their child of promise was born, such was his joy that he called him "the son laughter." And when that lovely woman died, and she whom princes had looked upon and coveted was no more among the living, and that warm and faithful heart was cold, how touching the record: "And Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba; and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her!"

The same excellence of character appears in *his conduct toward his children and slaves*. His family was large; he was the great Prince of the Oriental country. In addition to his children, he had three hundred slaves born in his house, beside others that were bought with his money. There is no more important duty than the religious education and government of such a household, nor is there any more difficult, especially if it be, as Abraham's immediate family was, a *family of sons*. Yet we may be allowed to say, that no parent, and no master, ever performed this duty more faithfully than Abraham. God himself declares, "For *I know Abraham*, that he will command his children, and his household after him,

that they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment." That large household were all dedicated to God, stamped with the seal of his covenant, and carefully instructed in the truths and duties of piety. Nor was his care in consulting the temporal prosperity of his children less remarkable. For the children of Hagar and Keturah he made bountiful provision during his lifetime, and sent them away into the East country; while, in relation to Isaac, his great solicitude was to see him commence the world as a godly young man, and in such alliances as were befitting the child of promise. Fearful lest he should be ensnared by some of the wealthy and accomplished daughters of Chaldea, or by some princely daughter of the idolatrous Canaanites, he does not rest until he sees him the affianced husband of the daughter of his brother Nahor, still in Mesopotamia, and the companion of his pilgrimage when they left Chaldea. It is not easy to find, either in sacred or profane history, a more instructive and beautiful example of a Christian husband and a Christian father than in the character of Abraham.

Nor may we take our leave of his instructive character, without adverting to some few particulars which show HOW HIGHLY HE WAS DISTINGUISHED BY THE TOKEN OF GOD'S FAVOR. Some of these were of very early occurrence in his history,

and all of them were of the most emphatic kind. None was more highly honored of God or of man, from the time of his removal from Chaldea to the day of his death. God stood forth as his Guardian and Protector wherever he went. On his first departure from Chaldea, his language to him was, "I will bless him that blesseth thee, and curse him that curseth thee." When he returned from the "slaughter of the kings," the great Melchisedec, God's High Priest, was sent forth to meet him, and in God's name assure him of his favor. When he was subsequently in the midst of enemies and danger, God uttered to him those inspiring words: "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward!" When a famine drove him into Egypt, and when, after the overthrow of Sodom, he dwelt in a city of the Philistines, and the kings of Egypt and Gerah, enamored by the beauty of Sarah, each in his turn took her into his harem, God at once taught them a lesson which not only saved her harmless, but induced them "to treat Abraham well for her sake." Heathen princes became his attached friends, his allies, and gave him a dwelling in their land. Wherever he wandered, and wherever he dwelt, he was regarded as the favorite of Heaven. The very princes from whom he feared the most lavished their bounty upon him. Some gave him flocks and herds, and men-servants and maid-servants; some

gave him sheep and oxen ; some gave him silver and gold, so that "he was very rich." The heathen nations saw that their cold, dead idols could not accomplish for their vicious votaries, even in a temporal view, what the God of Abraham could and did accomplish for *him*.

Yet this was of little moment compared with the spiritual blessings which God showered upon him. He had the highest proof of his personal interest in God's saving mercy. He did not walk in darknes as so many do ; he had no doubts and fears, but ever enjoyed the light of God's countenance. God early announced to him his purpose of grace to his own soul, and not only often repeated this assurance, but confirmed it by his covenant and oath. He talked with him as he did with Noah, and with Moses on Horeb, on Sinai, and in the wilderness. He heard and answered his prayers, and did not leave off communing with him until Abraham himself was ashamed any further to urge his requests. At the close of that affecting scene, where he offered up his son, God called to him out of heaven, and said, "By myself have I sworn, for because thou hast done this thing, that *in blessing I will bless thee.*" What more could mortal man ask for? GOD WAS HIS EVERLASTING FRIEND ; the GOD OF ABRAHAM is even one of the names by which he has condescended to make himself known. Happy man ! thus to

have dwelt under the shadow of God's wings, and to have found so secure a refuge in the bosom of infinite love, that not once in all his history do we read of his being assaulted by Satan, or tempted by the roar of the prowling Lion. "That Wicked One touched him not."

It is a fact of interest, too, that he was *greatly blessed in his children*. He had one by Rebekah, one by Hagar, and six by Keturah—eight in all, and all sons. Of his children by Keturah nothing is said, but that they were consecrated to God, religiously educated, and with competent portions sent into the country east of Palestine. Ishmael, we believe, was a godly man. That prayer of his father, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" and that benignant answer, "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee, behold I have blessed him," comprise, as it seems to us, more than mere temporal blessings. His exiled mother, too, was no stranger to Abraham's God, as appears from that hour of extremity in the wilderness, when she laid down her son to die, and Abraham's God was her refuge.

Notwithstanding the character of Ishmael's descendants, developed as it has been in the roving and warlike and infidel habits of the Arabian and Saracen tribes, was not this son of the Egyptian woman one of the sons of God? We are familiar with the history of *Isaac*, his father's

glory, and God's promise to the world, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." If ever man was blessed in his descendants, that man was the son of Terah, giving to the world a long line of prophets and kings; himself the founder of the nation which, for more than two thousand years, was the most prominent nation on the earth, whose laws and religion molded the character of succeeding generations, whose history was the history of the church of God, who were the depositaries of his truth and promises, and the selected dispensers of blessings that involve the dearest interests of mankind. Even now, in their excision and debasement, they indicate some of the original qualities of their great ancestors. Beyond any other class of men, they hold the purse-strings of the world; while for intelligence, diplomatic wisdom, and military prowess, they have been abundantly honored by the nations of Europe. Nor is this all. All true believers in every age of the world are declared to be "*Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the promise." When this wonderful man, in a season of disappointed hopes, complained that he was childless, "God brought him forth and said unto him: Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars if thou art able to number them; and he said unto him, *So shall thy seed be.*" How has this promise been fulfilled,

and how is it yet destined to that more glorious fulfillment, when, "as the casting away of them was the reconciling of the world;" so "the receiving of them shall be as life from the dead!" "Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body" is one of the promises to such piety as Abraham's. "*I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee.*" Where is there a promise more pregnant or more prolific in blessing? All the temporal blessings in the world were a meager equivalent for this parental privilege on the one hand, and on the other for this precious hope of the children of his people.

It was likewise a special token of God's favor to Abraham that *he granted him a long life and a peaceful death.* Though we "spend our years as as a tale that is told," there are those of whom God has said, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." In recounting the blessings which flow from heavenly wisdom, the author of the book of Proverbs asserts, "Length of days is in her right hand." It is a distinguished privilege to live long when long life is devoted to life's great ends. This was Abraham's privilege; he lived to see and enjoy more of God's goodness than the great mass of good men; and he thereby attained to a growing acquaintance with the divine truth and the divine conduct, which is attained only by long experience. He lived to learn much of himself, great humility and self-

distrust, and great confidence in God. He lived to become the most useful man in that important age of the world, and to carry the influence of his instructions and example to his grave. Nor was there any cloud that obscured his setting sun ; it had swept the whole horizon, from the eastern to the western sky, and went down on his throne of gold. The fruit was ripe and ready to be gathered in. His work was done. He had nothing more to live for. He died at the right time, and under those circumstances in which a good man would wish to die. It was desirable that he should die just as he did, and before he was broken down by disease, or oppressed by the infirmities of extreme old age. Providence and grace had done much to make him what he was, and he lived long enough to show the beauty and maturity of the work which God had wrought in his behalf. He was ready to die, and could welcome death. The grain was ripe ; it was bending toward the earth, and just about to fall from the stalk. The narrative of his death is in few words, but they are a beautiful illustration of the end of one who " comes to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn in his season." And " these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred and three score and fifteen years. And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, and an old man, full of years, and was

gathered to his people. And his *sons Isaac and Ishmael* buried him in the cave of Machpelah, the field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth; there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife." The corn was harvested, and now the field was barren, and the stubble dry. The winds of autumn swept through it, and already it began to feel like winter. There was a chasm in the world when Abraham died. These two brothers felt it deeply. It was a melancholy day, and their manly bosoms must have swelled with many a sigh; but it was a day of peace. Their early feuds were forgotten; and though separated by distance, by destiny, and by the character of their descendants, they were united in affection to their venerable father; and when they laid him in his grave, there were no dark suspicions awakened in their minds. No darkness rested upon that parent's sepulcher, whose head had been such a crown of glory to his children. The earth never opened her bosom to more illustrious dead. Far-famed cemeteries have received heroes and statesmen; crowns and scepters have become the trophies of the abbey and the minster; and princely and illustrious victims have become the adornment of damp walls where a nation's history is deciphered. But what spot of earth contains dust so precious as the cave of Machpelah, or such records of the beloved and

mighty dead ! There it remains, dilapidated indeed, on a sloping hill, overlooking the plains of Mamre, and shielded by the Moslem's pride, not less a monument of the world's hope than of the ravages of the destroyer. Abraham is still honored, even in his grave. Many a recital of his placid virtues and heavenly graces has been uttered by the missionaries of the Cross to listening Arabs beneath the palm that overhangs that sacred urn. Many a bright truth has been thought of there, and many a time the triumph sung, "O death where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

And they are bright truths and songs of triumph which the life and death of such a man as Abraham suggest to *us* in these ends of the earth. If we are "the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," then, Gentiles though we be, "are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Abraham's faith will bring us into his high alliances; his God shall be our God, and He whose day he rejoiced to see, we shall see also and be glad. Like him, let us learn to bind our idols on the altar, and shrink not from any sacrifice which his and our God requires. If we tread in the steps of those who by faith and patience inherit the promises, we must count on trials; but, like Abraham, we shall not be the losers by them, but the gainers; we shall have new prom

ises, new peace with them all, and every one of them shall bring its own recompense. Centuries after this holy man slept in the cave at Mamre, the Apostle James was raised up to write his epitaph in that memorable and sweet sentence, "AND HE WAS CALLED THE FRIEND OF GOD." O that this may be truly said of you and me, when our place is known no more among men! One of these two things we must be—either his *friend*, or his *enemy*. And who would be the *enemy* of Abraham's God? From such a character, and such a doom of ignominy and woe, "the good Lord deliver us!" Christ have mercy upon us! Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us! "Look down, O Lord, from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory. Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy tender mercies toward us? Are they restrained? Doubtless, thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; *thou, O Lord, art our Father*; thy name is from everlasting!"

CHAPTER IV.

Int.

NOT only is there a contrast of character between the righteous and the wicked; the truth may not be suppressed that there are instances in which there is a melancholy contrast between the righteous themselves. There is a great difference between the piety that is intelligent, progressive, uniform, and consistent, and that which is impulsive and fitful. It will be difficult to make the homely representation of the prophet more emphatic than it is, when, in describing the imperfections of good men, he says, "Ephraim is a cake not turned"—baked on the one side, and raw on the other.

Few, if any examples of the *two extremes of religious character*, are more forcibly exhibited than in the two individuals who form the subjects of the present and the preceding chapter. We mean Lot and Abraham; this distinguished for his constancy and circumspection, that for his declension;

the latter for his cultivation of every grace and virtue, the former for blemishes which tarnish his excellence ; Abraham for a piety that was comely and fruitful, Lot for a piety that was barren and doubtful, and that failed to carry conviction to the minds of men of its genuineness and purity. We have no pleasure in exhibiting the untoward and uncomely side of this two-fold representation, and, in thus turning from the lovely and beautiful to the sad and disgusting. The Scriptures are impartial, and delineate character as it is. We have sometimes wondered why the character and history of such a man as Lot is given to us. But the Spirit of God is the narrator, and we are silent. Our object therefore, in the present chapter, is to exhibit the character of Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

Haran, Abraham's brother and the father of Lot, died in the city of Ur of the Chaldees, and left this high-born youth under Abraham's guardianship. For all that appears from any notices to the contrary, he was Haran's only son, and the sole heir of his father's property. Abraham and Sarah had then no child ; Haran was their elder brother, and Lot was regarded as their son. When God called Abraham out from that idolatrous empire to the land of Canaan, Lot was a member of his family ; nor could a charge so sacred to a brother's memory be left behind. He shared the perils and the honors of the pilgrimage.

He was far from possessing either the intellectual or moral qualities of Abraham ; on the other hand, he was in some respects a weak man. We must acknowledge even more than his infirmities ; and while we may not call in question his piety, must consent to portray melancholy features of his wickedness. There were times when his religion was very obscure and doubtful, and many a beholder might have been pardoned the suspicion that it was any thing more than a name. But there were times also when it broke through the cloud, and he appeared and conducted himself like a good man. There are several incidents in his history which evince his moral sensitiveness, and his high regard for rectitude and goodness. His undisguised and frank-hearted hospitality to the angels who, under the garb of travelers, were sent to execute God's wrath upon the cities of the plain, was not a little in his favor. His expostulation with the men of Sodom when they would have done those strangers a foul wrong, and his ready exposure of his own person to danger in their defense, were creditable to him as a man of moral principle. His appeal to his sons-in-law, on the approaching destruction of Sodom, was marked with an earnestness which honored his heart ; and showed that in that age of contemptuous unbelief, he was not among those who had no faith in God's threatenings. That Abraham, who must have known

him well, had confidence in his piety is evident from his prayer when he interceded for Sodom, "Wilt thou also destroy the *righteous* with the wicked?" while God's answer in rescuing Lot indicates that he was a righteous man. The Apostle Peter also bears testimony in his favor; he speaks of him as "just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked;" and adds, for "that *righteous* man, dwelling among them, vexed his righteous soul from day to day." We rejoice in this testimony; but are left to mourn that his life was not more consistent with it, and more uniformly that of a friend of God. He was a man of feeble moral principle, yet not destitute of it. It was not like a refreshing river in the desert; but rather transpired and leaked out just enough to show there was some little fountain of grace within. We are disposed to look upon him as a far worse man than David in his deepest apostasy; or than Solomon when his heart was estranged from God; or than false and profane Peter. We have long regarded him as the *worst saint* of whom we have any account in sacred history. His faults occupy a much larger space in the divine record than his virtues; nor does the historian cast a veil over any one of them.

That his religious and moral principles were not of the most firm and established kind is obvious from his *voluntary exposure to corrupting associ-*

ations from no good end. Good men will not thus expose themselves but from considerations that justify and demand the exposure. They instinctively recoil from them, as ill suited to the state of their own minds. Duty may call them to this exposure; and when it does so, they may pass through the furnace without even the smell of fire upon their garments. It was a perilous hour in the history of Lot, when he consented to part with his religious privileges, to leave the Holy Land for a land of Paganism, and to separate himself from his spiritual friend and guardian to dwell with wicked men. There was no necessity for his doing this, even though the unseemly strife between the herdsmen rendered a separation expedient; there was room enough in the broad land of Canaan without his removal to a land of notorious wickedness. It was not poverty that drove him, for he was rich. It was not a due regard to his worldly interests; these might have been promoted without such a fearful exposure. Nor was it for the purpose of disseminating the true religion among the ignorant and unevangelized population with whom he selected his inheritance; his subsequent life shows no such benevolent motive. It was for no such good ends as these, but rather for purposes that were purely mercenary and selfish. His piety was obscured by his love of wealth. His

whole history shows that the love of money was a passion which early influenced him, nor was it eradicated at last, but by violence. This was the fatal snare. He cared not where he went, nor among whom, nor what nor whom he left behind, if thereby he could augment his treasures. His moral principle had not strength to contend with the well-watered plain and the fertile soil, and with the beauty and luxuriance of the land that even then gave forth premonitions of its doom. Lot chose it in preference to the land promised to the posterity of Abraham, and where the Lord commanded his blessing. He thought more of his wealth than of his soul.

“Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward *Sodom*.” The character of Sodom could not have been unknown to him; it was a large and wealthy city, but its inhabitants “were wicked, and sinned before the Lord exceedingly.” And not only they, but the inhabitants of Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim. It was a region of wealth and wickedness. “Pride, and fullness of head” had generated there every sort of crime. It was the hot-bed of unnatural and degrading pollutions, and such pollutions as are to the present day too degrading for a name save the execrated name of the place they bear. It did not require any great prudence for this man to have foreseen

that he was jeoparding his spiritual interest when he pitched his tent toward that polluted and polluting city. Yet, under all these forbidding aspects, he coveted the wealth of Sodom, and, though he was successful in obtaining it, it was at a fearful expense. "God gave him his request, but sent leanness into his soul."

During the period in which he remained among this people, he lost much of the savor, and all the strong indications of his piety. He plunged into the world and drank deep of its intoxicating and poisonous spirit. He was ensnared by secular cares and the deceitfulness of riches. Unlike Abraham and other patriarchs, who, with all their wealth, "lived as strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and plainly declared that they "sought a better country, that is an heavenly," Lot was satisfied to enjoy the wealth and splendor of Sodom. His mind was held in these debasing charms, nor could he feel like one whose everlasting hopes are laid up in heaven. He was not probably aware how strong the grasp was with which the world had seized him, nor did he stop to consider whether it was not stupefying his conscience, hardening his heart, and prolonging his forgetfulness of God.

It is an aggravating circumstance in his history also that *he remained in the midst of these exposures in defiance of rebuke.* A wise man may not

be aware of the coils which the Destroyer has artfully wound around him; but if the alarm be sounded, he struggles to be free. Lot might have met with difficulty and incurred loss in disentangling himself from Sodom; but we have no evidence that he attempted any such arrangement, or that the thought entered his mind. It was not at once that he ventured to tread on this unhallowed ground; he felt his way as though he himself were not persuaded of his security. On parting from Abraham, "he pitched his tent *toward* Sodom;" at first, probably pursuing his rural occupation in the valley of the Jordan, and at some distance from the city. Even if he was not at once apprized of his exposure, and did not apprehend the inhabitants of Sodom to be as bad as he found them, their character speedily developed itself, and he had ample time to remove from their contaminating society. Yet, if the chronology on which we are accustomed to rely is correct, he spent not less than *seventy years*, after his separation from Abraham, among that abandoned people. A few years' experience must have taught him some sad lessons; but he not only went forward deliberately, and with his eyes open, but plunged deeper and more deep into untried temptations. Although God did not leave him without opportunity of withdrawing from that licentious and abandoned people, and

even rebuked him for remaining among them, he chose to remain. About eight years after his first removal to the plain, Sodom and the adjoining cities were invaded and plundered, and the property which he had perilled his soul to accumulate, was seized, and he himself became a prisoner. He ought to have regarded this admonition as a voice calling upon him to come out of Sodom, and be "not a partaker of her sins, lest he also be a partaker of her plagues." Yet after his recovery from this captivity, and through the interposition of Abraham, he returned again to the city, and there spent almost the entire residue of his days. We wonder at this thoughtlessness and temerity. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." Lot was found in bad company, and chose to remain in it. He became habituated to the spectacle of crime, and lost all that sensitive and delicate abhorrence of it which ought to have distinguished him as a good man. The consequence was, that he wandered, none know how far, from God. Sodom would have been hazardous to better men than Lot; to him it was well-nigh ruinous.

Among the indications of a very low state of religion in his own soul may likewise be enumerated his *negligence of the spiritual good of his household*. In this particular he was strongly con-

trasted with Abraham. His large household of children and slaves, whom he was bound to train up for the kingdom of heaven, were educated—*where?* Amid the luxury and pollutions of Sodom, and at best by the very doubtful example and influence of such a master and such a father. This is one of the darkest features in his character. Well is it said by the prophet, “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” Lot had *sons*, and he had *daughters*, too, whom he brought up in Sodom! Was it possible for a good man thus to trifle with the highest and most sacred of earthly responsibilities, and thus educate and prepare for everlasting perdition those who were committed to his trust for the purpose of becoming the heirs of heaven? We may judge of the solicitude with which he protected the character of his daughters, from one foul item in his treaty with the men of Sodom, in order to restrain their brutal violence from the angel strangers. He had no such strong testimony in the consciences of those who were under his care, as constrained them to respect his authority or his religion. There is but a single recorded instance of his bold and faithful opposition to the sons of Sodom.

There was a sort of infatuation in his attachment to this guilty city. When in the last

extremity he was thrust out of it, he was found "lingering," as even though then loth to leave that sink of iniquity. "He lingered." He lingered in Sodom, and the morning it was to be destroyed, and while angelic messengers were urging him to flee. He heard the cry of Sodom's wickedness and the fearful threatening announcing its doom; yet "he lingered." He could warn others; yet he himself lingered. Strange to say, he was a good man; yet he lingered within the walls of Sodom. During his very flight the weakness of his faith betrays itself. When urged to "escape for his life, and not to look behind him, nor stay in all the plain, but escape to the mountain lest he be consumed," he intercedes for a nearer and more acceptable place of refuge. As if the power and grace that had saved him thus far, either could not, or would not complete his deliverance; or as if the refuge of God's providing were not better than any which he himself could propose! God condescended to this request, and gave him a small city which still stands at the south-east corner of the Dead Sea, a monument of the divine long-suffering, and of the distrust of this his erring servant. There he dwelt with his two daughters, until at last they retired to a cave in the mountain, where there was one scene in his history from which we may not lift the vail.

Though a good man, therefore, Lot was a most inconsistent and unfaithful man. If he had some redeeming qualities, they are not enough to rescue his character from deep reproach. His religious fidelity was of no enviable kind. The narrative of his life is an exceedingly humbling narrative, and shows us that no high calling, no early hopes and culture, no youthful promise, no past experience, furnish any effectual preservative in the hour of temptation. There is a strong contrast between his religion and that of Abraham, and scarcely any approximation in his character to the exalted spirit of the father of the faithful. There was a vacillation and timidity; there were indiscretions and sins which put him at a great distance from patriarchal dignity. If they were not such as amount to an absolute forfeiture of religious character, they were such as make the most exacting demands upon the charity that hopeth all things. It was piety that might have lived in Hebron; in Sodom it drooped and withered; the men of Sodom themselves might have been pardoned for questioning the sincerity of his professions as a worshiper of the true God.

We should be sorry to believe that there is any such piety as Lot's in the world at the present day. There may be some such in Pagan lands, and where the light of truth does not discover

the difference between "the precious and the vile;" in these Christian lands, we cannot believe that piety, whose graces so languish, and whose light is so dim, is any where to be found. Yet it may be instructive to us all to consider *the consequences of such a piety as this, and note the tokens of the divine displeasure with which it was visited.* Very different were these consequences from those which followed the bright career of Abraham; nor are they relieved; nor is there any lighting up in the retrospect, except by those disclosures of the divine rectitude which it so fully illustrates.

One effect of his unfaithfulness was, that he *did not enjoy the light of God's countenance.* His own mind must have been involved in darkness and doubt, his spiritual views and prospects obscured, and his peace and comfort disturbed. God said to his ancient people, "Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Lot had none of the enjoyment of a consistent and exemplary piety. Many was the bitter reproach of conscience he had to struggle with, and many a painful remembrance of the past. Violated obligations embarrassed his intercourse with God. He was often, if not habitually and always, shut out from all that delightful influence, and reminded that in "forsaking the fountain of living waters," he

had "hewed out to himself cisterns, broken cisterns that could hold no water." His religious policy, if it may so be called, could not have been more unwise and inexpedient. The man who has just religion enough to spoil the world and not enough to draw comfort from God, always "procures to himself" this comfortless state of mind. The threatening is sure, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." The defects of Lot's character, if they did not exclude him from hope and heaven, produced great spiritual desertion. He had been a thousand-fold the happier man, if he had been a better. Contrast his hopes, his friendship, and fellowship with God, with those of Abraham, and it is no difficult matter to perceive on whose side the advantage lies. During those seventy years in which he was dwelling in Sodom, Abraham, for the most part, dwelt in Hebron, where he enjoyed those "angel visits," neither few nor far between. Here God often appeared to him, and renewed to him "exceeding great and precious promises." Here he made over to him the land of Canaan, and assured him that his posterity "should be as the stars of heaven," and also gave him that seal of his covenant so full of blessings, temporal and spiritual, to him and his seed. They were scenes never to be forgotten. But Lot was far away, nor did he enjoy even the crumbs

of this rich festival. It was not to him that the words were uttered, "Fear not, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward;" but rather such words as were uttered to the lukewarm and back-sliding church, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love; remember, therefore, whence thou hast fallen!" He found his associations, not with God and his people, but in Sodom, and with God's enemies; all this while he was grovelling in Sodom, scarcely escaping its wickedness. How wide the difference between these two men, both in their character and in the tokens they enjoyed of the divine favor! Both were good men; both, indeed, are now in heaven; but if there be any thing in that revealed principle of divine truth, that men reap as they sow, we can be at no loss to know which reaps the richer harvest and wears the brighter crown.

It is important to remark also, that in addition to this, *all the worldly prospects of Lot were suddenly blighted in their bloom.* This is not unfrequently the case with good men when they have become excessively worldly, and more especially where their wealth has been accumulated at the sacrifice of religious principle, and by doubtful means. The history of this strange man furnishes an affecting view of God's faithfulness in visiting the iniquity of his people. He lived

to see the wealth of Sodom, and the treasure he had there secured, smoldering in ashes ; the finger of God touched his possessions, and they vanished into smoke. Those luxuriant plains, for which he left the land of promise and forsook the God of Abraham, were overrun by fire from the Lord out of heaven. He was probably never richer, and never gloried more in his wealth, than at the time when his expectations were so fearfully defeated, and the large possessions for which he had sacrificed so much, either perished in the flames or sunk in the Dead Sea. Just look at this guilty and miserable man in the extremity of his poverty and want. He who once could scarcely find space enough in the land of Canaan for himself and servants, and augmented flocks and herds ; he who had been heaping up silver as dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets, now retires to a cave in the side of a mountain, and probably with not enough rescued from the flames to keep him from actual suffering. What a rebuke was this to his eagerness after the world ! Where was that burning fever after wealth and pride when he beheld the pride and wealth of those devoted cities drifting like flakes of fire upon the breeze ? Where was it, as he heard the Thunderer's voice and saw his last earthly hope swept away by the crushing tempest ? There was no time to search for second causes ; there was a Power above him proclaim-

ing the instability of the hopes he had built on earth, and, by a single blow, reducing him to beggary and despair. Much as his pecuniary interests were advanced by his separation from Abraham, God taught him the hazard and loss at which they were secured. There, in yonder fetid lake, are now the quenched embers of that melted ore and those large domains. It is a lesson never to be lost sight of, that worldly property may be promoted at too great an expense. What compensation is uncounted gold when it hardens the heart and ruins the soul? What will it be when the fires of the Last Day kindle upon these amassed treasures, and the voices of agony and despair are lost in the roaring elements? What does that guilty but pardoned sojourner in Sodom *now* think of all the riches in which the wealthiest of her sons rioted, compared with the loss of the Divine favor, the foul stains he left upon his profession, and that fierce wrath of Almighty God which his own unfaithfulness contributed to bring upon the cities of the plain?

Nor was this all. *Lot was disgraced in the character and ruin of his household.* Not one of his numerous servants escaped the overthrow of the city; they were all nurtured, and partook in its crimes, and were therefore partakers of its doom. Nor were his own flesh and blood reserved for a much better fate. He probably married one of

the wealthy daughters of Sodom ; there his children were born and brought up ; and there they also contracted those matrimonial alliances which insnared them to their undoing. His sons-in-law, who married his daughters, do not appear to have been reclaimed from their wickedness by their alliance with his family ; when he gave them the warning that the city was about to be destroyed, they mocked the message. His daughters listened to the warning, and escaped with their parents ; while their scoffing husbands were overtaken by the horrors of that fearful morning when the licentious, and abandoned, and scoffing, sunk to hell. Sad hour to this fatherless father ! and most bitterly must he have felt the consequences of his own folly, when he saw his children thus die without hope, and the pit close upon them for ever ! And his daughters—we blush to recite their history : we may not recite it. They had been familiar with the rumor and spectacle of crime, and they had learned enough of the ways of Sodom to destroy all sense of shame. They lived to be their father's dishonor, to bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, and to make their own name accursed. Their descendants, the children of Moab and Ammon, were for the most part the fitting descendants of their degraded and incestuous ancestry. The *Moabites* drank the bitter cup of God's

wrath ; for ten generations they had no lot and no part with his people ; to this day their land is traversed by the wandering Arab, and bears the curse, " Moab shall be a perpetual desolation." The *Ammonites* were of the same general character, and worshipers of Moloch ; their country was conquered by Moses, and divided between the tribes of Reuben and Gad ; they were successively subdued by Saul and David, and at last reduced to a state of abject slavery to the Hebrews. With the closing history of *Lot's wife* all are familiar. She was one of those who " put their hands to the plow and look back," and who for the moment are alarmed at their danger, and then relapse into security. Her name stands on the sacred record as a reproach to her guilty husband, a reproach to herself, and as a solemn admonition to religious apostates. Her heart was in Sodom ; her friends were there, and there her treasure. She lingered. She " looked back." She attempted to return ; and God's vengeance smote her. " She became a pillar of salt," which men might look upon, and have continually before their eyes, because she disobeyed the voice of God, and refused to escape with her husband to the city of refuge.

The final consequences of Lot's unfaithful conduct was, *that he himself was scarcely saved from the overthrow of Sodom.* The time had come when that guilty city was to be destroyed. No

example of previous judgments, no voice of prophets, no expressions of the divine goodness and forbearance had availed to reform these ill-fated cities of the plain. Sins there had been so long in the midst of them, so burnt in upon the body and the soul, that they would not be repented of, but remained to ignite the flame where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. Millions have sunk to perdition under this class of debasing sins; cities have sunk under them, for they are the great sins of cities; empires have sunk under them, which might otherwise have remained to this day. It was this class of sins, sins "of which it is a shame to speak," and for "which thing's sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience," which brought such sudden and dire destruction upon the cities of the plain. Their iniquity was full. To show with what intrepid and unblushing shamelessness they could trample upon all that was sacred, one of their last deeds of infamy was to break open the house of Lot for the purpose of forcibly violating the persons of the *angels* who were sent to the city with the message of God's long-delayed indignation. His anger could sleep no longer. The time had come to wipe off this polluted generation from the earth, and even to exterminate the very soil they occupied. He had intimated this purpose to Abraham, and gave him the oppor-

tunity of interposing that memorable intercession on the behalf of his exposed nephew. There was "some good thing in him toward the Lord God of Israel," and therefore, "in the time of trouble God hid him in his pavilion;" and though he did not "set him on high" as he did Abraham, he saved him "so as by fire." And when the fires of the Last Day are kindled, he shall again rescue this his faulty servant as an everlasting monument of his mercy, then and there to confirm the truth that though he "will not destroy the righteous with the wicked," it is his grace in Jesus Christ, and not their own righteousness which rescues the best and the worst of his people from the pit. Great as was the difference between Lot and Abraham, between him and the men of Sodom there was a still greater difference, and one that was radical and essential; and therefore he was rescued from the desolations of the plain. "Scarcely saved" was the meager mark which God put upon him, but it was one which the destroyer saw and respected, and left him harmless. He could not reek his vengeance upon the city until Lot had escaped to Zoar. Even "while he lingered," angelic messengers "hastened him, and laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, and they brought them forth and set them without the city." What a scene for some delicate

and moral painter is furnished by this little incident in sacred history! We know not with what so fitly to compare it, as to those sweet and heavenly influences which so often come down upon the hesitating, lingering sinner, and constrain him to flee to the stronghold while he is yet the "prisoner of hope." Sweet messengers of mercy! angel forms, thus condescending, in their robes of light, to force this group of delaying, hesitating refugees from the flames of Sodom! Memorable words! "Haste thee; escape to Zoar; for I can not do any thing till thou be come thither!"

The sun had now risen for the last time on Sodom. Her hour had come; it was the hour of guilt completed, and of justice begun. Ere that sun went down, she would be a burning lake. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." Never was destruction more complete. The very atmosphere was in a flame. A perfect sea of fire spread far and wide; while tower and palace and cottage reeled and tottered and fell, and vine and fig-tree and sturdy palm and oak crumbled in the blaze. Flight was impossible, and resistance vain. Not one escaped. The lake itself was no refuge; rather did it augment and give fury to

the burning, and became a mass of liquid fire. The cities of the plain sank in it. Its life and purity were burnt out by the sin and punishment of man. Livid clouds and black vapor hovered over it. They hovered over it for ages, and hover still. Even now, so infected are its waters, that no living thing is found in it. The very air around it still is noxious; secret fires burn beneath it, and the adjacent soil is black and dissolved to ashes. It is the sepulcher of Sodom. There she lies sleeping in her shame; oblivion rests upon her; she sunk in billows of fire. And when Abraham, on the following morning, "looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain," the air was darkened; and, instead of beholding, as he hoped, its towers gleaming in the sun, "lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a great furnace."

Such was Sodom's destruction, and such Lot's deliverance. If history does not record a more terrific overthrow, it does not record deeper moral degradation; and if in the minds of the unbelieving the overthrow is scarcely credible, it is scarcely credible that men should have been so vile. Lot but just escaped the degradation and the overthrow. After he retired to the cave of the mountain, we hear of him no more. There is design in this omission of the sacred writers; and the reason of it is to be sought in the faults of

his character. From this hour God consigns his name to a sort of ecclesiastical death. We hear of the "children of Lot" as in league with Gebal and Amalek against the people of God; but we read nothing of him. Abraham died in peace, with the blessing of a living generation upon his head, and a name that shall be venerated as long as sterling virtue is held in remembrance. Lot passed away under the cloud, died no one knows when, or how, or where, and his memory is regarded with strangely-commingled sentiments of confusion and regret, respect and shame.

We may not close this view of the character of Lot without the three following remarks:

1. In the first place, *it addresses the admonition to the professed people of God to beware of those habits and associations that induce spiritual declension.* Such a state of mind involves fearful loss. Many a bright and cheering view of God's truth is lost by it, which a quickened intellect and an awakened heart enjoys. Fervid love and elevated faith are lost by it, and in their place come apathy and distrust. The tenderness and sweetness of godly sorrow are lost by it, and instead thereof is hard-hearted obduracy. Steady hopes, precious comforts and inciting joys are lost by it, and are superseded by gloom and despondency. Activity and usefulness are lost by it, and, instead of mounting upward, the soul, in ignoble sloth and lassitude, cleaves to the dust.

Communion with God is lost by it; and when such a Christian kneels at the mercy-seat, it is with a languor and deadness, and vacancy of thought and emotion, that seem to forbid his access. His retrospect is pensive, and the grateful reminiscences of what God has done for his soul are few. His present religious experience is also full of embarrassment. Earth does not satisfy him; its pleasures are not his joy, nor its wealth his riches, nor its honors his crown. Yet he is perpetually seeking them, and drinking at these earthly fountains. He is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. He is in darkness and sees no light; he is weak, and enemies prevail against him; he is wounded, in despondency, and the Helper, the Comforter is far away. Take heed, ye who tread in the steps of Lot, lest, while ye partake of his character, ye have no part in his deliverance. Ye who have thus forsaken your first love, take heed lest the melancholy disclosure should at last be made that you have a name to live while you are dead. When the blossom withers, and the fruit falls off, and the green leaf is seared, there is a worm at the root, and the tree is cut down.

2. In the second place, the character of Lot instructs us to *protect sacredly the honor of the Christian name*. We know of no piece of biography which so enforces this important lesson.

We read the injunctions, "Let your light *shine*;" "walk *worthy* of the name by which you are called;" and when we advert to the character of Lot, we understand their import. We do not love to dwell upon such a character; it rather disgusts us, and we turn away from it with shame. Who would wish to be such a Christian as Lot? Who would live and die like him? Who would exhibit so doubtful and disheartening a spectacle of piety? Who would occupy so obscure a niche in God's temple, when he and his children might be as polished stones? Such a Christian is an affecting sight to look upon. All the bright and celestial lineaments are passed away from such a soul. He is a dishonored man; the world does not honor him; the church does not honor him; God does not honor him. It is dispiriting, and falls on the heart with despondency, when professed Christians thus depreciate their high vocation. One such Christian as Lot brings reproach upon the church of God. How do the men of the world scoff when those like Lot profess to be Christians! What a weapon do such Christians put into the hands of the enemy, and how adroitly does he use it in assaulting the walls of Zion! If such Christians are the standard of piety, it is no marvel that there are not wanting some who say there is no difference between the church and the world, except that the men of the world are not

so great hypocrites as professed Christians. We should tremble before such rebukes as this. The man who contents himself with just religion enough to save him from open apostasy, will find, perhaps to his cost, that he has not enough to save him from the fires of the Last Day. We hope better things of *you*. Keep your honor bright, my Christian brother. Think of the crown, and press onward!

3. In the third and last place, *Lot speaks to those who are dwelling at ease in the City of Destruction*. Even *he* is not so lost to men, but that "being dead, he yet speaketh." We take up his message and say to you, "Flee from the coming wrath!" Ye who are without the protection even of a declining faith, forget not that this earth to which you are so strongly allied is a doomed world, nor that your doom is sealed if you come not out from it. To be born, and baptized, and nurtured in the land of promise, my young friends, and then to leave the God of Abraham, and your fathers' God, and go and dwell in Sodom—what a doom is this! Exacting and cruel world! if, in order to enjoy it, you must go out from God and his people. O do not *linger* here. "Up; get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy it. Escape for thy life; look not behind thee. Tarry not in all the plain; escape to the MOUNTAIN, lest thou be consumed!"

CHAPTER V.

Pharaoh.

THE land of Egypt, like Palestine, is famed equally in sacred and profane history. Like Palestine, it was once the asylum and habitation of the ancient people of God. Like Palestine, it has been subjected to strange vicissitudes, and scourged by Almighty Providence for its wickedness. Like Palestine, it has been once and again subdued, plundered, and made tributary to its conquerors. Like Palestine, it has been alternately in the hands of the victorious Assyrian, the Medo-Persian conqueror, the ambitious Macedonian, the proud Roman, and the cruel Turk. Like Palestine, it has been the theater of wondrous achievements and wondrous sufferings for righteousness' sake; and, like Palestine, it has been preserved in its original integrity for changes and a destiny which shall yet accomplish predictions uttered more than two thousand years ago.

Ancient Egypt, as well as ancient Palestine, did

not materially differ in its boundaries from those which circumscribe it now. It was washed by the Mediterranean on the north; on the east it extended to the precincts of the Holy Land, to the Arabian desert, the Isthmus of Suez, and the Red Sea; on the south, to the cataracts of the Nile, and the mountains which separate it from Nubia; and on the west, to the Lybian sands. From the abundant alluvial deposits caused by the annual overflowing of the Nile, ancient as well as modern writers describe it as the most fertile region of the globe. It was the proud boast of this exuberant land, that "though a conquered nation, she fed her conquerors." Few countries have been more distinguished for their wealth, their beauty, their comforts, their stupendous and unwasting monuments of art, their cities, once among the greatest marts of commerce, and rivalling even Nineveh and Rome, than this land of terror to the Hebrews, this house of bondage to the seed of Jacob.

At a period when the whole western world was involved in barbarism, when Carthage, Athens, and Rome were not in existence, and little was known of the continent of Europe, this ancient kingdom had reached a degree of refinement, luxury and power which made her the Queen of the Nations. It was governed by princes, who, in the Coptic language, are called PHARAOHS;

the name itself being a designation of royalty. The Pharaoh who occupied the throne when Joseph the Hebrew was sold as a slave, and advanced to the chief place in the king's household, appears to have been a man, not only of sound and discriminating judgment, but of just character and generous impulses. Had he been a jealous or cruel monarch, he would scarcely have rewarded, as he did, the wisdom, fidelity and conscientious rectitude of the Israelitish stranger, under whose auspices the family of Jacob was removed to Egypt, and treated with such paternal care and kindness.

How long this wise monarch reigned, or how many monarchs intervened between the death of this prince and the death of Joseph, we have no means of ascertaining. After the death of the latter, and the death of "of his *brethren*, and all *that generation*," there arose "a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph." This was a turning point in the destiny of the nation; these words seem like a preface to a new volume of history. We turn the leaf, and, from a page of peace and prosperity, the eye falls upon one of misery and stern oppression. These words are like a gleam of lightning which surprises the tranquil traveler, and in an instant a long vista of folly and of crime flashes up before us. To an ear familiar with the accents of the sacred writ-

ings, they have a tone of prophecy in them. A new king arose—a king very different in temper and character from the mild and prudent prince under whose sway the people of Israel had so greatly prospered. Above all he was a king “who knew not Joseph;” as though a mere acquaintance with the history of this remarkable man would alone have been sufficient to enlighten the darkness and temper the severity of the new king. The venerable Jacob, that ancient and common bond of authority, respect and affection, was dead. Joseph, the lord of his brethren and of Egypt, was also gathered to the sepulcher of his fathers. That whole generation was swept to the grave; and their descendants, now a numerous people, were strangers in a strange land, under a new king, whose policy toward them had at once a threatening aspect. The name of Joseph was embalmed in the hearts of the Egyptians of the preceding generation, but his character and services were now forgotten, and the chartered rights of his people to the land they occupied were no longer respected. The shepherd Hebrews became the abomination of the Egyptians, and every artifice of prejudice and calumny was resorted to, to influence the mind of the new monarch against the people whose fate seemed to hang in a trembling balance, and who as yet had found none to ward off their impending servitude.

Such were the ill-boding circumstances under which *the Pharaoh*, whose character we propose to portray, and in whose overthrow the God of Israel was so emphatically honored, is brought to our notice in the sacred writings.

We will direct your attention in the first place to HIS CHARACTER.

It is a well-delineated and graphic character of this prince which is given in the Book of Exodus. The writer gives us a ready insight to his *natural and intellectual* endowments, from the spirit of enterprise and decision which distinguished his reign, and from the military prowess which had already restored the liberties of Egypt after the oppressive domination of the shepherd kings. The *moral* character of men are developed by the circumstances in which they are placed by divine Providence; by the attractiveness and power of the motives which govern them; and by the opportunities and means with which they are furnished of doing good, or evil. Pharaoh was born to a throne. His power and his sphere of action were such, that if he had virtues he would express them; and if he had latent wickedness and latent vices, they would not be long concealed.

At an early stage of the Egyptian monarchy, the family of Jacob were invited into Egypt, and by royal grant were put in possession of that portion of the land best adapted to their pastoral

habits. Subsequent kings and a distinguished queen had approved and sanctioned this policy of their predecessors, and for so long a period that the Hebrews had acquired a moral if not a prescriptive right to the soil. They were a peaceable, industrious, and religious people; nor do we read of any collisions between them and the native Egyptians, nor any thing in the form of revolt, or crime, by which they incurred rebuke, or the forfeiture of their ancient privileges. They had enjoyed them unmolested for four hundred years; and the reigning monarch was under all the obligations of good faith, as well as sound morality, to make good the guaranty by which they had been so long enjoyed.

Pharaoh's encroachment upon the Hebrews was gradual; but it was soon made with a strong hand, and in a tone so decisive that they were driven from their homes and scattered throughout the land. Israel had reposed on the nation's faith; they had no independent government of their own; Pharaoh was their political father, and they looked to him for protection. But he was a jealous and mercenary monarch; and began his career by this act of perfidy. It was one of the dark features of his character, that, with no other than the tyrant's plea, his reign was early distinguished by this mockery of eternal justice. The policy of his predecessors had been equitable and

generous; their scepter had been entwined with the olive-branch. His was a treacherous and exacting policy; his helmet bore the lash of the task-master, and already he began to wield the exterminating sword.

There are few exceptions to the fact that tyranny *is cruel*. This Egyptian despot is said by profane historians to have come from the distant province of Thebes; and so far was he from partiality to the Hebrews, that he regarded them as an ignoble race, and fitted only to be bond-servants to Egypt. It was a harsh measure when he drove them from their tranquil plains; still more rigorous was it when he compelled them to excavate the canals of Egypt, and construct those artificial barriers by which the waters of the Nile were made available to the purposes of cultivation. More severe was it still, when he drove them by the scourge of their overseers to "serve with rigor" in the erection of the "treasure cities," and those many works of art which have defied the ravages of time. Those wondrous monuments stand at the present day speaking witnesses of Hebrew servitude. There is not a stone in those vast piles that was not laid with the sighs of the oppressed Israelites, that does not echo back their groans, and proclaim to all time and all lands Pharaoh's dishonor and his unexampled cruelty.

It would not have been matter of wonder if the God of Israel had interposed at an early period to rebuke this cruel monarch, and avenge the wrongs of his outraged people. One reason for this delay is not improbably to be found in the unhallowed attachment of this people to the luxuries of Egypt. They were not as yet thoroughly sick of their bondage, and ready to depart at God's call. Where Egypt is their asylum, it is well that some Pharaoh should so straiten the people of God that they should desire to be let go. Another reason doubtless was, that God allowed this unrelenting prince to act out the heartless impulses of his own mind; so that when the slumbering fires of divine indignation were awakened, it might be seen that "the curse causeless does not come." The consequences of this forbearance were, that his conduct became more atrocious, and their slavery more severe. "The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve *with rigor*; and they made their lives *bitter* with hard bondage." Their life was a burden; they were weary of it, by reason of this unrelenting oppression. Helpless and defenseless, and in tones of suffering, "the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage; and they cried, and their cry came up to God by reason of the bondage."

Nor was this the greatest expression of the

oppressor's fury. A tyrant's fears are sufficiently powerful incentives to impel him to any deeds of atrocity. Pharaoh was alarmed at the rapid increase of the Hebrews. Shepherds though they were, their great progenitor had been renowned in arms. It was no difficult matter for them to become a nation of warriors; and Pharaoh resolved on crushing them in the bud. Cruelty is ingenious; it is one of the most inventive appetites of a depraved mind. Did not the records of the past demonstrate it, we should scarcely think it possible that so much inventive genius had been employed in making men miserable. Pharaoh was worthy to rank with the most noted names which are written in characters of gloom and blood upon the page of history. The plan by which he hoped to restrain the increase, and ultimately demolish that growing nation, was a novel one—certainly a novel one in that age of the world; nor do we know that it has ever been since practiced upon even by the most inhuman. Incredible as it may seem, he determined to destroy *all the male children* of Hebrew mothers, at their birth, and published an edict to this effect: "If it be a *son*, ye shall *kill* him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live." Pharaoh charged all the people, saying, "Every *son* that is born ye shall *cast into the river*." This nefarious edict, carrying tears, terror and agony to

so many thousand mothers, was in force more than fifty years after the death of Joseph, and so late as the time when Moses was born. No thanks to Pharaoh that the nation did not fall victims to it. It was an artful decree; it had a bad object, and the means were atrocious. A generous mind, even if he saw the necessity of such wholesale destruction, would have effected it more humanely than by these prolonged apprehensions and lingering agony.

During all this while, there was no lighting up of the prospects of this oppressed people. Compelled to make bricks without straw, they were called to an account for every deficiency, and for every delinquency made to suffer. And when at length they made their appeal to the clemency, the humanity of Pharaoh, he did but mock their wrongs, and send them from his presence with the hopeless rebuke, "Ye are idle, ye are idle; get ye to your work!" There are depths in man's wickedness which the mind of man cannot fathom. There have been cruel men, cruel masters, cruel monarchs, cruel warriors, and cruel persecutors. Nebuchadnezzar was cruel, when he threw the three youthful captives of Judah into the burning fiery furnace. Herod was cruel when he slaughtered the infants of Bethlehem. Nero was cruel when he illuminated the streets of Rome with the burning bodies of the Christians. Pizarro and

Cortez were cruel when they tracked the natives of South America with blood-hounds, and stretched their monarch upon burning coals. Charles the IX. was cruel when he stood at his window, and enjoyed the frantic sport of firing upon the Huguenots. Liberty and Atheism were cruel when, in revolutionary France, the arms of the executioner grew weary with their work of blood, and such was the slaughter, that there was a tannery of human skins. And PHARAOH THE CRUEL, both in the order of time and of nature, holds no ordinary place in this infamous catalogue. He had no heart, no sympathy, no relenting. He established his government upon a solid basis; but the "drapery of his throne" was reeking with deeds of relentless cruelty. His reign was brilliant; but it was as the brilliancy of a torrent reflected from a sea of blood.

Wickedness is not always bold. There are so many truthful considerations that are fitted to make wicked men cowards, that we honor the man who has not the courage to do wrong. There were periods in the life of Pharoah when conscience was awakened to do its office; when he dared no longer bid defiance to the claims of rectitude, and was obviously afraid of rushing on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler. A cursory view might lead us to suppose that he was even of a *vacillating* spirit; that he knew not

his own mind ; and if he did, that he had not the decision of character to abide by his own resolutions. We find him at one time promising to let Israel go, and the next day violating his promise. Again and again we hear him uttering the same promise, and again and again retracting his words. He is sorely beset on every side, and scarcely knows what course to pursue. His ruling passion is apparent ; and it easy to perceive that, amid all his turbulence, it holds his mind like an anchor in the midst of undulating waters, while at the same time it is ever veering with the tide and the wind. He was not unlike very many hearers of the Gospel, who, while the strong tendency of their minds is to turn a deaf ear to the calls of heavenly wisdom, often hesitate, and come to the resolution to hear and obey ; but who, when there is respite from apprehension, lose sight of these misgivings, and their last state is worse than the first. His mind had struggled through these convictions and fears ; he had risen above them ; he had outlived them ; and by all his former vacillation, his purpose was the more boldly formed to contend with God.

The cry of the oppressed had been uttered in the ears of Him who is the helper of the helpless, and divinely-commissioned ambassadors were sent to the oppressor's court, with the unambiguous command, "*Let my people go !*" And now we

behold a scene unparalleled in the annals of diplomacy: on the one side, an ambassador of the King of kings, and armed with his power; on the other, the powerful, proud and hard-hearted monarch, who was resolved to resist the just claims of the God of Israel, and stake his life and throne upon the issue. The first and most plausible form of his refusal to obey was to call in question the genuineness of the divine ambassador's credentials. His skeptical reply to them was: "*Who is the Lord* that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." He had a right to require proof of their divine mission, and he who sent them had provided them with ample means of vindicating their high legation. He had authorized them to perform such deeds and wonders, in the presence of Pharaoh, and so far above the power of creatures, that he could no longer doubt they were divinely commissioned. Yet, when after having thus stamped their credentials, first with the seal of miracle, and then with miracles of judgment, they received the same reply from the proud king, that "he would not let Israel go."

Thus unscrupulously repulsed, God directed them to appear before him again, threatening Egypt with still severer plagues. On the infliction of these judgments, there is an apparent relenting on the part of Pharaoh, and he says, "Go

now, ye that are *men*, and serve the Lord." But these divinely-commissioned ambassadors were faithful to their trust. The message with which they were intrusted was simple and concise. There could be no compromise. The command was unconditional: "*Let my people go!*" Unless this was obeyed, peace was out of the question. After still additional judgments, Pharaoh yields still further, and says, "Go ye and serve the Lord; only let your *flocks 'and your herds be stayed.*" But again he is met by the same uncompromising firmness: "Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof remain behind." Nine times did they thus appear before him; and although, under the increasing severity of the divine judgments, Pharaoh confessed his sin, and promised to release Israel from their bondage; yet, when he saw that "he had respite," his towering pride and arrogance came back upon him, and he resolved he would not let Israel go. Once more, the *tenth time*, he went, and Pharaoh was infuriate with rage. He drove them from his presence, and said unto Moses, "Get thee from me; take heed to *thyself*; see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face *thou shalt die!*"

The Scriptures speak of a "hard heart," and of those who are "stout-hearted." And what is this state of mind but that obdurate and deter-

mined spirit which persists in doing wrong in defiance of the most powerful convictions and inducements? There have been such men in the world; there are such still; and more such are there in the world of darkness and despair. In the midst of light, in the midst of judgment and mercy, fear and hope, they tempted their fate, and rushed to their everlasting retribution. In this *obduracy of heart* Pharaoh was preëminent. It was no easy matter for him to persevere in his bold rebellion. His vigorous mind must have had severe conflicts. It required effort, strong and vigorous effort, to withstand the firm and noble bearing of these, God's messengers; to contend with the dictates of his own conscience; and to resist the evidence of the divine claims, when that evidence was so convincing. It must have cost him many a struggle of his waking hours, and many a sleepless night, to trifle with the calamities of Egypt, to despise God's threatenings, to persist in a course which he was admonished must lead to death, and to contend to the last with that God who is mighty to destroy.

Yet, worm as he was, his purposes of rebellion had steeled his mind to brave all the opposition which Omnipotence could throw in his way. It was a vicious and detestable spirit which nothing could control. Every expedient and motive had been tried. Moses could not overcome it by his

miraculous power. Aaron could not, with all his eloquence. God could not, by all his authority. His forbearance could not. The plagues of Egypt could not. Even proffered mercy could not overcome it. No matter what the dealings of God toward him, they all served but as occasions and incentives to his unrelenting obduracy, and to show that "his neck was as an iron sinew, and his brow brass." If there ever was a hardened reprobate it was this obdurate king of Egypt. And in just recompense for his vileness, God himself hardened his heart; left him in the power of the Tempter, and gave him over to a reprobate mind. His name stands forth to the world as a memorable instance of the hardening effect of all those means of reform which, when abused and perverted, leave the enemies of God encased in obduracy. The varied and urgent considerations addressed to his mind would have subdued and humbled any other man in the world whose heart was not so invincibly obdurate.

Such was the character of Pharaoh. His mind was wound up to this direct and unyielding collision with his Maker. He unfurled the flag of defiance, and on its bloody folds was inscribed the fatal device, "WHO IS THE LORD THAT I SHOULD OBEY HIS VOICE?" What effervescence of his kingly pride! Where, in the records of our rebellious race, is found bolder rebellion! Is it

not the spirit which animated that arch-rebel who first raised the standard of revolt in heaven, and who still lifts his haughty brow in defiance and in undying enmity to the King of heaven?

There is, therefore, another view we must take of this fearful scene. "Whom God destroys, he first infatuates." The measure of Pharaoh's iniquity was full. God had said, "I will get me honor upon Pharaoh and upon all his hosts, upon his chariots and upon his horsemen." Pharaoh's resistance had been thus far effectual; but it was now the Lord's turn to appear with power, and by the memorable overthrow of Egypt's king to magnify his own great and holy name. Our second object, therefore, is to show *how God honored himself* upon Pharaoh. On this part of our subject we have time only to throw together the following observations:

God's controversy with Egypt was between himself, as the only living and true God, and the idols of the heathen. It was his purpose to bring this long-agitated question to such an issue, as should not only constrain Egypt to know and fear him, but make deep impressions upon the pagan nations. The instructive lessons of the past had been of little avail. Egypt especially, though within the echo, and almost within sight of these admonitions, was still the great center of idolatry, embellishing it by the splendor of her arts, de-

fending it by the ingenuity and learning of her priesthood, and surrounding it by the halo of her enchantments. Yet is there, and there was then, but one living and true God ; one great Sovereign of heaven and earth, who holds the nations and their kings in his hand as clay in the hands of the potter, and who alone had the right to make one a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor. The time had come when the Supreme Ruler was about to show that the gods of the heathen are vanity and a lie ; that he alone "is the Lord in the midst of the earth ;" and the fitting instruments of proclaiming and enforcing this great truth were Pharaoh and his pagan army. Since they would not be reclaimed, it remained for God to destroy them ; and thus, not by argument and instruction, but by a fact more powerful and convincing than all philosophical demonstration, to furnish the proof of his resistless supremacy.

In addition to this manifestation of his sovereignty, his moral government had claims upon this obdurate monarch. Not only is there a God that *reigns*, but a God that *judgeth* on the earth. It is one of the mysteries of his providence, that in the present world there is so little difference in the allotment of the righteous and the wicked. This objection to the equity of the divine government, so far as it regards individuals, is at once removed by reverting to the fact that the present life is not

designed as the period of retribution and recompense. With regard to *nations*, the difficulty admits of a different solution. God more usually sets his mark of reprobation upon them in the present world.

Egypt was the first organized persecuting power; the first that had the visible people of God in their hands, and wreaked their vengeance on them because they were his people. And therefore their judgment did not linger. The barbarity of their character was scarcely more signal than was the signal mark of God's displeasure against them. It was not accordant with the equity of the divine government that Pharaoh should perish without richly deserving it, and without being eminently fitted for his doom. What else was he fitted for? Was he fitted still to occupy his throne, and wield his scepter, the scourge of Israel and the terror of the world? Was he fitted to be a lamb of God's fold? Was he fitted to shine as a star in the firmament of God's kingdom? Was he fitted to be a member of that great Head whose people he was so cruelly persecuting? Was it not for the glory of God's name that he be overthrown? And are not our own convictions of the justice of his sentence such, that we ourselves have no tears to shed over his fate? Do we find any thing in this man's character that leads us to lament his fall? any ex-

tenuating trait to excite our compassion? Or in looking back from this distance of time, and contemplating that memorable spectacle, does not a loud alleluia burst from our lips as that inhuman and barbarous oppressor, that bitter and determined enemy of the Most High, sinks like a millstone into the sea?

There is not a little that is instructive also *in the circumstances* of his overthrow. The mission of Moses and Aaron was at an end. It was of no use to expostulate further with the unrelenting temper of Egypt's king. He had told them, "See my face no more;" and Moses had uttered the withering reply, "Thou hast spoken well; *I will see thy face again no more.*" Terrible words! An awful farewell! It was God who uttered it. It was God who turned his face from Pharaoh. Moses was his ambassador, his representative; nay, the Lord had made him "as God unto Pharaoh." It was their last interview; and the hour is at hand when Pharaoh will remember it with bitterness of heart.

It was midnight, and such a night as had never before been known. All Egypt was awakened from its slumbers by one universal cry of distress. Throughout the whole land, from the Mediterranean to the cataracts of the Nile, from the Lybian desert to the Red Sea, from palace and from cottage, the sound of woe rises in one swelling volume upon

the air. The cries of youth and age mingle in a note of mourning, like the grief of one vast heart, the wailing of one mighty voice toward heaven. But it does not pierce the clouds; it does not come up before God. Death is in every house. The destroying angel had gone out into the midst of Egypt; and "all the first-born in the land of Egypt died, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon the throne, even to the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill." No; "there was not a house in which there was not one dead."

Pharaoh seems now to bend and yield to God's demands. He feels, for the first time, in whose hands he is; nay, he seems to manifest signs of repentance. He sends a message to Moses and Aaron, granting the point in controversy, and even condescends to beg for mercy. His words are remarkable, and deserve our careful attention. "Rise up, and get you forth from among my people," he says, "both ye and the children of Israel: and go serve the Lord as ye have said. Also, *take* your flocks and your herds, as ye have said. And bless me also! And the *Egyptians* were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men." He not only submits to the divine requirement, but what does he add beside? "And *bless me* also," he falters

with trembling lips. His proud spirit is shaken, and he stoops to crave a blessing from *his* ambassador, of whom, but a short time before, he had said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" And will Moses bless him at this sudden request? Ah, that fatal farewell, "I will see thy face no more," had shut him out from hope, and closed the door, and barred every avenue of mercy.

On that memorable night, the entire nation of Israel, amounting to more than *three millions* of souls, departed out of the iron furnace of Egypt. Four hundred and thirty years before, Abraham, their great ancestor, had left Mesopotamia to go into the land of Canaan, and God then told him that he would give that land to his posterity. And now, in exact accordance with this prediction, Pharaoh yields the controversy and lets Israel go. "*It came to pass that at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day, it came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.*"

When Pharaoh uttered those words of entreaty, "Bless me also," Moses well knew that it was a relenting extorted by calamity, and that as soon as the Lord's hand was removed from his neck he would resume his hostility to Jehovah and his people. The God of Israel had not been honored by this obdurate monarch, nor had his infatuated

armies reached that excess of power by which his name was to be made known. The hosts of Israel had assembled at Ramases, in the land of Goshen, not far from Cairo, from which they took their departure, and which is near the junction of the two great mouths of the Nile, and about three days' journey from the northern tongue of the Red Sea. Scarcely had the Hebrews began their march, when Pharaoh, regretting that he had let them go, marshalled his hosts, with triumphant anticipations of conquest. Wounded pride, defeated avarice and malignant revenge urged him on; nor did he dream that it was a possible thing to fail of dividing the spoil and destroying them. The Hebrews made their first encampment at Succoth, their second at Etham, at the extremity of the desert, their third at Pi-hahiroth, upon a plain extending along the shores of the Red Sea, here spreading out their army toward Migdol, where the sea is the narrowest. The Egyptians took an opposite direction, and marched toward Baal-zephon, on the frontier of Egypt, where was a strong fortress, and where the plain on which the Hebrews had encamped is inclosed by a lofty and rocky range of mountains. The Hebrew army was thus shut in by the inaccessible crags of Baal-zephon and Migdol on either side, by the Red Sea in front, and by the hosts of Pharaoh on the rear. Thus inclosed by a line of

circumvallation, which to human view was absolutely impenetrable, dismay and consternation pervaded their camp, and with one voice they began to reproach Moses for having thus brought them to perish in that wilderness, as though there "were no graves in Egypt." Pi-hahiroth was but half a mile from the *shore of the Red Sea*, which at that part was about fifteen miles across. There they stood in mingled murmuring and fear; "they were sore afraid, and cried unto the Lord." Moses saw their embarrassment, but he also saw what they did not see. "Fear ye not," said he unto the people; "stand still, and see the salvation of God!" And when the unearthly command came forth, "Speak unto the children of Israel that *they go forward*," there was no delay. Their intrepid leader led the way; the bones of Joseph followed; and then the millions of Israel, under the light of the full moon, and the whole horizon illuminated by "the pillar of fire," crossed the sea in a single night, and at early dawn had reached the opposite shore.

In the mean time the Egyptians were encamped behind the mountain of Baal-zephon; nor did they know that the Hebrews were in the act of crossing the sea. Night came on; and, while their dispersed troops were being collected, and their *six hundred* armed chariots, and *fifty thousand* horsemen, and *two hundred thousand* infantry

could be arranged beneath their standards, the Hebrews were far on their way to the solid land. Pharaoh rashly approached the shore where Israel had led the way; nor did he perceive his perilous position until his entire army had entered the bed of the sea, and were hemmed in by the double wall of waters on his right and on his left. Never probably was the leader of an army more embarrassed, or had more fearful misgivings. Conscience was uttering her secret protestations, and the cry of Israel's slaughtered infants was sounding in his ears. And those prophetic words of Moses, "I will see thy face no more," like the knell of death, were vibrating on his heart. He and his uncircumcised legions were treading on holy ground—ground which their unhallowed feet had desecrated, and which was to be their grave. There were also fearful presages of their doom. The full moon, now "in the morning watch," was going down, and the cloud, whose bright side was at the head of the camp of Israel, was suddenly transported to the rear, and threw impenetrable darkness over all the host of Pharaoh. And more than this, "The Lord *looked* through the pillar of fire, and of the cloud, and *troubled* the host of the Egyptians, so that they said, Let us *flee* from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them." It was a memorable night in the history of Egypt. If Jewish traditions and histo-

rians may be accredited, this dark and livid column of clouds enveloped the whole horizon. God opened the vials of his wrath upon Pharaoh; the tempest howled, and lightnings flashed their sheets of fire. Pharaoh's affrighted infantry fled; his cavalry became uncontrollable; his chariots were overthrown, and left in the rear; while in the midst of this terrible consternation, and just as the last vestige of the Hebrew army had reached the shore, the suspended waters *closed upon the hosts of Egypt*, and they sank like lead into the Red Sea. "There remained not so much as one of them." The flower and strength of Egypt were withered. Her king, her princes, her warriors, her priests, her pomp and power were gone. Her provinces were again in mourning. It was many a long year before she recovered from this exterminating blow, and before even the name of Egypt is recognized in sacred history as one of the existing powers of the earth.

Sin and suffering are not elements in the Divine government which he delights in. In the arrangements of infinite wisdom they are never found as isolated events; they exist only as in their relations and consequences; they are made subservient to holy and benevolent ends. "I will give men for thee, and people for thy life," is a promise of solemn yet pregnant import to the church of God. He who "spared not his

own son" for her, how shall he spare her relentless oppressors? "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Divine love was the umpire between the Hebrew church and idolatrous Egypt. The balances were in his hands. who lives to protect his people when all the nations die, and who will save them harmless when the earth shall be dissolved, and the heavens rolled together as a scroll. On that sad night, when the destroying angel laid waste the first-born of Egypt, the bloody token of the *Paschal Lamb* had been put upon the lintel and door-posts of the Hebrews. It was deliverance by destruction; death for the purposes of redemption. After that solemn night could there be a question as to the safety of God's Israel? What marvel, if the horse and his rider are cast into the sea? This deliverance, and by this disastrous overthrow, had a far-reaching purpose, while both were prefigurations of a redemption from a worse than Egyptian bondage and by blood. There is an import in those songs of Zion which have for so many centuries celebrated the oppressor's overthrow and her deliverance. "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever! To him that *smote Egypt*, and brought out Israel from among them; for his mercy endureth for ever! To him which divided the Red Sea, and made Israel pass

through the midst of it, and overthrew Pharaoh and his host; for his mercy endureth for ever!" At the morning dawn, after that passage through the sea, there was a death-like stillness on the opposite shore. Judah's Lion waved his triumphant standard to the rising sun, and the twelve tribes noisily unfurled their banners under the overshadowing symbol of Jehovah's presence. The cloudy pillar moved not; it *stood still*, in tranquil smiles. The conflict is over, and the storm is past. Israel stands now upon the banks of the Red Sea, a calm, unbroken expanse of waters, only to survey the corpses of the slain, the wrecks of their chariots, and the armor and spoils of Egypt floating at their feet. And there and then did they utter those words of triumph, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods; who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." Israel's millions led the song, while female piety and heroism responded, "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea!" And thus was God exalted in the oppressor's overthrow.

The two following *practical thoughts* may not be suppressed in view of this instructive history.

1. It teaches us, in the first place, *to reverence*

the God of heaven. In what splendor does the character of Israel's God shine out in this short history! Never would Pharaoh have been overthrown, never have been elevated to the throne of Egypt, never have been called into existence, but for the lasting testimony he has involuntarily given to Jehovah's supremacy. For the Scripture saith unto him, "Even for this same cause have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared in all the earth." If the meanest reptile and the pebble on the shore teach us something concerning God; what views of him rush upon our minds as we look back to Egypt and the Red Sea! It is not Pharaoh that most interests us here; nor is it Moses; nor is it Israel. It is the GREAT GOD. He would be known by the judgments he executeth upon his enemies, and the redemption he effects for his people. Who shall not fear those thousand-times-told triumphs of his justice, his mercy, and his power! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and let the earth rejoice. Every page in the Bible, and every leaf in the history of his providence proclaims that he is worthy. When the horse and his rider are cast into the sea, Israel may sing, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

2. The second thought enforced by this narrative is the *dissuasive it furnishes from contending*

with the Holy One of Israel. It is not every man who has the spirit of Pharaoh, or contends with his Maker as he contended. Yet every man contends with him, who resists his authority; rebels against his providence; quarrels with his truth; resists his Spirit; or refuses to acquiesce in the terms of mercy proposed in the gospel of his Son. We counsel all such contenders with the Most High to go to the shores of the Red Sea, and there learn how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the LIVING GOD. The oppressor's throne shall not shield him from the oppressor's overthrow. Neither the rich man's wealth nor the poor man's poverty, the wisdom of the wise nor the ignorance of the unwise, the pride of the lofty nor the humiliation of the degraded, shall protect them, when the angry cloud is black with storms. Pharaoh felt his embarrassment, and trembled, and sought the blessing when it was too late. To you who are irreconciled to God he is now sending that embassy of peace which this proud monarch refused. Israel's God stoops to offer you his friendship, and makes known the terms on which he will be pacified toward you. They are the same in every age, and it is not for us to alter or modify them. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." If we, or an angel from heaven preach to you any other gospel, let him be accursed! We

call upon you on the authority of him whose messengers we are, to return to him from whom you have revolted; to trust in his grace and submit to his dominion. You have a respite now, but will soon stand where justice is enthroned, and where every mouth will be stopped. Employ this respite wisely; for though it is as a "vapor that appeareth but a little while and then vanisheth away," it is "the accepted time." Do not, like Pharaoh, be too proud and unrelenting to submit to God's claim. "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, how long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself BEFORE ME?"

CHAPTER VI.

Moses.

SEVERE trials are designed to bring the characters of men to the test ; to elicit their excellence and make known their virtues to the world. They also do more than test the character ; they form and invigorate it, mold it to its lofty purposes, and call forth an energy which would otherwise have remained latent. It is not in a tranquil sea and under serene skies that the navigator tests the qualities of his vessel ; nor does the armorer prove the temper of his blade by merely striking at air. . Neither is it in the days of quiet and prosperity that man's nobler qualities are called into exercise ; but by struggling with difficulty, by contending with opposition, as the spark is drawn from the conflict of the flint and steel.

The infant Moses was called into existence under that cruel decree which consigned all the male children of the Hebrews to death as soon as

they were born. But he was the child of prediction and promise ; nor was it in the power of any earthly edict to cut short, or obstruct his career. The compassionate princess who rescued that helpless one from the waters, was far from suspecting that he was to prove the ruin of her father's house and to lead Israel forth from bondage. Yet such was God's purpose ; and this daughter of the cruel monarch that had devoted him and his people to destruction drew to land the conqueror of her own family and people.

How different would have been the history of the church and the world, had not that Hebrew infant been cared for, and the whole tutelage of his tender years directed by the paternal care of Him who called him to be the prophet of his people ! He was saved by Pharaoh's daughter, but he was not to be nurtured by her. There was a Hebrew stranger to whom his deliverer committed him, from whom he learned the history of his oppressed and subjugated countrymen, and by whom he was instructed in the religion of his forefathers. That *mother of Moses* well deserves a place on the pages of sacred history ; we are not surprised that a distinguished Christian poetess should have so beautifully and so sacredly dramatized the mother and her son. Often, under some spreading palm-tree, or beneath the humble Israelitish tent, had he listened to those narratives

and imbibed those teachings from her lips which were to inspirit and strengthen him in scenes of difficulty and danger. When from the religious training of his mother he was transferred to the royal family of Pharaoh, he was carefully educated in all the learning of the Egyptians. The teachers of the King's household, and at a period when Egypt was distinguished for its advancement in the arts and sciences, and for its refinement and civilization, were *his* teachers; and princes and princesses cultivated the intellect and formed the polite manners, the courtly graces, the princely bearing of the youth who was to be the deliverer of the nation whom they purposed to destroy.

Yet was he a Hebrew, and could not but sympathize with the oppression of his people, nor suppress his generous indignation at the severities they endured. A single rash act, while he was a young man, drove him out of Egypt into a land where he was no longer the prince, but the tranquil shepherd, the diligent student, the devout inquirer into the works and ways of God. The time of Israel's deliverance had not come, and here, in this quiet land, inhabited by nomadic tribes, God was preparing him for the great things which he must do and suffer. Though a fugitive and an exile, these forty years in Midian were the most tranquil years of his eventful life.

They were happy years; away from the snares and turmoil of the Egyptian court, and the revolting scenes of cruelty toward his countrymen which he had been so often called to witness. They were also instructive years, during which he had intimate communications with God, unfolding his mind to the developments of his providence, furnishing it with those great facts in the records of the past, and enriching it with those great religious and moral truths which should prepare him to become the most eminent of historians, and the Lawgiver of Israel.

Ambition could not have drawn him from this rural solitude; had wealth and worldly pleasure invited him, he would have turned a deaf ear to their call. The ties of family and friendship which bound him to Egypt were at least balanced by the ties which bound him to Midian. Yet the time had arrived when this seclusion was no longer to be enjoyed. There were considerations which moved him. The *voice of God* was addressed to him from "the burning bush" as he was tending his flock in Mount Horeb, amid the solitude of the desert. God spake to his astonished servant, and said, "I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM THY FATHER, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB." Moses stood in solemn reverence. When could he forget this interview with God? When could the influence of it vanish from his

life? He "hid his face, and was afraid to look upon God." He knew not what to think of that burning glory which kindled the bush and left it unconsumed. It was fearful and mysterious; though but an emblem, an adumbration of the Deity, it was the Deity veiled and overshadowed. It is never the pure spirit of Jehovah, shining in his unveiled splendor, but rather the manifestations of the Invisible One, which creatures of mortality may behold. Something must stand between God and sinful man—some intervening object—some burning bush—some cloudy or fiery pillar—some mildly-reflecting medium, not so bright and dazzling as to destroy his mortal vision—something, if not less holy, yet less majestic and terrible—some cleft in the Rock of Ages, where he covers the suppliant beholder with his hand, while his glory passes by—something which he who is fallen by his iniquity may look upon and live. This vision, thus vouchsafed to Moses, was designed to ordain and inaugurate him in his great work. God here gave him his commission to go and deliver the Hebrews from bondage; it was uttered on that memorable mountain, and written as it were in letters of fire. Just as he prepared the prophet Isaiah to go to that same people by that wondrous manifestation of his glory, when he "saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple;" just as he prepared another

prophet for his message of "mourning, lamentation and woe" to the nations, by his visions at the River Chebar; and just as he prepared the apostles, the confessors, the martyrs, and reformers of other times for their trials and conflicts and his service, by unwonted views of his great glory; did he call and designate this deliverer of his people to his great and responsible work by a still more expressive and emphatic voice. From this hour Moses was assured of his divine legation. For more than sixty years God had been preparing him for this high service, and now the hour had come when he was to go and bring forth his people out of Egypt.

And here one of the obvious traits in his character shows itself in *the modesty and self-diffidence with which he at first declines this high embassy*. Notwithstanding the solemnity and emphasis of his appointment, he could not feel that he was the man for such a vocation. The most self-confident do not always prove the most faithful. When the Most High sent the Prophet Jeremiah to Israel in their apostasy, his only answer was, "Ah Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am a child!" When he called the heaven-born Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles, he could not refrain from exclaiming, "Who is sufficient for these things!" When he called Luther to shake the Vatican, what days and nights of hesi-

tation, solicitude and prayer might be recorded in the history of this bold man before that withering sense of unfitness for the service to which he was destined was so far overcome that he could enter hopefully and cheerfully upon his work! Moses saw at a glance the greatness of the enterprise intrusted to him. He was to treat with a haughty monarch, expostulate with an ignorant and degraded people, and confront a learned and frowning world. He anticipated scenes of trial and conflict, and his answer was, "WHO AM I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" He would fain have said, It needs a more consecrated and a bolder heart than mine, and a more eloquent tongue to stand in such a presence, and a mightier arm than mine to deliver Israel. More than once was he embarrassed by this shrinking diffidence; he even carried it so far, that God's anger was kindled against him. More than once did he bring his commission back and lay it at God's feet, because he felt himself unequal to its fulfillment. He did not question the importance of the service; it was a view of its importance that overwhelmed him. He would cheerfully be a subaltern in such a campaign, but he could not consent to become its chief. He seems sometimes to complain of the burden that was put upon him. When the Israelites dis-

couraged him, he would go to God and say, "Behold the *children of Israel* have not hearkened unto me; how then shall PHARAOH HEAR ME WHO AM OF UNCIRCUMCISED LIPS?" When disheartened both by Israel and Pharaoh, his heart sank within him, and then he would return to the Lord and say, "O WHY IS IT THAT THOU HAST SENT ME?" There was no bitterness in these words; nor were they uttered in the spirit of unsubmitiveness. They were the out-pourings of a heart oppressed by a sense of high responsibility, and a distrust of his own powers. Notwithstanding his piety, his intellectual furniture and courtly training, he had been so many years an obscure peasant, and saw so many obstacles in his path, that he was a disheartened man; and not until God actually broke out upon him in severe rebuke, and laid the responsibility upon him, did he consent to bear the burden. Who does not see that his modesty and self-diffidence constituted the charm of his character, and the best preparation for his work; and that, gathering strength in the midst of this conscious weakness, he was less likely to be overcome by reproaches and difficulty, and that his courage and assurance would the more certainly stand abreast with his trials and dangers?

To this self-diffidence he added in the next place *great prudence and discretion*. He had

every thing to encounter and every thing to call into exercise the soundest moderation. He was a mark for every arrow, both of lurking calumny and open opposition. He was censured where he deserved praise, and suspected where he deserved confidence. But though he suffered in silence, he knew how to bend to the tempest, and recover his strength when the force of the storm was past. His whole life shows that he was not a man of many words, but rather of a taciturn temperament, and possessed large measures of that practical wisdom, which, when fortified by the gentle, soft and amiable virtues, rendered him one of the most trustworthy of men. It is recorded of him, "that he was very *meek* above all the men which were on the face of the earth." The most severe inspection of his conduct discovers nothing that is boastful and tumultuous, but rather "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." From the time he left Egypt till he reached the borders of the Holy Land, we do not perceive any thing like affectation of greatness, or pretensions from personal vanity. The instances in which he was provoked to anger are those in which God himself was provoked. He was *excited* at his last interview with Pharaoh, and he was more excited when Aaron made, and the people worshiped, the golden calf; when they complained of the manna in the desert, and Korah and his

faction instigated rebellion. Meekness itself might not hold its peace amid such scenes. The only instance in which he so far forgot himself as to lose sight of his delegated authority, and vaunt himself before Israel, was at the smiting of the rock in Horeb. God marked and remembered this folly, and we shall yet see how grievously Moses was punished for it. This was an unnatural deviation from his habitual conduct, and an unnatural violation of the spirit which was so deeply rooted in his heart. A man of his talents, acquirements and divine commission might have "gone through the world like a whirlwind." Well was it for him and for Israel that he possessed another spirit. A stormy passage indeed had it been through "that great and terrible wilderness," had he been of angry passions and ungoverned temper. The Israelites were a fickle people—an ignorant and idolatrous people. They had become degraded by their bondage in Egypt, and were loose, perfidious and ungrateful. Yet this accomplished and courtly man was not only condemned to live among them, but to guide them amid enemies, hunger, thirst, and internal treachery and sedition. At one time they almost deified him; at another they held him responsible for their sufferings, and were actually about to *stone* him. And though the God of Horeb appeared as his avenger, he

himself "held his peace." He endured the scorching flame without resentment, and without a murmur, save the tears he shed, and the prayers uttered in secret. In his subjugation of the ruder passions he was a remarkable man. He was the more distinguished for these qualities in that he possessed a mind of the highest order. There was no want of sensitiveness in his nature. He was ardent and impulsive, yet his well-balanced intellect and emotions had become disciplined by self-control. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." The equanimity of Moses had this unearthly stay.

Allied to this cultivation of the gentler and sweeter graces was also his *unbending perseverance*. The office he sustained was environed with difficulties; there never was a more important, or a more difficult office. It was not the promptness and ardor which he brought to this service which so much distinguished him, as the steadiness and energy of his purpose, and his patient and indomitable endurance. History records instances not a few in which precipitation in great enterprises were only ominous of their failure; while it furnishes very many instructive examples in which the failure would have been complete and inevitable but for the unconquerable perseverance of a single man. Never was this truth more sig-

nally verified than in the character of Israel's great Leader. It was not the growth of a moment. Very early did his thoughts become habituated to solicitude, to obstacles and danger; while by slow degrees he ascertained they were inseparable from every step of his progress. He united so much steadfast integrity with such heroic enthusiasm, that his firmness became invincible. His moral courage rose in sublimity, and was the more invigorated with every accumulated burden. There were scenes in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, which would have disconcerted the plans and unnerved any man in the world who had not the bone and sinew of his firm character. Irresolution might have been looked for under such circumstances; but he was a stranger to every thing but resoluteness. The courage of Israel might fluctuate; but there was no fluctuation with him. They might despair; but despondency, when he had once entered upon his work, was a feeling he knew nothing of. It was not a beaten path that he traveled, nor were the obstacles such as had been before surmounted; yet he went forward without distrust, or apprehension. It is an old adage that "he conquers who endures." This feature in the character of Moses is one of its noblest features. He had "counted the cost;" and when labor and suffering came, he wearied out labor and suffering, dif-

ficulty and danger, by patient, steady, unbroken endurance.

But the noblest trait in his character was his *disinterested and self-sacrificing spirit*. We have listened to arguments and sneers against the doctrine of *disinterested benevolence*; but the character of Moses outweighs them all. Next to the Virgin's Son, there never was a more instructive and beautiful exemplification of the purity, the power, the loftiness of this spirit than is furnished by the Jewish Lawgiver. No mere man was ever further from self-seeking. Nor is there any man in relation to whom it was more important to the interests of true religion in the world that this self-denying spirit should be made to appear. And "to still the enemy and the avenger," God made it abundantly manifest.

At a period of life when the things of time exert the most attractive and fascinating influence, he deliberately renounced the world for a service which had no earthly commendation but its trials. It was in the vigor of his young manhood, and when he was never better fitted to enjoy its bounty and splendor, and when all that is flattering in its alliances, all that is honorable in its distinctions of name and power, and all that is enchanting in its pleasures, lay at his feet. He knew the value of what he renounced, for he was born for empire. Yet the degradation of an

oppressed people, with an approving conscience and approving God, had attractions for his benevolent mind superior to it all. He "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than all the treasures of Egypt," and desired no better, no other allotment than to share the fate of God's Israel. More than once he had the opportunity of retiring from this self-denying service, not only honorably and with God's approbation, but on God's proposal to destroy Israel and "make *him* a greater and mightier nation than they." But he had identified himself with his miserable countrymen, and resolved never to forsake them, be the issue what it may. This high-minded man would not listen to the proposal for a moment. It was ruinous to Israel. "Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, I pray thee blot me out of the book which thou hast written!" Self was nothing; God and Israel were all that that large heart thought of. That meek spirit covered a soul of the most exalted self-denial. High thoughts had a dwelling in his lofty mind. He might have been the "world-famed" founder of an empire; but "he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." He might have been the proudest among the proud, and among the rich the richest; but "he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." He might have procured aggrandizement, office and wealth for

his sons ; but he left them no inheritance save the tent in which he encamped in the wilderness, because "he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." We do not know of such an example of moral excellence, in which religious principle gained such an ascendancy over secular advancement, and the man of God over the man. He was the same devoted servant of God and his people to the last ; the same man every where, from the hour when he took his shoes from off his feet at Horeb, to the hour when he went up to the top of Pisgah, nobly doing and bravely suffering the divine will. Tempests beat upon him, nor did they cease to beat, nor he to contend manfully with the storm. It is this steady, unbroken *self-denial* which sheds increasing light and brightening honors upon his fair name. For after all that has been said and written on the subject, this is the great expression and test of moral virtue. There is no such eminence of goodness as that which consists in superiority to self. Charity rises to its true dignity only when "it seeketh not her own."

Such are the leading traits in the character of Moses. We would fain know more of such a man, and are naturally led to a CONSIDERATION OF THE GREAT MORAL ELEMENTS OF WHICH HIS CHARACTER WAS COMPOSED.

Those secret springs, the motives of human conduct, are ordinarily concealed. In the present instance they must have been powerful. Obviously, there must have been strong principle, nurtured by strong truth, great aims and vivid expectations, which lie at the basis of this noble man's character. Nor are we at a loss to ascertain what they were: they are distinctly revealed to us. The Apostle Paul draws aside the veil and gives an insight to the great principles by which he was actuated. There are the three following, as briefly stated by this Apostle in his eleventh chapter to the Hebrews:

Throughout all this course Moses was controlled by *his faith in God*. "By *faith*, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." How often are we called to dwell on this delightful and high principle of human conduct in good men! Like Noah and Abraham, he BELIEVED GOD. God's word of command and promise was the starting point in his high career, and his constant support and stimulus. When he knew that God had spoken, with a single-hearted and whole-souled confidence he believed that God was true. His soul rested on the bare word and promise of God, and, in so doing, not only enjoyed the repose, but the vigor and decision of a satisfied assurance. He was embarrassed and agitated until he heard God's voice;

then all was tranquil and determined. He had crossed the sea of doubt, and stood on solid rock. He was not weak enough to be credulous, but he was strong enough to be believing. He was, characteristically, a cautious man, but he jeopardized nothing in trusting to the truth of God. There were thoughts and emotions which passed through his great mind, and there were deeds he performed which had never existed but for the faith which "touches all things with the hues of heaven." His heart confided in the heart of God, reposed in his excellence, and was comforted by his power and love. It was this that gave his faith its luster, and made his character so different from that of the fickle and unbelieving Israelites. It was a vision unknown to the eye of sense, but not less convincing and not less effective. It was the highest impulse, and, in every view, fitted to influence his intellectual and moral being. It suggested considerations of unexampled weight and authority, and such as addressed themselves to his understanding, controlled his conscience, moved his affections, made their appeal to his love of rectitude, stimulated his hopes and his fears, and formed him the man he was.

In the next place, he was governed by a *sense of the divine presence*. Nothing is more apparent from his history, than that "he endured as seeing

him who is invisible." From his first interview with God at the burning bush, there is nothing by which he was so distinguished as his intercourse with the Great Invisible. The Eternal God conversed with him on Horeb, in Egypt, on Mount Sinai, and in the wilderness. It was not by visions, nor by dreams, nor by Urim and Thummim, as he was wont to do with other heaven-directed men, but, "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches." Sometimes the divine presence was marked by those tokens of condescension which inspired his courage; sometimes it was overwhelming, and constrained him to exclaim, "I do exceedingly fear and quake;" and always it was such as to enforce the admonition, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground!" Wherever he walked, or stood, or slept, or worshiped, the earth on which he trode was consecrated by the divine presence. He went forth an alien to all the world except Israel and Israel's God, ever pitching his tent near the dwelling of Him who "inhabiteth eternity." He had no fears except that God might depart from him, and no such desire as that "his presence should go with him and give him rest." Once assured of this, troubles sat light upon him; danger did not intimidate him; care and toil did not depress him, because he had learned where to

go to unburden his sorrows and his fears. This was the stay and staff that supported him; this the comforting and encouraging thought which bore him as on eagles' wings above all the storms that lowered upon his path. Did infuriate Pharaoh drive him from the foot of the throne? God's presence would be with him there. Was the Red Sea before him? God's presence would be with him there. Did the Israelites threaten to fall away from him? still God was with him. Did death, under the most frightful aspects, menace him in the wilderness? God's presence would be with him there. This was enough. And thus he went through his pilgrimage; ever attended by trials and dangers, but amid trials ever cheerful, and triumphant amid dangers, because ever cheered by the presence of God. What different men, what another sort of Christians should we be, if we always enjoyed this strong and vivid sense of God's presence, were thus filled with his fullness, and all our desires were satisfied by being thus swallowed up and lost in God?

In the last place, *he was controlled by considerations drawn not from time but from eternity.* They were *religious* considerations which governed him—considerations without which no man can ever be truly great. That distinguished statesman, Daniel Webster, once said, "A solemn and religious regard to spiritual and eternal things

is an indispensable element in all true greatness." It is a noble thought, nobly uttered, and by a noble man. The world has seen men of talents and vigorous enterprise, men endowed with every gift of nature, fortune and education—men who were the most remarkable men of their age in person, in manners, in great powers of thought and lofty genius, who were lost to the world from their mere want of moral principle. Few has it seen like Moses, who "looked not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen." It is recorded of him that "he had respect unto the recompense of reward." The *great doctrine of a future and everlasting retribution*, without which man is no better than the brutes that perish, was intimately inwoven with all his habits and thinking. His vivid and far-reaching mind was contemplating the results of his embassy upon the future ages of time, and the never-ending ages of eternity, and was therefore ever living amid great scenes, influenced by great motives, and aiming at great objects. This it was that made him so great in his goodness, and so good in his greatness. He saw era after era finishing its course, event after event full of mercy to God's Israel accomplished; till at length he beheld the fashion of this world passed away, the delusion vanished which sense throws over the things of time, the pleasures of sin succeeded by never-ending sor-

rows, and the trials of the wilderness forgotten in the joys of the "spirit land." This was heroism ; this was Moses. He began his career, and he continued it in the fear of God, ever pressing forward until he put off the armor where God himself laid the turf upon his bosom.

Such was the character of this man of God, and such the moral elements of which it was composed. He was not so much the great Hebrew warrior, but he was the great Hebrew statesman. He was not only the man of his age, but we are strongly inclined to believe the greatest man of whom we have any account in sacred or profane history. A modern historian remarks of the *elder Pitt*, "that he made himself the greatest man in England, and England the greatest country in the world." With far stronger emphasis may it be said of Moses, that, under God, he made himself the greatest man in the Hebrew nation, and the Hebrew nation the greatest in the world. The poets and orators, the philosophers and historians, the statesmen and warriors, the princes and monarchs of this world, with all their talents and power and splendor, never reached the summit of human greatness which was occupied by the man whose lifeless body was buried by his Maker in the land of Moab.

There are some touching incidents as we draw toward the close of his history. The tribes of

Israel had now reached the eastern side of the Jordan, and were prepared to cross the river and enter upon their long-sought inheritance. The bones of the generation who forty years before came out of Egypt were now bleaching in the desert-sand. *Miriam*, the far-famed sister of Moses, was dead. *Aaron* too had gone up to Mount Hor, and "died there on the top of the mount." Of Israel's original leaders Moses alone was left. And was not this noble man permitted to fulfill his mission to the end, and to lead Israel triumphantly across the Jordan, as he had led them triumphantly across the Red Sea? It was his own expectation to enjoy this high privilege; but for wise reasons this expectation was never to be realized. There had been a guilty presumption in his conduct when he brought the water out of the rock at Horeb, and God had said to him, "Because ye believed me not to SANCTIFY ME in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye *shall not* bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Moses was not prepared for this. The disappointment was extreme. It was an overwhelming miscarriage of greatly-endearred and long-cherished hopes. He knew not how to fortify himself against it. To the last degree reluctant to abandon this expectation, and still hoping the best from God's paternal love, he ventured, notwithstanding this decision, to be-

seech him in these affecting words, "I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon!" But "the Strength of Israel is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." God's reply was, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more to me of this matter!" Moses was silent; but his own blighted hopes did not render him forgetful of the hopes and happiness of his people. As he had toiled, so, during the short period now allotted to him, he toiled henceforth; intermitting no labor and multiplying and condensing his counsels; treading his destined path with a firm and lofty step; silencing his own griefs that others might rejoice; cheerfully bearing his own disappointment that the hopes of others might be fulfilled; living in the life of his people, and bearing all Israel upon his noble heart as he and they drew nearer to the land he was destined never to enter.

Pisgah was one of the highest summits of Nebo, from which there was a full view of the Holy Land. From Lebanon on the north, from the Arabian desert on the south, from the Jordan on the east, and from the Mediterranean on the west, this ancient land of Canaan there rose in all its fertility and beauty—the HOLY LAND, rich in promise above all lands. Moses had not been a faithless leader; nor should his hopes be so

utterly crushed as to admit the suspicion that he was dismissed from the service as a dishonored man. "Get thee up," said God to him, "to *the top of Pisgah*, and lift thine eyes westward and northward, and southward and eastward, and *see the land with thine eyes!*" It was a sublime spectacle, unutterably gratifying to the heart of this aged servant of God. There he stood with his Maker as his guide. His feet might not tread upon that sacred soil; but its dew fell upon him; its fragrance cheered him, and he was wrapt in the vision of its beauty. He had just come from the burning sands of Arabia; but the desert was past. Sinai loomed in the back-ground, and only to give prominence and vividness to more prophetic visions. He saw the land where the predicted Shiloh should appear, and to whom the gathering of the people should be in the latter days. It was the land where the Son of David would be born and "lifted up," and where the prize for which the Mighty Sufferer struggled, would be won—gloriously and for ever won. From the cross of Calvary and the tomb of Joseph he caught a glimpse of that heavenly Canaan too, whose hills never lose their verdure, whose fruit never withers, whose streams never fail, and where "there is no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it, because the Lamb is the light thereof, and God its glory."

Yet is it with a feeling of deep sympathy that, after having accompanied him to the banks of the Jordan, we must leave him here, even though it be on the top of Pisgah. Both his cradle and his grave are invested with peculiar interest. It is with interest we watch the *infant* rocking upon the waters of the Nile; it is with greater interest we behold the *man*, "his eye undimmed and his natural force not abated," ascend the mountain to *die*. Every eye followed this venerable man of God, as for the last time he left the camp where for forty years he had shared the toil and the perils of the wilderness. Israel's millions, with eager gaze, looked after him till the dense forest, or the jutting cliff hid him from their sight; and then they wept their departed Leader; mother and maidens, son and sire, bowed their heads in heaviness. "Lo, Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, and *God buried him* in a valley over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day." No human being was there to witness the last struggle. No voice of man was heard. No hand of man bore his pall. No train followed his bier, and no waving plumes graced it. No funeral knell was sounded. He was alone with God. Unseen hands laid him in the grave, and the only tears that were shed was the weeping of Israel's tribes far off on the plains of Moab.

Pharaoh was buried, by the same unseen but wrathful power, in the waters of the Red Sea—a fitting burial for his stubborn ferocity and his deeply-sworn hatred against God and his people. *Moses* slept in the valley selected by omniscient love and protected by omniscient power from the unhallowed gaze and idolatrous superstition of mortal men. *Pharaoh's* restless and fierce spirit, thirsting for battle and proud defiance, was quenched in the prouder and more restless billows, as “a torch that is burnt out,” and whose ashes are flung to a bottomless cavern. *Moses* breathed out that sweet and high-born spirit on his Maker's bosom, allured away by infinite love—a light kindled up afresh and ever-shining in the celestial kingdom. How wide the contrast! What a fearful and dismal world must that be, where all the *Pharaohs* of our earth are congregated, foaming out their fury against the God of heaven and his saints! “SO LET THINE ENEMIES PERISH, O LORD!” And what a blessed and glorious world must that be, where *Moses* and the Prophets, and Jesus of whom *Moses* wrote, and his ransomed ones, are congregated from every nation and tongue, serving God day and night in his temple, and giving him praise while they have their being! “SO LET ALL THOSE THAT LOVE THEE REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN THEE!” Who, as he thinks of *Pharaoh*, would not utter the prayer, “Gather not my soul with sin-

ners, nor my life with bloody men!" And who,
as he thinks of Israel's great chief, would not say,

" Could I but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood
Should fright me from the shore !"

CHAPTER VII.

Joshua.

IN the catalogue of the names of those who were sent by Moses from the wilderness of Paran to "spy out the land of Canaan," we find "of the tribe of Ephraim, *Oshea* the son of Nun." In the same paragraph it is said, "And Moses called *Oshea* the son of Nun, "*Jehoshua*," or *Joshua*. The name denotes deliverer, or saviour. In the New Testament, and in the Greek mode of writing it, it is *Jesus*, as in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews; where our translators might, with entire accuracy, have retained the Hebrew word *Joshua*. The first time in which his name occurs in the Bible is in the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we have a succinct narrative of the conflict between Israel and Amelek, and where, even during the life of Moses, *Joshua* is designated by him as the military commander of the Hebrews. Moses was the lawgiver and statesman; *Joshua* was the martial hero. And to show how perfectly the

military was subject to the civil power in the Hebrew state, Joshua is called the minister and servant of Moses. On the death of Moses Joshua succeeded him; during those years of warfare which were employed in subjugating and dividing the Holy Land, Joshua united the civil and the military power in his own hands. He was abundantly fitted for this high office, in the natural qualities of his mind; by his fellowship with his countrymen in their Egyptian bondage; by his intimacy with Moses and the trials of the wilderness; and by large measures of imparted grace. The peculiarities of his character are brought out in his execution of the high commission with which he was entrusted as Israel's leader into the Holy Land. God had raised him up and qualified him as the conqueror of the nations of Canaan, and to give his people rest. We can not present a better view of his character than by directing our thoughts to the *character and condition of the Canaanites at the time he received this commission; to the commission itself* with which he was intrusted; to the *manner in which this commission was executed*; and to the *principles by which he was influenced in carrying it into execution*.

We will, in the first place, direct our attention to the character and condition of the *Canaanites* at the time he received this commission.

The land of Canaan, in the original division of the earth, after the flood, among the sons of Noah, was reserved by God for the descendants of Abraham. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Asia was given to Shem, with a particular reservation of Palestine, *as the Lord's portion*, for some one peculiar people, and that people the chosen race from which the promised Messiah should descend. It was to be the theater of such wonders of God's power and grace that no nation should be allowed to occupy it permanently except his own people, the seed of Abraham. How it came into the possession of the Canaanites, who were the posterity of Ham, through Canaan his son, the sacred records do not inform us; nor do we know that profane history, notwithstanding its many conjectures, gives any *definite* account of this outrage. It was in opposition to the revealed arrangement which assigned Europe to the descendants of Japheth, Africa to the descendants of Ham, and Asia to the descendants of Shem. Many of Ham's descendants did actually plant themselves in Africa; but there were at least ten powerful tribes who were the immediate descendants of Canaan, who established themselves in the Holy Land. This favored and selected land had

now been, for centuries, in the possession of that proscribed and accursed race of whom it had been predicted that they should be "the servant of servants" to the posterity of Shem and Japheth.

These Canaanitish tribes were not merely thus lawless usurpers of the Holy Land, but they were a corrupt and corrupting people. They had cast off the worship and fear of the only living and true God, and had become abject idolaters, paying that homage which is due to God alone, to gods of gold, and silver, and wood, and stone; to four-footed beasts and creeping things. When the Scriptures speak of nations as *idolatrous*, they comprise in that designation all that is atheistic and erroneous in theory, and all that is cruel, immoral, impure, and degraded in practice. Idolatry is just that system of iniquity to which the depraved heart most easily attaches itself, because it justifies, and even requires every form of wickedness under the sanctions of religious worship. Obscenity and blood are and ever have been its great characteristics. The grossest immoralities find a place in its groves and temples; human sacrifices smoke on its altars; and young children and infants, by scores and thousands, amid the frantic and deafening shouts of the worshipers, are made to pass through its fires. An idolatrous temple resembles some dark cavern on the confines of hell; nor is it wonderful that, in speaking

of its rites, the Apostle should say, "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to *devils*, and not to God." These were the crimes for which God had already brought a flood of waters upon the Old World; for which he had rained fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain; and for which he had overthrown Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea.

Yet such were these nations of Canaan—total apostates from the religion of the true God—degraded by every polluting vice and unnatural cruelty that could outrage humanity, and so matured and putrescent in wickedness, that, in the strong language of the Scriptures, the very soil they occupied was sick at heart, and "the land vomited out its inhabitants." Nor had any thing in the history of the past served either to instruct or restrain them. In defiance of what God had done in Egypt and "the field of Zoan," at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, and of what they themselves had seen him do in the miraculous passage of Israel over Jordan, they remained incorrigible, and their iniquity was full.

It has been the method of the divine government in every age of the world, sooner or later, to overthrow and destroy such nations as these. And who will question the rectitude or the wisdom of this procedure? If there were no God in heaven,

and blind chance governed the destiny of the nations, the conquerors would not so often take the place of the conquered, nor national wickedness so often prepare the way for national destruction. But "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth;" and when he, as he has so often done, exterminates one nation and plants another and a better in its place, who does not rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and honor him as the Ruler among the nations?

The nations of Canaan had been treated by Him with great *lenity and forbearance*. It will be recollected that after he had called Abraham from the idolatrous nations of his forefathers, and given him a covenant title to the Holy Land, the reason he assigned for not at once putting him in possession of the land was, that the iniquity of the Amorites and the other idolatrous nations which then occupied it, was "not yet full." *Four hundred years* must yet pass away before they would so fill up the measure of their iniquity as to be ripe for destruction. He is "long-suffering and slow to anger;" but there is a limit to his forbearance, and a limit to the wickedness of men, beyond which it may no longer be tolerated. He might, with illustrious justice, have extirpated the Canaanites long before; but his justice is not the only perfection of his nature brought to view in his

conduct toward them. It was for the honor of his *forbearance* that he should wait long before he struck the fatal blow, and therefore his patience toward them was lengthened out to long-suffering. During these four hundred years he did not leave himself without witness, in that he gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. He was all the while doing them good and giving them the opportunity of repentance. But they lived only to cumber the ground, to oppose the interests of true religion, to make war upon his people, to become the stronghold of idolatry and wickedness, and to propagate and extend them from generation to generation. God had "endured with much long-suffering these vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." They had lived to people the world of perdition long enough; the time had come to stop the stream that was pouring into it from those incorrigible nations. They were no longer fit to remain on the earth. They had been tried, and the result showed that they were continually growing worse instead of better. It would have been an injury to Israel and to the world if they had been spared, and it would have been of no benefit to themselves or their children. Not only did they deserve to die, but the time had come when they must be cut off, and the divine justice become the more conspicuous, for this long delay.

Such was the character and condition of the Canaanites when this commission was given.

Let us, then, in the next place, advert to the *commission itself*, with which Joshua was intrusted.

Never was mortal man intrusted with such a commission, and on so extensive a scale, either before or since. The God of heaven has various ways of chastising and overthrowing incorrigibly wicked nations, and has a right to employ just such agencies and just such agents as he judges best. Sometimes he employs the pestilence, sometimes the storm and the earthquake, sometimes consuming fires and floods, and sometimes the exterminating sword—cutting off young and old, infant and suckling, man and beast, and sweeping them to an indiscriminate grave. Ordinarily, he does this by his *providence*, and without any revealed *command*. The flood, the fire, the pestilence, the foe, are his servants; they come and go at the bidding of his providence, and perform their work of death under the control of natural and moral causes. They receive their commission from him, and, with the exception of those instances in which men themselves engage in this work of death, the responsibility is his, and does not belong to the mere physical agents which are thus unconsciously employed. The commission

of Joshua, as a conscious and voluntary agent, was peculiar, and can be rightly estimated only when we consider the source from whence it supernaturally originated, and the authority by which it was enforced.

When the intimation was given to Moses that he should not conduct Israel over Jordan, he prayed that "the God of the spirits of all flesh" would set a man over the congregation who might become their leader, that they "be not as sheep which have no shepherd." In answer to this request, God directed him to "Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom was the spirit of wisdom," upon whom Moses was required "to lay his hands," and give him a charge in the presence of the congregation.

In compliance with this direction, Moses publicly ordained Joshua as his successor in office, and then said unto him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of a good courage; for *thou* must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it." On the arrival of the Israelites at the river Jordan, God himself also personally invested Joshua with this high office, and in the following solemn form and words: "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, *thou* and all this people unto the land which I give unto them,

even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, *that* have I given to you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites unto the great sea, toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses so will I be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage; for unto this people shalt *thou divide for an inheritance* the land which I swore unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according *to all the law* which Moses my servant commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand, or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou may mayest observe to do all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Such was the *general commission*; but it was made more definite both by antecedent and sub-

sequent revelations. It was to put the Israelites in possession of the Holy Land, not peaceably, but by *exterminating or driving out* the idolatrous nations. Yet were there some merciful and remarkable conditions annexed to this exterminating commission in that it cautiously protected the *adjacent nations*, and did not extend to *all* the nations of Canaan. The land of Edom, or Idumea, bordering on Moab, was definitely exempted from the exterminating edict. The Edomites had provoked the children of Israel by refusing to allow them to pass through their land when they first came out of Egypt; and it might be supposed that in the days of their triumph the Israelites would not be slow to avenge the injury. But God said to Israel, "Meddle not with them, for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; for I have given Mount Seir unto *Esau* for a possession." The land of Moab also, though it belonged principally to the Amorites, one of the most powerful and warlike of the Canaanitish tribes, they were not permitted to invade. "Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle; for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession." The same command was given in relation to the Ammonites, and for the same reason. The nations of Canaan themselves they

were directed not to destroy until they had first offered them terms of peace. The peremptory order to them was, "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim *peace* unto it. And it shall be if they make thee an answer of peace, and open to thee, then it shall be that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee and shall serve thee." There was not a single city or tribe which they were allowed to exterminate that did not refuse these terms of amity, and appear in arms against them. Those tribes which even appeared in arms against them, with the exception of the seven devoted nations, they were not permitted to exterminate, but only to "smite every *male* thereof with the edge of the sword." And even the seven devoted nations were to be destroyed gradually, thus giving them the opportunity to reform or escape, as many of them did, or become the tributaries of Israel. "The Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee, by *little and little*; thou mayest not consume them *at once*, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee." This command was so rigidly observed that the Scriptures themselves instruct us, that, notwithstanding the conquests of Joshua, the entire land of Canaan was not subdued until the reigns of David and Solomon.

But, with these limitations, the commission of

Joshua was absolute and peremptory to *extirpate and destroy*. He had no alternative but to put the inhabitants to the sword—man, woman, and child, and even the beasts of the field, and its trees that “be not for meat.” He had no more discretion in this matter than the whirlwind, or the pestilence, and no more responsibility. The act was God’s and not Joshua’s, nor Israel’s. They had reason to tremble only when they hesitated to fulfill the edict of Him who has said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” The language of the command is as explicit as it can be. “Thou shalt save nothing alive that *breatheth*; but thou shalt utterly destroy them, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that they teach you not to do after all their abominations which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God.” “Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them.” “And thou shalt *consume* all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee.”

This was a very *difficult* commission to execute, and on more accounts than one. The country which Joshua was to subdue extended from Mount Lebanon on the north, to the wilderness of Arabia on the south, the river Jordan on the east, and on the west to the borders of the Mediterranean Sea. The nations that possessed it

were warlike and powerful nations, and composed some of the most formidable races in the then known world. The Philistines, the Phenicians, the Sidonians, were all of Canaanitish origin, and made common cause with the enemies of God's people. The "Canaanites that dwelt in the valley had chariots of iron, both they who were of Bethshean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel." They had also strongly-fortified and walled cities—"cities walled up to heaven." The land was divided into provinces, and governed by petty kings who were inured to war, bound together by alliances both offensive and defensive, and ready for aggression or defense. Moses more than once speaks of them as "nations stronger and more numerous" than the Israelites. In numbers and military resources they far surpassed the infant nation of the Hebrews, whose training had been in the abjectness of Egyptian bondage, and who had just come from the toil, the suffering, and the depression of their forty years' march through the Arabian desert, and bringing with them little experience and less of the munitions of war. The warriors able to bear arms who first came out of Egypt were all, but two solitary individuals, cut off in the wilderness; their children only remained. The Israelites themselves were greatly intimidated by the apprehension of invading such a people,

and in the first report of those who were sent to reconnoiter the land, their hearts sunk within them, and they resolved almost unanimously to return into Egypt. It was an enterprise that required great *courage* and indomitable perseverance, if it were only for the inequality of the parties to be engaged in this exterminating conflict. They do not seem to have had the courage to undertake the work. God had laid the burden upon them, but they did not feel able to bear it, and endeavored to throw it off. They required the constant stimulus of heavenly counsels and Joshua's inspiring words to induce them to go forward. The condition of their success was that they should be punctual in their observance of all the laws of Moses; and they were a disobedient people. Such was their fickle and pusillanimous spirit, that Joshua himself was greatly tried by it, and not unfrequently greatly depressed. He was also not a little embarrassed by their disobedience to God in their *conduct of the war*. They would not listen to his voice, and instead of following his directions, followed their own fancies, and consulted their own selfish ends. They spared those whom God told them not to spare, and took rich spoils of captured cities which he told them not to take. And then they would be defeated and slain by their adversaries, and "their hearts would melt and become as water." There were

Achans in the camp that troubled Israel, and whose conduct made Joshua and the elders fall to the earth upon their faces before the ark and exclaim, "Alas, O Lord, what shall we say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!"

Not only was the commission a difficult one to be executed; it was a most *fearful* commission. Where there was no relenting on the part of the invaded, it was to *destroy* the inhabitants without *distinction of age or sex*, unless specially restrained by a divine command; and this was fearful work. It was a fearful command to Abraham, when God said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains that I shall tell thee of." And though they were not paternal emotions, like Abraham's, that were revolted by this command to Israel, they were humane and gentle emotions, to which the Israelites were not strangers. It is true that they were not strangers to the severity and rigor of penal law. They had indeed been disciplined by their own penal code to deeds of death against incorrigible wickedness. Their own law bound them to inflict a similar punishment on any of *their own nation* who should forsake the God of heaven and apostatize to idolatry. They knew well the inflexible rigor of this their own law. The idolater was to be put to death; the secret seducer to idolatry was to

share the same fate. The idolatrous city was to be burnt with fire and all its inhabitants put to the sword, and it should never again be built. No eye was to spare, and no heart was to show pity to the Hebrew idolater. Yet, disciplined as the nation had been by such a law as this, when they were called to this wholesale execution of it upon the seven nations of Canaan, it need not surprise us if they felt it to be fearful work. It *was* a terrible commission. Deserved and necessary as the sentence was, it was a terrible one to execute. It was not avarice and the love of plunder that could stimulate them to such a work as this; it was not lust; it was not ferociousness and cruelty. They were a peaceful, harmless people, and for nothing is their law more distinguished, notwithstanding its penal exactions, than for its kindness to the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger, and those tender and sentimental injunctions the design of which was to form their moral sensibilities by a standard at once the most refined and honorable. God himself calls it a "terrible thing" which he required of them, and because it so countervailed and shocked their own sensibilities. So fearful was it that they were driven to it by necessity, and scourged to it by the fear of severe judgments if they refused. It will be recollected that on one occasion they refused to obey the command; and what was the

consequence? Why the Shekinah appeared in its brightness, and God spake to them out of the cloud of his glory and said, "As I live, all this evil congregation that are gathered together against me, in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die." On hearing this sentence they wept and relented, and said, "We have sinned against the Lord: *we will go up and fight* as the Lord commanded us."

Such was the commission given to Israel's great military leader as he was about to invade the ancient inhabitants of the Holy Land. It was a well-defined and restricted commission, and it was a difficult and fearful commission to execute.

It is not, therefore, unimportant to inquire into the manner in which this commission was executed.

It *was* executed faithfully, without transcending the powers of the commission on the one hand, and without any relaxation of the rigor of the exterminating sentence on the other. Joshua was a great and good man, a veteran soldier, and a true and tried friend of Israel and Israel's God. He was one of the two who "followed the Lord wholly," and who of all the generations that came out of Egypt were allowed to enter the Land of Promise. He is first introduced to us when he was little more than forty years of age. When

he formally received this commission at the outer edge of the wilderness, and in sight of the Holy Land, he was somewhat more than fourscore, yet had he but just entered upon his great work. No sooner had he received the appointment as Israel's leader, and his explicit instructions were put into his hands, than he addressed himself with great seriousness and earnestness to prepare himself and his followers for the execution of their trust. First sending his aids through the host, with orders to prepare to cross the Jordan within three days, he directed the people to follow the ark of God through the emptied channel of the river to the opposite shore. When this was done, he circumcised the whole congregation of Israel in Gilgal, and called upon them to celebrate the Passover. The generation that came out of Egypt were all subjected to the rite of circumcision, and solemnly kept the Passover on that memorable night when they left Egypt.. The generation born in the wilderness, and who were now to be conducted to their promised inheritance, had not been circumcised: the Passover also had been neglected in the wilderness. These were the two signal badges of the visible people of God—the former denoting man's depraved and polluted state by sin, and his need of being regenerated, even in infancy; his original sin, and the circumcision of the heart, by which it is taken away:

the latter, his deliverance from the curse by blood, the blood of the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot, taken out of the flock, and in all things made like unto his brethren, the great Sufferer enduring the fierceness of God's anger burning against him.

We are no advocates of war, nor do we believe that the spirit of Christianity is a martial spirit. There has been very little *piety* in the wars which have desolated the earth; yet must we believe that Christianity can put on the martial spirit when God and duty call for it. There was piety in the bold mountaineers of Switzerland when they descended from their glaciers to resist the invasions of Charles of Burgundy, and when they rose from their knees to prove themselves invincible and victorious. There was piety in the tent of Col. Gardiner, and prayer too, on the night before he fell at the battle of Preston Pans. There was piety in the tent of Washington; and but for the strong influence of religious principle that miracle of Independence never would have been wrought by our fathers. And there was piety at the battle of Alma, when the light dragoons, under Sir George Brown, about an hour before they came within the range of the enemy's guns, requested that a short pause of eight minutes might be allowed them for the purpose of offering up prayer to the God of battles. As the invaders, and ultimate

possessors of that land of promise, the Israelites, this people of the living God, were not to go as *so many heathens* ; but bearing these marks of God's people, with the emblems of purity upon their persons and the blood of sprinkling upon their tents. They were to go as a religious people, for religious purposes, as the descendants of the woman's seed to make war upon the seed of the serpent, and under the banner of the Lord of Hosts and the God of the armies of Israel whom the heathen had defied. They needed thoughtfulness, they needed prayer, they required the faith and hopes of personal piety and all the sanctions which religion and the institutions of religion, and the priests of Israel, and the ark of God, and the presence of God, and the cloud of his glory, could give them. Among the first things which their venerable leader did, therefore, was to roll away the reproach of their paganism, and to seal them as God's visible and covenant people. This service so met the divine approbation that "it came to pass when they had done circumcising all the people, that the Lord said unto Joshua, this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." The manna ceased that day, and they did eat the old corn of the land. And then there was a marvellous vision and a marvellous revelation made to Joshua: "There stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand."

A greater than Joshua was there. "And he said, As captain of the Lord's host am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship." And Joshua loosed his shoes from off his feet, for the place whereon he stood was holy. It was holy ground, and he was ready for his work.

Nor did he delay to perform it. He first invested *Jericho*, the city of palm-trees, and one of the oldest cities in Palestine, and utterly destroyed all that "was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword," save Rahab and her father's house; and "he burnt the city with fire." He then invested *Ai*, and, by the divine command, destroyed every thing but the cattle, which they took for themselves, and "burnt the city and made it an heap for ever." He then attacked the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, took these kings from a cave, and brought them out and hanged them. After this, he attacked the combined forces of the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Hivite kings, and discomfited them. Thus he did successively to the seven proscribed nations, slaying them with great slaughter, sometimes putting their kings to the sword, and sometimes hanging them upon a tree, "thirty-one kings in all," until he smote the inhabitants of the hills

and the valleys, the cities and the interiors, "and the land had rest from war."

The wars in which he was thus engaged occupied full sixteen years, nor is it unnatural to suppose that not a few of these invaded and terrified people escaped to the surrounding countries, and, if not slain, were "driven out." Such was the fact. Many of them were driven into Africa, and there their descendants, the distant progeny of Ham and Canaan, remain to the present day. Dr. Winder, in his "History of Knowledge," affirms that, in the vicinity of Tangier, on the African coast, west of the Straits of Gibraltar, there were two pillars of stone, with the following inscription, in Phenician characters: "We are those who fled from the face of Joshua the son of Nun, the robber." This fact is attested by Procopius, a celebrated writer of the sixth century, who expatiates upon the evidence that many of the Gergashites, Jebusites, and other Canaanitish tribes took refuge in Africa. Dr. Jamieson, of Edinburgh, in commenting upon this testimony, says, "Whatever may be thought of it, it is confirmed by different writers. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in Africa, testifies that if any of the boors in the neighborhood of Hippo or Carthage was asked who he was, or of what country, he answered that he was a Canaanite. Eusebius also asserts that the Canaanites who were routed by Joshua led colonies into Africa, and

settled at Tripoli. Mela, the geographer, who flourished in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, and who had been born in the neighborhood of Tangiers, admits that its inhabitants were Phenicians, or the ancient inhabitants of Palestine. The Greek poet, Nonnus, assures us that Cadmus the Phenician made a very successful expedition into these parts of Africa. And Philistius of Syracuse, a writer of good authority, who lived above three hundred and fifty years before Christ, relates that the first traces of Carthage were owing to Zorus and Carchedon, two Syrians or Phenicians, thirty years before the destruction of Troy." The original curse of Noah rested upon the Canaanites. Those who were not put to the sword by Joshua became a scattered people, some of them "being exterminated at Tyre, Thebes, and Carthage, by the Greeks and Romans, who were the descendants of Japheth," and some of them still dwelling in that land of swarthy darkness, or hewers of wood and drawers of water to other nations, and standing memorials of their ancient idolatry and Joshua's conquests.

Joshua fulfilled his commission and his day and died, and Israel became possessors of the land where the pagan feet of the descendants of Ham and Canaan had no right to tread.

Infidels have amused themselves and abused the world by their sarcastic reproaches of the

character and conduct of Joshua in thus exterminating the political existence of the nations of Canaan, and cutting off, or driving out the inhabitants. To judge of this matter rightly, we must take the scriptural account of it as it is, and place ourselves in the position of Joshua, as it respects his Maker, the Israelitish nation, and the idolatrous tribes of Canaan. This we hope to do even more satisfactorily than we have already done, by adverting more at large to the principles which governed the conduct of Joshua in executing this commission. As this constitutes the more practical and important part of our inquiries, it must be deferred to the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

Joshua.

THE character of men is often decided by a single action, or a single course of conduct, so expressive and so in keeping with the whole picture, that in portraying and grouping the series, you exhibit the man. This is most true of the distinguished individual of whom we spake in our last chapter, as Israel's leader in the conquest of the Holy Land. The character of Joshua cannot be made to appear, as it is, without inquiring into the *principles of his conduct, and the reasons and motives by which he was influenced in thus carrying into effect this commission.* This is the last topic to which we proposed to direct the reader's attention, and which we proceed to consider in the present chapter.

We begin by remarking, that Joshua was influenced by a *supreme regard to the command of God.*

There is but one God, and one supreme Law-giver in the universe. When he gave the law to Israel from Sinai, he prefaced it with these memorable words: "*I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before ME.*" His command is every where the infallible *rule and standard of right*, whatever it may require, and whatever it may forbid. To all who question the rectitude of his commands, his language is, "Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker! Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God!" The mere fact that he requires a prescribed course of conduct is of itself *conclusive* evidence that it is *right*. It is as impossible for him to command that which is *wrong* as it is for him to err in judgment, or to err in heart. Perfect rectitude is a beautiful attribute when contemplated in the character of the angels around his throne, and in the spirits of just men made perfect; yet these are but streams from his ocean-fullness, and rays from the uncreated and unblemished sun. There is no such sanction and support of rectitude in heaven, or on the earth—no such incentive and allurements to it, and no such reward and crown, as that found in his approbation of what is right, and his disapprobation of what is wrong. No sentiment more completely possesses his holy mind than his per-

fect horror and detestation and disgust of sin. The opposition, the revolting which subsists between light and darkness, life and death, is incomparably less than that which subsists between God and sin. "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!"

When he therefore commanded Joshua to execute this fearful commission, it was enough for this obedient servant of the Most High, that *God had commanded it*. Fearful as the commission was to execute, he was urged to execute it by all the principles of religion, and all that bound him to his Maker. It was not for him to sit in judgment upon the wisdom of the divine procedure; to hesitate where God had decided, or to inquire into the reasons of the edict, even were they ever so inexplicable to his own mind. God had already told him that one reason of it was that the Hebrews might be filled with horror at the character and vices of the nations they were thus required to exterminate; another, that he designed by their conquests over a foe so superior, to bring "the fear of them and the dread of them" upon all who heard the report of their wondrous triumphs; and more than all, that they were nations which, for their seducing and corrupting wickedness, must no longer be tolerated on the earth, much less as usurpers of the land which by covenant and by oath had been given to the chil-

dren of Israel. Joshua did not inquire into these reasons; God gave them unsolicited and gratuitously. Joshua no more inquired into them than Abraham inquired into the reasons why God commanded him to offer up his son for a burnt-offering. The father of the faithful no sooner heard God's voice than he made haste to fulfill the divine command, and bound Isaac upon the altar, and stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his *son*; and for this he was called "the friend of God." The friends of God *obey* him; if they are not enough his friends to obey him, they are no friends. Love is obedient; "if ye love me keep my commandments." Repentance is obedient; it brings forth "fruits meet for repentance." Faith is obedient; it demonstrates its genuineness and strength by its works. "Not every one that makes professions of piety," that "saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Joshua was one of those of whom it is written, "Blessed are they which *do his commandments*, that they may have a right to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the gates into the city." It is a noble trait in his character that he obeyed the command of God, difficult and revolting as it was to all his natural sensibilities. That solemn demand, "HAVE NOT I COMMANDED THEE; be strong and of a good courage," gave

grace the victory over nature, and protected him from the malediction, "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood!" Few trials could have furnished more decisive evidence of his religious character, or of his fitness to be Israel's Leader. Leader as he was, he felt himself to be but a subaltern under the Great Captain of their salvation, ready to understand and hearken to his word, and prompt and cheerful to do his bidding. This was the first and motive-principle of his conduct.

Allied to this, there was *a humble sense of his entire dependence upon God*. It is no unusual thing for God to lay burdens upon his people, which, unaided and alone, they are not able to bear. He did upon Abraham, upon Moses, and upon Paul; he has laid them upon all his friends in every age of the world, and lays them still. Even in the everyday concerns of their salvation, all their sufficiency is of God. The duties which he requires of them must be performed. They are moral duties, and necessarily imply moral obligation. They are commanded duties, and it is at their peril to neglect them. Yet they cannot be performed except by his imparted grace, and their dependence upon his grace is their great stimulus to effort and their only hope. His unvarying precept is, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, *for* it is God who worketh in you to will and to

do of his good pleasure." Much more does he intend that this dependence shall be felt, when he calls them to important services for his church, and allows them to take an active part in establishing and extending his kingdom in the world. God then designs to bring himself emphatically into view and to magnify his own great name. "He is a jealous God ;" he forms a just estimate of his own character, claims, and station ; he is concerned for his own honor, and "will not give his glory to another." He requires his ministers and his people, in all their individual and associated efforts, "in the name of the Lord to set up their banners," and upon those banners to inscribe the truth, "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." This is but a fitting and proper regard to be paid to God by those he thus employs in his service ; nor can, nor may he be indifferent to the manner in which they are affected toward him. And the more they thus honor him, the more do they realize the truth and preciousness of the promise, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee," and the more do they prove that "his strength is made perfect in their weakness."

Never was this great principle of the Divine procedure more clearly or more fully demonstrated than in the conduct of God toward the ancient Hebrews, from the calling of Abraham down to their subjugation of the Holy Land under Joshua.

If we advert to the facts connected with this whole history, we cannot fail to perceive *how little* was actually accomplished by *them*, and *how much* by the interposing and mighty arm of Jehovah. They were a nation of slaves, few in number compared with their oppressors, and with those whom they were required to extirpate, and weak in strength and resources except in the God of battles. When they were first brought out of Egypt, it was not "by their own sword, or their own bow," but by "signs and wonders," and God's "outstretched arm," and by the death of all Egypt's first-born, without any agency of their own. When they had just escaped their pursuers, and were hemmed in by mountains on either side, the relentless foe in their rear, and the Red Sea before them, all they were required to do was to "stand still and see the *salvation of God*." It was an unearthly power that conducted them through the sea, while their enemies sank as lead in the deep waters. It was an unearthly symbol and glory, assuming the form of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, that led them through the desert. It was manna from heaven that fed them, and water that flowed miraculously from the rock that followed them, where, without it, no water was. And when they were confronted by enemies, the sun and the moon stood still in their habitation, and God rained upon their foes "great

hail-stones out of heaven," until they were destroyed. When, after Joshua had led them across the Jordan, they stood before Jericho, all they had to do was to compass the city seven times, and blow their rams' horns, and at Israel's shouting the walls of the city fell prostrate, "so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and took the city." And when, in subsequent periods of their history, mighty hosts and combined kings came out against them, the battle was decided in their favor, sometimes by merely breaking their pitchers, and holding up their lamps, and shouting "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon;" sometimes by the single arm of a woman; and sometimes by the simple shepherd boy's sling and stone. Thus they seem to have been little more than unconscious agents, and to have been the mere means by which God brought himself to view as their deliverer, and the observable indices of his mighty power. So Joshua thought, so he felt, and so he acted. When he would encourage and inspirit the people, his tonic language was, "The Lord shall fight for you." God himself gives emphasis to this great fact in his Word; and when the sacred writers celebrate Israel's victories, their language is, "To *him* who smote great kings, and slew famous kings, and gave their land for an heritage to Israel his servant; for his mercy endureth for ever!" This is a les-

son which God often read to that ancient people. "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the *Lord their God*, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen." "Thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst thy people. For they got not the land in possession by *their own sword*, neither did their *own arm* save them; but *thy* right hand and *thine* arm, and the light of *thy* countenance, because though hadst a favor unto them." "I saw the tents of Cush in affliction; and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. *Thy bow* was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. *Thou* wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed." Joshua was God's anointed one for this high service. Not one word of self-confidence or self-glorying escapes his lips. When Moses vainly boasted at the rock in Horeb, and was shut out of the promised land because he did not *sanctify God* in the presence of the congregation; Joshua was silent. He had a courageous and resolute spirit within him, but it was a spirit that depended on the Divine all-sufficiency and veracity. This was the sentiment in his bosom when he led Israel to the war, and when he divided to them the land. This was the character of his work, and this the character of the man.

A third element in his character was, that, notwithstanding the difficulties which attended the execution of his commission, he *had entire confidence in God that the work intrusted to him could be accomplished.* It is a great point gained in a religious cause not to be discouraged by difficulties. Discouragement often drives men to relaxed thoughtfulness and negligence, to forgetfulness of God, to sin and perdition. "Strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth to life." There is no victory without conflict, and there is no conflict without opposing foes. When once a man is resolved, like Joshua, to be the servant of God, and come what will and cost what it may, to do his will, he may look for the worst which the world, the flesh, and the devil can do, to oppose his progress. This bold man of God undertook to execute the commission with which he was intrusted, not only as a commanded service, and one for which he felt his absolute dependence, but with the promised assurance, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee; be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Just conceive of a man of faith and prayer, and unwavering confidence in the divine faithfulness, entering upon such an enterprise with

such an assurance as this, and what place is there for discouragement? So Joshua reasoned; and, though he saw the difficulties that lie in his path, and none felt more deeply than he that it was only by God's mighty hand that the work could be accomplished; he was as much a stranger to depression and fear as he was to self-dependance and presumption. He believed God's word, and was perfectly satisfied that he would fulfill his promise. If, after having received the command, he could have entertained any lingering doubt as to the rectitude of his course, as uncalled for or cruel, this promise of the divine presence and favor assured him that the God of the spirits of all flesh would never countenance an enterprise that could compromise his rectitude. God himself would stand by while the fearful work was being done, and would still say to him, "Be strong and of a good courage." His faith was strong, and therefore his courage and his expectations of triumph were strong, though mountains were to be made a plain, and a highway was to be made in the desert, and encamped hosts were to be defeated, and rivers become dry, that the ransomed of the Lord might pass over.

Confidence of success in a good cause is the principal ingredient in all true courage. It is a law of man's nature that fear and despondency unnerve his efforts. Preëminent courage requires

sanguine expectations of success. Fire can no more live without air than courageous effort without strong hope and confidence of successful achievement. Where the opposition to be encountered is formidable, and the object to be attained is worthy of unflinching effort, and great sacrifices are called for in order to attain it, the courageous mind that aims at accomplishing it must be buoyed up by a well-nigh assured confidence of triumph. And this was Joshua's state of mind. He *needed* to be a bold man; he *was* bold because he had implicit confidence in God. The fickleness and faint-heartedness of Israel did not discourage him; he was not discouraged by the treachery and fraud of the Gibeonites, nor intimidated by the combined power of the Canaanitish kings. He never retired from his post; he never shrank from the conflict in disgust; he was never tempted to abandon it as unavailing and hopeless. There was no misgiving of heart, or purpose, or effort, until the enemies of Israel were defeated and the land had rest from war. Israel was intrenched within the impregnable fortress of the divine faithfulness. "God was for them, and none could be against them." He who "is wonderful in council and excellent in working," had enlisted all his perfections for a glorious termination of their conflicts, though "the everlasting mountains be scattered," and the perpetual hills bow."

Once more ; it entered deeply into the principles by which Joshua was actuated, that *the object of his commission was of such immeasurable importance to the church and the world*. There are movements in divine providence, sometimes affecting individuals, sometimes associations of men, and more frequently the nations of the earth, that are designed to tell upon the future and to extend their influence upon all the coming generations of time. Facts almost unnumbered, recorded on the page of history, might be easily recited in illustration of this remark. If the *law of progress* is the law of social existence, it is because it is *his* law who governs the world for the sake of his Church ; and who, by all the changes in human affairs, and all the rise and fall of empires, and the extirpation of some and the planting of others in their place, is advancing the cause of truth and holiness in the earth, and deciding the destiny of unborn millions, not for time only, but for eternity. These wise and benevolent ends are indeed often promoted gradually, and almost imperceptibly ; but not unfrequently are they secured by violent convulsions both in the moral and political world, by the battle of the warrior and by garments rolled in blood. The existing conflict which in our own day threatens to involve all Europe and Asia, doubtful as its immediate issues are, will, beyond all question, be overruled

and directed by God to this result, and will have an important place in overthrowing the false religions by which the world has been so long deluded and enslaved, and in hastening the time when the Lord God shall be to his people, "a place of broad rivers and streams in which shall go no galley with oars, neither gallant ships shall pass thereby." And so of past wars and past convulsions, involving, as many of them have done, great questions of truth, and right, and liberty of conscience, and the existence and advancement of Christian nations on the earth, and the melting away of its savage and idolatrous tribes. Yet what were the brightest of these golden eras, and of how little consequence to the world, compared with Joshua's conquest of the Holy Land! Just imagine to yourselves the utter failure of Joshua's undertaking, and this single conquest of Canaan stricken out of existence as a fable; and what would have been the moral condition of the world at the present hour! No Bible; no Sabbath; no Saviour; no hope; the whole world lying in wickedness and without God! The highest commission ever intrusted to mortal men was intrusted to Moses and Joshua. The nation which Joshua conducted to that promised inheritance, contained the religion, the laws, the liberties, the salvation of the human race. The germ of all its hopes was the vine which was

brought out of Egypt and transplanted in the mountains and valleys once swarming with the wild boar of the forest. God thought it a high and honorable commission with which he thus intrusted this his chosen servant. And though the adult generation that came out of Egypt did not think so, but declined the service ; for this very refusal they were forbidden to prosecute it, and from the very verge of the land were told to go back and wander forty years in the desert, and leave their carcasses in the wilderness. Their children, the generation that were permitted to possess it, appreciated the high service, and so did their venerable Leader. Under the divine guidance, they were prosecuting an enterprise of everlasting interest to themselves and to all future time. Not one of their number felt the weight of this thought more deeply than Joshua. His eye was upon the future. Distant things interested him. He had been permitted "to go over that Jordan" and see the Lebanon which Moses was allowed to behold only from the top of Pisgah ; and when he had crossed the river, he felt that he stood upon holy ground, and could live and die for realities which distant generations were to possess. His feet trode the soil which was promised to Abraham and his seed ; nor should the usurping and idolatrous Canaanites any longer possess it. What must have been the emotions of that noble man

as he stood before the walls of Jericho and saw them fall ! and as he went from conquest to conquest till the land had rest, and he was employed in dividing it among Israel's twelve tribes !

He had been the witness of all that God had done in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. The fervor of his youth, the vigor of his manhood, the maturity and experience of his old age, had all been consecrated to that blessed purpose which had itself bound him and Israel to their hallowed destiny among the nations. He was a happy man, for his mind was habitually filled with the grandest subjects of thought, and "endured as seeing him who is invisible." He was a happy man, for his work was done, and his work was God's. As we have already remarked, when he crossed the Jordan he was eighty-four years of age ; at the close of the war he had reached his hundredth year, when the settled tribes assigned to him, as the residence and repose of his old age, the city of Timnath-Serah, on a range of high lands called Mount Ephraim, running through one of the most fertile and eligible sections of the Land of Promise. He lived in retirement ten years, not uselessly, but as the counsellor, and the honored, if not active, leader of his people. Not long before his death he assembled the people, and gave them his last counsels. You will find them at length in the

twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of the book of Joshua; nor need we hesitate in affirming that this farewell address stands second to no document the world has seen. This is one of the most interesting scenes of his life. See that venerable man—that warrior for truth and righteousness against God's enemies and Israel's—that old hero, standing with uncovered head before the thousands who had been his companions in arms and in triumph, and, to the last, forgetful of every thing but God and Israel. Read those parting words, and mark his rapid review of the men and the scenes that were past. How many bright names and bright scenes, and not a few mournful ones also, must have risen up to his view? How many happy memories, and how many that he would fain have obliterated? His race was run. He was soon to die and be forgotten. No longer would his voice be heard in their tents, or on the battle-field, or in the Lord's tabernacle. For the last time he uttered the words, "Take good heed unto yourselves that ye love the Lord your God. Fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth." And then having exacted from them a promise that they would serve the Lord and obey his voice, he "took a great stone and set it up there under an oak that was *by the sanctuary of the Lord*, and said unto all the people, Behold this *stone* shall be a witness unto us, lest ye deny

your God!" So "Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance. And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, *died*, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance, in Timnath-Serah, which is Mount Ephraim."

What a life! what a death! And they exemplify to us,

1. In the first place, *the conflicts and the triumphs of the church of God* in every age of the world. The true and spiritual Church, in her embodied capacity, is God's great army for the conquest of this idolatrous world to the dominion of his anointed Son. This earth is given to Jesus Christ as truly as was the Holy Land to the descendants of Abraham. The decree was long ago declared, "Ask of me, my Son, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." It has been accomplished only in part. Notwithstanding great and mighty nations have been subdued, and submitted themselves to Messiah's scepter, "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Jehovah-Jesus, Zion's divine and glorious leader, her exalted, spiritual Joshua, still holds the commission in his hands, and is even now on his way to complete his conquests. He bears no sword of terror except toward those

who appear in arms against him and obdurately refuse his published terms of peace. His command is, that his gospel be preached to every creature, and his object is to “judge the poor of the people, to save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor.” In this sacred warfare his church is called to coöperate, and in so doing to act out the same principles by which Joshua was governed in his subjugation of the Holy Land:—The same obedience to the divine will—the same dependence upon God’s omnipotent providence and grace—the same confidence that, arduous as the work is, it shall be accomplished, and that the spiritual Israel, still under the guidance of the pillar and the cloud, shall march on, through seas and deserts, through emptied rivers and prostrated walls, until the Canaanite shall no more be found in the land. O what glorious triumphs are those for which our sanctified deliverer *died*, and for which his church is permitted to *live*! Inspired prophets never rose to the altitude of their sweet visions but when they saw this coming glory, nor did they ever sing so sweetly as when their harps announced this year of Jubilee.

2. The character of Joshua also exemplifies the conflicts and triumphs of *individual believers*. Individual believers in every age of the world have their own personal conflicts; and it is a severe

and deadly strife. Every true Israelite finds his bitterest foe within his own bosom. When he first puts on the armor he lays his account with enemies from without; but let him remain on the field of battle half a century, and he finds that he has another sort of enemy to deal with than the world and the devil. Sufficiently powerful indeed are these last, and demand more than human valor to overcome them; but they are not the covered, wakeful, deceiving, and rabid Canaanite within. Here is the conflict; and hence the exhortation so often repeated, to watch, to pray, to strive, to wrestle, to run, to fight. The subjugation of his sins is the great business of the Christian's life. This is his great warfare; and but for the strength that is made perfect in his weakness, not only might he well be cast down, but must be destroyed. We have been almost tempted to smile when we have recited these words of God so often repeated to Joshua, "ONLY BE THOU STRONG AND OF A GOOD COURAGE!" O, there is a fitness, a beauty, a force in them which ye may one day know. Yes, thou sinning and thou discouraged one, "only be thou strong and of a good courage," and thou shalt have the victory. The very fact that you find it a *warfare* shows that it is a *holy* war; and because it is a holy war you shall not be defeated in the conflict. No soul is vanquished that fears and prays. That deceitful

and rabid foe—or rather that embattled legion of foes, which you find within, are not less the foes of your adorable Master; and he has said that they *must die*.

“ Yes, my Redeemer, they *shall die* ;
My heart has so decreed ;
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made *my Saviour bleed*.”

The “ Captain of our salvation” has done and suffered enough to give us the victory. “ All power is given to him in heaven and on earth,” that even we, sinners as we are, may be “ more than conquerors through him that loved us.” It may not be at once that the victory is achieved, but by slow degrees and successive conflicts. “ ONLY BE THOU STRONG AND OF A GOOD COURAGE,” and the promise shall be fulfilled. “ By little and little will I drive them out from before thee, until thou inherit the land;” nor will that day be long in coming. The last year of time may be as near to us as the last day of the year.* It is nigh, even at the doors. Some of us are looking for it, not with impatience, but with sweet hopes and heaven-imparted expectations of the *victory*—hopes and expectations which the wealth of the

* This lecture was preached to the congregation of which the author is the Pastor on the last day of the year 1854.

world could not buy. We have but this great wish for you, and for ourselves, that in the last struggle these poor lips may whisper, *Victory!* O, come ye who have never yet ventured on this "good fight of faith;" put on the armor, and learn the Christian song of VICTORY!

CHAPTER IX.

Balaam.

ALTHOUGH there is no fitting contrast to the character of Balaam, it is too instructive to be omitted in the present series. We have placed it in contrast with that of Joshua; yet it stands alone in its hideous peculiarities, not without design, but to lift its admonitory voice against the inconsistencies of a hypocritical religion. It presents human nature under a melancholy aspect, and we wonder at these inconsistencies; yet are they but the type which is too frequently verified. What we propose is to *exhibit these inconsistencies*, and to show *how they are to be accounted for*.

Our first object is to exhibit the inconsistencies in his character. There are incidents in his history as well as states of mind which present him as one of the most inconsistent of men. He was a grossly-deluded man, or else a finished hypocrite; more probably he was both.

Although the visible church was confined to the descendants of Abraham, yet were there in the

times of which we speak, scattered over the world, here and there, a worship less impure than that of gross paganism. There were such men as Job and his three friends, and such men as Jethro and his descendants, amid the barbarous regions of pagan idolatry. Abraham was not for so long a period a sojourner in Mesopotamia without leaving some traces of the true religion. From such sources as these, pagan as he was, Balaam had the knowledge of the true God. Paganism consists in the worship of idols. It is a false, but it is also a deformed religion, but not without some resemblance to the true. It does not exclude the recognition of the Supreme Deity. That Balaam was a pagan of this mixed character is apparent from his whole history, and from his open avowal of the divine existence and government. He acknowledged the God of Israel to be the only true God, and in this acknowledgment also acknowledged his obligations to obey him.

Veneration for their priesthood is characteristic of pagan lands. Balaam was highly esteemed *for his religious character and influence*. Sacred history informs us that toward the close of their progress to the Holy Land, the children of Israel had encamped on the plains of Moab, greatly to the terror of Balak, Moab's king. It was the custom of ancient nations, before they went into battle, to consecrate their enemies to destruction ;

to imprecate *God's curse* upon their persons, their counsels and their arms. And such was the superstitious and malignant expedient to which the king of Moab resorted, in order to inspirit his troops in confronting an army who had been disciplined by such leaders as Moses and Joshua. He sent to Mesopotamia for *Balaam*, a pagan diviner and magician of great renown, to come and utter his anathema against the armies of Israel. Not only was he regarded as a man skilled in the arts of magic and enchantments, but as a prophet of God, and entitled to confidence for his spiritual and prophetic character. The king of Moab knew his religious reputation in his own country; nor did he doubt his own victory over the invading army of Israel, if he could but induce so eminent a prophet to denounce against them his curse of extermination—"I wot, that he whom *thou* blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

That there was something like sincerity in the religious sentimentalism of this diviner would appear from his conduct on receiving this request of the king of Moab. *Such was his sense of dependence on a superior power, that he promptly referred the whole matter to God.* He dared not consent to curse Israel; his reply to Moab's ambassadors was, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again as *the Lord* shall speak

unto me." This has all the appearance of religious integrity; he openly and officially acknowledges God's rights and his own dependence and obligations. On his asking counsel of God, "God said to him, thou shalt *not* go; thou shalt *not* curse the people, for they are blessed;" and his reply to the ambassadors was, "Get ye into your land; for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." This was prompt and decided, and indicates his fear of God. And when the king of Moab sent other messengers, with a still nobler and more disinterested bearing, he replied, "If Balak would give his house full of silver and gold, *I can not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.*" And when at length he was persuaded to a personal interview with the king of Moab, his language was, "Lo, I am come to thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that *the Lord putteth in my mouth*, that shall I speak." All this has the semblance of religious honesty.

In perfect accordance with these indications of a religious mind, we notice also his *spiritual sentimentalism, and prophetic gifts*. He not only appears to be a religious man, but a very religious man. He had spiritual visions and ecstasies, and gave utterance to some of the most beautiful and precious truths ever uttered by human lips. No true prophet and no divinely-com-

missioned apostle could say more than he when he uttered the words, "Hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" His mind is fixed, and his thoughts are arrested and borne away by visions of heavenly truth: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither hath he seen perverse-ness in Israel." There is enthusiasm and rapture in his emotions: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the rivers' side, as trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel!" There is great elevation of thought, and great tenderness, not only when he thinks of Israel, but when, in such hallowed words, he speaks of himself: "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the top of the hills I behold him. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let *me* die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Such things as these, to the eye of man, are indications of piety.

And is it so, that men may possess this knowledge of God, this high esteem of their fellow men, this professed regard for God's authority,

these exalted spiritual sentiments, and this desire to die the death of the righteous; and, at the same time, be at heart and in life, false, wicked, corrupt, and corrupting? It is even so; such is the deceitfulness of the human heart, that it is even so. We must therefore inspect his character more closely; and when we do so, we shall see its rottenness.

There are incidents in his history which show, beyond a doubt, that he was a *supremely selfish, a most wicked man*. These incidents do not indeed come out boldly and at once, but rather transpire secretly, gradually, and progressively, till at last we see only the sorcerer, and the decided enemy of God and his people. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is the heart that forms the man. We have the key to Balaam's character in the remarks of the Apostle Peter, where, in describing the character of those he calls "cursed children," he speaks of them as "having forsaken the right way, and gone astray, following the way of *Balaam*, the son of Beor; who *loved the wages of unrighteousness*."

Let us mark how this spirit is manifested, and how this character comes out, in the first place, in his consenting to CONSIDER *the proposal of the king of Moab to curse the people of God*. A liberal compensation was offered him for this unhallowed service; the deputation from Balak held

the "rewards of divination in their hands." He was ensnared at the outset. He was an avaricious man, and stooped to *hesitate* whether he should or should not be influenced by the bribe. This hesitation, had he been wholly ignorant of the true religion, might have been a more doubtful index of a mercenary heart. But he was cotemporary with Moses; he might have known his high embassy; and must have known the signs and wonders which God had wrought in behalf of his people, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. He dallied with his conscience on a question which was perfectly plain, and contrived to detain Moab's messengers until he should consult the *divine oracle*! And this is no uncommon resort with persons who are desirous of securing the sanctions of *religion* to courses of conduct which they themselves know or suspect to be wrong. Men sometimes determine in their own minds what course of conduct they will pursue, and then, in order to give sacredness to their conduct, profess to seek the divine direction. A religious and honest man would not have needed to consult God, or any one else, on so plain a subject as that submitted to the decision of Balaam. But the gold of Moab glittered in his eye, and induced him to dally with his conscience. What if such a proposal as this had been submitted to Moses, or Joshua, or Jethro? Balaam was a far

different man. His first obvious dereliction from integrity consisted in consenting so far to trifle with conscience as to ask counsel of God whether he might curse Israel! He was a blind and avaricious trifler, and God left him to his avarice and blindness.

The next indication of his wickedness is found in the fact, that, *after God's decision was known, he still held the question under advisement.* He professed to have decided it, but manifestly left it an open question; and, although God had spoken, he detained the princes of Moab until he should *again inquire of the Lord!* Why this hesitation and inquiry a second time, unless there were at heart a strong desire, and a secret purpose, to curse those whom God had blessed? It was a perseverance and an obstinacy in wrongdoing, which cannot be accounted for in the conduct of a good man. Having once tampered with the decisions of conscience, he was now prepared to go further, and deal subtilely with God. In this second inquiry, whether he might comply with the solicitations of Balak's messengers, he received the reply, not that he might go with them, but that, if *called for again*, he might go. But he did not wait to be called for; he was in haste to perform the service and claim the stipend. He went, and "God's anger was kindled because he went." He followed him with his frowns,

miraculously caused the beast on which he rode to rebuke him, and sent his angel with a drawn sword in his hand to hedge up his way. Yet he is still bent on his purpose ; there seems to be no end to his tergiversation. He submits himself to the guidance of the king of Moab, and goes from altar to altar, and from one high place of idolatrous sacrifice to another, at each offering costly sacrifices, if so be he might obtain some modification of the prohibitory edict. No magical rites, and no practiced enchantments were wanting to delude himself and impose upon his employer-prince. He persevered to the last in his devices, formed every contrivance to get round the divine command, and to persuade himself that he had God's permission to denounce the curse. There was a severe conflict within his bosom ; he was obviously an embarrassed and unhappy man, urged on the one hand by the wages of unrighteousness, and, on the other, by the slavish fear of displeasing God.

But the most decided proof of his wickedness remains. There was one way left by which he could bring a curse upon Israel, and draw down upon them the divine judgments. It was not in his power to change the faithfulness of God toward his people, but it was in his power to change their faithfulness toward God. God could not be imposed upon nor corrupted ; his only

hope now was to deceive and corrupt *them*. This he could accomplish; he could corrupt their character, and make God himself angry with them, and thus most effectively subject them to the curse. John, in the Apocalypse, speaks of "the doctrine of Balaam," by which the Israelites became ensnared in the licentious indulgences of Moab. This conduct of Balaam is not obvious to a negligent reader; but if we turn to the chapter which immediately follows the narrative of the interview between Balak and Balaam, we find that while Israel abode in the land of Moab, they relapsed into the idolatrous practices of the heathen, offered sacrifices to their impure deities, and mingled in all the polluting and obscene rites of their idolatrous worship. This was the heaviest curse which Balaam could bring upon them, and this it was which provoked God to curse them, by cutting off *twenty-four thousand of them in a single day*. What no enchantment nor divination could accomplish was thus accomplished by the rebellion of Israel themselves. The charms and spells of Moab's idolatry were more potent than the magic of Balaam, subtle and concealed as was the corrupting agency of this vile idol-priest in bringing about this melancholy result. The sacred historian is careful to record that the sin of the children of Israel "in the matter of Baal-peor," was "through the counsel

of Balaam." And when this famous diviner came to give an account of his stewardship, it was not the end of the righteous that he died. He fell on the field of battle, where he was found contending against Israel and Israel's God, and fell with the corrupters of God's people. We have only this short record of his death, that in Israel's invasion of the Midianites, "they slew the kings of Midian; *Balaam* also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword."

Such was the character, and such the end of Balaam. Profane history abounds in traditions concerning this strange man, and assigns him the highest rank among the magicians of his age. The Jewish Rabbis say that he was one of Pharaoh's counsellors; others affirm that he was a man venerable for age, and the father of Jannes and Jambres, the famous Egyptian magicians who withstood Moses. Notwithstanding the favorable indications in his character, all agree that he was a bad man and idolater, and a false prophet.

It is obvious that he was no ordinary man, if it were only for the strange assemblage of characteristics by which he was distinguished. He was remarkable for his *inconsistencies*. He was under prophetic impulses, yet was most corrupt at heart, and in his life flagitiously depraved. He had intercourse with God, yet he was a sorcerer. He offered prayer to the God of Israel, yet had he

habitual resort to the altars and oracles of paganism. On the one hand, practicing his vile superstitions and magical arts, and, on the other, the devotions of an apparently true piety. On the one hand, he is wrapt in ecstasy at the future and glorious prospects of God's people ; on the other, he is ministering to their destruction. On the one hand, he resolves that no motives of worldly gain shall induce him to disregard the commandment of God ; on the other, his whole conduct is determined by insatiable avarice. On the one hand, he appears to possess some of the most eminent virtues ; on the other, he is the slave of the most detestable of all vices. On the one hand, he blesses Israel ; on the other, he curses them. On the one hand, he lives the life of the wicked ; on the other, he fervently prays that he may die the death of the righteous. There is palpable absurdity in such conduct. It was inconsistent with his reason, with his conscience, and even with his own supremely selfish ends. To acknowledge his obligations to God, and to disregard them, and secretly resolve to disregard them, is to act the most inconsistent part. It is voluntary and of set purpose to act contrary to his own conviction ; and this is the greatest of all moral absurdities. If he meant to disobey God he would have acted a more consistent part to deny his obligations to obey him. This would

have made his practice consistent with his profession. But they were wholly inconsistent. In words he acknowledged God, but in works he denied him. Strangely inconsistent character! Yet are therethose, even at the present day, who, in some respects, resemble this wicked prophet. We proceed, therefore,

To inquire *how is his character to be accounted for, and what are some of the obvious principles of conduct which governed him?* Why did he run into this strange, this palpable absurdity? There must be some causes to have produced this effect; and what they were is obvious from the following considerations:

In the first place, *he followed the bent and bias of his own wicked heart.* The motives which induced him to act the part he acted must have been strong; nor are they found in any thing short of his radical hostility to God and his people. There is great strength in the wickedness of that mind which is enmity against God. Balaam's wicked heart exerted a paramount influence. It opposed his reason; it opposed his conscience, and was more powerful than either. His inconsistency was found in his own bosom, and in acting it out he only acted out his true character. Consummate wickedness is consistent in its inconsistencies. He was an inconsistent

man, and therefore he acted this inconsistent part. All this religious sentimentalism, and this seeming piety, and these raptures of poetic devotion, and this studied homage to the God of Israel, and this desire to die the death of the righteous, were perfectly in keeping with the nature and feelings of his depraved heart: and though not the natural, were the studied and factitious expressions of such a state of mind. Never does wickedness appear more in its true character than when, like Satan, it assumes the garb of an angel of light.

In the next place, Balaam was *greatly desirous to commend himself to the favor of God*. This is evident from all his conduct, as well as from his own repeatedly expressed views. He could not endure the thought of dying without God and without hope. Nor is there any doubt that he himself thought he appeared better in the sight of God by acting this inconsistent part, than by throwing off the mask, and openly avowing himself to be God's enemy and the *enemy of his people*. The Apostle never would have said, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked," if men were not sometimes wicked and foolish enough to do this very thing. Balaam's impressions of God's existence and claims, and of his own dependence, naturally made him desirous of propitiating the divine favor. He was afraid to do

otherwise than make those acknowledgments of the divine supremacy which he did make. It is no uncommon thing for wicked men thus to acknowledge God with their lips, while their heart goeth after their covetousness, and in works they deny him. The acknowledgment looks well as far as it goes. It has a fair exterior, and they flatter themselves that this appears well in the sight of God. So Balaam thought. He looked upon this as a part of his duty which he was willing to perform, and which he hoped might commend him to God's favor.

In the third place, he *eagerly sought the favor of men*. He was a professed *diviner*; a sorcerer; a prognosticator; a pagan prophet. His profession and office were religious; nor could they be sustained without throwing around them the garb of piety. As a necromancer, it was indispensable to his reputation that he should be a *spiritualist*, and seem to have some mysterious communication with the unseen and spiritual world. What marvel that such a man should desire to maintain his sanctity and appear well in the eyes of his fellow-men? This he could easily do; and this, men of like pretensions and character have done in our own day. This whole system of spiritualism was understood much better by the seven nations of Canaan, and by the Moabites and Balaam, than by its modern disci-

ples. Before a written revelation was given to the world, true religion was maintained among men by supernatural visions and dreams, and supernatural appearances, such as were frequently vouchsafed to the ancient patriarchs. It was maintained by religious rites and ceremonies, and observances of God's appointment, which were handed down from generation to generation. When, at the confusion of their language, mankind were dispersed over the earth, although they sunk into paganism, they carried with them a traditionary knowledge of these original religious observances, and a traditionary impression of this supernatural intercourse with the spiritual world. Their views were vague and indefinite, and exceedingly corrupt; but where they were lacking in definiteness, were supplied by human invention and the wicked imaginations of men. Such was the pagan world then, and such it is now. Balaam appears to have been the prince of this magical art, and the great master of its mysterious secrets, else would not the king of Moab have engaged him to use his enchantments against Jacob, and his divinations against Israel. He well knew that men look only on the outward appearance. It would be too barefaced to make no manifestations of religion. To acknowledge his obligations to God looked as if he meant to fulfill them. It was not only more respectful to acknowledge than

to deny them ; but it was his *interest* to appear before men as a religious man. He had committed himself to a sacred profession, and the motives were strong to induce him to maintain his sacredness.

In the fourth place, he had strong motives to *practice deception upon himself*. Throughout the whole of his history, it seems to us that he had a great desire to think himself a religious man. That declaration, "If Balaam would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more," indicates a desire to form a favorable view of his own character. That prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," vile as he was, shows that he would fain have looked upon himself as a religious man. Though there is no doubt that his notions of true religion were undefined and crude, it would have been great comfort to him to know that he possessed it, and that he would share the destiny of God's people. When men are more eager to attain the *hopes* of piety than piety itself, it is no difficult matter for them to impose upon themselves by *false* hopes. God gives them over to believe this lie. They will discover evidences of grace where others cannot discover them, and where they do not exist. They will interpret those truths, and those interpositions

of providence, and those internal emotions, as indications of God's special favor, that are no indications. They will persuade themselves that their affections and conduct toward the great realities of religion, toward religious men and religious duties, are right when they are wrong. They do not wish to become acquainted with their true character, nor to look at their real wickedness. They hate to see the blackness and malignity of their own hearts, and therefore do many things to cover them over with a false and deceptive appearance. These religious acknowledgments and religious pretensions constitute a piety that makes them satisfied with themselves. Balaam's religious professions, and his apparently spiritual emotions gratified him, because they served to foster his self-complacency and strengthen his favorite delusions. He could not afford to dispense with them. He loved to think of them, and to turn them to the best account. It may have caused him perplexity and embarrassment to reconcile them with his wickedness; but they were not the dark shades of his character that he dwelt upon; and when he did dwell upon them, it was for the moment only, and then only to gild them with the brighter rays of his supposed virtues.

In the fifth place, the inconsistencies of his character may be accounted for by *the power of conscience*. The wickedest men are not beyond

the checks of conscience. Although the power of conscience is greatly impaired by sin, and has lost its mastery, it has not lost its rod. Men are sometimes whipped into courses of conduct which look like piety, when true piety itself has no attractions for them. Balaam well knew that he was treading a doubtful path; the experiment was a hazardous one to curse a people whom God had not cursed. That he was deeply conscious of his inconsistency and embarrassment, is most obvious from his management and contrivance to get round the divine command. He was pursuing a course in defiance of conscience; and the best thing he could do to alleviate her reproaches was to put on the semblance of religion. The scenes through which he passed were scenes of great excitement, and he felt the need of some false refuge. Had he been going, at God's command, to curse the *enemies* of his people, rather than going, contrary to his command, to curse *his people themselves*, there would have been no necessity for these pretensions to piety. But his mind was agitated; his conscience was disturbed; and it was the most natural thing in the world for him, with his cherished desires and purposes of disobedience, to seek the support and solace of this self-wrought spiritualism. Men always do this who know that they are vile, and who at the same time desire to preserve this self-flattering unction.

The inconsistencies of his character evince nothing more clearly than his intense desire to make an unhallowed compromise with a clamorous and refractory conscience. He could not silence her voice; bound and imprisoned as she was, she would utter her upbraiding. She was privy to his motives; she knew his secret pride and avarice; she was witness to his latent desires of disobedience, and the designs he meditated. Nor could he mitigate her rebukes in any way so effectually and so satisfying to his own deceived heart, as by putting on the appearance of high devotion, and seeming to himself to be a pious man, and a true prophet.

In the sixth place, so far as it regards his religious views he was *constrained to utter them by the Spirit of God*. His object was to pronounce a curse against God's people, and to devote them to destruction on the eve of decisive battle. God would not allow him to do this; it would encourage and inspirit their enemies to rush to the conflict with an energy and hope which, if they did not give them the victory, would aggravate the assault, and add to the slaughter of his people. Instead of cursing Israel therefore, God told him to go and utter the words which *he* should put into his mouth. He obeyed, and uttered sentiments and predictions which he himself neither meant, nor wished to utter. He predicted the

enlargement of Israel and their conquests over their enemies. He extolled the excellence of their character, and spoke in terms of poetic beauty of the divine favor toward them. The "vision of the Almighty" was upon him, and in strains of spiritual poesy not often surpassed, he depicted what was in reserve for them in the latter days. Instead of uttering what he himself desired to utter, and what the king of Moab had bribed him to utter, he uttered truths which he would fain have suppressed, and which threw Moab's king into consternation and despair.

Nay more : in thus making him the involuntary medium of divine communications to the army of Moab, God also at last gave him a view of his own vile character and hopeless destiny. He made him confess his shame before the world, and pronounce his own doom. It is an affecting acknowledgment when this worldly preacher is forced to confess himself cut off from the true riches, and this false prophet is forced to utter the melancholy truth, "I shall see him, but not now ; I shall behold him, but not nigh." There was a power above him operating on his tongue, else would it never have given utterance to such things as these. It is no uncommon thing for uncommon pretenders to spiritualism thus to be made to overreach themselves. God is able to make these false prophets true ; to see what they do not wish to

see ; to fear what they do not wish to fear ; and even utter and acknowledge what they do not mean to confess and utter. He could convince Balaam of his sin while he himself was forming every contrivance to conceal it. He could demolish his self-flattery and excuses. He could fill his mind with depressing anxiety, and point him to death and judgment. The angel's sword should glitter on his path, and the tongue of the beast on which he rode should rebuke him, before he should be allowed to utter the oracular curses of the heathen against God's Israel, or avert the curse from his own soul. And what marvel, if, with such wickedness nourished in his heart, such influences exerted upon him, such a conscience, such delusion, and such solicitude to appear spiritual in the eyes of men, he should have disclosed such palpable inconsistencies of character ?

From this view of his character, and this application of its inconsistencies, we may deduce,

1. In the first place, *affecting impressions of the madness of sin*. The character of Balaam is a strange character ; it is, in truth, an astonishing character. But it is not more strange and astonishing than the power and deceitfulness of sin. The sum and substance of it consisted in the fact, that while he had strong religious impressions, he still persevered in his wickedness. And are there

no such characters in the world at the present day? Should conscience do her office, would she not search out not a few who comfort themselves that they breathe a spiritual atmosphere, and who, at the same time, walk in the counsel of the ungodly? Are there none who outwardly reverence God's Sabbaths, who respect his ministers, and who, like Balaam, not only come to hear what God the Lord will say unto them, but are attentive and even anxious hearers, who yet pursue the path of sin and death? Are there none who utter the sacred desire, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," who counteract and belie that desire by their daily life and conversation? Balaam was not more inconsistent nor more deluded than this. In what different views, and in what cross lights do such persons see the plainest truths! By what contradictory principles of action are such minds kept back from the way of life! Nor can such moral phenomena be accounted for without recognizing the deceitfulness, the madness of sin. Such a man's love of wickedness must be strong; nay, he must be its slave, else would he not long remain thus inconsistent and miserable. Who knows the power of sin, and the strength of its bondage? We pity the diviner. We scarcely look upon the pretensions of the modern spiritualist without scorn. But what enchant-

ment is there, what divination, what lunacy, like the madness of sin? Just think of a man urging his way to the gates of death—not by carelessness, for he is awake and thoughtful—not in ignorance, for he has often asked himself, What am I doing, and what will be my end?—not without solicitude for his soul, for he wishes to die as the righteous die—but simply because it is the way he has chosen. “I have loved idols, and after idols will I go;” and onward he goes in the full career of his iniquity! Such a man presents the greatest moral enigma in the world. Conscience perplexes, but does not control him. Fears and hopes, which influence him in the ordinary concerns of human life, do not influence him here. Death and eternity terrify, but do not govern him. Reason, which influences him in other matters, here loses its power; and if he were to reason on other subjects as he reasons on the subject of religion, he would be accounted fit for the madhouse. His purposes and resolutions are at war with one another. His wishes are contradictory; his very will counteracts itself. What infatuation is here! How many and how subtle are the intricacies of a deluded and dishonest heart, and what twistings and turnings does it unfold in order to live in wickedness with the hope of dying in peace!

2. We are taught, by this view of Balaam's

character, *the danger of loving the wages of unrighteousness*. We might, perhaps, and with strong propriety, caution you against an overweening anxiety even for *rightful and righteous gain*; but they are the wages of *unrighteousness* and the gain sought after by *evil-doing*, against which this detestable dissembler stands forth as a solemn warning. It is the gain procured by professions of sacredness, where the heart and the life are rotten at the core. It is the gain procured, too, by fraud and dishonesty, by prevarication and a lying tongue, by disobeying God, and deceiving and corrupting men. The Scriptures put a fearful stigma upon such wages and such men. It was for this that the leprosy of Naaman was to cleave to Gehazi. It was for this that the Apostle Peter said to Simon Magus, "Thy money perish with thee." It was for this that Judas went out and hanged himself, and went to his own place. And it was for this that Balaam was made to utter the cry of despair. Be ye not like them. Honest gain may insnare; dishonest damns the soul. Ill-gotten gain is a terrible burden on the conscience, on the bed of death. If you *can not* restore and forego the rewards of unrighteousness, you *must* forego that heaven where nothing shall enter that worketh abomination or maketh a lie.

3. Balaam's character, in the third place, in-

structs us to *deal honestly with God*. It is weakness and wickedness to deal dishonestly with yourselves, and deceive your own souls. It is both, to deal dishonestly with your fellow-men. But it is worse to attempt to practice deception and dishonesty *upon God*. Yet you attempt nothing less than this, when you commute and compound with an abused conscience, and, by giving up some sins for the sake of retaining others, bribe her to silence. You do nothing less than this, when, like Balaam, you practice religious duties for the sake of indulging in darling sins. You do nothing less than this when you proudly inflate your heart with a gaseous sentimentalism, and neglect the great realities of the Christian life. You do nothing less than this, when you feel very solemn and very pious, and yet never go beyond the sublimated thought, "Let me die the death of the righteous!" He who searches the heart knows that there are those who, with all the sense of God and religion upon their minds, are guilty of sins, which, if unrepented of and unforsaken, will shut them out of heaven. Where there is unsoundness and dishonesty at heart God knows it. And *you* may know it, if you frown not upon an honest conscience. Here was the wickedness of Balaam, and here his ruin. He circumvented his conscience. Your danger, like his, is in doubting and deliberating after conscience has decided.

Beware of nice refinements in wickedness. Take heed lest you attempt to deceive God by misinterpreting his truth and explaining away your duty when he has made them so plain. That man is most unprofitably, nay, most perilously employed, whose subtle mind occupies itself in fixing the utmost limits of right, and in reducing it to such an attenuated line, that he may imperceptibly step over it, and without remorse. Never attempt to make sin sit easy upon your own conscience; and never attempt to make it appear otherwise than it is, in the eyes of God. Deal honestly with God. An honest and fair mind God loves.

4. In the fourth and last place, *let Balaam's religious sentiments be ours, and let them be consistently acted out.* These views of Christ and of Israel, how beautiful they are, and how precious to an honest mind! "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed; and how shall I defy whom God hath not defied? From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him. Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment. Do not indulge the vain hope of dying the death of the righteous, so long as you live without Christ and without

God in the world. There is no mysticism that will save you without Christ and holiness. "O that ye were wise ; that ye understood this ; that ye would consider your latter end !" Learn a lesson from this wicked man, who, bad as he was, felt that he must die. If the life of the righteous has no charms for you, and it is their death of peace only that you care for ; remember Balaam. It were mournful to be constrained at last to say with him, "I shall see him, but not now ; I shall behold him, but not nigh." Your acknowledgment of your obligation to repent and believe the gospel must for ever condemn you for not repenting and not believing it. It condemns all your *excuses* ; for if there be any validity in your excuses, there is no binding force in these acknowledged obligations. These two things are utterly inconsistent with one another. You must either deny your obligations, or give up your excuses. It condemns all your *delay* and halting between two opinions. The conflict between your heart and conscience, and the inconsistency between your acknowledgments and your conduct, will never cease until you become Christians. It is high time to renounce this strange inconsistency and act the part of rational men. Nothing is more absurd than to wait for a more convenient season to attend to the concerns of the soul. Nothing can make the future a more convenient

season than the present. To be consistent, you must be Christians, or atheists. You must acknowledge the Son of God and obey him, and this is to be Christians; or you must deny him and disobey him, and this is to be atheists. There is no stopping short of one of these two extremes. And this is a point which surely ought to be decided without delay.

And we moreover admonish you that this very acknowledgment of your obligations will *at last condemn you*. If you refuse to become Christians, you shall stand speechless at the Bar of God. Out of your own mouth you will be condemned, because now, and then, and for ever thereafter, you must confess that you ought to have become Christians. When will ye be wise? Reason—conscience—interest—honor—consistency—time—eternity—death—heaven—hell—God the Lawgiver—Jesus the Redeemer—the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier—all combine in urging you to break off your iniquity by righteousness and your transgressions by turning to God.

CHAPTER X.

Saul.

THE first king of Israel was selected from the smallest of its tribes, and from the most abject family in that tribe. Yet were there traits of courage and enterprise in this obscure family. Abner, Saul's uncle, was made the general of his armies after he came to the throne, and Saul himself was a courageous and brave king. He was a young man of commanding person; "a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he." When he first made his appearance to the assembled tribes, "Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people!"

It was an interesting period in the history of the Hebrew state when he came to the throne. Samuel was the prophet of Israel, and the last of those judges, or chiefs, who presided over the republic from the days of Moses until the change in their government, from the republican to the

monarchical form. The dynasty of the Judges had been marked by oppression and invasion from the surrounding nations; by the wickedness and idolatry of Israel; by great and frequent internal changes and convulsions; and by signal expressions of God's justice and mercy. The prophet Samuel was now an old man; and his two sons, to whom he intrusted the administration of the government, instead of walking in the steps of their father, "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment."

This was the specious pretext to the people for a change in the form of their government. It was not the most welcome thought to this venerable man, that, after he had been for forty years the faithful servant of this people, he should be thus rejected on account of the infirmities of age. Beside the ingratitude toward himself, it was an important change in the government which they proposed; a measure of very doubtful expediency, and one fraught with manifold evils. Nor could the prophet do otherwise than spread the whole matter before the Lord.

The government of Israel had hitherto been a *theocracy*; the great peculiarity of their political state was, that *God himself was their King, their civil Head and Ruler*. They had no other. God's royal palace was in the midst of them; there was the visible symbol of his presence; there they

were to inquire for the intimations of his will ; and thence he gave forth those oracles which decided all their internal and foreign policy. With him alone was the prerogative of making and repealing their laws, of establishing their religion, of imposing their taxes, of constituting their tribunals of justice, of declaring war and making peace. Whatever human responsibility existed in carrying into execution the measures of the government, the final appeal in all doubtful and disputed matters was to God alone. He himself directed all their invasions upon the surrounding nations, and commanded them what and when to spare, and whom and what to destroy. They never went into battle without his direction, but they suffered defeat ; and when, in the conduct of their battles, they disregarded it, it was not with impunity. Even the tenure of their property, and the most important regulations which affected it, were prescribed by him.

Under this wise, watchful and energetic theocracy the nation flourished in the wilderness during the presiding power of Joshua, and through all the revolutionary period of the Judges. No other nation was ever thus governed. It was the simplest government, the least oppressive and exacting, the least ostentatious and extravagant, the most equitable, and the most free. The character and habits of that people, and the age in

which they lived, required some severities on the one hand, and some indulgences on the other, which none could so wisely introduce into their system of legislation as the great King and Monarch of the Universe. For that people this was the wisest and the best government.

When, therefore, they proposed a change from the theocratic to the monarchical form God himself was displeased. The insult was not offered so much to Samuel, as it was indignantly cast upon the God of Israel. "They said, a king shall reign over us, when the Lord their God was their king." They had a secret panting after the usages and even the idolatry of the pagan world. Their imagination was dazzled by the power, and pomp, and splendor of the surrounding empires; and though it was an act of rebellion against their own celestial Prince, to whom they had so often bound themselves by sworn and covenanted allegiance, they insisted on this change. And God gave them their request. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected *thee*, but they have rejected *ME*, that I should not reign over them." In obedience to God's command, the prophet expostulated at length with them on the folly of the proposed change; he even entered his solemn protest against it, and advised them in strong terms of

the mischiefs and oppressions they would suffer under the alternations of monarchical and despotic power. But they were bent upon their purpose, and to all his representations only replied, "Nay, but *we will have a king over us.*"

It was an established provision in the Constitution of the Hebrew State that no foreigner should be elevated to the throne. We know not, whether in ordaining and establishing the Constitution of these United States, our forefathers were influenced by this great precedent. The limitation is a wise one, if it were only to unite the people against the machination of foreigners; to discourage the ambitious of other lands from all attempts to seize this high office; and to multiply the motives to honorable effort, and a patriotic spirit among ourselves. And these considerations were of still greater force upon a people that were environed by pagan lands. The king of Israel must be a native Israelite, and neither a heathen nor a proselyte. "One from among thy brethren shalt thou set over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee who is not thy brother." History informs us, that when king Agrippa, an Idumean proselyte to Judaism, who had his eye upon the crown of Israel, met with this passage in the Pentateuch, he burst into tears, because he was not of the seed of Israel. How far this law served to maintain the integrity and

independence of the Hebrew State, is obvious from the fact that at the first invasion of it, their glory departed, and they became tributary to a foreign power.

Saul was a native Israelite, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. It was God's purpose that he should be the king of Israel, and this purpose was disclosed to Samuel. While this prophet was residing at Naioth, a little distance from the city of Ramah, God said to him, "To-morrow I will send thee a man whom *thou shalt anoint king over Israel.*" Saul was wandering in the hill country, and, at the suggestion of his own servant, made a seemingly incidental visit to the seer, who, before the interview closed, not only intimated to him that he should be the king of Israel, but "took a vial of oil and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?"

Not long after this, Samuel called the people together at Mizpeh, where he himself dwelt, and where they were wont to hold their public assemblies; and after repeating his rebuke for their folly, informed them that his object in calling them together was the selecting one of their number to reign over them. By early statute God had reserved the choice of the person who was to be their king to himself. "When thou art come

unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shall possess it, and shall dwell therein, and shall say, I will set a king over me; thou shalt in anywise set *him* king over thee, whom the *Lord thy God shall choose*." This divine selection did not, however, supersede the choice of the people. They could not appoint any other person than the one God had nominated; yet he was not actually invested with the regal authority but by the act of the people. Hence, when God appointed David to be their king, the men of Judah anointed him, and publicly declared their concurrence in the divine appointment. So when God appointed Solomon to be their king, the people ratified the appointment. When, after Solomon, God made the kingly government hereditary in David's family, though the crown was hereditary, "all Israel came to Shechem to make his son Rehoboam king."* So far as the people were concerned, Saul was elected by *lot*, the lot falling first upon the tribe of Benjamin, then upon the division of Matri, then upon the family of Kish, and then upon Saul his son. He was accepted by the people; and when the prophet said unto them, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, all the people shouted, and said, *God save the king!*" After this, he was publicly inaugurated in his

* See Godwin's "Moses and Aaron;" Jennings' "Jewish Antiquities," and Lowman on the "Hebrew Polity."

office, invested with the regal crown, robes, and dignity, and went in and out before the people in all the state and grandeur of a Jewish monarch.

The wisdom of Samuel's remonstrance against the proposed change in the form of their government is no where more obvious than *in the character and conduct of the man appointed to reign over them*. In the first place, Saul was a *hypocrite*. He was a bad man, though his wickedness is not fully apparent in the early part of his reign. Men who are unexpectedly elevated to places of trust are not unfrequently so impressed with a sense of their responsibility as to shrink from the evil-doing with which, in the progress of their aggrandizement, they at length become familiar. Their self-diffidence and their purposes of rectitude disappoint both themselves and others. The dawning hopes of their usefulness go out in darkness. There were scenes in the early history of Saul which at first view indicate that he was a religious man. He, himself, was a member of the Jewish Church, a professed disciple of Moses, and an avowed friend of the God of Israel. He showed great reverence for the prophet Samuel and for the institutions of the Hebrew church. When the man of God first intimated to him the divine purpose, that he should be the king of Israel, conscious of his unfitness for this high trust, his modest and humble reply was, "Am I

not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore speakest thou *to me*?" When, on leaving Samuel, he came to the hill of God, and there met him a company of prophets, the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among the prophets. God "gave him *another* heart," and, like Balaam, he had the spirit of prophecy, which he never had before; and so unlooked for was this by the people, and so preposterous did it appear to them, that it became a proverb in Israel when any man made unusual and unfitting pretensions to sacredness, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" When Samuel assembled all Israel to his coronation as their king, the same diffidence which he had before expressed was repeated. He secreted himself from the gaze of the people, as though the office and the responsibility were such as he was slow to assume. When, after his first battle with the enemies of Israel, on which his martial address, and courage, and victory were so signal that the people with one voice professed themselves ready to put to death the faction that refused to welcome him to the throne; he had the magnanimity to reply, "There shall not *a man* be put to death this day, for to-day THE LORD *hath* wrought salvation in Israel!" When, in the battle with the Philistines, the people greedily flew upon

the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground, and did eat them raw and with the blood, Saul said to them, "Ye have transgressed; roll a great stone unto me this day, and sin not against the Lord in eating with the blood: and Saul built an altar unto the Lord."

These things have the semblance of piety, although, as subsequent events show, they did not arise from the fear and love of God, but were mere acts of expediency, and arose rather from a transient sense of responsibility, and of the prerogative and dignity of his kingly office, than from any deep-seated rectitude. He had too much religion for his character, and therefore we find him,

In the second place, *false to his engagements as a king*. His true character began to be disclosed the more firmly he found himself seated upon his throne. He was ambitious of power, and the first outbreak of his passion was his *wanton encroachment upon the priestly office*. The sacerdotal office belonged, by divine right, to Aaron and his posterity, and to them only. It was the revealed law that no man should take upon him this office, unless he had been called of God and divinely-appointed to this service. This was one of the fundamental principles in the constitution of the Hebrew State; it was essential to its integrity that the office of the civil and religious ruler should be kept perfectly dis-

tinct. So important, indeed, was this principle, that every violation of this law was a capital offense, and punishable with death. When Korah and his associates violated this law, "the earth opened, and swallowed them up." We are instructed that this visitation was thus marked for severity, that it might be "a memorial to the children of Israel that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron come near to offer incense before the Lord, that he die not." When king Uzziah went into the temple "to burn incense upon the altar of incense," he was smitten with the leprosy to the day of his death. Saul had received the crown on this revealed and well-known condition, yet he violated it "in offering a burnt-offering." It was a rash and unkingly act, not only because it was forbidden, but because the event shows that it was uncalled for. It was still more wicked, because, by his own showing, it was performed in opposition to the protestations of his conscience. The peculiar and pressing exigencies of his condition were the creatures of his own impatience; and even if they had been real, they were no excuse for his violation of an expressed and unequivocal law of God. It was, in every view, an unjustifiable act, and one which, occurring as it did, in the early part of his reign, gave sad and ominous presage of his disobedient spirit, and of his wanton disregard of

those constitutional limitations of his royal prerogative which were so essential to the security of the State.

Although the union between Church and State, in the Israelitish nation, was so intimate that the Jewish religion was established by law, and all the officers of State were by law members of the church; yet had the house of God laws, and services, and officers of its own, which the civil power could not invade. There was no safety for the State if the church might wield the civil power; and there was no safety for the church if the State might control the ecclesiastical authority. This arrangement was essential to their civil and religious liberty. It had been well for the world, if this lesson, so early inculcated by God himself, had been remembered. Rome lost sight of it when she first amalgamated the civil with the ecclesiastical, and every advance toward it in Protestant lands is but a step toward Rome. The consciences of men have been bound in fetters of iron, their liberties have been the sport of despotism, and blood has watered the soil of Europe, simply from a disregard to this great principle of state policy.

The Puritans separated from the Church of England on account of her close alliance to the crown. They denied to the last and to the death the right of the civil power to con-

trol the church in matters of religious faith, or ecclesiastical government. They could never submit to the doctrine that "the king is the head of the church," and that those who conduct its religious worship should be *officially* governed by the civil law. This was the turning point in that memorable controversy which separated the Free Church of Scotland from the Established Church, and which led so many noble men, at every cost, to contend for the principle, that no king and no parliament should dictate ecclesiastical laws to the sacred community of which Jesus Christ is the only Head, and his Word the only statute book. It is somewhat remarkable that in this first organization of the kingly government in Israel, this great principle should have been so emphatically protected. There was a reason for it in the importance of the principle itself. When the civil power ventures to assume or encroach upon the spiritual, there is tyranny in the State ; and when the church consents to avail herself of this power, there is tyranny in the church. The church of Christ should never give way on such a question as this, and should sooner give up the protection of the State than give up her "divinely chartered right of doing what in her judgment is for the honor of the Redeemer and his kingdom on the earth." Lord Chatham once said, "In England every man's house is his castle ; not that

it is surrounded with walls and battlements; it may be a straw-built shed; every wind of heaven may whistle round it; every element of heaven may enter it; but the king can not—the king dare not.” What the laws of England guarantee to the poor man’s dwelling, *that* the laws of the Hebrew State guaranteed to the church of God. The empire of law ends where the empire of Jesus Christ begins. Neither the prince nor the law may invade the sanctuary where Jehovah dwells.

In this Saul was a trespasser; and though a king, by this single act he forfeited the throne as the hereditary right of his descendants. “And Samuel said unto him, Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord which he commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue, because thou has not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.” It is true that in the subsequent history of Israel, it is recorded that some of her kings offered sacrifices; but it does not appear that they did so except through the official acts of the priesthood, or by special dispensation from heaven to those kings who were ordained to be the type and prefiguration of Him who was both King and Priest over his own house. It is therefore a lesson not to be lost sight of, that as long as the Hebrew State enjoy-

ed its civil and religious liberties undiminished, the civil and the ecclesiastical authority were distinct, and no further dependent on one another than their amicable and mutual coöperation subserved the common good.

Saul was not immediately dethroned ; but the question was decided that the crown of Israel should not remain with his descendants. And during the remainder of his reign he conducts himself like a prince contending with his destiny, struggling with his own apprehensions, and ever awake and envious to the sentence, "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over the people."

The wickedness of his conduct is, in the third place, exhibited by *the means which his suspicions suggested to maintain his throne*. Never did a man deal more falsely than he did with David and Jonathan. Jonathan was a young man, distinguished both for his piety and valor, and in high favor with the people. Though the father well knew that the crown was forfeited as an hereditary right, he was obviously jealous of this son's popularity, and not a little apprehensive that he might supplant him on the throne. There is a single circumstance which sets this feature of Saul's character in a strong light. Israel was at war with the Philistines. Without the knowledge

of his father, Jonathan and his armor-bearer had invaded their garrison with such effective slaughter, that there was "great trembling in the garrison, no order in their camp, and the host of the Philistines were melting away, because every man's sword was against his fellow." It was difficult for Saul to account for this defeat until, on assembling his army, he found they were all present except Jonathan and his armor-bearer. On this discovery Saul joined in the battle; and, well aware of Jonathan's previous exposure and fatigue, issued the order that no man, on the penalty of death, should taste food until the evening. It was a snare which the jealous father had arranged for the unsuspecting and ignorant son. Without knowing the order, he had tasted a little honey which dropped from the wood through which the troops were passing, and was condemned to die. The son expostulated with the father upon the rashness and rigor of the decree; but "Saul answered, God do so and more also; for *thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.*" There was precipitancy, there was green-eyed jealousy, there was brutal cruelty in a decision which could so sternly sacrifice the life of the son to the father's ambition, and which indicated any thing rather than the father's fitness for the throne.

And such was the verdict of *the people*. Loyal as they were and had been long taught to be, and

monarch and the Lord's anointed as Saul was, the people of Israel were not slaves. With one voice they rebelled against this high-handed decree, and boldly told Saul to his face, "God forbid! As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of Jonathan's head fall to the ground! So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not."

History records examples of kings and queens who have banished, or imprisoned, or poisoned, or slaughtered their children, through jealousy of their own power; but they were not such as have conciliated the confidence of mankind, or were entitled even to the claim of a common morality. When a wicked king becomes severe and cruel, his dissembled virtues lose their blandishment. From this hour, Saul's conduct to Jonathan was marked by diffidence, deceit and treachery: "The Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." When he ascertained that his son was the bosom and covenanted friend of David, his suspicions betrayed themselves in so many forms of vigilance and malice, that he seems incapable of one generous or benevolent feeling. He tries to circumvent them both, sometimes by specious kindness, and sometimes by a bold exposure to his and their powerful enemies. Fiercely he cast a javelin at both of them, even when at his own table. Families, and individuals, and the nation were made

miserable by his wicked jealousy, and he himself was the most miserable of them all. History does not, to my knowledge, record a more admonitory example of royal jealousy than that exhibited by Saul. He slew fourscore and five priests in a single day, and Nob the City of Priests smote he with the edge of the sword, both men, and women, and children, and sucklings, because Abimelech the priest succored his son's friend and his own rival in his extremity. Again and again did he violate his promises to both of them, showing himself one of the most perfidious of men, and not to be believed under the solemnity of an oath. The narrative of his malignant sagacity and his vile stratagems fills pages of the sacred history. Something may be conceded to a man of so uneasy and restless a temper, and holding his throne by a grasp that was daily becoming more weak; but there is no allowance for this contemptible duplicity and falsehood, and for that unsleeping malignity, by which he would save a throne by the loss of every thing for which a high-minded and virtuous prince would reign.

In the fourth place, he *dealt falsely with God's prophet and with God himself in refusing to execute the commission with which he was intrusted to destroy his enemies.* God had commanded the Israelites, when they took possession of the Holy Land, to destroy the idolatrous nations which

then inhabited it. They were to the last degree degraded and corrupt; and so irreclaimable that it was the divine purpose to destroy them for the same reasons for which he destroyed the antediluvian world by the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah by fire out of heaven. Divine justice required that they should be exterminated; and the only question which sober men have presumed to agitate relates to the *manner* in which this destruction should be effected. They might have been destroyed by famine, by pestilence, or by the *sword*. God chose *the sword*. Small and great, if they refused to become the subjects and tributaries of the Hebrews, were to be desolated by *war*; and, as in all similar invasions, by their invaders. It is of some importance to bear in mind the fact that the land did not belong to the Canaanites, except by usurpation and divine sufferance; it had been early given to the descendants of Abraham; and they were its divinely-commissioned invaders and conquerors. And now God *required* them to subdue it and destroy its inhabitants. Nor was it at their option to spare those whom they were thus required to destroy. *They* had no responsibility in the matter; it was *God's act*, and not *theirs*; nor were they any more responsible for it than the plague, the famine, the flames, or the thunderbolt. They incurred responsibility only for their hesitation and disobedience

to the command ; and that they incurred to their cost.

Of all these nations, the *Amalekites* were the signal objects of the divine displeasure. They had so evil entreated him and his people, and their character and influence were such, that God had resolved that the name of Amalek should be blotted out from under heaven. They had already been defeated by the Israelites in a battle at Rephidim ; they had been repulsed by Gideon ; but they were still a powerful and warlike people. When Saul came to the throne, he received an explicit direction from God to destroy this corrupted and corrupting people. The message sent to him was in the following words : “ *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and *smite Amalek*, and utterly destroy *all that they have* and *spare them* not ; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, *ox and sheep, camel and ass*.” Saul understood the command, and in part obeyed it. He did *not* spare man nor woman, infant nor suckling ; “every thing that was vile and refuse” among the *oxen and sheep and camels and asses*, “*THAT* he utterly destroyed.” But there was one man he did not destroy. Agag, their cruel king, whose “sword had made women childless,” he took to his camp as his royal

prisoner. And "the *best* of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatling, and all that was good" he *did not destroy*, but reserved them for himself and his soldiers. He had forgotten that God did not send him on a predatory warfare in order to enrich himself by the spoils; it was on an *exterminating* warfare, and as the executioner of God's *justice*, that he was sent. And he failed to fulfill his solemn commission. And that he himself was conscious of the failure is apparent from his hypocritical and lying tongue on his next interview with the prophet Samuel. "And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said unto him, *Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord!*" Weak dissembler! when the "bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen" which he had but just brought into the Israelitish camp were sure to betray him. "And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Time is the friend of truth. "Be sure your sin will find you out." God gives it a tongue that proclaims it to the church and the world. Ordinary discretion might have foreseen and prevented this disclosure; but this is a circumspection which does not always attend the deceiver's path. With these demonstrations of his disobedience sounding in his ears, in vain did Saul reply, "The *people* spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to

sacrifice unto the Lord thy God !” It was adding insult to disobedience, and only showed the heart of the deceiver.

Nor is this a fact of little moment in Saul's history. Thousands have had resort to this expedient of Saul, and have vainly hoped to extenuate, and even atone, for the most palpable and enormous sins by some sort of religious sacrifices. Monasteries have been founded by benefactions obtained by fraud and violence ; splendid gifts have been cast into the Lord's treasury, for the sake of soothing the festering wound of those ill-gotten gains which “did eat as doth a canker.” The pangs of many a death-bed scene have been alleviated by gifts to sacred and pious uses, of property dishonestly come by ; and, what is worse, there are not wanting ministers of religion, who, unlike the prophet Samuel, comfort the terror-stricken victim with the assurance that charity thus bestowed secures his peace with God. Christianity is at a great remove from this delusion. Jesus rebuked it when he rebuked the scribes and pharisees for the vain attempt to compensate the neglect of a commanded duty by gifts to the altar. Paul rebukes it, when he says, “Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, I am nothing.” There is no more preposterous doctrine than that sin is atoned for, and heaven purchased, by gifts to

Christ and his church. It has filled the coffers of Rome, and stimulated the demands of her exacting priesthood, but never saved a soul from death. There was a period in the history of England when the Catholic priesthood had obtained such power over the consciences of the sick and dying, that twenty-eight per cent. of all the real estate in the kingdom was thus transferred to the church, and when, for the safety of her citizens, as well as her own liberties, she was constrained to protect herself from such encroachment by solemn statute. The Church of Rome, even at the present day, has no more formidable machinery than that by which she extorts property from dying men for pious uses. Not only has Jesuitism access to all the arcana of kings, and cabinets, and domestic retirement, but to the purse-strings of the guilty, relieving their consciences of the burden of wealth "gotten by vanity," and measuring out their consolation by the measure of the gifts. And never is Protestantism more unlike itself than when, in obvious forms or artful, it slides into this delusion. God cannot be deceived, and he will not be mocked. He asks not, nor will he receive, ill-gotten gain. "I, the Lord, love judgment; I HATE ROBBERY FOR BURNT-OFFERING." He will not receive such gifts because he will be the sharer in no robbery. No man may varnish his evil deeds with the profess-

ion or the acts of godliness. This was the sin of Saul. And were it not well for all men that that stinging rebuke and instructive lesson which Samuel uttered in the ears of this subtle hypocrite were engraven on every heart: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as *in obeying the voice of the Lord?* Behold, to *obey* is better than *sacrifice*, and to *hearken* than the fat of rams." Very often, and with great solemnity, do the Scriptures inculcate this truth, demanding of an hypocritical and ostentatious piety "to what purpose is the multitude of its sacrifices," forbidding all such "vain oblations as abomination," and calling upon the devotees of such a religion to "cease to do evil and learn to do well." In this disobedience this king tempted his fate, and sealed his doom a second time. And Samuel said to him, "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath *rejected thee* from being king over Israel."

But this was not all. His course was a downward course. Who can sound the depths of sin in the human heart? Abandoned of God and forsaken by his restraining grace and providence, this wicked king, in the fifth place, had recourse to one who *had a familiar spirit, for the purpose of ascertaining his own destiny*. There are few subject on which the human mind, both in pagan and Christian lands, has been more led

astray than the influence of what the Scriptures call *familiar spirits*. The opinion has been to a great extent adopted, that that class of persons who maintain, or profess to maintain, this intercourse, are in league with the evil spirits of the invisible world, and that through their agency they are enabled to produce extraordinary effects and to predict the events of the future. This is undoubtedly an error, and has led to errors in judgment upon the characters of men, and to features in the criminal code of some modern nations which indicate nothing more clearly than their own superstition. There is no reason to believe that any one was ever thus in league with the devil for such purposes, or if he was, there is no reason to believe that he ever attained his object by such means. We are not disposed to call in question either the direct or indirect agency of the Great Tempter upon the *minds of men*. As the tempter and deceiver, the minds of men are his province. The Scriptures teach us that he "blinds the *mind*," and that "he worketh in the *hearts* of the children of disobedience." How far the length of his chain permits him to influence natural causes it is needless to inquire. The supposition is altogether inadmissible that he possesses the power, either by controlling the laws of a common providence, or by miraculous interposition, to affect human character and destiny.

For if he is able to control the laws of a common providence, then is *he* the governor of this world and not God ; and if he is able to work miracles, then are miracles no proof of a special divine interposition, and the whole doctrine of miracles, and the supernatural revelation that rests upon it, is subverted and overthrown.

Who then are "familiar spirits," and what is the power which they possess? It is not denied that they exist, and have exerted great power. Their existence and power are clearly recognized in the sacred writings. They are recognized in pagan history, in classic song, and in romantic story. Chaldea, Babylon, Egypt, idolatrous Canaan, Greece and Rome, were successively the diviner's throne. In the three former especially the arts of divination and witchcraft were reduced to a system, and became a science. Those who understood and practiced them were not spiritual existences ; they were not devils, nor had they any *miraculous* intercourse with evil spirits. They were men and women, priests and priestesses, inhabitants of the present world ; but they were persons who clothed themselves with mysterious powers ; who *professed* to consult invisible spirits, and *pretended* to know and do what they did not know and never performed. They were the ambiguous and deceitful oracles of the heathen. They were persons professing extra-

ordinary wisdom, and comprised the whole family of fortune-tellers, astrologers, necromancers, exorcists, and pretenders to that knowledge of future events which God has not seen fit to reveal. Their *art* consisted in consulting certain *arbitrary signs* in the heavens or in the earth; or in the flight of the birds; or in the entrails of animals; or in the length or falling of a staff; or in tracing figures in the yielding sand; or in a letter of the alphabet; or in some strange and unaccountable voice; or in the peculiar formation of the palm of the hand; as the *indices and expositors* of human conduct and human destiny. Their *power* consisted in the insolence of their pretensions, and in the credulity, delusion and gullibility of their subjects and victims, and not in any actual assistance the practitioners received from invisible spirits.

The egregious wickedness of this delusive system is perfectly obvious. The worst of it was, that it professed to be a *religious* system; and was so far a conception of the true religion, that it had the *semblance* of miracles. In professing to unlock the secret purposes of the Most High, it was not only a system of deception and imposition, but a practical renunciation of dependence upon God, and a practical denial of his exclusive dominion. The tendency of it was, and ever has been, to weaken the confidence of men in his

truth, to allure them from the light of revelation to pagan darkness, and to seduce them from their allegiance to his government. And in this respect there is plausible reason for considering it a league with the Evil One, because it so intimately coalesces with his designs of evil. It was a grand system for the devil's purposes, because, while on the one hand it adroitly addressed itself to the infidelity and wickedness of the human heart; on the other, it made its insinuating appeal to human credulity and superstition. The professed communications between the living and the dead, of which so much is said in our own day, partakes of the delusion of this wicked and mischievous system. They are but a modern version of those low arts of the devil which men of sense and integrity have ever deemed scarcely worthy of their scorn. Do the votaries of mesmerism and clairvoyance and spiritual rappings in modern times know the ground on which they stand, and what they are doing? Is the thought present to their minds that the law of Moses classifies this whole class of sins as among those "abominable customs of the heathen," by which the land of Canaan was defiled, and that, in that degraded age of the world, it made them punishable with death?

Saul, as the king of Israel, had rigidly carried this law into execution. It is recorded as one

the acts of his reign, that "he had put away those that had familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land." There was one of these proscribed agents however, called in the original Hebrew a *Mistress of Ob*, or a goddess of the *Obi-superstition*, who had escaped the severity of the law, lived in concealment at Endor, and whom Saul's servants had searched out, and commended to their master. He was on the eve of a battle with the Philistines. Samuel was dead. God had departed from him, and answered him neither by dreams, nor by vision, nor by prophets. He had no communication with the unseen world; and in this exigency he resorted to this pythoness, this professed mistress of the mysterious art, to invoke the spirit of the departed Samuel in order to make known to him the issues of the approaching battle. What a fall was this for the king of Israel—leaving his throne in disguise, and under the vail of night seated in the den of a sorceress! She consented to practice the mysteries of her dark profession; and God himself took occasion, through the miraculous appearance of the departed prophet, to rebuke both her and her royal master. She herself was thrown into consternation at his appearance, and "when she saw him, cried with a loud voice." The apparition was as unexpected to herself, as the message was disheartening to Saul. Samuel rebuked him for his

past and present wickedness ; told him that it was in vain he sought for other helpers, now that the Lord had departed from him, and premonished him of his death in the battle of the following day.

The question has been gravely agitated, whether this woman, whose life was forfeited by the laws of the land, did not raise the prophet Samuel ? To this question we hesitate not to reply, that neither she, nor any of those invisible spirits with which she pretended to have intercourse, could raise the dead. There could not have been a more severe rebuke of Saul's resort to necromancy, than that God himself should thus commission Samuel to pronounce his inevitable doom. Saul deserved this rebuke for this appeal to a sorceress. He who began his reign by erecting an altar unto the Lord, thus ends it by erecting an altar to evil spirits, and giving his royal countenance to those nocturnal orgies which were so ruinous to the souls of men. He had recourse to an impostor as profoundly ignorant of the future as himself, and one who by her pretensions made herself equal with God. And what marvel that God confounds both the goddess and the worshiper ? He would know the forbidden future, and God lifts the vail of the terrible future before his eyes. The oracle of the pythoness was his last hope ; and the oracle of the God of Israel responded in tones of despair.

We remark, once more, the crowning wickedness of this agitated and reprobate king was, that *he involuntarily destroyed his own life*. Human progress moves forward by experiments; and so does human wickedness. There was one step more between Saul and the pit. Samuel had been miraculously called from the spiritual world to utter in his ears this awful message: "*To-morrow, thou and thy sons shall be with me: the Lord shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines!*" Never did man enter into battle with such misgivings. He could not doubt the prediction that he and his three sons *should die*. To-morrow's sun would look upon him among the slain, his crown fallen, his robes bathed in blood, his spirit gone to him who gave it, to meet its equitable recompense. So affected was Saul by the prediction, that brave and heroic as he was, "he fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, and there was no strength in him." Sad message from the spirit world! and bitter and heavy enough to crush the heart of peasant or king.

This prophetic sentence was mournfully fulfilled. The next day Saul and his troops took the field against the Philistines, and encamped on the mountains of Gilboa. Israel was put to flight before the Philistines, and the three sons of Saul, Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishuah were slain.

Jonathan, the faithful son and loyal subject of his father, and David's lovely and loving friend, fell in that fearful overthrow. Saul, sorely pressed by the triumphant enemy, was wounded by the archers, and lay in agony upon the field. The wound was mortal; yet the light of life still glimmered in its socket, though it was gradually dying away. His courage failed him; his pride was mortified; and "he said to his armor-bearer, draw thy sword and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me." This atrocious deed his armor-bearer was afraid to perform. Saul was his master, he was the king of Israel, and he could not lift his sword against the Lord's anointed. We honor the spirit of this faithful servant of Israel's suffering king. Saul's request itself was suicide. Be the agony ever so extreme, and though it may seem a kind office thus to put an end to suffering, it is premature kindness, and nothing short of a violation of the imperative command, "Thou shalt not kill." There is reason to fear there are those who allow their consciences quite sufficient license in such extremities, forgetting that the last moments may be the moments of penitence and pardon to the sufferer, and even where they fail of imparting hope to the guilty, never fail to impart the most affecting lessons to the world. Death is his messenger who first

opened the fountain of life in man ; nor may the hand of man ever stop or obstruct the stream, however sluggishly it is ebbing away. Saul's request would have been no palliation of the murderous deed, had it been done. There was a young man, an Amalekite, who in order to ingratiate himself with David, boasted that at the solicitation of the suffering king "he stood upon him and slew him ;" but David commanded him to be slain on his own confession. "And David said to him, Thy blood be upon thy head ; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed." Saul was not the arbiter of his own fate. The lingering moments of that suffering life on the battle-field were as truly his Maker's gift, and the object of his guardian law, as the days of infancy or manhood. Be the period and the sufferings what they may, he who rashly puts an end to it is a transgressor far beyond the ordinary depth of human guilt. And what does the miserable suicide gain, by plunging into the ocean guilt, and shame, and remorse of eternity, in exchange for the transient storms and dark waters of time ? Christian lands, and some pagan countries, have held this crime in such abhorrence, that the laws of not a few of them have visited it even upon the *persons* of the perpetrators, refusing them burial, or assigning them a dishonorable interment at the corners of the highway,

marking the spot by the well-known stake of ignominy driven through their bodies. Human life is a post which no man may abandon without orders from his commander. Its responsibilities, both of doing and of suffering, are never to be resigned until he who sustains them is called by the voice of his great Lawgiver to give up his account. No Lethean cup may obliterate this responsibility. Nothing but the agitation of passion in the darkest tempest of its despair can prompt to so foul a deed. No man is his own master; he is God's creature, and does not belong to himself. He is sent into the world with the direction, "Occupy till I come." Neither his own caprice nor his own sufferings are the law of his being. "None of us liveth to himself, and none of us *dieth* to himself." In the hour of death, not less than in the hour of life, we should please God. Job was a sufferer, and might well say, "I would not live always." But he could also submissively say, "All the days of my appointed time will I *wait*, till my change come." Paul was a sufferer, and desired "rather to depart and be with Christ;" but he could wait for the crown of martyrdom. A decoction of herbs might have saved thousands of martyrs and confessors from the flames; but they would not trifle with the life which God had given.

Saul was the bold and impious trifler. Who knows but he might have lived long enough to

have made his peace with God ? What right had he to limit the divine mercy and cut short his space for repentance ? What pride of heart was that which chose rather to rush upon his own sword than fall into the hands of the uncircumcised ? Why could not he consent to suffer rather than break the law of God ? Yet no sooner did his armor-bearer refuse to slay him than he took his own sword, and plunged it to his heart. There was no repentance here, and there was no heroism. It was a fearful hour, and the deed was fearful thus to close a life stained with crime. He was a lover of life, and ambitious of its honors ; but he was more afraid of the pursuing Philistines than of an avenging God, and more solicitous that his poor body should escape the ignominy of the uncircumcised than that his soul should escape that shame and everlasting contempt which is the self-murderer's doom.

Such was the sad end of Saul, the first of Israel's kings. "And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armor, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols among the people. And they put his armor in the house of Ashtaroth, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-

shan," and his head in the temple of Dagon their god. David had just returned from his slaughter of the Amalekites, and was residing in Ziklag, when these tidings reached him. And there it was, in that lofty and touching style which has rarely been equalled, that he composed that funeral dirge in honor of the dead, which is said to be the first of the kind among all the monuments of antiquity. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy places; how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Ye mountains of Gilboa! let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan! thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been to me. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

There are two concluding reflections in this view of the character of Saul. Most forcibly are we struck, in the first place, *with the folly of men in making pretensions to piety when they have none*. There are wolves in sheeps' clothing; nor is there any class of men more sorely pressed to

maintain consistency than those whose object is to accomplish selfish ends by religious means. Men who have too much religion for their Christian and moral character have a very difficult course to pursue, both in justifying their Christian profession and in concealing their wickedness. It is not an easy thing to discriminate between true and false affections in religion; but where they are false their true character will sooner or later be disclosed. Sometimes it will be disclosed by some bold and unhappy outbreak of their master-passion, like the conduct of Saul toward Jonathan and David and the city of the slaughtered priests; and sometimes by little incidents which ordinary discretion might have foreseen and prevented, like the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen which he rescued from the ruin of Amalek. Their sin will find them out; God will give it a tongue that shall proclaim it to the church and the world. No circumspection will protect them from the impulses of a deceiving heart. In reviewing their history it will be seen that there is some favorite idol they could not abandon for the sake of truth and duty—some fatal rock on the ocean of life on which their *religious* character was shipwrecked.

These remarks are applicable to all mere nominal Christians, while our subject gives them a special relevancy to those who occupy exalted sta-

tions, either in Church or State. Nothing is more unwise than for such men to make pretensions to piety which they do not possess. Just as certainly as time is the friend of truth, will their character be known. Such are their responsibilities, such their associations, such the changes they meet with, such their temptations, and such, ordinarily, are the vigor and intensity of their own minds, that while they, of all men, need the power of godliness, their profession will not conceal their want of it. Saul, in his youth, was probably a self-deceived man rather than a deceiver. But the delusion of youth became the hypocrisy of manhood and the perfidy of still riper years. He could not long maintain a mere religious profession amid the danger of arms and the rivalry for power. He dealt falsely with God, and he dealt falsely with man. And so will any man, under such circumstances, who is not at heart true to both. What his character truly is, *that* his reputation soon will be. So long as the fountain is impure, though it may be walled in and dammed up, there will be crevices through which its impurities will flow. God is very apt, by his providence, to make the true characters of men appear. The character of the faithful may be under a temporary cloud, but the cloud shall pass away; the character of the faithless may, for a time, be

gilded with an artificial light, but the light shall become darkness. All the churches, all the nations, and all men, shall know that there is One who "searcheth the reins and the heart."

2. In the second place, let us be admonished *against progress in sinning*. Those who reject the gospel and go away from Christ little think of the downward path they tread. Just think of the youthful Saul, as, in all the pride and promise and diffidence of youth, he stepped from the obscurest cottage in the Holy Land to the throne of Israel! And then think of him descending from that august throne, and, in disguise and under the vail of night, seated in the den of a sorceress! Think of him in Mount Gilboa, falling upon his own sword! Who knows the deceitfulness of sin? who can sound the depths of it in the human heart? The unrepenting sinner is rushing upon his doom, and furbishing the sword for his own bosom. O beware of this course of heedless wickedness! There is no safety but in resisting evil at its first onset. To tamper with it is to become its victim.

"Vice is a monster of such frightful mein,
As to be hated, needs but to be seen.
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Every sinful thought, every sinful desire and

deed, debases man's moral nature, and renders his downward progress less difficult. Counteracting causes become fewer and less potent, and the progress becomes alarming. It is the destroyer's path, and leads to the chambers of death. Avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it, and turn away. The steps of Saul mark not the path which guilty man should tread. It was not Israel's first but her last king who is the Deliverer-Prince—David's Lord and Son.

CHAPTER XI.

Samuel.

THERE is no more unexceptionable character in the Old Testament, and no more fitting contrast to the character of Saul, than that of the prophet Samuel. It does not dazzle by its splendor so much as attract by its gentleness and beauty. It has none of those inequalities that ordinarily belong to great minds, but is rather distinguished for its equable and uniform excellence. Men immortalize themselves by other means than the brightness of their intellectual endowments. It is not always that the most brilliant characters are the most praiseworthy. There have been, and there are those, who, although they do not occupy so prominent a niche in the temple of fame, occupy a wider space in the hearts and memories of mankind. Who would not rather have been the diffident and amiable Cowper than the splendid Chesterfield; or the unpretending and attractive Mont-

gomery rather than the blazing Byron? The moon silently walks in her brightness *for ages*, while the flaming meteor darts across the heavens and is seen no more.

Samuel and Saul flourished at the same period; their history is inwoven, and is also blended, with all the leading facts in their own times. They were the two leading men at the close of the Hebrew commonwealth, and until the reign of David its second king. They occupied the highest stations, the one in the State and the other in the Church; the one a prince, the other a prophet. It was by their influence and authority, sometimes combined and sometimes in collision, that the kingdom assumed its first form and character, and, by the subjugation of its enemies, prepared the way for the most brilliant and prosperous periods of its history.

There are several strong points in the character of Samuel to which it would be interesting and profitable to direct our thoughts, while we may perhaps illustrate and impress them all by dwelling on one feature of his character. The *one fact* in his history which throws brightness over his whole course—which demands a memorial—which makes his character just such a one as ought to be drawn—which gives it all its excellence, and which may well be engraven especially on the tablet of the youthful mind, is

his **EARLY PIETY**. We do not recollect any remarkable personage in the Old Testament records, unless it be Josiah the king, whose character is so indebted, for its loveliness and lustre, to his early piety, as that of Samuel.

His early history is associated with some touching incidents. There was an aged priest of Israel whose name was *Eli*, seated in the temple at Shiloh, and near the altar stood a "woman of sorrowful spirit," drowned in tears and employed in prayer. "She spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." But for an ungenerous imputation cast upon her by Eli, we might never have known what that prayer was. "She vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts! if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man-child, *I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.*" It was not in the spirit of murmuring and complaint that she uttered this request. God had laid his hand upon her; nor was it until she had tranquilly cast her care upon him who cared for her that she rose above gloom and despondency, wiped away her tears, and left the temple with a cheerful heart. "She went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad."

That praying woman was the *mother of Samuel*.

His piety, like that of thousands, goes back to the prayers of a pious mother. She was no skeptic, no formalist, and no distrustful suppliant. She had great strength of religious principle, great hope and confidence in God, and great peace in believing. Who shall measure the influence of this single prayer?

Nor was she unmindful of her vow. When her son was born she called his name SAMUEL—emphatic name, “saying, Because I have *asked* him of the Lord.” When he was weaned, she carried a costly offering for the temple, took her child with her, and devoutly consecrated him to God for the service of the sanctuary. And then the enigma of her seemingly strange conduct at Shiloh was fully unravelled. “As thy soul liveth, my lord,” said she to the high priest, “*I am the woman* that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. *For this child* I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him; therefore I *have lent him* to the Lord; as *long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.*” He belonged to God as his creature before this consecration; he belonged to him before by the solemn promise and vow of his praying mother; *now* he belonged to him by a new and covenant title, and because he was thus formally and devoutly consecrated to the service of his sanctuary. The surrender was sincere and true;

it was absolute and unconditional; it was without reserve of service, and without limitation of time.

Nor did his parents, in the subsequent education and nurture of their son, lose sight of his high and holy destination; they educated him as an immortal being, and destined to immortal glory. They left him, even when a child, within the precincts of the sanctuary, and under the fostering care of its teachers and its service. And God accepted their offering, and bestowed upon their child the "prophet's reward" and the blessings of his covenant. He was not left in ignorance of his mother's wishes and prayers and renewed acts of consecration, nor of the object for which he was left at Shiloh; for though a child, we read of no grief on his part that he was thus early separated from those he loved, and no reluctance at the service to which he was devoted. His religious devotement to the sanctuary was a lesson he learned from his mother's lips while she dandled him upon her knees; nor is it probable that the thought ever entered his mind, that it was a possible thing for him to be otherwise employed. It was a memorable hour with these devoted parents when they thus left their son in the house of the Lord at Shiloh. But, young as he was, it was not an hour of sadness. They had devoted him to God, and left him under God's guidance and care.

Hannah's heart was full and overflowing; nor could she suppress the exulting song, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God." When the mother of the great *Augustine*, discouraged and depressed by the indications of growing wickedness and immorality in a son whom she had devoted to God, went to her pastor in agony and tears, he said to her, "Begone, good woman; it is not possible that the child of such tears should perish." It would require strong proof to convince us that the son of such a mother as Hannah's grew up an ungodly youth.

How early he became pious, the Scriptures do not inform us; that it was during his *childhood* is apparent from the whole scriptural narrative. We are told that "he ministered before the Lord, being a child." It is recorded of him also that "he *grew*, and was *in favor with the Lord* and also with men." God moreover spake to him upon his pillow; he had frequent interviews with him in the night-watches, and made him, even when he was a child, the medium of communicating his designs, and truth, and will to the venerable priesthood which had so long been established at Shiloh. He was not merely a godly youth, but

a godly *child*. He had the same native sinfulness, and the same proneness to go astray with all other depraved and lost descendants of Adam. But he had been given to God, trained up for God, renewed and sanctified by his grace, and adopted into his family. He who "gathers the lambs with his arm and carries them in his bosom," called him into the fold in a cloudy and dark day, and there taught him to hear his voice and follow his footsteps. Unassuming and childlike as his piety was, for a child it was rich and matured, undissembling and unfeigned, well proportioned and harmonious, dignified and lovely. It was this his early piety which so distinguished him from the young and the old of his times.

This thought deserves some enlargement; and we proceed, as we have already intimated, to advert to the influence which his early piety exerted upon his life and character.

True religion is the most powerful principle of action ever imparted to men. It is a bud of un-earthly origin, a scion engrafted on a poisoned and degenerate stock; but which so insinuates itself into every stem and fiber, that it penetrates the root, permeates the branches, and quickens and regenerates alike the oak of seventy winters and the sapling of a day. The power it exerted over Samuel is apparent,

In the first place, *from the evils from which*

it protected him in a perilous age of the world. A child born and educated in the bosom of the Church of God, and in the brighter periods of her spiritual history, has few evils to contend with, and few dangers to encounter, compared with the one who is thrown upon the world in the years of great moral degeneracy. Samuel began his career in an evil day. Moses and Joshua, the great lights of the Hebrew nation, were dead. The Israelites had taken possession of the Promised Land; the law of property was established; each estate was held on the tenure of military service, and "all Israel was one standing army." The government had long been in the hands of men distinguished for military activity and daring, and not a few of them of so corrupt a character that the nation, was on the verge of apostasy. There was little to retard the progress of the Philistine conquests; Eli, the high priest and judge of the nation, had become an old man; while his sons had introduced disorder and licentiousness into the sacred office that threatened to degrade the worship of God at Shiloh to the gross impurities of idolatrous lands. In this critical period of the nation's history, and amid this depravation of public morals, young Samuel was growing into power within the very precincts of the sacred but polluted Tabernacle. A single false step and he was ruined; all his future usefulness was eclipsed by

an impenetrable cloud. He stood on an eminence where a doubtful character, or even an ungenerous suspicion, might have been his undoing.

"The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." The whole course of human life is very apt to be a series of mistakes where it is not begun wisely. It is very difficult for subsequent circumspection to recover what has been lost by youthful folly and waywardness; and still more difficult from so wild a stock to produce the fruits of habitual circumspection and self-control. Discouragement and depression, more especially in sensitive minds, are rather to be looked for in such a young man than unsleeping vigilance and rigorous efforts of reform. The shame and self-distrust that are consequent on immorality, lead to indifference and self-abandonment, rather than stimulate and sustain strong and virtuous purposes. There is no more melancholy view than a young man thus launching forth upon the stormy sea of life, reckless of its shoals, unprepared for its tempests, and, long before he reaches his destined haven, or attains any of the ends to which he early ventured to aspire, cast up like a withered hulk on some lee-shore. Nor is there any sure protection from such a catastrophe except in the steadfastness of moral and religious principle. High lineage, splendid talents, expectations of wealth, so far from protecting him, only multiply

his exposures Education and accomplishments, a strong sense of propriety and a wakeful worldly discretion avail little to protect him while he remains ignorant of God and bows not to the truths of his word. Difficult and perilous as young Samuel's condition was, his mind was imbued with the teachings of heavenly wisdom; the law of God was in his heart, and the great torch-light upon his path. There was a tender conscience within that youthful bosom, and there were principles of rectitude there, and the love of right. The living God was his "refuge and strength;" he began early to "commit his way unto the Lord;" and this it was that kept him in safety. In the character of most other good men of whom we have an account in the Scriptures, there is some visible blemish, some drawback upon their great excellences; but there is no recorded blemish in the life of Samuel. Though he lived to be an old man, he was without reproach from youth to old age. The piety which so early budded in the house of God, and which blossomed on the head of the child in Shiloh, remained unwithered by the corruptions of a degenerate world, a degenerate church, and a degenerate priesthood; nor, as the seasons of human life followed, did it wilt under the summer's sun, nor was it blighted by the wintry blast.

In the next place, *his youthful piety fitted him*

for distinguished usefulness. If a young man were a mere animal, capable only of pleasure and pain, and destined only to develop his faculties in the pursuit of sensual and earthly enjoyments, his untaught instinct alone would be all the guide he requires. But his Maker has assigned him a higher and nobler vocation. He was made *to be useful*; this is the great end of his being. Not more truly was the sun set in the firmament, in order to give light to them that dwell on the earth; not more truly are the clouds collected in the heavens for the purpose of giving rain; and not more truly do the trees grow and flourish, that they may bear fruit, than man was formed to minister to the well-being of man, and subserve the claims and glory of God. It is a great lesson for a young man to learn, that time and the world will disappoint him if he *lives not to be useful*; and that with all its flattering promises of enjoyment, the most he can get out of human life, either in youth or in age, is *its usefulness*.

How shall he be useful? What "*rule* hath God given to *direct us how* we may glorify and enjoy him?" You are familiar with the answer to this great question. The rule, and the only rule is "the word of God." There is no more obvious, and no more important axiom, than that to act well his part in the world, the thoughts

of God his Maker, his Redeemer and his Judge ; his dependence upon him, his obligations to him, and the way of life which he has revealed, are thoughts with which he ought to be familiar as early as he can comprehend them. Better had a young man wander with the tribes that people the forest, than be a dweller in Christian lands and live untaught in the truths of Christianity ; and better, far better, that he had not known than to know and disregard them. Many a young man knows them too well, who knows only to be the more bitterly reproached, and the more certainly and justly condemned. His usefulness depends upon the *impressions* which these great realities make upon his *character*.

Young Samuel was born to a high destiny. He was the *Judge* of Israel ; it was an office of high honor and responsibility. The political affairs of the nation were under his direction and control ; and he held the office "all the days of his life," a "just man ruling in the fear of God." He, too, was their *Prophet*, the father and founder of the school of the prophets, and their venerated and able teacher. He was the most eminent man of his age, and among the most eminent in Hebrew history. There was no man in whom the nation had such confidence, or whom Saul their king so respected and feared. It is recorded of him that "the people feared the Lord and Sam-

uel," than which there is no higher commendation. And the foundation of his usefulness was his piety. The people had seen him grow up from his childhood, always demeaning himself as a pious child, a pious youth; and when he became a man, they respected him as one whose character and example were without reproach; as a man of sterling virtue and integrity—a sincere and God-fearing man. He had more influence than any other man in the nation from this single circumstance. Saul looked up to him in the time of danger, and, while he sought his counsel and his prayers, trembled under his faithful and unsparing rebuke. And when in his darkest hours this wicked king solicited the prayers of the prophet, it is delightful to hear the assurance from the prophet's lips that he should still be remembered in his supplications before God. HIS PRAYERS WERE VALUED; the people marked how God answered them; and in the hour of danger they never failed to make this man of God their resort, because they knew he was a man of prayer. Nor did they deem his usefulness in this respect among the least of their privileges; nor did *he* deem it a light matter to be permitted to pray for them. "Moreover, as for me," said he, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." He bore that people upon his devout heart; and many is the time when he stood be-

tween the living and the dead, and gave proof to Israel that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

The great beauty of his usefulness was, that it began so early and was continued so long. The prime of his youth, the vigor of his manhood, and the experience of age were also devoted to the best interests of Israel. His entire life aimed at making this people a better and happier nation. There is a vast difference between the bright and illumined career on which he so early entered, and the flickering dead light of that religion which is first kindled in a dusky old age. It is the morning brightness that shines clear, that waxes in the strength of noon, and which, though sometimes obscured by clouds, sweeps its strong and steady course to the western sky. The gracious God, indeed, rejects not those who come into his vineyard at the eleventh hour; even the wretched remnant of a life, jaded with toil and pleasure, and worn out in sin, that is truly devoted to him, shall not meet the discouragement of his refusing frown. Yet should the fact never be lost sight of, that for one veteran enemy of God that finds access to his family and service, a thousand youthful offenders set their faces toward him with penitence and hope.

In the third place, the youthful piety of Samuel *received peculiar tokens of the divine favor.*

True piety is beloved of God, whether in the old or the young; but it is eminently beloved and cherished by him when it is expressed in the unsophisticated and transparent beauty of early life. That scene in the sanctuary, at Shiloh, where "the child Samuel ministered before the Lord, girded with a linen ephod," and where God awaked him from his pillow and he obeyed the call, is among the most beautiful scenes in scriptural history. Where the graces of the Spirit are thus engrafted on the green, fresh stalk, and before it has been scorched by the sun, or riven by the blast, must ever be regarded as the most rich in promise; they form budding, blossoming, fragrant promise of the full-grown year. They may not be invested with its most varied and splendid robes, but they are the most unsullied and pure. They are the beauties of holiness expanding its flowers on the dawn of human life and over its morning dew. There is no more enchanting sight in all this lower world than a little child thus giving its heart to God. It reminds us of the children in the temple, when they cried, "Hosannah to the Son of David!" How is God exalted by such simple, childlike piety! What a beautiful view, when the wayward tendencies of the young mind are thus counteracted, its fickleness and instability controlled, its inexperience and credulity no longer following phantoms, and

the germ of its rebellion subdued into unquestioning submissiveness and peace! What is there on this earth to be compared with childhood's confiding tenderness and unsuspecting confidence, its guileless simplicity, its cheerfulness and buoyancy, its susceptibility, and its imitative propensities thus receiving the stamp of an unearthly mind? How little of earth, and how much of heaven, to see such a child, before the evil days come, and before pensive reflection, and disappointed hopes, and disrelish of the world, and withering temptation assail and ensnare, making the eternal God its refuge! Sweet flower of Paradise, may the storms of earth pass over thee, and may thy fragrance be exhaled under its dark clouds! "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God has perfected praise." He loves his own work. It is recorded of the child Samuel, that "the Lord was with him." He heard the beatings of that young heart when it throbbed at midnight because he had called the child. From that hour he was God's special care. He kept him as the apple of his eye, and watched over him with more than a mother's tenderness. God was his helper, and made him strong in weakness, resolute and faithful in duty, bold and successful in his high vocation. God was his comforter, and gave him tranquillity in the midst of confusion, peace in the midst of war, light in darkness and

embarrassment, hope in despondency, and promised grace in every time of need. God never lost sight of this his first love, and these early vows and devotement. He never does lose sight of them. "Go, cry in the ears of Jerusalem, Thus saith the Lord: I *remember* thee; the *kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals* when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." He takes it kindly that the young love him, and records it to their praise. There are sacrifices which they make in becoming the children of God, which are not made by the old. And God never forgets them. The covenant he entered into with them in their youth, and the promise he then gave them, he never alters. Amid all their inexperience and exposures—in all their conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil—in all their infirmities, and follies, and even sins, he whom their first warm affections chose as their portion and joy, never leaves them nor forsakes them. The Shepherd of Israel gathers them and carries them in his arms.

"E'en down to old age, all his people shall prove,
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And then when gray hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in his bosom be borne."

In the fourth place, Samuel's youthful piety

prepared him for a happy old age, and a peaceful death. Youthful piety is, in every view, the precursor of a happy life. The young may seek their enjoyments in the pleasures of sense, the accumulation of wealth, or the pursuits and conflicts of ambition and fame; yet who, that has been ardently devoted to these pursuits, has not proved that this is not the true way of being happy either early or long? Few, who make these their great object, either acquire them, or retain them when acquired, or enjoy them when retained. They take to themselves wings and fly away like an eagle toward heaven; while they are inconstant as the waves of the ocean, and fragile as the spider's web. Even where they are most enjoyed, they bring with them so much solicitude, and care, and watchfulness; so many months of vanity and wearisome nights; and withal, so many unhallowed jealousies and passions, and so much foolish rivalry, wicked pride, and mortifying self-reproach; that, for the most part, they are such "a toil of pleasure," that the most successful competitors in the race are not unfrequently the most wearied and the most miserable.

The fountains of Samuel's joy were not broken cisterns; nor was the stream poisoned; nor did it provoke the thirst it could not assuage. His religious enjoyments began in early life, and were subsequently associated with his earliest and hap-

piest remembrances. He had none of those sources of regret which imbitter the recollections of those whose youth is devoted to folly and sin. Men in more advanced years live upon the past ; the great ingredient of their happiness or misery is the remembrance of by-gone days and scenes ; they may be dark waters which roll back upon them, or they may be limpid and clear. Job once said, "Thou writest bitter things against me ; thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." The iniquities of youth are not easily forgotten, even though repented of, forsaken and pardoned. Years of labor and circumspection, disappointment and sorrow, may pass away without repairing the losses of youthful folly. It is scarcely possible but they should be felt where the first and best days of human life are thrown away. Where the morning is dark, and its meridian overcast, though the sun shine upon its departing hours, its descending rays scarcely efface the traces of the storm. The favored prophet of whom we are speaking encountered no such deep shadows upon his prolonged pathway. The fearful consequences of early wickedness did not visit him ; he had no youthful infidelity, no vicious and insnaring companionships, no corrupting vices to look back upon ; nor was his mind insnared, and his thoughts and imagination fascinated by the recurring and lingering power of those early habits

which are so fatal to cheerful piety. His childhood, his youth, his manhood received the delightful and the progressive tokens of God's favor. The seal of his early adoption into the divine family was never obliterated, and never faint. Not only had he God's testimony, but the testimony of his own conscience, and the testimony of all Israel, that both in his private and public character he was without reproach. One of the most affecting scenes of his life took place at Gilgal when he was about sixty years of age, and when he resigned his authority as a civil magistrate into the hands of Saul. It was at the close of a religious service, and in presence of all the people: "And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold I am old and gray-headed. Behold here I am before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken; or whose ass have I taken; or whom have I defrauded; whom have I oppressed; or of whose hand have I received any bribe, to blind mine eyes withal? and I will restore it to you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, nor hast thou taken aught of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, HE IS WITNESS." Such a public appeal and response deserve a place in the sacred rec-

ord, and are in perfect keeping with his early history.

This distinguished man lived long enough after this, to counsel the people, instruct and rebuke Saul, and anoint the youthful David as his successor to the throne. The last years of his life were employed in the school of the prophets, at the place of his birth, where the future teachers of Israel availed themselves of the riches of his thoughts and experience. He lived to the advanced age of *ninety-eight* years; and though he had been a wanderer and oppressed with public cares, his old age was tranquil and happy. It was a rich and green old age. The spring of life extended itself into the brown, luxuriant autumn, and showered its blossoms upon the snow-clad clods of winter. And when the winter of his long life broke up, and his rigid frame was laid in the dust, it slept in his father's sepulchers, and by the side of those beloved and venerated parents who early consecrated him to God. Precious spot to be consecrated as the last earthly rest of such a man! And is it not something more than a picture of the imagination when we say, there was one sepulchral stone there, bearing this short inscription, THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL? There, by the side of Elkanah and Hannah, he "rests in the grave until the resurrection."

How beautiful, how pleasant is the memory of

the pious dead! "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." We lay them in the still grave, and though we see their face no more, their memory is blessed. Young Samuel still lives, and shall live in the affections of millions. Homer and Shakspeare, Hannibal and Napoleon, the great Henry and the greater Louis shall be forgotten. Samuel is immortal. "And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah."

The two following reflections are naturally suggested by this view of his character.

1. *It strongly urges the claims of the young on the church of God.* Although we cannot go back and enter with the young around us into all the emotions and hopes of youth, we can better understand than we once could, that they are the flower of the world and the hope of the church. We are greatly desirous to see them more truly dedicated to God, and nurtured in his fear. The time was in this land when, at the close of the last century, we heard our fathers express the fear that the ministry of reconciliation was being so diminished in numbers that the church knew not where to look for an adequate supply of religious teachers. There were not a few Elkanahs and Hannahs among them, who felt it to be a dark day, and who, with one accord and great

earnestness, besought the God of Zion not to forget the children of his covenant. He heard their prayers; and when, at the beginning of the present century, he poured out his spirit upon the American churches, that blessed work of grace, which continued more than thirty years, was distinguished for nothing so much as the conversion of great multitudes of the children of his people, and the early consecration of their sons to God in the gospel of his Son. The active and full-grown Christianity which now prevails in this land, and the missionary spirit which is its glory, were chiefly the fruits of those visits of heavenly grace. It is a dark day which now overshadows us, and one of the alarming indications of the age in which we live, not simply that there is a dearth of youthful piety, but that, of the fair youth who become pious, so few are devoted to the service of the sanctuary. Old ministers are dying off, and few among the young step forward to occupy their places. Never was the demand for ministerial labor so urgent, and never were the minds of young men, fitted for this service, so diverted from it to other and more lucrative vocations. From causes, some of which are obvious, the ministry of reconciliation in the minds of the intelligent and honored seems to be a profession from which their sons are proscribed. The mother of Samuel did not reason, and did not feel, as the

mothers of the present day feel and reason. It is a sad mistake to conclude, that, because there are trials in the ministry, and dependence, and restraints and exposures, we will aim at something better for our children than to serve the God of Hannah and Samuel in his temple. Fashion and pleasure, and worldly distinction and brilliant attainments in other vocations cannot compensate the Christian church, nor the Christian parent, nor the Christian child, for this melancholy oversight. Where, where is the Lord God of Hannah and Samuel? What Christian parent, whose heart beats high with pious emotions, and who, when he lifts his eyes and hands toward heaven, is not filled with earnest desires that his children may live to some purpose? And what nobler purpose than to serve God as young Samuel served him?

2. The character of Samuel, in the second place, *strongly urges the importance of youthful piety*. Thousands never seek the Lord, because they do not seek him while they are young, and because they allow this seed-time of human life to run to waste, and become over-grown with tares. "Childhood and youth are vanity;" but they are the season of hope. Middle life is the season of peril to the soul, because it is then that she intrenches herself within the strongholds of sin, and boasts of the impregnable strength of her citadel.

Old age is the season of discouragement, of despondency, and not unfrequently of despair. You who are *young* our subject counsels. Take heed lest you shut this *door of hope*! Let Samuel's piety mingle its light and hopes with your young years, and illumine all the dark passages of your pilgrimage. *Saul* and *Samuel*—how great the contrast! In life, in death, in eternity, how great the contrast! Yet is every youth pursuing a course that will terminate either in this mournful or this joyous end. Most affecting is it to see how early the tokens of reprobation sometimes show themselves in those youthful minds that are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God! Thus it is that many a young man lives. He is wise, and has a strong will to do evil; but "to do good he has no knowledge." He lives fast and he dies soon; the grief of his parents, the pity of angels, he lives and dies without God and without hope. You may "sow the wind and reap the whirlwind"; or you may sow under the mild sun and dropping rain of the opening year, and reap the ripe, mellow harvest. There is but one day of grace, and one bright morning to that day. In a little while—who can tell but it may be to-morrow?—and the light of that morning will fade; a sickly cloud will overshadow it; it will fade away in the night of the grave.

CHAPTER XII.

Ruth, the Moabitess.

IN order to appreciate this and the following chapter, we must transport ourselves to a far-distant pagan land, not far from Palestine, just on the east of the river Jordan and the Dead Sea. It derived its name from *Moab*, the son of Lot, whose descendants conquered it from a gigantic and warlike people who were sunk in the grossest idolatry. It was originally an exceedingly fertile country, but is now little better than a barren desert, traversed only by wandering Arabs, and fulfilling the prediction—"Moab shall be a perpetual desolation."

At the period of which we now speak there were *two females* in that pagan territory who occupy no unimportant place in the Old Testament history. They both married into a Hebrew family, and are both brought to our notice under the following circumstances of touching interest. During the administration of the *Judges* of Israel,

the land of Canaan was so severely scourged by famine that "a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons." The name of the man was *Elimelech*, the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of their sons Mahlon and Chilion. We know not how long he sojourned in this pagan land; he did not live to return to the land of Judah, but died in Moab; and here Naomi was left a widow, with her two sons. Not long after their father's death, her two sons were married to these two daughters of Moab, whose names were *Orpah* and *Ruth*, the latter of whom became a proselyte to the Jewish faith, while the former, after having been brought within the influence of true religion, ultimately renounced it and apostatized to paganism.

In this benighted land Naomi dwelt about ten years, not a little to the trial of her faith, and in the midst of scenes that recalled the aching remembrance of him whom she had loved in Canaan, and not less in Moab. To add to her grief, here her two sons died also. There was a chasm in her heart which nothing could supply. The cold sympathies of this pagan land could but multiply the griefs which they would fain have assuaged. She had lost what she could not regain. Her cup of sorrow was filled. And what marvel if her only re-

sort now was to turn her thoughts once more to her native country, rather than quietly resign herself to gloom and despondency in a land of strangers. She could not force herself again into the world; there was nothing to interest her in Moab save the sepulchers of her husband and her sons. Her mind was now chained to a single object; she had "heard how the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread," and her heart panted after the land which God had promised and given to her fathers.

Yet was it, in many respects, a sad and melancholy return. Nor is it unnatural for us to suppose that it would have cheered her solitude to have been attended by her widowed daughters. Why she did not invite and encourage them to return with her, rather than dissuade them from their own expressed purpose, is difficult for us to understand, unless the reasons were found in the embarrassments of her own condition. She herself was about to seek a refuge she knew not where. She was thrown upon the world as a widow and an orphan. She "went out full," was going back "empty;" and should she even find a welcome for herself in her native land, she hesitated to tax the bounty of those to whom she herself must be indebted, on behalf of these two strangers. Her nation also were a peculiar people, separated from other nations, and nei-

ther their laws, their religion, nor their customs, encouraged accessions from the surrounding idolatrous clans. Though it is obvious that she loved these daughters, that they had commended themselves to her confidence, and that she gratefully remembered their kindness to her departed sons, she expressed no desire that they should accompany her to the land of Judah.

They were already on their way, when she addressed them in the following affectionate and affecting language: "*Go, return*, each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me! The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" It was a scene of great tenderness. "She kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept." The effect of this expostulation was not probably such as she had anticipated. Calamity is not the season when the female heart becomes indifferent and cold.

These daughters-in-law could not thus be dissuaded from their purpose. Their prompt reply was, "Surely we will return with thee to thy people!" Even *Orpah*, whose inconstant heart at last relented, seemed not less determined than the more constant *Ruth*. Naomi, not without her fears that they were making a rash resolve, and that they had not counted the cost of thus re-

nouncing their own land and joining themselves to the Lord's people, replied to them, "*Turn back*, my daughters; turn again; why will ye go with me?" This last appeal deeply affected them, and "they both lifted up their voice again and wept." Orpah, perhaps not for the first time, perceived that it was the more expedient course to return to the land of Moab. Once more, and for the last time, she kissed her mother-in-law, and with this affectionate farewell, "went back to her people and her gods." Not so, her unmoved and faithful sister. "Ruth clave unto Naomi." Her purpose was formed; she had determined to forsake the idolaters of Moab and incorporate herself with the people of God; and the time had come for making that purpose known. Strange to say, Naomi still endeavored to dissuade her; or if not to dissuade her, to put the sincerity and strength of her purpose to the test. Yet she was firm and immovable. "And Naomi said unto her, Behold thy sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law." But Moab's cup to her was poisoned; never could she return to that land of idols. She had other aims, and was chained to her purpose by a superior power. It was no reason that she should vacillate, because others vacillated. Why should she stay away from the God of Israel, because others stayed away? Rather would she renewed-

ly and unalterably commit herself; and though friends, and country, and the defection of those she loved, would fain have allured her to return, nothing could persuade her again to bow at the altars of Moloch. She could never again be as she had been. It was a noble and high-born purpose which animated her youthful bosom. "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part me and thee!" She preserved her resolution inviolate, accompanied her mother-in-law to the land of Judah, and lived and died one of the Lord's people.

There are some beautiful characteristics of genuine piety in the conduct of this youthful female, which it may be profitable for us to contemplate.

In the first place, she presents an *impressive example of conversion from heathenism to the religion of the Bible*. She was by birth a *pagan*, and educated not only amid the insensate thoughtlessness of pagan lands, but in the belief and worship of the many false gods of the heathen. Conversions from paganism to Christianity, at the present day, do not differ essentially from her

conversion from the religion of Moab to the religion of the Hebrews. The moral condition of the heathen in the age of the world in which we live, is but too accurate a portraiture of what it was in that early age. Fair and beautiful as the territory of Moab was, it was a land of darkness. Its imaginary deities were not so many as are found in some more modern lands; but they possessed the same monstrous and disgusting forms, and received the same obscene, cruel, and preposterous worship. The idolatrous fabrics of the far East are but the anti-types of the Temple of Moloch and Baal, where not only the most horrid rites were performed without remorse, but where a guilty conscience often found relief in the blood of human sacrifices. There are, it is true, glaring pictures of human profligacy elsewhere than in pagan lands; yet is paganism the soil where the natural wickedness of the human heart flourishes uncontrolled and in rank exuberance. It is a law of the human mind and God's providence, that men are like the gods they worship; where their gods are examples of polluting, degrading, and demoralizing wickedness, it is no marvel that the history of the heathen world is a history of vice and crime. Paganism is one vast sea of wickedness lashing the shore at every season of tempestuous excitement, and whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

It is a remarkable fact that so lovely a character, and so exalted a destiny, as subsequent events show appertained to Ruth, was found in a land where God was not only so forgotten and degraded, but where the purity and joys of social and domestic life were imbibittered and poisoned at their source. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." She was "a chosen vessel," and the time had come for him to take her out of that fermenting mass of corruption and burnish her for his own sanctuary. The famine in Canaan, the removal of Elimelech and Naomi to Moab, the marriage of their two sons with Orpah and Ruth, and their subsequent death, were all links in that chain of events which was designed by infinite wisdom and love to draw this favored Moabiteess from the corruptions of idolatry and bind her to the God of Israel. He had sent these famished Hebrews to the fertile plains of Moab more for her sake than their own, and more for his own great name's sake than for either; and where, in their own sacred retirement, they might watch this blossom of hope, and transplant it to the Holy Land. It was from their lips that she first learned that the gods of Moab were a vanity and lie, and that to serve them was to be like them. It was under their kind culture that she first received the knowledge of the true God, and from them she first understood that if she would

be rescued from the superstition and bondage of that dark land, she must acquaint herself with a God she need not blush to worship, and find a religion into which she could safely pour all the ardor of her young heart. She became a converted woman. The refuge she sought, she found in the truth, and worship and religion of the Hebrews, and believed, practiced and adopted them.

In the second place, she presents *a beautiful instance of supreme and tender attachment to the God of Israel*. Her religion began in a heart of ingenuous, unembarrassed love to Israel's God; she was an early example of the many heathen spoken of by the apostle, who "were turned from dumb idols to serve the *living God*." There is no heart so desolate as the heart of that man or that woman who has nothing to love. Those there had been whom she had loved, but they were among the departed. Her heart slept with them amid the graves of Moab. She had been disappointed in her expectations from the world. She had roved from scene to scene, and been banded about from one object to another, till, wearied in the pursuit, she had at length found one Being in the universe on whom her heart could rest, and in the enjoyment of whom she found sweet repose. Like a bird which has been long on the wing, she found her refuge and her rest in God, and there placed her desires, her

hopes, her joys and confidence. It was wisely ordered that she "should bear the yoke in her youth," and learn from painful experience that this world could not satisfy her. She had pure affections, ardent affections—affections that had passed through the furnace, and come forth like gold, and which nothing but God could gratify. They were affections which, however once wayward and treacherous, now delighted themselves in nothing so much as God. Her heart was his, though bruised and broken by trials; her thoughts were his; his her time, her influence; her whole self was his. He was the widow's *God*. Perhaps we cannot appreciate the emphasis with which that daughter of sorrow uttered the words, "THY God shall be MY God!" It was not a transient purpose, like Orpah's, springing from domestic ties and present impulses; it was not a rash resolve produced by Naomi's tenderness; it was a heaven-born and holy purpose, arising from her love to God. Other lords had had dominion over her; she had loved and served the creature more than the Creator; but it was now her purpose, and henceforth, to acknowledge the only living and true God, and to be called by his name. The choice was honest and ingenuous, and the consecration without reserve. They were intelligent thoughts which she uttered, and they were joyous thoughts when she said, "Thy God shall be

my God." It was because her heart was anchored here that she did not vacillate and turn back with Orpah. There was no other whom she so loved, and on whom she so reposed. Before all the gods of Moab; before all that Moab or the world could give; above all that she could hope for or conceive from other sources, she selected the God of Israel for her chief joy. In heaven there was nothing, and on the earth there was nothing, that had charms for her compared with God. God was her supreme love and delight, her guardian and guide, her comforter and hope, who took the place of all other gods, and to whom only she looked for light, holiness and peace.

Inseparable from her attachment and consecration to the God of Israel, there is, in the third place, *the impressive act of her incorporation with his visible people*. All the rest of the world, except the Hebrews and a few of their collateral descendants, had even in this early age of the world lost the knowledge of the true God. Although there had been, and were still among that people, mournful indications of apostasy, affecting proofs of an idolatrous spirit, and no small degree of infidelity and wickedness; with all their imperfections, they constituted the only professed people of God on the earth. There was spurious religion and hypocrisy in the Hebrew

church; and, beside all this, there was great unfaithfulness, inconstancy and imperfection among those who were the true Israel of God. Yet they were God's people. The true Israel were found only there, and the only people whom he had called out from the surrounding nations as a people for his praise. To this people Naomi belonged, and was now returning to share their inheritance, and with them Ruth resolved to become incorporated. God's chosen people were among them—a people whom he would keep as the apple of his eye, through whom the true religion was to be perpetuated in the world, and to whom he would give the salvation of his Son when the wicked are turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. The resolution of Ruth, therefore, to Naomi was, “*Thy people shall be my people* ;” and she was not ignorant of the meaning of her words. When she had once given her heart to *God*, it did not require much reflection to unite herself to his *people*. Her love to *him* would materially produce love to *them* ; she could hold fellowship with *them*, because she could hold fellowship with *him*. Her heart inclined her to do so ; God himself required it ; it was demanded by the nature, designs and organization of a visible church ; and it was the revealed method by which she could honor him before the world. The Hebrew church made express provision for

the introduction of converted pagans, and treated them no more as foreigners, but as fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

This is no unimportant feature in the character of pure piety. It is the same thing in all ages of the world, in all lands, and in all denominations of good men. There is in them all that union of heart which lies at the basis of religious fellowship. This fellowship always implies this union of heart to God and his people. Ruth had drank into this "one spirit," and therefore desired to associate herself, not with the idolaters of Moab, but with the worshipers of God, and with those whose feelings sympathized with her own, and by whom she might be instructed, encouraged, and confirmed in the great pursuits of her future life, and in her religious and immortal hopes. She was a godly woman, and sought the society of the godly. She bore the image of her Father who is in heaven, and sought those as her associates who were also partakers of the divine nature, and prepared to engage in the same employments and encounter the same enemies and discouragements. The bond that bound her to God bound her to Naomi, and bound them both to the visible church. The character of all truly converted persons constitutes them a peculiar people; nor is it among the least indications of the divine wisdom and

goodness that they have this distinct and visible organization.

In the fourth place, the piety of Ruth is also strongly commended *by her self-denying and self-sacrificing spirit*. Naomi and Ruth were both pilgrims and strangers on the earth; they were both self-denying and heavenly-minded women; the latter, especially, gave proof of this high character by thus forsaking her country and kindred for the love she bore to God and his people. She might have remained in Moab without reproach, and shared the common abundance of her countrymen; but in so doing she must have become insnared, if not a partaker in their wickedness, while the mournful result would have been the abandonment of her religious hopes. For such a course and such a result she was not prepared; rather would she forsake all and follow the path of truth and duty. The circumstances in which she was placed were well fitted to put her character to the test. It was not the wealth and splendor of Naomi that attracted her, for she was a bereaved and destitute woman. It was no promise and no prospect of future wealth, or alliance, or comfort, or even home; for Naomi had premonished her of the forbidding aspects in all these particulars of her future condition. Yet none of these things influenced her. Whatever she might forsake, and whatever her future con-

dition and prospects might be—be they prosperity or adversity, evil report or good report, the cross or the crown—she clave to God and his people.

This was her spirit, and this is always the nature of true piety. Such are the uniform and unbending terms of true discipleship. True religion, just so far as it goes, makes no compromise with a supremely selfish mind. In every instance of genuine conversion, there is that moral revolution in the soul by which self is dethroned, and the crown restored to him who is God over all, blessed for ever more. The struggle is sharp and severe; but the enmity of the carnal mind is slain, its deadly egotism subdued by Almighty grace, and the soul is made willing to own another master in the day of God's power. Every good man cleaves to truth and duty, for truth and duty's sake. In his inquiries after truth they are not his own fancies, nor the opinions nor traditions of men that govern him, but the word of God. In all questions of duty, they are not the habits and maxims of the world which he consults, but God's pure and unchanging law. In all his allotment, they are not his own desires and will which have the supremacy, but the will of God. The ends which he aims at are no longer his own gratification and honor; rather is it his great concern to please and honor God. Supreme selfish-

ness, no more than any other form of sin, is ever wholly eradicated from the heart in the present world; but, as the love of God waxes stronger, this hostile passion waxes weaker and more weak. Whoever imagines himself to be the friend of God and his people, without the distinctive livery of a self-denying heart and life, "that man's religion is vain."

Ruth rightfully wore this badge of discipleship. She came out from a world that lieth in wickedness; she forsook the broad way trodden by the multitude, and entered the strait and narrow way found by the few, without knowing the obstacles and trials to which she would be subjected. She did it because it was true, and because it was right. She was prepared for trials, whatever they might be. Be they ignominy and suffering for faith and a good conscience—be they the humblest condition among the lowly, the most dishonored among the despised, among the poor the most impoverished—she had made her choice. Be it a bed of down or a pallet of straw, her purpose was, "Where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge." She desired no better allotment than the allotment of God's people. She knew that that allotment was to do and suffer his will, and to that she cheerfully assented. She would not complain of obscurity and disappointment, of perplexity and sorrow, of

bonds and afflictions, if the God of Israel chose to visit them upon his people.

The fifth and last trait in her beautiful character was *her religious firmness and decision*. This was the crown of her queenly excellence. It was not a purpose hastily formed when she resolved to "turn from dumb idols to serve the living God;" nor was it one from which she was ever diverted. Sudden impulses, strong reasonings even, and high and noble resolves, do not impel the mind of apostate man to decided and persevering rectitude. It was above and beyond nature for this widowed and forsaken woman so truthfully to declare that she would never change her course when she turned her back on Moab and directed her way toward the dwellings of Israel. That sacred Spirit, when he first moved upon her heart in the humble tent of Elimelech and Naomi in that dark pagan land, then and there began a work which he stood pledged to carry on. The promise had already been recorded, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." He who teaches as no other teaches had engraven it upon her heart; she had a presentiment of its preciousness, and hesitated not to bind herself to be the Lord's by a covenant never to be revoked, and for ever registered in heaven. Long enough had she been driven by tempests, and beating about the ocean of human life; but she had found the rock on

which she could anchor her hopes for eternity. She might still feel the swell of the tempest, but never could she be moved from her steadfastness. They were new relations into which she had entered, but she could not renounce them ; new bonds, but she had no desire to escape from them. No, never. Nothing should separate her from God and his people. She would live with them, and she would die with them. It was for *Orpah* to prove inconstant, and “go back to her people and her gods.” Ruth was of another mind. Her language was worthy of more matured piety than hers. *Entreat me not* to leave thee, “or to return from following after thee ; for where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge ; where thou *diest* I will *die*, and there will I be buried ; the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but *death* part thee and me !” She called God to witness to the sincerity of her vow ; nor did she hesitate to “enter into his covenant and into his oath,” solemnly supplicating his blessing, or imprecating his curse, as she fulfilled her vow. She hoped all things and feared nothing. She went undaunted and she went assured. There was that well-balanced thought, and calm endurance, and impassioned zeal about her, which, though but at the commencement of her course, gave strong assurance that she would hold on her way. And she did hold on, and hold out to the

end. "Neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature was able to separate her from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Such was the character of this heaven-directed woman. We may not take leave of her, without commending it to your regard and imitation. This we do by the following considerations:

1. In the first place, *it falls in with all enlightened convictions of truth and duty.* We discover in it those elements of true piety which commend themselves to our judgment, our conscience, and all the better feelings of our hearts. They are principles, affections, and conduct, carried out with such an undivided mind, such full purpose of heart, and so strong and cheerful a will, that they need only to be set before us in order to secure our cordial and warmest approbation. The God of Israel deserves all this love and confidence, and his people deserve all this fellowship. No other being in the universe is worthy of this self-sacrificing and unchanging votement. All other gods are vanity and a lie; they have no loveliness, and nothing that is trustworthy, or that may be honored and revered. The best and highest affections of the soul may be centered, with safety and joy, only in him. His people are lovely, else he would not love

them, and consent to "be called their God." There are blemishes in their character, and "spots in their feasts of charity," and not a few among them who are a reproach to the sacred name whereby they are called. Yet are they, as an organized community, the only holy and happy people. It would be a fearful chasm in the universe if God himself were not its great Governor and Redeemer; and it would be a fearful chasm in our world if all who are his people no longer had a place among men. There is no such refuge, no such giver, no such satisfying portion as God; and there is no people so excellent and virtuous as his people; so true to the interests of truth, so firm in their adherence to rectitude, and so certainly the friends of God and man, and the patrons of every good work. Ruth did well when she declared, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God;" and be the person old or young, rich or poor, male or female, enlightened or ignorant, bond or free, who refuses to tread the hallowed path she trode, does violence to his own convictions, and sooner or later fills his own bosom with self-reproach. It is impossible for such a person to have inward peace and serenity of mind. Reason, and conscience, and memory, and every active emotion bear witness against him, spoil his joys, and fill his cup with gall and wormwood. There is no greater

mistake in judgment, no greater crime in morals, and no deeper misery in condition than to be severed from God and his people.

In the second place, it is only by imitating her piety *that the great object of human life can be secured*. Those there are who live to no good purpose, because they aim at none. "They are altogether unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." The distinguished individual whose character we have been contemplating was out of her proper place so long as she was associated with the idolatries of Moab. She was a degraded and miserable woman, and lived to no good end. Yet such essentially is every son and daughter of Adam, until they become at heart allied to God and his people, and have learned to say, "None of us liveth to himself." Not more certainly was she born to higher destinies than the degradations of paganism, than man is born to higher destinies than alienation from God and his people. His intellectual and moral nature indicates that he is fitted for high ends; while the consciousness and the secret shame that he sinks below them, and the extorted yearnings after his lost but high estate, are affecting proofs that he himself feels that to be a wanderer from God is to miss the career of usefulness and honor. Ruth entered upon this career from the hour when she consecrated herself to Israel's God. Like the

father of the faithful, she scarcely began to live, until she obeyed the command, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and I will bless thee and *make thee a blessing.*" There is no personal blessing like that which makes men a blessing to others. If this end be not gained, the great object of human life is lost. "Israel is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit to himself;" such a man is a "cumberer of the ground." Thought, emotion, effort, character, influence never aim at fitting ends until consecrated to God and the great interests of his kingdom. This is the atmosphere which the active mind was formed to breathe; these the sympathies which belong to it; nor are the ends of this living existence secured until it is swallowed up and lost in God.

In the third place, such a piety as Ruth's *exerts a kind and favorable influence on the condition and prospects of men in the present world.* No man knows, and may we not say, still more emphatically, no *woman* knows, what her earthly condition may become, until she herself becomes the child of God. Her conversion is the pivot on which her future destiny may turn; it is the great crisis in her history which, if wisely and devoutly employed, fits her for stations and spheres of usefulness and honor, which she little thought of amid the giddy whirl of worldly pleas-

ure. Could the biography of the most eminent women in the world be written, it would be seen that the character they possessed, the influence they exerted, and the wide space they occupied, are to be attributed to their personal piety. There is a particular providence which governs the condition, and all the affairs of men. "He setteth up one and he putteth down another;" the "lot is cast into the lap, and the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord." He prepares the stations of men, and he fits men for their stations. Piety may bring with it trials, while these shall prove the value and preciousness of its hopes. A pious woman, like Ruth, may be the daughter of sorrow, while that watchful Providence which numbers the hairs of her head shall not withhold the testimony that she is "the daughter of the Lord God Almighty." There were not wanting causes for depression and gloom when this bereaved Moabiteess turned her feet from her native land. But how soon did the cloud dissipate, and the pure light of heaven rest upon her path! She was poor, and went as a gleaner into the harvest fields of Judah, with nothing else to lean upon but the divine promise, and no protection but the benignant law of Israel in favor of the widow and the stranger. Yet, exile as she was, he who raiseth up the poor from the dunghill, and the stranger out of the dust, and setteth them among

princes, directed her to the field of that high-born and wealthy Israelite to whom she became affianced in the tenderest of all earthly bonds, and allied to the most honored family of the house of Judah. And now we find her name enrolled on the noblest genealogical table in the world. This same *Boaz* and *Ruth* were the immediate ancestors of king David and Solomon, while her last recorded descendants were *Joseph and Mary*, the mother of the EXALTED SAVIOUR. No one was ever the loser by genuine and self-denying piety. If "gain is not godliness, godliness is great gain;" it is "profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

I add, therefore, in the fourth and last place, *no one will repent of such piety as Ruth's in the world to come.* There is a world to come. Atheism can not blot it out of existence; infidelity can not; nor can it be blotted out by any indifference to its amazing and everlasting realities. Heaven is there; it is God's habitation and dwelling-place, and the home and rest of all who have been taught to say, with Ruth, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." And a glorious world it is; they are fields of light where the reapers and the gleaner shout the harvest-home with songs and everlasting joy upon their head. In some far-off cavern in that eter-

nity also, there is a hell—a hell of eternal torment, deluged by the lake of fire. In one of these two worlds every son and daughter of Adam must dwell, and *which*, depends upon the character he forms in the present world.

Such piety as Ruth's was formed for heaven. She does not repent the decision she formed thousands of years ago. Nor will any one who forms it repent of it in that coming world. Nay, he does not repent of it even now. Cost him what it may, it does not cost him one tear of regret and penitence for having formed it. Were his sacrifices great as Paul's, he would count them gain for Christ. Go, if you will, to the most pensive child of grace in all the world; make your appeal to that daughter of bitterness, and as you, with her, inspect her poverty and recount her disappointments and sorrows, propose to her to recall the hour and deed when and by which she avouched the Lord Jehovah to be her God, and you shall see with what mingled and strong emotions she cleaves to the God of her salvation. Do *you* regret it, who have already made her decision yours? *Would* you regret it, if you *had* made it yours? *Will you ever regret it*, if you form that decision? I know your answer, and am bold to ask you why you do not form it? Will you not escape the bondage of corruption and receive the inheritance of sons? Is it not time

that you bid adieu to guilt and wretchedness, and begin your everlasting career? O how all that is enjoyed or suffered below the sun vanishes from our sight when once we turn our eyes toward that world of purity and joy!

I have thus set before you the piety of Ruth the Moabitress, and endeavored to commend her character to your regard and imitation. "*Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!*" Is this your purpose? Do you give your cheerful consent that this vow should have a place in the book of God's remembrance? Well do I know that you do not give your consent to the solemn purpose and vow of everlasting alienation from him or from his people. You are not prepared to meet such a witness as this, on your trial at the Last Day. We take you at your word, then, when you say to us, "*Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!*" And we say to you, in God's name, that "*his grace shall be sufficient for you.*" You are not cast upon your own resources, but upon that everlasting God the Lord, who "*giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*" If you are perfect weakness, you have omnipotence to lean upon. That almighty Saviour pledges himself to *you* while you thus pledge yourself to *him*; he shares the responsibility with you, and you have his covenant and oath for your safe-keeping.

To the *hesitating*, what shall we say? What *can* we say, but remind them of the gracious assurance, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out"? Prove his faithfulness. Cast yourselves upon his guidance and guardianship. Leave your idols and the world behind you, and set your faces toward Zion. "Turn back again; why will ye go with us?" No; we would not that you should leave us here on the borders of the Promised Land and just at the gate of heaven. We rather say, as Moses said to Hobab, "Come, go with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

CHAPTER XIII.

Orpah, the Apostate.

THE Scriptures teach us that there are those who "seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, but are not able." They are more sensitive than enlightened, more alarmed than convinced; more ready to make promises than to keep them; more prompt and ardent than steadfast and persevering. The truth of God seems to have taken strong hold upon their minds for the moment; but the impression gradually becomes weaker and more weak, till the subject is lost sight of, and they go back to the world. Such was the history of the unhappy woman whose character is presented to us in contrast to that of Ruth the Moabitess.

In several particulars these two young women were *alike*. They were both of Moabitish descent; both married into a Hebrew family, and married brothers. The marriage was an unlawful one, and in direct opposition to the Mosaic law, which proscribed all intermarriages between

the Hebrews and the inhabitants of pagan lands. Nor did the providence of God smile, but frown upon these unlawful bands. The two young men of Hebrew origin, who became their husbands, died not long after their marriage, and both of them died childless. While the weight and burden of the blow fell upon these young men and their bereaved parents, because they were the enlightened and deliberate offenders, these two daughters of Moab were partakers of the frown, in that they were alike desolate, and involved in the same common widowhood. Such were the strong points of resemblance in their youthful attachments, their youthful associations, their youthful joys, and their early sorrows. Nor was the resemblance less observable in their early destitution of religious privileges, and their subsequent enjoyment of religious privileges in the family of Elimelech and Naomi. The religious influence of their adoption into this Hebrew family was, as might have been anticipated, of the blandest kind. From the dark and sanguinary customs of paganism, they were both introduced to those sacred associations where the God of Israel was known and honored, and where, although his worship had probably become corrupted in that land of idols, and perhaps suspended through the death of Elimelech, they could not but have marked the difference between

the true religion and the false. They were alike also in the *apparent* effect of these religious privileges upon their character, until the test was applied which so clearly proved that there was a radical difference between them. *Ruth*, as we have already seen, showed herself to be a decidedly pious woman. *Orpah*, though bound to her and to Naomi by so many sympathies in their outward condition, and so many cords of attachment; when the question came to be decided, whether she would remain an idolater, or attach herself to God and his people, could not forsake her idols to serve the living God. She seemed to consent to do so for a time; but when the hour of final decision came, she could not go hand and heart with Ruth to God's altar. She had but the semblance of her sister's sacred purpose, and that only for a little while. Eventually she was left behind; and though she began the pilgrimage to the land of Judah with Naomi and Ruth, she did not persevere. She became recreant to her own expressed faith and views. She was an *apostate*. Her character, though more painful for us to exhibit, is not less instructive than that of Ruth. Let us, in considering it, advert to her apostasy itself, to the causes of her apostasy, and to its consequences.

In the first place we are to consider HER APOSTASY ITSELF.

It may seem severe language to call this amiable young woman *an apostate*. But was she not so? When the daughter of piety and prayer in Christian lands, educated in the fear of God and the knowledge of his truth, baptized at his altars, and in her own thoughts and purposes brought to the vestibule of his kingdom, deliberately makes up her mind to forsake God and his people for the vanities and pleasures of the world; is she not an apostate? When the daughter of pagan parents, and in pagan lands, is brought within the sphere of Christian influences, educated amid Christian teachings, and is herself almost persuaded to be a Christian, resolves to "go back to her people and her gods;" is she not an apostate? The annals of missionary labors record not a few such instances of apostasy; and this is just what Orpah was. Her own land was in every view a pagan land; her people were pagans, and distinguished for their hostility to the God of Israel. Long before the days of Orpah and Ruth, the mark of reprobation had been put upon them, that "no Moabite should enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation." Moab, says the prophet Isaiah, "is very proud. We have heard of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath; the glory of Moab shall be contemned with all the great multitude." The degraded origin, the vile character, and the fearful over-

throw of this land, are topics of familiar and affecting narrative in the Old Testament scriptures.

It was from the corruptions of this land, and its idol gods, and its prejudices and hostility against the God of Israel, that Orpah was brought within other and more sacred influences, and introduced to new relations, new scenes, new truths. Her attachment to her idol gods was for a time displaced by her outward respect for the true religion. Her departed husband was a worshiper of the true God; and though he slept in the sepulchers of that pagan land, it was amid Israel's hopes, and where delightful memories beguiled her young heart toward the God of Israel and his people. It was amid such scenes, and such remembrances, and such hallowed sympathies, that she shared the sympathies of God's people, the disconsolate comforting the disconsolate, and the widow's God, the Lord God of Israel her professed and seeming refuge. It is not improbable that she thought herself a pious woman; nor is there any evidence that Naomi had not the same confidence in her attachment and character which she had in those of Ruth.

But the time had arrived when her attachment to God and his people was brought to an ordeal it could not endure. Religious character is often put to the test by unexpected and apparently unimportant occurrences. Naomi herself was about

to return to the land of Judah. Whether Orpah was a true and sincere friend to the God of Israel, or at heart an idolater, would be decided by the course she would now pursue. Was her attachment to Naomi and Ruth any thing more than the love of an amiable heart to the friends of her husband, or was it a higher and holier attachment? Or were there pagan attractions still stronger that bound her to the land and idols of Moab? Naomi would not allure her by any dazzling prospects of worldly good; so far from this, she frankly told her that if she chose the allotment of God's people, it must be from no mercenary motives, but rather from a self-sacrificing spirit. Nor was Orpah disheartened by this representation, but "went on the way with her to return to the land of Judah." She could not at first be dissuaded from her purpose. In vain did Naomi say, "Go, return to your mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that each of you may find rest in the house of her husband!" There was something so touching in this quiet appeal, that the natural affections of Orpah prevailed over the inconstancy of her religious emotions. Naomi "kissed her and she wept;" but her reply was prompt and seemed to be firm,—"*Surely I will return with thee unto thy people.*" Nor is there any reason to doubt that such was her

honest purpose. She loved Naomi, and her conscience and judgment united with this attachment to induce her to forsake her idols for God and his people. But she did not know herself. Her heart had never been given to the God of Israel. It had been chastened by trials, and subdued and adorned by the best affections known to the unrenewed mind ; but it had never been thoroughly weaned from an idolatrous religion, and given to the God of heaven, nor was she prepared to give it to him now. Suddenly, therefore, and perhaps unexpectedly to herself, she changes her mind, and takes an affectionate and final leave of her fellow travelers to Mount Zion, and returns to her native and idolatrous land. We do not know the conflicting emotions which agitated her. It was not without a struggle that she formed the purpose to turn her back upon Israel's God and his people. Orpah wept, and so did Naomi, as she folded this youthful Moabitess to her bosom for the last time, and with mingled grief and apprehension, saw her "return to her *people* and her *gods*." She had been outwardly rescued from the degrading influence of an idolatrous religion ; but now, all at once, she consents to return to all her former idolatrous habits and intimacies. On their departure from the land of Moab she bid fair to enter the land of promise, and share its temporal and spiritual blessings with her mother and her

sister. Her religion seemed to be as honest and ardent as theirs. But while they pressed onward in the right way to the city of habitation, she, affectionate and amiable as she was, and setting her face thitherward as she did ; when reduced to the alternative between the claims of the God of Israel and the pretensions of idolatry, became an apostate. Such was her apostasy itself.

What then, in the next place, were THE CAUSES of her apostasy ?

If we consider the circumstances of her last interview with Naomi and Ruth, and their previous endeared intercourse, we can not account for this sudden and final leave-taking, except from strong considerations. What were they ? Were they the general attachment to friends and country, or some particular and silken cord not openly avowed, which thus drew her back ? This is possible ; yet it does not seem in keeping with her previous conduct, and especially with her announced purpose to accompany Naomi, unless she was dishonest in her expressed purpose, of which there is no evidence. The secret of her conduct appears to have been, that she was not, like Ruth, a pious woman. If she had been, she never could have gone back to the land of idols. Distinguished as she was for her amiable spirit and domestic virtues, she fell short of true piety. If she had possessed a truly godly character, and had made those

spiritual attainments which are essential to the salvation of the soul ; she could not thus have apostatized. She was one of those spoken of by the Apostle when he says, "They went out from us because they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us ; but they went out that it might be made manifest that they were not of us." There is no such thing as final apostasy from true faith and godliness. When the Apostle declares that he was "confident of this very thing that he who began a good work" in the early Christians, "will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ," he decides the question that all those who are united to Christ by a living faith, are united to him by a bond which is indissoluble and eternal. The Saviour affirms this truth in most unequivocal language when he says, "My sheep hear my voice ; I know them and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." It is one of the discriminating characteristics of true piety, that it perseveres to the end. There are those, and those only, that "have no root in themselves," who "in time of temptation fall away." No matter what the trial is, all true believers persevere. No matter what, or who

must be forsaken in order to follow the heavenly Leader, they "forsake all and follow him." Such are the revealed conditions of discipleship; "he that loveth father or mother more than *me* is not worthy of *me*."

If the fact be conceded then that Orpah was not a pious woman, there is no difficulty in accounting for her apostasy. Her heart was not right with God; nor had she any permanent sympathies with his people; nor any sincere attachment to the true religion. She accompanied Naomi and Ruth as far as she could without compromising her character as an idolater. Just as many ever have gone, and now go, great lengths in religion without being truly religious, so did she go great lengths with these true children of God. But there was a point where she could go no further. She could not consent to become "an Israelite indeed," because her heart was in Moab, and she was wedded to its idols. There *may* have been reasons why, if she had been a pious woman, she chose to return to her native land. She might have returned to set up a standard for God's truth; to bear her testimony against the wickedness and abominations of its idolatry, and to let her own light shine in the midst of its darkness. But if this were so, it is not easy to conceive why she makes no allusion to such high considerations. We are, moreover, in-

formed that she returned as an idolater and to all her former courses of pagan superstition and sin. It is significantly recorded that "she went back to her people and *her gods*."

The sole cause of her apostasy, therefore, is to be attributed to her *unchanged moral nature*. If she had found instruction in the truths she learned from Naomi, she found no spiritual aliment and joy; and if she had, for a season, become outwardly weaned from her idolatrous usages, there was no real and internal change in her moral nature. She was still unholy and unclean, and she did but follow the promptings of her nature, and truly acted it out when she returned to her people and her gods. "It happened unto her according to the true proverb, that the dog is turned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." All the tendencies of her unrenewed nature, modified as they had been by her outward relations, yet still unsubdued by divine grace, were to throw off the restraints of her external condition, to forget them all, and to bury them in her departure from God and his people.

Her whole course appears strange and unaccountable at first view, yet was it but the natural promptings of a heart that was not reconciled to God. She did not like to retain God in her knowledge, nor had she any desire to bind herself to a

land and a people where she would be constrained daily to think of him and worship him. It was much easier for her to dismiss him from her thoughts, and cast him behind her back, and measure her responsibility by the stupidity of the idols she had worshiped in her native land than by the rectitude and spirituality of that Being who looketh on the heart, and who hateth all the workers of iniquity. Wicked men in similar circumstances always have acted thus; and she did but act agreeably to her own corrupt nature thus to apostatize. It was contrary to her nature to go the lengths in religion which she went; it was a restraint upon her of which she herself may have been hardly conscious. Nor did she hesitate to improve the first good opportunity of renouncing her religious friends, and their religion, and their God. It was no difficult matter for her to do this when once she had made up her mind to take the decisive step; it was but allowing her heart and principles to speak and act themselves out. The true religion made demands upon her with which she was not prepared to comply. She began to feel that she could not serve two masters; that there was less fellowship between light and darkness than she had supposed, and that there could no longer be any compromise between the earthly and the heavenly. And as she despaired of persuading Naomi and Ruth to

turn back to Moab, and not less of lowering their elevated and firm spirit to her own standard, she followed her own devices rather than their example. As she drew near the dividing line, which, if she crossed it, would separate her from the world as her chief good, from the devotees of the world as her chosen companions, and from its sinful employments and customs as her supreme joy, she felt that the chasm was wide, that the sacrifice was one she could not make, and that she would rather have Moab with its idol pleasures than Israel and Israel's God.

With this view of her apostasy itself, and its causes, we pass,

In the last place, to the consideration of *its consequences*.

The first of these was *great and rapid increase in wickedness*. This is always one of the consequences of religious apostasy. There is no law of the natural world better ascertained than this great law of the human mind, that where its convictions of sin and duty are worn off, and its religious hopes and fears and sentiments cease to influence it, it falls into greater and more confirmed wickedness. It is like the restrained and compressed river, when once it has broken over its banks; or like the stifled flames, when once they have burnt through the barrier that opposed them; or like the suppressed fury of the popu-

lace, when once it triumphs over the restraints that confined it. It is all the more violent and exacting for its previous imprisonment. An apostate, gambler, drunkard, or sensualist, never stops long at the point where he left off; he is soon found far in advance of his former resting-place. And so it is with apostates in religion. Men act thus because, whether right or wrong, their course is progressive. Sin always acts thus; "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." And the great enemy of souls never fails to be busily employed in this onward course of apostasy. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he taketh with himself, seven other spirits worse than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

We have no detailed account of Orpah after her separation from her religious associates. The recording spirit leaves her there where the fatal step was taken. She had refused to accompany them to the land of Judah, and had "gone back to her people and her gods." It was a fearful and wicked decision, and fitted to revive and confirm all her pagan habits, and plunge her in more

than her former ignorance. She was now separated from the light and instructions and example and influence and love of God's people; and what marvel, if from this unhappy hour she mingled in Moab's idolatries with a more remorseless conscience, a higher hand, and bolder heart than ever? When she once departed from the right way, and fell from her steadfastness, she knew not where to stop. The further she departed from God's truth the more she hated it, and the more pleasure she took in her own delusions. If any one could have visited the land of Moab, and seen this guilty and unhappy woman, after years of familiarity with its idolatrous customs, he would have found her not only a confirmed idolater, but the more zealous promoter of idolatry for all her former sympathies with the true religion, and fast filling up the measure of her iniquity. This is human nature, whether in man or in woman. Apostates love darkness rather than light. There is no class of men who hate the truth and those who declare it so bitterly as they. They ordinarily become, in some form or other, the ministers of error and unrighteousness, and spare no effort to spread irreligion and corruption as far as they can.

Another consequence of her apostasy was, that *she participated in the judgments that fell upon her native land*. I know not that the fact has

been accurately observed; but, if I mistake not, the judgments of God have fallen upon apostates in the present world. There are not wanting instances within my own recollection of apostates losing caste in the church and in the world, becoming the objects of contempt as well as pity, and sinking into obscurity and want. Men shame the coward, but they brand the *traitor* with infamy. God marks the apostate, if not as ignominiously as he did apostate kings and prophets under the old dispensation, or Judas and Julian under the new, yet not less really. Moab was a degraded land, and Orpah shared in its degradation. Her countrymen were reduced to the meanest slavery, and we have no evidence that she did not bear the degrading yoke. The period in the history of Moab, in which she lived, is not marked with precision in the sacred writings. It was under the reign of the Judges of Israel, and while Moab was desolated by war, and so severely chastised for its hostility to the Israelites. The prophet Isaiah utters the most pathetic lamentations in view of the griefs and miseries that were coming upon it. It was invaded by Jeroboam the king of Israel, by Tirhakah the king of Ethiopia, by Tiglath Pileser and his three successors, and by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. To the earlier miseries of this wicked and unhappy land Orpah was probably not a stranger. And when she

chose it in preference to the land where the ark of God dwelt, and which was protected by his power and presence, she was left to "eat the fruit of her own way, and be filled with her own devices." In that dark and miserable land she lived and died, and sunk to an idolater's grave.

In the third place, the final consequence of her apostasy, there is good reason to believe, was that *she was lost for eternity*. We never hear of her again, not even of her visiting the land of Judah, or in any form keeping up her intimacy with the family and friends of her departed husband. She makes no inquiry concerning them, and they make no inquiry concerning her. The separation was final when they parted in the land of Moab. She refused to have any lot or part with Israel's God, or with his people, and she had none either in this world or in that which is to come. While these holy women were fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, she was a stranger and a foreigner. While they were the honored ancestors of the promised Messiah, she, if God did not write her childless, was the mother of a race of idolaters whom he cursed.

We have said that she came to an idolater's grave. And what is an *idolater's grave* but the gate-way to perdition? It seems a want of charity

to consign this lovely woman, who fell upon Naomi's neck and bathed it with her tears, to such an end. It was a bitter hour, and perhaps in that sad farewell there were some bitter forebodings. However this may be, we may not be more charitable than he who is the great and essential CHARITY. He has said of all *idolaters* that "they shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" without are "murderers and *idolaters*, and whatever loveth and maketh a lie." How true it is that "the salt that has lost its savor is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men!" How fearful the sentence, "he that putteth his hand to the plow and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of heaven!" How much more guilty and miserable is this poor woman than she would have been had she known nothing of the endearments of religious intercourse, and nothing of the truth and claims of Israel's God! Better, far better had it been for her "not to have known the way of righteousness" than thus to "have turned from the holy commandment delivered unto her." The apostate's death is not the ordinary death of the thoughtless and unrepenting sinner; it is either the death of judicial blindness or judicial despair. It is prayer unanswered, or imprecations full of horror. It is conscience in her last struggle, and preparing her everlasting and scorpion sting. No man's condition is more

hopeless than such a man's, to whom the door of heaven is shut never more to be opened. The lamp of truth, long since quenched within the soul, here, on the verge of eternity and at its Maker's bidding, is rekindled, but only to burn like the fire that never shall be quenched. No, the apostate's doom is not the ordinary doom of the lost. Resisted convictions and violated vows call for signal vengeance. "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

From the character of this apostate woman we may then make the following practical deductions :

1. It is fitted, in the first place, to impress the great truth that *amiable natural affections are not holiness*. There is a strong propensity in many minds to substitute the more amiable instincts of nature for those Christian graces that are produced by the Holy Spirit; there is so much resemblance between them, that they are often confounded. Yet the difference is radical and essential; so radical and essential is it, that many an avowed infidel is distinguished for his natural amiable temper, while many a true Christian has found to his sorrow that his great conflict is with a rough, and thorny, and ungovernable spirit. There are amiable natural affections, and refined social intercourse in portions of the pagan world.

There are not wanting bland and moral virtues among savage tribes ; while they are at the same time ignorant of God and the gospel of his Son. If such things constitute holiness, the gospel is a fable. Amiable instincts are to be appreciated, but they are not Christian piety. The heart may be susceptible, and love tenderly ; but the question decisive of its moral character is, does it rise to God and heaven, and is the circle in which it moves bounded by things seen and temporal ? Naomi bore delightful testimony to the amiable character and social virtues of Orpah ; but this was the best that could be said of her ; here her religion ended. The love of God had no place in her heart, and her love for his people was that adventitious and transient love which had no solid basis, and which lacked the strong bond of love to him to give it permanence and power.

There is great danger of deception when we judge of our own character, or the character of others, merely by the strength and tenderness of the natural affections. None of these, however pensive or joyful, however varied and faithful, make us the friends of God. Nor do they in any degree partake of those graces which are the fruits of the Spirit, and which bear the marks of the regenerated man. Not a step is taken in the way of life, until the soul is born of God. Until

then, the good work which the Spirit of God begins in the heart, and promises to carry on, is not begun. Until then, it is but the show of goodness from which the most amiable and moral may fall at any moment. None are more likely to perish than those who think they are right when they are wrong. "There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

We are also taught by the character of this apostate woman the *necessity of perseverance in the Christian life*. True religion begins with returning to God through Jesus Christ. God himself is the wanderer's home, his portion, and his rest. Yet this is but the beginning of the Christian's career. He has a race to run, and he may not stop in the midst of his course; he must persevere to the end if he would gain the prize. When Ruth beheld Orpah going back to her people and her gods, it filled her with sadness, but it did not shake her purpose. She had counted the cost and formed her decision. Come trials, come poverty, come solitude, come ignominy, come death; nothing should separate her from God and his people. It is no small discouragement when we witness such defections, and when those who once seemed to follow Christ, go back and walk no more with him. But instead of being less firm and steadfast, the language of our hearts should be like that of

the early disciples when they witnessed such defections in great numbers: "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee?" Our exposures should make us watchful, because no man is safe who is heedless and self-confident; but they should not make us faint-hearted, because there are exceeding great and precious promises to the watchful and persevering. There is but one alternative—perseverance or apostasy. To the true Christian it is perseverance; to the formal and the false it is apostasy. "Let him," therefore, "that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!" Beware of the gradual encroachments of the tempter, and of gradual approximations to the precipice. If your religious convictions begin to pass away, and your religious duties become irksome, and error is taking the place of sound doctrine, the precipice is not far distant. The next step will be that you will insensibly withdraw yourself from every thing that is serious, till eventually you will forsake your religious friends, and your religious friends will have forsaken you, and, like Orpah, you will be left behind, because you and they are traveling in different and opposite directions. They are those only who endure to the end that shall be saved. "I count not myself to have apprehended," is the Christian's watchword. The promise is "to him that overcometh." Of what avail is it that we once thought ourselves Christians if

we are not Christians now, and if we are not Christians when we stand before the Son of Man? On the slippery ascent to heaven, the most experienced "work out their salvation with fear and trembling."

In the third and last place, the character of Orpah addresses itself to *those who are confessedly without God and without hope in the world*. Whoever is not a Christian has an interest in the fate of this apostate Moabiteess. If, with all her seriousness, she was destitute of piety; what hopes have you who are never serious? If she, who thus seemed to have entered upon her pilgrimage to the better land, went back; how far are you from the heavenly city who have never approached the precincts of the Canaan that is above? The way is long and difficult, and you have not as yet entered it. The great battle of human life, the "good fight of faith," is yet all to be fought, and you are as yet without your armor. Is this the way to gain the victory and wear the crown? Nay, you are not only without your armor, but asleep on the field of battle. Is it wise and well to be thus heedless? Where so much is to be renounced, so much to be believed, so much to be sought, and so many enemies to encounter; are you safe in doing nothing? Appalling constancy! if nothing can move you from this settled thoughtlessness in sin. You may cleave

to earthly idols, and to earthly friends because they are idolaters; but will they be any recompense for a neglected Saviour and a ruined soul? Why will you live and die an exile from God and his people? Think of Orpah, and then think of Ruth; and which of the two characters, the two communities, the two eternities will you choose? *Choose* you must, either the God of Israel, and his people, and his service, and his favor; or another god, another people, another service, another destiny which he has pronounced reprobate. The burden of this decision is upon you; God and nature have thrown it upon you, nor can you throw it off by this seemingly neutral indifference. Indifference, in such an alternative, is *choice*, because it is neglect of God. You have only to decide, therefore, *which* you will choose. "Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve." My young female friends, does not the example of these two daughters of Moab speak to *you*? O ye gay and giddy seekers after pleasure and vanity! will you consent to be associated with Orpah, or with Ruth? Again I say, *Make the choice*; and go and record it in *your book*. And read it when it is recorded. And re-read it, and nourish it with your prayers, and tears, and most precious hopes. And bid the guardian and witnessing angel record it, and engrave it upon the tablets of eternity, never to be revoked or altered.

CHAPTER XIV.

Daniel.

THE ancient people of God had, more than once, been exiles in a strange land. They were bond-servants in Egypt, and parts of them had been carried captive into Assyria, whence they were never to return. History loses sight of these ten tribes as a distinct people; to the present hour, they are reckoned as the missing, or lost tribes. Of the captivity of the two remaining tribes, constituting the kingdom of Judah, we have a full account in the Old Testament scriptures. To human view, this last exile seemed to be little less than the downfall of the Hebrew State. Jerusalem, with its sacred and royal palaces, was laid in ruins, and the miserable remnant of the people were placed under the command of a *Pasha*, appointed by the Assyrian monarch, whom they assassinated, and then fled into Egypt. Their power was gone; they were a scattered and crushed people; the nation which, under the

reign of David and Solomon, controlled the wealth, and power, and commerce of the world, had no longer a name among the nations of the earth.

Yet were there two circumstances which, under the favor of divine providence, prevented the utter dissolution of the Jews as a nation. The first and principal one was, they differed from all other conquered nations in that they were bound together by their religion and laws, and intermarried only with those of Hebrew origin. The second was, that they were transplanted in large colonies to the inland districts of the conquering empire, where they could still be preserved a peculiar people. When Nebuchadnezzar, in the rapid flight of his army over Syria, subjugated Palestine, he thus transported them. The first transportation was composed of the noblest citizens of Judea, men of aristocratic families, and some of them of royal lineage. The king himself, the strength of the army, the men of letters, the more useful artisans and agriculturalists, and treasures of the temple, were carried to Babylon. But while this avaricious conqueror seized upon the public treasures, to no inconsiderable extent, he respected the rights of private property. It is a fact worthy of notice, that, while he has the boldness to lay his hand upon the holy vessels of the sanctuary, those goodly vessels which Solomon had made of the gold of

Parvaim and garnished with precious stones ; the golden pillars, and golden lavers, and the molten sea, and the basins and vases of pure gold ; something checks him, and prevents his satiating his lust of gain by an indiscriminate spoiling of his captives. It was the purpose of the Most High, that even in their exile they should "build houses and plant vineyards," and enjoy the means of honorable subsistence.

Among the most conspicuous of those who were carried away in the first deportation, was a man celebrated in Hebrew history, and a cheering contrast to the proud and weak prince whose character we have recently contemplated. He was a young man of royal lineage ; "of the seed of the princes of Judah." Nebuchadnezzar had given directions to the master of his household to select from among these princely captives those of comely personage, bright talents, and high attainments, who might be educated in the palace in the language and learning of Chaldea. DANIEL was one of the four Hebrews thus selected. He was the first of the four ; his literary taste, his courtly accomplishments, the elegance of his person, and his attractive spirit, best qualified him to hold a place near the monarch's throne. The circumstances of his captivity and introduction to the king's household seem to be contingent, but were all arranged by infinite wisdom as means to import-

ant ends, and as links in a chain wrought by Him who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." They constituted the first step to that high post of observation from which this captive Israelite looked down on successive ages, and to that powerful influence which he was destined to exert in favor of the exiled Jews. He lived in a most important age of the world, was in every view a remarkable man, and remarkably qualified for the work he was called to perform.

In the brief delineation of his character we propose now to furnish, we remark, in the first place, that he was distinguished for HIS WISDOM. On reading the narrative of those portions of his life which are recorded in the Scriptures, we can not shut our eyes to the fact, that he was endued with a large measure of that faculty which "discerneth both time and judgment." We never see him acting otherwise than as a wise, grave, and discreet man. Even in his youth he was eminently endued with those qualities which led him to perceive and decide what was most just, proper and useful. His life exhibits the extremes of high elevation and deep abasement; yet in every condition we find him free from those mistakes and blemishes which cast a temporary shadow upon the virtues and excellences even of the most eminent and highly favored of men. No lapse from the path of sound and practical wis-

dom is attributed to him ; not a deed of folly or a sally of passion is recorded in his entire history.

It is as a *captive* that we first become acquainted with him. He is an exile in a strange and pagan land. Few conditions are more trying to the fortitude and temper ; none more calculated to sour the disposition and cloud the character with despondency, particularly of an Israelite. Yet his cheerful, trusting temper and characteristic moderation bore him up under this calamity, and his amiable disposition soon gained him the affections of those who were placed over him. He would not defile himself with the king's meat, for he was a Jew ; he was temperate to abstemiousness, because he was an exile and his country was in mourning, and because his mission and his aims were not those of self-indulgence, but of self-denial and toil.

Even the calamities of his condition are lost sight of in the eagerness with which he engages in those employments, by which the providence of God was preparing him for future usefulness. Not only did he enter with alacrity upon the course of instruction, which embraced all the stores of Chaldaic learning and pagan knowledge, but with such success, that, when he was brought before the king, he was found to excel his teachers. Although he did not separate himself from the world, he appears to have been a

man of retired habits, and to have loved repose and tranquillity. While he lived among the counsellors of kings, and the wise men of Babylon were his companions, he was not contaminated by the manners of the royal household, but every where preserved a stainless life. He was among the few young men who are distinguished for self-control, and diligently employ their advantages for wise ends. It is not too much to say that, in the age in which he lived, he was the wisest of the wise. The Scriptures refer with point and emphasis to this trait of his character, when, in the spirit of cutting irony, they say to the proud king of Tyre, "Thou art wiser than Daniel!"

In the second place, he was A MAN OF PIETY. Of his domestic relations we know but little, except that he was not born to low estate, and was educated amid all the religious privileges and all the external scenery endeared to a devout Hebrew. It is apparent from his history, that his mind was early and deeply imbued with the principles and spirit of the Hebrew faith, in all their reverence for the divine law, and in all their anticipations of His coming, who is the end of the law and the prophets. Though we know not how early he became pious, it was before the first captivity, and while he was but a youth. This is the more remarkable, as his childhood must have been passed

amid great temptation. They were alternate scenes of light and darkness. Stormy seasons had agitated the land of Judea. The good and the bad had ruled over her and had been slain, and her existing king held his throne from a foreign power. Though he was a witness to all the vices of the royal court of Judea, yet truth and godliness had struck their roots so deep in his young heart, that mirth and wickedness had no more charms for him than for the man of gray hairs. The buoyancy of youth only gave buoyancy to his piety; its ardent aspirations and glowing hopes only made his piety more glowing and ardent. And when from his native land he was transplanted to Babylon, and was there exposed to the blandishments of a pagan land and court, he still retained his integrity. Nor were that simplicity and purity of character, and that fear of God, which are the chief charm of youth, ever impaired. He was courted by courtiers, yet he lived above their smiles; and when envied and hated by them, he was not disturbed by their hostility. He was the favorite of the monarch; yet he refused his gifts. No favors and no frowns that could be showered upon him moved him from his religious principles. There, in the heart of an idolatrous empire and a licentious court, where he was envied for his preëminence, admired for his intelligence and beauty, and no

man cared for his soul, truth and duty were still his great object. It was a land where there was no temple but the temple of idols—no faithful priesthood—no Mountain of Zion whither the tribes could go up—no law of God recognized—no usages of the people to reprove his impiety should he become apostate, and no eye to see him but God's. Yet nothing induced him to become a wanderer. There was every thing to discourage his religious tenderness, yet was it scrupulously cherished. His very rank and accomplishments were snares. The wealth and splendor of Babylon lay at his feet. Its festivals and its music, and all its forms of refined dissipation, would fain have instilled their poison into his heart and chilled every devout emotion; but his mind was steeled against such allurements, and bound to piety by a superior power.

No man knows himself, or is known by others, until he is tried. Many a flower which opens with beauty and promise on the genial sun and fragrant air of Christendom, would wither and die if it were transplanted to the dark nights and cold winters of pagan lands. Daniel had a heart that could melt in the tenderness of holy love, not only on the banks of the Jordan, but by the rivers of Babylon. In his view, the God of Jacob was as near to Babylon as to Judea; death and eternity were as near the palace of Nebuchadnezz-

zar as the palace of Solomon. And these considerations influenced him to watchfulness, to humility, and to stainless rectitude. We find the evidence of his piety in the fact that every where he honors God, is zealous for his glory, and takes no glory to himself. We find it in the fact that he was eminently a man of prayer. One of his prayers is recorded at length; and who that reads it does not perceive that it was uttered by a man accustomed to pray, and who well knew how to fill his mouth with arguments?

Every where he manifests the same devout character. Whether a freeman in the house of Judah, or dragged a captive to a foreign land, and compelled to serve a foreign master—whether elevated to a place little lower than the throne, or sentenced to a fearful death—whether restored again to favor, or again exposed to reproach and cruelty—in every condition we find him bearing himself with the unruffled equanimity of a man of God.

His piety is spoken of with honor in the sacred writings. Ezekiel classes him with Noah and Job, and he is there spoken of as one of three men who might have become mediators with heaven, and have averted the judgments from his people. In the prophecy of which Daniel himself is the author, his piety is recorded only by his deeds; nor does it contain an encomium upon

his character, except the one pronounced by the angel Gabriel, and the one inadvertently extorted from his enemies. There could not be higher testimonials than these. There was no greater contrast than between his character and that of Babylon's nobles; no greater dishonor than theirs, no greater honor than his. Higher honor was it to have possessed Daniel's piety than to sit at the king's gate. He did not degrade the Hebrew name, nor offend the generation of God's children. Though he went to Babylon when he was a youth, and remained there and in the palace of Persia till he became an old man, the bitterest complaints of his bitterest enemies only praised and commended his piety. Well was it for the captive Church that this most distinguished of her sons shared her captivity. Good men are not only formed by the times, but for the times in which they live. Daniel's religious character, under God, decided the destiny of his exiled countrymen; and not theirs only. The state and character of the world are often made to depend upon a single man. The humble piety of Martin Luther was not more truly the pivot on which the destinies of the world turned, than was the piety of Daniel in Babylon.

In the third place, he was a man of *great decision and firmness*. There is sufficient evidence that his natural disposition was mild and affection-

ate. He was not an obtrusive and blustering man; he chose rather a conciliating course of conduct, whenever he could do so without the sacrifice of principle. It cost him effort to resist the wishes of others; it was more in keeping with his gentle nature to fall in with, than to fall out with them. Nor was he a man of fickle temper, but distinguished rather for steadfast purposes than rash and sudden impulses. Nor can we appreciate his firmness without bearing in mind that he was no bigot either in religion or politics. He had no attachments to men, or measures, or principles, from mere obstinacy and stubbornness, and in defiance of reason and truth. He was a man of enlarged and liberal views, and asserted his rights of private, independent judgment only when constrained by his inviolable integrity.

There are several instances of his decision and firmness that are worthy of remark. It was a severe trial of his fortitude when he was called to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's last dream. The king's dream portended misfortunes among the most grievous, perhaps the most grievous, that can fall to the lot of man. He who was once a mighty monarch was to be stripped of his power. He who abounded in wealth and revelled in luxury was to be completely impoverished. He who was feared and honored by lands and princes was to be degraded to a condition lower than

that of his humblest servants. He who from the battlements of his palace could look far as the eye could reach, and say all this is mine, was soon to find his kingdom narrowed to the confines of a field of pasture, himself a lunatic, a madman, his reason departed from him, living without life, existing without the conscious blessing of existence, and eating grass like oxen. And this man, tyrant though he was, was Daniel's benefactor; harshly as he had conducted himself toward his people, to Daniel he had proved himself a kind and gracious master. Is it any marvel that the prophet trembled and hesitated to disclose the import of this fearful vision; and that he "was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him?" The monarch stood before him in unsuspecting security, though just about to be hurled into an abyss on the verge of which he stands with heedless indifference. Daniel's agitation, the regret and deep commiseration with which he gazes upon him, appear to make not the slightest impression upon his mind. He was slow in deciphering the prophet's agitation, and, as soon as he apprehended it, encouraged him to speak out the grievous matter. And with singular address does the prophet utter it, wishing doubtless to prepare the blinded monarch for what he is about to unfold. "My lord, the dream be to them that *hate thee*, and the interpretation to thine *ene-*

mies !" He then proceeds to interpret the dream, and with a plainness and faithfulness that leave no room for the suspicion that his agitation was to be attributed to his want of firmness. Nay, when all the fearful truth is told, he is not content to dismiss the king without an earnest and solemn appeal to his conscience, and a severe rebuke for his wickedness.

His condition was also a most trying one when, in a subsequent period of his life, he was called before *Belshazzar*, the successor of Nebuchadnezzar, to interpret the hand-writing upon the wall of his palace. It was a fearful night, and the carousing and infatuated monarch was not apprised that the enemy were at the gates of the city. Amid the most splendid festival which the palace of Babylon ever saw, and just as the king had commanded the vessels of silver and gold which his predecessor had taken from the Temple of Jerusalem to be brought forth, and by his profane oblations was praising the gods of Babylon and casting contempt upon the Most High; the finger of a man's hand wrote the mysterious sentence upon the wall which neither king nor counsellor could read nor understand. Daniel was then unknown to him, and was known only to the queen who had heard of his wisdom in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. There he stood in the presence of the haughty *Belshazzar*, and his thou-

sand lords, and his wives, and his concubines. And what did he say? After reminding him of the fate of his father, his bold language is, "And thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this. But thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all the ways thou hast not glorified." Not only did he thus rebuke this vile prince, but pronounced the sentence, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." The king's countenance was changed, and he was greatly troubled, and his lords were astonished; but the bold prophet delivered his message, "Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." And on that very night the city was taken, and Belshazzar was slain. This was boldness. We scarcely know which to admire most, the great fidelity or the great dignity of Daniel's conduct throughout this whole scene. The celebrated assault of Bossuet on Louis XIV., and of John Knox on Mary of Scotland, bold and unflinching as they were, are not to be compared with the courtly dignity and fidelity of Daniel in the presence of a prince whose word might have consigned him to the furnace.

His subsequent conduct under the decree of Darius is of the same dignified and decided character. He was the object of envy in the Persian

court; he had malignant enemies because he was the king's favorite and enjoyed signal promotion. He was too wary to be tampered with and practiced upon by their political artifices, and there remained but one cruel expedient by which they hoped he might be ensnared. "We shall not find any occasion, or fault, against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." His character in this respect was not doubtful; if they could array the laws of man against the laws of God, they well knew that he might be convicted as a transgressor. The spirit of persecution had been rife under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and had broken out in wild and terrific forms when that monarch cast the companions and friends of Daniel into the burning fiery furnace for refusing to worship the golden image which he had set up. Nebuchadnezzar was dead. Belshazzar his son had, as we have seen, been severely rebuked by this Hebrew captive, and had heard from his lips the sentence which doomed him and his kingdom to subjection to the Medes and Persians. Daniel was now an old man; he had survived the siege and sacking of the city, as well as the slaughter of her monarch, and was exalted to high honor in the kingdom. It was in secret conclave that the envious princes of this monarch obtained an edict from the king which rendered *prayer to the God of heaven a*

crime against the State, and the penalty the den of lions. The decree is published; and Daniel hears it with grief. He had great influence in an idolatrous court, and occupied an eminence which he was greatly desirous to employ for the welfare of his captive countrymen. Might he not so far respect the laws of Babylon as to pray to God in *secret*, and without any open avowal of his well-known religion? Might he not have said, My required homage to man is no homage because it is involuntary, and my heart is with God? No; he says no such thing; he does no such thing. He hears the edict with grief indeed, but with no faltering of purpose. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being opened in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime." There was no change in his religious habits. His conduct was prompted by no foolish spirit of presumption, or vain-glorious obstinacy. He did but as he had done *aforetime*, neither more nor less. He would not offend the king by any unnecessary parade of devotion; but neither would he omit one iota of the honor due to the God of Israel. As he had worshiped him hitherto, so he would continue to worship him. His resolution is fixed. Men may threaten, but he will worship God. The

king may frown, but God is greater than the king. No matter what the consequence is, he will worship God. His purpose is absolute and without conditions. In the lions' den he would worship him ; he would worship him though the earth be removed and the mountains were carried into the midst of the sea. He chose rather to die praying, than to live prayerless. More than sixty years he had been a man of prayer ; nor would he now be driven from the throne of grace by the fierceness of hungry lions, or fiercer and more savage men. When his enemies went in a body into his chamber and "found him praying and worshipping God," he utters not a word. He makes no apology, no clamor, nor does he set on foot any factious intrigue against the government. He quietly submits, and is cast into the den of lions. There was no weakness, no vacillation, no fear and trembling, when truth and duty bid him count the cost and act the hero. Courteous and retiring as he was, he was as daring and dauntless a man as ever figured on the field of battle. But it was the steady bravery of rectitude, rather than the whirlwind of martial ambition. Men may call it blindness, enthusiasm, obstinacy ; but they may well take heed lest in defaming a heroism so lofty and sacred, they themselves fail of the lowest badge of discipleship. A patient sufferer for conscience' sake is always an interesting and noble

spectacle; but rarely, if ever, has the world beheld a spectacle of firmness more pure and exalted than that exhibited by Daniel.

In the fourth place, he was distinguished for his *patriotism*. He was a Jew in principle and in heart; nothing could detach him from his devotion to the best interests of the Hebrew people. His solicitude for his three companions, and his successful efforts for their advancement in the province of Babylon, his care in rescuing them from the effects of the stringent decree of the king, as well as that inimitable prayer for the deliverance of his countrymen from their captivity, and the repairing of her desolations, show that he loved his country. He was cotemporary with Nehemiah, and the learned Ezra, and partook largely of their patriotic spirit. He had been violently taken from his native land in his youth; and, though surrounded by all the fascinations of wealth and the badges of power, he could not forget the place of his fathers' sepulchers.

In the lips of most men *patriotism* is a word without meaning; the love of country is exhausted in the love of self. Such was not the patriotism of Moses and of David, of Alfred and Gustavus Vasa, of Washington and of Daniel. True patriotism originates in the love of God, and flows out in love to man. It concentrates in the love of country when God, and man, and recti-

tude unite in exciting the ardor of its attachment, and in demanding its sacrifices. It is a sacred and religious emotion. It finds utterance, not in the speeches of demagogues, but in the lessons of experience and wisdom. It has power with God as well as with man ; it is a flame which burns brightest on God's altars. Would you see it personified, look at Daniel when he set his face toward the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, the welfare of the land he loved. In strains the most humble and affecting, he acknowledges her departures from God, her gross disobedience, her contempt of his prophets, and the perfect justice of her dispersion and exile. This was true patriotism. And when he so tenderly pleads for her, and beseeches the God of heaven that his anger and his fury may be turned away from his holy mountain and the city that is called by his name, who does not see in all this the heart of a patriot? History tells us that when on the battle-field against Charles of Burgundy, the entire army of the patriotic Swiss prostrated themselves on the ground in prayer. It is recorded also of the Duke of Marlborough, that he never led his troops to battle without first marshalling them for prayer. This was patriotism. And never did that great man who was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his country-

men," furnish a more affecting proof of his love of his country, than when on the eve of battle he was found in his tent upon his knees. The boasting patriot who deifies his country and never prays for her, has no such love to her as is recognized in heaven. They are beautiful thoughts which fell from the pen of the sweetest of all English bards, when he sung the patriot's praise and the demagogue's shame, in those memorable lines :

1
" For when was public virtue to be found,
Where private was not ? Can he love the whole,
Who loves no part ? He be a nation's friend,
Who is in truth the friend of no man there ?
Can he be strenuous in his country's cause,
Who slights the charities for whose dear sake
That country, if at all, must be beloved ?"

Jerusalem was more indebted to Daniel's love and Daniel's prayers than to all the magnificence of her kings. I do not know that there is any finer example of a *Christian patriot* in the world. JERUSALEM was a word that never failed to fill his bosom with the liveliest emotions. Though the city was desolate, and the temple pillaged and destroyed, yet all his hopes were entwined, like ever-green garlands, around its ruined walls. It was the city of his home, of his religion, of his God. His very exile invested the privileges it once enjoyed with a double value and a double

sanctity. He forgot the thunder in which the Almighty's voice spoke out in anger, and remembered only the cloud, the visible emblem of his presence, upon the Mercy Seat. He forgot the years of pestilence and famine, and remembered only the healthful mountain and the waving harvest. Its soil was hallowed by a thousand sweet remembrances. There Abraham had set up his humble tent, and there the patriarch Jacob had wrestled with God and prevailed. There were the bones of Joseph, and there the graves of his fathers. The feet of their kings and their prophets had trodden it, and the echo of Jehovah's footsteps had been often heard in its groves and on its mountains. It was the land where the great Messiah of whom he wrote was first to set up his everlasting kingdom. The very air seemed odorous with the smoke of incense and burnt-offerings. Every breeze seemed stirred by a seraph's wing; every ripple of the Jordan as if troubled by the feet of angels; every sound and every breath as if charged with whispers of promise. Well did the Psalmist represent the exiled Israelite longing for his native land, as uttering the words, "If I forget thee, O *Jerusalem*, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember *thee*, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy!"

I add, in the fifth place, this remarkable man was *greatly beloved of God*. "The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous, and his ear is open to their prayer." It was a signal expression of God's regard for him, that amid all his exposures, all the machinations of his enemies, and the wrath of the king, he was preserved in safety. He was safe in Judea, safe in Babylon, safe in the den of lions. He could say to the king, "My God hath sent his angel, and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me." And when that fatal edict was issued, which cast his three companions into the burning fiery furnace, by some strange providence he was absent, or by the partiality of the king he was not included in the cruel decree. God covered him with his feathers, and preserved him in safety under the shadow of his wings.

Nor may we overlook the fact that he was cared for in his temporal prospects. He was held in high estimation in the court of Babylon. After various services to the king, he was advanced to a high post of honor, and was prime minister in the kingdom. His conduct in this exalted office did not belie the expectations of his royal master, whose favor he retained throughout his reign. He was held in equal estimation during the reign of his successor; and on the conquest of Babylon by Darius, was appointed by that prince chief of

the presidents of the kingdom. After a brief disgrace, brought about by the conspiracy of envious rivals, he was restored to his high position, and "prospered in the reign of Darius the king, and of Cyrus the Persian." It is a remarkable fact in his history, that he retained his place near the throne under five successive kings—Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. They were periods of revolution and conquest, and scenes which demanded great powers of mind, accomplished learning, a thorough knowledge of the world and of the complicated forms of government, sagacious foresight and practical wisdom, unremitting diligence and inviolable integrity. And he possessed them all. He was the great statesman of his age; as truly so as Pitt, or Talleyrand, or Metternich, or Webster. Stranger and Hebrew as he was, kings gave him their confidence; they found it for their interest to have an honest and true man for their counsellor. Other men have retained their places by bribery and corruption; Daniel retained his because he did not seek it, and would not have it at the expense of his integrity. Other men have retained them by art and chicanery, by an accommodating conscience, and a policy that shifted with human fickleness; Daniel retained his by deserving it. For more than half a century he was the most accomplished diplomatist of empires that controlled

the destinies of the world. It was an unspeakable blessing to mankind that such a man presided over the counsels of its princes in that idolatrous and stormy age ; but it was an honor to *him*, such as has not been, to my knowledge, enjoyed by any of his race.

It was no ordinary favor also, that the God of heaven disclosed to this prophet the hitherto unrevealed arrangements of his providence for a great while to come. He had intercourse with God, such as no other man enjoyed. The great Governor of the world lifted the vail and spread before him the great outlines of the future, and made him the revealing medium of a series of events which has not yet reached its glorious consummation. The revelations made to him form the most extraordinary and comprehensive predictions contained in the Scriptures, and are still looked to as the key to all the unfulfilled prophecies both in the Old and New Testaments. His writings form a most valuable part of the word of God, and will long be inspected and closely studied as the chart which points out the progress of the Church and the world, through storms and through sunshine, through the dark night and the clearer day, down to the Last Judgment,

More than this, this holy man had special and immediate assurances of the divine favor. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,

and he will show them his *covenant*." Emphatically did he live above the world, and in the spirit land. He was wont to converse with God and angels: Angelic visions were familiar to his eye; angelic voices often fell upon his ear, and he was instructed and comforted by their presence and assurances. On one occasion the angel *Gabriel* was sent to say to him, "O Daniel, *greatly beloved!*" Another heavenly personage subsequently appeared to him, who was clothed with linen and a girdle of fine gold; whose face was like lightning and his eyes like lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like polished brass, and his voice like the multitude, who having first lifted his prostrate form from the ground, uttered to him the same words: "O Daniel, a man *greatly beloved*; stand upright, for unto thee am I now sent." On another occasion, another angel addressed him in the same language: "O man *greatly beloved*, fear not; peace be unto thee, be strong, yea be strong." After this, there appeared to him three angels on the banks of the Tigris, who held secret communications with one another, into which he was told he might not inquire; but who did not leave him without those words of encouragement and comfort: "Go thy way, Daniel, till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Sweet assurances these at the close of his eventful life! "Verily there

is a reward for the righteous, and his expectation shall not be cut off." "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; thy blessing is upon thy people." Daniel was faithful unto death, and has long ago received the crown of life. He lived to see the restoration of his people from captivity; though he himself appears never to have returned to the Holy Land. He was now oppressed with the weight of years, and probably died in the land where his long career of piety and usefulness had been passed, and found his grave in that pagan soil. He did not live to see his own predictions fulfilled; nor will they all be accomplished until the end shall come. "At the end of the days there shall be rest for God's persecuted prophets and people; and with him they also shall stand in their lot and be witnesses of the truth, that there failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord hath spoken to the house of Israel."

Such is a brief sketch of the life and character of this holy man. His life is a singularly eventful one; yet in prosperity as in adversity we find him the servant of the most high God; in danger, relying upon his arm for rescue—in safety, worshiping him with a fidelity which nothing could impair—watching with tender care over the interests of his pagan masters, and remembering with affectionate love the unhappy companions of his captivity. As a prophet, he was fearless; as

a sage, simple and unassuming ; as a magistrate, upright and diligent ; as a friend, faithful ; and as an Israelite, warmly attached to his native land and devoted to the worship of God's temple. Nowhere do we see him desponding and downcast, nowhere overweening and puffed up. He passed through the world in heart-felt reliance upon the keeper of Israel. This was his refuge, while the billows beat about him with such fury. How fondly do we cherish the remembrance of such a character as this ! Well is it inwoven in the inspired annals. Babylon's kings have passed away. Babylon itself is no more ; the comorant, and the bittern, and the night-owl, and the lizard, dwell in her desolate palaces. But Daniel lives. His name lives as the adornment of his race ; his character lives, as a light on the lee-shore of time to warn monarchs of their danger, and to guide the tempest-tost Church of God through deep waters. How glorious the results from the life of this single man, when the great events to which his character gave such an impulse are swallowed up in eternity !

From the many practical thoughts suggested by the life of this remarkable man, we select the two following :

1. In the first place, the character of Daniel *commends to us the duty of prayer*. God honored him as a man of prayer. It was for his prayers

that he was thrown into the den of lions, and for his prayers that God shut the lions' mouths. It was for his prayers that he received such and so many tokens of the divine favor, and by them that he had power with God. Scarcely was his supplication ended which he offered for the restoration of his exiled countrymen, before God sent his angel to announce to him, not only their restoration to the Holy Land, but the coming of the promised Redeemer, and the sacrifice which he would offer for the sins of the world. How often is this lesson inculcated in the Sacred Writings! It was when Jacob was wrestling with the angel of the covenant, that God said to him, "Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but *Israel*." Samuel and Elijah were at prayer, when God answered them by thunder and rain from heaven. Solomon had just "made an end of praying," when fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifice, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Ezra had just risen from his knees, when God sent him to build up the waste places of Zion. Zacharias was offering incense in the Holy Place, when an angel appeared to him to assure him of the birth of John the Baptist. Jesus was in prayer on the banks of the Jordan when the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. Cornelius was at prayer when an angel announced to

him that his prayer was heard. Peter was in prayer when God revealed to him that under the gospel dispensation there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. Paul and Silas were at prayer in the prison at Philippi, when their chains fell off and the prison doors were opened. Paul was in prayer when he was caught up to the third heavens. John was in prayer on the Lord's day, when he saw the Son of man in his glory, and heard his voice who liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore. It is in the time of prayer and when these prayers are the most humble, fervent, and believing, that God is wont to reveal himself to his people, and make to them special communications of his favor.

2. In the second place, the example of this noble man illustrates *the importance of personal integrity and uprightness*. We would fain hope there is a greater amount of these high qualities in the world, than has sometimes been supposed ; while at the same time it is not so great that they are likely to be undervalued on account of their abundance. Well did the Psalmist utter the request, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me !" It is not from the love of crimination, nor from puritanic severity, that we make the remark, that the times and the city in which we live make these virtues more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold. It is at no small hazard

at the present day, that a man in high places may venture to be so singular as to make conscience of truth and rectitude. "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the streets and equity can not enter." In some form or other, we may look for God's rebuke for such sins as these. *It were better to be an honest magistrate like Daniel, than to be Nebuchadnezzar in his glory.* "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou was not spoiled; that dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee!" To dread no eye and fear no tongue is the great privilege of an honest man. "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, and shutteth his eyes from seeing of evil; he shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks." The great conflict in our world from the first apostasy to the present hour, has been between truth and falsehood, and honest and dishonest men. Heaven looks down upon the contest now; and among those who are the objects of its complacency are the men of inflexible integrity and uprightness. What Daniel uttered men believed; what he did, men were satisfied was deserving their support and confidence. His name was associated in Babylon with a feeling of safety in regard to any interests that were

committed to his care. No honest man lives in vain ; nor is his influence lost, however obscure his condition, and however humble his own spirit.

The life of Daniel furnishes, in the third place, a beautiful illustration of the truth, that *those who honor God, he will honor*. Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ? Daniel stood alone ; yet he was safe. God was for him, and none could be against him. In truth and rectitude men can afford to stand alone. If we do not misinterpret the predictions of the prophets, and the signs of the times, the Christian Church will not, for generations to come, find her pilgrimage a path of flowers, but one of much tribulation and fiery trials. Nor need she shrink from the conflict, though it threaten the lions' den, and the burning fiery furnace. To all those who have honestly decided that it is better to suffer than sin, the promise is sure, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder ; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. It is but little when they have done their worst. We have more to fear from ourselves, lest an approving conscience and an approving God be bartered for the favor of man, or the fear of man which bringeth a snare. O Daniel, *greatly be-*

loved! what portion can the world give to be compared with this? God's love is infinite and unchanging. There is no want it will not satisfy; no calamity it will not relieve. The world can give you wealth, honor, palaces, and a throne; but it can not give the love and favor of God. Nor is there any other source of tranquillity and joy. Disappointment and woe await the man who seeks them elsewhere. Daniel in the cabinet of kings, and Nebuchadnezzar eating grass like oxen, are strong memorials of the truth, "Them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." God will fulfill his word. He will fulfill it in his government of the nations, and in the history of individual men. He will fulfill it toward the families that fear him, and the families that call not upon his name. He will fulfill it toward the sanctuaries where his honor dwelleth, and toward the altars of the heathen. He will fulfill it when his friends are called to fiery trials, and when, in their prosperity, his enemies exalt themselves and say, I shall never be moved. Sooner or later he will fulfill it, though the earth be removed out of his place. When the Last Enemy is vanquished, he will fulfill it *then*. He will fulfill it at the close of time, when the nations that despised him shall be dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel, and the nations of the saved shall take possession of their last heritage. On

the morning of the resurrection he will fulfill it, when the prediction of Daniel shall be accomplished, that "of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

CHAPTER XV.

Mebuchadnezzar.

EMPIRES were founded in the early ages of the world much as they have been since, by rapine and violence. In the primeval partition of the earth between the three sons of Noah, *Assyria* fell to the posterity of *Shem*. During the reign of David and Solomon it was comparatively a small kingdom, and did not extend west of the river Euphrates. Subsequently, and in the days of its splendor, it included all the countries from the Mediterranean on the west to the river Indus on the east—extended south to the Persian Gulf, and occupied the rich, level country between the Tigris and the Euphrates. “Under his shadow dwelt all great nations;” nor was there “any tree in the garden of God like unto him in his beauty.” Great and powerful as it was, it was overthrown by the father of the prince, a brief account of whom we propose to present.

There are three persons mentioned in the scrip-

tures who bare the name of *Nebuchadnezzar*. The *first* is the king of Assyria, who reigned at Nineveh; the *second* is Nebopoleassar, who was also called Nebuchadnezzar; and the *third* is the Nebuchadnezzar spoken of in the scriptures, the son of Nebopoleassar, or the second Nebuchadnezzar. The successful revolt of his father against the king of Assyria drove that effeminate and luxurious king into the heart of his palace, where he set fire to the splendid pile, and was consumed in its ruins. Thus ended the Assyrian, and thus began the Chaldean empire. The seat of power was henceforth transferred from Nineveh to Babylon, where it remained in unrivalled splendor until it was overthrown by Cyrus. When the father of Nebuchadnezzar came to the Chaldean throne he was an old man, scarcely adequate to the burdens of empire, and still less competent to resist those invasions upon his dominions which his ambition had provoked. It was toward the close of his father's reign that the son appears on the page of history. His character stands out boldly and prominently; yet is it a mixed character, comprising elements that were little, yet some that were great. No one is so vile that some feeble spark, some faint gleam of natural or constitutional virtue, does not linger in his bosom.

He is first presented to our notice in the char-

acter of A CONQUEROR. Before he came to the throne he was intrusted with the command of the army, and recovered the provinces which, but for him, would have been lost to the empire. He quelled the spirit of revolt in Syria, reduced Egypt, entered Judea, and took possession of Jerusalem. It was his military character, imperfect and unattractive as it was, that dazzled the eyes of his countrymen, and propped up his father's throne. The reason why military heroes have so generally and so successfully aimed at civil empire, is found in the fact, that in the past ages of the world nations have, for the most part, been governed not so much by law and equity as by the sword. Such is man's wickedness, that the nations have looked more to their warriors than to their statesmen, and their history is written not so much in the wisdom of their cabinets as in the exploits of the field. The unhallowed game of war is so intricate; it affords so many opportunities in which intellect may triumph over material force; genius overcome difficulties insurmountable to ordinary minds; a far-reaching sagacity appreciate, combine and direct the most discordant resources, and heroic patience outlast the most terrific trials; that when such a man enters upon the arena of a warlike age, the splendor of his endowments sheds a radiance upon his bloody path, and he rarely fails to excite the ad-

miration and secure the confidence of his fellow-men. Nebuchadnezzar was not one of those rare examples in which the hero and the statesman were combined. He was as far from the statesman-like qualities of the prophet Daniel, as he was from the military qualities of Cyrus. The little intellect that he had, and the few resources of genius that were at his command, were not even exerted in a cause for which justice and righteousness bade him put on the armor. It is in no such light that he is presented to us. He came to oppress and enslave. He took up arms against the people of God, and without cause. He basely slew the sons of Judea's king in the presence of their royal father; then put out the father's eyes, bound him in fetters of brass, and carried him captive to his own idolatrous land. He pillaged the treasures of the palace of God's temple, and carried away its sacred vessels, and great numbers of the principal Jews to Babylon. These were not the deeds of a high-minded warrior. His single aim was conquest and gain. Yet he was a CONQUEROR, and advanced from victory to victory with the resistless might of the tempest. His conquests secured his crown.

His next introduction to us, therefore, is in THE CHARACTER OF A KING. For several years, and during the period in which he had the command of the army, he was associated in the empire with

his father. While he was employed in the expedition against Jerusalem his father died, and on his return to Babylon this youthful prince became the crowned emperor. He inherited his father's dominions; was the most magnificent of all Babylon's kings; occupied the very pinnacle of human fame, and concentrated the power of the realm in his own person. He made its laws, controlled its property, and had the unlimited power of life and death over his subjects. The decrees which issued from his palace none might revoke; none might even question their rectitude or expediency. Chaldea, Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, all lay at his feet. If there was one man who controlled the world, he was that man. Few kings have had it in their power to do greater good to their subjects, or to exert a more wise and benevolent influence on the nations. He was raised to power for important purposes. God made him "a king of kings;" compared with other kingdoms, his own was "the head of gold." Had he been such a king as David, or Solomon, or even Cyrus, or such a king as Antoninus Pius, or Louis XII., or even Edward I. of England, his throne might have become the great antagonist power to error and wickedness in the earth, and his name the honored bulwark against oppression and violence. It would have been a refreshing view in that age of the world, when so many high

interests depended upon the influence of a single monarch, to have found some record of Nebuchadnezzar the great, the wise, the good—Nebuchadnezzar the patriot king.

Such was not his character. When we read his history with care, we find little to applaud, and almost every thing to condemn. His reign was marked by no measures of reform, and no progress in improvement, either civil, or social, or religious. Once, indeed, we read of his assembling his magistrates, and rulers, and counsellors of state; but it was not to consult upon the interests of the empire, to correct abuses, and perform the varied duties of wise and wholesome legislation. He assembled them, and it was done with idle, childish pomp, to worship a golden image! He possessed many of the qualities of a *tyrant*. He was arbitrary and rash, and appears to have been subject to paroxysms of ungovernable fury. When under the influence of these, he committed excesses of cruelty; yet cruelty does not appear to have been a predominant ingredient in his character. Born to the throne, and nursed amid the clangor of arms, he had never been taught to cultivate that moderation, and exercise that self-control which should mark the conduct of one to whom the guidance and welfare of a nation were intrusted. There need be no greater proof of his fitful tyranny, than his command to the wise

men of his kingdom to tell him his forgotten dream, and the interpretation. A monarch may impose the weightiest burden, and inflict the severest punishment; but when he commands impossibilities, it is worse than tyranny. His wise men very rationally replied, "There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter; therefore there is no king, nor lord, nor ruler that asked such things." He might as well have asked them for the sun, or the moon. His conduct was that of a madman, and his cruel edict against them was in keeping with his mad command. He was a furious and wicked king. Instead of the memorials of his virtues, we find only the sad memorials of his vices. His whole history shows him to have been luxurious and effeminate; immoral himself, and the demoralizer of his nation. It would have been a melancholy view to have stood upon the walls of Babylon, and to have marked the influence which went forth from his palace to corrupt all orders of men, instigating his subjects to deeds of sensuality and crime, and preparing that fair land for its approaching doom. The name of king Nebuchadnezzar, instead of being the pride of a loyal people, and embalmed in the affections of a grateful posterity, lives only because it is associated with the history of a nation which he consigned to their seventy years' captivity, and lives only to be thought of on the

one hand with admiration of God's justice, and on the other with admiration of his divine mercy.

The next view in which he is presented to our consideration unfolds his *unbounded arrogance and pride*. He had, indeed, not a little to be proud of—as this world estimates the occasions and incentives to pride—in his royal lineage—in the success of his arms—in the extent and wealth of his dominions—in the adulation of his courtiers, and in his own youthful magnificence and prospects. The city of Babylon was at the zenith of its glory. He himself had visited Nineveh and Jerusalem; he had seen Thebes, Memphis, and Heliopolis, with their temples, pyramids, and obelisks, and all the wonders of Egypt; and it was his proud boast that Babylon should excel them all. He had brought the great masters of art from all the countries he had conquered in order to embellish his own capital. No city could be compared with it in dimensions, strength, or beauty. Its stupendous walls, the magnificence of its streets, the beauty of its waters, the splendor of its temple, tower, and palace, and the luxury of its hanging gardens, rendered it one of the wonders of the world. Nebuchadnezzar had filled it with a selected population from the captives of his conquered provinces, and from their treasures he had filled it with wealth. It was the richest city in the world. These were

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sufficient incitements to the monarch's pride. They were fascinating to such a mind as Nebuchadnezzar's; he was infatuated by them, and his heart was lifted up. He was arrogant; he must have "the king's seed to serve him;" the princes of his conquered provinces must be his slaves.

Nor was it enough that from his lofty seat he looked upon Chaldea as his foot-stool; he presumed to pass sentence even on the whole earth. And, because earth could not gratify his pride, he was not content without contesting the claim of sovereignty with his Maker. It was not enough for him, in his princely arrogance, to say, "*Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?*" The "rod had blossomed; pride had budded." Its fruits were bold presumption and impiety. One cloud of proud thoughts after another rolls over the mind of this infatuated prince until he forgot that he was God's creature. As he looked forth from the turret of his palace upon the stars of heaven, he conceives the impious thought, "*I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit upon the mountain of the congregation in the sides of the North. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High!*" He could not remain satisfied while there was one Being in the universe above

him. He was the Anti-christ of his age, "that opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." When modern Rome insults the Deity by erecting her throne upon the consecrated hills, and affecting to be the appointed representative of God upon the earth, she is but the anti-type of the insolent king of Babylon. It was unbounded arrogance. The Old Deceiver whispered in his ear, "Ye shall be as gods;" and the poison took in his festered heart. He was blinded to his destruction. There was a mist over the precipice where the man was doomed to fall, who made the earth to tremble and the world as a wilderness.

To have a just view of his character, we must therefore, in the next place, contemplate him as an *idolater*. Chaldea was the land of idols; it was so even before the days of Abraham. It became idolatrous through its pretensions to superior wisdom: "Vain was it in its imaginations, and its foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." Idolatry crept into the world just as infidelity crept into it, and just as Romanism crept into it, under the combined sanctions

of human wisdom and human superstition. The idolatry of Rome and the idolatry of Babylon address themselves alike to the senses and the imagination. It is the religion of splendid edifices, costly festivals, gorgeous vestments, and mysterious ceremonies, and priestly power. It need only to be introduced into such a world as this in order to be perpetuated. When once the conception of the One Infinite, independent Deity, existing every where and governing all things, whom the greatest should fear, on whom the weakest should rely, and whom all should worship, is obliterated from the mind, it is no marvel that men become stupid and debased. There is nothing so stupefying and debasing as that state of mind which never thinks of God, or seeks to keep him at a distance. This is the reason why the Chaldeans were idolaters. When they lost the knowledge of the true God, they made themselves gods to suit their own fancies. Though they lived so near the period when patriarchal tradition had handed down this knowledge, their land was the cradle of idolatry. Their laws and customs, their learning and philosophy, were deeply imbued with a senseless and idolatrous superstition. And their mythology, gross or refined, and sometimes adorned by fancy and genius, and the cultivated love of wickedness, is an impartial history of their national degeneracy.

At the head of this idolatrous people stood Nebuchadnezzar, himself the idolater king, and the great patron of idolatry. He was a contemner of the true God, and taught his subjects to be contemners. His idolatry lies at the basis of some of the imperfections, and many of the vices of his character. He was superstitious, because he was an idolater. Superstition is one of the great features of idolatrous lands. The superstition of Rome is one of the appendages of her idolatry. The most wicked of her Popes were the most superstitious of men. The prophet Isaiah represents Babylon as "wearied" by the multitude of her senseless divinations, star-gazers, and prognosticators. The superstition of Nebuchadnezzar's character is obvious from his reliance upon the occult arts of divination and astrology. The professors of these arts were the great men of his kingdom; they were his privy counsellors, to whom he had resort in all seasons of embarrassment and difficulty. He appoints the prophet Daniel to his college of diviners, as though he himself were one of the fraternity. His hopes and his fears, his power and his wealth, his pride and his effeminacy, found their element in his idolatry. His contempt of God, and his love of wickedness, were sanctioned by his idolatry. He had the boldness to enact laws against the God of heaven, and to prohibit his worship in all the

provinces of Babylon. There were periods in his reign when even the captive Hebrews, whom he had torn from their temple on Mount Zion, were not allowed to pay their homage to the God of Israel. They were mocked as the worshipers of the true God, and were called on, as princes were wont to call on their fools and jesters, to make merriment at the court festivities. The infidel and scoffing demand was rung in their ears, "Come, sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

Would you see this idolatrous prince as he *was*, you must accompany him with his princes, and counsellors, and judges, and all the rulers of the provinces, and the assembled people and strangers of Babylon, on some one of those festal days appointed by his royal edict for the worship of the *golden image* which he set up on the plains of Dura. It was a ludicrous pageant, ushered in by "cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and all kinds of music" and jugglery. There behold the man before whom kings prostrated themselves, who did shake kingdoms, and who had just said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God," himself falling down in the presence of shouting multitudes, and worshiping the god his own hands had made! This is that king—Nebuchadnezzar!

There is still another view we must take of his character. He was a *bigoted persecutor*. It was not enough that he exercised a political despo-

tism ; he was a religious despot, and was satisfied with nothing short of absolute control over the conscience. His religious edicts were more or less rigorous, as his feelings dictated them, and as his rage and fury were excited or moderate. Sometimes the penalty of resistance was the work of the headsman ; sometimes it was to be cut in pieces, and the houses of the rebellious to be made a dunghill ; sometimes it was to be cast into the den of lions, and sometimes it was to be bound hand and foot and thrown into the burning fiery furnace. The three captive Hebrew youth who had the integrity and firmness to refuse their homage to his golden deity, were cast into the furnace seven times heated. To worship the God of Israel was *heresy* ; it was an encroachment upon the royal prerogative that could not be tolerated. Nebuchadnezzar himself constituted the State and the Church. He was the Emperor-Bishop ; and woe betide the man who refused to worship the god of Chaldea, or presumed to worship the God of the Hebrews. He was the great ecclesiastical ancestor of St. Dominic, as Babylon was of Rome. Babylon was the first inquisitorial court, where cord and fagot began the work of torture and death. Subsequent persecutors have surpassed this prince in the inventions of cruelty ; none have surpassed him in the torrent of their fury. It was the impotent and vain rage of a supersti-

tious and proud tyrant ; but it was not the less intolerant and insufferable. Persecution is the same thing every where, and persecutors are every where like Nebuchadnezzar. We may not speak of this trait of his character with calmness ; they were the belchings of infuriate rage and insatiable ambition. Nor have we any desire to trace his path, or that of his imitators, into that sea of blood, where both he and they were bound to perdition.

There is one more view of his character which may perhaps aid us in forming a just estimate both of the prince and the man. If we mistake not, he was greatly wanting in decision and firmness. He was a *weak man and a weak prince*. As a warrior, he does not compare with Cyrus, or Alexander, or Cæsar, or Napoleon. He often leaves his work half done, where a conqueror of strong and decided character would have finished it without repeating the blow. In the progress of his conquests, he was awe-struck and terrified, he knew not why. As a king he is a tyrant ; but a weak and vacillating one, giving absurd orders, flying into fury when they are disobeyed, and when his victims are miraculously rescued, falling down before them and acknowledging their God, just as he would acknowledge Bel or Dagon. He is arbitrary and rash. The prevailing ingredient of his government seems to be weakness. Nature had done little for him ; good fortune every thing.

His intellectual faculties, naturally feeble, obviously had not received the culture which might have improved them, and elevated them to the standard of mediocrity. He was essentially a man of feeble character. In every thing he did, he seemed to be endeavoring to bring royalty into contempt. He had wise men in his kingdom; but instead of instructing himself in their wisdom, or directing it to noble objects, he held it in estimation only as it was able to interpret his *visions*! Daniel came to him a prophet, a man inspired with divine wisdom. He exalted him to a place of honor; but we have no evidence that he ever consulted him, except when the wisdom of his Chaldeans was at fault, and then only to explain his *dreams*. His dreams seem to be the principal concern of his life; and God sent him dreams that troubled him, and a prophet to interpret them, and fearless in the discharge of his duty. What weakness was it when he says to Shadrac, Meshac, and Abed-nego, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" after he had offered oblations to Daniel, and had made the confession to him, "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods." He had proof sufficient that the God of Daniel was greater than Bel and Dagon; yet the extent of his acknowledgment goes no further than to recognize him as the God of his captives. His superstitious idolatry, his

blind polytheism still clings to him, obscures his vision, and hangs a vail between his heart and the majesty of the Infinite Jehovah. What little good is found in his character seems comprised in his facility of temper. When he punishes he is in a fury, and when he rewards he is profuse and almost slavish. His acts of cruelty seem the acts of a weak mind, under the influence of sallies of frenzy that were perhaps constitutional ; while his acts of clemency and profusion were the acts of a feeble, easy temper, liable to be abused. He is often weak not only to capriciousness, but to contradiction. There was very little strength of mind in him ; and in fact his whole life seems like a school to prepare him for those seven years' exile from among men, when he "did eat grass as oxen, and his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

We see him then, in the last place, properly performing his part *as a beast*. There was an end to his unprincipled career ; a sickening and disgusting end. Almighty providence was about to crush this audacious, impotent reptile, not by a sudden overthrow, as he overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea ; nor by the sword of an assassin ; nor by the prison, nor the scaffold ; nor by nauseous disease, nor by the solitude of exile ; but by a more fearful visitation, and one which should hold him up to the world as the object of uni-

versal pity and contempt. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Impotent is the pride of man. Nebuchadnezzar was in his glory when the prophet Daniel predicted his overthrow; it was a fearful vision foreshadowing a total eclipse of the monarch's power. "I saw in the visions upon my bed, and behold a *Watcher and an Holy One* came down from heaven. He cried aloud and said, *Hew down* the tree and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves and scatter his fruit. Let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, *leave the stump of his roots* in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field. And let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the *beasts* in the grass of the earth." In the execution of this decree, we are told that "his heart was changed from man's, and a *beast's heart* was given to him." God gave him a year's respite before the prediction was fulfilled; but he was hardened in his pride. It was at the end of the year, and as he was exulting in the thought, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built," and while "the words were in the king's

mouth," that there "fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar! the kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will.' We may not stop to philosophize upon this transformation: suffice it to say, it was the immediate visitation of God. Nor was there any delay in executing the sentence. "*The same hour* was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from among men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven," and seven years passed over him.

Thus fell Chaldea's king. God smote him, and he became an idiot—a senseless maniac—wandering in the mountains and in the open field. He lost his relationship to man, and in no small degree the human form. He was transmuted to a brute. He, by whom nations had been overturned, and who had been idolized as a god, was debased below the condition of a slave—ranged the fields of Babylon with brutes, and with no protection from sun or storms—exchanged his imperial robes for the long and rough hair of the desert, and the delicacies of royalty to eat grass

with oxen. His princes, and his counsellors, and his wise men looked for him, and found him among cattle. Babylon looked for him, and turned with disgust from his filthiness. The army, the populace, his wives, his children, looked for him only to see that the hand of the Omnipotent was upon him, and only to hope that he was a melancholy madman. "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground that didst weaken the nations!"

If the sacred volume had closed his history here, who would deny that this weak, superstitious, and supercilious tyrant deserved such a doom? He has trifled with opportunities. Miracle after miracle has been wrought before his eyes, but all to no purpose. He has sinned long, and committed crimes enough. But God is long-suffering and gracious. This is not the last page of his history. There is still hope for Chaldea's poor and outcast king. There was no hope for him upon his throne. There was no hope for him in his pride of power and station. There was no hope for him while he was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace. But there is hope in his deep affliction, and now that he is humbled to the dust. Of the process by which his brutish heart became again changed to man's heart, we know nothing. Whether, even in his abject abase-

ment, there remained a glimmering of reason and consciousness sufficient to be the object of divine grace; or whether the change was effected at the moment when his understanding returned to him, we are also ignorant. We can only say that we know enough not to be without hope for this poor pagan monarch. We see this pitiable man, with scarce a vestige of human form, or human reason, coming to the light of life, and not improbably to the hopes of immortality. We listen to him, as his brutish covering falls off, and his understanding returns, and he lifts up his face toward heaven. We listen to him as he rises from the earth—not suddenly—not to exult in his restored humanity—nor to snatch with eager grasp the power and honors of which he has been so long divested; but kneeling with outspread hands under the open heavens, his eyes directed thither, and the bands of his tongue loosened. We listen to him, and from lips sealed for seven long years, we hear the song of praise to the Most High. We listen, and the first words which burst from the heart of this repentant monarch rise like perfume from flowers just washed by the rain, like incense from an altar newly reared and crowned with the first offerings of the humble and contrite. “And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me. And I blessed

the Most High ; and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing ; and he doeth 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 ?" Noble thoughts were these, and well fitted for Christian lips and Christian ears !

The result was that he was restored to his throne, and reigned an honored and prosperous monarch to the day of his death. We have the narrative in his own words. "And at the same time my reason returned unto me. And for the glory of my *kingdom*, mine honor and brightness returned unto me. And my counsellors and my lords sought unto me ; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, and extol, and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment ; and those that walk in pride, he is able to abase."

Many are the lessons to be inculcated from this most remarkable piece of biography. Shall not we learn from it,

1. In the first place, the thought which this pagan monarch deduced, *that the Most High ruleth among the children of men?* We look at these

wondrous overturnings in human affairs, and find no peace, no repose of mind, except in the thought that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." The loftiest monarch can no more govern this world than Xerxes could curb the impetuosity of the waves, by casting iron fetters into the sea. This is God's work. "Dominion is with *him*." Princes are to him but clay in the hands of the potter, to be made vessels unto honor, or, like the king of Babylon, made to eat grass with oxen. How should we give glory to the Lord our God, before our feet stumble upon the dark mountains! It is the tyrant's fear and freedom's hope that God is on the throne.

And it is the Church's refuge. "With the merciful he will show himself merciful; with the upright he will show himself upright; with the pure he will show himself pure; and with the *froward* he will show himself froward." When Judah's victorious king was entering the capital in triumph, God sent his prophet to say to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah, and Benjamin; the Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." Let this land hearken to his voice, lest he "trample us in his fury, and vex us in his sore displeasure." The Most High that ruleth among men grant that our prosperity may not be prosperity of wickedness,

lest in our overthrow Babylon itself should say,
"Art *thou* also become as one of us!"

In the second place, this biography teaches us *the certain abasement of human pride*. This is one of the lessons, also, which it taught Nebuchadnezzar. The last words in his memorable acknowledgment of the divine supremacy were, "Those that walk in pride, he is able to abase." They were words, the force of which he deeply felt, and which ought never to be lost sight of. There is nothing God will more certainly accomplish than stain the pride of all human glory. The supercilious Pharisee, who thanked God that he was not as other men, was taught that God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Lofty airs and insolent self-sufficiency and self-exultation ill become man, who is a worm. We must be unprofitable readers of the Bible if we have not noticed the frequency and emphasis of its rebukes against the pride of man. "Woe to the crown of pride! Behold I am against thee! O thou proud; the power of thy pride shall come down. The pride of life is not of the Father, but of the world. Him that hath a proud heart will I not suffer. The Lord hateth a proud look. He scattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts." Such are God's own revealed teachings. And such, too, are the teachings of his providence. Nebuchadnezzar, eating

grass like oxen—Belshazzar slain in his palace—Herod eaten of worms—Cæsar slaughtered in the senate-house—Tiberius suffocated in his bed—Nero fleeing from the sentence of death, denounced by his own subjects—Charles of England and Louis of France executed on the scaffold—and the great Napoleon, like a portentous meteor darting across the heavens, sinking, glimmering and exhausted, on a barren rock in the ocean ; all these teach us that the widest dominion of pride is the surest, and often the most sudden descent to abasement and shame. “The day of the Lord shall be upon every one that is proud, and he shall be brought low.”

In the third and last place, the history of Nebuchadnezzar teaches us *the vanity and mutability of all earthly things*. God reads us this lesson from his Word. All history reads it. Our own observation reads it. And if it is not confirmed by our own experience, we are the most favored of mortals, or the most slow to learn.

“All has its date below ; the fatal hour
Was registered in heaven e’er time began.
We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
Die too. The deep foundations that we lay
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock ;
A distant age asks where the fabric stood,
And in the *dust*, sifted and searched in vain,
The undiscovered secret sleeps.”

There is no relief from these changes of time. From such a world there is no lasting good to hope for. Nor is there any earthly refuge from its disappointments and its fears. Peradventure you see days of trouble, like the Babylonian monarch. The visions of wealth, honor and pleasure are receding from your eager grasp. Dreams upon your bed trouble you. Thoughts in the night-watches whisper to you. And what is it that can now give you peace and tranquillity? Who and where are they that can guide and comfort you? Are they the magicians, the Chaldeans, the wise men of this world? Have they any interpretations that satisfy you? Can they quiet the conscience, and silence the still small voice, and banish the visions that make you afraid? No; if they would be honest, they would confess, with the prognosticators of old, "there is none other can show this matter except the Gods whose dwelling is not with flesh." A precious truth is this, though uttered by the diviners of Babylon. "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble."

Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils. In the intimacies of friendship, in the accumulations of wealth, in the house of pride, in the festivities and walks of pleasure, you will meet with changes, disappointments, and death. Nebuchadnezzar did not live in vain, if it were

only to proclaim in our ears the uncertainty of all earthly joys. Oh how does the bright vision vanish in that dark hour when the Last Enemy approaches! What is the world good for then? Speak to a dying man of gold. Tell the grasping ambitious of their honors. Hold up to expiring princes their sparkling crowns. Tell the man of pleasure that his cup is not exhausted. Whisper to the man of science how green the laurels are that will adorn his grave. Ah, there the laurels wither; the cup of pleasure is dried, and crowns and gold become dross. "Son, remember that thou, in thy *life time*, receivest thy good things." There is no more affecting sight than to see a man who has toiled for the world, convinced too late that he has had his reward.

The last change makes the worldling poor. The emperor goes without his crown; the effeminate without his pleasures; the rich man without his gold, into that eternity that knows no change. No; no change. *Eternity alone* knows no change. Heaven knows none. Nor is there any where Babylon sunk. "What then shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul!"