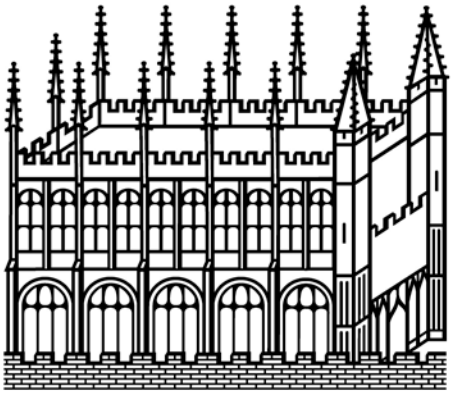

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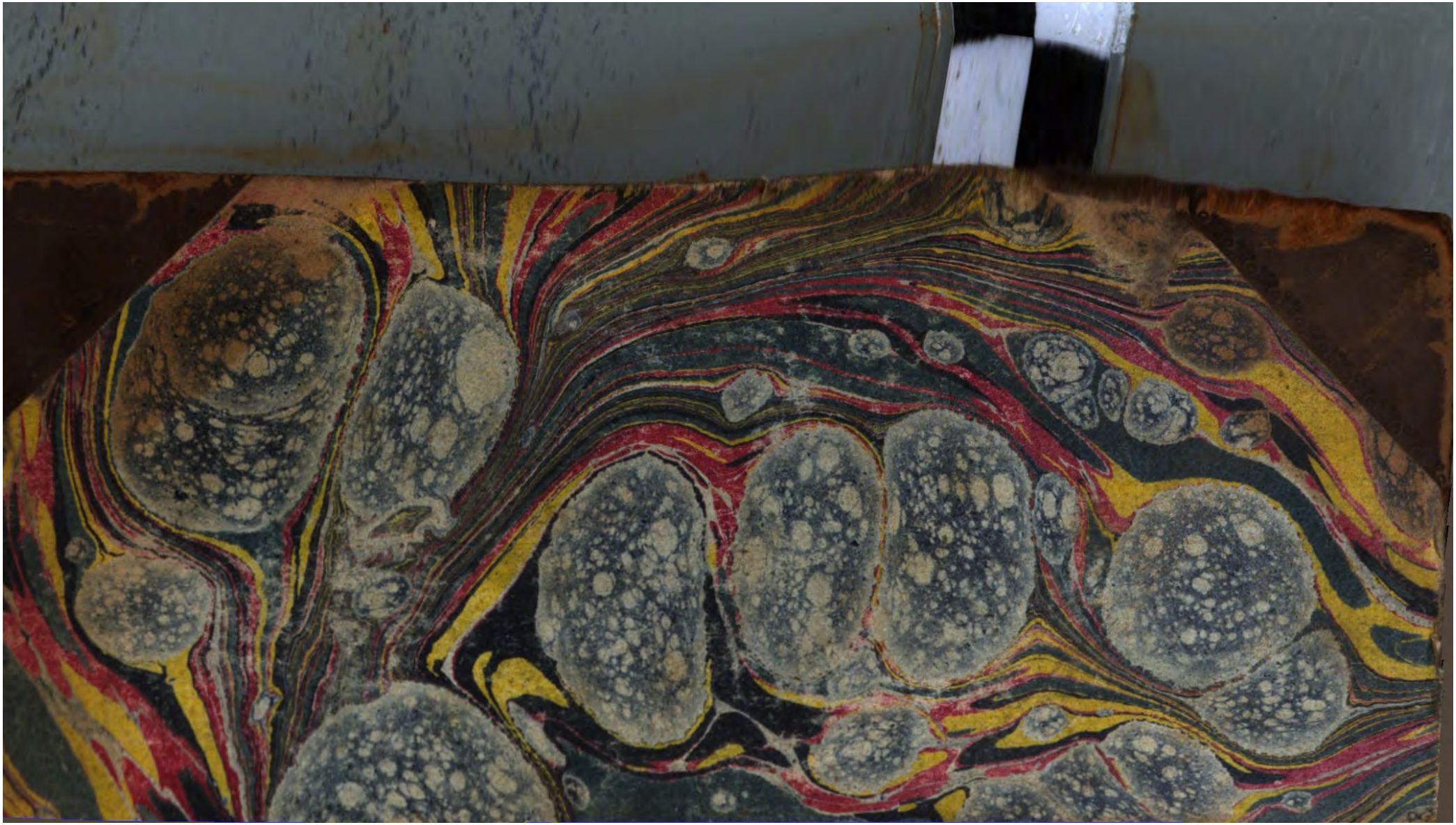

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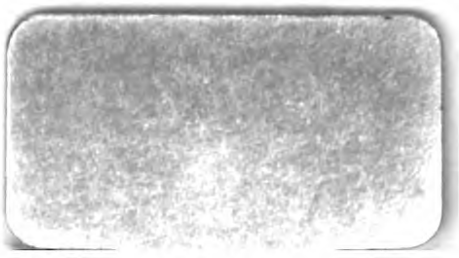

TEN DISCOURSES

ON THE

PRINCIPAL EVENTS

IN

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

MOSES.

BY THE

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In publishing the following Discourses, the usual apology may be made, that I have only acceded to the request of some members of my congregation, whose friendship I value, and whose opinion I respect. But, though the mere act of publishing might be passed over without remark, some explanation is perhaps necessary for touching upon ground already occupied by the Rev. Mr. Blunt, in his Lectures. The idea, however, of treating in a series of Sermons the character and actions of one of the most remarkable personages of Holy Writ, is so obvious to every preacher, who wishes to vary his subject, and study the improvement of his hearers, that it scarcely merits the charge of plagiarism. I ought also to state, that I have long been accustomed

to deliver a similar series of Sermons during Lent, and probably before Mr. Blunt's Lectures appeared, or at least before they acquired the reputation which they now enjoy. With regard to the seventh Discourse, I wish to observe, that I found it impossible entirely to divest my mind of the impression made upon it by Bishop Horne's admirable Sermon on the same subject.

June, 1834.

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DISCOURSE I.

BIRTH OF MOSES.

DISCOURSE I.

BIRTH OF MOSES.

Exodus ii. 6.

And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

No portion of Scripture is, perhaps, better calculated to impress upon the mind the great duties of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" and to bring before it the momentous doctrines of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," than one of those remarkable characters pourtrayed therein for our admonition; one of those personages so eminent for their faith and piety, their constancy

and obedience. At the same time, no kind of narrative has laid such hold of the youthful mind, or so deeply and indelibly impressed itself upon the heart, as the historical portion of the Old Testament, particularly the books of Genesis and Exodus. There is a simplicity as well as dignity in the style of the sacred writings, which, whilst it fills the mind of the wisest, yet may be grasped by the intellect of the lowliest: whilst it lays before us scenes of wonder to which no parallel can ever now be actually presented—scenes of patriarchal simplicity to which our ideas and habits are most foreign, yet compels us to acknowledge their interest and confess their veracity. Who does not remember the impression made upon him in childhood by the histories of Joseph and Moses, and Samuel and David? We dwell upon them with love and affection, till the imagination is transported into the regions of the East, and we behold the patriarchs in all their unadorned but glorious simplicity, holding communion with angels, and even

with God himself; sitting at the door of their tent, or at the gate of their city, administering judgment with wisdom, or declaring unto their families the wonders that the Lord had done among the children of men.

But, pleasing and interesting as these narratives are, they are designed to answer a much more important purpose: and it is with a view of turning them to more profitable account than merely to excite our feelings or sensibilities, that I have usually selected one of them for our consideration during the season of Lent. That to which I propose, with the divine blessing, to call your attention at present, is the history of him, who, after the Messiah, holds the most prominent place in the holy Scriptures; of him who was the messenger of the old covenant, as Christ was of the new; of him by whom came the law, as by Christ came the Gospel; of Moses, the first and greatest of the prophets. May God, who has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, pour out of that

Spirit abundantly upon us; enlightening our understandings to receive, and strengthening our minds to hold fast in faith, the blessed truths which he has revealed. May our eyes be opened to see him in his works and in his ways, in his providences and in his dispensations. May he make the lessons of heavenly wisdom which he has given us, the examples of holiness which he has set before us, conducive to our eternal welfare. May he be to us an unfailing instructor and guide; and, finally, when he has made us by his grace and Holy Spirit "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" to do his will, may he unite us hereafter to those whose lives now occupy our meditations—whose examples we strive to follow—to the prophets and apostles, in eternal glory in his kingdom.

We know that man was originally created in the image of God, and stamped with the likeness of his perfections; that he was happy because pure, and peaceful because sinless. But fallen from that high estate, and ejected from the region

of his blessedness, he wandered forth into the world, rendered barren by his crime, and desolate by his transgression. His posterity gradually yielded to the dominion of evil, thus successfully begun; till "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually [1]." To destroy this corruption, to eradicate at once this mighty power of wickedness, and, in some degree, to purify the earth from the contamination which it had undergone, the flood was sent, sweeping away the whole race of mankind except the family of Noah. When men again increased and multiplied, the seeds of evil also sprang up, and grew, and produced their own abundant harvest. But God had sworn never again to destroy the earth with a flood of waters, and had set his bow in the clouds as the ensign and emblem of his truth. Partial punishments were therefore inflicted, and Sodom and

[1] Gen. vi. 5.

Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, were overwhelmed with a fiery deluge. Still the knowledge of God became less distinct; his nature, attributes, and perfections, less vividly impressed upon the minds of men; his truth unknown; his commands forgotten or despised. Idolatry sprung up in all its various forms, and multiplied in all its absurdity, and all its hideousness.

To preserve some portion of divine truth in the earth, and to prepare the way for a more complete regeneration in fulness of time, the Lord determined, in his wisdom, to establish a church and a nation, which should preserve his name, and be a witness for him among men—which should be as a green spot in the vast wilderness of human depravity: as a pillar of fire amidst the thick darkness.

With this design He called Abraham; He withdrew him from the idolaters by whom he was surrounded in Chaldea; He tried his faith and obedience, and finding him, like his great progenitor Noah, "perfect in his generation," He

finally established with him his covenant; He promised that he would bestow upon him, as a temporal inheritance, the land of Canaan, the place of his banishment; and that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The accomplishment, however, of this promise, even in its temporal part, was remote. It resembled most of the other promises of God, which are intended at once to encourage and to prove; to strengthen our endurance and to try our obedience; that faith may exalt our hope, and hope enlarge our faith.

Various were the trials which the infant church was to undergo, before this consummation. The Lord concealed not from his servant the perils and the sufferings; but he also showed him their glorious termination. "Know of a surety," says he, "that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and

afterward shall they come out with great substance[1]."

The account which we possess of the residence of the children of Israel in Egypt, is extremely concise: the long period from the death of Joseph until the birth of Moses, being contained in the first chapter of the book of Exodus. In a similar style of brevity and simplicity, the first eighty years of the life of Moses, namely, the whole period preceding his mission to his brethren, is comprised in twenty-two verses of the second chapter. From narratives thus brief and compendious, we cannot expect to derive all that minute information, which our present curiosity would wish, or even the laudable spirit of inquiry into subjects so sacred and interesting, might desire. Yet how wonderfully are the great lines of the history drawn for us! how admirably are all the principal objects presented before us! what a perfect picture is given

[1] Gen. xv. 13, 14.

of all the occurrences of this momentous period!

Jacob, in want and famine, goes down into Egypt; finds there his son, whom he had long mourned as dead, exalted to the highest rank in the most powerful kingdom then in the world. By his interest and authority, he and his children are established in a portion of this fruitful land, and thus placed beyond the reach of want or the fear of famine. Jacob dies. Joseph is gathered to his fathers; and, in the impressive words of Scripture, "all that generation passed away." Another king is seated upon the throne of the Pharaohs, "who knew not Joseph;" who remembered not his services; who felt no interest in the new people. In the mean time, "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them." By a barbarous policy, which served, though the Egyptians thought not of it, to accomplish the prophecy made unto Abraham, the whole people are at once re-

duced to a state of slavery. "They set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens." They compelled them to labour in their public works, to build their treasure cities. Yet the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew. The rigour of their servitude is consequently increased, and an inhuman edict is published, to destroy all their male children as soon as born; so that the whole nation might gradually be exterminated.

Now, however, that his people are in the greatest distress, the arm of the Lord is stretched out to save them. The time draws nigh when Israel's probation is to have an end, and the promise made to Abraham to receive its accomplishment. The same beautiful simplicity, which we have already noticed, characterizes this part of the narrative.—"There went," we are told, "a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi." The name of the man was Amram; that of his wife Jochebed. Amram was the grandson of Levi; and Jochebed, though

called the daughter of Levi, according to the peculiar language of Scripture, was most probably his grand-daughter, or perhaps his great grand-daughter.—"And the woman bare a son."—We may conclude that this was immediately after the edict of Pharaoh; as she had three years previously borne his brother Aaron, who appears to have been in no danger; and seven years before his sister Miriam.—"And when she saw that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months." But when he could no longer be concealed, or guarded at home, from the cruelty of Pharaoh, she resolved that her child should fall into the hand of God, rather than of man. She committed the infant in sorrow, but in faith [1] and hope, to the river. "She took for him an ark of bulrushes, and put the child therein, and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink."—Still, though cast out, he was not entirely abandoned; "his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done unto him."

[1] Heb. xi. 23.

But a mightier hand than that of maternal love guarded the infant prophet. A kinder eye watched over him than that of sisterly affection. The Lord of heaven and earth, the controller not only of the elements, but even of the unruly wills and inclinations of men, had marked him as his own; and no earthly power could frustrate the determination of the Omnipotent. The daughter of Pharaoh—the child of him who sought his life, was led to the spot, to prevent her parent's cruelty. She saw the child, and had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."—The desire of preserving this child arose in her mind, and the sister of Moses was at hand to suggest the means. "Then said his sister unto Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? and she said, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And she said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child

and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son."

Such is the brief and simple narrative which we have received concerning the birth of the great Lawgiver, prophet, and leader of Israel; the inspired historian of the creation, the type of the Messiah, the deliverer of the chosen people of God.

It is not without an object that I have been thus diffuse, in laying before you a subject, with the outlines of which even the youngest, or most ignorant, must be in some degree acquainted. It presents several most important and interesting materials for our reflection; some of which I shall now proceed to consider. And, first: It is a mistake to suppose, that the great designs of the Almighty have at any time been dependent upon a continual exertion of supernatural energy; that the frequent occurrence of those astounding exhibitions of inconceivable might has ever been indispensably necessary for their fulfilment. In reality, if we look through the sacred history, we shall find

that the mightiest purposes of his wisdom, the most stupendous plans of his power, have in a great measure been accomplished by ordinary means—by means in nowise to be distinguished from the natural course of things. In almost every instance he employs human agency to effect his resolves, makes mankind his ministers of justice or of mercy, of vengeance or of grace; and uses these his instruments as rational and accountable beings, and not as mere machines, impelled by the strong spring of irresistible necessity. In few cases, therefore, can it be shown that miracle has been indispensable for the accomplishment of his object. When employed, it has been more as an accessary than as the chief agent, and appears to have been introduced rather for the sake of man himself, in consideration of his natural weakness, to help his infirmity, and to strengthen his faith [1]. It seems as if,

[1] This is further shown by the cessation of miracles since the promulgation of the Christian dispensation. We do not now need miracles as aids to our faith, and therefore they are not wrought. Yet the

to God himself, these extraordinary exertions of power were unnecessary; that the same hand which formed, the same mind which planned, the same spirit which organized the system of nature, had foreseen and provided for all the various contingencies which might happen; so that every exigence is met, as it occurs, by the mere natural impulses implanted in each individual, and that events require nothing more to controul and direct their course, than the silent invisible influence which pervades all things, and in a particular manner the mind and the soul of man himself.

Still more clearly does it appear that his ordinary providential government is not carried on by isolated acts of power, by stupendous exertions of miraculous energy, controlling the elements of the material and moral world, and opening the treasure house of his omnipotence.

prophecies of Scripture declare, that some of the grandest purposes of the Almighty have still to receive their accomplishment.

The Lord does not on every occasion "make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations[1];" but by skilful combinations of circumstances; by the judicious arrangement of materials, oftentimes the most discordant; by the slow process of gradual advancement; He proceeds step by step, silently and imperceptibly, towards the accomplishment of his greatest designs: making all things, even the most minute and insignificant, "work together" to do his will. "His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known."

In the present case, though there is a most wonderful combination of motives and circumstances tending to the accomplishment of one purpose; yet none of these motives are in themselves extraordinary, nor any of these circumstances out of the common course of events. There is nothing miraculous in the desire of a mother to save her infant from death: nothing miraculous in the compassion of

[1] Isaiah lii. 10.

Pharaoh's daughter for a deserted orphan. It was *natural* that she should be struck with its beauty, softened by its tears, and affected by its destitution. There is nothing, I repeat, at all miraculous in any of these circumstances. It is only when we consider their combination, and particularly when we survey the result, that we are compelled to say, this is the hand of God. One link wanting, and the whole chain must have been useless. A single defect in the arrangement, and the whole fabric must have fallen to the ground. If Moses had not been saved from Pharaoh's cruelty; if he had not been exposed at that particular moment; if the heart of Pharaoh's daughter had been hard as his own; or if she had been content, with ordinary feelings of charity, to consign him to the care of others; where would have been the future lawgiver, the mighty instrument of Egypt's judgment, and Israel's deliverance? This entire subservience of events shows the Divinity

[1] Gen. xv. 14.

more conspicuously than any single act, however wonderful; for it exhibits absolute wisdom directing absolute power.

And thus it is in the minor occurrences of life; in those changes and chances which happen unto all men. We are led by a chain whose links are oftentimes invisible, because familiar to our eyes. We are conducted in a path of which we take no note, because it is distinguished by no extraordinary features. We acknowledge not the hand of God, because it changes not the usual course of nature; and often, in those events which have had most influence upon our lives, we see not, neither do we understand, who it is that hath been with us, and made "all things to work together for our good." To acknowledge God, we demand a sign, and we perceive not that he is continually present with us, "about our path, and about our bed."

Again. The Almighty appears, in all cases, to have prepared his chosen instruments with the greatest attention: to have cast, as it were, and tempered, and

polished them with extraordinary care. The peculiar office which Moses was to hold was that of a legislator; and therefore it was fit that he should possess information beyond what a people in a state of slavery could be capable of affording. For this purpose, he was exposed on the Nile—found accidentally by the king's daughter; no meaner hand would have answered the purpose—nursed by his own mother, that he might conform to the rites and be instructed in the principles of the faith of Abraham—but brought up in Pharaoh's house, and educated "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," the only people, at that time and for ages afterwards, who had any pretensions to learning.

The same carefulness in choosing and preparing his instruments we find strikingly exemplified in the case of St. Paul and the rest of the apostles. The latter, who were to teach their own people and nations comparatively barbarous, possessed no learning. It was sufficient that they should be fishermen or artisans.

They were indeed acquainted, as was every Jew, with their own history and prophecies; they were abundantly zealous, and filled with that which is infinitely preferable to human learning, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But St. Paul was ordained to preach the Gospel to the disputatious Greek, to the learned Roman, to men who were in an advanced state of civilization, among whom learning was encouraged and respected. He was therefore brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the most celebrated of all the Jewish doctors; by no means ignorant, as he proves by frequent quotations, of the heathen poets and philosophers. And it was so ordained, that his teaching might not be despised; that he might be able to confute his adversaries in their own way, and foil them with their own weapons. The greatest enemies of Paul could not upbraid him with ignorance. Once indeed he was accused of too much learning: "Festus said unto him, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make

thee mad [1]." And, as if this was not sufficient, he was also a Roman citizen, not by purchase, but in the most honourable way, by birthright. Thus respect, at once, and protection, were provided for the future minister of Jesus, for the future apostle of the gentiles; inasmuch as the Roman citizen claimed and found in his high privileges both respect and protection. Gamaliel little thought that he was giving polish and temper to the sword, destined to pierce his own armour; and adding weight and keenness to the axe which was to be laid at the root of his own faith: he no more imagined that he was educating the youth, who should become the champion of the cross, and contribute essentially to supersede Judaism, and overthrow idolatry, than the daughter of Pharaoh thought that she was fostering the child, who should release Israel from the tyranny of Egypt.

But lastly, we may derive, from this history, the assurance, that all secondary

[1] Acts xxvi. 24.

causes are absolutely and entirely under the control of Him who sitteth in the heavens; that there is not only a general providence which upholds and governs the universe, but also a particular providence, which, however extraordinary or incomprehensible it may appear to our limited faculties, directs, controls, and superintends every circumstance in our lives, every thing in the world around us. It is a confidence that, in the fullest and most extensive sense of the expression "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." And what a powerful support is this assurance in all the dangers and difficulties of human life! What an inexhaustible source of consolation in all its troubles and afflictions, and sorrows, to think, and believe, and know undoubtingly, that the God who suggested to the mother the mode of preserving the life of her child—the God who guarded his infant helplessness, when floating unconsciously upon the waters of the river—the God who directed Pharaoh's daughter to the spot, and melted her heart to charity—that the God of Abraham, and

Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, is also our God, and that his hand is effectually, though not often visibly extended for our protection as it was for theirs?

What are we all—the meanest as well as the highest, the lowest as well as the most exalted — but instruments in his hand; instruments prepared for a particular purpose, adapted to a particular work? And we may rest assured that, until this work be done, until this purpose be accomplished, not all the might of Pharaoh, not all the power of Egypt, not all the malice of Satan himself, can destroy us; not even a hair of our head can fall to the ground without the permission of our heavenly Father. The events which happen to us may not indeed be pleasant; neither may we be able to discover their influence upon our future welfare or utility: we cannot walk with him upon the sea, nor follow his footsteps in the deep waters: we cannot look through the clouds that envelop futurity: we cannot even trace with accuracy the past: yet we are

assured that "*all* things work together for our good."

And oh! if we could but see this more clearly, and feel it more deeply, and understand it more thoroughly, and believe it more fervently; what burdens of grief would be shaken from the mind! What mountains of anxiety would be removed from the heart, when knowing and feeling that God cared for us, we might be prepared to cast all its care unreservedly upon him! Why do we grieve for the disappointments of life, but because our faith is not yet perfect? Why do we faint under its distresses, but because our faith is not yet perfect? Why do we sorrow for hopes destroyed, for prospects blighted, for friends departed, for all the calamities and bereavements of life, but because our faith is not yet perfect? If we only knew the unspeakable blessedness of a heart fully and entirely stayed on God, our constant prayer would be, "Lord increase our faith."

To those among you who are young;

by whom the busy and toilsome path of life has not yet been trodden; who have not tasted of the cup of its enchantments, or have not yet discovered its bitterness; to you I would address a few words, in concluding this subject.

You have been taught to believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who hath reconciled this God unto you. You have been taught to consider him as your Father which is in heaven; to worship him; to pray to him. But do you clearly perceive what this means? Do you sufficiently comprehend all that you owe to him, as the maker and ruler of heaven and earth; and all that you expect from him, as your Father which is in heaven? Do you understand and feel all that he has done for you, all that he is now doing, all that he is still prepared to do? You were once, like Moses, encompassed with the perils of infancy, though not in the same *degree*, and from these perils He has, in mercy and in goodness, preserved you. You can see in others

the helplessness of childhood, and from that judge what must have been your own. Yet, though the slightest accident might have rendered the healthiest among you an object of compassion through life, or even extinguished life itself: though the smallest atom might have utterly destroyed that form, of which you now, perhaps, are vain; His everlasting arm has been around you, and guarded you from danger. When you reflect that opportunities have been afforded which might have been withheld without complaint—blessings and privileges bestowed, which might have been denied without injustice: can you not feel what you owe to God Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth? When again you think how little you know what shall happen on the morrow: how soon the death of parents or relatives may leave you solitary—perhaps destitute: when you read, and hear, and see how little man is able to direct the future, or order his own goings, or command that prosperity to shine upon him through life, which

seemed to beam so brightly at its dawning: when, I say, you meditate upon the dangers which beset all mankind in their progress through the world; the troubles and trials and disappointments which await them, (and it is not an imaginary picture which I present unto you; but one which you will, too surely, find real and actual) what is it that you have to pray for to your Father which is in heaven? It is still guidance and protection. That he will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves—keep your feet from falling. That he will be with you and preserve you. Nor are you left without assurances of his aid and of his fatherly protection. The God of Moses is also your God. He who rescued *him* will also save *you*. His promises are as sure as they are consolatory. If thou wilt remember him in the days of thy youth, he will not, in age, forsake thee. "If thou commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in him, he shall bring it to pass[1]." "Wait on the Lord, and keep his

[1] Ps. xxxvii. 5.

way, and he shall exalt thee[1]." "He will keep thee in perfect peace, if thy mind is stayed on Him[2]." Begin then, before you set out in the busy and perilous way of life, to repose your confidence and rest your faith on Him, and on Him alone. Begin early to seek Him, who alone can be a strong rock and house of defence to them that take refuge in Him. Secure in his protection, you may go on your way rejoicing. Strong in his strength, you may go forth into the world with boldness, and survey its dangers with resolution. Trusting in his blessed promise, you may support the trials that await you: for His words are, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour[3]."

[1] Ps. 34. [2] Isaiah xxvi. 3. [3] Isaiah xliii. 2.

DISCOURSE II.

MOSES' CHOICE.

DISCOURSE II.

MOSES' CHOICE.

HEBREWS xi. 24, 25, 26.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

WHEN we trace the circumstances connected with the early life of the great Jewish Lawgiver, the brief account which he himself has given in the second chapter of Exodus is materially assisted and elucidated by two passages in the New Testament. One of these occurs in the historical exposition of the grounds of his belief, delivered by Stephen in

answer to the high-priest and the assembled council, as related in the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The other, in that chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews from which the text is taken; wherein the apostle enumerates, and sets forth in such glowing terms, the victories and triumphs of faith in all ages of the world, and under all the various dispensations of the Almighty.

The thoughts of the Jews were continually turned to Moses, both in the reading of the Law and in the performance of their ritual. He was on every account an object of pride and veneration. It is not wonderful, therefore, that they should possess many traditions respecting so remarkable a personage, and that every circumstance, whether true or false, which once gained credit, if it only appeared to reflect honour upon him, should be carefully and religiously handed down from generation to generation. Their existence as a people, or at least as a free people, they owed to him. The land which they possessed they owed to him. The

worship in which they joined, the rites to which they were bound, the restrictions by which they were confined, they owed to him. He was the minister through whom every benefit was conferred, every law promulgated, every ordinance imposed. In fact, the Jews could scarcely move or speak or think—could scarcely perform the most insignificant action, or view the most ordinary object, without being reminded of Moses. Their whole form of government and civil polity was of his institution. Their whole literature was for ages comprised in his writings, and in those of the prophets, which may be considered as explanatory of his system. The Jews had only one book, but that book was the Scriptures.

With the traditions so handed down, a considerable portion of fable might naturally be expected to mingle. And though his character and his writings were too sacred in their eyes, to permit them to falsify his own account of himself; yet any thing which seemed, however errone-

ously, to exalt his reputation, was eagerly received, and fondly cherished.

Is it not then remarkable, that neither Stephen nor the apostle to the Hebrews brings forward any of those extravagant traditions respecting him, which were at that time as firmly believed in Judea as the Scriptures themselves? Their narratives coincide in substance exactly with that of Moses. They are given indeed with conciseness, and with the greatest perspicuity, and they merely add a few circumstances, which are not only natural and probable, but evidently and almost necessarily true.

Let us compare these three narratives. In Exodus the account runs thus. "When the mother of Moses saw that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink." The history then proceeds to describe the mode in which the child was

found by Pharaoh's daughter, and delivered to his own mother to be nursed; and concludes by saying, that "the child grew, and was brought unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses. And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens."

We shall perceive that the story loses nothing of its beautiful simplicity in the mouth of Stephen. "In which time," says he, (that is, in the time when Israel was so evil-entreated by the Egyptians,) "Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." —Here, then, we have the same history, with the addition of two new facts.

One, that he was forty years old at the precise period of visiting the children of Israel, his brethren. The other, that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. The latter of these circumstances is not only highly probable, as being the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter; but, if we may judge from his character and conduct afterwards, necessarily true.

Again, the account given by St. Paul differs slightly from both of these; but is still characterized by the same simplicity and conciseness. "By faith (that is, by the faith of his parents) Moses, when he was born, was hid three months, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith (that is, by his own faith) Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had re-

spect unto the recompense of the reward." Here, then, we have a new fact, which is, that Moses made a deliberate selection between the dictates of conscience, and the allurements of riches and power, with all the sensual pleasures which these could bestow. He desired to be numbered among the poor, despised, enslaved, and degraded people of God, rather than to hold the highest rank among their oppressors. This circumstance, too, is not only probable, but certainly true; for it is evident, from the narrative in Exodus, that his separation from the Egyptians was voluntary.

Now, it is not the least remarkable circumstance, that we have the power of comparing the narratives thus given, by the Lawgiver himself, by the martyr and by the apostle, with that of Josephus, a man of learning, and a Jewish priest, who wrote not many years after the time of St. Paul. And any one who ever perused the absurd exaggerations of national vanity, and the showy embellishments of the uninspired historian, must have turned

with tenfold delight and conviction to the simple and unpretending language of Scripture and of truth.

Before proceeding in our reflections upon this subject, there is one expression in the text which seems to require some explanation. "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." We may ask, how could Moses, so many years before the coming of Christ, choose or endure the reproach of Christ? The mode of expression appears more suited to the ages of the apostles and of the Gospel, than to that of the patriarchs or of the law. And so it does, undoubtedly, as far as the *mode* of expression is concerned; but in substance and signification it applies as strongly to the patriarchs and to Moses, as it does to the apostles and disciples of Christ. The Jewish government was a theocracy. The Jews were the people of God: Christ was their king: they were blessed with his continual presence, and favour, and protection: He was their guide and their support; and therefore

the sufferings of Israel were the sufferings of Christ, the reproach of Israel was the reproach of Christ. "For he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old [1]."

But still further, Christ, or the Messiah, was the hope of Israel; and that hope was as peculiar and distinctive an article of their religious belief, as the existence of the one true God. Christ was, indeed, always considered as the head of the Church in all ages; himself the author and the object of every dispensation from the beginning of time. In him Adam beheld the restorer, the deliverer, the regenerator of his fallen race; the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head. By him Noah preached to the disobedient before the flood, "when once the

[1] Isaiah lxiii. 8, 9.

long-suffering of God waited." Abraham with the eye of faith "saw his day and was glad." The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, "when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow[1]." Christ was with the Church in the wilderness. He was the angel, or messenger, "sent before to keep them in the way, and to bring them into the place prepared." In fact, we are wholly in error, if we suppose that Christianity is a new thing. Its full elucidation, development, and accomplishment, is, indeed, comparatively new; but Christianity itself was, essentially, as much the religion of the patriarchs and the prophets, as it is ours. They had the same faith, though not with the same evidence that we have. They had the same Saviour, though they saw him not so clearly as we do: the same promises, though they viewed them not so distinctly: the same hopes, though not with the same unclouded glory. *They* saw as in a glass darkly;

[1] 1 Peter i. 11.

but *we* face to face. Their's was the day-spring; our's the full radiance of the noon-day. Still it was the same; differing only in degree of evidence, assurance, and completion. It was the shoot of that tree which was to cover all nations with the shadow of its branches: the rise of that "river, the streams whereof should make glad the city of God[1]." The reproach of Christ was, therefore, the reproach to be endured for the profession of the true faith, as it was then revealed; for walking in the commandments of God, as they were then made known; for looking forward to the redemption that was to come; and for abiding in expectation of the reward held out to all who live godly in this present world, instead of indulging their fleshly and carnal lusts.

Now let us consider what this narrative exhibits, and what instruction we may derive from it. It presents to us a man, snatched in infancy from impending and, apparently, inevitable destruction; brought

[1] Psalm xlvi. 4.

up in a voluptuous court, as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter; trained from childhood to behold oppression and violence, to witness vice unchecked, passions unrestrained, tyranny uncontrolled; habituated to the view of idolatry and superstition in all their grossness; yet hearing nothing from the great, the noble, or the wise, with whom he conversed, which denoted either reproof or disapprobation. Encompassed by all the seductions of wealth, ambition, and pleasure; endowed with learning to make himself distinguished even among the Egyptians; and, certainly, not deficient in genius to make that learning available; still, holding fast his integrity, amidst every thing calculated to wrest it from him; preserving a conscience pure and unstained, where all tended to debase and pollute it; turning with affection to his brethren in their state of galling servitude; cherishing in secret the faith and principles of his fathers; and, at last, cheerfully giving up all those worldly advantages, so precious in the eyes of men,

" choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

And what was the motive for this singular choice? By what power was he impelled? By what influence was he induced to make this sacrifice? The apostle declares it to be the power of faith. " By faith Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." The same faith " in things not seen as yet," that led Noah to " prepare an ark to the saving of his house." The same faith that induced Abraham, at the call of God, to quit his country and his kindred without hesitation or regret, " not knowing whither he went;" but " sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange country." The same faith which, in after times, enabled the prophets and apostles to " subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire; to endure cruel mockings and scourg-

ings, bonds and imprisonment;" to brave death itself in its most fearful forms of terror. The same faith burned in his bosom, and impelled him to this resolve. He knew the promises of God made unto his fathers, and he believed them. He knew the duties requisite to insure a participation in those promises, and he hesitated not to comply with them. It was not knowledge only—it was not belief only—but it was the practical application of that knowledge, the actual exertion of that belief. "He had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

The promises of God made unto the fathers of the Jewish nation were temporal in their immediate design, but eternal in their typical application. The land of Canaan was an emblem of the heavenly country: the repose there to be obtained —of the happiness of the just made perfect: the abundance there to be poured out—of the fulness of joy and the pleasures which are at the right hand of God for evermore. And we can have little doubt,

that the patriarchs so understood them, if not fully, at least partially; that they had some faint notion, some glimmering conception, that better things were designed by these outward signs, than the signs themselves, which were at best only earthly and perishable.

Of the accomplishment of the temporal promises there was not at that time much probability; indeed, there was little in them to influence a man already in possession of the riches of Egypt; we must, therefore, conclude that Moses was chiefly influenced by those which are eternal. He saw the rewards of the righteous—obscurely, but he was persuaded of them—afar off, but he embraced them—imperfectly, but he doubted them not. And what power but that of faith could have been sufficient to produce an effect so wonderful? What power but that of faith could overbalance all the enchantments of Egypt? It must have been more than a worldly recompense which he had in view; for no change could bring greater worldly prosperity

than he had already obtained. He saw through the mists of humanity, the glories of immortality. He beheld, beyond this vale of suffering, the happiness of the just made perfect. In this faith and this hope, he was willing to sacrifice all that he possessed. For this pearl of great price, he was ready to sell all that he had. Weighing in the balance the present against the future, time against eternity, earth against heaven, he preferred hope to immediate enjoyment, faith to instant fruition. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

This is a subject which strikes home to the hearts and feelings of all men. It touches the situation and necessities of all mankind. All are exposed to temptation; all are liable to be assailed and drawn aside from the path of holiness, by the allurements of the world. Independently of that innate aversion to the high and paramount calls of duty—independently of that natural tendency of the heart of man to iniquity, of which all

must be sensible, we are continually in danger from external objects, and earthly gratifications. The aspect which duty presents, is ever rigid and uncompromising: in its very nature it involves labour: it implies a conquest over the unruly will; a force upon the predominant inclinations; a victory over the appetites and passions of the flesh. Many times it calls for loss and suffering; whilst, on the other hand, instant pleasure or immediate profit may accrue, by a departure from rectitude. When the mind is thus wavering between inclination and duty, between interest and obedience; if the treasures of Egypt should be cast into the balance; if a prospect of wealth, or pleasure, or advancement, unbounded, should be opened to the view; what power, but that of faith, could give a preponderance to the scale of righteousness, and make us esteem the reproach of Christ as the greatest riches, and have respect unto the future recompense of the reward?

It is not an easy task to keep through life, from infancy to age, the arduous but undeviating path marked out for the upright. It is not an easy thing, to go through evil report and through good report, through honour and dishonour, for the sake of preserving a conscience void of offence. To deny ourselves perpetually. To give up every thing, how much soever beloved or delighted in, because it is at variance with the commands of God, or even because it has a *tendency* to withdraw us from our allegiance to him. It is necessary that we should have the faith of Moses, to enable us to make his choice. It is necessary that this faith should be an ever-living, ever-watchful, ever-active principle, called into daily and hourly exercise, to meet and encounter daily and hourly trial. It is necessary that our view should be constantly and unceasingly fixed upon the termination of our journey, upon that bright and never-fading crown of glory which is laid up for the righteous.

A choice is in truth proposed to us. We may continue in Egypt; we may acquire its riches, exhaust its pleasures, divide its honours; or we may, by the grace divine, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, select the better part, and join ourselves to the people of God, and become partakers of their hopes, sharers in their privileges, fellow heirs of their promises. Good and evil, a blessing and a curse, are set before us; but we must remember, that we cannot embrace the curse, and yet receive the blessing; that we cannot choose the evil, and yet secure the good. The book of life and death is open, and in its ever-during page we must write our own reward or our own condemnation.

If the hopes set before the Jew were thus powerful—if the promises made unto the fathers were thus effectual—if the glimmering twilight which they possessed was sufficient for their guidance; the uncertain prospect which they enjoyed, for their comfort and support; what should be the effect of the hopes, and

promises, and prospects, held out to us? "We are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, unto Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant [1]." Our understandings have been enlightened—our Salvation has appeared—the Salvation which was waited for by the holiest of Israel—which was seen only in type, and shadow, and prophecy by the most favoured servants of God. To us the promise beams with a glory abundantly intense, and eclipses all that the world can offer, all that mortality can bestow. Before it, riches fade, and pleasures pall, and crowns are worthless, and honours are contemptible. "See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

But strongly as this subject appeals to all; forcibly as it strikes upon every

[1] Heb. xii. 22—25.

heart, and affects every grade of society, and every period of life; it applies in an especial manner, to you who are young. You have still a choice to make. The path of godliness and of iniquity are both before you; and it is yours to select that in which you will walk. The company of sinners and of the righteous both invite you; it is yours to say to which you will unite yourselves. God and mammon, Christ and Belial, solicit your allegiance; it is yours to declare, to whom you will submit, to whom you will pledge and devote yourselves. Be not deceived; you cannot serve both; a choice must be made. The moment you enter the world; the moment you begin to act for yourselves; aye, and before that time, even *now*, you must declare yourselves. Even *now*, as soon as you can distinguish between good and evil, you become fearfully responsible.

Early as it is in the day, the clouds begin to rise which portend the storm; the enemies begin to gather which threaten your peace; the heart begins to ac-

knowledge the power of the earthly inclinations, as the vessel upon the ocean feels the current and the gale. Oh! let faith be stationed at the helm, faith in the promises of God, in the eternal recompense of the reward: let that be your pilot through the waste of waters spread fearfully before you, and trust to it for guidance unto the haven where you would be.

To you, especially, the example of the Jewish lawgiver is important and instructive. To you the world displays its treasures, and sets forth its glories. To your eyes its enchantments are expanded, and perhaps you think it requires but the withdrawing of the restraint in which you are held, to enable you to grasp them all. But you reflect not that the voice which, in accents so pleasing to the ear, suggests that all these things shall be yours, is the very same voice which assailed the Saviour also, in the day of his humiliation; and that it is coupled, with the same condition, then offered by the spirit of evil, "If thou

wilt fall down and worship me." Yet so it is. An eager pursuit after worldly riches is but an unceasing worshipping of mammon. A burning thirst after temporal honours, is but a passing through the fire unto Moloch. An unrestrained indulgence in sensual pleasure is but a continual sacrificing unto Belial. Think then, whilst yet there is time, that there *are* greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; greater enjoyments than those of carnal appetite; brighter glories than those of earthly fame. The Gospel promise is, "Do this, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven [1]." "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold more now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life [2]."

And oh! remember, my brethren, that the pleasures which tempt you from the path of righteousness—the pleasures of

[1] Matt. xix. 21. [2] Mark x. 29, 30.

sin, are but for a season. They are but shadows which pass away, and have no endurance;—unsubstantial vapours which will not abide. In vain we try to preserve them. In vain we endeavour to chain them to our subjection. There are no bonds which can prevent their departure from us; no chains which can keep them from fleeing away. The time will come, when we shall nauseate the cup of which we are now so eager to drink; when the crowns in which we now glory shall fade and wither; and the prizes for which we now strive shall be worthless in our eyes, as the toys of childhood. And think not that this just appreciation of earthly objects will be delayed until the hour of death draws nigh: think not that it can be put off till the grave opens upon us: think not that it is possible, if we were willing, to live the *whole* of our lives to pleasure. It will come long ere the time of nature's just decay. Pleasures will cease to please, allurements will cease to allure, enjoyments will cease to fill the heart with joy, long, long before the dust

returneth to the earth. "If a man live many days," says the proverb, "and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many[1]." The sentence of Scripture is fully borne out by our own experience; "Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless ones[2]."

And what is there in this worldly, sensual life, to wish for? Look at the covetous. Is there any thing to envy? Look at the profligate. Is there any thing to envy? Look at the successfully ambitious. Is there any thing to envy? Is the debased and degraded mind an object of desire? Is the shattered and debilitated body a thing to be sought after? Is the harassed and exhausted spirit a prize to be grasped at? Count the number of years of enjoyment, in wealth, or honour, or sensuality, which can, in the utmost extent, pass away, before the evil days come, when all will say alike, "we have no pleasure in them;"—and see how few

[1] Eccles. xi. 8. [2] Isaiah xxxii. 10.

they be. And is it not the same with every kind of worldliness? The time must arrive, when the mind and the soul, even of the sinner, conscious of its own immortality, will look forward with painful anticipation to the future. His hopes are disappointed, his treasures are consumed, his comforters are fled. And where is the weary spirit to rest? Youth has been passed in frivolity; manhood wasted in vice; and age, if indeed age be granted, must be passed in pain, remorse, and sorrow. Degraded even in his own estimation; despised and rejected even of men; without enjoyment in this world; without hope in that which is to come; he sinks—but not to repose; he rests—but not in peace. Look again, at one who has walked, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; one who, dedicated in childhood unto God by the instrumentality of others, has, "when come to years," consecrated himself anew; who, by faith, has chosen rather to suffer affliction, if need be, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; who has offered

upon the altar of his God the earliest and the best of his years, and dedicated to him that made him the health and energies which He gave; who, upheld by the same faith, supported by the power of the Spirit in the inner man, encouraged by the hopes and promises of the Gospel, has gone on from strength to strength, continually increasing in purity, continually advancing in holiness. Look at him in age, if age be granted, and behold the eye brightening with hope, as eternity draws near; the mind more elevated by faith, as "the recompense of the reward" approaches; the heart more filled with peace and joy, as earthly attractions disappear. Think of him, as now expecting and waiting for that crown of glory, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give, in the day of His full and perfect manifestation. Compare the two—place them together in the same chamber of death, and then say whether you do not prefer the reproach of Christ to all the treasures in Egypt. Think seriously and deeply upon these things;

and may God give you his grace, to make choice of that better part, which not even the power of the grave can wrest from you; to look stedfastly, and have respect continually, unto the great recompense of the reward.

DISCOURSE III.

CALL OF MOSES.

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Exodus iii. 11, 12.

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee.

In our reflections upon the history of "Moses, the man of God [1]," we are now brought to that momentous period when, having made a deliberate selection between interest and conscience, he steps forward into more public and active duties, puts his resolutions in practice, and proceeds to act upon his convic-

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 1.

tions. "It came into his heart to visit his brethren." It was not sufficient, in his estimation, to express a distant affection for his kindred, a cold regard for their welfare, an ineffective commisseration for their state. He does not employ a deputy, nor merely make inquiries concerning them. He visits them personally, without regarding the contempt of the Egyptians, and unites himself to them, without fearing the dangers which he may encounter.

The first prominent circumstance of his life is thus narrated. "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." What the violence was which the Egyptian committed is not expressly stated, and the Jewish traditions upon the subject are as

usual various and extravagant. But the general and most rational supposition is, that an attempt was made to take away the life of the Israelite his brother, and therefore life was justly made the forfeit of life.

It is by no means improbable that Moses had conceived, even at this time, some unformed idea of liberating Israel from bondage; and that, feeling perhaps a vague and indeterminate presentiment of being himself the destined deliverer, he undertook, in all the eagerness and presumption of inexperience, this apparently wild and desperate enterprise. It is difficult to suppose, that he could look upon the burdens of his people, and see their oppressions, and hear their groanings, without feeling some risings of human anger within him against their tyrants; some of the fervency of righteous indignation against their persecutors; some desire to avenge their wrongs and redress their grievances. Indeed, the language of Stephen clearly leads to this conclu-

sion; "When he was full forty years old it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel, and seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not[1]." He appears, however, to have assumed this office without authority—before it was conferred upon him; and to have entered upon it uncalled. This first attempt was made in the spirit of manly daring, from the impulse of generous sympathy, with feelings of the noblest patriotism and self-devotion. And are not such feelings and motives honourable? are they not to be prized and cherished and encouraged? Valuable, indeed, they are, and rare as they are valuable. They are of the very finest clay of human nature—of the very purest elements of

[1] Acts vii. 23, 24, 25.

human affections. Still they are but clay, they are but human elements, they are but of the earth, and therefore earthy. The minister of God must have objects and principles more pure, more exalted, more spiritualized, than mere humanity can supply — more holy than any with which the world can mingle. The very vehemence of temper, too, which Moses appears to have shown on this occasion, was not that by which the protracted work of Israel's redemption and establishment, could be accomplished. It might win a single victory, but it would not pursue with patience a slow and almost imperceptible train of conquest. It might rush headlong against the danger, but it would not be content to wait the Lord's time for extrication. It might break through a single obstacle, however formidable, but it would not contend with difficulties unceasingly occurring, nor support the sickness of the heart arising from hope perpetually deferred. The minister of Jehovah needed faith and hope and patience and endurance. Faith unextin-

guished, in the darkest adversity—hope undiminished, in the gloomiest depression —patience unwearied even by the severest trial—endurance unshrinking even under the most painful suffering.

The work of Israel's redemption was the Lord's—it was not to be a mere political deliverance, effected in the ordinary way of political deliverances, by the intrigues and struggles of partisans and leaders; or even by the generous exertions of the bravest and the noblest. It was to be a religious emancipation; the liberation of the church from servitude; the performance of God's own covenant with his peculiar people. The struggle was not between nation and nation, between Israelite and Egyptian; but between principle and principle, between the opposing powers of good and evil, between the people of God and the people of the world, between Jehovah and Satan. It was emphatically "the Lord's controversy," and therefore nothing earthly, nothing carnal, was permitted to mingle with and to pollute it. It was to show

the might of the Lord of Hosts,—to make "bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations[1],"—to prove that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will[2]."

The design of Moses, thus prematurely commenced in the spirit of worldly enterprise, was allowed to terminate in signal failure; and that, probably, even before it was fully organized and matured in his own mind. The time of Israel's deliverance was not yet come, nor did the Almighty purpose to accomplish it by the sword. He desired, besides, to give his chosen servant a lesson of humility; to teach him to repose less dependence upon himself and his own powers; to train him for his future task in the school of adversity; "to strengthen him with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness[3], to teach him obedience by the things which he suffered[4]:" and, as we

[1] Is. lii. 10.
[2] Dan. iv. 17.
[3] Coloss. i. 11.
[4] Heb. v. 8.

shall find hereafter, the lesson sank deeply into the heart of the prophet.

The narrative of his disappointment and flight is thus continued. "When he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian." In this remote district, a part of Arabia, he marries the daughter of Jethro, a priest or prince of the country: two sons are born unto him, and he spends no fewer than forty years in the humble duties of the shepherd's life.

At length the time arrives for Israel's deliverance,—the time fixed "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God[1]",—the time foretold to Abraham and

[1] Acts ii. 23.

to Joseph. The Lord remembers his covenant which he made with the fathers. He looks down from heaven and beholds "the affliction of his people, which are in Egypt, and hears their cry by reason of their taskmasters." Moses, to whom the office of deliverer was destined, is now sought for. Moses, now eighty years old, is to be called to effect what he was unable, perhaps unqualified, to do, in the prime and vigour of manhood. He who was compelled to flee from the wrath of the king to save his own life, is now to be sent back again into Egypt, not only to brave that wrath, but, in opposition to the whole power of Pharaoh and the whole strength of his kingdom, to bring forth the Jewish people from their bondage. What was it that could *now* have produced this peculiar fitness? what could have wrought this important change? the shepherd's indolent life for forty years could not have endued him with political wisdom. The advance of age could not have warmed his natural ardour, nor prepared him for the labour of camps, nor

taught him the duties of a general. Mysterious are the ways of God! His ability for the task arose from the eternal counsels of the Almighty. His adaptation to the service proceeded possibly from his seeming unfitness as an instrument of those counsels and designs. The praise of Israel's redemption was not to be of man, but of God. Moses, indeed, at no period of his life was a warrior; and he himself declares, that he was entirely destitute of eloquence, an indispensable requisite in a political leader. But in addition to these great defects, it was necessary that he should be old—at that point which is usually the extreme verge of human life—before he was deemed a proper instrument in the hand of Him "who will not give his glory to another [1]."

Are we not forcibly reminded here of that remarkable circumstance narrated in the Book of Judges [2], when Gideon had assembled two and thirty thousand men by the well of Harod, to fight against the

[1] Is. xlii. 8. [2] Ch. vii.

Midianites? "The Lord said unto him, the people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many, bring them down to the water, and I will try them there." Three hundred only stood the test, and with these Gideon accomplished what thirty-two thousand had been afraid to attempt, and unable to perform.

We have before observed, how carefully the Almighty selects his instruments, and with what attention he prepares them. But he does not choose as man would choose them; he does not prepare as man would prepare them. He delights to make "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak

things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence[1]." Independently, however, of the instance of Gideon's army, many others of individuals so selected, will readily occur to every one. The apostles serve as a memorable example. St. Paul declares of himself, that, with all his learning, displayed in the weight and power of his letters, yet the Corinthians might say with justice, that "his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible[2]." Indeed, some bodily infirmity is generally supposed to be meant by that "thorn in the flesh[3]," from which he prayed to be delivered. Even Christ himself, if we may understand literally the prophetic description given of him by Isaiah, did not assume a form of human beauty. "His

[1] 1 Cor. i. 27—29. [2] 2 Cor. x. 10.
[3] Ibid. xii. 7.

visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men [1]:" "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him [2];" so careful is the Almighty to preserve his own glory and to make his power visible unto man.

Thus qualified to be the agent of the Most High, even by his own infirmity, and fitted for an instrument of his will, even by his own weakness, Moses came, moved by the Spirit, to the sacred mount of Horeb. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him, and said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place

[1] Is. lii. 14. [2] Ibid. liii. 2.

whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee." The answer thus given by Moses seems, both from the mode of expression, and from his known character, to have been prompted by unfeigned humility; by a natural and judicious distrust of his own qualifications for so important an office. Therefore he receives the most seasonable encourage-

ment: "Certainly I will be with thee." The Almighty farther declares to him, first of all mortal men, his own peculiar and incommunicable appellation, the awful name of the self-existing God, Jehovah. "Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." The mode in which he is to proceed, and the circumstances of the deliverance to be effected, are then detailed. Signs are also given to remove his doubts. The rod in his hand is changed into a serpent, and again resumes its previous form:—his hand thrust into his bosom becomes leprous, and again appears clean as the other.

The difficulties and dangers of the undertaking, however, crowd upon his mind, and his faith is yet only in its infancy. "O, my Lord," says he, "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." As this still bears the semblance of humility,

it is also met by a suitable promise; "And the Lord said unto him, who made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." But the spirit of distrust and fear was strong within him; "and he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send;" that is, by any one but by me. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." This persevering doubt, in spite of all the gracious assurances—this abiding dread of temporal consequences, in defiance of all the promises of supernatural aid and protection—might justly kindle the anger of the Lord, and cause him to reject his services. Yet, even in displeasure, he condescends to afford further assurances, to strengthen his faith and confirm his resolution. His faith is strengthened; his resolution is confirmed; he goes forth to revisit his nation, and to attempt their deliverance, bearing no arms but that rod

with which Jehovah had enabled him to work miracles, and, in the name of the God who had met him on the Mount of Horeb, he applies to the Egyptian monarch, to permit his people to go and hold a feast unto the Lord in the wilderness.

Let us now proceed, as we have done before, to consider the points of resemblance between the case of Moses and of ourselves; and between God's dealings, as they are exhibited to him, and as they are displayed to us.

We have seen the reluctance of Moses to obey the call of the Lord—his hesitation, even amidst the signs and wonders which were shown to him—his unwillingness to relinquish the peaceful security of his desert dwelling for the dangers and perils of Egyptian strife. We have seen the lingering weaknesses of the flesh breaking forth in the excuses which he makes in answer to the divine invitation and command.—And how often does man, when urged to engage in the Lord's service, and to wage his warfare, plead

his own inability, and allege his own unfitness for the task? How often, when summoned to go forth in the name of Jehovah, and combat the spiritual enemies of the Almighty, does he say, Whom am I that I should go? How often is infirmity made the pretence for neglect of duty, and human frailty the apology for disobedience? How often does cowardice assume the language of self-distrust, and abject fear the expression of humility?

To all mankind a call has been given. The Lord has appeared. "The Lord, even the most mighty God, hath spoken; and called the world, from the rising up of the sun, unto the going down thereof[1]." The voice from Sinai has spoken unto us out of the midst of the fire, the rigid precepts of justice, in the thunders of the law: the voice from Zion hath spoken to us from the humiliation of the cross the still small accents of mercy, in the gracious language of the Gospel; but the command,

[1] Psalm l. 1.

whether from Sinai or from Calvary, whether by the law or by the Gospel, is still the same; it is a command to enter into the Lord's service, to perform his will, to wage his warfare, to purify ourselves from the corruptions of the flesh, from the defilements of the world, to free ourselves from the bondage of sin, "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord [1]." Arduous is the task imposed—laborious is the duty required—great is the trial which is made of our faith, our patience, our endurance. And who is sufficient for these things? Who is able, in his own unassisted strength, to go forth, and contend with the powers of Egypt—with the world, the flesh, and devil? Alas! not one. No man can deliver his brother; no man can, of himself, even free his own soul. We are weak; we are encompassed with infirmity; we are utterly unable of ourselves to help ourselves. The very heart within us—"the very citadel of our strength"—is full of

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 1.

treachery, it is "deceitful above all things." May we not then justly use the language of diffidence, and say, "Who am I, Lord, that I should go forth on this errand? That I should endure this trial? That I should accomplish this mighty work?" "Send, Lord, by him whom thou wilt send;" by some one stronger—bolder—purer; by some one more faithful—more patient—more enduring than myself; but not by me. Impose not on me this trial, so far beyond my strength; exact not from me this service, so far exceeding my powers; require not of me this entire obedience, which my very nature unfits me to yield; and look not for this holiness, which the original and innate corruption of my soul disqualifies me from making perfect. But perform thy part of the covenant, though I neglect mine. Fulfil thy gracious promises, though I do nothing to deserve them. Grant me thy mercy, though I reject the conditions. Give me "the crown of glory," though I "fight not the good fight of faith."

And is this mode of pleading with

God, this trifling, as it may justly be called, with his eternal majesty, so *very* uncommon? Do we never hear infirmity alleged as a sufficient excuse for sin, and weakness as an adequate apology for transgression? Nay, a bold and daring claim is advanced for the rewards of righteousness, from the very circumstance of our own manifold corruptions. How often do the accents even of confession proclaim the resolution of continuing in sin? How often does the voice of humility herald the answer of disobedience? Alas! it is much easier to confess unworthiness, than to perform the commandments of God. It is much easier to lie down contented under a sense of our own feebleness, than to rise in the strength of the Lord, and go forth zealously to his service. It is much easier to serve God with our lips, than to worship him with our hearts, and honour him in our lives.

But, do we then attempt to undervalue that lowliness of mind which bows the spirit of man to the dust? Do we

desire to reprove that prostration of heart, which humbles the thoughts of pride and of self-sufficiency before the throne of mercy? God forbid! This lowliness—this prostration, is indeed the first step in obedience, the first requisite for holiness. But if we rest here, if we found our claim to recompense and reward *merely* upon this prostration and this lowliness, we forget the principal part of Christian excellence—the chief requirements of the divine law. Let him who, in real humility, thus confesses his want of power, hear the answer of the Lord to Moses; "Certainly I will be with thee." It is not then in our own strength, that we are to go forth. It is not relying on our own resources, that we are to engage with our adversaries. The Lord himself has promised to be with us; to give us the spirit of wisdom and of understanding; to support and strengthen us in every conflict; to preserve us in every danger. We have armour also provided for us—"the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all

the fiery darts of the wicked—the helmet of salvation — the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God—our loins may be girt about with truth—we may put on the breast-plate of righteousness—and our feet may be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace [1]." He who came down from heaven to save us,—" Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant [2],"— has promised to give us abundantly of his Spirit, to help our infirmities, and to subdue our corruptions. With all these aids, what mean our professions of unfitness for the work set before us? Do they not sound as a mockery of God? Have they not the taint of unbelief strong upon them? Are they not marked with the superscription of human waywardness and rebellion? What is the use of our humility, but to make us seek more earnestly, and demand more eagerly, and grasp more firmly, the assistance mercifully offered unto us? " Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth;

[1] Ephes. vi. 13—17. [2] Heb. xii. 24.

and to him that knocketh it shall be opened [1]."

Cast away then this indolent spirit of complaining; this idle murmuring at your own state. The Christian is strong —strong in his very weakness—strong, above all, in a consciousness of that weakness. For when that consciousness is greatest, most heartfelt, most sincere, he will cling most firmly to his support, as the shell cleaveth to the rock, when the hand of man threatens to remove it from its place. It needs but the opening of the eye of faith to enable us to see that "they who are with us, are more than they that be against us;" to behold the "chariots of fire" which are round about the servant of God [2].

But there is one class of men to whom this subject applies peculiarly — to the called, ordained, and appointed ministers of the Gospel of Christ—to the clergy. Each one of them is bound to perform his part in the liberation of mankind,

[1] Matt. vii. 8. [2] 2 Kings ii. 16, 17.

from the bondage in which they are held by sin. But no one is to assume this office of himself—no one is to embrace it uncalled, unappointed, unordained. Neither is he to venture upon it in the spirit of philanthropy merely—in the confidence of human strength—in the might of human learning or eloquence. Still less in that of carnal enterprise—to get himself a name. He is not to embark as in a political strife, as in a philosophical controversy; but as in a work of spiritual regeneration; and he is to go forth to his labour in the power of the Lord of Hosts, in the wisdom of the Most Highest. He is to fight, not his own battle, but the battle of the Lord; to be prepared to do his work diligently, and yet give God the glory. Neither his warfare, nor the weapons of that warfare are carnal. His business is, to turn mankind "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith[1]." It

[1] Acts xxvi. 18.

is not to teach a mere system of morals; but to inculcate a holy, a spiritual faith. It is to preach Christ crucified. He is the messenger of Jehovah, the medium of communication for declaring the whole counsel of God. And he is to brave every danger, to hazard every reproach, to encounter every enemy that may stand in the way of this duty; even though he should call down upon his head the vengeance of Egypt. And when the minister of the Gospel arrays before his mind all the difficulties that lie in his way, all the dangers that surround him, when he "sits down to count the cost," can we wonder if, oppressed with an overwhelming sense of the magnitude and importance of the office imposed upon him, with an awful consciousness of its tremendous responsibility, he should be tempted to say, in accents of real humiliation, and almost of despair, "Who is sufficient for these things?" or, in the language of Moses, "O my Lord, send I pray thee by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." But does not the Almighty

reply to him, as he did to his servant: "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say?" or, as he did to the prophet Jeremiah, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord [1]." Is not the promise of Christ the same for ever?—"Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you [2]." And can we not, therefore, adopt the language of the apostle, and proclaim, "When I am weak, then am I strong [3]." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me [4]."

This then is our conclusion. Humility is the first of the Christian graces, in order, though not in perfection, and a

[1] Jer. i. 7, 8. [2] Matt. x. 19, 20.
[3] 2 Cor. xii. 10. [4] Philip. iv. 13.

sense of weakness and infirmity will ever accompany a knowledge of ourselves. We must, however, prevent this humility from degenerating into indolence, this confession of weakness from sinking into distrust, this consciousness of infirmity from relaxing our industry, our care, our watchfulness. True humility shows not itself in distrust, but in reliance ; not in pleading our insufficiency for the task allotted, but in seeking earnestly and fervently the aid which will enable us to accomplish it. It proves itself to be sincere and heartfelt by its efforts to conquer and subdue that which has given occasion to it—sin. No mercy is offered to the mere confession of sin. No promise is given to the mere acknowledgment of unworthiness. No prize is held out to those who only profess their inability to "run the race that is set before them," to "finish the work that is given them to do." And to rest in any such confession or acknowledgment, is to accuse the righteousness and justice of God himself, who has ordained us "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord :"

it is for the clay to upbraid the potter, that he has made us fragile. We are called to obey, as well as to confess: to serve the Lord, as well as to bow before his supremacy. We are commanded to strive, and to labour, and to wrestle; and surely it is not to mock our inability—to deride our infirmities, that we are so commanded. God acts not—he cannot act, unworthily. He commands nothing which we have not strength to perform, either actually, or possibly—either in ourselves, or within our reach. He is no "hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed [1];" but he is the Husbandman, who sows carefully, and expects to reap plentifully; who scatters widely, and looks to gather abundantly. He is the Lord of the vineyard, who has fenced, and planted, and watered the soul, and naturally demands the fruit in due season. In humility, indeed, our work must commence; in a full and perfect consciousness of our own

[1] Matt. xxv. 24.

utter insufficiency: but then we shall look to him, who in wisdom and in mercy has made us what we are; who, though he appoints us our labour, has also given us grace; and who, whilst he has exposed us to trials, as the means of our spiritual probation and improvement, has also promised, that as our trial is, so shall our strength be. We shall look to him who knows by experience the infirmities of our nature; who has himself borne their burden for a season; to him who can make the eternal reward far overbalance the difficulty of the achievement, and has assured us, that they who, in this spiritual warfare, "shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved [1]."

[1] Mark xiii. 13.

DISCOURSE IV.

MIRACLES WROUGHT BY MOSES IN EGYPT.

PHARAOH'S HEART HARDENED.

INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER.

DISCOURSE IV.

MIRACLES WROUGHT BY MOSES IN EGYPT.—PHARAOH'S HEART HARDENED.—INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER.

Exodus xii. 26, 27.

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

Few portions of the history of Israel are narrated with such minuteness of detail, as that which sets forth the proceedings of Moses, from the period of his return into

Egypt, to the final departure of the Jewish nation; and exhibits his various attempts to prevail upon Pharaoh to let the people go. And, doubtless, there are few which so well deserve a faithful and particular notice; whether we consider the actual and immediate importance of the deliverance, the extraordinary means resorted to for its accomplishment; or its consequences, diffused as they are over the whole world, and felt as they have been, and will continue to be, throughout all succeeding ages, even unto the end of time.

To satisfy, in some degree, the scruples of his servant, to give him a confidential companion and assistant, and to compensate for his own deficiency in eloquence (seeing that he was himself "slow of speech and of a slow tongue"), the Lord supplies him with a coadjutor, in the person of his elder brother Aaron, to whom he allots the office of speaking on all public occasions. Still further to confirm his faith, he gives him as a sign, that which, of all things, Moses would think

most unlikely to occur. "Behold," says he, "thy brother cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart." And so ready is the Almighty to afford strength and assistance to his ministers, even when they least expect it, that before Moses had descended from the mount this promise is performed, he meets and embraces his brother.—Communing together of all the things which the Lord had revealed—of all the promises which he had made and of all the hopes which he had held out to them, they arrive in Egypt; where their whole progress was one stupendous scene of wonder-working power, encountered by equally wondrous obduracy and depravity.

Their first step is to assemble their brethren, and open their commission; to declare unto them the message which they had brought from God. And we may conceive the joy that lighted up the countenances of the bondmen, at the prospect of deliverance—at the intelligence, by the mouths of Moses and Aaron, that God had remembered and visited his people.

"The Spirit of the Lord God was upon them; because the Lord had anointed them to preach good tidings unto the meek; he had sent them to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of their God [1]." "And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: and Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." From this assembly they enter at once into the presence of Pharaoh, and solemnly demand permission, in the name of the Lord God of Israel, to go, that they may hold a feast unto him in the wilderness. This interference only brings down re-

[1] Isaiah lxi. 1, 2.

proaches upon themselves, and additional misery upon their people; and Moses, already disappointed and dejected, reproached by the captives as the author of their increased calamity, thus expostulates with God: "Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil-entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? for since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." But the Lord bears with the impatience of his servant and renews his promises. "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land." Thus encouraged, Moses returns again and again with the same demand, and ever with the same success; "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the Lord had spoken by Moses." Miracle after miracle is wrought: punishment succeeds punishment: plague after plague is hurled upon Pharaoh and his people; till, ex-

hausted by their continual sufferings, even the Egyptians rise against their king and say, "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?"

During the whole of this memorable contest between human obduracy and Almighty power; the conduct of Moses, though described in the simplest and least ostentatious terms, is marked in a surprising degree with dignity, accompanied by that meekness and patience and forbearance which become the minister of God. He never for a moment forgets whose commission he bears, whose authority he wields, whose works he performs, whose words he speaks. His expressions and actions are noble; his word is power, his step is majesty. Even the Egyptians acknowledge his extraordinary merit: even the servants of Pharaoh pay him reverence and respect. "The man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people."

It is remarkable that the first miracles wrought by Moses are said to have been imitated by the Egyptian magicians [1]. Two suppositions are employed, in order to explain this. One, that God thought fit, in order to make his own omnipotence more manifest, to permit the magicians to exhibit these miraculous powers, in a limited degree, and for a short period. The other, and, as it appears to me, the most probable, is, " that the magicians did not perform works really supernatural, nor were assisted by any superior invincible being; but were mere impostors, attempting to imitate the real miracles of Moses by *secret sleights* or jugglings; which to a certain degree, and in a small

[1] The names of the chief among these are given by St. Paul (2 Timothy iii. 8.) from the many traditions respecting this remarkable period; when he likens the opposition made to himself and his converts by certain corrupt teachers and busy meddlers, to that which Moses encountered. " Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further."

extent, they succeeded in doing, so as to deceive the spectators[1]." This would appear—from the mode of expression used in describing these attempts; namely, that the Magicians did *so* or *in like manner* as Moses had done; which expression is not so strong nor precise as that used in describing the real miracles:—from the fact that the whole of the waters are said to have been turned into blood, and the whole of the land covered with frogs; so that the magicians could not have performed so *perfect* a miracle, nor indeed any miracle at all, unless upon a spot of ground cleared for the purpose, or with water procured, as it is stated to have been, by digging[2]:—from the language used by Moses, who declares that they practised by enchantments:—lastly, and from their own declaration, when, foiled in their attempt to imitate the fourth miracle, they were compelled to confess, "This is the

[1] Graves, App. Sect. 2.

[2] Exodus vii. 24. "And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water," &c.

finger of God." A still further argument may be drawn from the circumstance, that these exhibitions seem to have excited little surprise in the minds of the Egyptians, who were probably accustomed to witness such deceptions; and, though the majority of the people believing these wonders to be performed by the power of their gods, would at first presume that Moses was only a more able magician than their own [1].

But attempts have been made to throw a doubt upon the miracles wrought by Moses; to represent some of them as the effect of natural causes; and altogether to separate the ordinary events of the history from the supernatural. It will therefore be necessary to say a few words upon this subject.

To enter into all the arguments respecting the reality of the miraculous powers

[1] The Egyptians were always celebrated for juggling and the pretended study of magic: the latter of these characteristics existed till of late years—the former still exists.

which Moses professed to employ, or indeed to notice any one of them with such minuteness as it deserves, would require a lengthened dissertation, rather than the brief limits of a single discourse. The very *profession*, however, which Moses openly made, of possessing and exercising such miraculous powers, must of itself be the most convincing evidence of that reality, to those who believe the common events of his history. For what credit ought we to attach to a writer, who could be guilty of putting forth these pretensions, knowing them to be false, and thereby blaspheming the name and insulting the majesty of the Most High.

The mode in which these miracles are related strongly marks their reality. There is no distinction whatever made between them and the other events. They are described in the same manner, with the same precision and particularity of circumstances, the same apparent consciousness of truth, and the same confidence of obtaining credit and belief. The Egyptians were deeply interested in dis-

covering the imposture, if imposture had been attempted, yet they clearly believed the miraculous nature of these exhibitions; for they were terrified into granting liberty to Israel. And well might they be terrified, when they beheld their waters turned into blood, their land and their houses filled with noisome creatures, their fruits and their cattle destroyed with lightning and hail, their whole kingdom enveloped in a darkness that might be felt. Well might they be terrified, when the death cry arose within their dwellings, and the first born, the hope and pride of every house in Egypt, lay prostrate before the sword of the destroyer. It was indeed "a night much to be observed"—long to be remembered by them; when they were smitten, they knew not by whom; when destruction came, carried upon the wings of the wind, they knew not whence.

It is equally clear that the Jews believed their reality; for the very people who saw them are continually appealed to, as witnesses of that reality. Moses repeatedly accuses them of forsaking God—of dis-

obeying his injunctions—of doubting or despising his promises. He is by no means sparing of his reproaches for their many offences, and for their ingratitude in forgetting—but he never accuses them of disbelieving—the wonders wrought for their deliverance. In no instance does he attempt to argue upon the credibility of these miracles. He appeals to what their eyes had seen, their hands had handled, their mouths had tasted. And would he have dared thus to appeal, if his boasted miracles had been fabulous. Would he have dared to write an account of what he knew to be untrue, to read it in the ears of those who are said to have witnessed the transactions, and to lay up that history for the constant perusal of his people, who were acquainted with its falsehood. In fact, we must acknowledge the reality of the wonders wrought and of the plagues inflicted by the hand of Moses, or allow ourselves to be driven into inextricable difficulties. Strip the narrative of its miracles and we only increase its incredibility: take away the manifestations of Divine power, as related

by the inspired historian, and we have a series of events, from the commencement to the end, entirely out of the common course of things, and to which no rules of ordinary criticism can apply. We must suppose a continued and unceasing miracle of the most extraordinary and stupendous character. The circumstance that a man without arms, save the rod which he held in his hand—without assistance, except from Aaron his brother—without friends or partisans, beside that spiritless crowd which fled from him at every appearance of danger, and reproached him with every difficulty—that he should have led this feeble and cowardly band, from the bosom of a nation, violently averse to their departure, and fully able to oppose it—that he should have crossed the Red Sea without opposition—that for forty years he should have detained and guided such a multitude in the deserts of Arabia;—and, greater miracle than all, that he should have been able to provide food for them, when we know that a single caravan cannot procure subsistence during a rapid

journey of a few days—this, I say, is far more incredible than any among the miracles said to have been wrought by the hand of Moses in Egypt; and to those who receive the one and reject the other, we may fairly apply the words of Christ, that they "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel[1]."

Taking into consideration, then, this awful array of miracle, marshalled and set forth for the declared purpose of effecting Israel's deliverance, we shall be able to form some estimate of that obduracy which is ascribed to Pharaoh; who could behold all these things, and suffer all these things, and yet refuse to acknowledge the power of Jehovah, or to let the people go. It has sometimes been questioned, whether the Almighty actually interfered to effect that hardness of the heart, which, by calling forth these prodigies, might also exhibit his own

[1] This argument is pursued at great length, and most convincingly, by Dean Graves in his Lectures on the Pentateuch.

Omnipotence. This opinion, opposed as it is to every attribute of God, to every proceeding of his ordinary government with which we are acquainted, *seems* yet to be countenanced by the mode of expression used in the narrative. Thus it is directly asserted, that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the people go." And still more strongly in the following passage; "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." We know, however, that God is continually and most properly said to do, what he only permits to be done, or even what he merely does not prevent. Now, as we must allow Scripture to be the best expositor of Scripture, these expressions, adverse as they are to the positive declarations of other parts of Scripture[1], are

[1] St. James i. 13—15. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,

of little weight in upholding a supposition so much at variance with his known attributes and character. But there is another remarkable circumstance, serving materially to refute this opinion, which is, that though the Lord declares "He will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall not let the people go[1];" yet, the expression is not repeated until seven miracles have been found in vain: in all the intermediate instances, it is said, that "Pharaoh hardened his heart," or that "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened." Indeed, when God first declares the event to Moses, he merely says, "I am sure," that is, I know from my own perfect and absolute foreknowledge, "that the king of Egypt will not let you go; no, not by a mighty hand."

This hardness of heart, then, was not caused by the direct intervention of irre-

but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived," &c.

[1] Exodus iv. 21.

sistible power, in which case Pharaoh would have been in no wise culpable or accountable, but by simple abandonment: —not, by supplying a stimulus to evil, but by withholding the assistance necessary to do good: – not, by urging and impelling the soul in its descent to the abyss of iniquity, but by withdrawing the power which alone could enable him to rise from it. It is not a miraculous, but a natural effect. It is not an extraordinary act of vengeance, inflicted upon one individual, but it is strictly and truly the ordinary course of God's dealings with all mankind. Grace is given to every man, and knowledge is given, and mercies and warnings are given, and time, and opportunity, the talents of the heavenly householder, are bestowed, and messengers are employed to declare his will to men, and to remind them that he demands the usury of his own. Yet if these talents are buried, if we refuse his messengers, despise his warnings, reject his mercies, and do continual despite to the Spirit of grace, are we not taught to

expect that he will withdraw them all? that he will remove the light from those who close their eyes to its influence? that he will seal up the fountains of his grace to those who neglect or corrupt them? that at a certain point in the progress of transgression, his Spirit will cease to strive?

And it is not only just, but even merciful, that it should be so. We have reason to believe that the punishments of eternity will be proportioned to the opportunities abused in time, in the same manner as the rewards of immortality will be adjusted according to the degree of holiness attained in life [1]. Is it not, therefore, merciful, to prevent the soul from "*heaping up* wrath against the day of wrath," and accumulating for itself "greater damnation?" For who can tell what the ethereal spirit can bear? who can estimate what that unknown being,

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. "For one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."

compounded of an immortal soul, and an immortal body, may be rendered capable of enduring? He who is omniscient knows when grace will be useless, and warnings will be unavailing. He can "be sure" that the heart will remain hardened, notwithstanding all the efforts of his Spirit. The husbandman abandons the field, in which he finds it vain to labour, and leaves it to be covered with briars and thorns, or to be immersed in the waters. The vine dresser no more cultivates the vine that will produce him no fruit. The artificer throws aside the work, that will yield him no profit, and leaves it to the moth, and the rust, and the corruption. Even the very fowls of the air and the beasts of the field desert the barren soil, the burning climes, where they can neither find food for their hunger, nor water for their thirst, nor shade for their repose. And since all nature is so disposed, that no creature will labour nor abide where all is barrenness, and desolation, and want; why should we expect that God himself should vary his

own laws in conformity with man's perverseness. The Almighty digs, and fences, and plants his vineyard, and waters it with the dews of heaven, and guards it with his providence from the watchtower of his glory; and he looks that it should bring forth fruit. But if it refuse to yield, who shall reproach him that he labours no more? that he executes his sentence pronounced against it? "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it [1]."

We now hasten to the concluding scene of this memorable history. The tenth miracle is wrought. A darkness that might be felt, covered the whole country of Egypt for three days, so that "they saw not one another, neither rose

[1] Isaiah v. 5, 6.

any from his place." From the effects of this plague, as from those of the two preceding, the dwellings of Israel in the land of Goshen were exempt. To procure its removal from himself Pharaoh affects to relent; but no sooner does it cease, than he dismisses the prophet with anger and menace. "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day that thou seest my face thou shalt die." Moses replies with dignity and meekness, but in words of awful import; "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more." The last plague is now prepared. One which should touch every man from the king to the slave; one that should be felt by every heart, and heard in every dwelling. The destroying angel, the minister of divine vengeance, is commissioned to go through the whole land, and "smite all the first born in Egypt, from the first born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, to the first born of the captive that was in the dungeon." Even the brute creation were involved in the punishment inflicted for

the sins of men; for he smote "all the first born of cattle."

But, previous to this final display of Almighty power—this making bare of the arm of Omnipotence—the passover was established—a rite singular in its own nature, and still more singular in its typical signification: a rite which might serve, at once to try the faith of his own people; to be the foundation of an ordinance, conveying to all generations a lasting memorial of his mercy and his power; to make atonement for the sins of the people, and prevent the destroying angel from entering their dwellings; and to be a type of that greater and more efficacious sacrifice, which was, in fulness of time, to be offered for the redemption of all mankind. A lamb was to be chosen, under a year old, without blemish; one for each house. It was to be roasted entire; and the whole family, in number not less than ten, nor exceeding twenty persons, were to partake of it together, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand.

They were to eat it in haste, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. The blood was to be sprinkled "on the two side posts and on the upper door post" of each house; and no one was to "go out at the door of his house until the morning." These are extraordinary injunctions, and such as, separated from their typical sense, we cannot well understand. The selection of the lamb, its sacrifice, and the sprinkling of the blood, were all in the due order of the customary sin offering. But the explanation of the remaining circumstances we must seek elsewhere. It is sufficient to remark, at present, that it was in every respect a sacrifice, especially in the most essential particular—the sprinkling of the blood[1]; and that this sprinkling of the blood was to be to Israel a sign or token of preservation from the destroyer, is the express declaration of Moses. They were enjoined also to make a yearly commemoration of this great event; and with

[1] Magee on the Atonement, vol. i. 301.

similar ceremonies as in the original appointment. It was, indeed, a memorable deliverance. "It was," indeed, "a night to be much observed unto the Lord by the children of Israel in all their generations." Not merely that the captives should have been set free, that they should have been rescued from Pharaoh's power; but that they should have been saved from Pharaoh's destruction; that they should have reposed in security under the safeguard of the "blood of sprinkling," and have heard without apprehension the awful cry which arose throughout all the land of Egypt [1].

Surely we must look farther than the mere sacrifice then offered, in order to account for these remarkable effects. There could have been no natural virtue in the blood of the sacrificed Lamb, to preserve the family, on whose door posts it was sprinkled: nothing which could of itself have prevailed, to turn

[1] Exod. xii. 30.

aside the destroyer, and compel him to pass over their dwellings. For its efficacy and for the explanation of the attendant circumstances, we must alike look to him who was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" to him who was to suffer, "the just for the unjust;" to him whose blood was to be poured forth for the salvation of all who will apply that blood unto themselves by faith. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. As representing him, this sacrifice was efficacious; as typical of him, this blood acquired its preserving power. In him all those circumstances, which seem to us so singular, received their full accomplishment. In reference to him they acquire a meaning and a significance which we should in vain seek elsewhere. He is the Lamb without blemish and without spot. He was offered entire—not a bone of him was broken. He was slain at evening on the very day, at the very hour, when the paschal lamb was offer-

ed [1]. Even the hyssop was not forgotten. Even the preparatives and the accompaniments of the Jewish rite are figurative of those of the Christian passover.

The state of bondage in which Israel was, represents that bondage in which all the children of men are by nature. And as Israel could have no deliverance without a sacrifice offered for them; so we can expect no redemption without an atonement made for us. The destroying angel had gone forth to execute the vengeance of the Lord against his enemies, and nothing could stay his hand, nor arrest his progress, but the blood sprinkling, red upon the door. The sentence of wrath has also gone forth against all transgressors, and none can hope for safety who are not sealed with "the seal of the living God [2]," who are not "washed in the blood of the Lamb." "By faith Israel kept the passover and

[1] Bishop Patrick.

[1] Revel. vii. 2.

the sprinkling of the blood, lest he that destroyed the first born should touch them[1];" for they believed the word spoken unto them by Moses. And it is by faith also that we appropriate to ourselves the cleansing and saving power, which exists for ever in the blood of Christ. "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood[2]." The passover, however, was not only a sacrifice of atonement, and a sign of security, to the Jews who were in Egypt; but it was enjoined to be celebrated for ever, that is, to the end of the Mosaic dispensation, as a perpetual memorial of the mercies of God, and as a sacrament and a test of their obedience, of their faith, and of their continuance in covenant with him. "And it shall come to pass," says Moses, "when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye

[1] Heb. xi. 28. [2] Rom. iii. 24, 25.

shall keep this service. And, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped."

Christ also instituted a sacrament, more spiritual, more efficacious—the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come[1]."

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 23—26.

It was requisite that the Jews in Egypt should prepare their bodies for the fatiguing march before them, by taking food; and that they should do this, was the command of Jehovah. But he also designed to convert this strengthening and refreshing of the body into a sacrificial service, a significant and expressive sacrament. And does not this represent accurately what Christ did, when, after supper, he took bread and brake it, and took the cup and blessed it, and gave to his disciples, saying, do this in remembrance of me; thereby instituting a sacrament, which should supersede the Jewish passover? The bread and the wine formed parts of the Jewish feast—they were always distributed, after the paschal lamb; and thus our blessed Lord converted a portion of the ceremonial, into a spiritual, sacrament. And how full of meaning is this injunction in all its parts! We are in bondage and in danger of eternal death, but are saved by the body of Christ which was broken, and

by the blood of Christ which was poured out for us; therefore we show the Lord's death until he come. We have a labour to accomplish — a journey to perform, and we require spiritual food and nourishment; therefore we partake of his "flesh which is meat indeed, and of his blood which is drink indeed." And if we come to this holy sacrament in repentance and in faith, we thus obtain a pledge of our own salvation—of our own share in his perfect and all sufficient sacrifice and atonement—we verily and indeed take and receive the body and blood of Christ, and our souls are refreshed thereby, as our bodies are by the bread and wine. To use the expression of Christ himself on another occasion, "according to our faith it is done unto us."

When, therefore, *our* children say unto *us*, What mean ye by this service? We reply, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover. We show forth the Lord's death: we remember that hour when the shepherd was smitten and the sheep

of the flock were scattered: we commemorate that scene of wondrous mercy and unbounded love which was manifested to the world, when "He spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all:" we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood: we feed upon him in our hearts, by faith with thanksgiving; and we expect to derive into our souls such a measure of divine grace, of strength and power from on high, as may enable us "to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life."

If we require inducements to the frequent celebration of this sacrament, what greater can we need, than the enumeration of the benefits which it confers? If our salvation is a thing worth seeking after: if eternal glory is a prize worth contending for: if the depths of everlasting misery, the worm that dieth not, the fire that is not quenched, be evils to be avoided with our most anxious diligence: if it be, as sure it is, the primary and most essential duty of each immortal being to prepare for his state of immortality, there can be

no question that it is equally his bounden duty to seek every means of preparing himself, and to let slip no one opportunity of obtaining that grace which may help him. But, in addition to this obligation, arising from the reason of the thing, we have also the positive command of our blessed Lord, "Do this in remembrance of me." How then can *they* be called by the name of Christ who never attend his own peculiar and most holy ordinance? How can *they* hope for his salvation who live in continual disregard of his injunctions? Who hear the summons from month to month, yet stop their ears? Who receive the invitation of the Lord to the banquet which he hath provided, and yet turn aside, one to his farm and another to his merchandise, pleading, possibly, their very transgressions as an excuse for their disobedience, their sins as an apology for their neglect? No Jew could refuse to come to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover, and yet be numbered among his people. "Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of

the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord [1]." And who shall call *them* Christians who never celebrate Christ's death, who act as if they had neither part nor lot in his sufferings, nor concern in his salvation. Let us come then to the table of the Lord: "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," and we shall find—what all have found, who have approached in repentance and in faith—that strengthening and refreshing power which will enable us to support the trials and resist the temptations of the world, and will conduct us to the place of eternal rest and peace prepared for the people of God.

[1] Psalm cxxii. 4.

DISCOURSE V.

PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.
MOSES A TYPE OF CHRIST.

DISCOURSE V.

PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA—MOSES A TYPE OF CHRIST.

Exodus xv. 13.

Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

The chapter from which the text is taken consists principally of one of those hymns — the first of its kind that is known to us—in which holy men of old were wont to show forth their gratitude to Almighty God for any extraordinary mercy or deliverance vouchsafed to them, and to celebrate his glory and

majesty, his power and goodness. Never was temporal deliverance wrought, even for Israel, greater, more seasonable, nor attended with circumstances of more terrific solemnity, than that which is thus proclaimed. Never was a song of praise on earth more fervent in its aspirations, more sublime in its conceptions, more pure in its spirit, more impressive in its accompanying circumstances. Never, indeed, can such a scene again occur as that, when—rescued from impending destruction by a visible interposition of Omnipotence—millions of knees were bent, and millions of hands were extended, at the same instant, towards heaven, in humble and grateful adoration, and the voices of a countless multitude sent forth, as if from one mouth, the sound of thanksgiving and of praise. Never again can the earth witness such a scene as this: never again can the sky be rent with such a shout of holy joy. Far beyond all earthly similitude, it admits of no comparison save one—when cherubim and seraphim, the angels and

the spirits of the just made perfect, that "great multitude which no man can number[1]," shall unite their voices around the throne of God, and say, "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

The hymn is commenced by Moses, joined by six hundred thousand men of Israel, saying, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood up-

[1] Rev. vii. 9.

right as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.— Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Moses, and the women of the vast assembly took up the song and answered them verse by verse, saying, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

After the first-born had been destroyed throughout the land of Egypt, on that ever memorable night in which the passover was instituted, Pharaoh and his

people arose in terror, and called hastily for Moses and Aaron, not merely now to permit, but to press and compel their departure. "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." How are the mighty fallen and the proud of the earth cast down, when the hard and haughty Pharaoh stoops to solicit a blessing from him whom, but a few hours previously, he had threatened with death! Bitter must have been the humiliation, when he condescended to entreat those, upon whom he had exercised the most despotic cruelty, that, in mercy towards himself, they should depart with their little ones, their flocks and their herds! The Egyptians had endured personal inflictions and plagues: they had witnessed the mighty effects of miraculous power, wielded by the hands of Moses and Aaron: they had seen the fruits of their land destroyed; their houses filled with noisome creatures; their waters turned into blood; the very air loaded with diseases; yet still

their evil heart was hardened. Death has now been busy in their dwellings, and with the awful memorials of vengeance and power, in the corpses of their nearest and dearest, before their eyes, they thrust forth the Israelites, and even bribe them to depart. This is a miracle calculated to alarm them in the tenderest point. It is a plague at once the most severe, and the most deserved; as inflicting upon them the same species of evil which they had made their bondmen to suffer, and causing them to feel in their own persons the miseries which without remorse they had inflicted upon others.

Previous to this final act of wrath the Lord had commanded his people to prepare for their journey, and also to borrow from the Egyptians, as it is stated, "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment." Here we are startled with the difficulty, that such an injunction, directing actions apparently fraudulent and dishonest, could proceed from Him, to whom we dare not attribute evil counsel. Taken literally, it is a command which can scarcely be vin-

dicated upon any principle of retaliation or reprisal. But the difficulty vanishes at once, when we find that the word translated, *to borrow*, signifies properly, *to demand*. And thus the Israelites, according to the express injunction of Jehovah, demanded jewels of silver and jewels of gold, not fraudulently, as a loan which they had no intention of repaying, but in reality as a right—a remuneration for their services, which the oppressors ought not to have withheld—the purchase money of their departure, which the Egyptians were glad to pay [1].

Scarcely had Israel set out on their journey, when "the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us." The first shock of the calamity over, which had induced him to relent, his repentence ceases, and his heart becomes hard as it was before. The advantage over them, which the road pursued by the Israelites gives him, occurs to

[1] See Graves, p. 78.

his mind, and he determines once more to reduce them under his subjection. Thus it is oftentimes with the sinner. After repeated mercies, and calls, and warnings, have been found ineffectual to produce repentance, some overwhelming blow descends, which comes upon him as a thunder stroke, and makes the inmost soul to tremble; some grievous affliction is sent whose influence is irresistible; and the spirit awakens suddenly to a consciousness of its real state, to a sense of its actual peril. He sees in the affliction the handwriting of God against him, and his conscience with ready accusation enables him to read it truly. For a time he repents, and resolutions are formed of future amendment. With the danger, however, or with the acute sense of suffering, these convictions pass away; repentance exists no longer, and the resolutions are entirely forgotten; sin resumes its empire; conscience again returns to its torpor; and "the last state of that man is worse than the first [1]. That this would be the case

[1] St. Matt. xii. 45.

with Pharaoh, was foretold to Moses by the Lord; and it was so ordained that he might fill up the measure of his iniquities; that God "might be honoured upon him and upon all his host; that the Egyptians might know that he was the Lord."

The route pursued by Moses, which led the people into this danger, is an additional proof to those which we have before adduced, of the reality of his miraculous powers. For so little of human foresight or of carnal wisdom mingled in his counsels; so little does he appear to have acted upon any plan of ordinary prudence, that it would have been clearly impossible, without divine interposition, to escape from the perils which surrounded him. They are led into a mountain pass, with the sea in front of them, and the hosts of Egypt in the rear. In wilfulness or ignorance they became "entangled in the land." Thus situated, they are speedily overtaken by Pharaoh, and, to prove more fully that the whole deliverance was the Lord's, the Israelites are represented as bewailing their fate, and bitterly re-

proaching Moses that he had thus led them out to certain death. In the extremity of danger he cries unto the Lord, and then, obedient to the command of Him by whom every step of his way had been marked out (for "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire"), Moses stretches out his hand over the sea "and the waters were divided, and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground." The Egyptians pursue—the waters of the great deep close upon them—and Israel see their enemies no more. Thus the chosen people of God depart from Egypt, at the end of four hundred and thirty years, reckoning from the time when Abraham was first commanded to leave Charran, and sojourn in the land of Canaan[1]. When the desert had resounded with the voice of joy and thanks-

[1] "From Abraham's coming to sojourn in Canaan, to the birth of Isaac, was twenty-five years; and Isaac was sixty years old when he begat Jacob; who was a hundred and thirty years old when he went down into Egypt: which numbers put together make

giving for this glorious deliverance, they set forth on their journey, the Lord leading them the way, until he brought them to Horeb; to that mount where he had already revealed himself—his name—his nature—his perfections, unto Moses. Thus fulfilling that which he had given unto him as a token of his truth, saying, "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

This passage of Israel through the Red Sea, wonderful in itself, as an exhibition of Almighty power and providential mercy, and calculated to excite attention on this account alone, becomes still more memorable, from the allusions continually made to it in the Scriptures, and particularly from its mysterious and typical signification in the New Testament. As the whole

two hundred and fifteen years. And from his family's coming into Egypt was just as many more."—Bp. Patrick.

Jewish dispensation was preparatory to the Christian, there can be no doubt that most of the circumstances attending the establishment of that which was imperfect, ceremonial, and carnal, were intended, arranged, and ordained, as emblematical and figurative of that which was perfect and spiritual. We find this typical resemblance not merely in national events, but in individual characters and actions; and even prior to the existence of the Jewish people, nay, from the very beginning of time, it was the purpose of Jehovah to shadow forth those great things which should be hereafter. The character of Moses, as it is the most exalted and prominent in the Old Testament, so it resembles most closely the character of Christ; and his actions, as they are the most momentous in themselves and the most durable in their effects, so do they most clearly prefigure the actions of the Messiah. In meekness, in forbearance, in long-suffering, in love towards his people, in being the instrument of salvation to the

Israelites, in his repeated intercessions for them, he set forth, so far as was possible for mere humanity, the actions and the character of God made man. In the same manner, the event before us, as it surpasses most others in magnitude and importance, so it expresses more clearly and manifestly the great evangelical doctrine of which it is the figure. Let us hear the language of the apostle; "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ[1]."

The close relation and correspondence between the Christian and the Jewish economy is in no passage of Scripture more plainly and significantly declared than in this. The Israelites are called, as they

[1] 1 Cor. x. 1—4.

are in a spiritual sense, our fathers. We are the same church, under a different name, and a more perfect form, and with additional privileges—we have the same faith, but with increased light and knowledge—the same hope, but with augmented assurance—the same inheritance, but far exceeding in permanence and glory. Their deliverance out of Egypt, and the paschal lamb slain on that occasion, are lively types of our rescue from a bondage worse than Egyptian, by the death of Christ. Their miraculous passage through the Red Sea, by the guidance of Moses, and under the covering of a cloud, prefigures the Christian's regeneration; his passage from bondage unto freedom; from corruption unto holiness; from a state of nature to a state of grace; from death unto life. It represents the new birth unto righteousness—the mystical washing away of sin.

And what is man in his natural condition but in a state of bondage? His will is at enmity with God. His passions,

his desires, his habits, are tyrants of the most obdurate character. The corruption of his nature, that in-dwelling power of sin, the consequence of original transgression, bows him down to the earth. A darkness has closed over the mind and the soul—a darkness like that of Egypt—a darkness that may be felt. From this state we are rescued—certainly not by our own seeking—almost against our will, by Christ, as Israel was rescued, even in the midst of their murmuring, by the hand of Moses. Convinced by his word, guided by his light, led by his wisdom, encircled with his glory, we descend, and pass through the deep waters. The chains of our captivity are loosed; the bonds of our vassallage are broken; the strength of our innate depravity is weakened and finally destroyed: a new existence is opened to us, new privileges are granted to us, new hopes are set before us, new employments are found for us: we are no longer the captives of Pharaoh and of the Egyptians—no longer the slaves of Satan and of sin—no longer under

the dominion of the world and the flesh; but the subjects of the Lord of Hosts, the servants of the living God; and the soul, thus rescued, may say with Israel; "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation."

In another point of view also, the redemption wrought by the instrumentality of Moses resembles that effected for all mankind by Christ. It fitly and truly represents the change from mortality to immortality, from the dark certainty of death to the glorious prospect of a resurrection. Christ was not only the way and the truth, but also the life. Without his revelation, without his appearance among us, without his guidance, what would human life have been? It might be aptly expressed in the words of Pharaoh, "they are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." A gloomy sea separated time from eternity. No hope appeared beyond the miserable servitude of this life—no hope for

the body, but to bear continually the bondage of corruption—no hope for the soul, but to perish everlastingly. Surrounded on every side by barriers insurmountable—in a desert which afforded no real enjoyment, no lasting support—before us an ocean whose bounds we knew not, whose depths they could not fathom. To return — impossible: to proceed — destruction. Yet still the enemy advances — time admits of no delay—the gulph must be entered, hopeless as it seems—the abyss must be tried, desperate as is the attempt.—On a sudden, an Almighty arm is uplifted, the waters so much dreaded divide asunder, a path is visible in the midst, and that which was but lately clothed in terror exhibits now the means of rescue and deliverance. Christ has taken away the terrors of dissolution. He has robbed the grave of its victory. He has shown us that death is but the beginning of life —the grave but the door of immortality. Into that sea, which all must enter, through which all must pass, we go not

alone. He has trodden the same path before us, and is now himself our guide. The same eternal flame, the same resplendent glory, which shone around the camp in the hour of Israel's trial, beams upon every Christian soul during the awful period of his final conflict. The words of Christ, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live [1]," are heard, and felt, and believed. They speak to us the language which Moses spake unto his people:—"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Well, therefore, in this respect also, may we raise the song of thanksgiving and say, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation."

In our baptismal regeneration, then, and in our future prospects, in our means of grace, and in our hope of glory, in the salvation wrought for us, and in the

[1] St. John xi. 25.

eternity opened to us, the Jewish people are emblematical of ourselves. And Moses himself was a type, though but a feeble type, of that far greater prophet who should be raised up, in fulness of time, for the surer guidance and the more effectual deliverance of his people.

In no place can it be more appropriate, than in the present, to remark, that all the commands of God given unto Israel, are enjoined and enforced by an enumeration of the mercies and deliverances vouchsafed unto them. Thus Moses says unto them, "Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless: but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore, I command thee to do this thing [1]." For the same reason they were forbidden to glean their field or their vineyard after the gathering of the corn or the grapes, that a portion might remain for the stranger, the father-

[1] Deut. xxiv. 17, 18.

less, and the widow. And when Jehovah delivered the law itself on Sinai, he prefaced it by declaring their obligation to keep and to do it. "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." And are not all the Christian's duties enforced by the same, and even by more powerful considerations? "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's [1]." "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light [2]." "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God [3]." "Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ [4]."

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 20. [2] Ephes. v. 2. [3] Id. ver. 8.
[4] 1 Thess. v. 5—9.

The obedience of the Jewish people to the law as delivered by Moses, was purchased by the mercy showed unto them, and in like manner our obedience has been purchased. Yet let us examine ourselves for a moment, and ask what we have done in return for this great salvation. We rest, perhaps, our title to the splendid promises of the Gospel, and put forward our claim to reward,—on the fact that our steps *seem* to be turned towards the promised land, whilst yet possibly our hearts remain in Egypt, on the simple ground that we have permitted ourselves to be brought forth from the darkness in which we were enveloped, and from the bondage of corruption in which we were enslaved; whilst yet we are eager to resume our natural state. In short, we pride ourselves that we have been baptized and made members of Christ's visible Church, though we may never think of performing the duties of our station there. Yet surely, this baptism confers upon us no greater merit than the passage of the Red Sea in the face of

Pharaoh's host conferred upon the infant carried on its mother's bosom We were brought to the baptism of Christ unconsciously, and received an earnest of his grace by the instrumentality of others. The privileges and blessings of the Christian covenant were laid open to us, whilst yet we knew neither their nature nor their importance. We must make these blessings our own, by our own faith: we must secure these privileges to ourselves, by our own obedience. And we *may* secure or we *may* reject them: we may, if we please, resolve to serve God, or Satan; to follow the steps of the angel of the covenant to the land of promise, or neglect his counsel, and refuse his guidance: we may ensure to ourselves "the glorious liberty of the children of God[1]," or return to the bondage of Egypt. In short, the sacrament of baptism can no more give us a right to the inheritance of eternal glory, to the blessings of immortality, without our own

[1] Rom. viii. 21.

obedience and faith, than the passage of the Red Sea could procure for all the Israelites an entrance into the land promised unto their fathers. We must ever bear in mind, that baptism unto Christ, like that unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, only removes an otherwise insuperable obstacle out of the way of obtaining salvation, and takes off our natural incapacity to obtain it. A miracle of divine mercy and goodness and power was required to effect both; but neither the one nor the other could ever of itself create a title to the recompense of the reward.

But let us apply the subject more particularly to ourselves, and to the present occasion. This is a day [1] which must ever be memorable among us—the commemoration of the opening of the place where we are now assembled for public worship;

[1] This discourse was delivered on the anniversary of the opening of the chapel. If, therefore, any of the succeeding observations should appear irrelevant to the subject of the discourse, the occasion must serve as an apology.

and I have usually endeavoured to direct your attention to that most useful and necessary of all Christian exercises—self-examination ; to induce you to look back upon the past, and inquire whether your spiritual advancement has kept pace with the steps of time. It has already appeared that, in many respects, our present state, both as individuals and as a Christian church, resembles that of the singular people whose history we are now considering. We have been rescued from that bondage under which the whole creation must have groaned, but for the deliverance wrought by Christ. The natural incapacity of man has been removed ; the natural darkness in which the human mind was enveloped has been dispelled, and the clear light of heavenly truth has beamed upon the understanding, enduing it with spiritual perceptions, with sublime and lofty aspirations. The pure breath of Christian liberty has breathed upon the limbs of the captive, and bid him arise and go forth in freedom. The very sea has been divided before him, and a path

made in the great waters; for a rod more potent than that of Moses has smitten them asunder. From the region of danger, he may now behold, beyond those waters, a land of security; from the valley of the shadow of death, the place of perplexity, and trouble, and doubt, and sorrow, he may now contemplate the shore of immortality, the haven of everlasting happiness and peace. The ordinances of the Gospel have been vouchsafed, that spiritual food and nourishment, which, partaken of by faith, strengthens and refreshes the soul. Day by day that food is furnished, in still increasing supply: from that rock which was smitten for us, the waters of life still gush forth in a never-failing stream of mercy.

With all these blessings, so richly, so freely bestowed upon us, what have we done? The time is fast approaching when we shall be called to give an account. Each year of worship, as it adds to our means of grace, adds also to our obligations of duty. Each day spent in the courts of the Lord's house, as it increases

the number of our privileges, increases also the necessity for our advancement. The seventh part of the whole of human life is by Jehovah claimed as his due, and by an express command dedicated to his service, and to our own spiritual improvement. Has, then, our progress been proportioned to these advantages? Has the due sacrifice been laid upon his altar? And has the sanctifying fire from heaven declared its fitness and acceptance? Weekly as the sabbath comes round, does it bring us to the house of prayer? And does it bring us with minds more spiritual, with affections more pure, with hearts more elevated by fervent faith, by holy hope, and more free from the world, its cares, its vanities, its follies, and its lusts? Oh! let us ask ourselves these questions; and let us remember, that better would it have been for us, had darkness for ever shrouded the intellect, and corruption fettered the soul, than that light and liberty should have been bestowed upon us in vain. Better would it have been for us, "not to

have known the way of righteousness, than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us[1]."

Some, possibly, may think that an undue stress is laid upon the external ordinances of the Gospel. But let us appeal to Scripture, whether a single promise, either of spiritual assistance, or of future glory, is made to those who neglect them. Let us appeal to experience, whether the love of God was ever kept alive in the heart, without (I will not say an occasional compliance with, but) a diligent and constant seeking of the outward ordinance: whether the grace of God was ever increased in the soul without being applied for in the proper channel: whether the Gospel ever flourished in a land where the public services were neglected, and the authority of the visible Church despised.

Our Church, however, does not attach too much importance to ritual observances, to times and seasons. She does

[1] 2 Peter ii. 21.

not consider these observances as themselves meritorious in the sight of God; but looks upon them merely as leading to better things, and views them rather as the means, than as the end—the means of grace, leading to a hope of glory. Few and significant, and strictly Scriptural, are the rites which she has preserved, equally and in every respect remote from the superstition of the Church of Rome and the laxity of the schismatic. The clumsy fretwork of the ages of ignorance has been removed; the monstrous excrescences which defaced the form and destroyed the proportions of the Christian temple have been swept away, and the glorious structure stands forth in its own beautiful simplicity and symmetry, built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

Valuing then, as we do, and esteeming, above all earthly blessings, the worship and ceremonies and discipline of our Church, is it not surprising that so much should be said respecting the need of alteration? and, confessing as we do, that her forms are

derived from the clear fountain of eternal truth, so many plans of amendment should be advocated? There will indeed always be some who, in the emphatic language of St. Peter, are "presumptuous, self-willed, not afraid to speak evil of dignities; wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; who privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them; who speak swelling words of vanity, and allure through the lusts of the flesh: and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil-spoken of." It is impossible to read this prophecy without understanding it as indicating a class of adversaries to our Church, who, at the present moment, are most violent against her existence; most eager in their anticipations of her fall,—those who deny the Lord that bought them. Against these declared enemies, it is scarcely necessary to caution you. But you will meet with another class, as hostile, in reality, to her interests, well-being, and peace, who may aptly be styled wells

without water — clouds carried by the tempest. Those, namely, who are neither with us nor against us — who belong to us, but are not of us — who hold with one hand the standard of the Church, and grasp with the other that of schism. Who, usurping the seat of judgment, to which neither their station nor their knowledge entitles them, are prepared in the fulness of self-sufficiency, *humbly* to exact or *proudly* to yield, as it may suit their peculiar and ever varying opinions. One of these pretended friends resigns as indefensible the connexion between the Church and the State ; obliterates almost the only mark which remains to tell that there is still one Christian kingdom in Christian Europe. Another mutilates her beautiful and scriptural service, to please the indolent ; alters the administration of the sacraments, to soothe the Dissenter ; omits the public confession of the glorious and saving doctrine of the Trinity, to conciliate the Socinian ; and gives up particular portions of her Liturgy to gratify the prejudice and ignorance of heresy,

and unbelief. Her doctrines, her ritual, her discipline, are thus surrendered one by one—till liberality finds it has nothing left to grant—infidelity triumphs that it has nothing more to demand.

What then is our duty under these circumstances? It is to come nearer, and gather closer around the ark of our faith: to be more zealous and attentive in the observance of her evangelical requirements: to labour more earnestly, that we may show forth in our lives the effects of her services and discipline—the power of her doctrines upon ourselves. It is to discountenance, in our several walks of life, the arrogant pretensions put forth by ignorant or designing men. It is to avail ourselves diligently of the exalted privileges offered to us, and prove ourselves worthy of the peculiar blessings bestowed upon us. Let us seek comfort, and edification, and support, at the same fountains of everliving truth, where our fathers so abundantly found them, and where we also shall not fail to find, if we come in sincerity of heart, in the

spirit of a right mind. Thus built up in our own most Holy Faith, we shall give the best answer to our adversaries, by exhibiting our perfect unity, being "knit together in love," "continuing in the faith grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel[1]." One blessed assurance we have, amidst every peril and difficulty, that he who brought the Church out of Egypt, who led her through the sea of persecution, wherein she was baptized in the blood of her holiest and her best, will still "look down from heaven, behold, and visit the vine which his right hand hath planted, and the branch that he made so strong for himself[2]."

Remember also, that you have a charge as serious, an obligation as important even as this. The time will soon arrive when you, to whom I speak, will no more tread the courts of the house of the Lord; when you will no more be numbered as members of the visible church of Christ;

[1] Col. i. 23. [2] Psalm lxxx. 14, 15.

no more unite in her ordinances, nor seek comfort in her sacraments; when your warfare will be accomplished, your battle fought, your race ended; when, if you are found faithful servants, you will depart to join the church invisible but triumphant. Think, therefore, on those who will be left behind; on those who, now in infancy or youth, will then remain to occupy your places; and remember that it is yours to prepare them for that station; it is yours to make them sincere members of that Church to which it is your comfort and happiness to belong; it is yours, to train their infant minds in the way wherein they should go, and teach them diligently what great things the Lord hath done for them. Oh! let no word of irreverence, no expression of disrespect, shake their infant faith: let no appearance of apathy or indifference lead them to suppose, that you really despise what you pretend to venerate and follow. Think not that lukewarmness on your part will be followed by no effect on their minds; nor that a life of unvarying devotion, a death of unclouded

hope, will be lost upon their hearts. If you have been Christians indeed, it will be their pride and glory to seek spiritual support where their fathers sought and found it, to look for immortality and eternal life in the path which their fathers trod. Remember, too, that as God hath threatened to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, in temporal punishment, so he will visit the sins of the children upon the fathers, in that which is eternal; if through their disobedience or neglect, the youthful mind has been corrupted, the affections misled, the understanding darkened, the steps turned aside from the way of truth.

Let not this day pass, then, without a solemn communing with ourselves, whether we have done these things, or whether we have disregarded them; whether we are fitter for that eternal rest which is prepared for the people of God, whether as years revolve—as time becomes shorter—as eternity draws nearer, our faith and hope have increased in clearness and in fervour; whether our bond of connexion with the

visible Church has been drawn closer, as it is about to be severed, and our desires have grown stronger, our aspirations more eager, to join that blessed multitude, who, already redeemed and brought out of much tribulation, now seated upon the thrones of their glory, "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints[1]."

[1] Revel. xv. 3.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE GIVING OF THE LAW.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE GIVING OF THE LAW.

DEUTERONOMY v. 22.

These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

THE deliverance of Israel from bondage was now accomplished; the Red Sea had been divided to make a way for them to pass over, and had closed again upon the host of Pharaoh, overwhelming his chariots and his horsemen in the mighty waters. After the song of praise and thanksgiving had been lifted up, Moses, under the command of Jehovah, leads the people—still with the pillar of the cloud

by day and the pillar of fire by night—not northward, immediately to the land of promise, but in an opposite direction, into the southern part of Arabia. This appears to be done for two reasons. In the first place, the long oppression endured in Egypt had so completely broken and subdued their spirit, that they were quite unequal to the task of contending with the warlike nations, the Philistines, the Amorites, and the Amalekites, whom they must have encountered in their march. "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." Thus carefully does the Lord apportion the burden which he imposes, to the strength of man; the temptation, to the power of endurance: thus uniformly, under all his dispensations, is he a God "who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are

able [1]." In the second place, the Israelites were to serve God in Horeb, for this was the token which he himself had given unto Moses, saying, "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

No reasons are assigned in Scripture for so singular an appointment, and therefore we cannot know, with any certainty, why this particular spot was selected for the delivery of the Holy Law, and for the awful manifestation of the Godhead in his power and righteousness, in his majesty and glory. Yet, if we may be permitted, with all humility, to use conjecture on a subject so sacred, and so fearful—what place could be found more suitable to all the awe-inspiring accompaniments of such a manifestation, than the vast and boundless desert, in whose immense expanse and perfect solitude, and intensity of silence—shut out from the world, its idolatries, its wickednesses, its corruptions—the chosen people might hold communion

[1] 1 Cor. x. 13.

with their Creator and their God? No tumult was heard there, no voice of mankind, to interrupt that blessed conference. No noise of waters, no sound from a bird of the air, no rustling even of a leaf, to break the awful stillness, to lessen the deep impression of that holy quietude, or to cause one heavenly accent to be lost to the ears and hearts of his prostrate and adoring people.

From the shores of the Red Sea, the Israelites march, in three days, to a place afterwards called Marah, from the bitterness of its waters. Here commences that astonishing display of miracle and wonder, designed by the Almighty for the support or the punishment of his people—of long-suffering and forbearance with the waywardness and the sinfulness of man; that surprising exhibition of mercies vouchsafed only to be forgotten, warnings given only to be disregarded, covenants made only to be broken. At the intercession of Moses, the bitter waters become sweet; the rock in Horeb is struck by his rod, and the floods gush out

abundantly; and as their thirst is allayed, so their hunger is satisfied miraculously: "at even quails come up, and cover the camp:" and in the morning manna lies upon the face of the wilderness. The latter of these, however, was not merely a temporary supply, but continued to be sent daily, with the early dew, for forty years, during the whole period of their wanderings; and only "ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land" of Canaan [1]. It was moreover accompanied with a remarkable provision for the perfect sanctity of the Sabbath, since none ever appeared upon that day, but on the preceding day each person gathered double the usual quantity: thus establishing by a continual miracle a lasting memorial of the divine commandment.

Other trials now await them, and another extraordinary scene is opened to us by the following narrative. The people are attacked by the Amalekites in Rephi-

[1] Joshua v. 12.

dim; and Moses, at no time aspiring to the reputation of a general, commissions a young man, named Joshua, who afterwards acquired such enduring glory as his successor, to lead the forces of Israel against their enemies. The prophet himself engages in an employment more suited to his age and character. Attended by Aaron and Hur, and taking with him the rod of God—that rod which he had already found so powerful—he ascends the hill to view the combat and raise his hands toward heaven in prayer for success. It was the purpose of Jehovah, on all occasions, to magnify his servant in the sight of his people; and thus to give greater efficacy to his chosen instrument, and increase the sphere of his utility. Whilst, therefore, Moses held up his hands in supplication, Israel prevailed; but when bodily weakness compelled him to "let them down," Amalek prevailed. To ensure the victory, "Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the

going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." Surely, no more striking lesson could be given to mankind of the utter helplessness of human nature, of the unbounded efficacy of prayer, of the all ruling power of Divine Providence, than this memorable transaction: when the aged prophet, supported by his two more aged companions [1], poured out his soul in prayer to Almighty God, imploring assistance and protection for his people.

The eighteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus contains an interesting account of the meeting between Moses and Jethro, his father-in-law. Jethro brought to him his wife and his two children, whom it thus appears, he had left behind when he returned into Egypt [2], to execute the

[1] Hur was the grandfather of Bezaleel, who a few weeks after was appointed, by the express command of God, to make the tabernacle of the congregation, the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat.

[2] We are informed (chap. iv. 20), that Moses, when he went down into Egypt, was accompanied by his

divine command. It is not, however, important to the present narrative, otherwise than as it shows the perfect simplicity and truth of the historian, and the entire absence of all pretence or assumption; for we have here one of the most useful political regulations—the appointment of the judges—ascribed to the suggestion of Jethro; and also the acknowledgment by Moses of Zipporah his wife, though, as being an Ethiopian woman, she was held in contempt by the Israelites. From Rephidim they proceed to the wilderness of Sinai, and encamp in the neighbourhood of the Mount of God, exactly two months after their departure out of Egypt.

The delivery of the law from Mount

wife and his son Gershom (Eliezer being born afterwards); and some peculiar circumstances are related concerning his circumcision by the way. It is also stated (chap. xviii. 2.), that he sent them back; and we may suppose, that, at first, Moses resolved to take his family with him, but, meeting with Aaron, he was prevailed upon to alter his determination and send them back for protection to Jethro.

Sinai or Horeb is in itself an event of such vast magnitude and importance, and all the circumstances attending that delivery are so singular, so awful, so impressive, that it is necessary to trace their order more particularly. The Lord thus addresses the assembled multitude by the mouth of Moses; "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Having thus recounted his past mercies, and heard his covenant formally accepted, he commands them to prepare, by the strictest purification, for the wondrous intercourse about to take place. The whole mount is carefully fenced and guarded, lest any

of the people should touch the ground hallowed by the Almighty's presence. From that dread circle proceeded, on the third day, "thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud was upon the mount, and the voice of the tempest was exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire." Well might they, sinners as they knew themselves to be, tremble at his presence who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity[1];" well might they, with self-accusing consciousness of their own utter unworthiness, tremble at the manifestation of him who "is a consuming fire!" Never was offered to mortal vision such a display of terror-striking power and majesty: never fell upon mortal ear such a voice as that which, louder than the roar of thunders, "spake unto them out of the midst of

[1] Hab. i. 13.

the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness." Thus was proclaimed the moral law, the law of righteousness; that pure and perfect will of God, whose extent passes human comprehension. Awed by these wonders and subdued with apprehension at the requirements of Jehovah, the people entreat that they may hear that fearful voice no more, and say unto Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

With this prayer of Israel the Lord complies, and commands Moses to "come up alone into the mount, that he may give him tables of stone, and a law and commandments." "For six days a cloud covers the mount, and the glory of the Lord abides upon it: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." Here Moses continues forty days and forty nights, and receives not only the ceremonial law, but

" two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God [1]."

Returning from Sinai with these precious gifts, he finds, with dismay, that his people have already forgotten their terrors, broken their covenant with the Lord, and fallen into the grossest idolatry —that very sin from which it was the especial object of the Almighty to guard them; that they have plunged at once into the basest of the Egyptian superstitions; and that Aaron himself is an accomplice in this iniquity. In righteous indignation at their foul apostasy, he casts the tables of the law out of his hands, and breaks them beneath the mount; thus annulling, on God's part, the covenant which he had made with them. Empowered, however, not only in his religious, but in his magisterial character, he proceeds to inflict a severe, though deserved punishment upon the offenders. He calls around him the sons of Levi, who, possibly, had kept themselves clear

[1] Exod. xxxi. 18.

from the transgression, and commands them "to go through the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." And they did so: "and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." Having seen this summary vengeance exacted, he returns to make intercession for the survivors.

God had already threatened to destroy the whole nation, and had offered to transfer all his great and gracious promises to Moses and *his* family; but no root of personal ambition seems to have been planted in his bosom. Uninfluenced by selfishness, unallured by the prospect of temporal fame or power, in perfect simplicity and purity of mind, he regards only the glory of God. He pleads no extenuation of their crime, for he too well knew its enormity. He urges a fear of the effect which such an extermination of the Jewish people might have upon heathen nations; and he concludes his petition with the memorable and affecting sentence, unparalleled in

self devotion: he offers to resign his own share of the promise made with Abraham, if it may be accepted as some atonement for the sin of his people; to give up his own portion of that covenant rather than enjoy it without his brethren. "This people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin;—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." So grateful is intercession to the Almighty that he appears overcome by this entreaty, and replies, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." As if he had said, I blot not out the righteous from the book of my remembrance, neither do I punish one man for the sin of another: "Therefore, now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee."

Pardon having been granted to Israel, the Lord again descends in the cloudy pillar upon the tabernacle of the congregation, which he had abandoned because of their idolatry. After a lengthened

conference with Moses, in which the most extraordinary favour, and the most gracious condescension are shown, for it is said that "the Lord spake unto him as a man speaketh unto his friend," he is so far emboldened as to make this singular request; I beseech thee, show me thy glory. To this the Lord replies, not in displeasure but in increasing favour, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord; but thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen." This wonderful promise was fulfilled, when Moses, by the command of God, went up again into the mount for forty days and forty nights, as at the beginning, and received anew the tables of the testimony. There[1] the Lord

[1] It is usually represented that God made this display of his goodness unto Moses, at the time when

passed by before him, and, as he had said, in all his goodness, proclaiming, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."

What are we to understand then by this manifestation, and by the singular distinction here drawn between the face and the back parts of God? It is evident that the words cannot be taken literally, since God is a spiritual essence, and hath no parts, no form visible to mortal eye; for parts and form belong not to spirit. It is intended figuratively to set forth his glorious and gracious attributes; to render them clear to our comprehension by material similitudes, in the same manner as, in other places of Scripture, the arm

he talked with him out of the cloudy pillar at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. (chap. xxxiii. 9—23.) But it is evident that this is only the promise of what he would do; which promise we find afterwards fulfilled, when Moses went up into Mount Sinai to have the tables of the law renewed. (chap. xxxiv. 6.)

represents the justice and omnipotence of the Deity; the eye his omniscience and omnipresence; and the hand his providence and grace. Moses had already seen some portion of the divine glory, when it rested upon Sinai at the first delivery of the law, and it was perfectly suitable to the character of that law. Desiring to behold a still fuller display, the Almighty informs him that this is impossible; that mortality could not endure the vision. At the same time he promises to show him what he had not yet seen: what could not be appropriately exhibited together with the rigid justice of the moral law; that is, his goodness; his character as "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious."

This glory, therefore, this face of God which is invisible, designates the justice, the terror, the severity of God—it is God, as he is a consuming fire, a jealous God, —it is God, as he is extreme to mark what is done amiss—it is God, as he visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children — it is God, in majesty eternal, in purity infinite, in glory unap-

proachable. But, after these terrible glories are gone by, then he makes all his goodness pass before him. Here there is no limitation, no keeping back. This display is perfectly suitable to the nature, the state, the wants of man. *Now*, it is God, in his mercy and his grace —is God, as he is long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth—it is God, as he keepeth mercy for thousands—it is God, as he forgiveth iniquity, and pardoneth transgression and sin. Thus it was, also, in the manifestation which Jehovah made of himself to Elijah, on the very same Mount of Horeb, and after a similar preparation by a fast of forty days and forty nights. First came the fire, the earthquake, and the wind rending the mountain and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord: after these demonstrations of glory followed the still small voice of goodness and of mercy.

But to return to the delivery of the law. The first thing observable in the wonderful narrative before us, is, that the Mosaic law consists not, as often re-

presented, of a mere system of external ceremonies, now done away, and therefore neither useful nor interesting; that it is not a mere collection of arbitrary and temporary regulations, burdensome even to the people for whose use they were promulgated, and totally inapplicable to all other nations. It is separated into two grand divisions—the moral law and the ceremonial—each important in itself, and distinguished not more by the difference of character and purpose, than by the mode of delivery, and the degree of solemnity with which that delivery was accompanied. The moral law, the law of the two tables, containing the eternal and unchangeable rules of holiness, was given by the voice of God himself, out of the midst of the fire, issuing from "the excellent glory." "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more." And, as if to mark still farther the important difference between the two, and

to show emblematically the permanence of the moral law, it was also written with the finger of God on two tables of stone, and delivered unto Moses. On the contrary, the ceremonial law, necessary and even indispensable in its remedial capacity, and supplying types of the Messiah, of his life, his sufferings, and his death, his mediation and his intercession, was delivered by the instrumentality of another; because it was hereafter to be abrogated and annulled. But no voice except that of God might worthily proclaim—no finger except that of Jehovah might fitly inscribe, the glorious and enduring perfection of the law of righteousness.

When we look upon that law, and survey it in all its extent, and purity, and spirituality, well may we say, who is sufficient for these things? How can man, frail, imperfect, and corrupted as he is, hope to pay to it the faultless and undeviating obedience which it requires? Truly, no one, whether Jew or Christian, ever has been, or ever could be justified by the

moral law. He who made man knew that he was but dust. While, therefore, he instituted this holy law for a manifestation of his own glory, and to be a model set up on high, by which all the nations of the earth might measure themselves, and to whose excellency they might continually strive to attain, he also provided a remedy for failure, for transgressions of infirmity, and even for wilful transgressions, if repented of. In appointing this remedial process, the Lord pursued the usual course of his dealings with the infant Church, and acted more by means of sensible objects, than through inward perceptions—more by sight than by faith. For this purpose, then, the ceremonial law was instituted; which, however, though appealing directly and continually to the senses, yet became efficacious by faith, as the precursor and the type of a better covenant; because even the very act of sacrificing the sin-offering, and of presenting the peace-offering, constituted a confession of faith in God, of faith in its vicarial efficacy, in its typical atonement.

Such is the grand distinction between the moral and the ceremonial law, between that which was delivered immediately by God himself, with all the accompanying terrors of his glory, and that which was given by the instrumentality, and through the intervention of Moses. If the moral law could have been kept in every part, the ceremonial would not have been given. In being thus the minister of the remedial dispensation, Moses was an illustrious type of Christ; for he was the messenger of reconciliation and of peace. Well, therefore, may we believe that the gracious communication made unto him—the message of mercy entrusted to him—had so great an effect even upon his outward appearance, "that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance [1]." Since the ceremonial law, burdensome as it was in itself, was still a dispensation of mercy; and though it was efficacious only in reference to that greater

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 7.

atonement, which should, in fulness of time, be made for the sins of the whole world—though its glory was to fade and pass away before the brighter rays of the sun of righteousness; yet, as a medium of reconciliation with a justly offended God, it was indeed glorious.

The moral law, as we have before observed, by reason of the natural corruption of man, could not be *perfectly* obeyed. Judged by its rigour, there is none righteous, no not one. But the ceremonial law *could* be performed—no natural incapacity stood in the way of *its* fulfilment. Though the will is not all powerful over the affections of the heart, it *is* over the actions of the body. Though man might not be able to keep his thoughts from evil, or guard his passions continually from every species and degree of excess; yet he *could* command his bodily members to bend before the majesty of Jehovah, as acknowledged in his temple, as represented in the ark of the covenant, and upon the mercy seat. It was fully in his power to lay the required offerings

upon the altar, and, in short, to comply with all those rites which were enjoined. And to these services, performed in faith, there was granted a certain compensatory and atoning efficacy; because his sin-offering was a type of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; because the blood that was sprinkled represented the blood afterwards to be shed for the sins of all mankind: because his peace-offering was emblematical of a sacrifice of far sweeter savour, laid before the Eternal Father by the Eternal Son: because the entrance of the High Priest into the Holy Place within the veil, and the intercession there made, were typical of Him who entered once for all into the Holy Place not made with hands, evermore to appear in the presence of God for us. The Jew, therefore, was no more justified by the deeds of the moral law than the Christian is; but the same propitiation was effectual to the washing away of sin, in the case of the one, as in that of the other.

Did the Jew fully understand this? Did he see the promised Redeemer—the

anxiously-expected Messiah—in all these rites ? — Possibly not; and there is no more reason to require that the types of Scripture should be clearly comprehended prior to their fulfilment, than that the prophecies of Scripture should be perfectly understood before their accomplishment. It is sufficient to know that the ceremonial law was intended, not only to be efficacious through Christ, but to lead men to Christ, and to keep alive in the world a continual expectation of, and looking forward to, Him whom all these things were designed to prefigure and to represent. And it did preserve this expectation. David spoke of Christ, as if already present. The prophets saw him, as if already come ; and many, no doubt, were the devout men, who, from age to age, were anxiously and eagerly " waiting for redemption in Jerusalem [1]."

If we ask, then, what is the reason of this marked distinction between the Mo-

[1] St. Luke ii. 38.

saic and the Christian dispensations ? why the one should be unfettered and free, yet the other burdened with a tedious and expensive ritual and a long train of ceremonial observances ? or, in the words of the apostle, Wherefore serveth the law ? We answer with the same apostle : It was added because of transgression. — Not, as I understand the passage, because of the transgression of the Jews, nor to punish *their* disobedience ; for it was not till afterwards that they became disobedient and rebellious ; but, because of the transgressions of all mankind ; because of the vast spread of idolatry, superstition, and wickedness, which covered the whole face of the earth, as the waters cover the sea. It was added as a safeguard and preservative against contagion ; to provide an immediate remedy for the sins of one chosen people ; to keep alive some sparks of Divine truth, and prepare the way for the acceptance of that universal redemption which should be offered unto every creature through Christ ; and to be a

shadow of good things to come, an anticipation of the brighter glories of the Christian dispensation.

The law of ceremonies, therefore, is taken away—rendered unnecessary by that more complete expiation—abolished by that more effectual atonement—eclipsed by that more shining light, which accompanied the Christian covenant of reconciliation. But that law of righteousness, written with the finger, proclaimed by the voice of God himself, abides for ever. It remains to be a perpetual memorial against transgression. This law is not abolished by Christ, it has not even been weakened by his coming; rather, confirmed, and strengthened, and ratified. Our obligations to observe and do it are increased; while at the same time he extends the efficacy of his own all-perfect holiness, and all-powerful intercession, and all-atoning sacrifice, to those who embrace his mediation with faith, who come to him in repentance and contrition, who strive, by the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to walk with him in light. If we

reject his mediation, and despise his intervention—if, in the pride of human self-sufficiency, we rush into the presence of God, confiding in our own merits, trusting in our own works—if we demand our trial by the *law;* by the *law* we shall be judged. And who among the sons of men can abide that judgment? Who can undergo that trial? Who can stand before the terrors of that tribunal? Who shall presume to step within that awful fence[1] which circles round the majesty of the Eternal; and dare to encounter, face to face, the Lord of Righteousness upon his own most holy ground? Israel could not endure steadfastly to behold the face of Moses, the minister of the law, for the glory of his countenance: how much more shall we fear to meet the Giver of the law himself, when he shows us the full effulgence of his glory, in all its exterminating power?

Let us then turn to the blessed hope which is given, and embrace the repeated

[1] Exod. xix. 12.

offers of mercy held out to us. Let us approach the throne of grace, not pleading our own righteousness, but the forgiveness of our unrighteousness, for the sake of him who came to purchase salvation for the penitent. Let us labour diligently to keep the sacred law of God; to be pure as he is pure; perfect as he is perfect; holy as he is holy. Yet ever mindful of our own infirmity, ever conscious of our own weakness, ever sensible of the utter unworthiness even of our best, and purest, and holiest deeds, let us implore that grace which cometh from above to supply our deficiences, and strengthen our resolutions; and, having done all, having fought our fight, and run our race, and wrought out our salvation with fear and trembling, prostrate at the throne of mercy, let us acknowledge that, in all our obedience, it was God that worked in us, and let us seek our justification only in the blood, and the merits, and the mediation of Christ Jesus our Lord.

DISCOURSE VII.

AARON'S INTERCESSION.

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NUMBERS xvi. 47, 48.

And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living: and the plague was stayed.

THE purpose for which the Almighty led his chosen people to Sinai was now accomplished. The law had been given, with all the solemnity which so righteous a dispensation demanded, and the divine glory had been displayed, with all the awe-inspiring accompaniments which could impress, without destroying, the minds and faculties of men. The Israel-

ites, therefore, after the second passover, depart from the mount, having been encamped around it eleven months; and take their journey north-eastward, through the desert of Paran, unto Kadesh. At this time, the tabernacle was completed according to the instructions given by God, and was richly decorated by means of the free offerings of those whom, in the beautiful language of Scripture, "their spirit made willing." The arrangements respecting their progress were very remarkable, and its periods were regulated throughout entirely by the divine injunctions. "At the commandment of the Lord they journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched their tents." We are informed[1] that, "when the tabernacle was erected, the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode,

[1] Chap. ix. 15—23.

there they pitched their tents. Whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents and journeyed not." The order of their march was as follows:—First, in honour and in place, was the standard of the tribe of Judah. With them were marshalled Issachar and Zebulun. The tabernacle was now taken down and committed to the sons of Moses, Gershom, and Merari, whose duty it was to set it up, against the arrival of the sanctuary. Then came the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. After these "the Kohathites set forward bearing the sanctuary." Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin followed; and the rereward was formed by the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And

when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel [1]." Thus they proceed and arrive, in little more than two months, at Kadesh-barnea.

Since they had now drawn near to Canaan, Moses, with his usual confidence in the divine promises, exhorts the people "to go up and possess it, as the Lord God of their fathers had said unto them [2]." But the Jews, contrary to this advice, desire to send men to spy out the land, and to bring them word again. By the command of God their request is complied with; and twelve men, one out of each tribe, are sent on this errand. These persons having penetrated as far as Hebron, return, after an absence of forty days, bearing with them the most satisfactory evidences of the fruitfulness of the country. "And they came to Moses, and told him, and said, we came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey. Never-

[1] Chap. x. 35, 36. [2] Deut. i. 21.

theless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there[1]." Fearful, and dispirited at the report of the dangers to be encountered, and unallured by the prospect of future abundance and enjoyment, the people murmur against Moses and Aaron, resolve immediately to elect another captain, and return into Egypt[2]. So deep was their despair, so violent their rebellion, that they attempt to stone Caleb and Joshua, who alone had given a favourable report of the land, and had endeavoured, by reanimating their courage, to induce them to go up and possess it.

In anger at this unprovoked revolt against his supremacy, this unwarranted doubting of his word and power, this continual contempt of "all the signs and wonders which he had showed among them," this utter faithlessness and perversity, the Lord again proposes to "dis-

[1] Numb. xiii. 27, 28. [2] Chap. xiv. 4.

inherit" the whole nation, and to smite them with the pestilence; again offers to adopt Moses, to make him the root of another people "greater and mightier than they." But still Moses intercedes, still he uses the same argument which had prevailed before; "The Egyptians shall hear it, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. Then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness." His intercession prevails. He is heard this time also. Yet he cannot obtain an absolute pardon. Their offences have now been too great, too often repeated. They have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and henceforth "no place is found for repentance, though they sought it carefully with tears[1]." They had "refused him that spake on earth," and "afterward when they would

[1] Heb. xii. 17.

have inherited the blessing, they were rejected." The Almighty prefaces his decree with the memorable expression, "I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Upon this, Moses is commissioned to denounce to the people their punishment, which is indeed extraordinary. He declares to them that they should continue under his command, even against their inclinations; that they should neither return to Egypt, nor go to the land of Canaan; but, that they should be cut off from all intercourse with mankind for forty years, "each day for a year, according to the number of the days in which they searched the land," until every individual among them, from twenty years old and upward, every one, in fact, capable of raising his arm in rebellion, or his voice in murmuring, should perish and "leave his carcase in the wilderness."

When "Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel they mourned greatly." Bitter indeed must this sen-

tence have been, not only to the whole Jewish nation, but also to Moses. They were deprived, at once, of every hope of enjoying the inheritance promised unto the fathers, condemned to waste away in the barren and joyless desert, to endure its privations, to encounter its dangers, and to know, that to all these evils there was no termination but the grave, no hope of escape but through the gate of death. Moses also shared in their punishment, and found himself condemned, even at his advanced period of life, still to look forward, through forty years of toil and suffering, to that repose which he had hitherto deemed near at hand, the prize and the crown of all his labours. Severe as this dispensation appears to us, it is, however, just. It is but in the natural order of things, in the usual course of the providence of God. He felt, as all must feel, the blow which descends in chastisement upon a people. He endured, as all must endure, the temporal inflictions which come upon a nation for transgression. Our lives, our fortunes, our happiness, are

bound up with those of our brethren and companions and countrymen; and it is not in the ordinary, but in the extraordinary dispensations of the Almighty that we are to expect the wicked to be separated for vengeance, from among the righteous the tares to be rooted out for burning, from among the wheat.

In the same encampment, and soon after the occurrences above narrated, that new and awful scene of vengeance takes place, to which the text refers, and which I propose to make the principal subject of the following observations. The peculiar honours conferred upon Moses and Aaron by the Lord, the authority held and exercised by the former, the appointment of the latter to the office of the priesthood, and the restriction of that office to his family in exclusion of the other descendants of Levi:—all these circumstances, together with the recent disappointment of the people, combined to excite against them a violent opposition. At the head of this party stood three persons, whose names have acquired an unhappy celebrity; Ko-

rah, Dathan, and Abiram: and no fewer "than two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, men of renown, and famous in the congregation," joined them with all their influence. There is little doubt that the attack was directed against both Moses and Aaron, that their ambition aimed at the government as well as the priesthood. "Ye take too much upon you," say they, "seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Moses with his usual meekness offers to submit the cause to the arbitration of Jehovah. "This do; take your censers and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to-morrow;" that is, assume, if it seem fit to you, the priestly office; "and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy."

On the morrow these factious men assembled, expecting, doubtless, to obtain that ascendancy which was the object of their ambition. But, whilst they were

thus engaged, "the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." Instantly they fall upon their faces and say, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?" Appeased by this entreaty, he commands that they who did not choose to be identified with the rebels should withdraw from their society; lest in partaking of their sin, they should also partake of their punishment. Unawed, however, by these preparations, the leaders of the dissension stand boldly at the door of their tents, with their families, as if in hardened defiance of the power of God. On a sudden "the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the

pit, and the earth closed upon them : and they perished from among the congregation." "Fire" also "came out from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

Still, even this tremendous judgment had but a momentary effect upon the rebellious Israelites. The whole people again assemble on the following day, requiring at the hands of Moses and Aaron the blood of Korah and his followers. Now, having fully identified themselves with the transgressors, they share their punishment. "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, (no unhallowed flame would serve) and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them : for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation ; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people : and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the

dead and the living; and the plague was stayed. Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah."

Who can read the narrative of this awful infliction without shuddering?—What words but those of inspiration can do justice to a subject, in every respect so terrible?—"He stood between the dead and the living."—What an appalling picture is here presented of man's iniquity, and the Almighty's justice. The multitudes of Israel prostrate upon the earth—on one side the carcases of the dead—on the other the scarcely breathing bodies of the living—with only Aaron and his censer between them: with only man's weak arm, to turn aside so fearful a destruction: with only man's feeble intercession, to arrest the vengeance of the Eternal. Yet the march of the destroyer *was* arrested, the progress of desolation *was* stayed, and they, for whom ascended the incense thus offered, were restored from death unto life. Surely, the effect

is entirely disproportioned to the cause! surely, so vast a deliverance could never have been wrought by human strength, or human entreaty, or human sacrifice! There must have been something more than this; some other arm must have interposed to save; some other power must have intervened to succour. But no—if we confine ourselves to the mere narrative before us, we read only of Aaron. The dying Israelite saw Aaron, and Aaron alone. *We* need not, however, confine ourselves to the mere transaction. *We* have better information within our reach. To *us* the veil is uplifted which shrouded *their* spiritual vision: to *us*, the cloud is dispersed which concealed the true mediator and intercessor. *We* behold an arm extended more powerful far than that of Aaron, an energy exerted more excellent than his: we behold a Priest, more perfect than the first High Priest of Israel, an incense, purer and of sweeter savour than that which burned in the censers of the law. And when the vision is thus spiritualized, Aaron is displaced from his

exalted position, and in his stead we behold Him whom Aaron represented and typified continually; we behold Him, without whom the censer of Aaron was impotent, his prayer void of acceptance, his interposition destitute of authority:— to whose all-sufficient intercession and efficacious atonement we are enabled to attribute these wondrous effects.

And what has removed this veil from the eyes of men, and dissipated the cloud that enveloped the understandings and perceptions of mankind? It is the Gospel; teaching us "even the hidden wisdom, which was ordained before the world unto our glory[1];" showing us the real power that moved and actuated all these things; exhibiting to us the true nature of the atonements offered, and the true character of the dealings of God with his sinful creation. And if, even "until this day, the vail remaineth to the children of Israel, untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament[2];" let us bless God, that

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 5. [2] 2 Cor. iii. 13.

this "vail is done away in Christ;" that, in the Gospel of his Son, *we* have a key to all the incomprehensibilities of the patriarchal and of the Mosaic dispensations, to the transactions before and under the law; a key which will unlock the secret mysteries of redemption. To *us* the seven seals of the book are loosed by the Lion of the tribe of Juda[1], and we may read therein the full explanation of the wonders before concealed from all ages, since the foundation of the world.

It is an observation which must often be made, that most of the Patriarchs and holy men of old prefigured, either personally or in their actions, the great and glorious Messiah; but among them all, none did so more clearly and remarkably than Aaron; because Aaron typified him in his greatest and most peculiar office—that of Priest. Both are represented as invested with the priesthood: the one, first High-priest under the Law; the other, first, under the Gospel: the one, mediator

[1] Revel. v. 1—5.

under the old covenant; the other, mediator under the new: the one, minister of an earthly sanctuary; the other, minister "of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man[1]:" and both were "ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices." But as there are many points of similarity between them, so there are many important points of distinction. There is a difference in the constitution of each. The one was made after the law of a carnal commandment; the other after the power of an endless life. The priesthood of Aaron was not sanctioned by the solemnity of an oath; because it was to be disannulled and "abolished, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof[2];" but Christ was made Priest *with* an oath by him that said unto him, "The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever." "The law," again, "having only a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, could never, with those sacrifices which they offered

[1] Heb. viii. 2. [2] Id. ch. vii.

year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect;" but Christ, "by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified [1]." In this, however, consists the greatest difference: the Jewish Priest poured upon the altar the blood of bulls and of goats; and as he offered for the sins of the people, so he was obliged to offer for his own sins. Christ came, without spot, without sin, to make an offering of himself to God, to be at the same time the priest and the atonement, the altar and the sacrifice. "He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself [2]." The delineation of our High Priest would still be most imperfect, if we did not also state that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. He hath passed into the heavens, with the body which he assumed in the day of his humiliation, and which, now glorified, equally shareth in his exaltation. There, for ever, God and man, still incomprehensibly and indissolubly united,

[1] Heb. x. 1—14. [2] Id. ch. ix.

he can, even now, in his state of glory, infinity, and blessedness eternal, "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" seeing that, in the days of his flesh, "he was in all points tempted like as we are."

Remembering, then, who it was that Aaron represented, in whose name he acted, and whose character he bore, we shall be at no loss to comprehend how and why he prevailed to stay the progress of desolation, to turn aside the wrath of God. We shall perceive at once, that it was through Christ alone that Aaron's intercession, as well as all intercession both before and after the law, acquired its influence; that all sacrifices derived their cleansing power. It was not as a righteous man merely that Aaron was heard; though the "fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much[1]." It was not as an upright man, that he was accepted of God; though "the prayer of the upright is His delight[2]." But it was the priest-

[1] James v. 16. [2] Prov. xv. 8.

hood, with which he was invested by the divine command and the consecration of Moses, that gave the atonement its efficacy. It was the anointing which, by rendering him the type of the Saviour, endued him with the power of interposing successfully.

Never did the imagination of man present to him a more vivid, and at the same time a more faithful picture of his own state, than that which is given in the event before us. When Adam first sinned, and wrath had gone forth from the presence of the Lord, the wound inflicted upon the moral creation was such as no earthly power could heal; the variance caused by sin between God and man, was such as no mortal arbiter could reconcile. The Son, who is high priest from everlasting as well as to everlasting, stepped forth before the dying, and asserted his office, and claimed the privileges of his character, the reward of his sufferings. "Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldest

not;" Then said he, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God[1]." The irrefragable claim was allowed, the assertion of right was conceded, justice was satisfied with the vicarious sacrifice, and the flaming sword was turned aside. The sentence of eternal, was commuted into that of temporal death. But neither did the progress of human corruption rest here, nor yet the influence of our high priest's intercession. The contagion which began at the head descended through all the members. The energies of man are paralyzed, his appetites degraded, his passions inflamed, his understanding darkened, his whole frame prostrated before the torrent of iniquity. The plague spot of sin is upon the soul.

We know nothing in reality of the deep and fearful abominations of sin, and the debasement which our original nature has undergone, until the Scriptures open to us this knowledge. The same power of wickedness which thus sinks the soul into perdition, also closes the eyes to its

[1] Heb. x. 8, 9.

state of pollution and of danger: it gilds the vice, and palliates the transgression; it gives the quicksands upon which we tread the semblance of solidity; and clothes the gulf, into which we are about to plunge, with verdure, and beauty, and attraction. But when the Scriptures show us our true condition; above all, when we learn from the awful mysteries of the Christian covenant, the inestimable price which has been paid, the incalculable offering which has been presented, the transcendant dignity of him, who came down from the abode of his glory to suffer and to die for us, and that no meaner sacrifice could be efficacious; when, I say, the veil is removed from our eyes by the agency of Gospel truth, then we may behold the whole heinousness of sin, and the devastation which it has caused, and we may perceive the resemblance between our own situation, and that of the rebellious Jews, who saw nothing between them and the out-pourings of the wrath of God, but Aaron and his censer.

And what the Jew saw in Aaron, we now contemplate in our High Priest. We see before us a Saviour, ready to interpose on our behalf; to stand between the dead and the living, clothed in the garments of his own all perfect righteousness; to place upon the censer the incense of his own merits; to offer as our atonement his own most precious blood. "He saw that there was no man, and he wondered that there was no Intercessor; therefore, his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him [1]."

Surely, these are surprising and overwhelming contemplations! circumstances of most tremendous import! enough to make the heart of every man, at all conversant with his own state, or his own danger, at all acquainted with his present condition, or his future prospects, to hope with fear, to rejoice with trembling. If no intercessor had come, if no salvation had appeared, if man had been left

[1] Isaiah lix. 16.

to struggle, as best he could, with the deadliness of his manifold corruptions; then must the floods of ungodliness have rolled onward unrestrained; then must the kingdoms of this world have become —not the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ—but the undisputed territory of Satan, the acknowledged seats of the empire of darkness. Then must death, eternal as well as temporal, have settled upon all the nations; and that wailing and gnashing of teeth, that worm which dieth not, that fire which cannot be quenched, now reserved only for the finally impenitent, must have been the portion of every child of man, without reprieve and without mitigation.

Now, however, we possess a gracious and glorious assurance of perfect and entire remission and forgiveness; and we hail the blessing of the Christian covenant:—we hail him, who has taken upon himself the office of reconciliation, who has come with the message of pardon and of peace; and the soul, thus renewed by his influence, and restored to a state

of acceptance, begins to feel the invigorating sensation of health throughout its frame, and springs forward to embrace and welcome the glorious hope of life. He, who when on earth gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and cleansing to the leper, and healing to the sick, and life to the dead, can also open our eyes, unclose our ears, purify our souls, restore our health, and raise us from spiritual death, unto the life of righteousness. But he, who thus gives sight, and hearing, and cleansing, and health, and life, also bids us, "Go, and sin no more."

The all-sufficient fact, then, which the Gospel communicates, and which it was the purpose of the Almighty to typify and shadow forth by the terrific scene which we are now considering, is this: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. That the world through him might be saved [1]." And it was not whilst

[1] St. John iii. 16, 17.

man was righteous, whilst he yet stood in all the glory of sinless perfection and unspotted purity, that this offering was made, that this "free gift came;" but, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Well may we, in truth, pursue the argument of the apostle, and say; "Much more, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For, if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life [1]."

Immense was the ransom which has been paid for man; stupendous was the sacrifice which obtained for our High Priest the *right* to intercede; infinitely precious were those merits which made his mediation effectual; and great, proportionably great is our hope, our confidence, our assurance. When he asserts his title to interpose with the Father on

[1] Romans v. 8—10.

behalf of his disciples, it is as one having authority. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory[1]." When he pleads, it is as one who knoweth that the Father heareth him always. He claims as his peculiar inheritance the creation which he has redeemed, and views as his peculiar province the kingdom which he has won. With this knowledge, this certainty of redemption, the sting has been taken away from death, the victory has been wrested from the grave; for he stands between the dead and the living, and darkness has fled and despair has fled, and faith, and hope, have arisen upon the Christian's soul, and a voice has proclaimed in the blessed accents of mercy, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee[2]." "Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of

[1] John xvi. 24. [2] Isaiah lx. 1.

trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again [1]."

I would gladly trust that none among us deceive ourselves with the supposition, that meditation merely upon these high and holy things, is of itself sufficient, without an effort on our own parts, to secure the blessings of the Christian covenant. The apostle, in the fulness of his faith, and the rejoicings of his hope, declared, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus [2];" and we also may glory in the same declaration. But whilst we enjoy the consolation of this heavenly truth, let us not forget the condition, namely, that condemnation is only done away to those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

In one most important respect, the atonement made by Aaron differs from that made by Christ. The effects of the former were felt by the dying Israelites instantaneously and absolutely, without

[1] Isaiah lx. 22. [2] Romans viii. 1.

any conditions required on their part, without any stipulations with regard to the future life of the individual who was benefited. We, on the contrary, must claim our redemption by faith, and apply it by faith, and that faith must work by love, and display itself in righteousness. Theirs was a temporal deliverance from a single though fearful infliction; our's is a deliverance from an enduring, an increasing, and an eternal evil. It is a deliverance from sin—from its dominion, and from its penalties. It is a deliverance which we must seek and claim, and when found, diligently preserve. And if we come to our great Mediator in faith, if we come confessing the "plague of our own hearts [1]," if we come before him in his public ordinances, if we come before him in private prayer, and in secret humiliation pour out our souls at the throne of mercy, we may feel assured, that "the power of the Lord will be present to heal us [2]." He will "hear from heaven

[1] 1 Kings viii. 38. [2] St. Luke v. 17.

his dwelling place, and when he heareth forgive [1]." He will interpose, between us and destruction, the efficacy of his mediation. He will cause to ascend, in grateful incense before the everlasting Father, the sweet smelling savour of his own merits. He will show forth the power of God upon them that believe.

[1] 1 Kings.

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT LIFTED UP.

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT LIFTED UP.

NUMBERS xxi. 9.

> And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

FROM the memorable epoch, when the fearful sentence was pronounced against Israel, for transgression at Kadesh-barnea, a long period of wandering elapses, unvaried except by the account of their different resting places, until we find them again, after thirty-eight years, in the same encampment at Kadesh. Here Miriam, the sister of Moses, dies and is buried. Few,

comparatively, now remain of those who had distrusted the word of God, or rebelled against the authority of his servant; for most of "the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the Lord sware unto them [1]." Sorrowful must have been the prospect of this station to the leader and to the people, as they revisited the scene of the plague, the fire, and the earthquake, and looked upon the graves of their fathers and of their brethren. Well might Moses trust that the rebellious spirit was at length extinguished; that they who could not be influenced by the remembrances of mercy would at least be moved by the recollections of terror. Yet here again, unwarned, unawed, they murmur for want of water. Moses and Aaron are required to go and speak unto the rock before their eyes, that it may give forth its streams. Here, the patience tried by so many provocations, the meekness proved by so many rebellions, entirely

[1] Deut. ii. 14.

fails. They approach the rock in anger, and apparently in arrogant consciousness of the power intrusted to them. They assemble the congregation, and say unto them, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice." "His spirit was provoked," as the Psalmist says, "so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips [1]."

Even in his favoured servants, even in the highly honoured instruments of his purposes, and messengers of his will, so open a neglect of his commands, so evident an assumption of the Divine authority, of the power which belongeth unto God alone, could not be tolerated or passed over. They were enjoined to *speak* unto the rock: in anger they smote it twice. It was a mingling of human passions with sacred things. It was a neglect of giving to Jehovah the glory of the miracle. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to

[1] Psalm cvi. 33.

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 [1]."

As I shall again recur to this subject, when narrating the death of Moses, I shall only notice at present, how speedily that portion of the sentence was executed which related to Aaron. In less than four months, when Israel had journeyed to Mount Hor, "the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his fathers: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah." A scene is now described which it is impossible to read without the deepest feelings of emotion. By an express command, the brother and the son of the great High Priest go up with him to the mount—that mount which was to be to Aaron the bed of death—the place of sepulture—where earthly ties were to

[1] Numbers xx.

be severed for ever. He ascends in all the robes and ornaments of his holy office, so well according with the solemn act which he is there to perform—the offering of his spirit unto God. He ascends, knowing what is to take place, and, like the prophet Elijah, prepared to leave his mantle upon his successor. No doubt, no fear, no reluctance is visible, as he is about to enter upon the dark and fearful path which leadeth to the grave, to embark upon the deep waters of eternity. Though he may now be truly said to be walking in the valley of the shadow of death, yet he fears no evil; for one is with him, whose rod and whose staff comfort him. He ascends, as he had received the summons, full of years, and services, and glory. Together they proceed to the place appointed by the Lord; the place, from which, to Aaron, there could be no return. The world is left behind, with all its hopes, and fears, and joys, its employments, and its cares; and when the outermost tent of Israel is passed, he feels that he pertains no longer

to the earth. As soon as they arrive, the work of death commences. Garment after garment is stripped off, emblem after emblem of his sacred office is removed, and placed upon Eleazar his son; and with these robes the life itself departs, and ebbs away; the blood flows more slowly; the lungs breathe more painfully; the pulse beats more feebly; until, having resigned the last pontifical vestment, having yielded up the last ensign of his priestly functions, the soul casts off the mortal veil, as the body lays aside its ordinary covering; and he sinks upon the earth, committing his spirit into the hands of the God who gave it.

After the days of mourning for Aaron's death were accomplished, and possibly whilst deeply affected by the circumstances attending it, Israel vowed a vow of obedience unto the Lord, and he gave them a complete and distinguished victory over Arad, one of the powerful kings of Canaan. They were then directed to return from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, that they might compass

or go round the land of Edom; for the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, had refused them a passage through the country. The soul of the people, we are told, was discouraged by this disappointment, and because of the way. They had expected to proceed straight forward without impediment, and take possession, at once, of the promised land; and they could not endure the thought of farther delay. The time, however, of their sojourning in the wilderness was not yet accomplished, neither was the judgment of God pronounced against the transgressors at Kadesh-barnea fully completed. In this circuitous march, they encounter difficulties similar to those before experienced, and from which they had found miraculous deliverance. But all the wonders of divine mercy vanish like the morning cloud from their recollection the moment distress comes upon them again. They want food, and they forget the manna, and the quails: they thirst for water, and they remember not the rock that was smitten, and compelled to yield

its hidden treasures for their relief. Nay, they have manna, but "their soul loatheth this light bread." As if in utter and reckless despair, they join God also in their murmurings, and rebel openly against their eternal guide and King. The Lord, therefore, employs a new and peculiar species of punishment; "he sends fiery serpents among them, and much people of Israel die." This infliction, singular in its nature, manifest in its progress, and terrible in its effects, occurred in the year which terminated Israel's sojourning in the wilderness; and was the last visible means used by the Almighty for cutting off the remnant of those who had rebelled against him. The whole people prostrate and without defence against these reptiles, which shed their poison indiscriminately around, had recourse to him whom they had always found ready, even unsolicited, to interpose between them and the divine vengeance; to offer not only his prayers, but his life, and his portion in the promises, for their welfare. Their entreaty, indeed, is accompanied with the

humblest confession. Proud and boastful in health and prosperity; in the hour of danger and of suffering, their accents are sufficiently lowly. They come to Moses, and say, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." Moses readily undertakes the office of intercessor; but it does not please the Almighty to heal them with a word, nor to remove their plague with the breath of his mouth. He will establish a sign, a lasting memorial of *his* power and *their* disobedience, of his loving-kindness, and their ingratitude, of his justice, and their iniquities. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived." It is remarkable, that this is almost the only

instance of divine punishment inflicted upon the Israelites, in which the exact number of the victims is not mentioned; but, that this was fearfully great, we may conclude, even from the very vagueness of the Scriptural expression—"much people of Israel died." Since the object of the Almighty was twofold, to consume those whom he had doomed to destruction for their ancient transgressions, as well as to punish those who were engaged in the present rebellion, it is probable that the vengeance fell chiefly upon the older and more hardened offenders; who thus fulfilled the curse and left their carcases in the wilderness.

It seems impossible for any one, even slightly acquainted with the history of man's fall, of his present state, and of the means used to accomplish his redemption, to read this narrative, without immediately perceiving its analogy, in every respect, to the most prominent features in that fall, and that redemption. The resemblance is so strikingly obvious and true, that it requires scarcely any exer-

cise of the imaginative faculty to connect them together, as the symbol and the reality, as the type and the antitype. What, for instance, can represent better than the serpent's bite, the delusive art whereby that "old serpent the devil [1]," allured our first parents to transgress? Did it not infuse its poison through the blood, from the heart to the smallest vessel of the frame, from the fountain to the remotest rivulet, from the parent of all to the latest posterity? Did it not entail upon the world the evils of pestilence; upon nature, desolation and disorder; upon man, sickness and pain and death? Prostrate he lay upon the ground, agonized with fear and with despair; till he, whose mercies are from everlasting, interceded on his behalf, raised before his eyes a serpent, to destroy the serpent's power, and in the accents of pardon and of peace, bid him look upon it, and live.

Are we not all, too, naturally in the

[1] Revel. xii. 9.

same predicament with the Israelites, in a state of rebellion, liable to those eternal sufferings, as aptly and truly, as they are fearfully represented, under the emblem of a worm that dieth not? Nay, do we not, even now, in a state of impenitence, feel its gnawings, and experience its venom? Are we not, even now, sensible of the curse under which we labour? Does it not by anticipation infect the blood, and sting the heart of the unregenerate man? But whether we feel it or not, whether we are sensible or insensible of its malignant power, it is still there, exercising its deadly influence upon us, slowly but surely undermining our strength and poisoning the life-blood of the soul.

Yet what is its power at present, though with all the fearful apparatus of the internal conscience, the goadings of remorse, the agonies of despondency, to what it will be hereafter, when its deadly work shall be accomplished, and we shall be delivered over without reprieve to its dominion? What will it be when conscience can no longer be bribed by out-

ward objects, drugged by sensual indulgence, bound and gagged by the strong hand of intemperate and gigantic passion. When remorse will have no palliatives, pain no soporifics, when every apprehension and terror will be tremendously realized. In the midst of present suffering, and the dread of that which is to come, the soul, when convinced of its own sinfulness, and made acquainted with its own misery, like the Israelite, feels the sting, and knows its deadliness, and turns with the eye of faith to him who was lifted up for transgression, as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness. It looks upon Christ its sacrifice, and arises rejoicing in his salvation.

We might pursue the resemblance still further, and consider that by Moses, the giver of the law, the serpent,—the emblem of mercy, and remission, and forgiveness—was lifted up. And in this respect also the law is our guide to bring us unto Christ. By the law all mankind are guilty; by the law all are condemned;

the sting of death is sin, but the strength of sin is the law. To satisfy this law, which *we* could not satisfy, Christ was crucified, and suffered in our stead the punishment due unto us; and, therefore, he may be said to have been lifted up and crucified by the law. Again: the brazen serpent also, after this miracle, was laid up in the sanctuary, together with the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, as a lasting memorial of the cure which had been wrought, of the mercy which had been vouchsafed. And Christ, after he had been lifted up, entered into that holy place not made with hands, of which the earthly sanctuary was a figure, having obtained eternal redemption for us. But here the resemblance ends, since every emblem of necessity falls short of the thing signified. The brazen serpent was efficacious merely on this single occasion, being for ever after useless, except as a memorial. Whereas Christ exercises perpetually the office of mediation. In the full enjoyment of his

glory—the glory which he had with the Father before the world was—he still remembereth those whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren. He ever liveth to make intercession for them [1].

That the elevation of the serpent was understood as a sign or sacrament, even by the Jews themselves, is evident from a remarkable passage in the book of Wisdom, a book which contains much sound evangelical truth, and, notwithstanding some errors, will well repay a serious perusal. "When the horrible fierceness of beasts came upon thy peo-

[1] The proneness of mankind to give such honour to the means as is due only to the end, led the Jews, in after times, to suppose that they might still obtain blessings through the brazen serpent. Forgetting that it was but a temporary and inanimate sign, they offered that worship to the polished brass, which belonged only to their Creator. To prevent this new idolatry, it was judiciously destroyed by Hezekiah; who chose rather to hazard that the mercy of God should be obliterated from the memory of his ungrateful people, than that his most positive commands should be broken.

ple, and they perished with the stings of crooked serpents, thy wrath endured not for ever. But they were troubled for a small season, that they might be admonished, having a sign of salvation, to put them in remembrance of the commandment of thy law. For he that turned himself toward it was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by thee, that art the Saviour of all. For thou hast the power of life and death: thou leadest to the gates of hell and bringest up again [1]."

We are not, however, left to vague supposition and conjecture on this point. Christ, by his own declaration, has appropriated the emblem to himself; and with his own lips pronounced that he *was* signified in this memorable transaction; and he leaves us to infer, that so remarkable and extraordinary a mode of cure was prescribed with immediate reference to him. For, says he, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,

[1] Wisdom xvi. 5—13.

even so shall the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life [1]." With the express words of Christ before us, we cannot hesitate to apply the miracle and its attendant circumstances to the Saviour and to ourselves; and in this light it will appear, as I before observed, that we are similarly circumstanced with the Israelites. We are punished, as they were, for our offences; we feel, as they did, the sting of the serpent and the power of death within us. We know, if we reflect at all, that we are far gone from original righteousness, and liable to the curse, the ever-abiding curse of eternal death. But we know that the Saviour has been lifted up; that "in the likeness of sinful flesh, he condemned sin in the flesh [2];" and in the midst of fear, and much trembling, in the midst of doubt, and agony, and conscious guiltiness, we hear a still small voice proclaim, "Look up to him and live."

[1] St. John iii. 14, 15. [2] Rom. viii. 3.

It is most singular that the mode in which the Messiah, from the beginning has declared himself to his people, should correspond exactly with the view just presented to our minds; as if the lifting up of Christ was never absent from the mind of the prophets, even when recounting his glories; as if the sufferings of the Saviour, and their effects upon mankind, were never lost sight of by the Eternal Word, even whilst in the bosom of the Father; as if the afflicting scene of Israel's calamity and punishment in the wilderness ever dwelt in the memories of their descendants. Thus in Isaiah: "There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour. *Look* unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else [1]." Thus too in Zechariah: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall *look* upon me whom they have pierced [2]." The

[1] Isa. xlv. 21, 22.

[2] Zech. xii. 10.

same peculiarity of expression occurs continually in the writings of the apostles, particularly in that remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking* unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith [1]."

This, then, is the doctrine to be derived from the wonderful occurrence which we are now considering. That man is in a state of danger, nay of death—bodily death, and spiritual death. That, as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so Christ has been lifted up and crucified, to take away the power of death, to terminate the warfare between man and his great enemy, the old serpent, the spirit of evil, by the total destruction of the latter. Such, I say, is the great doctrine which

[1] Heb. xii. 1, 2.

this miracle shadowed forth; but let us also see the practical example which it affords us.

And, first, the Israelites were aware of their danger, and of its cause; they came unto Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." Nor could the remedy provided be serviceable to any except to those who were conscious of their malady. "Whosoever looketh upon it shall live." And thus it is with the salvation which has been wrought by Christ. To seek a remedy, it is necessary to be acquainted with the existence of the disease. To look to Christ, it is requisite that we should perceive our need of a Saviour;—that we should know our sins, and knowing, feel their enormity, their guilt, their danger; and thus knowing and feeling, repent;—that we should come before the throne of Divine mercy, and say with Israel, we have sinned; or, in the energetic language of the apostle,

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death[1]?" If we know not the plague of our own hearts; if we feel not the sting of our own iniquity; if we are insensible of our own utter unworthiness, it is clear that we shall not come to him for healing, from whom alone the power of healing proceeds. If we sleep whilst the venom courses through the blood; if a lethargy deep and deadly is upon the senses; if we discover neither the wound that destroys us, nor the hurt that slays us; if we slumber on still in our guilt, will not death be the necessary consequence? If the heart is hard as the adamant, impenetrable as the rock; if sin has taken full and firm possession of the soul, and paralyzed its faculties, and destroyed its powers; if that benumbing influence which is sometimes ascribed to the serpent has come over the mind, and its energies are prostrated in spiritual insensibility, how shall it be awakened? how shall it

[1] Romans vii. 24.

be aroused to a sense of its danger, and induced to make the exertion indispensable for a cure? There is no state of man more fearful than that of spiritual torpor —the deadness of the soul in trespasses and sins, in sensuality and worldly-mindedness.

Would it not have seemed strange to you, had the Israelite resolutely turned away his face from the remedy lifted up, and closed his ears to the blessed hope poured into them? had he persisted unto death in doubting or denying his danger, or sought for drugs to lull the sense of pain, rather than apply the means of cure? Yet what is the spectacle that so often meets our eyes? Is it not that of cold and deadly apathy? where the man appears to proceed from youth to age in utter indifference as to his spiritual condition, in total recklessness as to his future welfare. Childhood passes with its toys—youth glides by in pleasure—manhood steals away in care—year after year flies past upon the wings of the wind, in still increasing worldliness, as if there were no

state beyond the present, no home beside this house of clay. Time, measured out to us drop by drop [1], is polluted as it falls upon us, and age comes on, and sickness, and pain, and death, ere the mind has become enlightened, or the heart regenerated; ere a single hope has been centered in heaven, or a single wish has been wafted towards the skies. Deep, deep is the lethargy of the spirit, dark is the gloom of insensibility, which the Christian

[1] "It is very remarkable," says Jeremy Taylor, "that God who giveth plenteously to all creatures, hath scattered the firmament with stars, as a man sows corn in his fields, in a multitude bigger than the capacities of human order; he hath made so much variety of creatures, and gives us great choice of meats and drinks, although any one of both kinds would have served our needs; and so in all instances of nature; yet in the distribution of our time, God seems to be strait-handed, and gives it to us, not as nature gives us rivers, enough to drown us, but drop by drop, minute after minute, so that we never can have two minutes together, but he takes away one when he gives us another. This should teach us to value our time, since God so values it, and by his so small distribution of it, tells us it is the most precious thing we have."

minister often encounters. His arguments, his pleadings, are met with a mortal deadness; and if the mind is ever awakened, if the soul is ever roused, if the heart is ever alarmed, it is only when the hand falls, and the eye closes, in the weakness of nature's struggle; and hope alone, feeble as the expiring taper's light, is all that remains to encourage or to console him, as he stands beside the awful bed of death.

Therefore it is, that the Gospel came to sinners, to those who know themselves to be sinners; that its message is continually, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Therefore it is, that it is endowed with such a searching power, that it is furnished with keenness and sharpness, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart[1]." Therefore it is, that it strives to lay open the inmost soul, to exhibit its unworthiness, and make it taste its own

[1] Heb. iv. 12.

bitterness, and feel its own sorrows. Therefore it is, that the minister of the Gospel is compelled to cast aside all flattering and soothing words, and to disclose unveiled the corruption of man's nature; to tear away the covering from the secret "chambers of imagery," the deeply hidden recesses of guilt; that he is compelled to expatiate rather upon the dangers of sin, than upon the rewards of godliness; rather upon the terrors of the wrath to come, than upon the glories of eternity. Therefore it is, that the first office of the Comforter himself—the Spirit of truth, the Messenger of consolation—the very God of Peace—is to convince of sin. And, blessed indeed are the convictions of sin. Blessed are the pangs of godly sorrow. Blessed is the cup of remorse, bitter though it be, if it guide us to him who alone can say, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Blessed is the pain we feel. Blessed are the sounds we hear. Blessed are the trials we experience, the troubles we endure, if they only bring with them a sense of our spiritual state. Blessed is

the broken spirit, the contrite heart, for it leads us to him "who hath torn and will heal us, who hath smitten and will bind us up [1]."

But as the conviction of sin, and consequent repentance, are necessary to induce us to come to the fountain of life, so also is faith in its efficacy necessary to enable us to profit by its healing power. If man have no knowledge of his disease, he will not pray. If no remedy be provided, he need not pray. If he have no faith in that remedy, he cannot pray. Without faith, the half formed wish of the heart ascends not to the lips, but sinks into the depths of the soul, blighted by the hopelessness of despondency. The dying Israelite was conscious of his danger, and listened with anxious ear to the promise of relief, and turned with eager eye to the emblem of safety. Thus must it be with us. We must turn to Christ in the confidence and full assurance of faith. Faith indeed is truly represented as the main-spring, the

[1] Hosea vi. 1.

prime mover of the Christian's conduct, the chief material in the formation of the Christian's character. And have we not sufficient ground for faith? Moses declared unto the Jew the conditions of healing. Moses laid before the Israelite the terms of mercy. And lo! a greater than Moses is here. The Saviour himself has stooped to preach salvation; to be the way, and the truth, as well as the life; to proclaim his own promises by his own lips; and to be the minister of his own mercies, the messenger of his own covenant, the channel of his own grace. He has brought life and immortality to light. He has taken away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He has rent asunder the veil which concealed eternity from our view. He has given those blessed hopes which throw their light across the Christian's grave, and illuminate the Christian's resting-place. Shall we then doubt, oppressed though we are, by the weight of our manifold sins? Shall we be faithless, borne down as we are, by the burden of accumulated transgressions? Shall we

hesitate to look unto Jesus, when the sickness and faintness of the heart come, which spring from the convictions of sin? Surely, we cannot doubt his power to save: surely, we cannot doubt his skill to heal. The Israelite doubted not when he saw the brazen serpent lifted up; and surely, the change from the emblem to the reality caused no diminution in the efficacy of the atonement, no interruption of its healing virtue. If we approach him under the painful sense of our own suffering, under the trembling dread of our own danger, with heartfelt purposes of amendment; if with sincere and well-grounded faith we cry, "Lord, save us; we perish:" the same glorious flood of light which shone upon the darkened and despairing mind of the dying penitent, as he turned with suppliant confidence to the Saviour, who hung, lifted up from the earth, upon the cross beside him, and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom[1];" the same shall still beam upon

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 42.

our souls, uninterrupted in its passage, undiminished in its splendour; the same efficacy shall purify the soul, abolish the whole body of sin, and give us the blessed assurance that we are passed from death unto life.

But can we not attain to everlasting life without this faith? Can we not be healed in some other way than this? Is there no other name whereby we can be saved? The Scriptures tell of none. As to the Israelites, the brazen serpent alone was the saviour of life, so to all mankind, Christ alone, through faith in his name, can confer this inestimable blessing. Other ways may, indeed, be pointed out, more brilliant in appearance, more flattering to the pride of human intellect; which seem to shed more glory upon man himself. Other ways may be found, in competition with which, this may seem only as the little stream of Jordan, when compared with the mighty rivers of Damascus. Yet, it is only this despised and neglected stream that can cleanse the leper; it is only this stream,

upon whose banks the tree of life flourishes, "whose leaves are for the healing of the nations[1]." It was not, in fact, to confer honour upon man, that this remedy was devised by Almighty wisdom; but that God should receive the glory.

Bound as we are to the earth, dependent as we are, and ever must be, whilst surrounded with temporal things, upon sensible objects for our conceptions and for our support, we are not left entirely without emblems of the great redemption provided for man, of the mighty atonement offered for the sins of the whole world. In that last holy institution of Christ, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we have indeed a heavenly and enduring sign. Not merely a memorial of past mercies, as the brazen serpent in the sanctuary was to Israel, but a sure and certain pledge of continual favour, of ever present grace. In it, we do indeed commemorate the Lord's death, and the

[1] Revel. xxii. 2.

commemoration will continue even until his coming again; but it is also a service full of immediate blessings, a fountain unceasingly pouring forth living waters. It is one of those means appointed for conferring strength and support upon his faithful people; one of those channels through which the divine influences flow upon the soul. It was instituted as a means whereby we might receive these spiritual influences, and as a pledge to assure us that we shall receive them. Can we then, knowing our helplessness, conscious of our insufficiency, sensible of our danger, still neglect the means through which we may procure for ourselves help, and strength, and safety? It is his own institution, in remembrance of his own most precious death, and there, at his table, we may surely expect that he will be present; that, if we turn to him in repentance and in faith, he will look down upon us in mercy, and make all his goodness pass before us. Let us daily and hourly, in humble contrition, confess unto him that we have sinned. Let us

pray for an increase of faith which shall enable us to look more constantly, more earnestly, more confidingly, to him, who has himself purchased remission and forgiveness for us. Thus supported by his word, upheld by his power, comforted by his ordinances, and proceeding from grace to grace, from virtue to virtue, from faith to faith, may we renew our strength; and, finally, through his mediation, rise to the life eternal, immortal, in that blessed kingdom, where the serpent can no longer wound, where sin can no more defile.

DISCOURSE IX.

CHARACTER OF BALAAM.

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NUMBERS xxiii. 7—10.

And he took up his parable, and said, Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. 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!

ISRAEL had now wandered forty years in the deserts of Arabia, thereby accomplishing that period of punishment to which

they were condemned on account of their transgressions. All those who provoked God to anger by their repeated rebellions had fallen, and "left their carcases in the wilderness," according to the sentence pronounced against them by the mouth of Moses. They were, at length, permitted to approach the land promised unto their fathers, and after vanquishing Sihon, king of the Amorites, who attempted to hinder their progress, they crossed the mountain range of Abarim, and descended into the plains of Moab, to the bank of the river Jordan. Though surrounded by enemies sufficiently numerous to make their situation one of extreme peril; enemies exasperated by defeat, and vindictive in proportion to their fears; Israel yet spread their tents among them, under the guidance of Moses, under the sure protection of the Most High. Whilst thus they reposed, previous to crossing the stream, which now alone separated them from their inheritance, the singular occurrence takes place which is the subject of three chapters of this book.

Their rapid progress, and the total destruction with which they had visited the Amorites, strikes terror into the surrounding nations. The king of Moab, therefore, perceiving that human arms prevailed so little, against the singular people, who had thus suddenly "covered the face of the earth," determines to have recourse to those which are supernatural. For this purpose he sends to Balaam, a celebrated prophet of the neighbouring, and subject country of Midian. The reputation of this man was so great that the king does not hesitate to say, "I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." With respect to the circumstances which follow it is only necessary at present to observe, that, whatever the private feelings of the prophet may have been, whilst engaged in performing the duty to which he was summoned, his curses are converted into blessings by the over-ruling providence of God. He not only prophecies concerning the future prosperity and glory of the chosen people,

but even speaks, "under the influence of the spirit," of the "star which should come out of Jacob, and the sceptre which should rise out of Israel," the great and glorious Messiah, the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and of that "kingdom and dominion which should be given to the people of the saints of the Most High [1]." So clear, so sublime is this prophecy, scarcely exceeded by any uttered even by Moses himself, that it forcibly attracts our attention, and we are compelled to inquire more minutely into the particulars respecting it.

Removed as we are from the immediate experience of prophetic and miraculous powers, debarred from witnessing the visible signs and manifestations so often vouchsafed to former ages, we find some difficulty in understanding the system, as well as the principles upon which these divine influences were bestowed. We are easily led to imagine that, when

[1] Dan. vii. 17.

the Almighty conferred privileges so exalted—when he opened the eyes to behold the secret things of futurity, or gave authority to arrest and to control the usual laws of nature—there must have existed, in the persons thus highly favoured, some peculiar qualities, something, if we may be permitted to use such an expression, to justify so wonderful and conspicuous a mark of distinction. In other words, we are disposed to believe that such persons would be men of holy and blameless lives; that, before they were gifted with the extraordinary—they would possess in a high degree the ordinary graces of the Spirit. And we know that in general it was so, especially in the case of those who were commissioned to teach the way, and to proclaim the will of Jehovah, to transmit his precepts and commandments to posterity. Many and illustrious are the examples presented to our notice; and the apostle Peter distinctly tells us, that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [1]."

[1] 2 Peter i. 21.

But the gift of prophecy, and the power of working miracles, appear, by no means and at no time, to have belonged exclusively to God's peculiar people: still less, to have been limited to those among them who were his worshippers in spirit and in truth.

Prophecy may be divided into three distinct periods, the patriarchal, the legal, and the evangelical; and under each of these dispensations it admitted of several degrees. It denoted the peculiar influence which excited men to set forth, the praises of the Most High; which enabled them to preach and to explain the word of God. That it is has been so understood during the evangelical dispensation, we may learn from the distinction drawn by St. Paul, between speaking with tongues and prophesying; where he says, that spiritual gifts are indeed to be desired, but prophecy much rather; for "he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort[1]." We have also a remarkable

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 1—3.

instance of the same species of inspiration, in the eleventh chapter of this book. When the people murmured for want of meat, Moses assembled the seventy elders, whom he had selected to assist him in the government, and "set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders, and it came to pass, that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied [1]."

Before the giving of the law, it would appear that the heads of families in general, and even of those unconnected with Abraham, were frequently endued with this limited inspiration, and the Almighty bestowed it, possibly, for the purpose of preserving a continual witness of himself upon the earth. Amongst the Israelites, in after times, there was a peculiar family of prophets, and a school of prophecy, where the children of the

[1] Numbers xi. 24, 25. The whole passage is very remarkable.

prophets, and others also, were regularly trained and educated for the prophetic office; or to speak more accurately, for the office of public instruction; and though we have no certain information how the spiritual influence necessary for this work was imparted, or how far it extended, yet we know that they all possessed considerable, and many of them, singular powers, as a consequence of belonging to this school or family. From among this class of persons, as well as from the prophets of the patriarchal times, individuals were selected and gifted with extraordinary endowments, as extraordinary emergencies demanded their services. So that the privilege of looking into futurity seems rather to have been an accidental appendage to the prophetic office than to have constituted the essence of the office itself.

We may add, that those of more exalted station, under the Jewish theocracy, and particularly the high priests, enjoyed this privilege frequently, and even in some manner, officially. But neither in

this case, nor in the former, was it ever indispensably requisite that the person so enjoying it should himself be holy. Thus we read of the disobedient prophet, who was lured by the falsehood of his brother prophet to disobey the divine command, and was slain for his offence [1]. An instance still more remarkable is furnished by Caiaphas, who, merely because he was high priest at the period of our Lord's crucifixion, was enabled to "prophesy, that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad [2]." As a further confirmation of the view which I have now taken, St. Paul, in the passage above alluded to, makes the remarkable declaration, that though he should speak with the tongues of men and of angels—though he should have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge—nay, even though he should have all faith, so that he could

[1] 1 Kings xiii. [2] John xi. 51, 52.

remove mountains; yet this would avail nothing to his eternal salvation; it would not constitute him one of the elect of God. Thus we find that the possession of supernatural power was always distinct from that of spiritual grace; that the extraordinary gifts of God were never made the external symbols of inward righteousness; and that we are no more authorized to determine the degree of holiness of a prophet, from the clearness and sublimity of his prophecies, than we are to pronounce Samson righteous, on account of his wonderful strength. In fact, under both the patriarchal and the legal dispensation, as well as under that of the Gospel, it might have been observed as the disciples said unto Christ; "We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us [1]."

Of those, then, called prophets in Scripture, some were prophets by reason of their station, as heads of their tribes and families—others were prophets by right

[1] St. Mark ix. 38.

of their office as priests, or judges, or commanders—others as belonging to, or having been educated in a particular school or seminary established for the purpose—others again by birth, as being the sons of former prophets, and thus succeeding to their fathers' privileges and endowments, as it were by right of inheritance; whilst another, but the most illustrious class, was formed of persons eminent for holiness and entire self-devotion to God, and were chosen occasionally from among each of these, as well as from the inferior and less influential grades of life [1].

Balaam may with some probability be placed in the first of these classes; but his station in life, as well as his general character, are involved in great obscurity. Belonging to an idolatrous people, apparently without being himself an idolater, living amidst the thickest darkness of ignorance, yet possessing, in a very consider-

[1] Amos mentions it as a subject worthy of remark, that he was neither a prophet, nor a prophet's son; but a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. Chap. vii. 14.

able degree, the light of truth; he was, possibly, one of the few remaining depositaries of the traditions handed down from Noah, and disseminated by Abraham in his various and extensive wanderings—traditions which were gradually becoming more and more indistinct; till the flood of Divine knowledge was reduced to a scanty rivulet—till the taper was almost extinguished by the noxious vapours that surrounded it. What we can collect of his character exhibits no very extraordinary features. It shows a mind wavering between the knowledge of good and the propensity to evil—between conscience and inclination—between reason and passion. Whilst left alone to his lowliness in the tents of his fathers, untempted, untried, he may indeed have merited, by the superiority of his understanding—by the wisdom of his instructions, and by the uprightness of his life, the great reputation which he possessed. He may have been a burning and a shining light in the midst of the darkness—a green spot in the parched and sandy desert. On a sudden,

however, the dazzling vision of wealth and power comes before him; the long perspective of riches and honours is opened to his view; the king of Moab sends messengers unto him, the princes of the country; they approach, with the rewards of divination in their hand, saying, "Come, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail." Whatever his secret inclinations may have been, he still preserves the form at least of piety. "He said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me. And God came unto him and said, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed." This answer was given to the messengers in the morning, and they departed.

Balak was too intent upon his object to be so repulsed. He sent again princes more and more honourable than the first, and with promises still more splendid and alluring. Now the temptation becomes too strong for his resolution, and he says,

"I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more." He inquires of the Lord again—yet, it could not be with a desire to know his will, for he knew it already: it could not be to ask direction, for he had already received it. He tries to bend the will of God to his own base desires, to extort a sanction for his own covetousness. The permission is granted, but he is only saved from punishment by another miracle: "The dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet[1]." Henceforth, all his hopes of obtaining the rewards held out by Moab vanish. He feels that he is in the hand of One who is swift, as well as mighty, to punish. He is now commanded to go upon the Lord's errand, whither he had purposed to go merely upon his own. Still, how reluctantly soever he may have applied himself to this duty, he performs it boldly; and wonderful are the powers with which, for the time, he was invested.

[1] 2 Peter ii. 16.

His first three declarations relate to the temporal prosperity of Israel. "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey and drink the blood of the slain. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side. Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." It is in the latter part of his prophecy that the greatest power is displayed: when, looking with earnest gaze into the distant

gloom of ages, he beholds the glories of the great Messiah, and thus breaks forth in all the sublimity of prophetic rapture. "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Struck with an exalted perception of the happiness which awaits the people of God, and it may be, too, with a piercing conviction of his own unworthiness, he exclaims, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! After a lengthened account of the calamities which should befal the nations by means of Israel, "he rose up, and went, and returned to his place."

It may, perhaps, at first sight appear, as if we could have little in common with this patriarchal prophet—as if time, and place, and station, and circumstances, drew a broad line of distinction between his feelings, and actions, and principles, and those which can ever arise in our own breasts, or ever mark our own conduct. Thus it is that, too frequently, the most searching lessons of heavenly wisdom,

the most striking examples of human experience, given to us in Holy Writ, are lost to the heart, and fall fruitlessly upon the ear. But the nature of humanity is similar in every clime, and at every period; and the thinking mind will scarcely need the assurance of Scripture, that "all these things were written for our admonition."

The character of Balaam is, in reality, a very common one. It represents to us a man possessing considerable endowments, elevated among his brethren by superior powers and knowledge; yet sinking under the influence of temptation, and endeavouring to cover his offences with the mantle of propriety: darkening the heavenly light by his own corruptions: labouring to deceive his own soul: struggling to reconcile what, in their very essence, are irreconcilable, the commands of God with the reasonings of human infirmity; the suggestions of the Spirit with the inclinations of human impurity. He has sought the Lord, and the Lord has answered: he has appealed to conscience

and conscience has given its judgment: he has taken counsel of wisdom, and wisdom has declared the path of duty: yet, though the Lord, to whom he addressed himself, had said, "Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed;" he desires to disobey. Though he knows that to go would be to sin; though he is conscious that He from whom his power is derived stands in the way against him, his eye still turns to the rewards of divination, his heart still yearns after the honours promised by the son of Zippor. He finds himself unable to strive, yet he presumes to plead, "Now, therefore, stay with me this night also, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more."

What! could he seek the Lord again with the contamination of unholiness fresh upon him? could he come before the mercy-seat of God with the wages of unrighteousness in his hands, with the rewards of divination still in his possession, polluted with the purchase-money of his conscience? But the motive is kept

far out of sight, the exciting power is buried deep in the secret chambers of a soul. This is only another addition to the already innumerable instances of self-imposition, of that deceitfulness of the heart which surpasseth knowledge or belief. There were reasonings no doubt which satisfied the prophet that he was acting right, or, at least, not very wrong; for the power of interest had deadened the moral feelings, weakened the religious principles; had perverted the conscience, and thus destroyed its directing power. And this perverting of the conscience is the first step to iniquity, the first grand point gained by the chief tempter, the enemy of our souls. How often, too, is it accompanied by a wresting of the word of God, and an obscuring of the otherwise plain directions of the Scriptures, by a troubling of the clear waters of eternal truth! Indeed, the latter is almost a necessary consequence of the former. We approach the word of God deceitfully, we shut our eyes against the whole truth, and are unwilling to receive more than a part; we dare not

view in all its length and breadth the extent of the Divine commands, nor behold in all its excellence their purity—we seek only to confirm our own opinion, we inquire only to justify our own ways, to sanction our own inclinations.

And you will remark, as in the example before us, when the word or the throne of God is approached thus deceitfully, when the conscience is wilfully made to bow down before the power of the inclinations, that man is often left to himself and to the devices which he has chosen; that, as the natural conscience becomes more perverted, as the heart becomes more impure, the workings and strivings of the spirit become less frequent and less effective, and it is not till some divinely sent messenger of vengeance stand in the way of the sinner, that he is made acquainted with the enormity of his wickedness and with the extent of his aberrations from the way of holiness. We are taught by Scripture to expect, that God, when wearied with our perverse supplications, will sometimes grant us our

hearts' desire, though it be to our own ruin, and concede to us the request of our lips, though it be to our own destruction.

Balaam was a man of extraordinary endowments, a prophet among his people. And is it a strange thing to see the noblest powers of the understanding, the most elevated qualities of the natural man sacrificed to the rewards of divination—to the allurements of ambition? Is it strange to see the talents and energies which, if directed aright, would have made the possessor a burning and a shining light in the world; which, if guided and strengthened and supported by the Spirit, would have raised him to an enviable rank among the children of God, and given him a place amid the brightness of the firmament, devoted to the purchase of earthly honour and of temporal distinction?—Is it a strange thing that the crown of everlasting righteousness should be exchanged for a crown of infamy?—Is it a thing unheard of, that the mind and the heart, capable of better things, should be prostituted for interest or corrupted for gain?—that men should

descend and claim fellowship with the base and the worthless, because such fellowship may be accompanied by temporary advantage?—that the commands of God and the opinion of the world should alike be disregarded and contemned, so that Moab lay its riches at their feet? "A heart they have," says St. Peter, "exercised with covetous practices; which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Again; are there none under the dominion of pleasure, when all the powers, all the passions, all the qualities of body, and soul, and spirit, are bent to procure self-gratification, and the stream of holy affection is turned from its course, and made to flow in the foul and polluted channels of sensual indulgence? The spectacle with which the eyes of men are so often afflicted—of talents exerted for the worst and basest purposes, riches squandered in the haunts of evil, the living fire of genius quenched in the stench of corruption—is indeed enough to moderate

our self-esteem. We feel ourselves abased in the abasement of our species, degraded in the degradation of our kind; and exclaim, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him!"

But we shall not be deriving, perhaps, the most useful lesson from the narrative before us, unless we also observe how the desire of heavenly things long survives the pursuit of them, and the wish to enjoy the glories and rewards of immortality outlives all efforts for their attainment; how, even when the way of righteousness has been abandoned, and its path forsaken, the aspiration of the heart still continues to be, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." I speak, of course, of those who have been educated in the principles of religion, who have been brought up in the fear of God, in the knowledge of his way, and in respect to his commands; of those who have been taught to view the Almighty as their Father, and to consider Christ as their Saviour and their Judge; of those who have been accustomed from their

youth up to deem the inheritance of the just made perfect—the prize of their high calling, as the main object of their existence; who have once known the truth as it is in Jesus. Temptation has come, and prevailed. Trial has come, and they have yielded. Danger has come, and they have fallen. Slow, perhaps, was the conquest which has been achieved. Difficult was the victory which has been won against the better powers of the soul; and in no instance, probably, was the triumph ever obtained, except by that deceitfulness of sin, which, while it withdraws the soul from God, the feet from the way of duty and of life, still leaves the hope, the wish, the desire to return—the withered bloom which tells the promise that once was there.

We see resolution sinking under trial, yielding to temptation; the tree which appeared able to sustain the whirlwind, bending to the breeze; the rock which boasted to arrest the torrent, undermined and overthrown by the mere dropping of the waters; the soul which aspired even

unto heaven, drooping its wing, till it but skims along the earth. We see man setting out upon his journey, firm in resolution, ardent in hope, confident in faith. Difficulties are courted, as if for the pleasure of the conquest; dangers are sought, as if for the glory of the victory; but pleasure spreads her snares, ambition her toils, and not in vain. He strays further and further from the way of righteousness, till religion dwindles into the cold and ineffective wish, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Still hope survives when faith has fled, and charity has faded away. And this hope, this barren wish to inherit eternal life, is often mistaken for the righteousness which alone can give a title to that inheritance; the belief in immortality is substituted for the living faith which is necessary to enable us to attain unto it; the feeble desire to do good, for the active love which alone can make us meet for it.

Finally, then, this history affords to the young a lesson of peculiar interest. It

warns them not to mistake knowledge for holiness, the powers of the intellect for those of the spirit, the efforts of the understanding for those of the heart. They may have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; they may have all faith, so that they can remove mountains; but, if they have not charity, they are nothing more than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It tells them of the danger of trifling with the purity and integrity of their conscience; of the peril of indulging in delusive exculpations of their own conduct; of the importance of perfect simplicity in all their dealing, perfect sincerity in all their self-examinations, perfect unreserve in all their approaches to the throne of grace. Let them avoid, as they would a pestilence, all attempts at reconciling their duty with their inclination. If once they begin to argue and to plead—if once they admit the sophisms of worldly affection or of sensual passion to mingle in their searchings after the will of God—they let in a flood which, in all human probability,

will overthrow the most determined resolves, sweep away the soundest principles, and leave the soul but as a wreck upon the waters, the sport of every wave, the victim of every blast. Oh! let us continually and unceasingly pray to be guarded against this deceitful handling of our consciences and of the word of God. Let us mingle with our petitions, even when purest and holiest, a request that God will do with us that which seemeth best unto his wisdom, and give us, not what we ask, but what will be most profitable for us to receive. Let us lay open daily and hourly our hearts before Him, from whom, indeed, nothing is concealed; though he willeth that we should be made acquainted with ourselves. And there is one who will be present with us; who will assist us in this searching of our spirits; one who will give power to his own word and efficacy to his own ordinances; who will barb the arrows of conviction, which, while they pierce, yet heal; who—if we seek him in spirit and in truth—if we come to him in simplicity

and godly sincerity, casting aside the duplicity of worldly-mindedness—will show us what the Lord will have us to do.

Glorious are the promises to those who cleave steadfastly unto the Lord with all their heart, and soul, and strength; who, having made a covenant with him by baptism, walk uprightly by faith; who, in accordance with that baptismal vow, deny themselves, and strive continually to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts; who seek diligently and perseveringly an everlasting crown, even though it should be pursued through temptation and danger, through pain and sorrow, through difficulty and much tribulation. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! Though they dwell alone; though they be not numbered among the nations;" though they be separated from the world, and even rejected of men; yet the church of Christ is not left to the solitude of the wilderness: "The Lord their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them." Though temptation assail them: though

trials, even fiery trials, await them; "surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." Though the heathen rage, and the people of the earth imagine vain things; though the scoffer deride, and the infidel blaspheme; yet, "blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and Israel shall do valiantly." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

DISCOURSE X.

DEATH OF MOSES.

DISCOURSE X.

DEATH OF MOSES.

DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 48, 49, 50.

And the Lord spake unto Moses that self-same day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people.

THE book of Deuteronomy, as its name imports, contains a repetition of the laws given to Israel by Jehovah. It comprises a summary of the various communications made at different times unto Moses, and also a recapitulation of the most remarkable events which befel the Jewish nation from the period of their departure out of Egypt. It sets before their eyes all the mercies and deliverances vouchsafed to them, and

all the punishments inflicted upon them for their repeated transgressions. Above all, it labours to impress upon their minds that most difficult of lessons to a successful people, as the Jews must now be esteemed—humility : it teaches them that their victorious progress had not been effected by their own strength, but by the might of the Lord of Hosts; that the extraordinary favours shown to them were not in consequence of their own righteousness, for they had been most rebellious ; but because of the wickedness of the inhabitants of the land, and in order to accomplish the vast designs of Almighty wisdom. This book may therefore be considered as an abstract or compendium of the three preceding books of the Pentateuch ; interspersed however with the most exalted sentiments of piety, the best and purest precepts for the conduct of life, the most sublime devotional addresses to the Supreme Being, the most earnest and affectionate exhortations " to observe and to do all the commandments and statutes of the Lord," concluding with a

glowing description of the privileges and happiness of the righteous, and with fearful denunciations of the miseries which will be the portion of the wicked.

Moses was at this time a hundred and twenty years old, and though he felt not the burden of bodily infirmity, though "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated;" yet he knew that the hour of his departure drew nigh. Whether, therefore, we consider the peculiar circumstances under which these admonitions were given to the multitudes assembled in the plains of Moab, or the age and character of the prophet himself, we may easily imagine with what authority his words would fall upon the ears and hearts of his auditors. The whole book, indeed, may justly be viewed as the parting address of a dying parent to his children—the last bequest to those whom he had loved and cherished during life. As a father Moses stood among his people; as children they gathered round him, eager to catch the last accents of wisdom, the last sounds of encouragement or of warning.

In the moment of separation, it is reasonable to conclude that all their jealousies were forgotten, all their murmurings laid aside, and that they beheld in him only the favoured servant of God, their intrepid deliverer, their faithful guide, their powerful intercessor—one who had borne with unwearied patience all their rebellions and ingratitude; who had constantly sacrificed himself for their welfare, and who, to use his own affecting language, had "carried them in his bosom, as a father beareth his child [1]." The expressions of wisdom, thus solemnly and impressively uttered, appear to have produced, at least for a considerable time, the desired effect; for it is worthy of remark that, as often happens with the counsels of great men, more attention was paid to this address, after his death, than to all his advice and exhortations, while living.

Replete with interest and instruction as this book is throughout, in no part is it

[1] Numbers xi. 12.

more eminently so, than in the narrative which Moses gives of the sentence passed upon himself, and of his conduct and feelings under it. As I have before noticed the circumstances of this offence at the waters of Meribah, I shall not here repeat them. Moses had endured and survived the period of wandering inflicted upon the whole nation, and that period was drawing to its close. The promised land lay almost at his feet, the prize appeared within his grasp. He might now deem himself secure of the glory arising from being the conducter of the chosen people to the place hallowed in their imaginations, and feel certain, at least, of dying within its sacred limits. This prize, however, is wrested from him by his own transgression, and his glory is given unto another. Fervently did he pray that his sin might be pardoned, and its penalty withdrawn. "I besought the Lord," says he, "at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand : for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that

can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter[1]." The only boon he could obtain was that promise by which the sentence had at first been mitigated. "Thou shalt behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession. Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

Thus we perceive that he who was so powerful with God as repeatedly to obtain mercies and blessings for his people, could not even in a single instance prevail for himself. How are we to account for this difference? How are we to explain this variation in the efficacy of prayer? It can only be accounted for by the cir-

[1] Deut. iii. 23—27.

cumstance that, in the one instance it was the prayer of intercession, and in the other it was a personal request. So grateful to the Almighty is intercession, so perfectly consonant is it with the general system of his government, so entirely conformable to the spirit of the greatest and most glorious of his dispensations, that it would appear as if there were nothing which man might not obtain, when in humble but fervent faith, he comes boldly to the throne of grace for others. And should not this teach and induce us to pray earnestly and unceasingly for those in whom we are interested, for our friends and relatives, for our neighbours and our country, for our Church, and for our King: nay, even for our enemies? The prayer of faith seldom ascends in intercession, without again descending in blessing. The danger we cannot shield from our own persons we may ward off from those dear to us. The favour we cannot succeed in acquiring for ourselves we may procure for those around us.

How grievous must the sentence, thus pronounced and confirmed, have been to Moses! Cut off, at once, and by his own presumption, from participating in the inheritance promised unto Abraham, from that portion to which he had hitherto looked forward as the temporal recompense of all his toils, the earthly crown of all his labours—his glories blighted at the very moment of expansion, his joys withered at the very instant of fruition, his crown faded before it was fixed upon his brow, his prize snatched from him before its value was ascertained—surely we may think, that the punishment was greater than the crime, the penalty more than the transgression! Surely we may imagine, that forty years of faithful service might well outweigh one indulgence of human frailty! That a long life of laborious self-denial might cover a single ebullition of human passion! And such reasoning would be just and right between man and man—where service could be reckoned as an obligation, and obedience considered as a debt; and both

be pleaded as titles to reward and repayment. But we cannot thus reckon with Jehovah; we cannot write God in our books, nor debit him with the offerings we bring[1]. All that we can present is justly his due; every talent we possess, every faculty of mind and body, belongs to him without exception: the whole life of man is his, without a single drawback; nor can one moment be abstracted, without fraud, one service be withheld without injustice. If we were thus to reason, as in truth we ought, we should find little cause to accuse him of severity, even in the most rigorous inflictions of his justice; we should be thankful that the mercies remaining are more than we have deserved, rather than complain that our sufferings are disproportioned to our offences.

[1] "The little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it, we challenge nothing for it, we dare not call God to reckoning, as if we had him in our debt-books: our continual suit to him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences."—*Hooker.*

In addition to this, we cannot fail to observe, that, considering the peculiar state and disposition of the Israelites, their rebellions, and the little effect which repeated punishments produced upon them, it was imperatively necessary to show, that God is no respecter of persons; that he is a jealous God, who will not give his glory to another; and to afford to Israel a memorable example, that he requires from *all* men constant and unfailing faith, deep and perfect humility, implicit and undeviating obedience. At the same time, in our estimate of the severity of the sentence passed upon Moses, we are to remember that it was merely one of temporal privation. His sin, though great, was not unto death: it was not such as to blot him finally out of the book of God's remembrance. Restored by unfeigned repentance, he still continues the favoured servant of God, the honoured minister of his will. And happy indeed is man, when he is conscious that, by temporal punishment for temporal transgression, he is

made the humble instrument of showing forth the glory, the justice, the mercy, the perfection of God; though his "chastening seemeth not for the present to be joyous, but grievous [1]." Happy is he when he can perceive that his sufferings are truly visitations of mercy—the scourgings of his Father; for then, even in the very bitterness of the infliction, he feels that *this* Father has not utterly abandoned him; he knows that "the judgments of the Lord are right, and that in very faithfulness he hath caused him to be troubled [2];" "that his loving correction shall eventually make him great," and "that it shall hereafter yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby."

In concluding our observations upon the wonderful events in the life of so great and holy a man, it might possibly be expected that I should enter into a review of his writings, as a historian, and of his institutions as a legislator. But

[1] Heb. xii. 11. [2] Psalm cxix. 75.

to do this would of itself require a volume. His labours, also, were carried on under the immediate influence of inspiration, from which, as they can never for a moment be separated in our minds and judgments, so they cannot be estimated by any ordinary rules of criticism. We know, however, that the Holy Spirit, though it guided the understanding aright; though it supplied information, otherwise unattainable, both respecting the past and the future; though it opened the fountains of hidden knowledge and unlocked the treasure-house of celestial wisdom, yet left the sacred writers to the exercise of their own peculiar talents and powers, as regards the *mode* of their narratives. This accounts sufficiently for all the varieties of style and manner in the books of the Old and the New Testament. The composition of Ezra differs from that of Nehemiah; the writing of Daniel from that of Ezekiel; and the prophetic rapture of Isaiah is as distinct from that of Jeremiah, as the fiery energy of St. Peter, from the placid simplicity of St. John.

We may, therefore, notice, what cannot fail to occur to every reader of the Pentateuch, the lofty sublimity which characterizes every part of the Mosaic history; the splendid imagery of his hymns; the unexampled force of his exhortations; the pathetic earnestness of his appeals; the extraordinary power of his denunciations. And if the effect of these is so great upon us, strangers as we are to the language, habits, and feelings of the singular people to whom they were addressed, what must it have been upon the Jew himself, to whose heart each allusion would at once strike home, and by whom each expression would be felt in all its spirit-stirring energy.

It will be perceived that I am now viewing these writings merely as compositions, but even on this inferior ground alone, it is impossible to deny to the Jewish historian the praise of the most exalted intellect ever possessed by man; yet, considering them, (and we are bound so to consider them,) as the work of a mind inspired and directed by God him-

self, what a treasure of wisdom and knowledge, moral and intellectual, do they supply! What important instruction do they contain! What lessons of piety the most pure and heavenly! What examples both of good and evil! What glorious hopes, what awful warnings, what encouraging consolations do they hold out to us! Much indeed of what he instituted is now done away in Christ; many of his commands are now abrogated; many of his exhortations are now unnecessary; still they are of inestimable value, as showing us the types and shadows of those better things which we enjoy under the Gospel dispensation; they are indeed blessed in leading us to a more perfect knowledge, and comprehension of the character, actions, and attributes of the Saviour.

The history still remains, giving us, not only an account of the creation of man, but of his fall; and thus supplying the very key-stone of that mighty arch which spans the broad expanse of time, and embraces the mighty flood of the divine dis-

pensations. That history still remains, confirmed by daily and hourly experience, verified, as far as it is understood, by every fresh advance of human science, and illustrated by every successive discovery of human observation. The moral law too remains, the eternal code of righteousness, the memorial of the justice, the purity, the perfections of Jehovah. And though in the delivery of this law, Moses was merely the organ, the passive instrument in the hands of the Most High; yet even his appointment to such an office, implying, of necessity, his peculiar selection from amongst the multitudes of Israel, for high and wonderful intercourse with the Divine Being, is of itself more than sufficient to stamp his character with an impress which no lapse of time can either obliterate or destroy.

As it is impossible in our present limits to enter fully into a review of the writings of the great historian, so neither can we into that of his character. One singular feature, however, there is in that character—one for which he is prin-

cipally distinguished and celebrated in Scripture, and which we cannot pass over in silence, namely, his meekness. "Now Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth[1]." It is unimportant to consider whether this was inserted by the individual who arranged the books of the Old Testament, or whether (as is most probable), like St. Paul[2] in after ages, he felt constrained by the malignity of wicked men to commend himself, and in the spirit of humble confidence in his own rectitude, to vindicate his conduct from the aspersions cast upon it. Such a character is manifestly borne out to the fullest extent by the facts which we have already stated. No man ever had such difficulties to encounter, and none ever triumphed more victoriously over them. No man ever had such trials to endure, and none ever came forth from the furnace more pure and spotless. He bore with patience the murmurings of his people, their dis-

[1] Numbers xii. 3. [2] 2 Cor. xi. 10. 23.

contents, rebellions, and reproaches; and, according to the testimony of Him who cannot err, he was found faithful in all his house. He saw his brother, the friend of his bosom, banded together with his enemies, against him; yet still he loaded that brother with kindnesses, and treated those enemies with forbearance. Ever ready to intercede on behalf of his people; ever prompt to avert the divine wrath even by the sacrifice of himself, he reminds us strongly—as strongly as mere man can do—of Him "who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously [1]."

We are now drawing to the conclusion of this most eventful and instructive history; and, if I have dwelt longer on the well known circumstances connected with it; if the detail of the incidents which occurred to Moses and to Israel has been more extended than I myself proposed, it

[1] 1 Peter ii. 23.

has been done to answer more effectually the object which I had in view from the commencement of this series, namely, to present in one picture the whole history of this memorable period, and exhibit in a clear and continued narrative, the facts scattered through the last four books of the Pentateuch; to give such explanations as they seemed to demand, and show what inferences may and ought to be drawn from them; to impress upon the minds of the younger portion of my hearers, a full and comprehensive view of the dealings of Almighty God with his chosen people, and display to their understandings the wondrous workings of his providence.

It only remains now, that we accompany the prophet to the last awful stage of his existence. In about six months after the death of Aaron, the Israelites, amidst various perils and conflicts, crossed the mountain range of Abarim, in which the hills of Nebo and Pisgah are conspicuous, and descended into the plains of Moab, to the banks of the river Jordan. They

were now in that part of the country subsequently apportioned to the tribes of Gad and Reuben, and were only separated by the waters of the river from that which was strictly and properly the land of Canaan. Wistfully must the aged prophet have looked upon those waters, and anxiously no doubt did he desire to go over and possess what was beyond them. A command—the command of God, was however upon him, and though in sorrow and anguish, yet in patience and resignation, he submitted to the dispensation. When he had consecrated Joshua as his successor, and concluded his exhortations to the people, having thus performed the last services required of him, we read that "the Lord spake unto Moses that self-same day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy

people; as Aaron thy brother died in Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel."

How singular, how awful is this command! "Go up and die." What? in the fulness of health and unbroken even by the weight of years; with the eye not yet dimmed, and the natural force unabated? It is even so. Such is the command of God, who giveth and who withdraweth human life; "Go up unto Mount Abarim and die there." It is the divine will; and no voice of murmuring is heard—no word of complaining is uttered. He leaves his people, "goes up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho." There the Lord showed him all the land even "unto the utmost sea. And said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it

unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." So little were his people aware of their loss, that God himself expressly announced to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead!" His character is impressively summed up by the sacred writer in these words: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."

Thus terminated the earthly course of the prophet. No mortal eye witnessed his dissolution: no mortal voice poured into his ear the consolations of hope, or

strengthened his faith in the last hour of trial. But Moses needed not the consolations of man, nor the strength which human arguments and encouragements can supply. His hope was already firm, his faith already vigorous, and on the wings of that hope, sustained by that faith, he could boldly venture into the unknown regions of eternity. His state, humanly speaking, was more destitute than that of Aaron; for neither friend, nor brother, nor child was near, to render the last sad but grateful offices to the deserted body; to compose the limbs in the decency of slumber. But yet though "deserted he was not forsaken." One was with him, who cleaveth closer than a friend or a brother [1]. He from whom all our help cometh, was nigh. He who is "the strong rock and house of defence [2]," to them that fear him was at hand. Supported by the everlasting arms, he departed from the toilsome scene of life. And into whose hands could he "commit

[1] Prov. xviii. 24. [2] Psalm xxxi. 2.

his spirit" so well as into those of "the God who gave it [1]?" Into whose keeping could he intrust his mortal frame, so well as into his, by whose power—by the word of whose mouth, that which was now "sown in corruption" should hereafter "be raised in glory [2]."

So peculiarly expressive are the words of the Scripture narrative, that it is impossible to read them, without being struck with the calm and tranquil sublimity which they display. The most indifferent ceremony could not be enjoined in language more free from mortal passion or anxiety—the most tremendous event could not be declared in terms of stronger and more powerful energy. "Get thee up into this mountain and die." Did Moses think, at this awful moment, that his intellectual faculties, unimpaired by the weight of an hundred and twenty years, were about to be destroyed for ever?—that the living fire within him, which burned so brightly to

[1] 1 Eccles. xii. 7. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.

the last, unclouded, undimmed by age and toil, was about to be extinguished in utter and irremediable darkness? Did the Jewish lawgiver imagine that all his labours, and anxieties, and services were now to be forgotten, or buried in the dust; and that no recompense of reward—no crown of glory awaited him? There needs but this one passage to sweep away all the cobwebs of argument, and to convince us that *he* at least fully comprehended the nature of the change; that though disappointed in the dearest earthly hopes, he ascended to the mount to meet his God with a hope full of immortality.

Such was the death of Moses the servant of God, and who among us will not exclaim, "Let *me* die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?" Like him, however, we have our appointed time to wait—like him, we have our race to run; and like him also we must be found faithful in all our house; and if our lives have been spent as his, if we have been fervent in faith, patient in suffering, firm in trial, active in duty, we too shall

share his hope, his crown of rejoicing. A merciful period of final preparation is given unto most men. The command "Go up and die" generally precedes by a short space the time of actual dissolution. And blessed indeed are sickness, and pain, and infirmity, which give us the time to complete that preparation. But, when the voice shall be heard by us, will it be a voice of fear and trembling, of terror and consternation? or, shall we be enabled to hear it with calm resignation, with the triumphant confidence of Christian faith? —Will it be a voice which summons us to begin or to perfect our preparation? We are rarely permitted to attain old age, with the eye undimmed and the natural force unabated. What then is the dimming of the eye but the summons of the great Disposer of human life?—What is sickness, or infirmity, or the failing sense, or the tottering limb, or the drooping body, but a command in well known language, "Go up and die?" Yet, often no warning is given, no voice whispers to the ear that death is nigh, that the grave is open.

Often the blow is struck, the spirit is expelled from its frail abode, without a moment to reflect whither it is going. And does not every proof of the precarious tenure upon which mortal life is held speak to us in similar language, "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh[1]?" But whether that period of preparation be granted or not; whether our Lord cometh suddenly, or whether he sendeth forward the heralds of his approach; if we are found "stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity," we may exclaim with Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." If we can say with the holy apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith;" we may also add with him, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me." If we have been faithful ser-

[1] St. Matthew xxiv. 44.

vants, we may be well assured that He, who by his Spirit hath guided us through the wilderness, supported us in its dangers, sustained us in its necessities, and kept our feet in the way that we went, will not forsake us in the time of sorrow, nor fail us in the hour of trial. He will be with us when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and into his hands we shall commit our spirits, in sure and certain hope that he will restore again that which is intrusted to his care. Short is the distance which separates mortality from immortality — the plains of Moab from the inheritance of Israel. Short is the time in which the soul is transported from its earthly tenement to its everlasting abode; and blessed is that voice to the faithful servant which tells him that his journey is ended — his warfare accomplished — which bids him "Go up and die."

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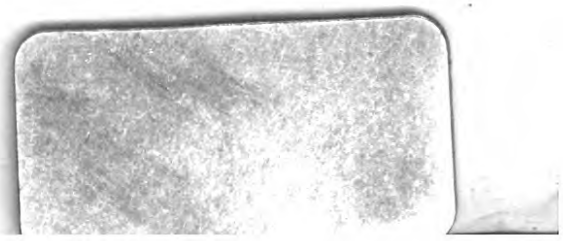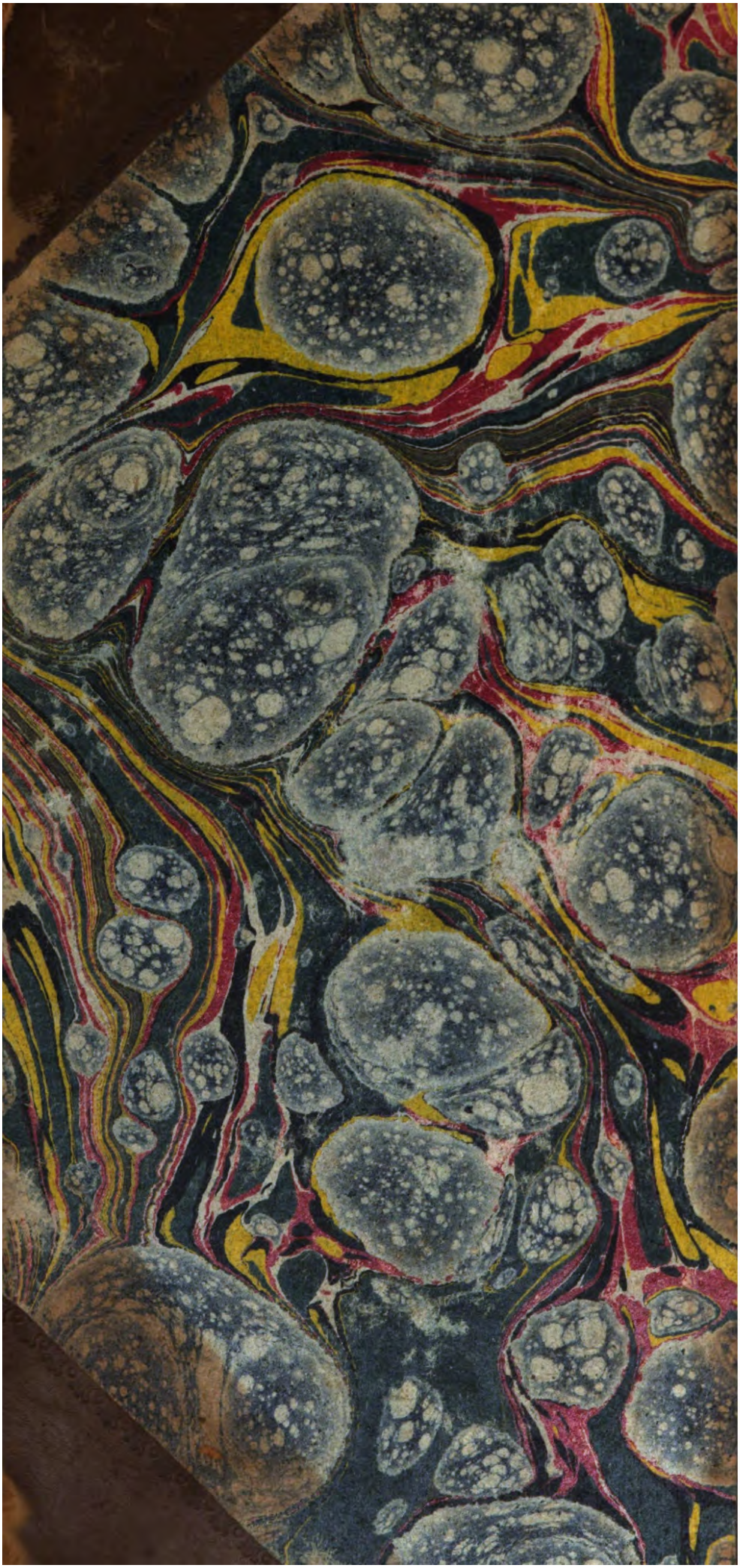
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