LECTURES
ON
FULFILLED PROPHECY,
AS VERIFIED
IN THE DESTRUCTION OF ANCIENT NATIONS,
THE VICISSITUDES OF THE JEWS,
THE MESSIAH,
AND THE GENIUS AND TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE
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"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

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PREFACE.

Prophecy is a theme of the deepest interest. The topics which it unfolds are magnificent and varied, the language in which it is written is sublime and beautiful, and its fulfilment is an attestation of the Divine authenticity of the sacred writings, which is pleasing and convincing. Here the philosopher and the statesman may behold the most impressive proofs of the moral government of God—the instability of human greatness—the weakness of human power—the benign influence of religion, and the baneful tendency of error and sin. The scholar, the poet, and the man of taste may luxuriate amid the finest specimens of oriental imagery, clothed in the richest dress, and calculated to elevate the soul. The youthful inquirer after truth will find himself gratified and profited in the excursive career through which the Hebrew prophets lead the way, by perceiving the immovable basis on which his pious fathers built their dearest hopes. The contemplative Christian may ascend the mountain heights once trodden by "the beautiful feet of those who published good tidings," and may trace "the old paths," in which so many ancient believers found rest and peace, who saw the days of the Messiah afar off. And the sceptic, if but open to conviction, if disposed to examine candidly the claims of revelation, and yield to the force of inductive evidence, can hardly fail to feel his doubts dissolve like the hoar-frost of the morning beneath the beams of the sun.

To this valuable department of the inspired volume we are much indebted as an important auxiliary to the testimony of miracles, which becomes increasingly obvious and cogent by the progress of time, and the
researches of modern travellers who have visited the Holy Land, and the circumjacent countries. Of their published statements, the author has gladly availed himself, aware that when the light of history is shed on the mirror of prophecy, the truth and beauty of the inspired volume instantly appear.

But, notwithstanding the inestimable value of fulfilled prophecy, as a source of instruction and a theme of evidence, it is to be regretted, that this interesting section of the sacred Scriptures is not more frequently and fully investigated. The prophetic writings are usually admired for the grandeur of their style, the balmly influence of their promises, and their cheering predictions respecting the coming and kingdom of Christ, the calling of the Gentiles, the conversion of the Jews, and the glory of the latter day. But in general, how superficial is the investigation of this part of the great field of revelation! The surface is traversed, but not penetrated. The flowers are gathered, but the mines are unexplored. Thus page after page, like tracts of waste land, are thrown into disuse, under the erroneous supposition that the prophetic denunciations there recorded against the ungodly nations of antiquity are startling menaces, with which we have nothing to do, forgetting that their accomplishment furnishes impressive lessons, and supplies irrefragable proofs of the veracity of the Holy Scriptures. How frequently did the Lord Jesus and his apostles refer to those ancient writings, as the field which contains hidden treasure! That field must be examined. A few grains of gold may be collected at the mountain rill; but to be enriched, we must enter the mine. Those writers are therefore entitled to the gratitude of the Christian church who have made the fulfilment of prophecy the theme of their investigations, and have presented the fruit of their researches to the world. They have made neglected sections of revelation prominent, and have strengthened its bulwarks, which infidelity will attempt in vain to assail.
But whilst the elaborate dissertations of such authorities as Bishop Newton, and the still more instructive discussions and collations of Dr. Keith, who has made the researches of modern travellers tributary to the truth, are invaluable, there are multitudes of persons in our congregations who have not had the advantage of reading those interesting works, but to whom information should be communicated on these momentous topics. The author has therefore long wished to introduce a series of subjects of this description into the pulpit, so calculated to inform, expand, and fortify the mind, and to diversify the ordinary themes of ministerial instruction. The only objection apprehended was the difficulty of making them sufficiently evangelical, to prevent the supposition of their being merely historical discourses, without subserving the higher object of preaching the Gospel. He resolved, after mature consideration, to try the experiment, by adopting them as the basis of evidence confirmatory of the Divine authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, and also of doctrinal, practical, cautionary, and consolatory induction, showing as much as possible their bearing on the mediatorial performances and kingdom of Christ.

He is grateful to acknowledge that the attempt has succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations. Not only was the attendance unusually large when the Lectures were delivered, but wishes were repeatedly expressed that they should appear in a more durable form. That request, though discouraged by the author, was at length presented by a committee of gentlemen as a written resolution, and has since been enforced by upwards of two hundred subscribers; an example worthy the imitation of other congregations, when urging their esteemed ministers to incur the labour and expense of publishing. With such solicitations, thus kindly expressed, the author has had no alternative but to comply.

It will be seen that he has studied economy in the structure of the volume, which might have been ex-
tended to much wider dimensions. Several extracts are also introduced which were omitted when the Lectures were delivered, as not being in exact accordance with the sanctity of the pulpit, but which are admissible into these pages on account of the information they communicate.

The author is free to confess, that in the course of his ministry, including a period of upwards of thirty years, during which the word of God has been the chief companion in his study, he has never beheld so much beauty, truth, and force, in the prophetic writings, as these investigations have presented. And should the perusal of the Lectures afford the reader as much edification as they appear to have yielded to those who heard them, the end for which they are committed to the press will be fully accomplished, and all the glory shall be given to Him "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, to whom gave all the prophets witness."
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LECTURES,
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LECTURE I.

CHARACTER AND INSPIRATION OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS.

2 Peter i. 21. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Travellers, when intending to visit distant—desert lands, usually require the credentials of their guides. They wisely wish to ascertain the character and qualifications of the party in whom they are to confide for information and safety. This is our case. We are commencing a journey of the deepest interest. We are about to explore countries which are prominent on the pages of biblical history, as having formerly presented scenes of luxuriant vice and of prophetic denunciation, over which the angel of death spread the broad shade of his wings, and brandished his flaming sword; and on which the Lord most high poured the vials of his indignation. We go thither to witness the fulfilment of those startling predictions which were uttered and penned when the guilty nations doomed to destruction were in the very zenith of their glory, and set the Almighty at defiance. We are to contemplate their present desolation, that with their original history in one hand and our Bible in the other we may ascertain the truth of the inspired writings.
In this wide range of profitable investigation, the Holy Land is to be our central point of attraction and attention. Of all the diversified spots upon the earth that country must be most dear to the Christian, as the land of miracles and mercies—the birthplace and the cradle of our religion—and which is so intimately associated with our faith and hope—with our devotional feelings and meditations—with the illustration of the word of God and the records of the Christian church. There the Lord of glory became incarnate, "wrought out a justifying righteousness for all them that believe," and accomplished our redemption by his sufferings and death. There the Holy Spirit descended from on high. The gospel was instituted. Angels ministered. "The wells of salvation" were opened. And "the water of life flowed," for which "the wilderness and the solitary place were glad, and deserts rejoiced and blossomed as the rose."

But whilst Canaan is to be our nucleus, in which we are to witness the tremendous judgments which befell the Jews, and to contemplate the person and kingdom of the Messiah, we shall diverge into other countries, near and remote, whither the prophets will take the lead. According to this plan we must explore the land of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, and Tyre, ancient nations which were adjacent to the land of Israel, and deeply implicated in the guilt of paganism and vice, and their hostility to the people of God. We must also visit the waste places of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, through which the prescience of prophetic foresight once widely ranged, and on which the frown of God's anger long rested as a withering blight, the alarming precursor of approaching destruction. These kingdoms were formerly conspicuous among the nations of the east. Some of them were of the first magnitude. All were the objects of prophetic denunciation, and their present solitude and ruins suggest the impressive fact, that "there is a God that judgeth in the earth."
Perceiving, therefore, how intimately the Hebrew seers are to be associated with our investigations, we deem it requisite, as a preliminary step, to inquire into their personal character and qualifications. The text furnishes a satisfactory reply. They were "holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." If these combined facts can be substantiated, ("and the Scripture cannot be broken,") those honoured servants of the Most High, whom infidelity has vilified as impostors, will appear before us in the most commanding position.

And what is holiness? for the definition of that term will enable us to form a proper conception of the persons to whom it pleased the great Lord of the church to communicate the events of futurity. It is the existence of pure and undefiled religion in the heart, irradiating the mind and embodied in the life. It is one of those "good and perfect gifts" which descend from "the Father of lights," as the source of happiness in this world, and an indispensable preparation for that which is to come. Holiness is not a single grace shining with a struggling gleam like the dying taper in the socket, but a pleasing combination of all the Christian graces, shedding their mild and mingled lustre over the whole deportment, like the light of the morning, "which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Thus the righteous in the language of Scripture are called "saints," (literally holy ones,) and in the application of sacred metaphors are said to be "light in the Lord," a comprehensive phrase which denotes knowledge, purity, happiness, conspicuousness, progression, usefulness; and they are exhorted to "walk as children of light." Holiness is the restoration of God's likeness to the soul, superinduced by regeneration, imparted and promoted by the Holy Spirit, and evidential of a personal interest in Christ. It is the practical development of Christian principles under the combined forms of faith and love, decision and devotion, purity and conscientiousness, truth and honour.
Nor is holiness confined to any particular time, place, party, or engagement. It is the Christian's element and habit, and is to be as conspicuous in the common concerns of social and public life, as in our religious exercises; in the world as in the church. Thus a holy man is a holy master or servant, parent or child, neighbour, friend, or member of the community. This is religion, scriptural, intellectual, genuine, practical religion, "teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world."

Such were the Hebrew prophets, whose hearts were sanctified by Divine grace; whose judgments were savingly informed; whose principles were righteous; whose conduct was the best illustration of their creed. Those holy men were consequently raised up by the Most High, to be the instructors and reformers of the Jewish nation, and were important auxiliaries to the priesthood. In seasons of public degeneracy or danger, they were the bulwarks of religion and of the state. Their influence, arising from their character and office, was considerable. Pious monarchs revered them, while to ungodly rulers they were objects of fear; it being the tendency of moral worth to cover guilt with shame. And though frequently exposed to opposition when the country sank into idolatry and vice, they remonstrated; they reproved; they cautioned; they threatened; being neither awed by the enmity of wicked men in authority, nor abashed by the public clamour of a degenerate people. They connived at no sin, however popular; feared no reproach, however galling; courted no favour, accepted no bribes. The prophets were but plain men, whose habits, dress, and dwellings, were lowly, yet they stood forth in degenerate times like unyielding monuments of truth and uprightness amid the storm and the flood, and thus became witnesses for God "in a crooked and perverse nation." Sometimes they appeared in sackcloth as mourners over the vices of the age; at other times they repre-
sented by a significant action or sign, the burden which oppressed their souls, and the heavy tidings which they were inspired to predict. On some occasions they uttered their maledictions in the highway, at other seasons their warning voice was heard at the temple or in the palace; but in every instance, they maintained their personal sanctity amidst a deluge of corruption, and their ministerial faithfulness though at the hazard of their lives.

These were the Hebrew seers, the philosophers, divines, and instructors of the Israelitish nation, in religion and virtue, who are to be our companions in these researches, and whom infidelity has so basely stigmatized as vile deceivers. Deceivers? What were they to gain by their deception? Their predictions were often calculated to expose them to the popular fury of a delinquent people, to imprisonment and death, instead of raising them to secular emoluments and worldly fame. Witness the violent persecution which oppressed the faithful Elijah and Jeremiah, the former having been driven into exile, and the latter consigned to a dungeon. They were not accustomed, like the false prophets with whom they were sometimes brought into contact, to flatter ungodly princes and nobles, and "prophesy smooth things" to licentious courts. They frankly declared the truth, "whether men would hear or whether they would forbear." Fame was not their object. They never sought it. They despised it. Nor had they the spirit of the world, to whose riches, pleasures, and maxims, they evinced a noble superiority. The honour and glory of God, the spiritual and moral welfare of their fellow-men, the safety and happiness of their native land, the promise and kingdom of Christ as an Almighty Saviour, and the ultimate evangelization of the whole world, were the principal objects of their fond and fervent solicitude. They were "holy men of God."

From the character of the prophets we pass to their inspiration. "They spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."
This was an endowment of no ordinary description. It was the possession of such a communicated degree of prescient power from on high as enabled them to penetrate the veil of futurity, and foretell some of the most remarkable events that have ever occurred in the history of the world. These events, involving the destruction of cities and nations of the first magnitude, were not nigh at hand in point of time, but in many instances remote. Centuries in some cases were to revolve between the prediction and the accomplishment, consequently nothing could be inferred from the tendency of passing occurrences. Neither were these foreboded events always near in point of space. Distant countries, as well as adjacent nations, were the objects of prophetic malediction, on whose soil no Hebrew seer had ever placed his foot, and of whose constitution, laws, and habits, those holy men could have known nothing by personal observation. Nor were their prophecies recorded in such terms of involved ambiguity, that the mysterious hieroglyphic would bear a diversified application. For though symbols are introduced and figurative phraseology employed, the whole statement is so obvious, and the names of places, parties, and occurrences, so conspicuous, that an ordinary reader could comprehend them. Indeed, their predictions in many instances appear more like a history of the past and present, than a prophecy of the distant future. Even persons unborn were described by name, with the peculiar reasons for which God in his providence intended to raise them up, and the important part which they were to act in the prospective drama.

Nor was the voice of prophecy confined to maledictory strains. The tones of Judah's harp were often changed from the plaintive notes of "mourning, lamentation, and woe," to the seraphic sounds of hope and joy. Frequently after the prophet had sat in "sackcloth and ashes," he arose, shook himself from the dust, put on the "garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness," and soared in the loftiest strains of delighted anticipation. This transition is very observ-
able when they allude to the coming of Christ; the great salvation which he was to accomplish; the conversion of the Gentiles; the spiritual prosperity of the Jews; and the glory of the latter day. Suddenly, when deploiring national guilt, or predicting the punishment of distant idolatrous states, a gleam of light appears to have darted upon them from on high like a descending sunbeam breaking through the overhanging cloud. They were thoughts of better days and brighter scenes, and remind us of the sudden exclamation of the dying Patriarch who, pausing in the midst of his farewell address to his children, broke forth in a parenthesis of joyous expectation, "I have waited for thy salvation, O' Lord!"

In these mental excursions, the prophets were under the special guidance and tuition of that Omniscient Spirit, to whose view the entire universe is ever present, with all its vast and varied worlds, creatures, and events. That the Deity could convey revelations of the future to the mind of holy men will not, I presume, be disputed. "Who shall limit the Holy One?" Who shall "stay his hand? or say unto him, What doest thou? hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther." And that the eternal Spirit did condescend to open the vista of futurity, and "show unto his servants things which were to come to pass," is positively and repeatedly declared in the sacred volume, and will be proved by the concurring testimony of history. And though it may be difficult to describe with unerring exactness the mode of Divine communication, as it is equally impossible to define the precise laws by which mind acts on mind, or the soul on the body, the fact itself is indisputable. It was not an ordinary manifestation of the Holy Ghost, who dwells alike in all true believers. It was special and peculiar. Thus, when the apostle John, in Patmos, was favoured with the revelations which he was instructed to record and narrate to the churches, he represents himself as having had a preternaturally adapted frame of mind for their reception, employing the significant phraseology —"immediately I was in the Spirit."
In this state of *extraordinary* endowment, the faculties of the prophets seem to have been, for the time, abstracted from surrounding objects, and wholly absorbed in the passing scene which was presented to their mental perception. That scene was a representation of the future by some emblematical combination. And whilst these visions were contemplated, the powers of the soul were excited, impressed, and adapted to a subsequent narration. Thus, from these inspired and divinely instructed intellects, prophetic information was received for the edification of the church, and other important purposes for which the revelation was imparted. But whilst the mind was supernaturally influenced, the bodily senses were exercised as usual, and the corporal frame was so sustained, that its delicate organization was not overpowered by the extraordinary pressure of the soul.

These special communications from the Spirit of God differed widely in their results from those assumed excitations which were often betrayed by pagan prophets, or the interpreters of heathen oracles; or which are sometimes adopted by fanatics, under the influence of a wild imagination, to gain the admiration of the credulous and the honour of canonization. In the case of the Hebrew prophets, there was no assumption of lordly superiority—no demand for blind devotion—nothing feigned—nor anything unnatural in their personal appearance. No suspension of reason. No distortion of the features. No unearthly sounds of the voice. No unintelligible jargon, nor anything that was artificial or terrific in their gestures, characterized their inspiration.

The mind was, indeed, absorbed, and sometimes greatly excited with delight or depressed by the burden that was to be disclosed. But, though the Holy Spirit of God employed the powers of the soul and the organization of the brain, in receiving and transmitting the information that was conveyed, the entire revelation was in exact accordance with the majesty of the Divine Teacher, the weight of the subject, and
the office of the prophet to whom those revelations were intrusted.

What a different class of men were the pagan prophets, and the interpreters of heathen oracles who were once held in high repute. We select a specimen from those of Greece, deriving our contrast from thence because the Greeks were celebrated for their learning and refinement.

"The attendants on those oracles, who delivered the responses, separated themselves from all human society, and withdrew to some solitude, where a thick wood, a craggy mountain, a waterfall, or dark cave might awaken the awe of their superstitious countrymen, and impose upon them the belief that there was the residence of some pagan deity. There they lived in mysterious retirement, and pretended to hold intercourse with the invisible world. Thither must all repair who wished to consult them, and no one could obtain an answer to his inquiries, till he had presented gifts to the god. Various ceremonies were adopted, all calculated to produce such a state of shuddering apprehension as would prevent his detecting an imposition, or suspecting the artifice of which he was made the dupe. The responses were then given, artfully expressed in hexameter verse by poets hired for that purpose; but their language was so chosen, that it was always more or less equivocal and often unintelligible. Many of these oracles or prophecies have been preserved by the Greek historians, whose testimony enables us to form an estimate of the subjects which were usually laid before the Greek prophets, and of the manner in which they disposed of them. Religion, or morality, is very seldom mentioned. They were principally occupied about public enterprises, emigrations, wars, and controversies between states and individuals. When disputes were to be settled by them, they were often bribed by one party, to give an opinion against the other; if they desired to keep favour with both, they would procrastinate and evade the question. When the issue of
public enterprises was demanded, they sometimes learned from men of experience in public affairs, what reply it would be most safe to give, or their answers were so artfully couched that they could bear opposite meanings. If these expedients failed, they referred the inquirer to the superstitious arts of magic and astrology; or they evaded the point by raillery, and, instead of instructing by prophecy, answered or irritated by sarcasm, and when every resource of cunning was exhausted, they would say that their god was angry and refused to answer. What is remarkable in all their prophecies, they seldom, if ever, have any good moral tendency—virtue is not rewarded nor vice punished. Power is flattered, however unjust, and weakness is left unprotected, however innocent. The grossest idolatry is always inculcated, and in many instances the horrid superstition of sacrificing human beings to the infernal gods is expressly enjoined. An extravagant pecuniary reward was generally the only condition on which their pretended prophecies could be obtained. Whoever went to consult the oracle was required to make large presents to the god, in consequence of which the temple, especially at Delphi, was superior to almost all others in the world, in riches, splendour, and magnificence."

"In every respect the Hebrew prophets were the reverse of these impostors. They sought no concealment, and affected no mystery, but mingled with society and lived generally with other men. They were at all times and at all places accessible to such as craved their advice, and this they freely imparted, without extracting gifts to gratify their own avarice, or requiring ceremonies to work on the fears of those who consulted them. No artifice was resorted to, to deceive others into a mysterious dread of their sacredness, nor was there any evasion, but all was prompt, direct, and decisive. On occasions of great public interest, they were seen in the most frequented places, enforcing their instructions with the most sincere and impassioned eloquence upon the listening
throngs who surrounded them. These public addresses they frequently committed to writing, and we have them in every form, from the simplest prose to the most lofty elevation of poetry. In all their prophecies it was their constant aim to exert the most salutary moral influence. Calamity they always threatened as the punishment of sin, and prosperity was the sure reward of holy obedience. To the corruptions of their times they presented independent, bold, and unyielding opposition. Ungodly rulers they fearlessly withstood by severe and public rebuke. Superstitious arts, calculated to impose on the credulity of an ignorant multitude, such as astrology, magic, and necromancy, they pointedly condemned: and the rich presents which were offered them they rejected.

“Is not the difference between the Hebrew and the heathen prophets perfectly obvious? In the one case we see all the machinery of fraud, a total destitution of moral feeling, and every indication of an exclusive attachment to this world. In the other we find an inflexible adherence to what is right, and a total renunciation of all worldly hopes whenever they interfered with the calls of duty. How shall we account for it, that the Hebrews, who were so far below the Greeks in learning, refinement, and power, should rise so far above them in the character of their religious teachers? To the Hebrews were sent ‘holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,’ while the Greeks ‘seeking after wisdom, became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.’” —Stowe.

Such were the prophets of Israel—men of piety, men of sincerity and truth; who, with a noble disinterestedness, and frequently at great personal risk, delivered their messages, and performed the duties of their onerous office, as teachers of righteousness.

In committing to writing the revelations with which they were intrusted, their style was frequently veiled. This figurative mode of conveying to their
auditors or readers the communications of the Spirit of God was wisely designed and exactly accorded with the whole structure of prophecy. But though the style was thus symbolic, we shall be aided in our interpretation of its meaning by recollecting, that "kings, queens, magistrates, and other persons in authority are denoted by such emblems as the sun, moon, and stars. Kingdoms and cities are described as mountains and hills. The covenant of God with his ancient people by lawful marriage. And a departure from his worship into the service of idols is commonly signified by adultery and whoredom."—*Companion to the Bible*.

But notwithstanding the honour that was conferred on the prophets, as the recipients of Divine revelations, their powers both of perception and interpretation were limited. To prevent the inflation of pride, and to exhibit the sovereignty of the Most High as the supreme "Governor among the nations," the passage preceding the text informs us, that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man." No teacher, therefore, in the ancient church, however gifted, could penetrate the veil of futurity at pleasure; neither were they at liberty to select their own themes. The Spirit then, as now, "divided to every man severally as he would;" and proved to the ancient seers the truth of our Lord's declaration to his disciples when he said, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father has put in his own power." They consequently knew no more than was communicated to them, like the amanuensis who can only record that which is dictated by the author.

Nor does it appear that the prophets thoroughly understood the exact meaning of their predictions, much less the precise *mode*, and *date* of their accomplishment. This limitation of intellectual power was particularly observable in their anticipations of the Messiah's advent and sufferings, and the glorious consequences which were to issue from his great propitiation. They foresaw the particulars of that great event
in the outline, as "the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy." But though they beheld "the grace which was thus to come to us," in the combination of its wondrous development, yet close investigation, diligent study, was requisite to ascertain the prospective detail. They are, therefore, represented by the author of our text as searching into the meaning of those revelations which the Holy Spirit instructed them to proclaim: "of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," 1 Peter i. 10, 11. Thus whilst there was an interchange of light and shade, a blending of obscurity and obviousness in the communication, there was the same union of privilege and insufficiency—of foresight and dependence in the narrator of the prophecy.

It is also observable, that in very many instances, the present tense, and not the future, is employed in the prophetic writings, although the incidents predicted were distant. This peculiarity probably arose from the proximity of the vision to the prophet's mind, and the confidence which he entertained of the certain accomplishment of the representation. He saw the distant scene symbolized in a panoramic form, with all its agents, relations, and circumstances. He saw the instruments of Providence wielding the permitted scourge as the punishment of sin in the present life. He saw cities falling—kingdoms revolutionized—and ruin and desolation succeeding wealth and vice. He looked yet farther through the vista of ages, and beheld the shaking of the nations preparatory to the Gospel dispensation—the person and work of the Redeemer, and the reign of piety and peace upon earth. And thus by the nearness of the scene to his mental vision, and with the most unhesitating assurance of its verification, by faith in the
power and government of God, he spake of the whole revelation as in actual motion.

These compositions of the Hebrew penmen were at times exceedingly majestic and inspiring. Both earth and heaven, nature and art, were held in requisition to embody their visions and form the lofty symbolic strain. Thus, if readers of the Bible were to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with the writings of the Prophets, they could hardly fail to be delighted both with the casket and its jewels. My young friends, let me strenuously urge you to be familiar with this important department of Divine revelation. You are fond of history. It is here in its most interesting forms. You have perhaps a well-cultivated taste. The diction of the word of God will gratify it. You admire the sublime and beautiful. Here are the finest specimens. You aspire after the expansion of the mind. Traverse the vast and varied regions of prophecy to ascertain the truth of the inspired writings, and you can hardly fail to be edified. Come then to the word of God, in which the wisest and best of men sought and found delight, and you will be enriched. Expatiate on its magnificent productions. Enter its well-stored mines. Compare the majesty of its productions with the records of the ancient world, and the testimony of modern travelers, who have visited the countries which were the subjects of prophetic malediction, and of which we shall extensively avail ourselves in these Lectures, and you will be so satisfied with the stability of that foundation on which you have fixed your hopes, that, impervious to the insinuations of a cavilling infidelity which contemns a system that it has never fully examined, you will be constrained to say—

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treach'rous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies
And bind the Gospel to my heart."

While on this subject, we may advert for a few
moments to those valuable institutions in the land of Israel, which were denominated "the schools of the prophets." The establishment and promotion of those ancient seminaries by the Hebrew seers, prove to a demonstration how far those holy men were removed from the low designs of artifice in imposing upon the world "a cunningly designed fable." Deception prefers the dark shade of popular ignorance. The diffusion of knowledge, like the light of day, is fatal to superstition and priestcraft. The prophets, by the formation of these public colleges, proved themselves the intelligent and faithful friends of their country, and the philanthropists of the age in which they lived. Thus aware that, "wisdom and knowledge were the stability of their times," in addition to the domestic tuition that was enjoined on parents by the authority of God, public schools were formed and superintended apparently by the prophets, to which they gave the weight of their sanction, and in which the youth of the country were trained for the most important offices in religion and society. Speaking of these valuable institutions, a popular author, Dr. Krummacher, observes,—"As in the history of that distinguished people all the institutions of human society found their best models, so did those of instruction in particular. Home and school were one. The child learned to lispt the name of Jehovah 'under the vine and fig-tree,' before the door of the peaceful dwelling; as also, that which is eternally true, and beautiful, and good for the human mind to know. Having enjoyed such a popular education in the highest sense of the word, many a young Israelite came forth from the paternal dwelling, vigorous in body and mind, susceptible like the good ground of the best cultivation, and carrying in his hand from his very home the key of Scripture, of history, and of nature. The stars of heaven, the trees and flowers of the field, preached to him, and the instructive voices of the Levites and Prophets, which were continually heard through the country, found in his mind a ready attention."

"Now, if among these youths there was one who
was pressed in spirit to penetrate deeper into the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and to search after ‘the wisdom which cometh from above,’ as the vocation of his life, and to become a teacher in Israel, the schools of the prophets, which, since the time of Samuel, appear as the fairest blossoms of Israelitish history, were open to receive him. The pupils of these establishments had to maintain themselves by labour as husbandmen or mechanics. This was not thought strange in Israel, much less contemptible. Indeed, it has ever been the practice of that nation, to teach their children some trade, even though they might be destined to learning and the sacred offices.”

Here again we see how unlikely the prophets were to act that deceptive part, in which self-interest is the soul-inspiring motive, and with which they have been so unjustly charged by those who are ignorant of their real character.

“Now, if the final object of these excellent schools was not precisely to form prophets and seers, for such the Lord alone forms and calls, yet the Lord was pleased to have ready such assemblies of his saints from which, when he saw fit, he might select a messenger for himself, endowed with all human preparations, whenever these were deemed requisite. It is highly probable, that most of the prophets proceeded from these institutions, which provided the country with many enlightened teachers; many worthy, well-instructed and faithful heads of families, and judges. And even if they had not done so, still their existence answered a high and holy purpose. They were the depositaries of Israelitish light and justice. They shone as luminaries in a crooked and perverse nation, and reproved apostasy more severely by their example, than could have been done by the most powerful language. Their quiet and mighty influence served to oppose the inroads of surrounding heathen darkness. And who shall say what streams of ‘living waters’ from those fountains of Israel, refreshed and fertilized the country at large.”—Krummacher.

Such were “the schools of the prophets,” the estab-
lishment of which proved, to a demonstration, the enlightened patriotism of their founders, and evinced the anxiety which the Hebrew seers felt to live among an intelligent people.

But it has been objected, by those who rack their invention to cavil at the evidence which we have adduced of the Divine authenticity of the sacred Scriptures, that there have been deceivers, under the garb of true prophets. We acknowledge the melancholy fact. The inspired volume also records it: "There were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you," 2 Peter ii. 6. But what does this prove? Is the pure coin of the realm to be rejected because there are counterfeits? We challenge comparison. Let such men as Balaam, Mahomed, and others, be confronted with the prophets of Israel. Were they "holy men of God?"! Were they distinguished by the purity of their lives, their disinterestedness, their self-denial, their philanthropy, fidelity, and usefulness? Take the former of these men as a specimen, as his character is sketched in Numbers xxiii., xxiv., and xxv. The narrative informs us, that the people of Israel having reached the borders of Moab in their journey from Egypt to Canaan, requested permission to pass peaceably through the borders of that country, Moses pledging his responsibility for any injury that might be done. Balak, the king, not only refused permission, but threatened to place himself in a menacing attitude. Aware, also, of the celebrity which was attached in that age of superstition to a certain soothsayer of the name of Balaam, of Mesopotamia, he resolved to send for him, and to put himself and his people under his fostering care, believing, to use his own confession, that they were blessed whom he blessed, or cursed whom he cursed. An embassy is accordingly despatched, with flattering compliments and a valuable present. The messengers are received. Their tale is heard. And, to keep up the deception, the crafty Balaam throws around him
the sanctity of religion, and requires them to tarry during the night, that he might ask counsel of God. This was a material part of the artifice, an important appendage to that system of deception which lined his coffers, veiled his character, and spread his fame. In the silence of the night, the Lord, who often makes the wrath of man subservient to his praise, appeared to the oracle as he did to the rapacious Laban, and forbade him to accompany the messengers. Balaam accordingly arose with the morning light, informed his guests of his disappointment, and sent them away.

Supposing that the prophet's refusal was a pretext to raise the price of his services, the king, who well knew the influence of gold, sent a second embassy of still greater distinction, with a message more urgent, and with promises of a much larger amount: indeed, the oracle was to stipulate for his own terms. They arrive, open their commission, and, in the language of their fear-stricken sovereign, say, "Thus saith Balak, the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me, for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me; come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." These messengers, like the former, are requested to tarry. A second application is made to the Most High, during the silent shades of night, as if the God of truth can be prevailed on by human importunity, in a bad cause, to withdraw his prohibitions and threatenings. The voice is heard a second time, saying, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; but yet the word that I shall speak to thee that shalt thou do." What a fearful permission? Does it not remind you of the rebellious Israelites, of whom it is said, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls."

Balaam is now happy; he has his heart's desire; he is escorted by great men; his vanity is flattered; he is in the high road to riches and honour; he is on his way to the capital of Moab. Well, the oracle reaches his destination, and is cordially welcomed by
the king in person, and a succession of illusive ceremonies commences, having the form of religious rites, to keep up the sanctity of the deception, and to give it the greater weight. But, though altar after altar is reared, though place after place is selected, and sacrifice after sacrifice is offered; though every lure is promised, and every artifice is employed; and the sovereign and the people are obedient to the prophet's mandate, and stand in breathless anxiety and suspense; though the conscience of Balaam is seared, and his heart is with the enemies of Israel; yet in every instance, by the mighty power of God, he is compelled to bless them, and to predict the choicest benedictions respecting them. See chap. xxiii. 18—26.

You may thus account for the withdrawal of the first prohibition, when the Lord said, "Thou shalt not go," and the reason of the removal of all subsequent restraint. It was to prove how surely God protects his people against the malignity of their enemies; it was to show, as Balaam himself acknowledged, that "there was no enchantment against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel;" it was to cover a deceiver with shame and disgrace; it was to place on record a striking contrast to "the holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The whole scheme thus proves a miserable failure: Balak, the king, is mortified and disappointed; his princes and people are abashed and alarmed; the wretched Balaam is loaded with disgrace, and sent away without attendants, or remuneration. His sordid, covetous soul is depressed and disappointed, and the people of the Lord of hosts appear more favoured and formidable than ever: and, what is still more remarkable, the miserable prophet, before he retired from the place of his humiliation, as if his spirit still lingered and loured, uttered a most remarkable prediction respecting the coming of the Messiah, the conquests of Israel, and his own apparent doom, chap. xxiv. 14—23.

Now contrast this sordid, scheming worldling with such a man as the prophet Samuel, who, after having
passed through an honourable course, as prophet and judge in Israel, addressed the people in the following strain: "Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you; and now, behold the king walketh before you: and I am old and grey-headed; and behold my sons are with you, and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am; witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe, to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, He is witness," 1 Sam. xii. 1—5.

Here you have a fair specimen of the piety and integrity of the Hebrew prophets. We will not detain you by introducing another striking contrast, in the false prophet, Mahomed, who propagated his religion by the sword, and established himself upon the earth as the vicegerent of heaven. Such men were as dissimilar to the worthy persons of whom we have spoken, though under the mask of religion, as darkness is dissimilar to light, as deception and fraud are opposed to purity and truth. These were "the holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

From the Lecture we deduce the following inferences:—

1st. The importance of personal sanctity as the basis of moral greatness. This best of all attainments is associated with right sentiments, feelings, and motives, and is the source of peace, safety, and happiness. It is required by our "high vocation;"—by our redemption,—our conversion,—our Christian profession,—the honour of religion,—and our hopes of a
blessed immortality. Holiness has ever been the desire of the saints; it was prefigured by the frequent ablutions of the ceremonial law; it is the effect of the Saviour's grace, and of the purifying efficacy of his blood, "which cleanses from all sin." Divine discipline, which is "a chastening for our profit, that we may be the partakers of the Lord's holiness," is designed to promote it: frequent admonitions, and earnest precepts enforce it: nor can we enter the kingdom of heaven, if destitute of it; for, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But when personal sanctity is produced, God's visible seal is affixed to our state: "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

2. The antiquity of the Holy Spirit's agency. Pious persons, when speaking of the essential operations of the Holy Ghost, frequently pause in their retrospect at the day of Pentecost. This is taking a limited view of the subject. It is true, that the special manifestation, with which the apostles were then favoured, was miraculous and memorable, most munificent and important; but the work of the Spirit upon the heart was not unknown till the Christian era. From the earliest periods of time it was vouchsafed. Wherever vital religion existed, the Holy Ghost was present as its author. As there never was but one Saviour there never was but one Sanctifier. The Holy Spirit made his appeals to the world before the flood, when God said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." He was with the ancient church, "who vexed and resisted" the Holy Ghost, according to the testimony of the martyr Stephen. The penitent psalmist, a thousand years previous to the day of Pentecost, felt the vast importance of the Spirit's agency, when he prayed, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." The sacred volume was indited by him, which is spoken of as his language, and is called his sword, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."
And in every age and portion of the globe, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost has been indispensable, to renew, instruct, sanctify, console, guide, and seal the soul unto the day of redemption. He helps us in prayer. Enables us to "mortify the deeds of the body." "Bears witness with our spirit that we are born of God." And is the glorifier of Christ. "We live in the Spirit." "We walk in the Spirit." "We pray in the Spirit." "We sing with the spirit." Let us, then, take heed that we "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. For, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."

3. The subject reminds us of the prophetical office of the Lord Jesus.

In this, as in all other particulars, the great Redeemer stood pre-eminent. To sustain that important office he came from above. Moses spake of him as such when he said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear." And on two occasions during our Lord's ministry, a voice was heard from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." The woman of Samaria, also, expected the Saviour in that interesting character, who said, "We know that Messias cometh: when he is come he will teach us all things." How condescendingly and effectively our Lord performed his prophetical office, you are well aware. "Never man spake like that man." "All bare him witness, wondering at the gracious words which proceeded from his lips." That office he still sustains, though invisible. He teaches by his word, his works, his providence, his ministers, his people, and especially by his Spirit. O come and sit at Jesus' feet, like Mary of old, saying, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people and to his saints." Come and receive his instructions, that you may be among the blessed people who know
HEBREW PROPHETS.

the joyful sound of salvation in the preaching of the Gospel.

"The Angel of the Cov'nant stands,
With his commission in his hands,
Sent from his Father's heavenly throne,
To make his grace to mortals known."

Come, and hail his mission. Come, read, and hear his word. "The entrance of that word giveth light." More than this—"The words which he has spoken, they are spirit and they are life." Here is the grand source of saving information, the fountain of spiritual intelligence, the vital, elastic spring of mental and moral purity, the unfailing source of hope and happiness. O! to be thus taught of God! To be made "wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus." What a privilege! Seek this ennobling enlightenment. Spread your petitions before the Divine Teacher, who waits to be gracious, and say, in the language of fervent, persevering prayer, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."
LECTURE II.

OVERTHROW OF THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE.

ZEPHANIAH ii. 13—15. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.

And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.

This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! Every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

Agreeably to our excursive plan, we now enter the first field of historic evidence to gather proofs in confirmation of the veracity of the prophetic writings. In approaching it, we have thought of the melancholy fact, that “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,” and that a large class, though surrounded by the footsteps and interpositions of an omnipresent Deity, deny his superintendence of the ordinary affairs of life. These rejecters of the obvious and oft-repeated testimony of revelation are the disciples of a false and cheerless philosophy. Their respective systems are opposed alike to reason, Scripture, and happiness, and are the echo of the ancient scepticism which arrogantly demanded, “How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?” For, whilst the atheist affects to deny the existence of an infinite Creator, the deist, in banishing the Supreme Ruler from his own dominions, by a denial of his moral government, sees the world in a state of orphanage, coldly concludes that every event, whether national, domestic, or personal, is the inevitable result of the arbitrary laws of fate and necessity, without
Divine direction or control. Nor are we without our fears that these vague opinions secretly exist to a much wider extent than is generally imagined, if we are to judge of the authority which is attached to second causes; and the opinion that is frequently expressed respecting passing events, whether pleasing or painful. What is more common than to hear the attributes of wisdom, power, and benevolence ascribed to nature, as if unconscious matter were a supreme intelligence—contriving, arranging, and governing; instead of adopting the genuine and scriptural phraseology, which is a filial and dependent recognition of the perfections and government of the blessed God. The same regret is applicable to the frequent use of the pagan expressions of "good and bad luck," and the like terms, which seem to imply the fortuitous events of fate, necessity, and chance. The following strictures, on ascribing that to nature which is due alone to the God of nature and providence, whose revered name is studiously avoided in this vague phraseology, are worthy of recollection. "A noble father enriches his mansion with everything that can instruct, improve, and delight his children. They enjoy his munificence with exquisite pleasure; and they spend their lives in displaying and explaining the wisdom, and goodness, and variety of his provisions for them. But they studiously avoid the mention of his name; any allusion to his titles, his honours, and the homage which he requires of them; and for this purpose they resort to all kinds of circumlocution and evasion. Would not an observer say, either that his name was not producible, because of some dire blot upon it, or that his children were unworthy of him? The most cutting part of our grief for this practice is, the meanness of the surrender which it involves to the irreligious. It is showing them that we are desirous of doing without God as much as we can, plainly that we are ashamed of him!"—Dr. J. P. Smith on Geology.

To detect the inconsiderateness that is thus be-
trayed, and to dispel the fatal insensibility under which so many act, as if the Bible were a fiction,—religion an outward form,—providence the mere operation of natural laws;—as if death were annihilation, and eternity a dream, the Great Eternal, at different periods, and in different forms, has not only proved his authority by his judgments, but has constrained even infidelity to say, with the astonished magicians of Egypt, "This is the finger of God." Few events have been more confirmatory of this opinion than the successive reverses, the final overthrow, and the entire extermination of every vestige of Assyria. This mighty empire is supposed to have been founded by Asshur, or by Nimrod, shortly after the dispersion of mankind by the confusion of tongues. It included several populous cities of considerable magnitude and splendour, of which Nineveh was the capital. Little, however, is known of this powerful mistress of the East till about 860 years previous to the Christian era, when, by the book of the prophet Jonah, Nineveh, the metropolis of Assyria, is presented before us in all its greatness and guilt. The following passage exposes the true character of the largest city then existing, as described by the great Searcher of hearts: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me," Jonah i. 1.

How much is included in this brief indictment! Here was the metropolis of an empire, the largest on which the sun had ever shed its benignant beams; whose dimensions were sixty miles in circuit, surrounded by lofty massive walls and strong fortifications, favoured by a salubrious climate and fruitful soil, and abounding with luxury and wealth; but so corrupt in its morals, that its guilt, like the blood of righteous Abel, became vocal; its cry rose to heaven—rent the clouds—and assailed the throne of God! What "a bitter and grievous thing" is sin, that can thus intrude upon the sanctity of heaven, disturb, so to speak, the devotions and hallelujahs of the
IN THE OVERTHROW OF ASSYRIA.

blessed, and cause the Eternal to raise his uplifted arm, and smite an empire!

What was Jonah's message? "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." What would become of London and other capitals, if thus weighed in the impartial balances of Jehovah's justice? Men, from familiarity and the force of habit, may be insensible to the high offence of moral guilt in the sight of an infinitely holy God; but, whatever be our indifference; whatever apologies we may adopt; or however soft the designations we employ, when speaking of it, national sin is the prolific cause of national judgments: and when the time of retribution arrives, even in the present life, how many agents and elements of punishment and destruction are at hand, both visible and invisible, and only wait the authoritative command of a just and righteous God to pour forth the fury of their vengeance!

But how was the prophet's message received? How would such a proclamation be regarded in any of the cities of Britain? Most probably, with ridicule. It was heard with a different spirit in the streets of Nineveh. "So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can
tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Jonah iii. 3—9.

This was a remarkable occurrence! Here was a heathen city, the metropolis of a pagan empire, populous, powerful, and rich; and yet when a solitary Jewish prophet, a person of another nation, and of another religion, appears amongst them with heavy denunciations in the name of the God of heaven and earth, every heart trembles! What a display of Almighty power! What a proof of the Lord's providential government! We admire the conduct of this Assyrian monarch. The terms which he imposed were binding on every individual; but all classes obeyed, and during three days they simultaneously fasted, mourned, and prayed. How pleasing is genuine repentance! and what ample provision has the God of all grace and consolation made for its production and encouragement in his holy word, and in the Gospel of his dear Son! Among the historical parts of the Old Testament, examples abound of the salutary results of sincere contrition, especially when viewed in connexion with faith in the atonement of Christ, which is the soothing balm of broken and contrite hearts.

And how was Nineveh's contrition regarded by the Father of mercies? With the same compassion with which he beheld your sorrow for sin when he said, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold I will heal thee." "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way: and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not," chap. iii. 10.

How long the inhabitants of Nineveh continued repentant, and what good fruits their alarm and sorrow produced, we are not informed. But whatever may have been their outward reformation, they continued idolaters. We hear of nothing resembling vital godliness in the land of Assyria. There were the same evil propensities, and the same means of gratifying them, as before the prophet raised his warning voice.
Nor was there any counteracting influence in their system to act upon "the evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Thus the Ninevites were in all probability like many in the present day, who become the subjects of deep conviction and penitential grief,—who excite our hopes by their seeming anxiety and apparent earnestness, but endure only for a season, like rootless trees, or sapless branches. In the time of temptation, or after the novelty of religion has subsided, they fall away: "whose goodness is like the morning cloud and early dew," that vanish with the advancing sun. This is truly affecting. "It had been better for them not to have known the way of truth, than after they have known it to turn aside from the holy commandment which was delivered unto them."

We hear nothing of Assyria, nor of its potent capital, after this event, for more than fifty years, when it appears before us in the character of an invader of the kingdom of Israel, on a dishonest, murderous enterprise, to which such powerful, ambitious empires have been at all times addicted.

"And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land," 2 Kings xv. 19, 20. The effect of this bribe, amounting to 375,000£., was not permanent; for what security has one ungodly nation against the incursions of another, in the absence of just and holy principles, and where pride, avarice, lawless aggression, and the love of war prevail? Happy will that period be when, beneath the benignant sway of the "Prince of peace," "men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war
any more.” We therefore find at the 29th verse of the chapter which we have quoted, that a few years after the former aggression, the formidable hosts of Assyria invaded the territory of Israel a second time, with more disastrous consequences to that once favoured country. “And in the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria and took Ijon and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee—all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.” Nor did these calamities of Israel terminate with this incursion. A third invasion was made by the invincible Assyrians. “Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes,” 2 Kings xvii. 5, 6. Here we see the sin-avenging hand of God upon his own people, who, like their powerful conquerors, had become gross idolaters, and lamentably degenerate in their morals. Thus the ten tribes of Israel were expatriated from their native land, and carried captives to Assyria, after having existed as a separate community from the kingdom of Judah about 254 years.

But though God permitted a potent pagan nation so severely to scourge his own people for their delinquencies, as to dispossess them of the inheritance of their fathers, the period was approaching when that scourge was to be broken by a still more powerful hand. Thus it occurred, as we shall show in our subsequent Lectures, with the nations which were circumjacent to the land of Canaan, and so it happened to Assyria herself. After so many centuries of undisputed domination, during which Assyria was the powerful mistress of the East, she became the subject of prophetic denunciation, though a long respite was granted by the King of kings, ere the threatenings
of prophecy were carried into effect. The language of Nahum is peculiarly striking and explicit. After a lofty exordium, illustrative of the majesty and power of God, he breaks forth against the doomed Nineveh in the following graphic strain: "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not: the noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear; and there is a multitude of slain and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses; because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcraft, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee? Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea and her wall was from the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets, and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength, because of the enemy. All thy strong holds shall be like fig-trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick-kiln. There shall the
fire devour thee: the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away and their place is not known where they are. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" Nahum, iii. 1, to the end.

What a heavy indictment! What glaring, accumulated guilt is here recorded as "wrath treasured up against the day of wrath and righteous retribution" of the supreme Ruler of the world! Nineveh was indeed a powerful, populous, and wealthy city; but much of her treasure had been acquired by dishonesty and rapacity. Here, also, idolatry prevailed in its worst forms. But her destruction was to be tremendous. Though "her merchants were multiplied above the stars of heaven," and "there was no end of her store and her glory," and her walls and fortifications were prodigious, "their strong holds were to be as fig-trees with the first figs." Their gates were to be set open to their enemies. Their men of valour were to be effeminate. Their nobles consigned to the dust. Their people scattered upon the mountains. Their wealth was to be a spoil to their conquerors, and Nineveh was to become a pool of water—a desolation—and an object of derision and contempt. These were the predictions of the prophet nearly a century before their fulfilment, when Assyria was the greatest empire on the earth. As Bishop Newton justly observes, "What probability was there that the capital
city of a great kingdom,—a city which was sixty miles in compass,—a city which contained so many thousand inhabitants,—a city whose walls were 100 feet high, and so thick that three chariots could go abreast upon them, and which had 1500 towers of 200 feet in height,—what probability was there that such a city should ever be totally destroyed? And yet so totally was it destroyed, that the place is hardly known where it was situated."

But though this prediction was the sentence of Nineveh's ultimate condemnation, nearly a century elapsed before the decree of a righteous God was executed. He had more work for that national scourge to perform, ere it was finally broken. Thus Isaiah, about the same period in which the prophet Nahum wrote, was instructed to utter the following predictive strain: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? Is not Hamath as Arpad? Is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks," Isa. x. 5—12.

Now observe how lofty, yet how humiliating, is the language which God here employs. Before him is the mightiest monarch of the age, and yet the Most High speaks of him only as "a rod and a staff," the
lifeless appendage of a stricken tree, long since cut
down and laid in the dust. "Verily, man in his best
state is altogether vanity." But though a mighty po-
tentate is but a frail rod in himself, yet when employed
by the omnipotent hand of God, he may become a
terrible weapon to punish or to destroy. Yet when
the work of such men is done, they are thrown down
like the scaffolding of the building, and laid aside.

And was this prediction accomplished? It was, in
the following manner. The king of Assyria, having
subdued other nations, directed his eagle eye to the
kingdom of Judah, then blest with the pious and
peaceful reign of Hezekiah, but which, like the adjoin-
ing land of Israel, whose inhabitants were now capti-
tives in Assyria, was overspread with idolatry and its
accompanying vices.

"Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did
Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the
fenced cities of Judah, and took them. And Heze-
kiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to
Lachish, saying, I have offended: return from me:
that which thou puttest on me I will bear. And the
king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of
Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty
talents of gold. And Hezekiah gave him all the
silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in
the treasures of the king's house. At that time did
Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the
temple of the Lord and from the pillars which Heze-
kiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the
king of Assyria," 2 Kings xviii. 13—16.

This bribe, amounting to about 285,000£, like
that which had been previously given by the trem-
bling king of Israel, merely satisfied the invader for
the short space of three years, at the expiration of
which we find him at the gates of Jerusalem, with
a formidable band of vaunting warriors, fired with
ambition, and flushed with former conquests.

"The king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris
and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with
IN THE OVERTHROW OF ASSYRIA.

a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up, and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool which is in the highway of the fullers' field. And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder. And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? Thou sayest, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah, with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh,” 2 Kings xviii. 17—20, and 33.

What could Hezekiah do? He was powerless before so mighty a host of fierce invaders. He was also poor, having already parted with his treasures to satisfy the rapacity of the prowling wolf of the nations. He had, however, one unfailing source of comfort and hope, of which no enemy could deprive him, namely, faith and prayer, and he resolved to adopt those measures to which he should have resorted in his former extremity. With this wise determination to commit himself and his kingdom to that almighty Deliverer who has said, “Call upon me in the day of
trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Hezekiah "sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke; and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. It may be the Lord thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah," 2 Kings xix. 2—5.

And he received a most encouraging reply. "Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land," verses 6 and 7.

But not content to solicit the prayers of the prophet in his behalf, Hezekiah wisely determined to pray for himself. Having received an insulting letter from the proud monarch of Assyria, Hezekiah "rent his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth," repaired to the house of the Lord, spread the menacing epistle before the God of his fathers, and poured forth the tremulous ardour of his soul in the following plaintive, fervent strain: "O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire: for
they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now, therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only."

What a privilege, what a solace is prayer! It gives vent to the secret anguish of the heart. It brings light and strength to the soul. It forms a confederacy with Omnipotence. It obtains support, relief, and deliverance in the time of need. It has been of the greatest benefit to the saints in every period and emergency. Witness the success of Abraham, and Moses, and Samuel, and Manoah; of David also, and Elijah, Elisha, and Daniel. And, recollect the achievements of prayer recorded in the New Testament, both supplicatory and intercessory, proving that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It was so in the instance before us. Scarcely had the suppliant king risen from his knees, than he received from the prophet Isaiah, in the name of the God of heaven, the following cheering information: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning him, The virgin the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.—Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come unto mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest.—Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same
shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake;" 2 Kings xix. 20—34.

What a friend is God! so faithful, so powerful, so gracious, so near at hand. Well might David say, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me, therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

How much are they to be pitied who have no God to look to, and no Saviour in whom to confide in the time of trouble and danger! This is the forlorn condition of infidelity. It has no affiance in an overruling Providence, no relief from the energy and efficacy of prayer. But, like a vessel in a storm, without a pilot, or chart, or compass, it is "driven of the fierce wind and tossed," till, at length, it sinks in the dread abyss, is shattered upon the rocks, or cast like a deserted wreck on an unfriendly shore.

Nor is the nominal Christian, who is a stranger to the sustaining power of vital godliness, in a more favourable position in the time of trouble. Of what avail is a scriptural creed, if it be not prized and practised? Many in the deluge perished in the view and vicinity of the ark. It is not your birth in a Christian land; your baptism by a Christian minister; your possession of the word of God; or even your respect for religion, that can constitute your salvation. You must confide in Christ as your only Saviour. You must be sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and become the sincere and exemplary servants of God, in order to be safe and happy. Then all will be well; for "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

But to return to Hezekiah. The promise of protection was made "by Him who cannot lie;" and the shield of omnipotence was to be held by the out-
stretched arm of Israel's God. Nor did the promise fail. "It came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses." What a slaughter! What a scene! Who is not reminded of the ravages of the destroying angel in Egypt, and the death of the firstborn? Who does not exclaim, "The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands. Thou, even thou art to be feared, (O Lord,) and who may stand when once thou art angry?" How appropriate is the beautiful language of that fine, talented, but prostituted genius, who so well expressed his poetic comment on this fearful judgment of a sin-avenging God!

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold,
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue waves roll nightly on deep Galilee.

Like leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen,—
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed on the face of the foe as he pass'd,
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved and forever grew still.

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider, distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances uplifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord."

Alas! that a mind that could pour forth so much
truth as this quotation exhibits, should have been wrecked by bad principles and passions! It reminds us of some of those beautiful flowers, which are of the richest hues, while their properties are poisonous, and must therefore be avoided by the lips, like the deadly nightshade.

But the destruction of the Assyrian army was not the extent of the calamity which befell the blasphemous invaders of the land of Judah. For in the next verse to that from which we have taken our quotation, we are informed, that “Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons, smote him with the sword.”

Where was now his boasting? What a contrast did the wretched, fallen monarch, a lifeless corpse, slain by his own children at the feet of an idol, present to the pious, prayerful, protected Hezekiah! “The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, but the name of the wicked shall rot.” But, notwithstanding these reverses, so humbling, so calculated to stain the pride of human glory, Assyria continued for some years longer an imperious and potent kingdom, wealthy, idolatrous, but growingly effeminate, by the influence of accumulated riches and indulgence. To the predictions of the prophet Nahum already quoted, the production of Zephaniah’s pen, under the same spirit of prophecy, were added during the interim, and which are recorded in our text.

At length the judgments of the Lord, long threatened, though long suspended, befell the guilty nation. The Medes and Babylonians, hitherto subject to the Assyrian sceptre, rebelled, and having united their forces, took Nineveh, the ancient capital, which they levelled with the ground, and subverted the empire. This subjugation of an almost impregnable city, according to the testimony of an ancient author, (Diodorus Siculus,) was facilitated by the inundation of the river. He states that “there was an ancient pro-
phecy, that Nineveh should not be taken till the river became an enemy to the city. That after the allied revolters had besieged the city without effect for two years, there occurred a prodigious inundation of the Tigris, which overflowed part of the city, and made a considerable breach in the walls, which had been hitherto deemed impregnable, and thus enabled the invaders to enter without difficulty. The king of Assyria, concluding by these disastrous occurrences that the oracle was verified, built a large funeral pile in his palace, and having placed thereon his concubines, eunuchs, and treasures, perished in the flames at the moment that the city fell." He also adds, that "the king of Assyria, unaware of the exact state of affairs without, and deeming himself secure, abandoned himself to inaction and debauchery at a public festivity. And that it was during this season of profligacy and negligence that the final attack was made, which the sudden irruption of the river so much facilitated. Thus, as Diodorus affirms, Nineveh fell partly by fire and partly by water." This was the testimony of an ancient heathen author, who of course could feel no interest in the fulfilment of the Jewish Scriptures, but of whose veracity he was a public—recording witness.

Now, place these statements on one hand, and the terms of the prophecy on the other, and what is your conclusion? The former of these predictions, those of the prophet Nahum, were uttered upwards of a century anterior to the fall of Nineveh and the overthrow of the empire; and the latter about twenty-five years previous to that event. The following additional expressions must surely strike every reader as singularly correct: "The earth is burned at his (the Lord's) presence. By an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof. While they are folded together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. Out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image; I will make thy
PROPHECY FULFILLED

grave, for thou art vile. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palaces shall be destroyed. Nineveh is of old like a pool of water.”

The historian already quoted also informs us of the immense treasures which were found among the burning ruins. The prophet Nahum seems to have predicted that discovery. “Take ye the spoil of silver, take ye the spoil of gold, for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture. She is empty, and void, and waste.” Both Nahum and Zephaniah unite in foretelling Nineveh’s entire desolation. This is the language of the former prophet: “It shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her? All thy strong holds shall be like fig-trees.” Our text completes the prophetic picture of Nineveh’s degradation.

Have these predictions been verified? Has Nineveh fallen so low as to have passed from a magnificent city to a desolate, uninhabited wilderness? So far back as the second century, Lucian, a writer and citizen on the banks of the Euphrates, tells us that no vestige of Nineveh was then remaining, and none could tell where it was once situated. This testimony has been substantiated by other writers, both ancient and modern. Nineveh, “that great city,” the most extensive upon the earth at the period of its subjugation, is not only overthrown, but the very materials of which it was composed have receded from the eye into a shapeless heap, or have disappeared like the down of the thistle, or the dew of the morning. The besom of destruction has swept away every vestige of its former glory. No deserted palaces. No forsaken temples. No solitary theatres. No dilapidated ruins remain to attest its former greatness. But, according to the express language of our text, “Nineveh is a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.” The sun rises and sets; the seasons revolve as before in that deserted vicinity; but Nineveh is gone, and “the place which knew it knows it no more.”
Thus terminated in the grave of forgetfulness "the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me," after having existed two thousand years.

"Thus kingdoms pass away, and kingdoms rise,
Casting their shadowy forms before our eyes.
So let them pass; for in the skies there's one
That has no need of moon, nor of the sun,
And that will last for ever. To this fair seat
Turn, pilgrim wanderer on this earth, thy feet.
Hark! from on high a gentle voice says, 'Come!'
It is thy Saviour's—make it then thy home.'"

From this subject we learn—

1. The evil of sin Look at the ten tribes of Israel, subdued by a powerful enemy, and carried into captivity in a foreign land as a punishment for their transgressions. And at length, after a long respite, behold their conquerors defeated, subjugated, destroyed. Their cities wasted; their magnificent metropolis laid in ruins; their once mighty empire blotted out from the map of the nations, and exterminated from the very bosom of the earth. These are the sad results of national guilt; for "evil doers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the earth." "For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." How applicable to the desolation of Nineveh! Such being the evil of sin, as witnessed by its consequences, how should we hate it—rejoice in the character of the Lord Jesus as an almighty Saviour, "who was manifested to take away our sins"—and seek pardon, salvation, and newness of life through his infinite merits! "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered."

2. We learn from the subsequent conduct and final overthrow of the Assyrians, the uselessness of repentance, unless it be followed by genuine conversion. Of what avail was their contrition under the fearful predictions of Jonah? Their alarm was but tempo-
rary. Their sorrow and fasting produced no prac-
tical fruits of righteousness; and thus, as a nation,
they perished. How many in our day resemble the
Ninevites! The power of conscience—the preaching
of the Gospel—sickness—sorrow—the fear of death,
or some other impressive visitation, produces alarm
and apparent anxiety for an interest in Christ. But
oh, how frequently are these convictions and strong
emotions of soul temporary, like the melting of the
ice under a winter's sun, to be frozen again and
petrified into a harder mass than before! If Divine
visitations are not sanctified, they usually make the
heart more obdurate. Never, then, forget, that re-
pentance, to be genuine, must be followed by dedi-
cation to the service and glory of Christ.

3. We perceive, in the merciful preservation of
Hezekiah and the people of Judah, the safety of the
righteous in the time of danger, and the efficacy of
prayer.

Here is a memorable instance of the truth of the
91st psalm: "He that dwelleth in the secret place
of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of
the Almighty. Surely he shall deliver thee from the
snare of the fowler; a thousand shall fall at thy side,
and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not
come nigh thee." It was thus with king Hezekiah.
He "dwelt under the shadow of the Almighty" by
personal devotedness—by genuine faith. There he
stood in an impregnable fortress. There he took
refuge,—confided and conquered! "By these wea-
pons (faith and prayer) what victories have been
gained! what trophies are now suspended, as the
effect of these weapons, in the armoury of Zion, or
upon her turrets, as mementos to encourage us in the
Christian 'conflict!' Here the sword of Noah, who
nobly withstood the infidelity of the antediluvian
world—there the shields of Moses and Aaron, which
quenched all the fiery darts of proud and formidable
Egyptians and rebellious Hebrews—Here the armour
of Samuel—of David—of Elijah—Elisha, and Daniel,
and all the prophets—there the entire panoply of apostles, confessors, martyrs, and reformers! Such is the equipment of these saints, and such their weapons and their victories, among which the noble conquest of Hezekiah over the invading Assyrians is memorialized in a conspicuous place."—Krummacher.

Let us, then, ever bear in mind the apostolic injunction, "Be careful for nothing," (with unbelieving anxiety,) "but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ." Amen.
LECTURE III.

DESTRUCTION OF AMMON AND MOAB.

ZEPHANIAH ii. 8—11. I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people and magnified themselves against their border.

Therefore as I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation; the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

Our last Lecture presented some instructive instances of the providential government of God. We saw the Lord's denunciation of the sins of the Ninevites,—His threatened destruction of their guilty city,—his merciful acceptance of their contrition,—and the readiness with which he averted the impending stroke in answer to the importunate cry of penitence and prayer. We also beheld the permitted subjugation and captivity of the kingdom of Israel as the punishment of their infidelity; the invasion and protection of the kingdom of Judah; the destruction of the Assyrian army; the assassination of the arrogant Sennacherib, and the final overthrow of the Assyrian empire, in fulfilment of the threatenings of prophecy. These incidents incontestibly proved that whilst the Most High governs the universe at large, nations, families, and individuals are open to his unerring inspection, amenable to his righteous laws, and subject to his omnipotent control.

An additional feature in the supreme administration of "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible," comes before us in our present investigation, suggested by the language of the text—namely, the Lord's retributive justice. For a season, the wicked may prosper and the righteous be depressed. The
strong may tyrannize over the weak, and lordly vice laugh at the wrongs of suffering innocence. Dishonesty may pass without detection, and the sighing of the needy be lost in the passing winds. The period of Divine interposition may be unusually protracted, and the voice of faith and prayer may appear to be without avail, or even an echo. And during this long and painful suspense, injustice may triumph, licentiousness may luxuriate in ill-gotten gain, and discouragement be tempted to fear that the Lord most high has no eye to pity, no arm to save. Or, the insinuation may be suggested by the tempter, that the ordinary affairs of frail mortals in this vale of tears are too trivial for the interposition of the Supreme Ruler of countless worlds. But what says the Saviour? "A sparrow falleth not to the ground without your Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Delays are not denials. The long-suffering of the Lord towards evil doers is not uncommon. While mercy descends with elastic pinions to pardon genuine repentance, justice usually advances with a tardy and measured step to inflict merited penalties, "judgment being the Lord's strange work." But though the blessed God is "slow to anger," "he is great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty." And the longer the period in which his uplifted arm rises, the heavier is the blow when it falls. "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." Happy they who, in the language of faith and patience, can reply, "Behold, God is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me."

Such a promised intervention as an act of retributive justice, is foretold in the text, and was literally verified in the overthrow and final extermination of the parties who were implicated. Thus, another proof of the moral government of God was added to the page of history, and an additional evidence of the truth of prophecy and of the veracity of Holy Scriptures was displayed to the world.
The Ammonites and Moabites were the descendants of Lot, and occupied a peculiarly fertile and extensive region on the eastern border of Canaan. They were numerous, rich and powerful, and bore the venerable marks of antiquity. But though the descendants of a righteous man, and inhabiting a vicinity which perpetuates, to this day, the sad memorial of the glaring sin of their ancestors, and its tremendous punishment in the destruction of the cities of the plain—though "the dead sea," and the stricken adjacent mountains were ever before them as faithful monitors, "they saw as if they saw not." They were gross idolaters, and inveterate enemies of God's ancient people the Jews.

At one period the Ammonites so far succeeded in their aggression upon the kingdom of Israel, that, in concert with other pagan nations, they oppressed it eighteen years. And at two subsequent dates, the Ammonites greatly harassed some of the ten tribes, especially the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, whom the victorious king would only consent to spare on the condition that each Israelite should lose his right eye as a reproach to his native country: a barbarous penalty which would, no doubt, have been inflicted but for the seasonable interposition of the providence of God. When the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh were taken captive and deported to Assyria, the Ammonites exulted over their sorrows, and, like vultures watching for their prey, pounced upon the defenceless inhabitants who remained, and took possession of their cities. In this lawless aggression, the Ammonites, as we are informed by the prophet Amos, (ch. i. 13,) committed the most inhuman barbarity on the unprotected women, whom they slew with fiendish cruelty, at a period when sympathy can hardly fail to be excited. And at a still more distant date, in the vicissitudes of Canaan, when the kingdom of Judah fell by the conquering arm of the powerful Nebuchadnezzar, the Ammonites derided their woes, and rejoiced in their downfall.

Here we see the real aspect of paganism; the state
of human nature when left to the domination of its evil propensities, without the softening influence of Christianity applied by the Spirit of God. It was one of the sad results of a system which ascribed to its false deities the worst of passions, and was so familiar with the shedding of innocent blood, in their sacrificial rites. In the absence of the holy light and genial power of evangelical truth, which emanates from the mercy and grace of God, and is a religion of peace, benevolence, and love, it is not surprising that "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." Such localities, like uncultivated wastes which are overspread with thorns and briers, and noxious reptiles, were the seat of the great author of evil, "who was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth." It is so still. It is recorded of the Ashantees, (a powerful nation on the coast of Africa,) that "the English, during their residence at Comassie, the capital, witnessed dreadful scenes of barbarity. The custom of offering human sacrifices is carried to a frightful extent. The king had lately sacrificed on the grave of his mother three thousand victims, two thousand of whom were prisoners of war. And at the death of the late sovereign, the sacrifice was continued weekly for three months, consisting each time of two hundred slaves. The absurd belief here entertained that the rank of the deceased in the future world is decided by the train which he carries with him, makes filial affection interested in promoting, by this dreadful method, the exaltation of a departed parent. The Caboceers and princes, in order to court royal favour, often rush out, seize the first person they meet, and drag him in for sacrifice. While the custom lasts, it is with trembling steps that any one crosses his threshold, and when compelled to do so, he rushes along with the utmost speed, dreading every instant the murderous grasp, which would consign him to death."—Edinburgh Cabinet Library.

The following extract from an American Mis-
sionary Report is calculated to convince the most sceptical of the existence of that wretched ignorance and cruelty in heathen lands, which it is the design of the Christian missionary, under the Divine blessing, to ameliorate. "The king of one of the native tribes in the interior of the western coast of Africa, literally walks to his throne in human blood. His palace is paved with the skulls and bones of his enemies slain in battle, and the walls and roof are ornamented with the same horrid trophies. How fervently should we pray that the Lord's way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations!" And how cheerfully and generously should we encourage and support those institutions which aim at the universal extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Nor have these cruelties been confined to pagan lands. Even a spurious system of Christianity, in the absence of its lovely spirit, has been equally guilty. It is recorded of the Spanish Inquisition, that "from 1481 to 1788, upwards of 343,000 persons were condemned. Of this number, 34,382 were sentenced to the flames, 17,690 were burnt in effigy, and 291,450 were imprisoned and their property confiscated. During the forty-six years of the reign of Philip V. alone, 14,086 persons were condemned to punishment, of whom 1574 suffered by fire." And this is religion,—the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, "who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." O how important to know "what manner of spirit we are of," and to act in concert with that Divine precept which enjoins, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." If this golden rule were but universally adopted, how different would be the aspect of the great family of man! But in vain do we expect to "gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles." If "out of the evil heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, fornication, and all uncleanness,"
according to the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and which is confirmed by daily observation, we see the vast necessity of that spiritual and moral change of heart and character on which the word of God so frequently and strenuously insists, and which is indispensable to our admission into the purity and blessedness of heaven.

We now return to the Ammonites, whose rapacity and unfeeling barbarity were denounced by the prophets long before the period of their punishment, when they flourished in vice and wealth, while their Israelitish neighbours were carried captives to a foreign land. The following was the prediction of Jeremiah, chap. lxxix. 1—5, "Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the Lord, Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities? Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites: and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire; then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the Lord. Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled; cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me? Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord God of hosts, from all those that be about thee, and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth." Ezekiel was directed by the Spirit of the Lord to adopt the same threatening strain, chap. xxvi. 28: "And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach, even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn for the slaughter, it is furbished to consume because of the glittering. While
they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end. Shall I cause it to return into its sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and skilful to destroy. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered: for I the Lord have spoken it."

Similar language is recorded by Ezekiel, chap. xxv. 1–7, "The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; and say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; behold, therefore, I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee; they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. For thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast clapped thine hands and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; Behold, therefore, I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries; I will destroy thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." To these menaces the prophet Zephaniah added his maldictions, chap. ii. 11: "This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of
hosts. The Lord will be terrible unto them, for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and men shall worship him, every one from his place."

These were the predictions of Ammon’s punishment and ultimate extermination, uttered by different prophets, at different periods, and in different places.

And have they been accomplished? They have, most truly. About four years after the deportation of the people of Judah to Babylon, in whose afflictions the Ammonites so heartily rejoiced, they were invaded, and carried into captivity to the same distant country, and by the same powerful arm. There they remained nearly seventy years, far removed from their inheritance, and the portion of Canaan of which they had taken possession. And even after their return from their captivity, at the expiration of that period, they suffered by those revolutions with which the people of Syria and Palestine were visited, and became subject sometimes to the kings of Egypt, and at other times to the rulers of Syria. But whatever were their calamities, either when first invaded by Nebuchadnezzar, when prisoners at Babylon, or subsequently, they continued the same idolaters, and cherished and evinced the same unalterable enmity to the ancient people of God. Thus we find them, like their forefathers, ready to attack the Jews, when they were exposed to the ravages of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is lamentable when tribulation fails to soften the hard heart; when persons remain in the same state of hostility and obduracy as before the calamity befel them. Thus they resemble the different creatures which entered the ark: although saved from the flood, and residents with Noah, they were unchanged. The tiger lost not his fierceness, nor the wolf his voracity, nor the serpent its poison, nor the fox its cunning. Indeed, if afflictions do not soften, they usually harden.

At length, as was long ago foretold, the Ammonites gradually became extinct as a nation, and are now only known by their names. "Behold, these are the
ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest thou shalt despise their image."

The following authors, quoted by Dr. Keith in his valuable work on Prophecy, have borne testimony to the present desolate state of this once populous and luxuriant country. "All this country, formerly so populous and flourishing, is now changed into a vast desert."—Seetzen's Travels. "Ruins are seen in every direction. The country is divided between the Turks and the Arabs, but chiefly possessed by the latter. The extortions of the one and the depredations of the other keep it in perpetual desolation, and make it a spoil to the heathen."—Keith. "At every step are to be found the vestiges of ancient cities, the remains of many temples, public edifices, and Greek churches."—Burckhardt. Buckingham states that he lay down among the flocks of sheep and goats, close beside the ruins of Ammon; and particularly remarks that during the night he was almost entirely prevented from sleeping by the bleating of the flocks! So literally true is it, that the chief city of the Ammonites is "a stable for camels, and a couching place for flocks," as was predicted by the prophet centuries before Ammon became an unpeopled solitude. Lord Lindsay asserts, that "the dreary aspect of this country (though so naturally fertile) looks so much like the abode of death, that it would convince a sceptic. It is quite deserted, except by the Bedouins, who water their flocks at its little river. We met" he adds, "sheep and goats by thousands, and camels by hundreds, coming down to drink, all in beautiful condition. What a contrast to the neglected, and perhaps in many instances scattered, degraded dust of its once powerful princes and nobles!" To this we may add the impressive reflections of Keith: "Such is now
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the once royal city of Ammon. Numerous ruins, and heaps in bewildering confusion, show how it has become a desolate heap. Some buildings in good preservation, and others still perfect, whatever purposes they may have been constructed to serve, fulfil now the purpose which, long before their erection, the prophet assigned them. Arches, of old trodden by the lovers of pleasure of high or of low degree, unbroken by time, which has laid the gay flutterers in the dust, are now promiscuously crowded by beasts. And where nobles were before kept from contact with their fellows, the pilgrim traveller in a desolate land now has cause to complain of the annoyance of flocks. It was not for them that arches, sculptured with exquisite art, and almost unrivalled beauty, were erected, nor to shelter them that walls, which uninjured have endured for ages, were built. Nor did stables for camels, and couching-places for flocks, enter into the design of the architects of the palaces, theatres, or temples of Ammon, nor of the sculptors of their beautifully carved corners, and ceilings, and grand columns, and alcoves. But He who saw the end from the beginning declared it, ere even one of these edifices of Grecian architecture was constructed, or the foundation of any of them was laid, or the plan of any of them was thought of: the appointed doom, and destiny, and use, to which they have been brought, were delineated by the prophets."

We now turn to

THE KINGDOM OF MOAB.

This was another pagan nation, adjoining the Ammonites, on the east of Jordan, and adjacent to Judea. Like their idolatrous neighbours, of whom we have spoken, they were hostile to the people of Israel, united against them, and succeeded in subjugating and oppressing them, under the reign of Eglon their king, and during the administration of the Judges. So far back as the period in which Moses led the
children of Israel through the wilderness, the Moabites sought their destruction by sending for Balaam, a noted soothsayer, to denounce them, with the delusive hope that, under the ban of his withering curse, they would fall an easy prey to the destructive sword. But though foiled in this vain attempt to "curse those whom the Lord had blessed," they succeeded but too well in seducing many of the people to commit whoredom with their lascivious daughters, and at last to join them in their idolatrous rites. The following is the affecting record of Israel's seduction, Numbers xxv. 1—5: "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifice of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor."

This was a deep and permanent blot upon the character of the Hebrews, an offence which was not easily forgotten. Thus we find that, after the children of Israel were settled in their own land, suspecting that some of the tribes intended to swerve into idolatry, because they built an altar, the rest of the nation, among other deprecatory expressions of abhorrence, said, "Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, but that ye must turn away this day from following the Lord?" And in the 106th psalm, when the inspired writer enumerated the national trespasses of his ancestors, he added, "They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifice of the dead. Thus they provoked (the Lord) to anger
with their inventions, and the plague brake in upon them."

It is supposed that the worship of this idol of the Moabites was attended by many obscene rites, which indeed were and still are the usual accompaniments of heathen worship. The feasts in honour of this idol were celebrated after the manner of funerals, at the conclusion of which the degraded worshippers committed a variety of dissolute actions, on which account some imagine that Baal-peor, like other pagan deities, was the god of impurity. Hence the prophet Hosea, speaking of Israel's trespass, says, "They went unto Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto their shame." Apollinarius, in his paraphrase on the 106th psalm, says, "The Hebrews polluted themselves in their sacrifices to Baal-peor, by eating hecatombs offered to the dead."

If such were the dissolute worship of the Moabites, what must have been the state of their morals? This gross perversion of the design of man's creation, so offensive to the infinite purity of the Most High, and so destructive of national happiness, was, at length, denounced by the prophets, and threatened with exterminating judgments, which were inflicted by the same powerful agent,—Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and in the same manner as proved so disastrous to the other neighbouring countries whose accumulated guilt, like that of Nineveh, rose with an audible voice from earth to heaven. The following predictions were recorded against them, and received their exact verification.

Isaiah xv. "The burden of Moab. Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba: on all their heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off. In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly. And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh: their voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz: therefore, the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto
him. . . . For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. . . . For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land."

Jeremiah xlvi.ii. "Against Moab, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded and taken: Misgab is confounded and dismayed . . . . Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard. For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Hormaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction. Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness. For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests, and his princes together. And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the Lord hath spoken. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away; for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood. Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels and break their bottles. . . . How say ye, We are mighty and strong men for the war? Moab is spoiled and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter,
saith the king, whose name is the Lord of hosts, The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast. All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod! Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory, and sit in dust; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, and he shall destroy thy strongholds. O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way and esp'y; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done? Moab is confounded; for it is broken down; howl and cry, tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled. We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud,) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. I know his wrath, saith the Lord, but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab, mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres. And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the wine-presses; none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting. Moreover I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the Lord, saith the Lord, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods. Therefore, mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres; because the riches that he hath gotten are perished. For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth. There shall be lamentation generally upon all the housetops of Moab, and in the streets thereof; for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the Lord. They shall howl, saying, How is it broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him. For thus saith the Lord; Behold he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab. Kerioth is taken,
and the strong-holds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs. And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the Lord. Fear, and the pit, and the snare shall be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the Lord. He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the Lord. They that fled, stood under the shadow of Heshbon, because of the force; but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones. Woe be upon thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives."

Such were the successive predictions of Moab's fall. What a contrast does this picture of her approaching wretchedness and poverty present to her former greatness! How offensive to her pride! How insulting to her national vanity! And how unlikely to be realized at the period when these prophecies were uttered! Moab, to use the language of one of the prophets already quoted, was then at her ease, in the undisturbed possession of her fertile dominions. She had already seen the kingdom of Israel broken up, and the kingdom of Judah a prey to the spoiler. But still Moab was untouched. "And because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do wickedly." The postponement of their punishment, however, was not a pardon, but only a respite; for before the lapse of five years from the fall of Judah, both Ammon and Moab were led into captivity. The spoiler, in the person of the Babylonian king, invaded her territories, destroyed her cities, levelled her palaces and temples with the dust, overthrew her altars, dethroned her idols, and seized her treasures.
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Thus Moab was broken like a potter’s vessel, according to the word of the Lord. Several modern travellers have visited the country to the east of Jordan, formerly occupied by the kingdoms of Ammon and Moab, and all unite in their description of its desolation, assuring us that not a vestige of its former greatness is to be found except in a few deserted ruins. The stillness of death, broken only by the bleating of flocks belonging to the wandering Arabs, reigns there. But no lascivious worshipper now pollutes that deserted soil, as an offence to the holy Majesty of heaven. No malicious enemy to the people of Israel now seeks for an impious soothsayer, or musters the hosts to the battle. There are still the elevations of Moab, on which, at the instigation of Balaam, the altars were erected, and the sacrifices offered to obtain the protecting favour of God,—where the king and the princes were assembled in the greatest suspense, the crafty Balaam attempted his incantations in vain, and on whose summit he uttered the benediction on the people of the Lord of hosts, to the great dismay of their enemies. But Moab as a nation ceases to exist. She is spoiled, she is cut off. How correctly descriptive of her present state was the prophetic language of Jeremiah: “O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the city, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole’s mouth!”

In corroboration of this prophecy we have the published testimony of a French infidel, (Volney,) who, without the most distant design of doing homage to Divine revelation, says, “The wretched inhabitants of that country, being but few in number, live in perpetual dread of losing the fruit of their labours, (from ‘the wanderers’). No sooner have they gathered their scanty harvest, than they hasten to secrete it in private places, and retire among the rocks which border the Dead Sea.” Seetzen also informs us that he found many families living in caverns, and he actually designates them “the inhabi-
tants of the rocks." Thus, while the cities once populous, rich, and laden with iniquity have fallen, the formerly deserted rocks are tenanted by the few miserable inhabitants who remain, but who from extreme poverty are almost naked. Truly "Moab is a derision, like a wandering bird cast out of her nest."

In surveying this deserted and degraded region, how forcibly are we reminded of the language of the psalmist: "Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up." If we look at the locality formerly occupied by the kingdom of Ammon, the piercing cry of infants once sacrificed to Moloch, their national god, still seems to assail our ears. We are informed that the "idol was a statue of brass, seated on a throne of the same metal, adorned with a royal crown; having the head of a calf; with his arms extended in an inclined position. When the deluded parents offered their children in sacrifice they heated the statue within, and when it was burning hot, they placed the innocent victim upon its arms, where it was quickly consumed. That the cries of the children might not be heard, they produced a considerable noise by drums and other deafening instruments." Other authors vary this account by stating, that the child fell from the extended arms of the idol into a fire beneath. Such ever have been, and still are, the cruelties of heathenism, thereby proving what human nature is when left to itself. These are the boasted triumphs of unassisted reason. This is the system that infidelity would leave to itself, without the correcting influence of a pure and beneficent revelation from Heaven.

But no cries of unoffending innocence, writhing within the blood-stained arms of Moloch now rend
the air of Ammon, and appeal to the Lord of Sabaoth for vengeance. All is silent; but it is the silence of death, the unbroken stillness of wide-spread desolation. Nor do the plains of Moab resound with the lascivious song, and the dance in honour of Baal-peor. The vessel of iniquity once filled to overflowing is broken to shivers, and nothing remains but a few scattered fragments. "There are the workers of iniquity fallen, they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise." "O ye solitary ruins!" says Volney, "ye silent walls! how many affecting and striking reflections do ye offer to the mind which is capable of considering you aright." Let us, then, at the suggestion of that infidel writer, conclude with some of these reflections.

1. The possibility of misimproving national judgments.

You have heard of the destruction of the cities of the plain, as a punishment for the sins of their inhabitants. You are also aware that the spot which those cities occupied is now overspread, to the extent of eighteen miles, with the turbid waters of the Dead Sea, like a permanent tablet of God's justice and power, as the moral Governor of the world; while the adjacent mountains, black and barren, seem to stand aghast at the wide-spread desolation of which they have been the witnesses, and from which they have never recovered. Could you have supposed that the Ammonites and Moabites resided in that vicinity, in which their ancestors so fatally perished? Could you have believed, that they had those monitory waters, in which the cities of the plain were engulfed, and those scathed mountains constantly before them, and yet were guilty of many of the sins which were thus so signally visited? But so it was. The sad memorial was lost upon them. Blinded by "the god of this world," they saw not their danger of falling into the same condemnation. "Hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," they set God at defiance, braved his terrors, hated and invaded
his people, gave their hearts to their idols, and indulged in their iniquities, till at length they fell under the powerful, aggressive sword of the king of Babylon, and were carried into captivity.

Nor did they improve, as we have seen, by this calamity. That event seems to have been a source of purification to the Jews, as we never hear of their idolatry, to which they were so much addicted, after their return from Babylon. It was otherwise with their pagan neighbours. Though nearly seventy years revolved during their absence from their respective countries, they returned as they went, heathens in theory and in practice. How applicable to such nations was the language of Jeremiah: “Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.”

It is so still. How seldom are national judgments, or even family corrections, improved! The famine, the pestilence, the earthquake, and other public calamities, are soon forgotten; and those awful visitations which happen in neighbourhoods, and in the circle of endearments, how quickly are the impressions effaced which they produce! How has it been with us? But what is the consequence? Is God to be set at nought with impunity? If one stroke of his rod be insufficient, he will repeat it, and add to its severity until the end is answered. Oh! be concerned to say, in the language of the inspired word, “Let us search our sins, and find them out, and turn unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up,” Hosea vi. 1.

2. We see the possibility of living in the vicinity of religious advantages, and yet remaining strangers to the power of vital godliness.

It was thus with these nations: they were neighbours to the people of Israel and Judah; they knew the origin of the Jews, their history, and the miracles
which had been wrought in their behalf: they were doubtless acquainted also with their creed, witnessed their modes of worship, beheld their piety and prosperity in Israel's best days, and had the most favourable opportunities of judging of their state. And yet how did they live? how did they act? They preferred their idols, and their vices, to the knowledge and worship of the only living and true God.

Apply their case to yourselves: you live in a Christian country; you attend Christian worship; you are connected with pious relatives; you are the eye-witnesses of the value, necessity, and power of personal godliness, and yet the world has your heart. Think of the consequences: you cannot plead excuse; you are not far removed from the sphere of religious influence; and yet, though "the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places," you "make light" of Christ and his salvation. "Where much is given, much is required." "He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

3. In the punishment of these and other nations of antiquity, in accordance with the numerous predictions of the prophets, what an irrefragable proof have we of the existence and government of God! Here is his authoritative voice, his uplifted arm, his all-pervading knowledge: here is the indubitable evidence of his power, his justice, his faithfulness, his truth. Were the predictions of the prophets uttered at random? Were they fortunate speculations? Were they suggested by no prescient Spirit from on high? Was there no moral Ruler of the world apparent in these awful visitations, and in the accomplishment of those prophecies which foretold them? What, then, becomes of the vague creed of the infidel, who denies the existence of an overruling Providence?

"To such a person the universe is changed into a vast prison, where himself and his companions are confined by bolts and bars, forged by the hand of fate, by blind, immovable, and irresistible destiny, where
no compassion is found in a supreme Ruler to pity their sufferings or to afford relief! Where no eye looks with sympathy (from above,) and no ear listens with tenderness! Where the walls reach to heaven, and are hung with clouds and midnight! And where effort to escape conducts the miserable tenants only to their sullen caverns of despair! Should the atheist, sick with the forlorn and hopeless continuance, turn his eye to the doctrine of chance, he will find himself equally distant from consolation and from hope! Here, himself and all other beings, in earth, sea, and sky, with all their properties and operations, are mere accidents; involved and perplexed in their movements, like the particles of dust in a whirlwind! His thoughts, volitions, and efforts—the continuance of his own being, and that of others, are mere casualties, produced by no cause! upheld by no support! directed by no wisdom! and existing to no purpose! All is doubt and derangement. Not a plan can be rationally formed. Not a hope can consistently be indulged, where everything is left to chance (and the government of God is denied). Now turn to the Christian, whose Bible teaches him to believe and confide in a particular Providence! How different are his views and feelings, when beholding the same illustrious objects! To him the vast assemblage of worlds is the immense empire of the omnipresent Jehovah! contrived by his boundless wisdom! chosen by his boundless goodness! and governed by his boundless power! This single thought, like the rising of the sun, imparts to the universe, in a moment, a diffusion of illimitable splendour, investing, explaining, and adorning all beings of which it is composed. On all, the sublime impression of design is instamped as a living image, glowing in living colours. The universe becomes, not a prison, as in the former case, but a vast assemblage of means, directed to an immortal purpose! arranged in perfect order! adjusted in exact symmetry! and conducive to the glory of the infinite Creator, to the real welfare of his creatures, and to
the establishment of that system of salvation, holiness, and happiness, which his beloved Son came from heaven to establish and promote."—Dwight.

Here faith is encouraged; and true piety triumphs; whilst the monitory voice of revelation urges, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths;" and the grateful song echoes far and wide, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."
LECTURE IV.

DESOlation of EDom.

Jeremiah xlix. 13—18. For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

I have heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. For lo! I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord.

Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.

The Edomites, whose fearful doom is thus strikingly predicted, were the descendants of Esau, of whom the word of God, that faithful detector of the heart, gives us an unfavourable report. Though born and reared in the patriarchal tent, which, as a religious home, was consecrated to the service and glory of the triune Jehovah, Esau early began to betray "the carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," thereby showing that corrupt propensities may germinate and multiply in a situation every way adapted to the promotion of personal godliness. It was in the families of the Hebrew patriarchs that the light of pure religion shone, and a holy correspondence was maintained between heaven and earth. There the altar was reared in faith and hope. The sacrifices of righteousness, as types of the atonement of Christ, "the Lamb
slain from the foundation of the world," were offered. Holy affections were enkindled. Devout desires and dispositions were cherished, and displayed. And God graciously manifested himself to the souls of his people. How goodly were these tents thus distinguished and honoured. Angels ministering spirits hovered over them with delight, and "there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

To have witnessed such examples of primitive piety; to have breathed in such an atmosphere far removed from the corrupting influence of the world, must have been a privilege of no ordinary value. Here was everything to foster and encourage the best principles and dispositions: good examples, good instructions, religious ordinances, religious habits, frequent communion with heaven, a special Providence, and abundant prosperity under "the blessing of the Lord, which maketh rich."

In circumstances thus eminently favourable, Esau passed the early part of his life, often hearing the sad narrative of the fall, the gracious promise of an incarnate and victorious Saviour, the method of redemption by his atoning blood, of which their religious rites were typical, the judgments of God in the flood, and in the destruction of the cities of the plain; the piety of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Lot; and of all those traditional topics which, in the absence of a written revelation, were embalmed in the memory, and often rehearsed as subjects of the deepest interest in the family. These momentous facts were transmitted from father to son, from generation to generation, as a collection of topics of the most valuable description, of which the patriarchs were the honoured conservators, and which were at length embodied in the volume of Divine truth, for the instruction of the world.

But though Esau was thus favoured with a pious parentage and a religious home, his privileges "were a price in the hand of a fool," who neither appreciated nor improved them. Of his despicable "sale of
his birthright for a mess of pottage,” you have been reminded by the apostle Paul, as the ground of caution against bartering the blessings of salvation for the things of this life. Of his determination to be avenged of Jacob, you are also aware, when he said with fiendish hostility, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then I will slay my brother.” Nor are you unacquainted with his vindictive spirit, when after the lapse of twenty years he placed himself at the head of four hundred armed men to execute his threatening, which time was unable to efface or soften, on hearing that his brother, who had fled from him so long since, was returning to his venerable father and his native land. Such was Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites.

Now, humanly speaking, what was to be expected from the family of such a parent? We rejoice to know that God, in the exercise of his sovereign mercy, frequently “forms a people for his praise” in the most unpropitious situations, raising “plants of righteousness” in an ungenial soil, thus proving that “where sin has abounded grace does much more abound.” But that the tendency of bad principles and practices in parents is to contaminate and ruin their children, for time and eternity, none can deny. It is easy to divert the stream at the fountain-head from the channel in which it ought to flow, but it is not so easy to reclaim it. Parents, who neglect their own souls, and the eternal interests of their children, should reflect upon the accumulated guilt which that negligence involves. Their sin, like an hereditary disease, may descend to generations yet unborn. “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children,” as the fruit of his example, his instructions, his influence, his solicitude, and his prayers. But what does an ungodly man leave? The pernicious effect of an unholy character! His sanction of that which is destructive to the soul! His guidance to the broad road which leads to perdition! What will be the reflections of such a person on the
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bed of death, and in the regions of black despair? Why did the rich man in hell pray to Abraham, so importunately, that a messenger might be sent to his five brethren as a warning spectre from the invisible world? Was it his benevolent concern for their welfare that prompted that request? Was it not more probable that he had been the means of leading them astray; or that he had given an impulse to their depravity, and now dreaded the piercing, stinging fangs of their bitter reproaches "in that place of torment," as a fearful addition to the unmitigated and eternal severity of his doom? Parents! if you love your children, if you have any regard to the welfare of society, care for your souls, that you may cultivate the best and dearest interests of those who are committed to your care, for the proper training of whom you are most assuredly responsible: yes, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Esau, after all the advantages which he possessed under the fostering care of such a father as Isaac, at length left the patriarchal home, and married two Canaankish women, who are expressly said to have been "a grief to Isaac and Rebecca," the Canaanites being idolaters. This is but too frequently the first public act of a wayward, disobedient child—the first step to poverty and disgrace. And having formed such an unholy and pernicious alliance, Esau settled among the mountains and fruitful plains of Arabia, on the southern border of Canaan, adjoining the country of Moab, and not far from the land of Ammon; and it is more than probable, partook of their sins, of which idolatry was the parent vice. Here he became the progenitor of a considerable community, who increased to a powerful commercial and wealthy nation. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, we read of the dukes and sovereigns of Edom, and as a proof of their strength we find in the 20th chapter of the book of Numbers, that when Moses, at the head of the people whom he was leading to the
promised land, requested permission to pass through their borders, holding himself responsible for any trespass that might be committed, "Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. And Edom came out against him with much people and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel a passage through his border, wherefore Israel turned away from him." Job, whose touching history you have so often read with sympathetic interest, is supposed to have resided in this country, and he is represented as having been "the richest man in all the east."

A large portion of the trade that was carried on between Phenicia and India was transacted in this country, which became a most lucrative and prosperous entrepôt. To their national wealth and power, as one of the sources of their guilt, allusion is evidently made by the prophet in the text, and which terminated in their destruction: "Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord."

Their wealth and power ministered to their corrupt passions and appetites. And in addition to their ample means for indulging in sensual gratifications, they were under no counteracting influence from the governance of pure and undefiled religion. Like the neighbouring nations, the Edomites were idolaters. Of this a lamentable proof is recorded, to the shame and disgrace of Amaziah, king of Judah. He invaded their territory, and subdued them, but it is added: "Amaziah, king of Judah, after he had overthrown the Edomites, brought their gods, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down to them, and burnt incense unto them. Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, who said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people which
could not deliver their own people out of their hand." The same prophet also added, "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel," 2 Chron. xxv.

And so it occurred, precisely as the prophet predicted. We therefore read in the 27th verse: "Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the Lord, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish; but they sent to Lachish and slew him there." Thus we see the fatal consequences of apostasy from the service of God. It is a forfeiture of our inheritance. It is an exposure to the most imminent peril. Every creature may be armed against us. Every event may be unpropitious to us. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways and with the fruit of his own doings." At every step of his departure a voice seems to say, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

But to return to the kingdom of Edom, or Idumea, as it is sometimes called. From the earliest period of its history, Edom was distinguished, like its progenitor, Esau, whose vices it seems to have inherited, by its enmity to the people of God. In the reign of the excellent Jehoshaphat, the inhabitants of that country united with their neighbours the Moabites and Ammonites in a formidable invasion of Judah. Its pious king was greatly alarmed, feeling himself unequal to the powerful confederacy which marched against him. "But Jehoshaphat" (like a holy man of faith and prayer) "set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord." Nor did they ask Divine protection in vain. A prophet appeared among them with the assurance "that the Lord would be with them." The armies of Judah accordingly advanced, headed by a band of singers, who shouted, "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever." "And when they began to sing and to praise, the
Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.” “And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much,” 2 Chron. xx.

By this quotation we may judge of the power and wealth of those circumjacent nations, among whom the Edomites were so conspicuous. But the principal act of hostility for which their doom was sealed by the decree of righteous Heaven, was the aid which they rendered to Nebuchadnezzar when he destroyed Jerusalem, burnt its temple, and carried the inhabitants to Babylon. The Edomites exulted in Judah’s subjugation, little imagining that in five short years a similar calamity would be their own lot. The 137th psalm is supposed to have been penned in reference to their exulting animosity. “Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem, who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.” They did more. They prevented the escape of the wretched fugitives. They seized them in their flight, and delivered them up to the conqueror, unmoved by their misery, their entreaties, or their tears. But the day of retribution was at hand. The prophet Isaiah, in the contemplation of their national guilt, and in the foresight of their continued hostility, was instructed by the Spirit of God to give the first signal of warning in the following strain: “For my sword shall be bathed in heaven. Behold, it shall come down upon Idumea and upon the people of my curse, to judgment;
for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea; it is the day of the Lord's vengeance and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day, the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste, none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the cormorant” (or pelican) “and the bittern shall possess it, the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it, and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom; but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing; and thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof, and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beast of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow, the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow; there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate, for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein,” Isa. xxxiv. 5—17.

About a century subsequent to the date of this prediction Jeremiah added the following prophecy:—

“Concerning Edom, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished? Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him. If grape gatherers come to
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thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself; his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not." Jer. xlix. 7–10.

At a still later date, and when the foregoing predictions were on the eve of their fulfilment, Ezekiel, then among the captives in Babylon, added the following: "Thus saith the Lord God, Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah, by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them, therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will also stretch out my hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it, and I will make it desolate from Teman, and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom, by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger, and according to my fury, and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God," Ezekiel xxv. 12—14.

Near the same period the prophet Obadiah added his malediction: "How are the things of Esau searched out? and how are his hidden things sought up? All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border; the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee; for thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger, neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction, neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of
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distress. Thou shouldst not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity, yea thou shouldst not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen; as thou hast done it shall be done unto thee, thy reward shall return upon thine own head,” Obadiah 6—15.

Now, what we require, after the recital of these alarming threatenings, is, the proof of their verification by some credible witness who has visited that spot. Evidences are supplied by different travellers, of unquestionable veracity, among whom Volney, though an infidel, was the first to give his testimony in confirmation of that very system of revealed truth which he sought to impugn. It is remarkable, that Idumea was unknown to the civilized world for a thousand years, having been buried in oblivion till the year 1812, when its magnificent ruins were discovered by that enterprising traveller, Burckhardt. At the period of Volney's travels in Syria, when Edom was unknown to the world, as if it had been hurled into the grave of forgetfulness by the sin-avenging hand of God, that writer called the attention of modern enterprise to the fact of its existence, by the following statement: “From the report of the Arabs of Bakir, and the inhabitants of Gaza, who frequently go to Mäan and Karak, on the road of the pilgrims, there are, to the south-east of the lake Asphaltites, (the Dead Sea,) within three days' journey, upwards of thirty ruined towns, absolutely deserted: this was the country of the Idumeans, who, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, were almost as numerous as the Jews. In several of them are found large colonnaded buildings, which may have been ancient temples, or at least Greek
churches. The Arabs sometimes fold their flocks in them; but generally avoid them, on account of the enormous scorpions with which they abound. This country has never been visited by any traveller, though it richly deserves it."

On this quotation a judicious author has justly said: "It is true that these ruins afford the most important lessons, especially as to the truth of prophecy. Never was a man more completely vindicated from the charges of his enemies and calumniators, than is the truth of the Bible by the writings of that author, who has dared to call in question its Divine authority. That very man, whose senses were spell-bound in the thickest darkness of error, has undesignedly struck a blow, powerful enough not only to shake, but to overturn the erroneous opinions of any individual who will calmly interrogate these ruins, and listen to the voice of their reply. It is true, as Volney affirms, that they are not the effect of chance. Chance is but an empty name, invented for the purpose of hiding ignorance and sheltering sloth, but not a power capable of overthrowing cities. The destruction of empires demonstrates the wickedness of men, by whom their ruin has been effected and perpetuated. Everywhere the Scriptures point out in these ruins the punishment of sin, and thereby make manifest the moral government of God, and show the untiring vigilance with which his providence enters into the minutest details of human affairs: considered in their true light, as the express and literal fulfilment of numerous prophecies, they prove, beyond all doubt, the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures."

That remarkable country, Idumea, to which Volney was the first to call the attention of modern investigation, and which supplies such a collection of impressive evidences, has, since his days, been explored by Laborde, Captains Irby and Mangles, Lords Lindsay and Hamilton, and other gentlemen, who have favoured the world with their researches, and who all
unite in doing homage to the truth of revelation in what they witnessed. But though the long-lost Petra, the ancient capital of Arabia Petraea and of Edom, which was sealed up in obscurity for so many ages, has been penetrated at considerable inconvenience, and even danger, by different travellers, no foreign footsteps passed through that blighted country for centuries, on which the express interdict of the Lord Almighty has so long rested, till the year 1839. Speaking of that guilty land, the prophet Isaiah said, in the name and under the inspiration of the Most High, “From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever,” chap. xxxiv. 10.

Taking that passage in a strict and literal sense, it would have been deemed the very height of presumptuous daring to attempt to reach the confines of Judea by that track, although for ages it was the highway of the nations, when affluent Edom occupied her original position on the scale of commercial greatness: almost insuperable difficulties would have also deterred most travellers from the attempt, in consequence of the well-known jealousy and ferocity of the native tribe of Arabs who infest that secluded region. But at the period already named an American gentleman, of considerable energy, courage, and tact, having visited Egypt and Mount Sinai, resolved to attempt, if possible, not only to explore the singular ruins of Petra, but to “pass through” that country to Palestine, an effort which had never been made before since that land lay sealed up in its doom. Having narrowly investigated the above-mentioned prohibition of prophecy, he concluded that it was not to be interpreted so literally, that the reprobated track is never more to be trodden; but that it simply meant, that the line of communication from Petra to the Holy Land, once so much frequented, shall be deserted. In that view of the passage I think he was sanctioned; for, in the preceding verse to that in which the Divine prohibition is recorded, it
is declared, that "the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever," Isaiah xxxiv. 9, 10. Now this declaration is not literally fulfilled, nor was it designed to be, otherwise that guilty land would still present a bituminous conflagration, unquenched, and unquenchable. The whole passage is undoubtedly a strong denunciation of vengeance and desolation, which has come to pass most circumstantially and impressively; but by straining figurative portions of the inspired volume into a literal meaning, in every instance, we give infidelity an undue advantage, and leave valuable parts of the sacred writings naked and unverified. After this explanation, to guard against mistakes, we shall introduce our author, who shall speak for himself. "I was now about to follow the wandering footsteps of the children of Israel, when they took up the bones of Joseph, and fled before the anger of Pharaoh, from their land of bondage, to visit the holy mountain of Sinai, where the Almighty, by the hands of his servant Moses, delivered the tables of his law to his chosen people. But I had in view something beyond the holy mountain. My object was, to go from thence, through the heart of the desert, to the Holy Land. There were difficulties, and, perhaps, dangers on this route; but I found it impossible to desist. It was entirely new: it lay through the land of Edom—a land that occupies a large space on the pages of the Bible,—Edom, denounced by God himself, once given to Esau for his inheritance, (as being of 'the fatness of the earth,') but now a desolate monument of the Divine wrath, and a fearful witness to the truth of the words spoken by his prophets. "I did not mean to brave a prophecy. I had already learned to regard the words of the inspired penmen with an interest I never felt before; and with the evidence I had already had of the sure fulfilment
of their predictions, I should have considered it daring and impious to place myself in the way of a still impending curse.

"To me the words of the prophet seemed sufficiently verified, in the total breaking up of the route then travelled as the great highway from Jerusalem to the Red Sea and India, and the general and probably eternal desolation that reigns in Edom. Still, however, it added to the interest with which I looked upon this route; and moreover, in this dreary and desolate region, for more than a thousand years buried from the eyes of mankind, its place unknown, and its very name almost forgotten, lay the long-lost city of Petra, the capital of Arabia Petraea, and the Edom of the Edomites, containing, according to the reports of the only travellers who have ever been permitted to enter it, the most curious and wonderful remains existing in the world—a city excavated from the solid rock, with long ranges of dwellings, temples, and tombs, cut in the sides of the mountain, and all lying in ruins, 'thorns coming up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof, a habitation of dragons, and a court for owls.' Three parties had, at different times, visited Petra, but neither of them had passed through the land of Idumea, and according to the reports of the few travellers who had crossed the borders, the Bedouins, who roamed over the dreary sands of Idumea, were the most ferocious tribe of the desert race. It will not be considered surprising, therefore, that having once conceived the project, I was willing to fulfil it, even at the cost of some personal difficulty and hazard.""..."

"I had now crossed the borders of Edom! The doomed and accursed land lay stretched out before me,—that theatre of awful visitations, and their more awful fulfilment! Given to Esau, as being of the fatness of the earth," (in accordance with the prophetic pronunciation of his venerable father, Israel,) "but now a barren waste, a picture of death, an eternal monument of the wrath of an offended God, and
a fearful witness of the truth of the words spoken by his prophets—'For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. From generation to generation it shall lie waste, none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it; and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness,' etc., etc., as is recorded in Isaiah xxxiv. I read in the sacred book prophecy upon prophecy, and curse upon curse, against the very land on which I stood! I was about to journey through this land, and to see with my own eyes whether the Almighty had stayed his lifted arm, or whether his sword had indeed come down upon Idumea.

"The valley before me varied from four to eight miles in breadth, and on each side were high, dark, and barren mountains, bounding it like a wall. On the left were the mountains of Judea, and on the right those of Seir, the portion given to Esau as his inheritance; and among them, buried from the eyes of strangers, (the approach to it being known only to the wandering Bedouins,) was the ancient capital of his kingdom, the excavated city of Petra, the blighted Edom of the Edomites. The whole land lay before me in barrenness and desolation. No trees grew in the valley, and no verdure on the mountain-tops—all was bare, dreary, and desolate. The next day the general features of the scene were the same—eternal barrenness and desolation. At length we reached the foot of these mountains, where, towering above all the rest, surmounted by a circular dome, was the bare and rugged summit of Mount Hor, the burial-place of Aaron, visible in every direction at a great distance from below, and held in high veneration by the Arabs. Not far from the base of Mount Hor we came to some tombs cut in the sides of the rock, and standing at the entrance of the excavated city, the long-lost
capital of Edom, where, about one hundred years before Christ, the king of Arabia issued from his palace at Petra, at the head of an army of 50,000 men; but which, for more than one thousand years past, has been deserted and lost to the civilized world, so that its very site was unknown until described by the enterprising Burckhardt, in 1812.

"And this was the city, at the door of which I now stood. It is situated in a natural amphitheatre, of two or three miles in circumference, encompassed on all sides by rugged mountains. The whole of the area is now a waste of ruins! Dwellings, palaces, temples, triumphal arches, are all prostrate together in undistinguishable confusion! The sides of the mountains are cut, and filled with long ranges of houses, temples, and tombs, excavated with vast labour out of the solid rock! And such is the wonderful combination of nature and art, to make this ancient capital magnificent and strong, that the loftiest portals ever raised by the hands of man—the proudest monuments of skill and daring, sink into insignificance by the comparison. Wild fig-trees were growing out of the rocky heights. The eagle was screaming above us. All along were the opening doors of tombs, forming the great necropolis of the city; and before us were the ruins of the beautiful temple hewn out of the rock, with rows of pillars and ornaments standing out fresh and clear, as if but yesterday finished by the sculptor.

"At some little distance we also found in the bosom of the mountains, and hewn out of the solid rock, a large circular theatre, with thirty-three ascending rows of seats, and capable of containing more than 3000 persons. The whole is in so high a state of preservation, that if the tenants of the tombs around could once more rise into life, princes and people might re-occupy their long vacated seats!" He adds: "To me the stillness of a ruined city is nowhere so impressive as when sitting on the steps of its forlorn theatre, once thronged with the gay and the pleasure-
seeking. Day after day these seats had been filled, and these silent rocks had echoed with the applauding shout of thousands. Little did a proud Edomite then imagine that a solitary stranger would, one day, be wandering over the ruins of his proud and wonderful city, and meditating on the doom of a race long swept away by the hand of God as a punishment for its sins. I would," he continues, "that the sceptic could stand as I did among these ruins, and there open the sacred book, and read the words of the inspired penman, written when this desolated place was one of the greatest cities in the world. I see the scoffer arrested—his cheek pale—his lips quivering—and his heart quaking with fear, as the ruined city cries out to him with a voice strong and powerful as that of one risen from the dead. Though he would not believe Moses and the prophets, he believes the handwriting of God himself in the fulfilment of his own word in the desolate and eternal ruins around him.

"I cannot leave this interesting region without again expressing my regret at being able to add so little to the stock of useful knowledge. I can only testify to the existence of the ruins of cities which have been known only in the books of historians, and I can bear witness to the desolation that reigns in Edom. I can do more, not with the spirit of scoffing at prophecy, but of one who, in the strong evidence of the fulfilment of predictions uttered by the voice of inspiration, has seen and felt the evidences of the sure foundation of the Christian faith; and, having regard to what I have already said in reference to the interpretation of the prophecy, 'None shall pass through it for ever and ever,' I can say that I have passed through the land of Idumea. My route was not open to the objection made to that of Burckhardt the traveller, who came nearest to passing through the land; for he entered from Damascus on the east side of the Dead Sea, and struck the borders of Edom at such a point that, literally, he cannot be said to
have passed through it. My route, therefore, is not open to the critical objections made to his; and beyond all peradventure, I did pass directly through the land of Idumea lengthwise, and crossing its northern and southern border; and unless the two Englishmen and Italian before referred to passed on this same route, I am the only person, except the wandering Arabs, who ever did pass through the doomed and forbidden Edom, beholding with his own eyes the fearful fulfilment of the terrible denunciations of an offended God. And though I did pass through, and yet was not cut off, God forbid that I should count the prophecy a lie. No; even though I had been a confirmed sceptic, I had seen enough, in wandering with the Bible in my hand in that unpeopled desert, to tear up the very foundations of unbelief, and scatter its fragments to the winds. In my judgment, the words of the prophet are abundantly fulfilled in the destruction and desolation of the ancient Edom, and the complete and eternal breaking up of a great public highway; and it is neither necessary nor useful to extend the denunciation to a passing traveller."—Stephens’s Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petræa, and the Holy Land.

This interesting statement requires no comment. It carries the most convincing evidence to the most untutored mind. Thus nature and art, things animate and inanimate, the infidel and the orthodox, the past and the present, ruins and reptiles, have given their verdict, and concurred as witnesses for God to attest the truth and inspiration of his holy word. How forcibly are we reminded of the language of Abraham in his reply to the request of the rich man in hell: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. If they obey not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

And yet, alas! how many remain in the chains of an infidel philosophy, after all that they have seen and heard; some having felt no scruple in deriding the
holy volume, though teeming with proofs of its Divine authenticity, as "a book of lies." Have they carefully read, have they closely investigated these defamed writings, with all the aid that is so abundantly supplied for explaining that which seems contradictory, and comprehending those portions which are obscure? They have not. "Dr. Beattie, professor of moral philosophy in the University of Aberdeen, who wrote on the Evidences of Christianity, and was repeatedly brought into contact with unbelievers, states: 'From several conversations that it has been my chance to have with unbelievers, I have learned that ignorance of the nature of our religion, and a disinclination to study both it and its conclusions, are to be reckoned among the chief causes of infidelity.'

The ignorance of Voltaire, especially respecting the Old Testament, is almost incredible. Gibbon, though so remarkable for his learning, does not seem to have read any judicious exposition or able defence of Christianity. It is stated, on the authority of Dr. Johnson, that Hume acknowledged that he had never read the New Testament through with attention. Is was thus with Paine, who bought a copy of the Scriptures, not to examine them diligently and candidly, but to write against them." The truth is, that infidelity has laid its cold and iron grasp upon the heart. There lurks the inclination to forget God, and reject his peaceful and holy government.

Many a man is an infidel because he loves that which is evil rather than that which is good. He is proud, careless, conceited; perhaps selfish and immoral. He prefers to live without restraint. For this purpose, he wishes that the Bible were untrue. He tries to believe what he wishes,—readily listens to insinuations and objections,—stifles the dictates of conscience,—gladly yields to the sophistry of erroneous books, or the ribaldry of infidel companions, and having committed his frail bark to the ocean of error, resolves to risk the consequences. But while we sincerely pity, and affectionately weep
over such persons, we entreat them to recollect, that their unbelief does not detract from the truth and authority of the inspired writings. Their scepticism does not diminish one atom of the weight of evidence by which the word of God is sustained, and "the same shall judge them at the last day."

My dear young friends, let me most earnestly caution you against the fatal influence of infidel sentiments. They often lie under a fascinating disguise, like the viper in a garden of flowers. Beware of sceptical companions. Beware of sceptical publications. Let not curiosity tempt you to advance even one step beyond the safe and happy boundary of Christianity. You would not like to place a cup of poison to your lips merely to taste its flavour. Neither would I advise you to read infidel books, to ascertain what they contain. You have the word of God, which is commended to you by the wise and the good of every gradation of intellect, some of whom were sceptics until they were better informed. Keep to that holy book. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More are they to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

"Volume of God! thou art that eastern star
Which leads to Christ; soon shall thy circuit reach
Round earth's circumference; in every tongue
Revealing to all nations what the heavens
But shadow forth—the glory of the Lord."—Conder.

O my young friends, follow that guiding star; that "sure word of prophecy; that light which shines in a dark place;" it will conduct you to the Redeemer, to glory, and to God.

The subject of our Lecture also furnishes a warn-
ing to the enemies of Christ and of personal religion, who frequently appear in the character of persecutors, although professing their faith in the veracity of the sacred volume.

Let such persons contemplate the punishment of the Edomites and the melancholy condition of Idumea. One of their principal offences in the sight of the great Searcher of the heart was, as you have heard, enmity to the people of Israel. They invaded their territory—rejoiced in their adversity—exulted in their subjugation and captivity—seized upon the vacated inheritance—and treated with cruelty the fugitive inhabitants. But God threatened them, and vengeance at length came on them to the uttermost. And who has not heard the voice of inquiry, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." But what saith the answer of God? "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." Many an Edomite has said of Zion, "Rase, rase it, even to the foundations thereof;" but the great Lord of the church, who has "all power in heaven and earth," has declared, "On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Whether, therefore, the cause of religion be menaced, or private Christians be "persecuted for righteousness' sake," the true believer, in the confidence of faith, may sing,

"Let mountains from their seats be hurl'd
Down to the deep, and buried there,—
Convulsions shake the solid world,—
Our souls shall never yield to fear.

Zion enjoys her Monarch's love,
Secure against a threatening hour;
Nor can her firm foundations move,
Built on his truth and arm'd with power."
LECTURE V.

SUBVERSION OF PHILISTIA AND TYRE.

Amos i. 6—10. Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom: but I will send a fire on the walls of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: and I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God.

Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:

But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

It is vastly impressive to walk among the tombs of the mighty dead. What a change in their condition do we behold! What humiliating pictures of human degradation and helplessness do we contemplate! How small and lowly is the space occupied by those who governed whole nations! How silent are those lips, whose authoritative word was the law of millions! And, in many instances, how deserted, neglected, and dilapidated are their sepulchres! In this dark domain of the king of terrors are the desecrated fragments of many an illustrious form, which was once "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day;" that was decked with jewels, swayed a sceptre, and wore a crown! Or perhaps we sit upon the broken tomb of a military hero, whose name stood high upon the annals of earthly fame, and whose skill, courage, and achievements were celebrated by the grateful plaudits of his sovereign and his country. But all are upon a level,
and have reverted to their native dust. Each has
"said to corruption, Thou art my mother; and to the
worm, Thou art my sister and brother."

But a still more impressive spectacle is before us
in our present researches, whither the providence of
God and his holy prophets have led the way. We
are roaming not merely among the sepulchres of fa-
milies and individuals, but among the tombs of whole
nations. We are visiting cemeteries, each of which
contains a kingdom. We are treading upon the dust
of empires. Every locality is a mausoleum of de-
parted myriads, of all ranks and ages. Not a survivor
remains, to repair their tombs, or to guard the frag-
ments of their mortality from the hand of the spoiler.
All is desolate! forgotten! unknown! What a les-
son for worldly ambition! How true the language
of the inspired psalmist, "They that trust in their
wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their
riches, none of them can by any means redeem his
brother, or give to God a ransom for him, that he
should still live for ever, and not see corruption. For
he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the
brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.
Their inward thought is, that their houses shall con-
tinue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all gene-
rations: they call their lands after their own names.
Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not, he is
like the beasts that perish. This their way is their
folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like
sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on
them, and the upright shall have dominion over them
in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in
the grave from their dwelling."

But while these reflections are suggested by visit-
ing the ruins of ancient nations which were severally
threatened by the prophets under the authority of
the Spirit of God, as a penalty due to their delin-
quencies, and whose desolation confirms the truth of
the sacred writings, these themes are not selected by
choice. It would be more in accordance with the
spirit of the Gospel, and with the feelings of the Christian and the philanthropist, to be able to trace the progress of true religion from age to age, and from country to country, until the whole earth is filled with "the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Such a happy state was not witnessed in pagan lands, however renowned for intelligence and skill, power and prosperity. Philosophy had the world to itself for centuries, with the exception of the small land of Canaan. What was the result? "The world by wisdom knew not God." "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Let infidelity survey this scene, and judge of the consequences of human nature being left to its own resources, without a Divine revelation,—without a Divine and governing influence. The experiment was tried for ages, and here are the results. This was the origin of national ruin. It was a corrupt system, gradually wasting away into national decomposition, and ending in the grave. This would have been the effect of human depravity even if there had been no retributive Providence.

It was in reference to these direful, exterminating vices that Moses, under Divine direction, cautioned the people of Israel against conforming to the nations of Canaan and its vicinity, whom he held up to abhorrence when he said, "Inquire not thou after the gods of these nations, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination unto the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire unto their gods," Deut. xii. 30, 31. Besides the most ferocious and unnatural cruelty, their idolatry included the basest pollutions. Thus the inspired lawgiver was instructed to add, "Defile not your-
selves in any of those things; for in all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you, and the land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out his inhabitants. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinances, that ye commit not any of those abominable customs which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein. I am the Lord your God,” Levit. xviii. 24, 25, 30.

Two of these guilty nations, thus ripe for destruction, like grass for the scythe of the mower, come before us in the present Lecture, namely, the PHILISTINES and PHENICIANS.

The Philistines dwelt on the western and southwestern borders of Judea, and on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. So far back as the days of Abraham, they were a powerful people, having at that early period rulers and considerable cities. Their country was divided into five small kingdoms, or states, each governed by a prince or noble, termed in Scripture “the lords of the Philistines,” and distinguished by its principal city. For many years, at different periods, the Philistines, like the other surrounding nations, were the invaders, and at one time became the conquerors and oppressors of the Hebrews. Their success was divinely permitted, as a punishment for Israel’s sins; but when adversity softened them to repentance and prayer, the yoke was broken, and their oppressors were defeated. In these merciful deliverances, Shamgar, Samson, Samuel, Saul, and David were conspicuous, as powerful agents in the hand of the Lord of hosts. It was during one of these incursions, when Divine protection was withdrawn, that the people were smitten with a great slaughter. The ark of God was taken as a trophy of war, and was carried in triumph to the temple of the idol Dagon. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, fell on the battle-field; while their venerable father, unable to sustain the shock which these disastrous
tidings produced, so fatal to his native country, so dishonourable to religion, fell from his seat and expired. During the pious and prosperous reign of David, the Philistines were vanquished, and continued in subjection to the kings of Judah, with a slight interval, for many years. In the worthless reign of Ahaz, the Philistines made fatal inroads upon the territory of Judah, until his excellent son and successor, Hezekiah, aided by the powerful arm of the Lord, exterminated them from the heritage of Zion. In the latter reigns of the Jewish kings, they still became a severe scourge, in proportion as the protecting power of vital religion declined. Thus for eight hundred years the Philistines were the enemies of Israel and Judah, and ever ready to pounce upon them as their prey.

But like the other nations, of which we have already spoken, their day of retribution was approaching, and was distinctly foreseen and foretold by the prophets. In point of time the text was the first prediction that announced their destruction. This was followed, at different periods, by others still more explicit and copious, as a warning to evildoers,—as a proof that "there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

Hear the language of Jeremiah, uttered at a period when the author of our text was in the silent tomb, chap. xlvi. 1—7: "The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet, against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza. Thus saith the Lord, Behold waters rise up out of the north, (the country of Chaldea,) "and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children, for feebleness of hands; because of the
day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper that remaineth: for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor. Baldness is come upon Gaza. Ashkelon is cut off, with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself? O thou sword of the Lord, how long wilt it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the seashore? there hath he appointed it."

To this we may add the prophecy of Ezekiel, at a still more distant date, as we imagine: chap. xxv. 15: "Thus saith the Lord God, Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a spiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coast. And I will execute great vengeance upon them, with furious rebukes: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them." The prophet Zephaniah added his denunciation, in the following strain, chap. ii. 4—7: "Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea-coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the Lord is against you: O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant: and the sea-coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity."

The latter part of this passage is supposed by
many expositors to present the olive-branch to the house of Israel, in the anticipation of their final restoration to their own land. There is also a promise of a similar import in reference to the neighbouring sea-coast of Tyre, which will come before us in our next quotations.

To the foregoing asseverations we may add the testimony of Zechariah, chap. ix. 5—7: "Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited: and a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod; and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite."

These were heavy tidings, uttered by different prophets, at different periods, when Philistia was rich in natural resources; powerful; favoured by the salubrity of its soil and climate; and strongly fortified against the encroachments of an invading army. But though strong, its subversion was determined by Him "who can make one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight." We have the testimony of many witnesses who have visited that scene of desolation, and have given us their report. Volney, whose writings we have frequently quoted, says, "In the plain between Ramla and Gaza we met with a number of villages, badly built of dried mud, and which, like the inhabitants, exhibit every mark of poverty and wretchedness. In winter they and their cattle may be said to live together. Except the environs of these villages, all the rest of the country is abandoned to the Bedouin Arabs." And again, "The white marble ruins which are still remaining at Gaza show that it has been at some former time the abode of wealth and luxury: at present it is a small unfortified town. Several ruins are met with in suc-
prophecy fulfilled in the

cession, the most considerable of which is Ezdoud, at the present time noted only for its scorpions. All the rest of the country is a desert.” The same writer enumerated the kingdoms of Damascus and Idumea, of Jerusalem and Samaria, of the warlike states of Philistia and the commercial republics of Phenicia. This Syria, said I to myself, which is now almost depopulated, then contained a hundred flourishing cities, and abounded with towns, villages, and cultivated fields, frequented roads, and crowded habitations. Everywhere might have been seen splendid productions of the hand of man?"

Had Volney been a Christian, and referred to his Bible for a reply, he would have read, “He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein,” Psalm cvii. 33, 34.

It was predicted that Gaza should be burned with fire. In corroboration of that fact, Dr. Keith, who has recently visited that locality, states that “innumerable fragments of beautifully-painted glass, of polished marble, and fused stones, as if they had come forth from a furnace, lie thickly spread in every place which the sand has not covered, at various distances, on a space of more than two miles in extent. Before approaching Gaza,” he adds, “unconscious the ancient city stood, it might well be asked, is meant by ‘baldness coming upon it?’ But traversed the place on which it stood, and beholding it as it rises naked and bare above the plain, perfect baldness shows how truly the word of the Lord rests upon it. The writer looked in vain for any fragment of ruin one cubic foot in size,—for any shrub, or plant, or blade of grass, to relieve or interrupt the perfect baldness of Gaza; but he found it not.”

To the testimony of this interesting witness, we
may add the report of his brethren, Rev. Messrs. M’Cheyne and Bonar, who accompanied him to Palestine and other countries on a mission to the Jews from the Church of Scotland. They state, after having described the vicinity formerly occupied by the Philistines, “Beneath us lay the high road to Gaza, the same as in ancient days, but lonely and still, except when the shepherds and their flocks passed by. Whether the Ethiopian eunuch had come thus far or not, it was this sort of road he was traversing; and it may have been while his chariot moved heavily and noiselessly over these sands, that Philip had the opportunity of running up to him and speaking the words of eternal life. Returning to our tents, we were now prepared to verify Dr. Keith’s conclusion, that these hills of sand, where we had pitched our tents, really covered the ruins of ancient Gaza. Each of us had found fragments of polished marble in the flat hollows between the sand-hills, the remains, no doubt, of the palaces of Gaza, and also masses of fused stones, proving that God had ‘sent a fire on the wall of Gaza.’ We now saw in a manner we had never done before, that God had fulfilled his own word, ‘Baldness is come upon Gaza.’ We saw that not merely mourning, such as baldness indicated in ancient times, but literally and most remarkably, the appearance of baldness which has come upon Gaza. No sort of verdure, not a single blade of grass, did we see upon these sand-hills. One solitary tree there was, which only served to make the barrenness more remarkable. This barren, bare hill of sand is the bald head of Gaza. How awfully true and faithful are the words of God!

“All along the coast of Philistia we had seen how accurately these words are fulfilled: ‘I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coast,’ there being now none of all those ancient warriors that used to issue from these coasts and penetrate into the heart of Judah. We saw also the ful-
filment of this word, 'The king shall perish from Gaza,' a paltry governor being now its ruler, not engaged in affairs of state, but in helping travellers to find camels for their journey. We were much struck likewise by observing how truly the 'sea-coast had become dwellings and cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks.' Many large flocks of sheep and goats were coming into the village, and we followed 'the footsteps of the flocks,' in order to see where they were lodged at night. We found the dwellings to be merely cottages of mud opening into a court-yard. In this yard the flocks were lying down while the villagers were spreading their mats to rest within. We could not look upon these 'folds for flocks,' so closely adjoining 'the dwellings and cottages for shepherds,' and this in the very region anciently called 'the sea-coast,' without expressing to one another our admiration at the manner in which God had brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy already more than once alluded to."

And this is the desolation of a country, whose proud inhabitants once set at defiance the only living and true God! Whose armies, headed by Goliah, braved the recollection of Jehovah's judgments upon the Egyptians, upon Pharaoh and all his hosts! Who set at nought the mighty hand that "smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and led his chosen people through the flood as upon dry ground!" Where are now the captors of the ark of the covenant? Where is Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whom the deluded king of Judah sent to consult in an emergency? And the worshippers of Dagon, in whose temple, as a trophy, they placed the fallen shrine of Israel? Come and read the affecting narrative of their degradation, amid the sterility and silence which pervade their national overthrow. Come and witness "the sure word of prophecy." Come and learn the impressive truth, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. Evil shall slay
the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be
desolate. There are the workers of iniquity fallen,
they are cast down and shall not be able to rise."
"Their memorial is perished with them." Oh! how
important to have a personal interest in Christ, "who
is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,"—
to have a scriptural title to that "inheritance which is
incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,"—
to have a good hope through grace, which is full of
immortality,—to have the assurance of safety, by the
internal testimony of the Holy Ghost, in that great
day when "a mighty angel will descend from heaven,
and place one foot upon the earth and the other on
the sea, and swear by him that liveth for ever and
ever, that time shall be no more."

From the demolition of Philistia we pass to

THE SUBVERSION OF TYRE.

Phenicia, of which Tyre was the principal city,
was another of the countries that occupied the margin
of the holy land. It adjoined Philistia, and stood on
the coast of the Mediterranean. Thus favourably si-
tuated for trade and commerce, the Phenicians be-
came at an early date a maritime people of the first
distinction, and were eventually denominated "the
lords of the ocean." Characterized by industry, skill,
and enterprise, to which their geographical position
gave them every facility, and stimulated by the love
of wealth which no difficulties could appal, and no
bounds could limit, the inhabitants of Tyre having
concentrated their energies principally in that city,
carried on a most extensive and lucrative trade by
land and sea. The greater part of the known world
wafted wealth to its celebrated harbour, and peo-
ple of all nations and languages thronged its streets.
At length, recognized as the emporium of the globe,
"its merchants were princes," and pride, luxury, and
sensuality, the usual concomitants of abounding
wealth, appeared in every form. By a reference to the 26th, 27th, and 28th chapters of Ezekiel we may form an estimate of the trade and riches of Tyre. With “Hiram king of Tyre” “Solomon in all his glory” formed an alliance. From thence he received the most skilful workmen for the finer parts in the erection of the Temple, and between these two monarchs a warm friendship long subsisted.

But though exalted upon the scale of ancient nations, the Tyrians, like other Asiatics, were pagan idolaters, and at one period, if we rightly comprehend the language of one of the prophets, they worshipped their king as a god. To such an extent of imbecility or insanity does human infatuation sometimes reach when actuated by “the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience,” instead of being influenced by the spirit of Christ. However learned, or talented, or elevated in society; however acute, or discerning, or cautious in secular pursuits to guard against imposition, and secure self-interest, it is astonishing how the mind has been blinded and duped in the great concerns of religion when left to its own resources. In all ages, in all countries, this lamentable delusion has prevailed. Not only among the untutored and the uncivilized, but even among men of the finest stores of intellect, who have presented extraordinary displays of mental development, in the arts, in science, in literature, and in commercial transactions, what affecting specimens of ignorance and folly have they exhibited, upon the greatest of all questions relating to the state of man by nature, and the method of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; thus showing the indispensable necessity of Divine teaching by the word and Spirit of the living God.

But the inhabitants of Tyre, with all their skill and enterprise, were not only idolaters, but like the other bordering nations of whom we have spoken, became the enemies of the people of the Jews, thus presenting another remarkable proof that human nature has been the same in all periods and circumstances, not only
in its alienation and depravity, but also in its avowed hostility to God and his church. Thus when the day of adversity arrived in the land of Israel, the inhabitants of Tyre not only refused to extend their sympathy to their afflicted neighbours, but treated them with scorn, trampled upon their fallen greatness, and increased the bitterness of their cup. For this unfeeling conduct, together with their other transgressions, they were threatened with merited destruction. And when we attentively peruse these predictions, and reflect that they were uttered against one of the most wealthy and powerful states then existing, as will be seen in the sequel, we shall perceive that these menaces were some of the most remarkable which ever proceeded in the spirit of prescience, from human lips, and we can only give utterance to our astonishment by exclaiming, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The prophet Amos was the first to speak. He lived about eight hundred years before Christ. Tyre fell, in fulfilment of Divine predictions, five hundred and seventy-three years before the Christian era, consequently there was an interspace of two hundred and thirty years between the prophecy and its accomplishment, thus, there was not the smallest tendency in passing events to that catastrophe. This is his language, Amos i. 9—11: "Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof."

Joel, who lived at the same period, or somewhat later, expressed himself in terms equally explicit, chap. iii. 4—8: "Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Palestine; will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return
your recompense upon your own head. Because ye have taken away my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things: the children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head. And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the Lord hath spoken it."

This is a remarkable passage. It was prospective. But it came literally to pass, although it extended through so many years. When Alexander took Tyre he reduced the people, whom he spared, to slavery; and according to the testimony of Arrian, 30,000 of them were sold. In these wars, says Calmet, the Jews who obeyed at that period the Persians, purchased the Phenician slaves, whom they sold to the Sabeans or Arabs. Thus the predicted retribution was circumstantially fulfilled.

The prophet Isaiah, at the same distant date, recorded his denunciation, chapter xxiii. 1—12: "The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish! for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them. Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle: thou whom the merchants of Zidon that pass over the sea have replenished. And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue: and she is a mart of nations. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins. As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. Pass ye over to Tarshish: howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.
Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crown-
ing city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffick-
ers are the honourable of the earth? The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength. He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong-holds thereof. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim: there also shalt thou have no rest."

At a period upwards of a hundred years after the date of these predictions, which were still unaccom-
plished, but were fast hastening to their verification, the prophet Ezekiel penned his malediction, which for explicitness has never been surpassed. Chapter xxvi. "And it came to pass in the eleventh year in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished now she is laid waste: Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God, and it shall become a spoil to the nations. And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword: and they shall know that I am the Lord. For thus saith the Lord God: Behold I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchad-
nezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horse-
men, and companies, and much people. He shall
slay with the sword thy daughters in the field: and
he shall make a fort against thee, and lift up the
buckler against thee. And he shall set engines
of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall
break down thy towers. By reason of the abund-
ance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy
walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and
of the wheels and of the chariots, when he shall
enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city, wherein
is made a breach. With the hoofs of his horses
shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy
people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go
down to the ground. And they shall make a spoil of thy
riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they
shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant
houses: and they shall lay thy stones, and thy tim-
ber, and thy dust in the midst of the water. And I
will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the
sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will
make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be
a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no
more: for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord
God."

"Thus saith the Lord God to Tyrus: Shall not
the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the
wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the
midst of thee? Then all the princes of the sea shall
come down from their thrones, and lay away their
robes, and put off their broidered garments: they
shall clothe themselves with trembling: they shall
sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every
moment, and be astonished at thee. And they
shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to
thee, How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of
seafaring men, the renowned city, which wast strong
in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their
terror to be on all that haunt it! Now shall the isles
tremble in the day of thy fall: yea, the isles that
are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure.
For thus saith the Lord God: When I shall make
thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; when I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited: and I shall set glory in the land of the living: I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God."

The 28th chapter of Ezekiel is equally remarkable as a prophetic menace, and will amply compensate a diligent perusal.

In these passages, both the guilt and punishment of the luxurious Tyrians are placed in the clearest light. By bringing these widely extended prophecies into a focus, they appear in the following summary, which must be the landmarks in our investigations. To use the language of Bishop Newton, "The opulent and populous city of Tyre was to be destroyed by the Chaldeans, who at the delivery of the (first three) prophecies were an inconsiderable people, and particularly by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. That the inhabitants should flee over the Mediterranean into the islands and countries adjoining, and should not be able to find a quiet settlement. That the city (though subverted) should be restored after seventy years, and return to its gain and merchandise. That it should be retaken and destroyed. That the people in process of time should forsake their idolatry and become converts to true religion. And, finally, that the city should be totally destroyed, and become a place only for fishers and the spreading of nets."

The whole of these astounding predictions have been fully accomplished, by the omnipotent superintendence of the Lord most high. Tyre, "the queen of the ocean," "the strong, the joyous city," was besieged by the Chaldeans under the invincible and ambitious Nebuchadnezzar, and fell, in the year 573 before Christ,
after a siege of thirteen years. The inhabitants, no longer able to resist their powerful invaders, fled by sea, with all their moveable property (being a maritime people) to their colonies. Thither their determined victor followed them, conquered them, slew many, and led the remainder into captivity. At the expiration of several years, they were permitted to return to their own country with the other captive nations by the magnanimous decree of Cyrus, (of whom we shall speak more particularly in the lecture on the return of the Jews from Babylon.) Restored to their fatherland they erected another metropolitan city, pursued the trade and commerce of their ancestors, became wealthy, lived in a state of splendid idolatry like their forefathers, and were at last subdued by Alexander the Great, who, after prodigious labour, took the city, burnt it with fire, and put most of the guilty inhabitants to the sword, selling the remainder to the neighbouring nations as slaves.

Here we see the retributive justice of God, in visiting the Tyrians with precisely the same calamity with which they had afflicted the people of Judah, whom they seized and sold into captivity. This impressive incident reminds us of the confession of Adonibezek, as recorded in the book of Joshua, ch. i. 6, 7. "Adonibezek fled; and they pursued him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and great toes. And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me." Thus the new city of Tyre fell under the successful invasion of Alexander, the Macedonian, as the old city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon displaying in both instances remarkable evidences of "the sure word of prophecy," and the faithfulness of God to his threatenings as well as to his promises.

But though the Lord "took vengeance on their inventions," some streaks of light were visible in the dark cloud which prophetic foresight depicted. The
same voice that foretold Tyre’s subversion, intimated the future conversion of the remnant of her desolate inhabitants to the Christian faith. Thus Isaiah, after predicting their overthrow, added, “And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing,” chap. xxiii. 18. This was a delightful change. It is indeed an unspeakable mercy when our afflictions are sanctified to the welfare of the soul; when they wean our affections from the world, and fix them supremely on God and his Christ. Many have proved the benefits of adversity, which, like the spoils of winter, have softened and purified the hard and stubborn heart. Many have said, “It hath been good for me that I have been afflicted.”

“Thou dost but take the lamp away, 
To bless me with unclouded day.”

And were the sanguine anticipations of the prophet realized? They were in part, at the commencement of the Christian era, and perhaps are yet to receive an additional verification. Thus we read, Mark iii. 7, “Jesus withdrew himself, with his disciples, to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.” And, in the seventh chapter and twenty-fourth verse, it is added, “And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it; but he could not be hid.”

The apostle Paul visited that locality, and was gratified at finding a Christian community, Acts xxii. 3, “We landed at Tyre, and finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: and when we had
accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city, and we knelt down on the shore and prayed. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship, and they returned home again."

Bishop Newton has quoted two authorities to prove, that several churches were formed in that country, and that the property of the people, instead of ministering to their lusts, was consecrated to the Lord. Yes, said the psalmist, when celebrating, in the spirit of prophecy, the regal glory of Christ, "And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour," Psalm xlv. 12.

But notwithstanding the consecration of the city of Tyre to the Lord, in the early age of the Gospel, prophecy foretold its final ruin, doubtless as the result of its apostasy: consequently, after all its vicissitudes, it was at length to become a miserable wreck, stranded on an inhospitable shore. Such is its present state. The following testimony of the deputation from the Church of Scotland, who visited that country in the year 1839, will be received with peculiar interest;—"All the magnificence of Sidon is gone; for 'God has executed judgments in her.' There are no more any merchants, worth mentioning, here; nor are there any signs of trade. How remarkable that passage, 'Be thou ashamed, O Zidon, for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men nor bring up virgins.' The city, and the sea that laved its walls, now lament the want of its once crowded and stirring population. It no more can boast of a king. All the kings of Zidon have been made to drink the wine-cup of God's fury, as was foretold. The gardens and groves that shelter the east side of the town afforded a pleasant shade. There the rich merchants of Zidon enjoyed their wealth, and revelled in that luxury and ungod-
liness which made the Saviour fix on them as eminent instances of guilt: 'It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.'

"Our way lay directly south, through the fine plain which stretches beyond Tyre. In three hours we came upon many fragments of marble pillars, scattered on the shore. These, and other similar remains, appear to be the remnants of ancient villas, if not of some town. In the days when Tyre and Sidon enjoyed their greatest splendour, this midway situation would be most favourable for the country seats of the princes and merchants."

"Tyre is but the wreck of a town. You cannot traverse its streets without meeting, at every turn, fragments of other days: thus, at the gate, there are two fallen pillars; in the bazaar, another prostrate pillar helps to complete the pavement; and on the shore of the peninsula (once THE ISLAND) broken columns lie on all sides, over which the sea dashes its waves.

"We stood awhile amidst the ruins of the old Christian church, at the south-east corner of the town, where Eusebius is said to have preached; and, looking over, observed the waves break on two large columns, with their capitals, that lay close under the walls. From this point, and from the summit of a tower to which the Jews led us, we surveyed the whole extent of what was insular Tyre, once densely covered with the palaces of Tyrian merchants. The little harbour of Tyre, the ruins of which are standing here and there, would not now vie with the harbours of any of our fishing villages. The island was originally half a mile from the shore; but across the intervening gulf, Alexander, with amazing labour, formed his famous causeway, (when he attacked the city,) using for that purpose the stones and the very dust of ancient Tyre, scraped from off her.

"Ruins of ancient walls and foundations are still to be found in different parts of this causeway. In order
to understand fully the accomplishment of the Divine predictions against Tyre, it must be borne in mind, that though the island may have been very remotely occupied as a strong-hold, yet the most ancient city, called by historians Palæ-Tyrus, or Old Tyre, was situated on the main land, at a distance of nearly four miles south from the island. This was 'the strong city, Tyre,' mentioned in the days of Joshua, and the 'strong-hold of Tyre,' in the time of David.

"As many travellers have done before us, we stood upon the ruins of insular Tyre, and, stretching our eye round the bay to the south, conjectured where old Tyre may have been situated; and afterwards, on our return from Acre, we traversed the coast, and sought with the utmost care for any remains of 'the strong city'—but in vain. The word of the Lord has come to pass, 'Though thou be sought for, yet thou shalt never be found again, saith the Lord God.' It occurred to us, in the days of Tyre's glory, when she took 'Cedars from Lebanon to make masts for her; and oaks from Bashan, to make oars; and fine linen from Egypt, to be spread forth as her sails;' when 'all the ships of the sea, with their mariners, were in her, to occupy her merchandise:' this vast bay may have afforded her an anchorage, where the forests of masts would present to the eye a spectacle not less noble than any which can be seen in the harbour of the very greatest of our commercial cities; and this in a region of surpassing beauty. Keeping both the Tyres in view, we could not fail to notice with what awful accuracy the word of God has been verified concerning them, not a vestige of her palaces remaining, except the prostrate granite pillars over which the wave is ever beating. If, indeed, the sea has made an advance upon the coast, then the very rocks where old Tyre stood may be now under water, and the nets of the fishermen may thus also be literally spread over them: and this also would give new meaning to the expression, 'Thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the
waters; although, at the same time, the ruin of her fleets and merchant ships will completely satisfy the terms of this prophecy. Looking to the bare rock of the island, or to the village that stands upon it without a remnant of the triple wall and fortress, once deemed impregnable, a traveller is ready to ask, in the very words of the prophet, ‘Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days?’ ‘Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. He stretched out his hand over the sea; he shook the kingdoms; the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong-holds thereof.’

Many other travellers have confirmed the predictions of the prophets to the very letter, as Maundrell, Shaw, Volney, and Bruce. But the imaginative language of a still more recent witness, Lamartine, cannot be passed over in silence. After describing the neighbouring country extending from Beyroot to the foot of Mount Lebanon, he adds, “From the top of one of these eminences we see Tyre, at present called Sour by the Arabs, which appears at the extremity of a long and sterile causeway. At a distance it seems a lively town looking on the sea, but it is only a beautiful shadow, which vanishes as you draw near. A few hundred crumbling and almost deserted houses, in which the Arabs collect at the evening their flocks, is all that remains of Tyre at this day. She has no longer a harbour in the sea, and a road on the land. The prophecies are long ago accomplished upon her. We journeyed in silence, contemplating the wreck and dust of empire, which we trampled on. I thought on the prophets, and taxed my memory for some of the eloquent menaces which the Divine Spirit spoke by Ezekiel. I found them not in words; but I saw them in the deplorable
reality before my eyes. I had full in view the black Mount of Lebanon; but when I looked for the eagles which ought to have appeared, as my imagination conceived, I saw them not. No bird of prey appeared to descend from the mountain-heights, to devour this corpse of a town, reproved by God, and threatened by his prophets. At the moment I was making this reflection, some large, strange, and motionless object appeared on the top of a perpendicular rock. It was like five statues of a block of stone placed there as on a pedestal. As we drew near, we saw one of these objects expand his wide wings, and flap them against his sides with a noise like that of a sail set to the wind. We distinguished them as five eagles of the largest kind I had ever seen. They did not fly away or bestir themselves as we drew near. Planted, like kings of the desert, on the edge of the rock, they looked down upon Tyre as their appanage, whither they were about to return. They seemed to possess it as of right—Divine—instruments of a command which they enforced, of a prophetic vengeance which they were commissioned to execute toward man, and in spite of man! I could not tire myself with thinking of the prophecies, of which this scene rendered us the astonished witnesses.

"Never had any thing more vividly struck my sight and my spirit; and it required an effort of my reason, not to behold, behind these gigantic figures, the lofty and terrific figure of Ezekiel rising above them, and pointing out to them, with his eye and finger, the cities which God gave them to devour, whilst the fire of celestial wrath shot from his glance! We stood about forty paces off. The eagles just turned their heads, and cast a disdainful look at us! At length two of our troop rushed in a gallop, musket in hand, to the very foot of the rock—still they flew not! Some shots caused them heavily to rise; but they returned, and hovered for a long time over our heads, without being reached by our balls—as if they had said to us, 'We fear you not—you can do nothing—
we are the eagles of the Almighty—to fulfil the words of his prophets.”

From this copious subject we learn—

1. The instability of human greatness.

Where is now “the queen of the ocean, whose merchants were princes, whose traffickers were the honourable of the earth?” They are gone. “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree: yet he passed away, and lo! he was not; yea I sought him, but he could not be found.” And is this the frail tenure of “uncertain riches?” Is this the fruit of worldly enterprise, of earthly prosperity, for which so many thousands sacrifice their health, their peace, their spiritual interests, their God and Saviour, their immortal souls? How valueless the gain! How unsatisfying the acquisition! How uncertain the period of its duration! How unworthy the preference of an intelligent and accountable being! “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Let ours be a different choice. Let each of us say, from the heart, and under a high appreciation of “the unsearchable riches of Christ,”

“What sinners value, I resign,
   Lord, 't is enough that thou art mine;
I shall behold thy blissful face,
   And stand complete in righteousness.”

2. If the destruction of a powerful state or nation be so tremendous, what a wreck will the end of the world present!

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.” What a startling, impressive scene, compared to which every other is
PROPHECY FULFILLED IN THE

manifestly inferior. It is the close of time! It is the dissolution of this earthly system! When the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised from their beds of sleeping dust! When the living shall be transformed from mortality to immortality, preparatory to everlasting blessedness or eternal perdition! When Christ shall appear in the clouds with power and great glory! And all nations shall be summoned to his bar! Where shall we stand? on the right hand of the supreme Judge, or on the left? And in what character shall we appear? Again we say, what an impressive spectacle! presenting

"A world alarm'd, both earth and heaven o'erthrown,
And gasping nature's last tremendous groan;
Death's iron sceptre broke—the teeming tomb,
The righteous Judge, and man's eternal doom."

Young.

"From his bright eyes affrighted worlds retire,
He speaks in thunder, and he breathes in fire;
Garments of heavenly light array our God,
His throne a bright consolidated cloud:
Support me, Heaven! I shudder with affright:
I quake! I sink with terror at the sight!"

Where will the neglecters of Christ and his great salvation then shelter themselves, when every man shall give an account of himself to God? What excuse can they make? What apology can they offer that will succeed? Then will be presented, in all the terrific forms of real life, the final scene depicted by the apostle John, when he says, "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the
Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 14—17. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

Let us most anxiously seek this state of sanctity, which is indispensable to a peaceful death, a joyful resurrection, and a blessed immortality. Then, instead of seeking to flee with the ungodly, from the presence and frown of the omniscient Redeemer, who will then be our presiding Judge, "we shall have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."
LECTURE VI.

DEGRADATION OF EGYPT.

Ezekiel xxix. 12–15. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. Yet, thus saith the Lord God, At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: and I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.

Our Lectures have been hitherto confined, with one exception, to the successive overthrow of the idolatrous nations bordering on the land of Canaan, and which all participated in their hostility to the ancient church of God. We have seen those nations in their prosperity and guilt; in their exposure to the maledictions of prophecy, and their doom. We have beheld kingdom after kingdom rising into power, abjuring their allegiance to the Most High, overspread with the delusions of paganism, devoting their existence to the world, inflated with ambition, the slaves of sensuality, and, at length, hurled from their pinnacle of glory to the depths of degradation. Yes, we have seen them "melting like wax before the Lord," and leaving no monument to perpetuate their name, but scenes of desolation; no voice to break the stillness of their death-stricken country, but the murmur of the passing wind which moans among their ruins, or sweeps over their deserted and forgotten graves.
We are now about to take a wider range—to proceed to a greater distance from the land of Canaan, to mark the verification of prophecy in the destruction of evil doers in a country more remote.

It was the opinion of some of the ancient heathen that the authority of their gods was local, confined to one department of nature, or limited to one country, or even to one district: thus they had "lords many, and gods many;" some for the heavens, some for the earth, and others for the ocean: there were gods of the hills and of the valleys, of the rivers, the seasons, diseases, and the like, till at last human infatuation extended the catalogue almost to infinity. The Hebrew prophets, on the contrary, ever represented the Almighty as the only living and true God, the adorable Creator and supreme Ruler of all worlds, creatures, and events, who requires the undissembled homage of the heart. They could therefore say, in the lofty strain of the pious psalmist: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me: if I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me; yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

On this extensive scale of the Divine government we are conducted to the once magnificent kingdom of Egypt—a country more frequently spoken of in the Holy Scriptures than any other pagan land, and which is often referred to as a type of our bondage to sin, Satan, and the world; and of the Christian's deliverance by the redeeming grace and power of the Lord Jesus.

This very ancient nation was founded at a period of remote antiquity by Mizraim the son of Ham, and
grandson of Noah, on which account it is sometimes called "the land of Ham." But though its commencement was small, Egypt gradually arose through the revolution of ages to the zenith of fame. It was celebrated for the inexhaustible fertility of its soil, in consequence of the annual overflowing of the Nile, one of the largest rivers of the world, which extends upwards of a thousand miles, without receiving a tributary stream of importance, and whose waters are celebrated for their delicious flavour, thus reminding us of "the river of the water of life," "which maketh glad the city of our God," the streams of salvation which copiously issue from the smitten "rock of ages." This flowing treasure, enjoyed like the Gospel of Christ "without money and without price," has ever made the land of Egypt productive when other countries in seasons of drought have been sterile and bare, on which account Egypt has been called "the granary of the world." Thither the patriarchs were in the habit of repairing when their own country failed in years of drought. Thither Joseph was carried by the Ishmaelites—was sold as a slave—and passed through the alternations of poverty, servitude—fidelity—false accusation—imprisonment, and Divine interposition, till he became the governor of the land and the benefactor of his father's house. There his venerable parent Jacob, and his brethren, sojourned, and their posterity resided upwards of four hundred years; were cruelly enslaved, and often sighed for deliverance. In Egypt, Moses was born—was concealed in the ark of bulrushes—was guarded by a paternal Providence—was found and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter—and became the deliverer of the oppressed Hebrews. In that country the Lord made bare his holy arm, asserted his authority, and displayed his mighty power; in which the earth, the air, fire, water, insects, reptiles, and disease, became his invading army, till at last the death of the first-born broke the oppressor's yoke, and set the captives free. In Egypt the ordinance of the passover, that
significant type of the paschal Lamb of God, was first instituted, presenting the pacific and protecting efficacy of "the blood of sprinkling." The fiery-cloudy pillar, indicative of the presence and guidance of the Angel of the covenant was first beheld. And the Red Sea miraculously opened its watery bosom, like the floods of sorrow to the true believer, to form a safe passage to the hosts of the Lord from the land of their enemies; and became a dreadful vortex in which the impious king and his advancing army sank to rise no more.

But though these national judgments, together with the loss of a million of captives, whose many years' toil greatly enriched the land of their oppressors, must have proved a severe stroke to the Egyptians, that nation continued to rise upon the scale of empires till it became the most renowned kingdom of the world. It was celebrated for learning; architecture; the magnitude and number of its cities; its population and wealth. Herodotus, the father of history, states, that Egypt contained twenty thousand cities, some of which were of great extent and considerable beauty, as may be seen by their present ruins. The magnificent Thebes, with its hundred massive gates, was its ancient capital, whilst spacious temples, colossal statues, beautifully wrought tombs, paintings and pyramids, rendered the Egyptians the most remarkable people of antiquity. Moses is said to have been "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and when the sacred historian speaks of Solomon, he is compared to the sages of that country. Their pyramids, the most stupendous monuments that were ever erected by human hands, are supposed to have been the work of the Israelites whose drudgery in brick and mortar is spoken of in the book of Exodus. The principal of these structures, whose base is equal to the largest of our metropolitan squares, is the highest building in the world, and is said to have occupied 100,000 men twenty years in its erection. And for what purpose? "These pyramids," says Rollin,
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"were tombs, and there is still to be seen in the middle of the largest of them, an empty sepulchre, cut out of one entire stone. Thus all this bustle and expense, and labour of so many thousand men, ended in procuring a prince, in this vast and almost boundless pile of building, a little vault, six feet in length! Besides the kings who built these pyramids had it not in their power to be buried in them, and so did not enjoy the sepulchres they had built. The public hatred which they incurred in consequence of their cruelties to their subjects, in laying such heavy tasks upon them, occasioned their being interred in some obscure place, to prevent their bodies from being exposed to the fury and vengeance of the populace."

Such are the pains and costs that "the men of the world, who have their portion in the present life," frequently incur, to perpetuate their name, who are strangers to the hopes of a blessed immortality, and to the glorious Redeemer "who has brought life and immortality to light through his Gospel." And such also are not unfrequently the disappointments in which their favourite projects terminate. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not, yea I sought him, but he could not be found." Oh! to have a portion with "the righteous, who shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

But after all the antiquity—the fruitfulness—the wealth—the learning—the wonderful works, for which the Egyptians were so celebrated above other nations, what was their religious and moral character? It was to ask that question with greater effect, that we have given you a brief sketch of their original magnificence. It was to exhibit the humiliating overthrow of that nation in the most striking form, that these statements have been made, that you may see what a country is, whatever be its facilities, when destitute of the genial influence of Divine revelation; that illuminating, beautifying, invigorat-
ing, enriching sun of the moral world. We, therefore, naturally inquire, after all these displays of intellectual skill and manual labour, for which the Egyptians gained so high a position, what was their character as reasonable, responsible, and immortal creatures, beneath the scrutinizing eye and subject to the governing power of an infinitely holy God, "who will render unto every man according to his works?" What were their notions of the Supreme Creator as the great ruler of the world? of the state of man by nature? of the promise of a Divine Saviour, and of the method of reconciliation through faith in his justifying righteousness and atoning blood? for of all attainments, this is the most important. We may also inquire, as the Egyptians were at so much expense and labour in the formation of their cities, temples, and tombs, what were their modes of worship? Where were their hospitals for the sick? Their asylums for the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the insane, the lame and the aged? Where were their homes for the widow—the fatherless—the orphan—the destitute and stranger? Where and to what extent were their public schools and their institutions for extending the pure and consolatory blessings of real religion far and wide? We have a right to propose these queries, because infidelity so often boasts of what enlightened reason can do without the aid of celestial truth, and the Holy Spirit of God, which they reject with scorn. What did reason do for these learned Egyptians who were so celebrated, and whose exquisite works of art, even in their ruins, are to this day the astonishment of the world? Let the faithful records of history, let the remaining specimens of their mythology, be referred to for a reply.

After all their attainments and performances, Egypt became the parent of superstition—the theatre of idolatry—the inventor of polytheism—the corrupter of the civilized world,—and at length sank to the lowest degradation. "It is astonishing," says Rol-
lin, "to see a nation which boasted of its superiority above all others, so blinded by ignorance and superstition, as to worship animals of various sorts, and the vilest insects, which they placed in their temples, and maintained with great care and expense. To read that those objects of religious adoration, when dead, were embalmed, and solemnly deposited in tombs assigned them by the public—to hear that this extravagance was carried so far, that even the commonest vegetables in their gardens were deified, invoked in times of necessity, and confided in for succour and protection in danger, are absurdities which, at this distance of time, are hardly credible; and yet we have the testimony of all antiquity that these things were so." That celebrated author might have added, that the inscriptions on their monuments and tombs prove the facts alleged. "One of their principal deities was the ox, which, like the Brahmin bull of Hindostan, was held sacred. Speaking of this object of religious adoration, Rollin informs us that magnificent temples were erected for him, and extraordinary homage paid him while he lived, and more so when he died. Egypt then went into a general mourning, and his obsequies were solemnized with great pomp and expense. After these honours were paid to the deceased god, the next care was to provide a successor, when all Egypt was searched for the purpose. As soon as this election was made, mourning gave place to rejoicing, when nothing was heard but festivity and joy." The Egyptians also worshipped the serpent, to which they offered human sacrifices, that the reptile might gorge on their blood.

These are the boasted productions of unaided reason; the consequences of man yielding himself to the imaginations of his own heart. Ah! how true is that inspired declaration, that "the world by wisdom knew not God." How different these puerile and degrading conceptions of a Supreme Being, the object of religious adoration and confidence, to the lofty and impressive language of the prophet, who
represents the Most High as "measuring the waters in the hollow of his hand, meting out heaven with a span, comprehending the dust of the earth in a measure, weighing the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," before whom "all nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity."

This was the deplorable condition of the Egyptians. What must holy angels have thought of such a scene! How must the blessed God have viewed that land which was covered for so many ages with "the shadow of death?" The prophet Nahum will enable us to answer that question: "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies," Nahum i. 1—8.

This lofty language prepares us for other predictions in which the sin of the Egyptians is repeatedly threatened. Isaiah xix. 1—4: "The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt
shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians; and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof: and I will destroy the counsel thereof, and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts."

To the same purport were the prophecies of Jeremiah xliii. 8—13: "Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah: and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts the God of Israel: Behold I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid, and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death: and such as are for captivity to captivity: and such as are for the sword to the sword. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt: and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt: and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire."

We might also quote the whole of the forty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah, which presents a profitable theme for investigation. We pass to the testimony of Ezekiel xxix. 17—20: "And it came to pass in the
seven-and-twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon: and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it; because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.” But a most remarkable passage, in which mercy holds forth the olive-branch, is yet to be named, Isaiah xix. 18—25: “In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called the city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saiyng, Blessed
be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."

Now, here are three different prophets, at different periods, and in different countries, predicting with singular accuracy the same event, namely, Isaiah in Judea, Jeremiah in Egypt, and Ezekiel in Chaldea; but each "spake as" he was "moved by the Holy Ghost."

In collecting the leading particulars of the foregoing predictions we are brought to the following conclusion: The Egyptians were to be vanquished and led into captivity, yielding to the invincible forces of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, who was spoken of by the first of these prophets, Isaiah, many years before that victorious conqueror was born. Their wealth was to be his recompense for his hard labour and disappointment at Tyre, which he besieged thirteen years, and at last subdued; but with little gain. Their country was to be deserted forty years. At the expiration of that period the captives were to return, and some of them were to be converted from idolatry to the service of the true God. A cruel king was to oppress them: a deliverer was to be raised up by the providence of God, as the saviour of their country and their lives. But ultimately they were to fall away from the true faith, and be brought into degradation and baseness, as the penalty due to their transgressions. This was an outline of the calculations of prophecy. Let us now endeavour to ascertain how far these predictions have been verified.

The first blow was struck by Nebuchadnezzar, who having gained the mastery of Judea, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, and Tyre, and aiming at more extended conquests, directed his eagle-eye to the ancient kingdom of Egypt, which became an easy prey, and whose principal inhabitants like those of other vanquished countries were carried to Babylon and Pontus. "Of this early transaction, we have the testimonies of Megasthenes and Berosus, two heathen historians who lived about three hundred years before
Christ," and are quoted by Bishop Newton. At the expiration of forty years, when the Babylonian monarchy was dissolved by the valorous Medes and Persians under Cyrus, the Egyptians, in conjunction with other captive nations, obtained their freedom. Subsequently to their return internal revolutions ensued in Egypt, accompanied by their usual concomitants, civil war, when "the Egyptians fought against the Egyptians," as was foretold. The country was again invaded by Cambyses the Persian, who, according to the testimony of Newton, ruled with severity, as did Ochus. The former of these monarchs treated the Egyptian deities with the utmost contempt, de- rided the people for their folly, and chastised the priests for promoting the delusion. He slew the sacred ox, Apis, which the Egyptians worshipped, with his own hand; burnt and demolished their other idols and temples; and would, had he not been prevented, have destroyed the famous temple of Jupiter Ammon. Ochus, also another Persian king, subdued the Egyptians, after they revolted, plundered their temples, and caused Apis to be slain, which had received so many divine honours, and to be served up in a banquet to him and his friends. Here again the words of prophecy were remarkably fulfilled.

The deliverer whom the Lord promised to raise up is supposed to have been Alexander the Great, who having subverted the Persian empire, broke the yoke by which the Egyptians had been galled and oppressed, and thus became in a temporal sense their saviour as was foretold. Or it may refer to his successor, the first Ptolemy, the ruler of Egypt, who was called "Ptolemy Soter," or the Saviour. On Alexander taking possession of Egypt after conquering the Persians, the Egyptians gladly submitted to him, on which account he showed them favour; erected a city among them bearing his own name, (Alexandria,) which still exists; and permitted them to be governed by one of their own countrymen, and their own laws.
Their conversion is supposed to have been effected partly by the preaching of Jeremiah, who resided, during the latter part of his ministry in Egypt, and by the Divine blessing on their adversity. Many of the Jews became residents in Egypt, who, if they were "Israelites indeed," the true servants of God, may have proved a blessing in the land. The translation also of the Old Testament into Greek, the language generally spoken at this period, may have concurred to bring about that predicted change in the sentiments and character of the Egyptians, who "were turned from dumb idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."

As vast numbers of Jews were settled in Egypt, they obtained permission to build a sanctuary to the Lord, which was erected in Hierapolis, and thus another part of the prophecy respecting Egypt was fulfilled. "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts. One shall be called the city of destruction, (or as it is in the margin, the city of the sun,) In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt. And the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation, yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land." Now, when we bear in mind that this prophecy, thus explicit, was penned by Isaiah upwards of four hundred years previous to the gratifying events which it enumerates, and that it received its verification in such a country and among such a people as the Egyptians, it is one of the most remarkable productions of the Hebrew seers.

If we pass through the next three hundred years, to the commencement and triumphs of Christianity, that luminous prophecy is still visible in its verifi-
cation. For, in turning to the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we find among the numerous Jewish proselytes who were assembled at Jerusalem on the memorable day of pentecost, and who were blessed by the outpouring of the Spirit, mention is made of "the dwellers in Egypt." The infant Jesus was carried thither under Divine direction by Joseph and Mary, when they escaped the murderous decree of Herod. There the angel of the Lord appeared to them to announce the death of their persecutor, and thus was fulfilled the language of the prophet, "out of Egypt have I called my son." It was at Alexandria in Egypt that the famous library stood which was founded by the first Ptolemy, the patron of learning, containing 700,000 volumes, which was wantonly burnt by the Saracens.

But whatever Egypt gained by the favour of Alexander and his successors, and by the conversion of many of its people, first to Judaism and afterwards to the gospel of Christ, it was eventually overrun with the wide-spread, exterminating influence of Mahomedism, which was propagated by the sword, and upheld by the iron hand of Oriental despotism, by which it is bound, blinded, and impoverished at the present day, as was foretold by the prophets of the Lord. Thus Egypt, once the lordly oppressor of the captive Hebrews, whose tears for many, many years, watered its soil, and whose sighs and groans were wafted to heaven,—Egypt, renowned for its antiquity, its learning, its fertility, its wealth, its wonderful works of art, for which it was denominated "the academy of the nations and the granary of the world,"—Egypt, once visited by the smiles of mercy, enlightened, and many of her people converted to God and to his Christ, fell from her pinnacle of glory to rise no more. In vain, as was predicted, did her magicians ply their art, as they did against Moses. In vain did the people look to their priests, and the priests to their magnificent temples and their worthless gods. The frown of the Lord was upon them. They were stricken. They fell,
and all was lost, as it will be, with ungodly families and individuals. For upwards of two thousand years, Egypt has had no native sovereign—no political independence—no glory among the kingdoms of the earth. It has been "a base kingdom," trodden upon by a succession of exterminating rulers, having passed to the Romans, the Saracens, the Mamelukes, and is now a province of the Turks. Thevenot, in his day, described the Egyptians as "exceedingly wicked, dishonest, indolent, and treacherous, so greedy of gain, that they would not hesitate to shed blood for the merest trifle." Pococke represented them, as "addicted to theft, artifice, and bribery, false and unfaithful, who imagine that the greatest villainies are expiated the moment that they wash their hands and feet." The truth is, they are degraded Mahomedans, subject to a foreign king, and oppressed by a despotic governor. Their once splendid cities are in ruins. Their spacious elaborately wrought temples are demolished. Their idols are prostrate. Their tombs, though still displaying their beautiful paintings as if they were the work of yesterday, are desecrated. Their colossal statues are in fragments. Their glory is departed, their comeliness is exchanged for corruption.

The valley of the Nile, once so rich in natural fertility and prodigious works of art, is now overspread with splendid ruins, and stones of extraordinary magnitude: while above them, in all the nakedness of affecting poverty and dilapidation, colossal skeletons of magnificent temples stand solitary and deserted. No idolatrous priest officiates within those walls. No devoted worshipper bows the knee, or presents his solemn prostrations before these fallen shrines. No moss covers those ruins, no mantling ivy robes them, or in any way conceals their degradation. They stand scathed and lonely like the blighted fig-tree, to which Jesus said, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth." Yes, there they lie, the broken monuments of Egypt's pride—the shattered relics of Egypt's
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sin, "in changing the glory of the incorruptible God into four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth." There are the multiform vestiges of wretchedness and baseness foretold by the lip of prophecy, like "the dry bones in the Valley of Vision;" and there also are the affecting specimens of human impotency, which, smitten by Omnipotence, appear shivered and scattered, as though the lightning of heaven had scathed, and the thunder had shaken them from their proud elevations, and laid them low in the dust.

Nor have their tombs been more respected, however sacred and superb. They have been entered by ruthless pillagers—have been rifled—have been desecrated! Many of these relics of ancient skill and costliness have been stolen or sold as curiosities to travellers. "Many a beautiful sarcophagus, once the resting-place of an Egyptian noble, now forms the nightly bed of a wretched Arab, surrounded by his miserable children and cattle. Nor have even the costly tombs of kings been more respected. They have been ransacked by the researches and investigations of the scientific, or have become the dwellings of beasts and birds." Oh! human nature, how abject is thy poverty, how forlorn thy state, without the ennobling hopes of the gospel of Christ!

The following interesting extracts from the author whom we have quoted in a former lecture, will throw additional evidence on the truth of prophecy in reference to "the baseness" of this once eminent kingdom and people.

"When Greece was just emerging from the shades of barbarism, and before the name of Rome was known, Egypt was far advanced in science and the arts, and Thebes was the most magnificent city in the world. That ancient city was twenty-three miles in circumference. The valley of the Nile was not large enough to contain it, and its extremities rested upon the bases of the mountains of Arabia and Africa. Its temples are universally known in the present day,
and artists have taken drawings of all their minute details. The great temples of Luxor and Carnac are peculiarly celebrated, particularly the latter. Standing nearly two miles from Luxor, the whole road to it is lined with rows of sphinxes, each of a solid block of granite. At this end they are broken, and, for the most part, buried under the sand and heaps of rubbish. But, approaching Carnac, they stand entire, still, and solemn, as when the ancient Egyptians passed between them to worship in the great temple of Ammon. The traveller looking on these figures, can easily imagine the imposing scene that was presented in the crowded streets of the now desolate city, when, with all the gorgeous ceremonies of pagan idolatry, the priests bearing the sacred image of their god, and followed by thousands of the citizens, made their annual procession from temple to temple, and with harps and cymbals, and songs of rejoicing brought back their idol, and replaced him in his shrine in the grand temple at Carnac.

"The rambler among the ruins of Thebes will often ask himself, 'Where are the palaces of the kings, and princes, and people, who worshipped in these mighty temples?' With the devout, though degraded spirit of religion that possessed the Egyptians, they seem to have paid but little regard to their earthly habitations; their temples and tombs were the principal objects that engrossed the thoughts of this extraordinary people. It has been well said of them, that they regarded the habitations of the living merely as temporary resting places, while the tombs were regarded as permanent and eternal mansions; for while not a vestige of a habitation is to be seen, the tombs remain monuments of splendour and magnificence, perhaps even more wonderful than the ruins of their temples. Clinging to the cherished doctrine of the metempsychosis, the immortal part on leaving its earthly tenement was supposed to become a wandering, migratory spirit, giving life and vitality to some bird of the air, some beast of the field, or some fish of the
sea, waiting for a regeneration in the natural body. And as it was also of the very essence of this faith to inculcate a pious regard for the security and preservation of the dead, the whole mountain side on the western bank of the river is one vast necropolis. The open doors of tombs are seen in long ranges, and at different elevations; and on the plain, large pits have been opened, in which have been found thousands of mummies at a time. It is supposed there are from 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 of mummied bodies in the vast necropolis of Thebes alone.

This writer then proceeds in different parts of his interesting work, to give various proofs of the degradation to which Egypt, after its original magnificence, has been reduced in fulfilment of the prophetic writings. In what state are those temples and tombs once so magnificent and costly? He adds, "For many years, until a late order from the pacha preventing it, the Arabs have been in the habit of rifling the tombs to sell the mummies to travellers. Thousands have been torn from the places in which they were laid, and the bones meet the traveller at every step. The Arabs use the mummy-cases for fire-wood." Can anything be more degrading, particularly when we contrast these spoils upon the dead with the former state of the living. Stephens also mentions, that he entered one of their temples, equal in dimensions to St. Paul's cathedral, but though built by the Egyptians for religious purposes, in the worship of their gods, it is now used by the pasha as a granary and storehouse. Another temple was found half-buried in the sand. "For many years it has formed the nucleus of an Arab village, having built their huts within and without, range upon range, till they reached and almost covered the tops of the temple. Nor is this the worst affliction of the traveller. He sees other ruins, more lamentable than the encroachments of the desert, and their burial in the sand; he sees wanton destruction by the barbarous hand of man. The beautiful columns upon which the skilful
and industrious Egyptian artist had laboured for months, and perhaps for years, which were looked upon with admiration, and perhaps with religious reverence, have been dashed into a thousand pieces, to build bridges and forts, for the present ruler of Egypt!"

In another spot our author, when roving among the catacombs on the edge of the Libyan desert, states that, seeing an Arab cleaning some horses near an opening in the side of the rock, he made inquiries, and found, that it was the entrance to one of those vast receptacles for the ancient dead. But to his surprise, the first chamber into which they entered, a chamber built, to use his expression, "with pious regard to the repose of the departed, was occupied as a stable, for the horses of one of the pasha's regiments." Is not this another proof of Egypt's "baseness," according to the threatening of prophecy?

Nor are the inhabitants in a more elevated condition. Stephens informs us, that when the present despotic ruler of Egypt resolved on the formation of a canal, of sixty miles in length, every village was ordered to furnish its quota of labourers; 150,000 were accordingly employed at once, and in one year the mighty undertaking was finished; but it proved the grave of upwards of 30,000 persons. In another place he saw "forty or fifty men chained together with iron bands round their wrists, and iron collars round their necks. Yesterday they were peaceful Fellahs, (cultivators of the soil,) earning their scanty bread by hard and toilsome labour, but eating it at home in peace. Another day and the stillness of their life is for ever broken, chased, run down, and caught; torn from their homes, from the sacred threshold of the mosque, the sword and musket succeed the implements of their quiet profession. They are carried away to fight battles in a cause which does not concern them, and in which, if they conquer, they can never gain." Our author con-
cludes his remarks on Egypt's present degradation, by saying that, "on viewing the ruined cities on the banks (of the Nile), the mighty temples and tombs, and all the wonderful monuments of Egypt's departed greatness, on contemplating their great antiquity, the mystery that overhangs them, and their extraordinary preservation amid the surrounding desolation, Egypt is, perhaps, the most interesting country in the world. It is now more than 3000 years since the curse went forth against that land. The Assyrian, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman, the Arabian, the Georgian, the Circassian, and the Ottoman Turk, have successively trodden it down, and trampled upon it. For thirty centuries, the foot of a stranger has been upon the necks of her inhabitants; and in bidding farewell to this once favoured land, now lying in the most abject degradation and misery, groaning under the iron rod of a tyrant and a stranger, I cannot help recurring to the inspired words, the doom of prophecy—"It shall be the basest of kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more among the nations; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt."—Stephens's Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land.

Thus fell from the pinnacle of its former glory, another potent kingdom. And thus have been most remarkably accomplished another series of inspired prophecies. We need not ask to what these astounding reverses were attributable. We have beheld them as the effect of a powerful cause; the fruit of sin, the lamentable result of bad principles and habits, in the absence of a righteous creed, religious institutions, sanctifying knowledge, the agency of the Holy Spirit, and personal godliness. Speaking of Israel's prosperity as a material feature in the future glory of the Messiah's kingdom, the prophet Isaiah said, "and wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times;" so intimately is pure religion, which is the highest species of wisdom, and intelligence, connected
with the permanent welfare of a kingdom. If this fact can be substantiated, and we have in these Lectures the most palpable evidences to justify it, the line of duty is clearly before us as Christians and patriots. Every decided and sincere follower of Christ, whose faith is attested by its fruits, is the best friend of his country. As such, we should seek to be useful by our influence, our activity, our pecuniary contributions, our patronage, and our prayers. We should sanction and encourage, to the widest possible extent, and upon the best concerted scale, the religious and moral tuition of the youth of the country; the wide diffusion of the sacred Scriptures and other books of piety; the erection of places of worship; the pure and faithful preaching of the Gospel; and all the other generous and philanthropic projects which, under God's blessing, are calculated to promote national reformation and conversion.

Nor should these influential measures be confined to our own nation. Other lands, near and remote, as being occupied by the great family of man, should share in our commiseration. This would be to act in accordance with our religious profession, and with the design of our Lord and Saviour's sufferings and death, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Righteousness exalteth a nation;" let us therefore earnestly seek the salvation of our own souls through faith in the great Redeemer's merits, and then, from the best and purest motives, let us endeavour to be useful to our country and to the world at large. Thus, whilst we deplore the corruptions of the age, we shall show the sincerity of our piety and patriotism, by seeking its improvement.

Nor let us forget the obligations we owe to Christianity. It is the glory of our native land. Never let us be ashamed of the doctrines and influence of
the Gospel. Let us fearlessly espouse it, highly prize it, and practically exemplify it.

"This is the pillar of our hope,  
That bears our fainting spirits up;  
We read the grace, we trust the word,  
And find salvation in the Lord.

Should rude blasphemers, with disdain,  
Pronounce the truths of Jesus vain,  
We'll meet the scandal and the shame,  
And sing and triumph in his name."
LECTURE VII.

CHARACTER AND PERPETUITY OF THE ARABS.

Genesis xvi. 10—12. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

And he shall be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

The fields of prophetic verification which we have hitherto explored have presented the successive overthrow of many of the ancient Asiatic nations. In these revolutions we have gathered a variety of practical suggestions, which are “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.”

We have likewise been brought into an interesting acquaintance with many sublime portions of the prophetic writings which are often neglected, and with the dispensations of our heavenly Father’s providence in past ages, with which it is highly desirable that we should be familiar. We are now about to vary the scene, by showing that the supreme authority of “the Lord of all power and might” is as visible and remarkable in that which he perpetuates, amid widespread ruin, as in that which he destroys. We are to turn our attention from the wreck of kingdoms and states once magnificent and powerful, to the singular extension of Divine clemency during a long series of ages to the Arabs, the descendants of Hagar and of her son Ishmael, introduced by the narrative in the text, and in confirmation of the prophetic promise of the Angel Jehovah.

In contemplating the circumstances in which this Divine pledge was given, we are forcibly reminded
of the wise maxim of one of the prophets, when he said, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." This advice, the propriety of which is indisputable, is applicable to the Lord's moral government as to the economy of his saving grace, especially when the events of his providential administrations do not appear to harmonize with the promises of his holy word. In the accomplishment of his wise decrees, the Most High does not always proceed in the same unvarying course; much less will he be guided by our limited expectations. Sometimes, to teach us that he is the supreme Arbiter of all events, he restrains, or extends, the ordinary laws of nature, by the performance of miracles; at other times,

"He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm,"

to show that "his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts." Thus he leaves us for a season in perplexity and doubt as to his intentions, for the trial of faith and patience, and to exhibit his own authority and superiority.

When God thus "holds back the face of his throne, and spreads a cloud upon it," our duty is plain. We must wait, and watch, and pray, recollecting that it is written, "He that believeth shall not make haste," by outrunning the Lord's footsteps, and attempting to take the work out of the Lord's hands. It becomes us rather, "who know but in part, and understand in part," to say, "I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." In such instances "our strength is to sit still."

It had been well for Abram and Sarai if they had adopted this wise maxim, in waiting for their promised heir, in accordance with the repeated declarations of the Almighty, "who does all things according to the counsel of his own will." It would have prevented the adoption of an injudicious expedient, and have preserved them from domestic strife. In-
stead of thus resting their hopes on the faithfulness of God, "who leads the blind by a way that they know not," they concluded, because "the promise tarried," and advanced years at length seemed to make it obsolete, that some other course was requisite, and was perhaps implied in the assurance which was given them. A second marriage was accordingly contracted, by mutual consent, though of a subordinate description, with one of their leading domestics, of the name of Hagar, Sarai's handmaid. By us, whose opinions and habits are so dissimilar to those of eastern nations, such an act would be deemed illegal and sinful. It was not thus reprobated in the early ages of the world. It was the common custom, and continues so till this day. The expedient, however, soon proved a source of dissension to all parties, as is sure to occur when we take the work of God into our own hands, and destroy that well-adjusted balance of mutual love, on which is inscribed, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." It is true that the promise on which their hearts had been fixed for so many years had now the probability of being accomplished in Hagar; but was this the maternal line in which God intended to fulfil his own designs? It was not. The promised heir of their large possessions, "in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed," as the ancestor of the Messiah, was to be given, like the Messiah himself, miraculously.

Polygamy, that fruitful source of domestic strife, soon destroyed the peace of the patriarchal home. Hagar, raised above her station, became vain and insolent. Sarai, slighted, and mortified at the behaviour of her servant, demanded her dismissal. Hagar was accordingly removed, and was now on her return to Egypt, her native country.

But how often, when we have plunged ourselves into difficulties, does the Lord appear in our behalf! Hagar flees from her mistress, whose displeasure she
has incurred; but God meets with her in her flight, consoles and admonishes her. "And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water, in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarai. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude," chap. xvi. 7—10.

That this celestial visitant was the Son of God, who frequently appeared in the angelic form under the Old Testament dispensation, there can be no doubt. He assumed the attributes and authority of the Deity, and spake both of the mother and of her unborn infant in the language of unlimited power, as the Supreme Disposer of all events. This is one of the passages which sanction our belief in the Redeemer's government of the church and of the world from the fall of man. In compliance with the angel's direction, Hagar returned to her former home with sincere repentance, became a mother, and lived to see the early development of her son's character and destiny, according to the prophetic testimony of her Divine Instructor.

The particulars of this prediction we have now to contemplate, by their accomplishment in the singular history and permanency of the Arab race, the posterity of Abram and of Hagar.

In speaking of their wildness of character, the word in the original which was employed by the angel is more forcible than in our translation. It would read thus: "He shall be a wild-ass man," intimating the resemblance which Ishmael and his descendants would bear to the disposition and habits of that animal, which is so appropriately described in the book of Job, chap. xxxix. 5—8. "Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild
ass? whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing." This was the comparison selected by the Angel Jehovah, as the model of Ishmael's habits and those of his wild race, even before he was born. Now the first question for our consideration, in ascertaining the correctness of this prediction, is, Were the Ishmaelites and their ancestor assimilated to this pattern, as the inhabitants of desert lands, untamed, and independent, like the wild ass of the wilderness? We are prepared to prove, by the most convincing evidence, that this has been the leading characteristic of the Ishmaelitish or Arab race, from the earliest period of their history to the present day.

Removed from the patriarchal home at the age of seventeen years, when the vigour of youth gives energy to the mind, and not unfrequently makes it romantic, and prompts to daring enterprises, Ishmael soon began to present, in his own person, the evidence of Divine prescience and of prophetic veracity. His dwelling was the desert. His occupation became the destruction of wild animals, partly from self-preservation and from choice. Thus, like Nimrod, Ishmael was "a mighty hunter," and acquired a degree of mental and physical hardihood and courage which, in process of time, gave the tone of aggression and acquisitiveness, if not of ferocity, to his disposition. Incited by such an example in their parent, and born amid the desert-wilds, his children and posterity imbibed a fierce, ungovernable, warlike spirit. Thus from remote antiquity the Arabs, despising the arts and usages of civilized life, have ever preferred the wilderness as their home; the hut, the cavity of the rock, the desolate ruin, or the movable tent, as their dwelling; and plunder as their occupation. For the long space of three thousand seven hundred years, the posterity of Ishmael have been literally "wild
men," the sons of the desert, without the least disposition to yield to the softening influence of civilization. Other nations, like families, individuals, or localities, have gradually emerged from poverty, neglect, ignorance, vice, or disorder, to prosperity and intelligence; but the Arabs continue the same. "Civilization has never imprinted her foot upon their barren sand; and time has failed to alter the shades of their general outline."

"No one can imagine," says a modern traveller, "the joy which the Arabs display when they return again to the wilderness, after having been a little while in a town. It is the pleasure of enjoying early and unchangeable associations. It is the luxury of throwing off all restraint which Shackles them, and of returning to a state of simple nature, in which they and their forefathers, from the remotest generations, were reared."

"It is here alone that the Arab is seen in his primitive simplicity, free as the gazelle, and both as swift in his speed, and as unsettled in his dwelling-place, as this beautiful wanderer upon the same plains. In viewing them we are carried back at once to the age of the earliest patriarchs. The forms we see present us the picture of these ancient fathers, with scarcely a single alteration. We may listen to their language, number their possessions, partake of their food, examine their dress, enter their tents, attend the ceremonies of their marriage festivals, and present ourselves before the prince,—still all is the same. At the well they water their flocks; they sit at the door of the tent in the cool of the day; they 'take butter and milk, and the calf which they have dressed,' and set it before the stranger; they move onward to some distant place, and pitch their tent near richer pasturage; and all the treasures they possess are in camels, kine, sheep, and goats, men servants and women servants, and changes of raiment. We may stand near one of their encampments, and, as the aged men sit in dignity, or the young men and
maidens drive past us their flocks, we are almost
ready to ask if such an one be not Abraham, or Lot,
or Jacob, or Job, or Bildad the Shuhite, or Rebekah,
or Rachel, or the daughter of Jethro the Midianite?
We seem to know them all. The mountains, and val-
leys, and streams, partake of the same unchangeable-
ness: not a stone has been removed, not a barrier
has been raised, not a tree has been planted, not a
village has been collected together. The founder of
the race might come to the earth, and he would
recognise, without effort, his own people and his own
land."—Notices of the Holy Land.

By these statements, which are confirmed by other
authors, we see the unchangeable habits of the
dwellers in these regions, and their assimilation to
the ancient patriarchs, with the exception of their
lawless, predatory character, for which the Bedouin
Arabs have ever been distinguished.

In viewing our text a second time, we are informed
that the descendants of Ishmael were to be a numerous
people. Thus stands the promise, "I will multiply
thy seed exceedingly," a declaration that was repeated
in the next chapter in answer to the prayer of Abra-
ham. The patriarch, with a paternal solicitude worthy
the imitation of every parent, entreated, "O that
Ishmael might live before thee;" to whom the Lord
graciously replied, "As for Ishmael, I have heard
thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him
fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve
princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great
nation." How gracious is God to the prayers of his
people! and what an encouragement does this pleas-
ing and important fact furnish to pious parents in
presenting their beloved offspring at the throne of
mercy in the arms of their faith and love!

The latitude of this promise soon began to appear
in the rapidly increasing number of Ishmael's children,
a boon which was much valued in those early times,
when the world was so thinly peopled. For whilst
Isaac, the progenitor of Christ, from whose seed a
blessing was to issue for the benefit of the nations, had but two sons, Jacob and Esau, Ishmael's posterity were multiplying in number and influence. At the period of one hundred and sixty-nine years from the date of the abovementioned promise, the Ishmaelites had become a trading nation, whilst the sons of Jacob were but twelve persons. It will easily occur to your recollection, that when these wayward children of the patriarch were plotting the destruction of their brother Joseph, "a company of Ishmaelitish merchants came from Gilead, with their camels, bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down into Egypt," to whom they sold him. Here was the prolific germ of "a great nation," according to the Lord's promise. Subsequently, the Ishmaelites were considerably multiplied in the nation of the Hagarines, so called from Hagar; also in the Nabathæans, who became a numerous and powerful people in Arabia Petrea; and in the Itureans and Saracens, who erected one of the largest empires in the world. "When Mohammed arose, the enthusiasm and fanaticism of his religion kindled the warlike energies of this people, and they poured forth as locusts upon all the surrounding countries; nor did they rest till they had overrun one half of the world. On the east, they invaded and subdued Syria, Persia, Northern India, even to the Oxus, where their characteristics still remain. On the north, they rushed through Asia Minor, crossed the Dardanelles, and laid siege to Constantinople, which was then the capital of the Greek empire. In the west, they subdued Egypt, and all Northern Africa, to the Straits of Gibraltar, crossed there, founded a kingdom in Spain, and planted their power even on the mountains of Switzerland, and the frontiers of France."—Eli Smith.

Thus the descendants of Ishmael, according to the prophetic promise, were "multiplied exceedingly, and became a great nation."

It was also declared by the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, that Ishmael should beget "twelve princes,"
PROPHECY FULFILLED IN THE

Gen. xvii. 20. Now, if we turn to the testimony of Moses in chap. xxv. 16, we find that, having particularized the generations of Ishmael, he concludes with these remarkable words: "These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names by their towns and by their castles, twelve princes, according to their nations." So exact is the God of truth and faithfulness in the accomplishment of every word that he has spoken. What an encouragement for us to "trust in him at all times, and not lean to our own understanding!" "Hath he said it, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation."

There is yet another proof of the greatness of this nation, in the vast extent of their territory. Arabia, their family inheritance, spreads fifteen hundred miles in one direction, by twelve hundred in the other. And not confined to these ample limits, the Arabs are found in Egypt, Barbary, Abyssinia, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Syria, and must constitute a prodigious population. To prove their descent from Abraham, they circumcise their children, and their language is among the oldest in the world.

A third point in the prophecy foretold their contentious, hostile character. "His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him."

This distinguishing feature in the Arab is proverbial. It has been recognized and announced by all writers in all ages. They have ever been described as freebooters, who, viewing the desert's wilds as their paternal inheritance, regard the pillage of the traveller as their right, and plunder as their occupation. Hence, merchants passing over the deserts of Arabia with their goods, pilgrims going to Jerusalem or to Mecca to perform their devotions, or travellers exploring those countries for historical or scientific information, are obliged to proceed in large
companies, called caravans, or with armed guides to protect their lives and property. Thus, a modern writer, (Stephens,) whom we have quoted in the former Lectures, informs us that at Bethlehem, in Palestine, he found a tribe of Arabs of about forty thousand persons, of the most ferocious description. He states, “As this desert is the region for their attacking, pillaging, and massacreing the caravans going from Jerusalem to Damascus, or from Mesopotamia to Egypt, the Arabs take advantage of some detached hills, formed by the moving sand, and have also erected artificial mounds, in which they and their horses burrow when watching for their prey. As soon as they perceive the caravan approaching, they dart like a falcon on the objects of their rapacity. They give the signal to their tribe, and all come to the attack. Such is their only industrial occupation. Such their only glory. Civilization with them is murder and pillage; they attach as much importance to their successes, in this species of exploit, as our conquerors do to the acquisition of a province.”

The same author, speaking of a beautiful vale in the neighbourhood of Lebanon, says, “This is one of the most lovely spots in the world, but cultivation is rare. For ever infested by the wandering Arabs, the inhabitants scarcely dare to sow their ground. The Arab has no creed but gold, and his objects of worship are money and his sword. Thus, they never go out unarmed, and are ever upon the watch for their prey.”

Yet they are faithful to each other, and cherish among themselves the nicest sense of honour. This trait shows itself in the honest regard which they observe towards each other’s property. Nor are they less distinguished for their hospitality. To use the language of the Rev. Eli Smith, who formed an acquaintance with them, “In their lofty poetry, which will bear a comparison with that of any other people, they laud and extol that Arab who consumes his substance to entertain strangers. Nor can they speak...
of one in higher terms than to say, the fire never goes out on his kitchen hearth, but is always burning to cook for the stranger, his guest! Dismount from your horse in the desert, and enter the Arab's tent, (after you have obtained his confidence and protection,) and he will entertain you as Abraham did of old, if not with the fatted calf, yet with the lamb or kid, with milk and butter. For to be economical on the score of food, is with the Arabs the height of meanness. This makes the Arab generous, and thus a feeling of sacredness attaches to the character of a guest. Some few are treacherous; but if you want to pass alone through the deserts of Arabia, you will be told there is no difficulty: We will pass you over to a tribe that is friendly with us, and they will pass you to one that is friendly with them, and so you will go safely through."

"And as to the vindictiveness of the Bedouin, he is not naturally bloodthirsty, but he is jealous of his rights, and it has been considered from time immemorial a sacred duty to avenge the blood of a relative. It is this feeling which gives them a decided character for independence." This explanation tends to reconcile apparently contradictory statements respecting the Arabs. The traveller without their protection is in danger, but with it, he is safe.

A **fourth** part of the prophetic promise in our text remains to be noticed—**their national perpetuity.** "*He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.*" This was literally true of Ishmael himself. Thus when Moses records his death, Genesis xxv. 17, he informs us that "*Ishmael died in the presence of all his brethren, and was gathered to his people.*" Nor has the passage failed in respect of his posterity. Other nations of antiquity have become extinct, as we have seen, though once populous, potent, and rich, yet the Arabs continue till this day. Though surrounded by warlike kingdoms from age to age, whose interest it has been to destroy these robbers, no empire, however formidable and extensive, has
ever been able to subdue them, much less to annihi-
late them. They have ever set the world at defiance. 
Many attempts have been made to bring them into 
subjection to some neighbouring state, but without 
success. Sesostris the powerful king of Egypt, Ne-
buchadnezzar the great king of Babylon, Cyrus the 
valiant leader of the Medes and Persians, Alexander 
the Macedonian, and after him the Romans, the Tar-
tars, the Mamlukes, and now the Turks, have at 
different eras attempted their subjugation, but to 
this day every attempt has proved abortive. They 
still live—still plunder—still defy the human race— 
still "dwell in the presence of all their brethren."

Conciliation is the only shield to the traveller in their 
trackless deserts, and that must be purchased.

"On the smallest calculation," says Sir R. K. 
Porter, "such must have been the manners of those 
people for more than three thousand years; thus in 
all things verifying the prediction given of Ishmael 
at his birth, that he in his posterity should be 'a 
wild man,' and always continue to be so, though 
they shall dwell for ever in the presence of their 
brethren. And that an acute and active people, sur-
rounded for ages by polished and luxurious nations, 
should, from their earliest to their latest times, be 
still found indeed a wild people, dwelling in the pre-
sence of all their brethren, (as we may call these 
nations,) unsubdued and unchangeable, is a standing 
miracle—one of those mysterious facts which esta-
blish the truth of prophecy." To which Bruce the 
traveller adds, "This prophecy alone, in the truth of 
which all sorts of religion agree, is of itself a suffi-
cient proof, without others, of the Divine authority 
of the Scriptures."

"It cannot be pretended, that no probable attempts 
have ever been made to conquer them; for the greatest 
conquerors in the world have almost all, in their turn, 
attempted it, and some of them have been very near 
effecting it. But when they (the Arabs) seemed to 
be upon the very brink of ruin, they were signally and
providentially delivered, as if the Lord said, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. Alexander was preparing an expedition against them, when an inflammatory fever cut him off in the flower of his age. Pompey was in the career of his conquests, when urgent affairs called him elsewhere. Aelius Gallus had penetrated far into their country, when a fatal disease destroyed a great number of his men and obliged him to return. Trajan besieged their capital city, but was defeated by thunder and lightning, whirlwinds, and other prodigies, as often as he renewed his attacks. Severus besieged the same city twice, and was twice repelled from before it; and the historian Dion, a man of rank and character, though an heathen, plainly ascribes the defeat of these two emperors to the interposition of a Divine power. We, who know the prophecies, may be more assured of the reality of Divine interposition. Indeed, otherwise, how could a single nation stand out against the enmity of the whole world for any length of time, and, much more, for near 4000 years?”

“The great empires around them have all in their turn fallen into ruins, while they have continued the same from the beginning, and are likely to continue the same to the end. And this in the natural course of human affairs was so highly improbable, if not altogether impossible, that as nothing but Divine prescience could have foreseen it, so nothing but a Divine power could have accomplished it. These are the only people besides the Jews who have subsisted as a distinct people from the beginning, and, in some respects, they very much resemble each other. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, are descended from Abraham, and both boast of their descent from that father of the faithful. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, are circumcised, and both profess to have derived that ceremony from Abraham. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, had originally twelve patriarchs, or heads of tribes, who were their princes or governors. And
both nations still observe several singular customs, and are standing monuments to all ages of the exactness of the Divine predictions, and of the veracity of Scripture history."—Bishop Newton.

Who can tell for what important purpose these children of the desert, these degenerate sons of Abraham, have been preserved from the annihilation into which neighbouring nations have fallen? At the first propagation of Christianity, many Arabsians embraced the Gospel. And history speaks of bishops and martyrs among this singular race. Who can declare what is in reserve for them in the book of God's decrees? Perhaps the patriarch's prayer, "O that Ishmael might live before thee," has not yet received the full extent of a gracious answer. Arabia's children, though wild and lawless, may be included in the promise respecting the Messiah's triumphs, "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust." For we naturally ask, when surveying the Almighty power which for so many centuries has preserved them, is there no beauteous beam of prophetical hope to cheer those desert wilds? Does no star of promise rise on that long-neglected race? Is Sharon's rose never to shed its fragrance on those extensive plains, when "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and when deserts shall rejoice and blossom?" Will there never be a highway of holiness in those desolate tracts, when "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it," and when the Lord shall "say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth."

True, they are now a lawless race; but what was the character of many of the primitive Christians, to whom the apostle said, after adverting to some of the most worthless members of society, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye
are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God?" And what was our former character, to whom the inspired congratulation is so peculiarly applicable? "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience."

If, as appears highly probable, the people of the Jews are to be restored to their own land on their conversion to Christ, may not the adjoining inhabitants of Arabia be among the first ingathering of the nations, as a portion of the "other sheep" belonging to the great and good Shepherd, which shall hear his voice, and enter his fold, that there may be "one fold and one shepherd?"

For let us not suppose that these sons of the desert are too deficient in mental endowment to understand and appreciate the blessings of salvation. It may be said of them with much greater force than was once asserted respecting the African negroes by an eloquent writer, when expatiating on the success of Christian missionaries in the West Indian islands: "They have dived," he observes, "into those mines from which it was said that no valuable ore or precious stone could be extracted, and they have drawn from thence many an imperishable gem glowing with the brightness of intellect and decked with the beauties of holiness."

—Watson.

Thus it may be with the long-neglected children of Ishmael. They may be "a seed to serve the Lord, the Redeemer, a generation to call him blessed." They may become "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God," when "the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect
of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." The following testimony respecting this people will be read with interest by those who long for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. It was the opinion of a gentleman who had closely examined their character.

"The Arabs are a very talented race. Soon after the establishment of the caliphate of Bagdad, almost all the learning and literature of the world was among the Arabs. I have examined some of their books of science, mathematics, &c., with intense interest. It is curious to see how they will start from the same point and arrive at the same results, by a process entirely different from ours.

"Algebra owes its origin to them; the very name is Arabic. In astronomy they are equally renowned; and by their observations have corrected the calculations made by the Greeks at Alexandria. The Arabic names of several of the stars and constellations now stand upon our celestial globes. In philosophy, though misled by a false religion, they have shown capacity of the brightest order. Their histories I regard as beautiful models. They are simple narratives of facts, much after the style of the Hebrew, dispensing with reflections and inferences, and leaving the naked incidents to make their due impressions on your mind. But pass from history to poetry, and you look as from earth to heaven. It is, perhaps, the most beautiful in the world. It is the soul of sublimity, and for the boldness of its metaphors, the beauty of its rhythm, and the brilliancy of its language, it cannot well be surpassed. In literature, no nation, of equal age, can probably boast more books in the native tongue, and I found a learned German translating a Bibliotheca in nine large volumes, containing only the names or titles of native Arab books. As to language, we love our own, and think very highly of its richness, force, and finish. But with all its copious treasures and polished elegance, it must yield the palm to the Arabic. This is so nicely ad-
justed in all its parts, that it reminds you of the frame of a building, with every mortice fitted to every tenon, and ours compared with it is little better than a *patois*. It is, moreover, the language of the Turk, the Tartar, the Malay, and the East Indian."

"Another trait in the Arab character is, that he is not disposed to infidelity. Just before going with Mr. Dwight to Armenia, I found it stated in the publication of a Jesuit missionary, that the Armenian is religiously inclined. I have since studied the Arab character with reference to this point, and found it true also of them; for while their neighbours the Greeks grow up and go over to infidelity, you will scarcely find any infidels among the Arabs. Indeed, you cannot insult an Arab more than by calling him an infidel. The religion of the Arab now is Mohammedan, and the impostor had the wisdom to adapt his religion to their character; but an acquaintance with them will show that the Bedaween knows hardly anything of his religion. Few of them at the present day can read the Koran; and though it prescribes a penalty for those who do not say their prayers five times a day, scarcely one in a hundred knows enough to say his prayers. It is, however, a striking fact, that while all nominal Christians in the east have prayers in an unknown tongue, they have theirs in Arabic."—Rev. Eli Smith.

Thus in their wildness of character, their multiplicity, their national independence, their singular perpetuity, have the Arab race become an additional monument of the truth of prophecy, and of the foreknowledge and power of God.

Before we retire from these desert scenes, we must call to recollection the historic interest that is attached to a section of these regions, over which the Arab roams. You are probably aware that we have been exploring a country, which was the memorable theatre of those signs and wonders which the Lord wrought for his chosen people, when he led them through the wilderness; and to which we so fre-
quently refer as to an interesting series of types of our pilgrimage, and of our journey to the celestial Canaan. This was Israel's track, their scene of conflict, their school of instruction, their field of discipline. Here they sojourned forty years, were adopted as a church, were incorporated as a nation.

Here hovered the fiery, cloudy pillar, indicative of the Divine presence, guidance, and protection, and emblematic of the providence and oversight of the Redeemer, who is made "head over all things to the church." Here was the burning bush, typical of the afflictions and preservation of the righteous both collectively and individually. Here were the bitter waters of Marah, which were miraculously sweetened in answer to the cry of prayer. Here were the wells and palm-trees at Elim, reminding us of some of the pleasant resting-places, and "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," with which we are favoured in the wilderness. Here descended the manna, emblem of "the bread of life that came down from above." Here flowed the water from the stricken rock, of which the apostle said, "They did all eat the same spiritual meat, they did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." And here still rises in silent majesty and solemn grandeur, the mount of Sinai, on gazing at whose elevation, and calling to remembrance the impressive scenes that were there witnessed, we are mercifully reminded that "we are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words. But we are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the
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blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Such is the superiority of the Gospel as an economy of grace and mercy to the former dispensation of the law. How highly should we prize, how faithfully should we improve our Christian privileges! But if we neglect them, O what a load of accumulated guilt will rest upon us! "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."

Nor let us withdraw our attention from the singular preservation of the Arab race, without reflecting, for our encouragement, on the power and promise of Christ our Lord, from whose lips the prophetic promise to Hagar emanated, and who has graciously pledged himself to preserve his church in the world, and to keep the feet of his saints. Nearly forty centuries have rolled away since the declaration in our text was uttered. What changes have occurred since that remote date in empires, and in the different races which have constituted the great family of man. But here are the Arabs still, in their wildness, their indépendence, their combativeness, their indestructible-ness. And here stands the promise of the Lord with all the freshness of yesterday's inscription, like the unfading colours of Egyptian antiquities. No pen has ever been permitted to erase it. No enemy could invalidate it. No occurrence has neutralized or concealed it. Ishmael's descendants still live.

But is this people nearer and dearer to the Son of God than his church? than his saints, for whom he shed his precious, atoning blood? Does he not promise our safety, by language most explicit, oft-repeated, and strong? Is he not the "head of all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,
and every name which is named both in heaven above and upon the earth beneath?" And has he not pledged himself to preserve us unto his everlasting kingdom and glory?

Then let us go forward in our Christian course, strong in the confidence of faith. Let us trust in the provisions and promises of that covenant "which is ordered in all things and is sure." And whilst we see every creature and every occurrence under the supreme government of the great Lord of Zion, let us tune our harps to his praise, and sing:

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."
LECTURE VIII.
CAPTIVITIES OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

Amos v. 25—27. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

Jeremiah xxv. 8—11. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

The former of these passages is predictive of the captivity of the kingdom of Israel, the latter of the kingdom of Judah, which occurred at a much later period. For chronological correctness, this Lecture should have been the third in the series, the captivities of the Jews having transpired before the subversion of the adjacent nations, whose overthrow we have already contemplated. It has been designately reserved for the present position, that we may proceed in a continuous history of the Jews, whose predicted vicissitudes we are now to investigate.

It is a melancholy fact that, in whatever country mankind have been located, they have betrayed the same corrupt propensities. If there had been one spot on the fair bosom of the creation, which presented an exception, we should have looked for it in the highly favoured land of Canaan. But notwithstanding the numerous advantages, physical, civil, and religious, which the descendants of Abraham pos-
sessed, in that locality, and the many instructive, cautionary, and impressive incidents, which were connected with the history of their ancestors, we see in them the same tendency to degenerate from the worship and service of God as had been betrayed by nations less favoured. Can we have a stronger proof of the fall? a more incontrovertible evidence of the universal apostasy of our race, of which the Holy Scriptures speak so frequently and fully? We may be assured that this is not the state in which mankind were created, when the God of wisdom, purity, and love, “saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.” There must have been a lamentable departure from the original model. Thus we are informed that “God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.” And hence we account for the oft-repeated declarations of the necessity of an atoning Saviour, and of the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, in the production of spiritual regeneration. Without this sanctifying power, religious ordinances and the most impressive events in providence will prove abortive.

This truth was painfully illustrated in the land of Israel and Judah, where, after a long series of valuable instructions, of impressive signs and wonders, and of significant rites and ceremonies, the most unblushing degeneracy in religion and morals was betrayed. In expatiating upon these delinquencies, many suggestions will occur to us, but no one will be of greater use than the admonition of Christ, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation;” and the seasonable advice of the apostle, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

You are aware that the Jews, the chosen people of God, were originally divided into twelve tribes, each bearing the name of the patriarch from which it descended. But though thus distinguished, like the different denominations of the church of Christ, they were but one nation. In the reign of Solomon, the country, and the church which it embodied as its
glory, were in a high state of prosperity. The horrors of war, in which David had long been unavoidably engaged against the enemies of his native land, were hushed to the serenity of peace. All their heathen neighbours, who hated or envied them, were subdued or awed into allegiance. Their territory extended far beyond its original limits. The people were multiplied to a comparison with the sand on the sea-shore, and were safe, prosperous, and happy, "sitting every man under his own vine and fig-tree," without molestation or fear. The tabernacle was superseded by the temple, which for beauty and costliness was not surpassed. The offices of religion were regularly performed. The sceptre was firmly established in the family of David, the royal ancestor of the Messiah, according to the Lord's promise. And their national wealth was so abundant, that "silver was thought nothing of," and was compared to stones; and cedars, for commonness, were likened to sycamore trees. Thus, blessed by the God of nations, whose favour is life, and whose "loving-kindness is better than life," the people of Israel were proverbially great,—in religion, in territory, in commerce, in political economy, in jurisprudence, in wealth, and in their foreign alliances. It was this that astonished the queen of Sheba, who, "having heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord" his God, "came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sittings of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king,
It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice," 1 Kings x. 1—9.

It had been well for the sovereign, the people, the country, and the cause of religion, if their personal piety had kept pace with their prosperity! But how often do the purity and fervour of the soul decline with the accumulation of riches and the enjoyment of ease; and relax into sloth, temptation, licentiousness, and pride! Thus, while adversity, like the bracing atmosphere of winter, invigorates and propels; prosperity enervates and exhausts, till "the things which remain are ready to die."

By a reprehensible conformity to the luxurious habits of neighbouring heathen states, Solomon, in the latter part of his life, adopted a multiplicity of wives and concubines, who were selected from oriental courts, in which idolatry was closely interwoven with the very texture of their civil and political constitution. The mind of the Hebrew monarch, once famed for high intelligence and wisdom, became blighted and blinded; and his heart, formerly the seat of holy affections, proved treacherous and corrupt. He not only gave his sanction to pagan rites, but even adopted them, whilst his government, as was to be expected, was less wise and parental than before. "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father: for Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the
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Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son,” 1 Kings xi. 4—12.

Here we see the fidelity of the sacred historian, in stating facts precisely as they occurred, though tending so much to the dispraise of the delinquent monarch of Israel; an incidental proof of the veracity of the inspired volume. We also behold the fatal consequences of one false step from the path of truth and righteousness. One sin begets another. The way of temptation is sloping; once in motion, it is not easy to stop before reaching the vortex at the bottom. The entrance of vice is like the letting in of water; at first the channel is small, a mere crevice in the embankment, till at last, it becomes a considerable avenue; the flood enters and spreads destruction in its course.

Such was the progress of sin with king Solomon. And though there is reason to hope that he saw and deplored his offences, and died repentant and in peace, yet so extensively were the seeds of evil sown, that at the commencement of the reign of his
son Rehoboam, who resolved to sway the sceptre with an iron hand, ten of the twelve tribes revolted, and placing themselves under one of the leading men of the kingdom in the person of Jeroboam, made him their sovereign, the remaining two tribes of Judah and Benjamin alone retaining their allegiance. Here was the literal performance of the Lord's threatening already quoted. This was the commencement of Israel's downfall; for "a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." Here was the irruption of a fearful volcano, which had long been in a state of ignition,—the sad result of religious defection,—the fatal consequence of unsanctified prosperity, and of the withdrawal of the Divine blessing. The key-stone of the arch crumbled, and sank from its position, and the whole structure fell. Israel's sun set in a cloud. Israel's glory was lost in a storm. Her beauty faded and withered when her monarch became an idolater. Ichabod was written upon her walls, she was convulsed by internal strife, and soon proved to the world, that, whilst "righteousness exalteth a nation, sin is a reproach to any people." The land of Canaan was now divided into two distinct kingdoms; the one consisting of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, and called the kingdom of Israel; the other, composed of the two remaining tribes, and denominated the kingdom of Judah.

But the evil did not end here. The kingdom of Judah was in possession of Jerusalem, the ancient capital; also of the temple, the priesthood, and the institutions of religion. Jeroboam, to prevent his subjects regretting their exclusion from the house of the Lord, determined, as a piece of state-policy, to alienate their affections from the sanctuary of their fathers by the introduction of image worship, for which, alas! Solomon had already given his sanction. He accordingly set up two golden calves within his dominions, as objects of religious worship, and the people, from expediency and inclination, gave their
willing consent, although the course which they were about to adopt was so glaring an infraction of the second commandment, and a direct violation of the Mosaic law, which subjected the offender to the punishment of death. From this period idolatry, though at first somewhat modified, became the national religion of the kingdom of Israel, at the instigation of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin;" and from reign to reign, during a succession of ungodly rulers, increased, to the shame and disgrace of a people who were the privileged descendants of the patriarchs, and the chosen people of God.

In the impious reign of Ahab this wretched system reached its climax. That was a dark era in Israel's once happy land—a blotted page in their national history, which terminated in mourning, lamentation, and woe. Altars consecrated to heathen deities were seen in every direction. Hills smoking with unholy fire reared their summits in defiance of the God of heaven. Groves echoed with the yell of frantic worshippers of Baal, and Milcom, and Ashtoreth. Idolatrous priests and prophets, by hundreds, overspread the land, four hundred of whom were supported by royal bounty, who trampled with impunity on the graves of the martyred prophets of the Lord. The faithful and intrepid Elijah was even obliged to flee for his life. And the whole nation, with few exceptions, incited by a corrupt priesthood, were mad after their idols, "and drank in iniquity like water."

And what rendered the delinquency of this degenerate people the more glaring were the warnings that pointedly appealed to them, from the pages of their national history, respecting the calamities of their ancestors for precisely the same offences. At six different periods during the administration of the Judges, their country was invaded, and spoiled by their pagan neighbours, when God withdrew his protecting shield. And since the days of Solomon, they
suffered severely by the destructive scourge of famine, when mothers, driven to frenzy, fed the frantic cravings of hunger with the sacrifice of their own children.

It was now time for the prophets, clothed in sackcloth and ashes, to commence their denunciations. The cup of iniquity was full! The long-suffering of Divine mercy was exhausted! Warnings and corrections were alike abortive! And a fearful extermination awaited the guilty nation.

The following maledictions will apprise you of the glaring complexion of Israel's guilt, and may be appealed to as a test of the veracity of the sacred writings by their literal accomplishment. In reading these threatenings, you can hardly fail to admire the yearnings of mercy over a wicked people, notwithstanding the heinous nature of their guilt, which was without excuse. The following passage is the melting love of a father's wounded heart, Hosea xi. 1—7: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrians shall be his king, because they refused to return. And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. And my people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him."

The prophet Amos was instructed to adopt a severer strain, chap. v. 1—3: "Hear ye this word which I take up against you; even a lamentation, O house of Israel. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up. For thus saith the
Lord God: The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.” See also the 16th to the 27th v. “Therefore, the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets: and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord. Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light, even very dark, and no brightness in it! I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings, and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”

How great must have been their sin, to induce the Lord thus to threaten to disinherit a people, over whose country he had watched so many years with a parental care! Their heinous conduct, however, left no alternative. Thus mercy and patience resigned their seat to truth and justice, and heavy punishments followed in quick succession, till the offending nation was vanquished, broken, and scattered by the powerful hosts of Assyria, as we have seen in the second Lecture. Passages in confirmation of that fact are recorded in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of the second book of Kings, and have been already quoted, with the parallel proofs of their verification, in that Lecture. The first invasion and captivity of the kingdom of Israel occurred, ac-
cording to the chronology of Usher and Newton, 740 years B.C.; when two and a half tribes were subjugated and carried to Assyria by Tiglath-Pilezer; and in the year 721 before the Christian era, about nineteen years subsequently to the former date, the remaining portions of the nation were subdued and deported by Shalmanezer. Thus terminated the Kingdom of Israel, in accordance with "the sure word of prophecy," after it had subsisted two hundred and fifty-four years.

We now turn to the Kingdom of Judah. What was its religious, moral, and political character, after the separation already referred to? Did the people cherish a salutary hatred of the infidelity of their brethren? They did not, to a great extent. Though retaining the holy city of Jerusalem, "which the Lord chose to put his name there;" the temple, and all that was sacred in religion; and though favoured with the reign of some pious monarchs, they betrayed the same propensities to idolatry which had proved so fatal to the adjoining kingdom of Israel. Of this debasing system Manasseh became a zealous patron, although the son of Hezekiah, and notwithstanding the penalty which he knew had been inflicted upon the other tribes, who were captives in Assyria. The following quotation presents an affecting specimen of his character, 2 Kings xxi. 1—9: "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzibah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab, king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. And he built altars for all the host of heaven, in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And he made his son pass
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through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house of which the Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them. But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel."

Could we have imagined it possible for human nature to sink so low? How fatal is the influence of "the god of this world," "the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience," when not counteracted by the influence of the Holy Ghost! How true was the language of the apostle, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Consequently, such destitution leaves the heart undefended, a prey to temptation, to the world, to error in doctrine, and licentiousness in practice. It was in the contemplation of some of these delinquencies, and in the foresight of others, that the prophets were instructed, from period to period, to "lift up their voices like trumpets, to show the people their transgressions and their sins." We have selected the following passages as specimens:

Isaiah i. 2—8. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have
provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city."

This prophecy was delivered many years before the kingdom of Judah fell: it is written in the present tense, from the certainty of its accomplishment.

Isaiah v. 1—7. "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved, touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: 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; and 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. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."
If we pass to Jeremiah i. 14—16, we shall see the party spoken of which was to be employed as their scourge: "Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord: and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands."

If we refer to Jeremiah ii. 26—28, the sin of Judah is not only held up to merited contempt, but the distress that awaited them as a guilty nation, their appeal to the Lord in vain for deliverance, and their abandonment, are circumstantially predicted: "As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, saying to a stock, Thou art my father: and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah."

The prophet Joel had long before recorded his maledictions in the following strain, Joel ii. 1—11: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand: a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people, and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them:
and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness: yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways; and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another: they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city: they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"

Habakkuk also delivered his prophetic message, chap. i. 5—10: "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far: they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the
east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap dust, and take it."

Near to the same period the following prediction was announced by Zephaniah, chap. i. 4–6, 12–18: "I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests; and them that worship the host of heaven upon the house-tops; and them that worship and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham; and them that are turned back from the Lord; and those that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for him. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them: and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath: but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."

Now, place these magnificent passages full in your
view, and could any narrative be more explicit. They are really more like the consecutive statements of history than the words of prophecy. Who but the omniscient Jehovah, "in whose sight a thousand years are but as one day, and one day as a thousand years," could have revealed these events to different minds? What does this revelation prove but the inspiration of the prophets, while the fulfilment of their predictions attests the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, and the moral government of God.

By these quotations we see the great inlet to Israel's and Judah's degradation and abandonment. It was their addictedness to idolatry. It was the alienation of the heart and mind from the God of their fathers, and which appeared not only in the glaring act of making an object of religious worship and of confidence from a rude mass of stone, wood, or metal, but also in deserting that system of revealed truth and grace which the God of love and mercy devised from eternity for the recovery of our race from the wreck of our apostasy. It was the confidence which they reposed in other mediators, priests, and sacrifices, in preference to the priesthood and propitiation of the great Redeemer, of whose salvation their religious rites and ceremonies were so instructively prefigurative, in which, as a nation, they had been initiated from their earliest years. It was, in fact, their preference for a corrupt system of human invention that formed their great offence. It was their appreciation of the religion of the world, which fostered the sinful propensities of the heart, to the neglect of that revealed method of mercy which humbles and saves the sinner, whilst it gives all the glory to infinite wisdom and love.

It is lamentable to reflect for how many ages and to what a wide extent this species of mental pride and alienation has extended, not merely in pagan lands, but also in civilized countries. For where idol temples and graven images are repudiated, there is often betrayed a more refined system of heathen-
ism, both in theory and in practice. What a proneness do we frequently detect to veil the real character of human nature as declared by the word of God; to mutilate the Gospel; and to unite the world with the church! What unscriptural opinions are often entertained respecting the justice, purity, and mercy of God; the Deity and atonement of the Lord Jesus; the spirituality and requirements of the Divine law; the guilt and helplessness of man, as a sinner; the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, in regeneration; justification by faith; Christian experience; and the Christian character! How many professors of Christ's holy Gospel are worldly conformists, who think, and speak, and act like others,—who make every thing bow to the good opinion of their fellow men,—who yield their homage to the idol self, although the great Redeemer has emphatically said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;" and whose inspired word enjoins, "Be not conformed to this world;" and positively declares, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him!" See to it then, my brethren, as you value your best and dearest interests, that yours is the religion of the Bible, the religion of Christ; the "faith which works by love," and "brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to the glory and praise of God."

But to return to the guilty land of Judah, against which so many maledictions had been uttered by those holy men, who would have rejoiced in the spiritual welfare of their native country. As was again and again foretold, Nebuchadnezzar, of whose conquests you have heard in the former Lectures, invaded, and gradually subverted the kingdom, at three different periods. The first aggression occurred in the reign of Jehoiakim, when he took Jerusalem, and carried to Babylon many of the sacred vessels of the temple, and some of the nobles and persons of distinction, among whom were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Having taken Jehoiakim,
Nebuchadnezzar put him in chains, intending to carry him in triumph to his capital; but altering his purpose, he allowed him to remain in Judea, on condition of his paying tribute. At the end of three years Jehoiakim revolted, which induced the conqueror to invade the country a second time, when having put the royal vassal to death, he consigned his body to birds of prey, according to the prediction of Jeremiah.

His successor upon the humbled throne of Judah was Jehoiachin, who imitated the example of the former sovereign by attempting to throw off the Babylonian yoke. This brought Nebuchadnezzar once more against the guilty land, when he again struck the blow of vengeance, dethroned the rebellious monarch, whom he sent prisoner to Babylon, with his family, his chief officers, and the artificers, to the number of seventeen thousand, and made Zedekiah king in his stead. Among the captives were Mordecai, the uncle of Esther, and Ezekiel the prophet. Nebuchadnezzar also took all the vessels of gold which remained in the temple and in the king's treasury. Zedekiah continued faithful nine years, when he rebelled, and confederated with the neighbouring kings. This led to the final destruction of Jerusalem, B.C. 586, after a terrific slaughter of a vast number of its inhabitants, and proved the most disastrous event to the kingdom of Judah. Its beautiful temple, built by Solomon at so much cost, was burnt. Its palace was destroyed. Its walls were razed. And its king was seized, was subjected to the pain of seeing his children put to death in his presence, and after being deprived of his eyes, which the inhuman victors plucked from their sockets, he was loaded with chains and sent to Babylon. Many of the survivors of this massacre fled to Egypt, taking with them, as is supposed, the prophet Jeremiah, where they perished as was foretold, while others who took refuge in the adjacent countries were treated with the severest indignities. This was the
incident referred to in the former Lectures, that was so much deprecated by the different prophets who threatened those nations with a similar calamity for having shown no pity to the Jewish fugitives, and which literally came to pass.

Thus fell Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, precisely as the prophets had predicted, by the same conqueror, and with the same disastrous consequences to its kings, its nobles, its temple, its treasures, and religious rites. Many of its guilty inhabitants fell by the sword; many perished by hunger or in their flight; and others were taken prisoners and carried captives to Babylon.

What must have been their feelings and reflections, on finding themselves in the hands of a vindictive conqueror; bound together in parallel lines with cords; treated with contempt as slaves; and marched beneath a burning sun, and over rugged, or sandy places, during a long journey of some weeks, to the distant land of their captivity? How bitter was their grief, and burning their tears, as they passed the boundary of their native country, the greater number of them to return no more! With what a lingering, heart-rending look, did they cast their eyes back on their native mountains as they gradually receded from view, and especially upon Jerusalem, and the ruined temple, now reduced to a smouldering heap! There were also the family endearments from which they were torn; the inheritance of their ancestors, which was the much-loved place of their nativity, and the scene of early associations; their family sepulchres, containing the venerated remains of parents, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, children, and friends. And there were superadded, the carnage of the present war. How many of their beloved relatives had fallen on the battle-field or within the walls of the city, with no one to bury them, or to assuage the wounds of the survivors, whilst others were dispersed by flight they knew not whither. Thus the wretched captives are not only prisoners,
but bereaved of their dearest friends. All are left
and lost amid the ravage of invasion, the horrors of
war, and the conflagration and ruin of a subjugated
country.

In this state of distress they are hurried along, un-
 pitied, unsoothing, like slaves for the mart, or sheep
for the slaughter, with slender supplies of food, strip-
 ped nearly naked, according to the custom of those
barbarous times, and subjected to the scorn and
derision of their captors. Many, in all probability,
sank from exhaustion and sorrow, and were left to
perish, while the survivors had the bitterness of
secret reflection, that they were suffering for their
sins, under the frown of the Lord's anger. If they
thought of their forefathers, how great was the con-
trast which their present degraded condition pre-
sented! Their ancestors entered the land of promise
in triumph, cheered by the assurance, "My presence
shall go with thee and I will give thee rest," and
exulting, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of
Jacob is our refuge;" but now, the feeling of bitter-
ness passes from person to person, and from rank to
rank: "Our defence is departed, for the Lord hath
forsaken us." No Moses was present, as in days of
old, to stand in the breach as an intercessor—no pil-
lar of cloud and of fire shades them by day and cheers
them by night—no manna descends to satisfy the
cravings of hunger, nor refreshing streams from the
smitten rock to satiate their thirst. "Hungry and
thirsty, their soul fainted in them," with the piercing
accusatory reflection, that all this might have been
prevented.

And when at length they arrived at their destina-
tion in Babylon, what a scene of idolatry, and lux-
ury was before them, and what a contrast did their
poverty and wretchedness present! No wonder that
they sat and mourned by the river-side beneath the
taunts of their enemies, when, suspending their harps
upon the willows, they exclaimed, "Our holy and
beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is
burned with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste;" or indignantly added, "O Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be who rewardeth thee as thou hast served us!"

Such was the captivity of Judah, which for severity had not a parallel in their national history.

No event is more calculated to alarm backsliders in the Christian church. That the decline of religion in the soul is neither impossible nor uncommon, is but too painfully apparent. In some instances, the purity of the faith is resigned for an erroneous creed, and the worst results follow. In other cases, the sentiments which the judgment has been taught to approve, remain unaltered, but are neutralized by a worldly spirit—sloth—the neglect of the means of grace—unfavourable alliances, or the decline of the elevating vigour of holy love, so that "the things which remain are ready to die." This is lamentable! God is insulted! The atoning Saviour, to whom we have pledged ourselves by a consideration the most binding, and by acts solemn and oft-repeated, is deserted. The Holy Spirit is grieved! Religion is dishonoured! The enemies of the Gospel are sanctioned in their opposition! The weak in the faith are startled! Inquirers are discouraged! And the soul is placed in the most imminent danger.

Let the heavy calamities which befell the Jews be your warning, if, like them, you have violated your religious covenant. "Be sure your sin will find you out." It is indeed a lamentable occurrence—a deep and dark spot in the life of a professed follower of Christ, to decline in the tone and vigour of his soul as he advances in life, and becomes better acquainted with the person and performances of the Saviour and the imperative claims of religion. It is a reflection which no language can correctly describe, to slumber when the world is wide awake—to become careless when the world is energetic—to loiter when all around is progressing—or to go back to former habits, after all that has been read and heard, seen and
felt, professed, promised, and enjoyed. "It had been better for them not to have known the way of truth, than after they have known it to turn aside."

In tracing a state of religious declension to its source, the first step is usually seen in the neglect of the means of Divine appointment for promoting the life of religion in the soul. And in that neglect, no omission is more common and fatal than that of secret prayer. When the frame of the soul is devotional, it is safe, and many and valuable are the seasons of communion with God which it is permitted to enjoy. But when prayer is neglected, or adopted as a mere matter of duty and form, without fervour and regularity, the mind becomes careless and dissipated, and the heart cold and barren.

Mr. Read, the Missionary at the Kat River settlement, in South Africa, related, when in England, the following beautiful fact:—

"It is the practice of many of the Christianized Hottentots, at some of the stations, in order to enjoy the privilege of secret prayer with greater privacy and freedom than they could do in their own confined and incommodious dwellings, to retire among the trees and bushes in the vicinity of their village: and, that they might carry on their devotions without being intruded upon by others, and also derive all that tranquilising influence which would be produced by a spot with which no other occupations, thoughts and feelings, are associated, than such as are holy, each individual selects for his own use a particular bush, behind which, and concealed by it, he might commune with his heavenly Father in secret, as Nathanael did under his fig-tree. By the rest, this bush is considered as an oratory, sacred to the brother or sister by whom it had been appropriated, and which therefore is never to be violated by the foot or even by the gaze of another, during the season it is occupied by its proprietor. The constant tread of the worshippers, in their diurnal visit to these hallowed spots, would of necessity wear a path in the grass which lies between
their habitation and the sylvan scene of their communion with God.

"On one occasion, a Christian Hottentot woman said to another female member of their little community, 'Sister, I am afraid you are somewhat declining in religion.' The words were accompanied with a look of affection, and were uttered in a tone that savoured nothing of railing accusation, nor of reproachful severity, but which was expressive of tender fidelity, and the meekness of wisdom. The individual thus addressed asked her friend for the reason of her fears. 'Because,' replied this good and gentle spirit, 'the grass has grown over your path to the bush.'—The unrepressed energies of nature, carrying on its usual progress, had disclosed the secret of neglected prayer.

"The backslider could not deny the fact: there in the springing herbage was the indisputable evidence that the feet which had once trodden it down had ceased to frequent the spot. She did not attempt to excuse it, but fell under the sweet influence of this sisterly reproof, and confessed, with ingenuous shame and sorrow, that her heart had turned away from the Lord. The admonition had its desired effect—the sinner was converted from the error of her ways, and her watchful and faithful reprover had the satisfaction and reward of seeing the wanderer restored, not only to the path to the bush, but to the renewed favour of that God with whom she there again communed in secret."—Rev. J. A. James.

Should a backslider cast his eye upon this simple but eloquent reproof, O that he may "remember from whence he has fallen, and repent, and do his first works." "For if we sin wilfully after we have known the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of vengeance and fiery indignation." "Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of enter-
ing into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” Happy they who can add, “We are not of them that turn back, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”
LECTURE IX.

FALL OF BABYLON.

Isaiah xiii. 19. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

BABYLON bore the date of high antiquity. It was one of the royal cities of Assyria, and in process of time rivalled in extent and surpassed in magnificence the celebrated Nineveh, the famed metropolis of that powerful empire. It occupied an extensive plain, proverbial for its fertility, and which formed part of the land of Shinar, or Chaldea, and is supposed to have been the spot on which the prince of darkness first erected the shrine of idolatry. Here the inhabitants of the new world, forgetting the impressive lessons that were enforced by the deluge, concerted the impious project of rearing a massive tower, whose top was to penetrate the clouds, to set the Almighty at defiance, and perpetuate their names. In this region, thus stricken by the blight of paganism, infinite mercy selected the patriarch Abraham, "in whom (as the progenitor of the Messiah) all the nations of the earth were to be blessed;" and commanded him to follow the footsteps of Divine guidance to the land of Canaan. And on these productive plains human ambition employed its utmost skill and vast resources in the formation of a city which became one
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of the wonders of the world. Such was Babylon, which, for eminence, was denominated, in the language of Scripture, "the glory of kingdoms," "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," "the golden city," "the lady of kingdoms," "a queen for ever," and whose king, for formidable power, was styled "the destroyer," "the battle-axe of the nations."

The mighty monarch to whom these potent appellations were applied, and who was the principal agent in the formation of this vast and beautiful city, and in achieving the conquests which rendered the Babylonian empire so powerful, rich, and extensive, was Nebuchadnezzar, whose incursions and victories have been so conspicuous in the former Lectures. To gratify his boundless ambition, he subdued the Jews — the Syrians — the Ammonites — the Moabites — the Edomites — the Philistines — the Phenicians — the Egyptians — and some of the tribes of Arabia; and having become the monarch of the east, returned to his capital, laden with spoil, followed with numberless captives, and resolved to employ all the energies of an insatiable mind in luxury, idolatry, and pride. To render Babylon emphatically "great" in extent, in beauty, in population, in riches, the usual concomitants of earthly glory, employed his daily thoughts, perhaps his nightly dreams, whilst every facility for gratifying a soul thus inflated was at Nebuchadnezzar's command. If models were required, they were furnished by the countries which he had subverted, and which he had witnessed in the original magnitude of Nineveh; the unparalleled grandeur and architecture of the cities of Egypt; the strength of Edom and of Tyre; and the beauty of the temple of Solomon. And if means were requisite, they were all at the disposal of the great king, whose will was the law of his realm. His vast wealth, supplied by the spoils of war, and his numerous captives, composed of the most skilful artisans from other countries, furnished materials, treasure, and workmen in abundance; whilst peace and undisputed sovereignty to a wide extent of territory
gave the ambitious monarch leisure to gratify the most unlimited wishes of a worldly soul. To this uncontrolled authority and boundless magnificence the prophet alluded in his memorable address to king Belshazzar: \textit{"O thou king, the Most High gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour. And for the majesty that he gave him all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down,"} Dan. v. 18. With such unlimited independence, together with the means and motives which he possessed, Nebuchadnezzar made the royal city of Babylon a specimen of what may be accomplished by insatiable ambition in the absence of that \textit{"hope which is full of immortality,"} and the faith which enjoys its highest gratification in communion with God and in acts of benevolence and usefulness to the church and to the world.

But, O how vapid was the satisfaction which such projects supplied when compared to the luxury that was enjoyed by the patriarch Job, who could say, without ostentation, \textit{"When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not, I searched out."} This was the bliss of benevolence. This was genuine, fadeless glory, that lasts when earthly magnificence ceases to gratify the mental appetite; when the selfish, sordid worldling lies despised or forgotten in the cheerless gloom of the prison of the grave. And yet, alas! how many Nebuchadnezzars are there still, though living on a
smaller scale, whose property, the accumulation of years of prosperity, is devoted in after-life merely to luxurious idleness, to a splendid mansion, costly furniture, an expensive equipage, and other objects of selfish gratification, without aiming to be blessings to their fellow-men! Who say to their earthly spirits, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" or who, making a god of their gold, live and perish as wretched misers, despised even by the inheritors of their cankered wealth!

According to the testimony of Herodotus, Babylon, like Nineveh, was 60 miles in circumference, an exact square, surrounded by a wall 350 feet in height, and 87 feet in thickness, and surmounted by 250 watch-towers. This vast and well-defended enclosure was entered by 100 gates of solid brass, from each of which a broad street, 15 miles in length, extended to the opposite side of the city; and where they crossed each other, 600 spacious squares were formed. Through the centre of this beautiful domain ran the Euphrates, like the Thames in London, on either side of which, at the foot of an intersecting bridge, was a splendid, spacious palace, the larger occupying, with its gardens and grounds, eight miles in circuit. At the termination of the streets leading to the river was another set of brazen gates, through the massive walls by which it was lined, so that every precaution was adopted to blend security with amplitude and magnificence. Near one of the royal palaces stood the splendid temple of Jupiter Belus, the national god. The origin of this celebrated temple is supposed to have been the tower of Babel. It was half a mile in circuit and 600 feet in height, composed of eight compartments rising above each other. In the highest part of this magnificent structure was a superb chamber, sacred to the idol whose name it bore, within which was a golden repository of considerable dimensions, containing all the precious spoils of vanquished nations, among which were the sacred vessels that
had been taken from the temple at Jerusalem. The riches of this shrine of idolatry, consisting of statues, tables, censers, cups, and other vessels, were immense. All were of solid gold, amounting, according to Dio-
dorus, to twenty-one millions sterling. The same author states, that this lofty temple was surmounted by a golden statue of Jupiter Belus, 40 feet in height, equal in value to three and a half millions of our money. Nebuchadnezzar also erected another golden image during the captivity, supposed by some ancient writers to have been a model of himself, which, in all the pride of despotic power, he set up as an object of worship.

Time would fail in describing all the particulars by which Babylon was distinguished. Its beautiful hanging gardens, rising on ascending terraces to the height of its lofty walls. That prodigious work of imperial authority, the artificial lake, for receiving the superabundant waters at the annual overflowing of the river, which was forty miles square. And the extent of its manufactures and merchandise, which rendered Babylon the emporium of the nations and the wonder of the age. After the destruction of Edom and Tyre, no city, then existing, could vie with Babylon. It was well situated for extensive trade and commerce, having no rival, and was consequently visited by foreigners from various parts of the globe, some for literature, some for traffic, and others for pleasure or sensual indulgence. Of this we may form an inference from the book of Revelation, in which a mighty angel, descending from heaven, and denouncing the glaring sins of the papacy, gathers his terms of accusation from the character of Babylon, and cries:

"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of
the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandize any more," Rev. xviii.

This was Babylon in her greatness and guilt. For in addition to the ordinary vices that a wealthy city usually fosters, so debasing was their system of idolatry, and so much did the Babylonians render religion subservient to the worst of passions, that the most abominable practices constituted the observance of some of their religious rites, of which even heathen writers could not speak without abhorrence. Here, again, we see what mankind are when left to themselves.

But notwithstanding the glaring insults which sin offers to the perfections and government of God, and to the mediatorial performances and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, whether committed by individuals or by public bodies, solemn warnings usually precede
its punishment. Before justice strikes the fatal blow, mercy shakes the rod, and holds forth the olive-branch, while conscience, providence, revelation, and Christian piety, make their reiterated appeal, and silently whisper, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Nebuchadnezzar, though a bold transgressor, was thus warned of God; in the first instance, by a remarkable dream, recorded in the second chapter of Daniel, and which, in that age and country, greatly alarmed him; the more so, as the reputed wise men of the empire were unable to recall the forgotten particulars to the king's recollection, and consequently were baffled in their efforts to declare the interpretation. They were threatened with a cruel death.

In this extremity Daniel was called, who not only rehearsed the mysterious dream, but explained its meaning in language so luminous and impressive, that "Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. The king answered unto Daniel and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king," Daniel ii. 46—49.

This was a wonderful event, whether we advert to the homage which the haughty monarch paid to Daniel, or to his reverential acknowledgment of the supreme authority of the God of Israel. Truly, "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."

But however pleasing such a subdued state of
mind, it was not of long continuance; for in the next chapter, and only one year later, according to the chronology of Dr. Hales, Nebuchadnezzar erected his golden image, which he required his diversified subjects to worship, under the penalty of being consigned to the burning fiery furnace. Three Hebrew youths, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, alone refused compliance with the despotic mandate. They were accused, summoned to the presence of the tyrant king, warned and threatened; whilst, in the language of impious daring, the furious monarch haughtily demanded, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Sustained by Divine grace, the holy men, with heavenly calmness, still refused, and after the furnace had been heated to a sevenfold intensity, they were plunged, with ruffian hands, into the fiery vortex. You know the sequel. They were miraculously preserved, were cheered by the presence of an angel, walked at liberty, their bands having been consumed by the flames which formed their robe of glory, and were happier than the sovereign on his costly throne. Nebuchadnezzar, with his officers of state, witnessed this miracle, recalled the faithful, honoured youths, acknowledged his error, adored the God of heaven, and promoted them to offices of distinction. What an encouragement for the servants of Christ to "stand fast in the faith, to quit" them "like men," to "be strong," and say, with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

This was a second warning to the proud king of Babylon; but the effect was soon forgotten. An erroneous creed, boundless wealth, dominant passions, and numerous springs of sensual gratification; still held possession of Nebuchadnezzar's worldly heart. A third visitation from the Lord of hosts not only re-awakened the proud monarch's fears, but issued in a heavy personal calamity. Another remarkable dream shook his iron frame, weighed down his spirit, was incomprehensible to the Chaldean magicians, was
interpreted by the faithful Daniel, and received its fulfilment in the king's insanity. During seven long years, under the influence of hypochondriacal madness, according to the opinion of Dr. Mead, he ran wild in the fields, fancied himself transmuted to an ox, and "ate grass like the beasts of the earth." What a change! What degradation! How singularly correct was the language of the prophet, which was uttered nearly one hundred and fifty years prior to this event, consequently a century before Nebuchadnezzar was born, when he said, Isaiah xiv. 16, "They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms, that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof, that opened not the house of his prisoners?" This is the man. How true the reflections of the psalmist, "When thou with rebukes dost chasten man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity."

At the expiration of seven years, as Daniel foretold, Nebuchadnezzar's reason returned. He reverently acknowledged the authority of the Most High, confessed the absurdity of pride; published the narrative of his degradation, deliverance, and confession, far and wide; and ere the lapse of many months fell a victim to the irresistible stroke of death.

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach, a weak and profligate prince, B.C. 561, who fell either in battle or by the hands of conspirators, after the short reign of one year. (Hales.) He was succeeded by his son Belshazzar, whose infamy, according to the testimony of Xenophon, was almost unparalleled. His whole life was a scene of riot and intemperance, and he was characterized by his cruelty to his subjects. Thus we find him at the moment of his downfall, seated at a sumptuous banquet, surrounded by a thousand of his princes and lords, and his numerous wives and concubines, desecrating the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had
taken from the house of the Lord, by drinking wine in
them to the honour of the gods of the heathen, not-
withstanding the solemn warning which he had wit-
nessed during the life of Nebuchadnezzar his grand-
father, and in the untimely death of his father.

Thus have we contemplated "great Babylon, the
glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excel-
lency," in her greatness and in her guilt.

We are now prepared to witness the force of those
very sublime and remarkable predictions which,
during the space of two hundred years, were uttered
and recorded, at different periods, in the unob-
structed foresight of Babylon's fall. Some of these
passages were penned before the principal actors in
this eventful drama were born, and others when not
so much as a passing shadow in the fair horizon of
Babylon's glory was seen by any mortal eye; but it
was the revelation of Him "who sees the end from
the beginning."

The following prophecies may be taken as a sam-
ple of many others which might have been selected:
Isaiah xlvii. 5—15, "Sit thou silent, and get thee
into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou
shalt no more be called the lady of kingdoms. I
was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine
inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou
didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast
thou heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I shall
be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these
things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter
end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art
given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that
sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me;
I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the
loss of children: but these two things shall come to
thee in a moment—in one day, the loss of children,
and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their
perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for
the great abundance of thy enchantments. For thou
hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None
seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee."

These were heavy tidings; but how unlikely to come to pass when they were uttered; for at that period the sun of Babylon's glory had scarcely risen. Hear another indictment at a later date—"The word that the Lord spake against Babylon and against the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard: publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces: her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast. For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken; their arrows shall be
as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the Lord."

"Because of the wrath of the Lord it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the Lord. Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the Lord: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land."

"How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the Lord. The Lord hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this is the work of the Lord God of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans. Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly; let nothing of her be left. Call together the archers against Babylon; all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about: let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work: according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel. Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee."

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"A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein. Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel, and will not show mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array like men to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon. The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble; anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations," Jeremiah 1.

Could any language be more lofty, explicit, and menacing than these prophecies, which were uttered many years previous to their accomplishment. If we pass to the next chapter, the phraseology is equally striking, and will amply compensate a careful perusal. But not content with depicting the approaching ruin of the greatest empire and city then existing, the Holy Spirit of God, by the lips of Isaiah, actually foretold the name of Babylon's conqueror, upwards of a century before he was born, Isa. xlv. 1—4: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:
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and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me."

But amid all the sublime imagery and appropriate phraseology that was employed by the prophets, it will be difficult to select a finer burst of impassioned eloquence, predictive of the death and degradation of Babylon's worthless monarch, than is recorded in Isaiah xiv. 3—20. "And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from thy hard bondage, wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also

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upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.”

On this passage two popular authors have given us a beautiful comment. “The regions of the dead are here laid open, and Hades is represented as rousing up the shades of the departed monarchs. They rise from their thrones to meet the king of Babylon at his coming, and insult his naked, disfigured corpse, with the severest taunts and bitterest reproaches, as being reduced to the same state of impotence and dissolution as themselves! This is one of the boldest figures that was ever attempted in poetry! To understand it, we must form to ourselves the appearance of an eastern sepulchral vault—a vast gloomy cavern—all round the sides of which are cells to receive the bodies of the dead. Here the deceased monarchs lie in a distinguished sort of state, each with his arms by his side, and his sword at his head. These illustrious shades rise at once from their couches, as from their thrones, and advance to the entrance of the cavern to meet the king of Babylon, not to greet him, but to resist his entrance.”—Lowth.

The other quotation is still more sententiously strik-
ing:—"Vengeance pursues and overtakes the imperial homicide in both worlds! The whole earth, after a preparatory pause of dread silence, breaks forth as with the voice of ten thousand thunders in pealing shouts of tempestuous exultation at the tyrant’s fall! The invisible world is moved from its centre to its circumference! All the myriads of the empire of death are assembled to receive the spirit of the warrior dyed in the blood of millions! They receive him with a fierce storm of reproachful and scornful interrogations! They with one voice proclaim his crime, predict his doom! The sickened earth, in token of abhorrence, vomits forth his very carcase, as an abominable drug, a mortal poison! And the indignant land, which he had covered with death, refuses him a tomb!"—*Dr. Campbell.*

These were the several predictions of Babylon’s fall, and final extermination, delivered at a period when the guilty nation was rising into note, or flourishing in the very meridian of its power and glory, and recorded in language the most magnificent, embellished with metaphors impressive, comprehensive, and startling.

In collecting these maledictions into one point of contemplation, they appear to embrace the following prophetic incidents. Babylon was to be taken by an invading army. Her wise men would be unable to render her the smallest aid. She was to be taken in a snare. A drought was to be on her waters. She was to fall suddenly, in one day. Her impious king was to hear with amazement and alarm the report of the seizure of his capital without having the power to prevent it. The Lord in his providence was to go before the invaders to open the gates of brass. The city was to be taken by surprise at a season of drunkenness. The mighty conquest was to be gained by a hardy, valorous armament, headed by Cyrus. And at the expiration of seventy years, the captive nations were to be set at liberty by the magnanimous conqueror. This was the syllabus of prophecy respect-
ing Babylon's fall and the restoration of the Jews to their own land.

Now let us appeal to historic facts as they are supplied by the sacred volume and ancient authors. In arranging these facts, there is a little diversity of opinion as to the order and date of some of the incidents, which is not surprising; but the following statements, derived from Herodotus and Xenophon, are in accordance with the inspired narrative, and are the most generally received version.

The Medes and Persians having confederated against the imperious Babylonians, encountered them in the field, under the command of Cyrus, son of the Persian king, and gained a decisive victory. They then besieged the royal city, in which Belshazzar took refuge and set the invaders at defiance, confiding in its impregnability, and the vast stores of provisions with which it was furnished, and gave himself up to sensuality, to which he was greatly addicted. Having attempted the subjugation of the city in vain, Cyrus resolved, if possible, to carry his point by stratagem. He accordingly employed his forces in the formation of an artificial channel, by which to draw off the water of the river. The work of preparation, by prodigious labour, was at length accomplished, and nothing remained but a favourable opportunity for removing the embankment and striking the fatal blow.

That opportunity soon arrived. A great national festival was held at Babylon, which was characterized by mirth and intemperance. In the evening of that day, Belshazzar held his banquet recorded in the book of Daniel, at which the vessels of the Lord were desecrated. And about the hour of midnight, when the profligacy of the palace had reached its climax, the mysterious handwriting appeared on the palace-wall, which threw the whole party into confusion and intense alarm. At that juncture, when the city population were lost in bacchanalian sleep, the invaders having secretly opened the moat, and
exhausted the river, marched up its channel; entered the gates, which they found open; advanced to the palace, which was the scene of terror, and spread destruction and death in their course. In that night was Belshazzar the king slain, and, in accordance with the language of prophecy, was "cast out as an abominable branch."

Thus fell Babylon, "the great," "the queen of nations," "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," in the year 536 B.C. Nor did the golden city ever recover this tremendous blow. Its glory became a fading flower. Its immense wealth was gradually succeeded by the most revolting poverty. Its lofty walls were reduced, and at length levelled with the plain. Its beautiful gardens and fruitful fields became a scene of desolation. Its spacious temples and palaces have fallen into ruins. Its hidden treasures have been borne away from their dark receptacles by foreign spoilers. And now, where royalty and nobility, pomp and power, wealth and luxury, pride and unbridled licentiousness, once revelled without restraint, ferocious beasts and reptiles hold their undisturbed possession. So truly has every particular of the sure word of prophecy come to pass in Babylon's fall and degradation. In surveying these ruins, who does not exclaim, "O Lord, thou art my God. I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name: for thou hast done wonderful things: thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin; a palace of strangers to be no city: it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glory thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee." Or in the language of another sacred writer, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever. For lo thine enemies, O Lord, for lo thine enemies shall perish, all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered!"

Sir Robert Ker Porter informs us, that "Babylon, once the glory of kingdoms, is now the greatest of
ruins. Immense tumuli of temples, palaces, and habitations of every description, are everywhere seen, and form long and varied lines of ruins. Those buildings which were once the labour of slaves and the pride of kings, are now mis-shapen heaps of rubbish." Buckingham states, that "from the temple of Belus and the two royal palaces, to the streets of the city, and single dwellings, all have become heaps, and the only difference is, from the vast and solid masses of ruins which look like mountains, to the slight mound that is scarcely elevated above the plain—Babylon is fallen, till its ruins can fall no lower!" Another author observes: "It was prophesied of Ammon, that it should be a stable for camels, and a couching place for flocks, and of Philistia that it should be cottages for shepherds, and a pasture for flocks. But Babylon was to be visited with a far greater desolation. Neither a tent should be pitched there, (even by an Arab,) nor a fold made by a shepherd, which implies the last degree of solitude and desolation."

This is actually the case. The shepherds might, if so disposed, erect with facility among these ruins a defence against wild beasts, and the Arab who traverses that vicinity by day might pitch his tent there by night. But neither the one nor the other can be induced to remain among these ruins; they are prevented by the superstitious dread of evil spirits. Although an enterprising English officer was attended by six armed Arabs, he could not prevail on them to remain after dark. No, says our text, "The Arabian shall not pitch his tent there;" but "wild beasts shall lie down there;" and these are now the only lords of great Babylon, once the "lady of kingdoms," and most of the cavities are occupied by bats and owls! The temple of Belus, the greatest work of man, is now a den of lions! Ah, how true is that denunciation, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols!" And the language of prophecy declares, that this once
splendid city, thus destroyed, shall “never more be inhabited.” Alexander the Great made the attempt to restore it, and employed ten thousand men for the purpose, but he died in the midst of the undertaking: God seeming to say, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

Sir Robert Ker Porter remarks in another place, “I could not but feel an indescribable awe in passing, as it were, into the very gates of Babylon. The whole view was particularly solemn. The majestic stream of the Euphrates, wandering in solitude like a pilgrim monarch through the solitary ruins of his devastated kingdom, still appeared a noble river under all the disadvantages of its deserted track. Its banks were hoary with reeds, and the grey osier willows were yet there, on which ‘the captive Israelites hung their harps,’ and refused to be comforted while Jerusalem lay in ruins. But how has the rest of the scene changed since then! At that time those broken hills (of rubbish) were palaces! Those long undulating mounds, streets! This vast solitude was filled with the busy subjects of the proud daughter of the East! Now, wasted with misery, her habitations are not to be found, and the worms cover her.”

Thus great Babylon sank from the highest pinnacle of glory, to the most entire desolation. Never was pride so humbled. Never was worldly ambition laid so prostrate in the dust. What now became of the blasphemous voice, that demanded of the defenceless faithful Hebrew youths, “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?” That insulting language, wafted to the high throne of Jehovah’s retribution, was answered in Nebuchadnezzar’s derangement and in the final overthrow of his magnificent city and powerful empire; thus teaching us that “riches profit not in the day of wrath.” No! they are uncertain riches, ensnaring riches, calculated to foster pride, absorb the attention from divine and heavenly things, and minister to the lusts and passions of the heart. “The rust of gold and silver is the worst of all rusts,
because it is invisible. Other corrosions stain the hands or the garment; the secret canker of gold poisons the soul, and makes it callous to social appeals of the most appalling and sacred urgency."

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven!" O to be rich towards God —to be rich for eternity—to be rich in all that elevates and expands the mind, adorns the character, and ministers to our piety, happiness, and usefulness! Then, instead of living and dying unfaithful stewards under the frown of God, we shall anticipate, through the infinite merits of the Redeemer, the welcome plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord."
LECTURE X.

RETURN OF THE JEWS FROM THEIR CAPTIVITY.

Jeremiah xxix. 10—14. For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

We left the people of Israel and of Judah in captivity, the former having been carried into exile by the kings of Assyria, and the latter conquered and removed from their native land to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. These calamities we have traced to their source. They were the fruits of sin, the strokes of Jehovah's long-neglected rod. The storm, repeatedly threatened by the insulted prophets, had long been gathering over the guilty land. The startling sounds of prophetic denunciation, like distant thunder, had long been heard, but lamentably disregarded. And the voice of the Lord, in the language of startling determination, was of no avail, when he said, “Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies; and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place: and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it; from the time that
it goeth forth it shall take you; from morning to morning, shall it pass over; by day and by night it shall be a vexation.'

This was the threatened punishment of a people once distinguished above all others by miracles and mercies, to whom Moses addressed the following congratulation: "What nation is there upon the earth which hath God so nigh unto them as our God is to us in all things which we call upon him for!" Their glory was now departed. "Their sins separated between them and their God," and the cloud of their iniquities concealed the brightness of his countenance. At length the threatened storm, as we have seen, descended in fearful violence. Destruction succeeded destruction. Every false hope was exterminated. Every frail refuge, in which impenitence and unbelief sought a temporary shelter, was laid prostrate. And fire and sword, subjugation and bondage, proved the truth of prophetic asseverations. Thus the cities of Israel and Judah, once resounding with the voice of joy and praise, from the multitude that kept holy-day, were reduced to ruinous heaps—to a deserted solitude, like the ruined cities of the plain, and became a monitory beacon to future generations to avoid the same condemnation.

But though the people of the Jews were thus stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,—though they saw their sun go down while it was yet day, behind the mountains that were round about Jerusalem, amid clouds and storms; yet the prescient eye of prophetic hope was permitted to discern a few bright streaks emanating from the smiling face of unchanging love, though concealed behind a frowning providence. Those rays of promise not only tinged the clouds which lowered over the guilty land, but seemed to descend on the waste places of Judah, and especially upon the mount of Zion and the ruins of her temple. These luminous emanations, visible only to the eye of faith and prophecy, were hailed and recorded as the peaceful, gladdening harbingers of a.
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brighter, though distant morrow, and remind us of the promise, "At eventide it shall be light." Thus though the harp of prophecy had often echoed with the plaintive notes of woe, though it broke the silence of suspense with many a touching cadence, it still warbled as it passed from hand to hand with the cheering sounds of pardon, peace, and hope. It was Judah’s harp. It was designed by the merciful Saviour and Sanctifier of his people to comfort them in their captivity with the assurance of reconciliation and acceptance, support and deliverance. It was the yearning voice of a prayer-hearing and promise-fulfilling God, who pledged himself to "bring the third-part through the fire, and to try them as silver is tried, and purify them as gold is purified."

The following were among the merciful strains which, in that cloudy and dark day, cheered and soothed the spirit of suffering disobedience: Isaiah liv. 7—10, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." We can easily imagine, how such gracious assurances as these were cherished and embalmed by those suffering children of the captivity, to whom the Lord referred when he commanded Ezekiel to go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of it. Nor is it difficult to imagine that these promises were at last highly appreciated by many of the exiles in
Babylon, whom their afflictions had softened and subdued to repentance, although they disregarded the warning voice in their own land. "In their affliction they will seek me," said their long-neglected Redeemer, and events proved the correctness of the assertion.

That there were not a few, both of the kingdom of Israel and of Judah, who maintained their integrity when their country was overspread with idolatry, we have reason to suppose. Even in the degenerate land of Israel, during the infamous reign of Ahab and Jezebel, the merciful Lord of the church assured the dispirited prophet Elijah, that "he had reserved to himself seven thousand men, who had not bowed their knee to Baal." Doubtless a far greater number existed in the kingdom of Judah. These were solitary stars in a dark night; "a remnant according to the election of grace;" God's "hidden ones," who, in the land of their captivity, were the depositories of Divine truth; the fermenting leaven of a new generation; chosen witnesses for the God of Israel; scattered sheep, to be collected by the good Shepherd, and depastured on the mountains of Zion at the period of their restoration; of whom he said, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."
I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment," Ezekiel xxxiv. 11. These were the preserved remnant, who, to use another metaphor, were to "take root downward, and bear fruit upward." So that while such devoted men as Daniel, Ezekiel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Mordecai, Zerubbabel, and others are severally named, as jewels in Babylon among the children of the captivity, there were doubtless many other "Israelites indeed," of inferior note, in whom the Spirit of God dwelt, and who were recognised by the ever-watchful eye of the supreme Lord of the church, as plants of righteousness, though among thorns, and as gems of his mediatorial crown, though mixed with inferior particles of earth. These were the persons who would value and study the predictions and promises of the prophets when far removed from their native land, and of whom it was doubtless recorded, as of their pious decendants, "Then, they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." What an impulse does this passage give to the energies of brotherly love! What encouragement it imparts to pious persons in unpropitious situations! And how strongly it sanctions Christian conversation and the communion of saints!

That the pious among the captives in Babylon who maintained their integrity had much to vex their souls we can easily imagine. They resembled Lot in Sodom. For though not eventually treated as slaves, like their forefathers in Egypt, whose lives were imbittered by cruel taskmasters; though their
condition was as lenient as foreign bread in the mouth of a captive could be divested of an unpalatable taste, still they were in the midst of pagan idolatry in its most heinous forms. Their religion and patriotism also were often insulted by the revilings of their conquerors, when "they that carried them away captive required of them a song, and they that wasted them required of them mirth, saying, (contemptuously,) Sing us one of the songs of Zion." What were their feelings of holy indignation when their worship of Nebuchadnezzar's golden image was demanded; when their brethren were thrown into the burning fiery furnace; and when the sacred vessels of the house of the Lord were desecrated by revelling pagans at Belshazzar's feast? With what a burst of patriotic fervour did they exclaim, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!"

But amid all these sorrows and insults, the pious captives were no doubt sustained by strength equal to their day, like the believer in his afflictions, and were greatly cheered by the fondly cherished language of Moses, the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, the predictions of the prophets, and the promises of the Lord, so applicable to their state whilst the seventy appointed years of their captivity tardily revolved. The great lawgiver of Israel, indued with occasional foresight of futurity, having frequently and faithfully warned the people of the fearful consequences of disobedience, employed and recorded the following language, a thousand years previous to the Babylonian captivity:

Deut. xxx. 1–3. "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey
his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.”

Solomon also, at the dedication of the temple, as if he foreboded the apostasy and reverses of the nation, presented the following prayer, 1 Kings viii. 44—51. “If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them. For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron.”
Now when this soothing language of Moses, and this memorable prayer of Solomon, were viewed by the captives in connexion with the promise in our text, and with similar assurances that had been uttered by the prophets, and when the whole were placed by the side of the following predictions, you see how the Lord's mercy softened the rigour of his judgments, and how truly that benign declaration was verified—"He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and all the fruit thereof is to take away his sin."

The following prophecies, to which they were encouraged to give heed "as to a light shining in a dark place," were intended to imprint the bow of promise upon the storm; they also present another proof by their accomplishment of theauthenticity of the sacred writings.

Isaiah xliii. 14–17. "Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow."

Isaiah xlv. 21–28. "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer,
and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."

In the same cheering strain the prophet continued to strike his lyre in chapter lli. 1—9. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. For thus saith the Lord God, My people went aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is blasphemed. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they
shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem."

In each of these quotations we see the language of strong confidence. Thus though the strain was entirely prophetic, and consequently anticipatory of the distant future, the terms employed are penned with an interchange of the past and the present, so assured did the prophet feel that his predictions would be verified.

We now pass to the testimony of Jeremiah, who was also instructed by the Holy Spirit to mingle his consolations with his maledictions, chap. xxx. 18—22. "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them: and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

How soothingly must these promises have recurred to the Hebrew captives! "Like the rain upon the new-mown grass, like the showers which water the earth," did the balmy influence of these predictions fall and distil upon the souls of the faithful, in the land of their banishment. Such are the consolations of the Spirit to the afflicted believer. But the Lord gives more grace; thus in the 31st chapter and at the 6th verse, Jeremiah adds, "For there shall be a day,
that the watchman upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God. For thus saith the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

A similar glow of yearning promissory language is recorded by Jeremiah, chap. xxxiii. 10—14: "Thus saith the Lord; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man, and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, without inhabitant, and without beast, the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the Lord. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah."
In contemplating these prophecies, so replete with light and comfort, how truly do they verify the inspired assertion, "Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his tender mercies!" Who would be an infidel, and reject this balm! Who would neglect the "great salvation," and lose the benefit of the Saviour's sympathy, "who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities!"

These assurances of Divine support and of ultimate restoration to their father-land from the yoke of their enemies were cherished so firmly, that one of the captives, speaking in the name of his companions in tribulation in the 130th Psalm, which is supposed to have been written in Babylon, exclaimed, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

This was making a proper use of the promises and faithfulness of God. Let us now proceed towards the period of their accomplishment.

We have already seen the day of clouds and storms in which, for the last time, the people of Judah saw their sun retire from their native land. We have likewise beheld the ensuing night, long, and dark, which formed the sad complexion of their captivity, surrounded as they were by "a people who were sitting in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death." One of the prophets had said, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." And their pious ancestor David had declared, as the result of his experience, "Darkness endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." All this they believed; and thus as the period began to approach when these sentiments were to be verified, they appeared like the anxious,
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patient watchman, waiting and looking with believing expectancy for the opening dawn, for the anticipated day of their emancipation.

Nor were their hopes disappointed. Gleam after gleam at different intervals pierced the midnight gloom, proving that the Lord had not forgotten to be gracious. They had seen their faithful brethren mercifully preserved in the fiery furnace. They had seen the defeat of the astrologers and magicians in their efforts to recall and explain Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream; the success of Daniel, on two memorable occasions; the exact fulfilment of his predictions; and his elevation to a high post of honour. They had witnessed the king's abasement by insanity, and his remarkable confession and proclamation, on his recovery, to the praise and glory of the God of their fathers. They had likewise beheld their haughty despotic conqueror laid in the dust of death; his wicked son and successor cut off by violent hands in the midst of his days; his grandson, the impious Belshazzar, slain by an invading army of the Medes and Persians; and the kingdom of Babylon subverted by the very forces and under the identical leader whom prophecy had so clearly described many years previous to the captivity.

Were not these tokens for good? Were not these rays of descending light; sources of hope and gleams of encouragement to Zion's watchmen, as harbingers of day, especially when they heard the victorious shout, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" and when they saw their predicted deliverer, in the person of Cyrus, enter the city in triumph, of whom Isaiah had spoken by name, a hundred and fifty years before, as the Lord's shepherd, who was to set the captives free?

In this state of sustaining hope the exiles at length reached the sixty-eighth year of their captivity out of the seventy, the predicted period of their banishment, when king Darius ascended the throne to sway his sceptre over the Medes, Persians, Chal-
deans, and all the captive nations whom Nebuchadnezzar had brought under the Babylonian yoke. But where was Cyrus? Was he not the ordained deliverer of the Jewish exiles? He was. Did prophecy speak of Darius in that character? It did not. But pause. "If the promise tarry, wait for it." Darius will disappear at the proper time, and Cyrus will be brought forward by the great Head of the church, "by whom kings reign." We have yet two years, ere the seventy, the period of Israel's bondage is to terminate; then the great question will poise on an important pivot, whether the oft-repeated promise of God and the predictions of his prophets shall be fulfilled or falsified.

But ere the period of Israel's predicted restoration arrived, although so near at hand, their faith was to receive a painful shock. A dark cloud gathered over the bright morning of their hope, and it is not improbable that unbelief was ready to insinuate that all was lost. The case was this: Daniel, who had been so providentially signalized during the Babylonian dynasty, was honoured by the present monarch Darius with the most exalted office in the state; and to him the believing expectation of his captive countrymen was naturally directed as an important agent in the performance of the Divine decrees, respecting their predicted emancipation, in consequence of his intercourse with the sovereign.

His elevation excited the envy of the native governors, and they sought by every stratagem to tarnish his reputation by impeaching his integrity, but without success. At length, knowing him to be a holy man, the breath of whose piety was prayer, they obtained a royal decree that no petition should be offered to God or man, except to the king during thirty days, under the dreadful penalty of consignment to the lions' den. The holy Daniel, like his brethren Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who long ago witnessed a good confession at the hazard of their lives, refused compliance, and continued his
devotions as before. He was accused. The decree was violated. And though the prime minister of the realm, who had been so useful and honoured for a long series of years in Babylon,—though an old man, over whose pilgrim path more than eighty years had rolled, he was committed to the dreadful den, to be devoured by hungry ravenous beasts of prey. Now where was Judah's harp? their prospects of deliverance? their hopes? the promises of God? the predictions of the prophets? What say Judah's watchmen, who had been long praying and waiting for the bright morning of freedom? Surely another long day of clouds and storms has arrived, and all is lost!

Not so. "The Lord reigneth: clouds and darkness are round about him: but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The faithful Daniel still lives. The lions' mouths are closed by the angel of the Lord. Daniel is delivered at the command of his attached sovereign. His persecutors are arrested, are hurled into the pit of death, and devoured. And like Nebuchadnezzar, Darius issues the following remarkable proclamation, Daniel vi. 25—28: "Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

This monarch had now performed his appointed work in the eventful history of the people of the Jews, and after a short reign of only two years, he being far advanced in life at the capture of Babylon.
either resigned the throne to his nephew Cyrus, or was cut off by the stroke of death.

We have now reached an important stage in our investigations. The stipulated seventy years of Israel's captivity have expired. Cyrus, who was spoken of by name, by Isaiah the prophet, a hundred years before he was born, is on the throne. And Daniel is his chief counsellor. But will a heathen monarch be disposed to act as God's obedient servant in the liberation of whole nations of captives, whom it was hitherto found desirable to retain? Who will show him, who will explain to him, the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures? Will he believe them? Will he attach any importance to them? Above all, will he comply with them? Recollect the disinclination of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to break the captives' yoke—his excuses—his violent hostility—his efforts to regain them. But what says "the King of kings and Lord of lords?" "My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure." Two years since, at the commencement of the reign of Darius, we find Daniel studying the prophecies, and laying the state of his country and of his people before the God of his fathers by humble, contrite, and fervent prayer, Daniel ix. 1.

This was a good beginning. That which commences with the spirit of sincere devotion usually terminates with joy and praise, when the grant is for our real benefit and the Divine glory. At a suitable period it is presumed Daniel, after such an application to the mercy-seat, brought under the notice of Cyrus the records of prophecy; all that had been said of him as a valiant conqueror; all that had been foretold respecting the fall of Babylon under his victorious sword, and of the predicted liberation of the Jewish captives by his magnanimous decree. Nothing, therefore, remained but the royal assent, as the seventy years had now expired which were the predicted period of Israel's exile. Success crowned the appeal. Cyrus is willing, and consents in the most liberal manner.
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If you turn to the testimony of Ezra, chap. i. 1—8, who was himself one of the captives, and who recorded what he witnessed, the great event long and often foretold is placed before you in the most convincing form. "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth: and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath, the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah." This really was remarkable language for a pagan potentate to adopt. It shows us, however, the mighty power of God over the volitions of the human mind, and reminds us of the happiness and prosperity of that anticipated period when "kings shall be nursing fathers, and their queens..."
nursing mothers" to the church of Christ. The number of the sacred vessels thus restored was 5,400, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah, chap. xxvii. 21: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem; They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord; then will I bring them up and restore them to this place."

Fifty thousand persons, principally of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, gladly embraced the opportunity of going to their father-land, though in ruins, headed by Zerubbabel, one of the native princes of the house of David, and accompanied by Joshua, the high-priest. Other parties followed at different intervals. But the greater number of Jews who were born, and had passed their days in Babylon, where they had acquired prosperity, and enjoyed civil and religious liberty, preferred remaining, especially the infirm and the aged, who would naturally feel appalled at the difficulty of forming a new settlement in a desolate country, and undertaking a long and fatiguing journey from Babylon to Judea. But their stay, as we shall show in the next Lecture, was overruled for good.

At a subsequent date a considerable number of the Jews followed the example of their brethren, under the oversight of Ezra, of whose journey, contrition, devotion, and public dedication to the Lord their God, an interesting narrative is recorded in Ezra, chap. viii. Thus, at different periods, the Holy Land, which had been reduced to desolation, and lay forlorn and neglected during the captivity, was repopled; as were also the circumjacent countries, by the same royal decree and in fulfilment of prophecy.

But what became of the ten tribes, who were carried captives to Assyria, 134 years previous to the captivity of Judah in Babylon? Various conjectures have been entertained, some of which have
represented them existing as a separate body in an unvisited region; others have imagined them to be amalgamated with American Indians, or residing among the inhabitants of Afghanistan; whilst some writers have proclaimed them as found among the Nestorian Christians. If we refer to the prophetic writings, there are several passages in which the restoration of the ten tribes to their native land was promised, as well as the return of the other two. See Hosea i. 11; Amos ix. 14; Obadiah 20; Isaiah xi. 12; Ezekiel xvi. 61; Jeremiah xvi. 15; xlix. 2; l. 20; Micah ii. 12; Zechariah ix. 13; x. 6, 10.

The question therefore is, Have these promises been fulfilled, or are they still in abeyance? Did the ten tribes return to their forfeited inheritance? We think so, for the following reasons, which have been clearly stated by an able writer, (Dr. Bennett:)

"The ten tribes might be reckoned five times as numerous as the other two. Thus, if the Jews that are known are estimated at four millions, the unknown must be twenty millions. With our present knowledge of the world, how could such a people be hidden? The probability, therefore, seems to be, that they returned with their brethren under the decree of Cyrus, and became incorporated as one nation, as in the days of David and Solomon.

"Our Lord came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, giving no intimations of their being anywhere but in Immanuel's land, except as a dispersion among the Gentiles, which was well known. The tribes were then clearly distinguished; for it was 'evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah.' Paul knew that he was of the tribe of Benjamin. Anna was of the tribe of Asher. The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali are said to have been enlightened by Christ's preaching, as if, not the soil, but the inhabitants were intended, as the prophet who is there quoted evidently means. Paul says, 'Our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come to the resurrection.' Peter, the apostle of the
circumcision, besides mentioning the church in Babylon, wrote to the strangers, probably meaning the believing Jews, who as strangers were scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bythinia. And James, the other apostle of the circumcision, wrote 'to the twelve tribes scattered abroad.' If we might appeal to the Revelation, the twelve tribes are there mentioned as known, not as lost, unless the single tribe of Dan be made an exception. The Jews have among them the names of Reuben, Manasseh, Naphtali, Simeon, as well as Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. And some suppose such surnames indicate the tribes to which the individuals belong; for those who are called Cohen are conjectured to be priests. If only two of the tribes were broken off for rejecting Christ, (and those were the only two who were implicated in that sin if the other ten did not return to their own land,) only two have the New Testament assurance of being grafted in again; but the promise is that their God will have mercy on all, and all Israel shall be saved. God has concluded them all in unbelief, that he may have mercy on all."—Dr. Bennett.

From this judicious mode of reasoning it appears that the original animosity subsisting between the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah wore away during the exile of the two nations, and that they mutually returned at different periods to their own land, in accordance with the decree of Cyrus, and the permission of his successors, which accounts for the vast number of Jews who occupied Palestine during the government of the Maccabees. Thus were the promises of the Lord faithfully fulfilled and the predictions of his servants the prophets circumstantially verified. And though the full extent of these assurances of mercy, in the final and plenary restoration of the whole of the Jewish nation to their long neglected Messiah, and father-land, is yet in reserve for a beautiful blending with "the fulness of the Gentiles," in the glory of the latter day, such a view of the subject appears
much more judicious and reasonable than that of representing so large a community as veiled in obscurity and lost to the world.

The subject of this Lecture shows us:

1st. The universality of sorrow in the present state.

From the cottage to the palace, affliction has made its inroads and spread its ravages, and through all countries its withering blight is traced under every affecting form. See it in pining sickness; in torturing pain; in impaired and lost faculties; in the privations of poverty; and in the sufferings of squalid wretchedness. See it under the working of mental anxiety; heartfelt disappointments; stinging vexation; corroding cares; sleepless nights, and days of bitterness. See it in the misconduct of wicked and disobedient children; in the ingratitude of near relatives; and in the follies and faults, or the intrigues and knavery of professed friends. See it in the woeworn countenance; in the tattered attire; in the altered condition of many an unsuccessful tradesman, mechanic, artizan, or manufacturer who has known better days. See it in the house of mourning; in the family bereavement; in the flowing grief of the widow, the fatherless, and the orphan. Go to the mansions of the dead, walk among the tombs, read the epitaphs, and think of the millions of tears which have been shed there where “man lies down, and rises not till the heavens be no more,” and then say, if it be not true, that “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.” Ah! who can correctly describe the bitter grief; the secret sighs; the wearing suspense; the exhausting solicitude; the groaning of spirit; the inward pangs which some of the best of persons have suffered in their way to the kingdom?

What chord in the human bosom is there that affliction has not touched and made to tremble? Where is the eye that never wept? the knees that never faltered? the hands which were never weakened? All have had some portion of the trials of life—the most secure—the most invincible—the most bold and
daring—the most thoughtless and unconcerned. All are made to feel that this is not their rest. Hence the world is fitly termed, a vale of tears. And whither does its gloomy pathway extend? Whither does it terminate? It leads to “the house appointed for all living.” Here all must walk and weep. O how important are the consolations of religion; the sweet influence of prayer; intimate acquaintance with the word of God; a personal interest in Christ; and the hope of glory! And how indescribably wretched is that state in which the only solace for the afflicted mind, is a false and cheerless philosophy; the deceptive amusements of the world; the pleasures of sin for a season.

2nd. The emancipation of the Jews from their captivity reminds us of the great deliverance which has been granted to all true believers by our Lord Jesus Christ. To that deliverance he referred when he said, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed.” This is salvation: deliverance from the love, the power, the guilt, the condemnation, the punishment of sin in time and in eternity. This spiritual freedom Christ our Lord purchased, and is proclaimed in the Gospel. All true Christians enjoy it. It is a material element in their “translation from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.” And it is the earnest of their final deliverance from all the remaining imperfections of their present state; from all the tribulations of the world; from the ravages of death; and the darkness of the tomb; to the everlasting possession and enjoyment of that holy, happy world, where there is “fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.”

May that liberty be ours, that in its most important sense we may verify the application of an ancient prophecy: “The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”
LECTURE XI.

PREDICTIONS RESPECTING THE MESSIAH.

Acts x. 43. To him give all the prophets witness.

The greater number of the former Lectures have pointed to the successive destruction of ancient nations whose idolatry and wickedness exposed them to the sin-avenging hand of God. We have also witnessed the singularly correct foresight of these devastating revolutions that was communicated by the Spirit of Christ to the Hebrew prophets; the unflinching fidelity with which they proclaimed and recorded their testimony, at a period long before the events transpired of which they were the inspired prognosticators; and the undeniable evidence which the exact fulfilment of these prophecies furnished in proof of the Divine authenticity of the sacred Scriptures.

We have now arrived at a stage of our investigations when we are to turn to brighter scenes. We are to look from the reign of vice, from the punishment of evildoers, from the permitted scourge of war, and the wreck of nations, to an economy of grace, religion, and peace; from the selfish struggles of worldly ambition, to the benignant displays of Divine condescension; from princes and destroyers, to "a Prince and a Saviour."

We are to contemplate the greatest of all events—the most momentous—the most gracious: an event in which both heaven and earth are deeply interested, and which has thrown its beauteous complexion on the successive generations of mankind, and the countless ages of eternity. "Into these
things the angels desire to look;" and they will unfold themes of wisdom and love, and sources of happiness and joy, when our mortal shall be clothed with immortality, when faith shall be absorbed in the realized visions of glory, and earth exchanged for heaven. Such is the importance which we attach to the coming of the Messiah.

From the unrivalled superiority of this great transaction above all others, we naturally conclude, that if the revolution of ancient nations formed so prominent a feature in the pages of prophecy, such an occurrence as the mission of the Son of God from heaven to earth, and the great salvation which he accomplished, would not be veiled in secrecy till the period of his arrival: for what was the rise and fall of empires, the whole of which occupy so small a speck in the vast creation, as to be no more than the dust of the balance in the sight of the great Eternal, when compared with the mediatorial performances of the Divine Redeemer, in whose merits and achievements the everlasting welfare of countless millions of the human race is involved? We are therefore brought to the inferential conclusion that a transaction which is without a parallel, which occupied the infinite mind of the Deity before the birth of time, which was preceded by so many preparations, and which will employ the tongues, the thoughts, the songs, the harps of glorified spirits, would form a prominent topic of obvious prediction. Does the light of day burst upon us suddenly, without previous intimation? No. It is ushered in by softened shades, and progressive beams. Neither does the beauty of summer succeed the stern sterility of winter without the frequency of warm congratulation; "Lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Nor are we to suppose that the approach of "the Sun of righteousness," which was to shine upon a benighted world "with healing in his wings," would be unattended with pre-intimations.
Our expectations are therefore raised as to the great probability of early announcements of the preconcerted arrangements of redeeming love.

Nor are we disappointed. Types, various, numerous, instructive, unitedly pointed to the propitiation of the great Redeemer, as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And prophets in succession from Jacob to Malachi bore their well-directed testimony for the guidance and encouragement of the ancient church. Among these witnessing heralds we shall see holy men of different eras, ranks, ages, places, and casts of mind, all harmonizing in doing homage to Him who was the supreme object of hope, and "to whom gave all the prophets witness."

The first accents of mercy which were heard in our fallen world, and formed a part of that celestial song which echoed on the plains of Bethlehem, proclaiming "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and goodwill to man," were announced by Jehovah the Father in Paradise, for the consolation of our First Parents, when oppressed with guilt and shame, before they were excluded from their privileged domain. That announcement, declaring that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent," was the same gospel to them as was published by our Lord himself, who testified that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." And though that early assurance appears at this distance of time, and under the zenith of Divine revelation, to have been somewhat obscure, there can be no doubt that by the Holy Spirit's tuition it was perfectly understood, otherwise the end for which it was communicated would have been defeated. That information assured the guilty pair, that though the penalty of death awaited them for having listened to the tempter and fallen from their integrity, an Almighty Deliverer in human form should overcome their subtle seducer. That promise, though brief, has ever been regarded as the
first ray of light from heaven, that was to usher in the long extended day of salvation.

That assurance, the theme of the most anxious attention, study, and hope, was transmitted from generation to generation, and became the germ of faith to righteous Abel, by which he offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; of piety and decision to Enoch and Noah, in the exemplification of which they "walked with God;" and of fidelity to ancient believers, "who saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

To this early assurance of the coming and achievements of the incarnate Messiah the apostle referred, declaring, "When the fulness of time was come God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And the venerable John, having surveyed the victorious triumphs of the Lord Jesus in his miracles, by casting out devils; in his resurrection, by "overcoming death and him that had the power of death, which is the devil;" in his ascension, "when he led captivity captive;" in the success of his Gospel, and in the extension of his kingdom, declared, "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Hence, though the great enemy of our race, "who was a murderer from the beginning," with serpent-like subtlety and poison bruised the heel of the incarnate Messiah, by oppression and suffering, and the persecutions and afflictions of "his church, which is his body," he has received from the victorious Son of God that "deadly wound" by which his power has been subjugated and will be eventually destroyed. Thus was Satan beheld by the omniscient Redeemer "falling like lightning from heaven."

To the patriarch Abraham this early promise of an incarnate Deliverer was again and again repeated in a more explicit form. He received the welcome
assurance that this stupendous gift of Heaven was not only to be of our race, but of his posterity: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That this promise referred to the Messiah is clearly stated by the apostle Paul, Gal. iii. 16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." "It is not possible to understand in what sense the Jews, as Abraham's seed, have been a blessing to all nations, unless we view them in connexion with the Messiah, who was of their favoured race. They have always been a people separated from other nations by their singular rites, their national prejudices, and the command of God. In the days of their prosperity they were a secluded people; and still in their scattered state they do not and cannot blend with mankind. But if the prediction made to Abraham be applied to the Messiah, it is pre-eminently true, for in that case salvation is of the Jews."—Dr. Collyer. It was this that induced our Lord to say, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was glad."

From Abraham, the father of the faithful, we pass to Jacob, that we may contemplate a memorable prophecy which escaped his lips on the bed of death. We enter the patriarchal tent. We stand in the family group. We place ourselves by his side. We hear his dying charge to his children. This is a solemn scene. This is holy ground. The Spirit of God and of glory is here. Holy angels, though invisible, are here. Each of his sons is separately addressed. But when Judah is named, what a thrill of delight warms the parent's heart! Foreseeing, by the Spirit of prophecy, that the promised Redeemer was to descend from that privileged tribe, he exclaims: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. xlix. 10. By this announcement, the pacific cha-
racter of the Messiah, as the Shiloh, is predicted, together with the period of his coming, and the success of his reign. Nor were the anticipations of the dying saint disappointed. To purchase, to proclaim, to confer, to promote peace with God and man, was one of the well-attested designs of our Lord's incarnation. He also appeared upon the earth before the power of government, which long lingered alone in the tribe of Judah, was finally lost by the Jews. And as to the gathering of the people to the Messiah's sceptre, his Gospel, his church, his everlasting kingdom, the proofs are numberless, blessed, and constantly accumulating.

From the tent of Jacob, thus irradiated with prophetic light, we proceed to the days of Moses, who, in his official character as the deliverer, leader, law-giver, and ruler of Israel, was an illustrious type of Christ. From the knowledge which he possessed of the plan of salvation, and the noble decision of character which he had long before displayed, when "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," it was to be expected that he would add his quota to the records of prophecy already collated by him as the author of the book of Genesis. He did so. For when delivering the statutes and ordinances of the Lord in the wilderness, and mingling his counsels, cautions, and instructions, he pointedly directed the attention of his auditors to the great prophetic Teacher whom the God of their fathers intended to send for the benefit of their race, Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." And when quoting his authority for this announcement, he added, "The Lord said unto me, I will raise them up a Prophet, from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto
my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”

How exactly that prophecy was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus may be seen by a reference to his connexion with the people of Israel, as one of their nation; by a review of his titles and offices as the Redeemer, Governor, and Guide of his church in the world; by advertting to his attributes and qualifications as possessing “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” as a Divine Instructor; by calling to recollection the important truths which he taught, and the mental light which he diffused, and still imparts by his word and Spirit; and the consequences of rejecting him. As a Prophet, he came into the world to make men wise to salvation; for “it is written, They shall be all taught of God.” In that condescending character he was expected. Thus, among other questions that were proposed to John the Baptist, by the Jews, who wished to ascertain if he were the Christ, they asked, “Art thou that Prophet?” The woman of Samaria, partaking of the general expectation that was entertained respecting him, said, “We know that Messias cometh: when he is come, he will teach us all things.” And Jesus frequently asserted his prophetic character, as the author of Divine and spiritual illumination.

From the lawgiver of Israel we turn aside to the neighbouring country of Idumea, to contemplate a beautiful sentiment of prophetichope which fell from the lips of the suffering Job. We find him in the depths of affliction, reduced by the successive strokes of a mysterious calamity from affluence to poverty, and from honour to derision; sitting among the ashes; clothed in sackcloth; and covered with wounds. But amidst all his misery and tears he had strong consolation. He was a holy man of God. He had faith in Christ. He was divinely sustained. And thus, with the buoyant, elastic spirit of prophetic anticipation, he exulted, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon
the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Chap. xix. 25—27.

In this beautiful passage, which has fallen like the balmy breath of heaven upon Christian mourners, when conveying their beloved, pious dead to the silent tomb, how much is included! The suffering patriarch seems to have embraced in one comprehensive view, the Messiah's pre-existence, as then living—his work as a Redeemer—the certainty of his future residence on the earth when accomplishing our salvation—his personal interest in the great Deliverer—the resurrection of the dead—and the beatific vision of the blessed in the heavenly state which he was permitted to anticipate. Happy man, amidst all his sufferings, sorrows, and reduction! "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Of what peace and support do they deprive themselves who neglect the great salvation!

In passing from the testimony of Job to that of David, predictions multiply around us in instructive variety. Our Lord adverted to that fact when he said, "All things which were written in the law, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms must be fulfilled concerning me." At present we select only one passage, Psa. xl. 6—10: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." That the psalmist penned this language prophetically, not in refer-
ence to himself, may be inferred from the terms he employed. Who, but the incarnate Saviour could annul, by his own immaculate sacrifice, the Divinely appointed offerings of the ceremonial law? Who, but the Son of God, was spoken of in the book of Jehovah's decrees, and in the volume of Divine revelation, for the important work which is here assigned him? Which of all his heralds or ministers was thus worthy of supreme attention as "a preacher of righteousness to the great congregation," for whom "a body was prepared" by the Lord of all power and might? Whose death could present a sacrifice equal in value to the infinite efficacy of the one offering by which "the great High Priest has for ever perfected all them that are sanctified?" And whose pre-eminent celebrity in the publication of the Gospel was equal to that of the great Prophet, when the listening multitudes "bare him witness, wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his lips?" and even the officers who were sent to apprehend him exclaimed, "Never man spake like this man?"

The predictive testimony of Isaiah is still more copious and explicit. Two specimens may at present suffice, as we shall have to appeal to him frequently in the next division of the lecture. An interesting representation of our Lord's ancestry—personal character—amiable disposition—and pacific reign, is recorded in chap. xi. 1—9: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the
wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Here we are informed that the Messiah was to be a descendant of the ancient family of Jesse, the father of David. We are apprized of the fulness of the Spirit with which his humanity was to be endowed, and which was indicated at his baptism, when "the Spirit, like a dove, rested upon him." His superior wisdom, knowledge, and amiableness are described. His authority, equity, and compassion, in maintaining the cause of the poor and the meek, are particularised. The conquests of his word, as "the rod of his mouth," and his judgments upon the finally impenitent, are distinctly foreseen. While the benignant influence of his grace, and the peaceful, holy, intelligent character of his kingdom, are depicted by the most beautiful assemblage of appropriate imagery of which we can well conceive.

The other passage in Isaiah is chap. xl. 11: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." How exactly the Redeemer fulfilled this pastoral prediction, was witnessed by the whole tenor of his ministry, and by his condescension, his sympathy, his constancy, his watchfulness. As the good Shepherd, he provided the green pastures of Zion—"laid down his life for the sheep"—restored them from
their wandering—led them—guarded them—and blessed them. Aware of his pastoral character, Peter said, "Ye were as sheep going astray, but have returned to the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." And, encouraged by his condescension, parents carried their little children to him, beseeching him to "put his hands on them and pray."

With the same prescient view of our Lord's pastoral character, the prophet Micah said, "And he shall stand and feed (his flock) in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and he shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

Jeremiah, taught by the Holy Spirit to confide in the Messiah's obedience to the Divine law, as the great substitute of his people, said, chap. xxiii. 5, "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." How frequently and fully did the apostle Paul expatiate on the doctrine of justification by the imputed merits of the Lord Jesus, and on the pacific results of that faith which confides in the substitution and obedience of the Saviour, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

The prophet Haggai, chap. ii. 6, foresaw, by supernatural enlightenment, the revolutions in the kingdoms of the world, that were to usher in the Messiah's advent under the regal superintendency of an omnipotent Providence, when he exclaimed in the name of the Lord of hosts, "I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come."

An important part of the Saviour's authority and work was predicted by Zechariah, chap. vi. 12: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace
shall be between them both." Here we are invited to contemplate the Messiah's manhood. His title, as "the Rod" that was to issue from "the stem of Jesse;" "the Branch of the Lord which was to be beautiful and glorious;" "the Plant of renown" foretold by Ezekiel; "the Tree of life" beheld by John in the celestial city; reminding us of his own selected simile, "the true Vine." And we are informed of his progressive elevation, however obscure the spot which he was to occupy. Though "his place," as it was termed by the prophet, was disregarded by the rich and the great, in which he appeared as "a root out of a dry ground;" and though many a storm would beat upon that branch, it was to endure, increase in stature and strength, and become beautiful, fruitful, and strong. Then, by a change of metaphor so common with the sacred writers, the mighty Redeemer is represented as the builder of his church, bearing the glory of the erection, by the wisdom of the plan, the quality of the materials, the progress of the work amid the most powerful opposition, the magnitude and extent of the structure, and the final issue of the undertaking. In that spiritual temple he was also to be a royal priest upon his throne, ruling over the nations, offering the great atoning sacrifice for sin, and making intercession for the transgressors. Nor did one particular fail of this varied prediction. A simple reference to our Lord's character and work will be sufficient to substantiate the animating anticipation.

Thus have we gone hastily through the extent of revelation, quoting from most of the prophets. These passages are miscellaneous, and many others might have been added, which we have purposely reserved for the next Lecture. We shall now proceed with the collation of those prophecies which refer more particularly to the leading consecutive incidents of the Messiah's history.

From Isaiah, chap. xl. 3, we learn that the Redeemer's advent was to be preceded and proclaimed by
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*a harbinger*, similar to the heralds of antiquity: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the **Lord**, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the **Lord** shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the **Lord** hath spoken it.” If you refer to Matthew, chap. iii. 1, you will be introduced to this herald of the Messiah in the person of John the Baptist: “In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” The same testimony was borne by the angel who foretold John’s birth and ministry to his father Zacharias; and it was subsequently asserted by John himself in answer to the inquiry of the Pharisees as to his identity, John i. 23.

The prophet Isaiah was also instructed to predict the Messiah’s *parentage* and *titles*, chap. vii. 14: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” And in chap. ix. 6, so confident was the Hebrew seer of the accomplishment of that promise, that, realizing the gratification of his fond hopes, he exulted, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” How minutely this prophetic sketch of the Messiah’s birth and dignity was verified, you are well aware by the records of the evangelists, and the testimony of the apostles.

Micah, chap. v. 2, foresaw the Saviour’s *birth-place*, and spoke of the eternity of his origin. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the
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thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;"—a passage, as you rejoice to know, which was literally fulfilled by the decree of Augustus Caesar for the enrolment of his subjects in the place of their ancestry, which caused the Messiah's advent to occur at Bethlehem instead of at Nazareth, the residence of Joseph and Mary.

If we turn again to the prophetic expectations of Isaiah, chap. liii., no statement could be more touching and correctly descriptive of the Saviour's lowly condition, rejection by the Jews, and personal sorrows: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Who could have imagined that this graphic sketch was a prophecy, uttered seven hundred years previous to our Lord's incarnation? It is more like a biographical narrative, written by an eye-witness.

The same Divinely instructed prophet gives an interesting specimen of the Messiah's amiable character, notwithstanding his sorrows and privations, chap. xlii. 1—3: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." Could any prophecy have been more correctly descriptive of the gentleness, the unostentation, the patience, the tenderness, and the persevering diligence of the Lord Jesus, as developed in the several parts of his inimitably interesting character?
The concluding events of the Messiah’s life were likewise particularized by the pen of prophecy with singular exactness, as—

1st. His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Zech. ix. 9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.” Fulfilled, Matthew xxvi. 1–5.


3rd. His betrayal by one of his disciples. Psalm xli. 9: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” Psa.lv. 12: “For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.” Fulfilled, John xiii. 18—21.

4th. The price paid for his apprehension, and the purchase of the potter’s field. Zech. xi. 12: “And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price: and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.” Fulfilled, Matthew xxvii. 3—10.

5th. His intense sufferings and sorrows. Psalm xxii. 14, 15: “I am poured out like water, and all my
bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” Fulfilled in the Saviour's agony in the garden, and his sufferings and thirst on the cross.

6th. His desertion by his disciples. Zech. xiii. 7: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon the little ones.” Fulfilled, Matthew xxvi. 31—56.

7th. His ill-treatment. Isaiah l. 6: “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” Micah v. 1: “They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.” Psalm cxix. 3: “The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.” Fulfilled, Matthew xxvii. 30; Mark xiv. 65.

8th. The piercing of his hands, feet, and side. Psalm xxii. 16: “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet.” Zech. xii. 10: ‘And 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, and they shall mourn.” Fulfilled, John xix. 18; chap. xx. 25; Luke xxxiii. 48.

9th. The derision of the multitude—the vinegar and the gall—the dying exclamation of the sufferer—the circumstances of his death—his prayer for his murderers—and the parting of his raiment, were all particularized by the lips of prophecy. Psa. xxii. 7, 8: “All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” Fulfilled, Matthew xxvii. 39—44. Psalm lxix. 21: “They gave me also
gall for my meat; and in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.” Fulfilled, Matthew xxvii. 34. John xix. 28, 29.

Psalm xxii. 1: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” Fulfilled, Mark xv. 34.

Isaiah liii. 14: “He was numbered with the transgressors, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Fulfilled, Mark xv. 38. Luke xxiii. 34.

Psalm xxii. 18: “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” Fulfilled, Luke xxiii. 34.

10th. His interment with the rich. Isaiah liii. 9: “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.” Fulfilled, Matthew xxvii. 57—60.

11th. The preservation of his body from corruption. Psalm xvi. 10: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Fulfilled, Acts ii. 31.


13th. His ascension. Psalm lxviii. 18: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” Fulfilled, Luke xxiv. 51. Acts i. 9.


To these numerous passages, we might have added another class of proofs, both declarative and symbolical, predictive of the Messiah’s offices, characters, and influence, but these are sufficient. Thus minutely and variously was “the testimony of Jesus the spirit of prophecy,” “to whom gave all the prophets witness.” Thus clearly were “all things fulfilled that were written in the law, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him.”
But, on comparing and analyzing these passages, there appears to be a contradiction. Some of these quotations speak of the Messiah by the highest titles of dignity, while others employ the opposite terms of extreme abasement, poverty and scorn. Thus, to use the language of a popular Scottish writer, "The ancient prophets, who foretold the coming of Christ, appear at one time transported with delight in the contemplation of his glory! They speak of him as a glorious governor, a prince, a king, a conqueror! with other magnificent titles of the greatest dignity, showing that his government should be extensive and eternal, and his glory fill the whole earth. But while the prophets thus foretell his greatness they also speak of his meanness, as 'despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' How then have their hopes of the Messiah's sovereignty and sufficiency been verified? A king which the world admires possesses extensive power—numerous armies—many attendants of the highest rank—magnificent palaces—immense treasures—a throne—a crown—and a sceptre! Here was the reverse; instead of a throne, the Messiah was nailed to a cross; instead of being crowned with gold and glory, he was crowned with thorns and disgrace. For a sceptre—a reed was thrust into his hand in token of derision. Instead of a palace, he had not a place in which to lay his head; instead of sumptuous feasts, he was often hungry and thirsty; instead of exhaustless treasures, he could not pay the tribute money without working a miracle! When he first entered the world he was born of poor parents; born in a stable and laid in a manger. And when he departed, he was numbered with the transgressors by dying between two thieves; and 'made his grave with the wicked.' How mysterious that the Author of liberty should suffer the death of a slave; and the fountain of honour the height of disgrace.

"Here unbelief murmurs, and asks—Where is the Messiah's glory, which was so often spoken of, and so
highly extolled? But faith replies, Look through the veil of his humanity, and under that disguise appears, 'The King of kings, and Lord of lords.'

The heavens his throne, the earth his footstool; the light his garments, the clouds his chariot, the thunder his voice; his strength, omnipotence; his riches, all-sufficiency; his glories, infinite; his retinue the hosts of heaven; his servants the excellent of the earth, on whom he bestows unsearchable riches; an incorruptible inheritance, everlasting joys, and the highest honours; making them 'kings and priests unto God.' And though the Messiah's birth was mean on earth, it was celebrated by the angels in heaven! His cradle was a manger, but eastern philosophers, guided by a star, came to do him homage! He had not the magnificent equipage and courtly attendants of other kings, but he was followed by listening multitudes who delighted to hear his gospel, and by many grateful patients whom he had miraculously cured, having made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, and the lame to walk! And though he had no royal guards, health and sickness, life and death, were subject to him! The winds and the sea obeyed him. Devils acknowledged his divinity and submitted to his power, and the grave paid him homage. He walked not in the flowery paths of state, but he walked upon the waves. He kept no treasure-house, but the sea furnished him with money by the servitude of a fish. He had no barns, but even in the wilderness he fed the hungry multitudes by a miracle. And though he died as a malefactor, what respect was paid him, by the repentance of the thief, the supernatural darkness of the heavens, the rending of the temple's veil, the bursting of the rocks, the rising of the dead!"—M'Laurin.

Thus every mystery is explained. Seeming contradictions are reconciled. The exact predictions of prophecy are accomplished. For did not the inspired penmen speak of the Messiah as a sovereign and a
servant; as a conqueror and a sufferer; as "Wonderful, Counsellor, and the mighty God;" and yet as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Look at his essential Deity on one hand, and at his humanity on the other, and all seeming contradictions are reconciled. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." "Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

So truly did the Messiah accomplish every prediction, every promise, every hope, in finishing the great and glorious work which he undertook to perform. In his person and character, all the prophecies, types, and "shadows of good things to come," centered, like the diverging lines in a mathematical point of concentration. That point, to which the faith and hope of all true believers turned, was the cross. "There you behold the law with all its venerable institutions doing homage to him, 'who was the end of the law for righteousness.' You behold Moses and Aaron bearing the ark of the covenant; David and Elijah presenting the oracle of testimony: you behold all the priests and sacrifices: all the rites and ordinances: all the types and symbols, convened to receive their consummation and to retire for ever. And while those institutes of the Old Testament appear on one side of the great antitype, you behold on the other, the Gospel with all its simple and sacred forms and ordinances, coming into view as the new dispensation. 'The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God.' Significantly was the veil of the temple rent. The glory departed from between the cherubims. The legal high priest resigned his urim and thummim, his breastplate, robes, and incense, to give place to him who was 'a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.'"—Blair.
Thus was the work of our redemption completed, the price of our ransom paid: “all things which were written in the law, in the prophets and in the psalms, concerning the Messiah, were fulfilled:” and “the new and living way to the holiest of all” was opened. And having reviewed the plan of mercy, and seen that every promise and prophecy was accomplished, Jesus said, “It is finished, bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”

“Oh the sweet wonders of that cross
Where Christ the Saviour loved and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side.

“I would for ever speak His name,
In sounds to mortal ears unknown,
With angels join to praise the Lamb,
And worship at the eternal throne.”

My brethren, is this your choice? your language? Have you welcomed the Messiah to your hearts? You would revere the conqueror who had saved your country from the ruthless hands of the spoiler. You would love the benefactor who had rescued you from poverty and orphanage. You would esteem the minister who had been instrumental in your conversion. But O, what a Deliverer, what a Benefactor, what a Divine Instructor have you in the Lord Jesus! Can you be delivered from sin and hell without a personal interest in his salvation? Should you not, therefore, seek him? surrender yourselves to his service and guidance, and follow him fully, by confessing him openly? by saying with your lips and with your life, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write?” And will not the guilt of those who slight and neglect the Saviour be of the blackest hue? You do not sin ignorantly. You cannot plead excuse. You have the most ample information, convictions, cautions, counsels, invitations, warnings, and threatenings. Whether, therefore, you receive or slight the “faithful saying which
is worthy of all acceptation," assuring you that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chiefest of sinners," his propitiatory character, his infinite merits, are the same, and his cause in the world must proceed and prosper. "He must have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." For, whilst the voice of the Lord God declares in his holy word, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;" the same sovereign authority affirms, "His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon himself shall his crown flourish."
LECTURE XII.

PROVIDENTIAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE SAVIOUR'S COMING.

Haggai ii. 6, 7.—For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

That was a scene of awful grandeur which was beheld by the prophet Elijah at the mount of Horeb. Nature was convulsed and thrown into the wildest confusion, for the Lord was there. The first herald that went before him was a rushing mighty wind, that rent the mountains, brake in pieces the solid rocks, which lashed and furrowed the sandy desert, roared in the caverns, and carried dread and destruction in its course. And after the wind an earthquake, when nature trembled with awe beneath the footstep of the Eternal, amidst sinking hills and rising valleys, opening fissures, and yawning gulfs. And after the earthquake a fire, to heighten the impressive spectacle, and to consume the scattered fragments of the mighty wreck that had preceded it. And after the fire, a still, small voice, which demanded, What doest thou here, Elijah? But why were these terrific harbingers sent before the glorious Majesty of heaven? To display his greatness, and to show, by a powerful contrast, the littleness of man, of whom the dispirited prophet was so much afraid, and whose dismay had impelled his flight from the guilty land of Israel to this sequestered solitude.

But though that visitation was startling, a more impressive spectacle is foretold in our text, and which was to prepare the way for the promised advent and kingdom of the great Redeemer. The convulsions
PROPHECY FULFILLED IN PROVIDENTIAL

at Horeb were local; this was to be universal, the shaking of all nations. That was formed only of the disruption of surrounding rocks and mountains; this was to exhibit the overturning of whole systems, the revolution of states and empires. That was introductory to a still, small voice, which was heard only in one place, and was addressed to one individual; this was to be witnessed by every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

In contemplating these predicted changes, which were to usher in the economy of the gospel, we shall be able to glance at some of the leading events of that intervening space, which extended from the return of the Jews from Babylon to the commencement of the Christian era, including a period of 536 years. This was a chasm in the history of the world and of the church, which God, in his providence, designed to fill up; by whose powerful interposition "valleys were to be exalted, and mountains and hills were to be made low," that the way for the incarnate Saviour might be opened and levelled like the track of ancient heroes, when, returning in triumph, clothed with honour and crowned with victory.

In tracing the singular leadings of the Lord's providence, there are a few brief but pointed passages, which we must carry with us in order to witness their accomplishment. Ezekiel xxii. 26, 27: "Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same; exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is: and I will give it him." Haggai ii. 20—23: "And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses
and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother." Malachi iv. 1, 2: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." Chap. iii. 1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." Joel ii. 30—32: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." There is yet another passage that we must take with us, Dan. xii. 4: "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

From these predictions we are prepared to expect great revolutions in religious systems, and in the kingdoms and empires of the world, together with the diffusion of religious and useful knowledge preparatory to the Christian era. These contemplated changes were symbolized under the aspect of the heavenly bodies and the convulsions of nature, in the sinking of mountains and the rising of valleys, and were of much greater importance to the church of Christ than the prodigies of nature. For of what utility would be the darkening of the sun, the trans-
mutation of the moon and other celestial orbs, compared to those great moral revolutions in Pagan systems and nations, which were to issue in the subjugation of the kingdom of darkness, the extension of vital Christianity, and the glory of Christ? The shaking of the nations, therefore, was to form a part of those political and moral changes in which we shall see the Lord Most High overruling the passions of men for the accomplishment of his wise decrees.

We have already observed, in former lectures, how God, in his providence, shook the Assyrian empire, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the nations that were adjacent to the land of Canaan, the kingdom of Egypt, and great Babylon itself. It is also in your recollection that, by the last of these convulsions, the Jews were restored to their own country, after an absence of seventy years. There we left them in the erection of their temple, and the celebration of their religious rites. Their character was no longer debased by their inordinate love to idolatry. There is reason to believe that the loss of their country, and their captivity in Babylon, completely weaned them from that glaring sin to which, during so large a portion of their former history, they had been so lamentably addicted. Thus their afflictions proved a course of salutary discipline. The shaking of their nation dislodged and scattered their master sins, and performed one of the Lord's promises, when he declared that he would "bring the third part through the fire, and try them as silver is tried, and purify them as gold is purified."

Another benefit resulting from the captivity, and which tended to prepare the way of the Lord, was the diffusion of revealed truth by the Hebrew Scriptures. The Jews were the only people who were originally favoured with a revelation from Heaven, consequently they were the only depositaries of the inspired word of God. Other nations were sunk in heathenism, and "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Their conquests, their wealth,
their priesthood, their philosophy, could do nothing for their spiritual and immortal interests. "The world by wisdom knew not God." It was necessary, therefore, that the doctrines of genuine religion, which gave proper views of the perfections and government of a supreme Creator, of the fall of man, and his recovery by an incarnate Mediator, should be known far beyond the narrow limits of Judea. And as God, in his wise and gracious providence, frequently brings good out of evil, he diffused the light of his holy word, by the dispersion of his ancient people, so that, while he corrected them for their sins, he made them a blessing to the nations among whom he scattered them.

At the period of their captivity, Babylon was the mighty metropolis of the East, and the principal mart of the globe for trade, commerce, science, and literature. Thither foreigners repaired for research, as well as for traffic. The Jews, from their fame, would be naturally regarded with inquiring interest, as "a peculiar people," while their history, religious rites, and sacred books, would become objects of curiosity and attention. It is, therefore, more than probable that copies of their Scriptures were obtained by learned men, for investigation, especially by those who had outlived the intelligence of their age, and being dissatisfied with the existing systems of pagan philosophy, were beginning to grope their way to a purer faith. Hence we account for the comparatively correct opinions that were entertained by some of the heathen philosophers and poets, long anterior to the coming of Christ, respecting his advent and character, as the great promised renovator of the world. This cherished expectation is very apparent in the writings of Virgil, and some other authors, and led the wise men from the East to Jerusalem, to the infant Saviour, who was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel."

There was another material channel opened for the diffusion of revealed and saving knowledge, by
the shaking of the nations at this period. The Jews were not the only people who were captives in Babylon. We have seen that the inhabitants of several other conquered nations were there also in the same state of exile. These were brought into an acquaintance with the ancient people of God—saw the miracles that were wrought in their favour in the preservation of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel,—and the different decrees which were issued by successive monarchs in their behalf. They had also an opportunity of witnessing the exact accomplishment of the prophetic writings in their own case, respecting the Jews, and in reference to the Babylonians and Persians. Thus was the Lord gradually preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah, by the extension of that knowledge which had been hitherto confined to one people.

At length, as you are aware, great Babylon itself was shaken to its very foundation, and was subverted by the conquering Medes and Persians. By this wonderful revolution two other nations were brought into an acquaintance with the Jews. These were their liberators. But ere they opened the way for the restoration of the captives to their own land, they had ample opportunities of gaining valuable information respecting the creed of this singular people, their modes of worship, their expectations of the Messiah, and the fostering care of the Most High.

To give yet greater effect to the progress of saving knowledge, flowing from the Hebrew Scriptures, God in his providence so ordained it that, though 50,000 Jews accepted the permission of Cyrus to return to their own country, and others followed at later periods under the government of the excellent Ezra and Nehemiah, the greater number preferred remaining at Babylon and in adjacent parts, under the fostering sway of their new rulers the Persians, having unlimited freedom in their religious worship. Thus, two fountains of important information respecting divine and heavenly things, were flowing at the
same time, the one in the Holy Land, the other at Babylon. This measure appeared the more necessary, and showed the wisdom of the great Lord of the church, as Judea was a persecuted colony, the Jews who returned thither being greatly annoyed and misrepresented by their envious neighbours the Samaritans, so that the progress of the re-erection of the temple was, for a considerable time, retarded by royal command.

At length, when permission to resume the work was obtained, the prophet Haggai, the author of our text, and Zechariah, were divinely directed to encourage the Jews in the undertaking which they had relinquished. The exhortations of those holy men were stimulating and enlightening, particularly the assurance which they were authorized to give their dispirited countrymen of the providential oversight of the Most High, and the issue of national convulsions in the advent and kingdom of the Messiah. The effect of their remonstrances and appeals was secured. The temple was at length finished with ecstatic joy, and Mount Zion was once more crowned with her long lost diadem. But momentous events were still in reserve, for the kingdoms of the world. Many mighty movements were decreed by Infinite Wisdom. Many alternations of prosperity and adversity, of domination and defeat, awaited existing states, like the rising and falling balance, in the hand of Omnipotence. But the elevation of one and the depression of another, formed a part of that predicted "shaking of the nations" which was to terminate, in a wide and vast area for the dissemination of the gospel, to earth's remotest bounds.

The Persians, as we have seen, now governed the East, a part of the globe on which alone the pure radiance of religious truth had hitherto shone. It was the Divine will that this celestial light, like the beams of opening day, should be gradually extended to the West, and that Europe as well as Asia, should be visited with the "Day-spring from on high."
The Greeks, an intelligent, patriotic, valorous race, had been gradually rising into importance, and having been brought into an amalgamation with the Macedonians, under the ambitious, intrepid Alexander, became formidable antagonists of the Persians, whose power was enervated by boundless wealth, tottered under its own weight, and was convulsed by internal dissensions. At length, the fatal blow was struck. Persia was invaded. Her sovereign fell, and the throne and the sceptre, frequently transferred from rival to rival, were seized by the conqueror. Here was another mighty change; another useful lesson for the kingdoms of the world; another proof of the instability of human greatness; the blotting out of another sun; the falling of another star by "the shaking of the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land," beneath the omnipotent hand of Almighty God. Persia, thus subjugated, ceases to occupy her rank of importance on the scale of nations; and Alexander, the victorious sovereign of the Macedo-Grecian empire, becomes in his turn master of the greater part of the known world, and after a short life is to go to the grave to make room for others.

We now behold the third monarchy that was symbolized in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Alexander, and some of his successors, though heathen monarchs, were highly instrumental in the diffusion of inspired truth, during the Macedonian or Greek empire. To facilitate the advantages of commerce, Alexander built the city of Alexandria, in Egypt, and removed many of the Jews thither, allowing them the utmost extent of religious freedom. Ptolemy Philadelphus, who succeeded to the throne of Egypt, did the same, and raised many of the Jews to places of considerable trust, and became a kind protector to the Jewish nation. During his reign the Old Testament was translated into Greek, called the Septuagint Version, as that language was generally spoken at this period, which opened a wide field for the extension of God's holy word. Seleucus, an-
other of Alexander's successors, built several cities in Asia Minor, and peopled them, in part, with Jews, and gave them equal privileges with the Macedonians. Hence the leaven of saving knowledge respecting the only living and true God, and the promised Redeemer, instead of being confined as formerly to Judea, was diffused far and wide, reminding us of that promise, "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the world with fruit." And again, "In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord of hosts in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof, to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign, and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel, mine inheritance."

Thus benignant were the results of the shaking of the nations by which the Jews, the original conservators of Divine revelation, were scattered, and knowledge was widely extended.

Greece had now performed her part in the mighty drama of the world. She, too, was to be shaken and humbled, to give place to the last great monarchy, which was to form a vast and well-levelled plain, preparatory to the coming of Christ and the extension of his kingdom, when Britain, though hitherto unknown, as a mere speck upon the ocean, was to be among the favoured isles, which were to wait for the Lord's law. I refer to invincible Rome, which was appointed to conquer the Greeks; as the Greeks had conquered the Persians; as the Persians had subdued the Babylonians; and as the Babylonians had overthrown the Assyrians. These were among the leading contemplated revolutions of the world, when the great Ruler of the universe said, "I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come."

"Thus saith the Lord that maketh a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters; which bringeth
forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall not rise; they are extinct; they are quenched as tow."

Here, I cheerfully avail myself of the fine energetic language of a popular writer, Dr. Hunter. "The eastern part of the world, in the wisdom of Providence, was first peopled. Great and extensive empires were first formed there, and there learning and the arts were first brought to perfection. But while science and empire flourished in the East, a power was gradually rising in the West, which was one day to surpass all that had gone before it. (It was that power under which the Saviour was to be born, and die for our sins,—under which the Gospel was to be widely disseminated through the whole earth, and which was ultimately to become a Christian empire.) Unknown to the proud nations of the eastern hemisphere, which vainly flattered themselves that they divided the world amongst them, this power (nearer to our own land) was gradually advancing from conquest to conquest; and the Roman Eagle was by degrees strengthening her wing, and preparing to take her flight round half the globe! The succession of those great monarchies; those shakings of the nations, led gradually and imperceptibly to that happy conjunction—to that 'fulness of time,' which was to usher in the Prince of Peace! They arose one after another. They enlarged one upon another, till at length the genius of Rome, under the permission of Heaven, triumphed over all—swallowed up the whole, and expanded—opened—united and consolidated that wide extended empire as a boundless field through which the Gospel of Christ was so successfully to spread its triumphs. To favour this great event, the struggles of ambition, which had so long distracted the world, subsided at last, suddenly and unexpectedly into universal peace. That stormy ocean which had been for ages in continual agitation, all at once sunk into a surprising calm. And the whole globe was overspread with tranquillity,
PREPARATIONS FOR THE SAVIOUR'S COMING.

and relieved from the din of arms, to receive 'Messiah the Prince!' Philosophy rode triumphant!! Every question relative to science—politics—morals—and religion, was freely discussed! Knowledge, as we have seen, had been widely spread! Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome, poured from their separate urns, their varied stores, and seemed to wait only for that best of all sciences—the Gospel, to sanctify them."

This was the issue of the shaking of the nations. These were the providential Preparations for His coming and kingdom, of whom it was long ago predicted, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust."

Let us now turn our attention to His endeared character and mission, who is emphatically designated in our text, "the Desire of all nations."

This expression, so comprehensive, was doubtless derived from the promise made to Abraham as to the blessing that was to descend to all nations, from him and his seed. It referred antecedently to the hopes which had been cherished by all true believers, respecting his coming as the promised Messiah, and related prospectively to the general expectations which were to be entertained concerning him, as the deliverer and renovator of the human race. In these anticipations of the ancient church, the Lord Jesus was recognised as "the mercy promised to the fathers;" as "the Shiloh to whom was to be the gathering of the people," "of whose kingdom there was to be no end." In these widely extended views, "all nations were to call him blessed:" and it is well known, that in whatever country personal religion has existed, faith and love have desired such a Saviour as he condescended to become, and have confided in him. Abel, Enoch, Noah, with the church before the flood, beheld him in the first promise which they cherished, and in the typical sacrifices
which they offered. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in Canaan, saw his day through the vista of intervening ages, and were glad. Job in the land of Uz; Moses and Joseph in Egypt; the Jews in Babylon; the Eastern Magi from Persia; "devout men from every nation under heaven," who went up to Jerusalem at the passover; and those who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel," all believed in him—expected him—desired him. And under the Gospel dispensation, every true believer, taught by the Holy Spirit, as the glorifier of the Saviour, however distinguished by rank, condition, intelligence, age, sect, or party, confides alone in him, aware that "there is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved."

Hence, we see the propriety of the comprehensive appellation which is applied to the Messiah in the text, as "the Desire of all nations." He is required by all, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." He is adapted to all; thus he commanded the Apostles to "go out into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." He is promised to all, as "a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of the people of Israel." He will be eventually sought, and possessed by all, for "all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him." And he will prove a blessing to all by the plenary enjoyment of personal happiness. Is life desirable? He came to procure it, and impart it. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Is food desirable? He is "the bread that came down from above," and was typified by the manna in the wilderness. Is raiment desirable? "His righteousness is unto all, and upon all them that believe." Is friendship desirable? He is "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Is peace desirable? "He is our peace," and he made peace by the blood of his cross. Is hope desirable? He is "the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope." Is light, is health, is strength, is knowledge, and liberty,
and purity, and happiness, and heaven desirable? “Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption:” he is “all and in all.”

Thus worthy of universal confidence and love, the Redeemer is emphatically represented in the text, as the great object of attention and attraction to the whole human race, and who declared in one of his Divine discourses, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

But the coming of the Saviour was not to be left to the caprice of men to prepare his way and to bid him welcome. God himself resolved to “bring his First-begotten into the world.” “The Desire of all nations shall come,” was the authoritative determination of the Lord of Hosts, “who doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth.” Nothing was suffered to rest upon the balance of uncertainty. It was the purpose of infinite grace. It was the volition of Almighty power. Obstacles were foreseen, but the fiat of that creative energy which said, “Let there be light, and there was light,” was sufficient to remove them. What though an ungrateful people to whom he was first promised, would despise and reject him? Angels were appointed to worship, and Gentiles were ordained to receive him. What though the murderous Herod would seek the heavenly infant’s life, and thus strive to destroy the world’s Redeemer, long before his entrance on his mediatorial work? God will protect him, and will detect the sanguinary secret; the holy infant shall find a refuge in Egypt, and a prophecy shall be verified, even by “the wrath of man,”—“out of Egypt have I called my Son.”

What then is the malice of earth or hell, when brought into contact with the sovereign determination of “the King of kings,” who said, “I will work, and none shall let it?” What was carnal policy, or Jewish enmity, or heathen philosophy, or infidel pride, when arrayed against the well-adjusted decrees of the great
Ruler of the world? Suppose a puny creature, though high in station, should lift his arm and say, "The sun shall not shine on my dominions, I prefer darkness to light;" would such an insane determination eclipse the orb of day, or divert his course?

It was thus with the beneficent mission of the Son of God. He came to establish a spiritual kingdom on the ruins of fallen empires, which had been shaken to their very foundations. He came to abrogate the Mosaic economy, which was merely a shadow of his priesthood and church. Disappointed in their sordid hopes of a temporal deliverer, the Jews rejected and crucified him; and the Greeks and Romans, inflated with ignorance, prejudice, and pride, united in the bitterness of contempt and persecution. Still the cause of truth and righteousness flourished. The Redeemer's converts became numerous as the drops of morning dew. Opposition was as futile as it was fierce, till at length, as we shall prove in the next Lecture, the Lord's kingdom spread over the vast extent of the Roman empire, the ample area that was opened by the providence of God in "the shaking of the nations."

But the coming of the Messiah was not the only incident that was included in the Divine determination. He declared his intention of filling the temple, which lay deserted and unfinished, with his glory. This animating resolve referred not to the visible Shechinah, which hovered between the cherubims, or any other description of celestial radiance which beamed so brightly at times in the tabernacle and in the first temple. It embraced a more spiritual and influential manifestation. It referred to the august presence of the Lord Jesus, as "God manifest in the flesh," as the brightness of Jehovah's glory and the express image of his person, "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And the promise was fulfilled in those instances in which the great Redeemer visited that structure, wrought his miracles, and delivered his instructions. See it displayed
when the venerable Simeon, embracing the heavenly infant in his arms, at his first presentation at the temple, exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Then was accomplished the prophecy of Malachi, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in;" and the language of the enraptured psalmist also, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Behold the glory of the Lord unfolded in the miracles which Jesus wrought, when the blind and the lame repaired to him in the temple and were healed; in the luminous doctrines which he there taught; and in the infant hosannas that were sung to his praise.

But we are not to confine the Divine pledge to the temple. That structure has long ceased to exist. It was typical of another fabric which was to last for ever—the Redeemer's church. It is well known that the church of Christ is metaphorically spoken of as a building composed of living stones, fixed on the foundation of the apostles and prophets: hence it was foretold by Zechariah, "Behold the man whose name is the Branch, even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory." And all true believers in the fellowship of the gospel are called "God's building, built up a spiritual house." How far the church of Christ is invested with his glory will be perceived from a slight reflection. It is favoured with the lustre of his holy word, "the entrance of which giveth light." It is irradiated with the ministry of reconciliation, the honoured means of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. It is filled with his invisible presence, by virtue of the promise, "where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." It is cheered by his ordinances; it is graced by his illuminating Spirit: thus we can still say of Zion, "Glorious things are spoken
of thee;" whilst an echo is heard in the gracious assurance, "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee;" "I will glorify the house of my glory."

By these diversified statements, extending over the space of five hundred and twenty years, from the period of Haggai's prophecy in the text to the coming of Christ, we have witnessed another class of evidences corroborative of the fulfilment of the prophetic writings, and the Divine authenticity of the sacred volume, of which they form a part. The nations in succession were shaken to an overthrow; systems were changed; knowledge was increased by the diffusion of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, and the dispersion of the Jews. The Messiah, the hope of all true believers in every kingdom, in every age, did appear, did fill the temple with his glory, by his presence, miracles, and doctrines; and the economy of the gospel, after a long introduction of types and shadows, did arrive. The comparative obscurity of the former dispensation was easily accounted for; it was the early dawn of the day of grace, but it was the dawn.

"Faith soared high in the patriarchal ages, and, showed the slumbering world the gleams of the unrisen sun upon her wings. Prophets caught the signal, and ascended the mountains, whose summits already illuminated, lifted their points of light amidst the darkness and appeared as day-stars to the valleys still overshadowed with night. The nations looked, and beholding the Messenger of salvation enshrined in glory, like the angel in the sun, exclaimed, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!'

"To one object all eyes are directed. Amidst the twilight of breaking day, Moses looks from his tables of stone and the covenant of works to Him 'who was made under the law, to redeem them that were under
the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Aaron glances from the altar and its mysteries and multiplied sacrifices, to the cross of Calvary, and to Him 'who by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' David strikes his harp with a bolder hand, as he gazes upon the ascending sun which pours upon its strings a flood of celestial fire, even Him, 'the Sun of righteousness.'

"Solomon sees the magnificence of his temple absorbed and lost in Him, 'whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain.' And even the poor Gentile priest drops the knife which he was about to plunge into the heart of a human victim—himself to find an atonement in His death, who 'gave his life a ransom for many.' The authors of all this misery, our first parents, exult to behold the whole mischief of their fatal apostasy repaired. The serpent, bruised and crushed, is banished the new paradise, and hides himself in the shades of everlasting night; while Death lies prostrate, pierced with his own dart, and expiring under the triumphant feet of the Redeemer, as he is seated upon his eternal throne."—Dr. Collyer.

In reviewing this subject we see,—

1st. The irresistible power of God.

To shake, not only one nation, but all nations, not merely the minor states, but the most powerful empires! And to effect their convulsion and destruction so easily—so quietly! without the employment of miraculous agency! without the intervention of any natural phenomena! by simply permitting the current of human passions to flow without obstruction, or by withholding the pressure from worldly ambition, like the counteracting force of a powerful machine, was truly wonderful. Such, however, is the moral government of God—his knowledge of all human affairs—his authority over the secret springs of the heart—his ability to do all his pleasure.

That mighty power is the Christian's safeguard—his shield—the staff of his dependence. This is the authoritative voice, which says, "Leave thy father-
less children, I will keep them alive; and let thy
widows trust in me.” Which promises, “when the
poor and needy seek water, and their tongue faileth
for thirst, I the Lord will hear, I the God of Jacob
will consider them.”

This is the omnipotence which the sinner defies,
whose threatenings he treats with silent contempt,
whose forbearance he insults, whose judgments he
braves, whose invitations and mercies, and whose ex-
postulations and menaces he views with remorseless
indifference. What will be the consequence? Though
“hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpun-
nished.” O, my brethren, think of your exposure;
your danger; your helplessness; and flee to Christ
for salvation without delay. “Because there is wrath
beware, lest he take thee away with his stroke, then
a great ransom cannot deliver thee.”

2. We see the benefits which sometimes issue from
providential visitations; from convulsive changes in
nations, families, and in the condition of individuals.

By such revolutions heathen states have been
brought into alliance with Christian countries, or
have been placed under their sway. And though in
many instances both the motives and the measures of
the conquerors have been censurable as contrary to
the pacific spirit of Christianity, the act has been
overruled for good. By such an event pagan Brit-
tain was brought into connexion with ancient Rome,
at a period when the Gospel was irradiating its cities
and provinces. And by the same process the teem-
ing population of India has been thrown into the
arms of Britain.

Domestic vicissitudes have also been overruled
for good. Families and persons have been shaken,
afflicted, reduced, but pride has been humbled; care-
lessness has been impressed; love to the world has
been supplanted by love to Christ and religion;
and thus poverty has been conducive to their real
wealth; reduction to their moral and spiritual eleva-
tion; sorrow has become the fountain of their joy;
and their losses have ministered to their everlasting gain.

3. The subject likewise teaches us the high estimation in which the Lord Jesus, as "the desire of all nations," is held by those who know his character, mission, and mediatorial work.

Though a thoughtless, careless world neglects him as "a root out of a dry ground," they who feel their need of redemption through his blood; of justification by his righteousness; sanctification by his Spirit, and are seeking an inheritance in heaven as the fruit of his propitiation and purchase, love him supremely, and serve him sincerely. Thus whilst the fading pleasures, the unsatisfying honours, the unenduring riches, the vapid smiles of the world attract and captivate the heart which is wedded to the things of this life, "which perish with the using," the language of the genuine Christian is, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." He can also exult in the confidence of a well-sustained faith.

"The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away,
But fix'd His word, his power will yet remain,
His realm shall ever last, his own Messiah reign."
LECTURE XIII.

GENIUS AND TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Isaiah lx. 1—3. Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

We have seen, in the last two Lectures, the numerous predictions which pointed to the Saviour's coming. In those prophetic enunciations, we were informed of the highly important and diversified characters which the Messiah was to sustain; the great propitiatory work which he was to perform: the ungrateful and cruel treatment that he was to receive; and the revolutions which were to open the way for his advent, and the establishment of his mediatorial kingdom. These interesting topics formed the subject of various prophecies, which were written with singular explicitness, and were all fulfilled with the same exactness as is visible when the well-drawn portrait is compared with the original.

We have now to pass the boundary of the Old Testament economy, that we may enter the wide field of the Gospel dispensation, to which so many paths of believing hope were opened during the era that preceded it, and were traversed by the sanguine anticipations of the saints at different periods and places, with a mental zest befitting the unrivalled magnitude of the all-absorbing theme of their attention. It was in reference to these earnest longings of the mind that our Lord said, "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;
for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

These events we are now to contemplate. Yes; "the fulness of time" has arrived at which the Messiah, "the Day-spring from on high," was to appear, to enlighten the Gentiles, and irradiate the people of Israel. The nations, disunited and distracted, have been brought into a vast amalgamation under one powerful monarchy, to give greater facility to the diffusion of saving truth. The holy Scriptures, formerly confined to one language and one people, have been translated into a tongue known to the greater part of the civilised world. Angels have winged their flight from heaven to earth, and sung their morning hymn to celebrate the Redeemer's nativity. "The Desire of all nations" has come, and has been welcomed and adored by Gentile philosophers, who were conducted to his birthplace by the guiding star, and greeted by pious Jews who were waiting for him as "the Consolation of Israel." The temple has been filled with his glory, by being honoured with his presence, his ministry, and his miracles. And every type, every promise, every prediction, and every prayer, has been accomplished in the purchase of that great salvation which was devised by the infinite wisdom, made known by the abounding grace, and was completed by the sovereign power of the blessed God. Thus the church, after all her vicissitudes and depressions, rises from her lowliness and poverty, "shakes herself from the dust, puts on her beautiful garments," and, arrayed in her Messiah's righteousness, and irradiated with the saving knowledge of his holy word, "shines, for her light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon her." And though surrounded like the rising orb of day with "the gross darkness of a world lying in wickedness," her bright beams of truth, purity, and zeal are to scatter the encircling gloom, and become
an attractive and beneficent source of happiness to the kingdoms of the earth.

To fulfil this design, a mighty transforming apparatus, mental and moral, is instituted by the supreme Lord of the church in the preaching of the Gospel; while a congratulatory voice from on high, exults, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down which accused them before God day and night. And they shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony." These illustrious conquests of truth over error, and of purity over sin, we are now to survey; contemplating at the same time the champions, the weapons, and the motives by which the bloodless victories of the cross were achieved. In these triumphs we shall see, in all the lineaments of real life, the visible exhibition of that symbolic picture which was drawn by the venerable John in the book of Revelation, chap. xix. 11—16: "And I saw heaven opened, and, behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING of KINGS and LORD of LORDS."

Here you behold the regal character of Christ. His Divine superintendency, as Head of the church. His penetrating knowledge. His conquering word, as "a sharp sword." His imposing attitude, as the
"Captain of our salvation." The memorial of his sufferings. And his august presence with his people in their conflict and enterprise. You also behold the numerous bands of his faithful aggressive followers, —their array, their order, their sanctity, their unity, their adaptation for speed, power, and victory. This was to be the conflict between truth and error, sin and holiness, Christ and "the god of this world," and which had been already witnessed to a wide extent at the period when this symbolic representation was recorded.

By these similes we are prepared to contemplate THE GENIUS AND TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIANITY as the subject of this Lecture. And what is Christianity? It is that system of truth and mercy which was taught by Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world. And whether we expatiate on its theological principles; its moral precepts; its inspiring motives; its devotional spirit; its benign influence; its universal adaptation; and its unchanging perpetuity; or advert to the beautiful simplicity of its frame-work, its ritual, and its ordinances, we must be constrained to admire and prize it as the choicest boon of Heaven.

As a theory, Christianity is based on the Holy Scriptures as a Divine revelation, and proclaims the existence, perfections, and government of a triune God,—the fall and helplessness of man,—redemption by the propitiatory sacrifice of an incarnate Mediator, in the person of the Son of God,—the influence of the Holy Spirit in the renovation of the heart and life,—justification by faith,—the final perseverance of the saints,—the resurrection of the dead,—the immortality of the soul,—the everlasting happiness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked in a future world. These are the leading doctrines of Christianity, branching into a variety of ramifications.

Its moral precepts are of the most purifying and practical character. It is the enemy of all sin, and the powerful promoter of holiness. It strenuously
inculcates universal obedience to the authority and commands of the Lord and his Christ, as recorded in the Scriptures of truth, requiring us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world; to love our neighbour as ourselves; to forgive our enemies; and, by a generous philanthropy, to promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of the whole human race. To produce these fruits, Christianity cultivates the understanding and the heart, as well as the character; and asserts its authority over all descriptions of persons, whether kings, princes, nobles, senators, magistrates, ministers, teachers, parents, children, husbands or wives, masters or servants. All are amenable to its supremacy as the word of God. All are required to obey its precepts, whilst they are taught its doctrines, are cheered by its promises, and sustained by its influence.

Nor are its inspiring motives less entitled to our admiration and homage. What are they? Not self-esteem. Not ambition. Not self-righteousness, and pride, inflating the hope of obtaining heaven on the ground of human merit. Quite the contrary. The motives produced by the influence of Christianity are gratitude and love to God and his Christ; affection to our fellow Christians, as brethren; and cordial respect and esteem for the great family of man, recollecting that "God has made of one blood all the dwellers upon the earth."

But in no feature is Christianity more remarkable than in its influence, both transforming and consolatory. What wonderful changes it has produced on the judgment, the will, the conscience, the affections, the temper, the sentiments, and the life. And this gratifying transformation is visible not only in individuals who have been some of the most incorrigible members of the community, whom no earthly power could reform, but also in families, neighbourhoods, and nations, near and remote. For we are not to judge of Christianity by the inconsistencies of nominal professors who disgrace it, but by its own spirit and
precepts. Where these are violated, whether by individuals or nations, the religion of Christ is not to blame. It is insulted by such aberrations. It is trampled on. Censure it not, therefore, more than you would an excellent code of laws, in consequence of the delinquencies which are opposed to them, or the good instructions and parental discipline of a well-regulated family, because one or more of its members have become prodigal and disobedient. It is the design and tendency of Christianity to regenerate and make happy the whole world.

It also exerts a consolatory influence, which is beautifully visible in poverty, sickness, losses, bereavements, reductions, persecution, temptation, and death. What sufficient support it yields; what hopes it inspires; what resignation, faith, patience, and contentment it produces; and with what tranquillity, and sometimes ecstatic joy, it cheers the closing scene of dissolution with the prospect of a blessed immortality. "What, then, is Christianity but the Divine method of making men happy? What are its doctrines but the principles of happiness? What are its precepts but the measures of happiness? Its promises, but the germs of happiness? Its graces, but the first-fruits of happiness? Its consummation, but the perfection of happiness? All that is refined in taste, delicate in sentiment, exalted in intellect, upright in character, endearing in affection, our arts, our liberties, our power, and our prosperity, all may be traced up to the same fountain. Withdraw all that we directly or indirectly owe to that source, and you plunge us back into the barbarism of druidical days."—Stowell.

Nor is this Divine system of purity and happiness adapted only to one era, country, or class of society. It is suited to all periods, ranks, and kingdoms, however dissimilar in their laws, habits, and customs. It is emphatically a system of mercy which embraces the globe. Like the universal light of day, it shines as cheerfully and gratuitously on the cottage as on
the mansion; on the peasant as on the prince. "Like 'the tree of life, whose leaves were for the healing of the nations,' Christianity will flourish as luxuriantly in India as in Europe; which will strike its roots as deeply in the sand-stone rocks of Iceland, or the deep morasses of Siberia, as in the valleys of Piedmont or the plains of Africa; and yields a fruit not less delicious to the taste of the converted Hindoo than to a British Christian. Yes, Christianity, which is neither local nor sectarian, is a religion for the whole earth, and wherever she has descended and taken up her abode, she has made the wilderness and the solitary place glad, and caused the desert to rejoice and blossom like the rose; and her progress has been the progress of knowledge, civilisation, and happiness. The same sun which shone on Britain in the days of Julius Cæsar, shines on her now; the same heavens gave her fruitful showers; and the same soil yielded its increase. But compare Britain now with what she was then, and you will have a fair specimen of the benefits which Christianity confers on a nation. Our ancestors were rude savages, who wandered about in a state of nakedness, or merely covered with the skins of beasts, whose sole employment was either in pasturage or hunting; and whose system of religious faith, if less elegant than that of ancient Greece, or less obscene than that of modern India, embodied in it the same cruel and deteriorating principle. But now Britain is the wonder of the world. She excels all other nations in the equity of her laws, in the enterprizing spirit of her commerce, in her deeds of valour and of mercy, in her national character, customs, and habits; in arts and science; in her institutions of benevolence; in her love of liberty; and in the generous efforts which she is making to bless the whole afflicted family of man. To what cause shall we attribute this immense superiority, which becomes the more conspicuous as we draw other nations nearer to her in the vision of comparison? Christianity, we approach thy
throne, and lay the honour at thy feet! These are thy doings, and they are worthy thy pure and benign character."—East.

We have also alluded to the soothing influence which the Christian religion imparts amid the vicissitudes of life, in the period of dissolution, and in the prospect of eternity. Now compare this holy peace, this hope and joy, with the avowed sentiments and feelings of infidels in similar circumstances. "It is easy to dissemble in life, but to die dissembling is hard indeed. It is not in the haven, afar from the ocean and the storm, that the mariner makes proof of his fortitude; nor in the camp, amid security and parade, that the soldier gives evidence of his valour; no, the tempest will try the one, and the battle-field the other. So the hour to test the sceptic is the hour of dread decision, when he verges on that eternity which, whilst distant, he derided."

"From among the beacons furnished by the last hours of the sceptical, let two be selected—those left by the two arch-leaders of the faithless host;—Voltaire, the prince of philosophical, and Paine, of vulgar infidelity. The horrors of the closing scene of the profane, though brilliant Frenchman are too well authenticated to be disproved. They are the more memorable, because had infidelity been allowed to choose the champion on whose constancy she would have staked her character, would she not have chosen him who had assailed Christianity with no less force than virulence, whose enmity against it had known no abatement with declining years; who had seemed to have triumphed over every misgiving of conscience, and whose habitual fiendish exclamation, in reference to the Saviour, had been, 'Crush the wretch!' But, when this proud blasphemer had been spared to nearly fourscore years and ten; when he had diffused the poison of his principles throughout his native land; when, after a season of partial discredit and retirement from the metropolis, he had returned to Paris, for the purpose of enjoying a kind
of public apotheosis; when a mighty assembly had
wreathed his hoary hairs with laurels, and over-
powered him with idolatrous applause,—then, whilst
returning to his apartments, his nostrils still reeking
with the incense of adulation, and his ears still echo-
ing with the acclamations of adoring thousands—at
that very moment God smote him, as He had smitten
the haughty king of Israel, with a terrific and in-
curable malady. The hand of God was upon him,
and the potsherd of the earth found how fearful a
thing it is to strive with its Maker. Almost unimagi-
nable were the torments of his mind: his cries were
piercing as the shrieks of a fiend; his atheistic asso-
ciates, who would fain have steeled his spirit, fled
before his curses; the nurse who waited upon him
would never afterwards attend the death-bed of an
unbeliever; and Dr. Tronchin, his physician, de-
clared, that 'the furies of Orestes were nothing to
the tortures of Voltaire.'

"Scarcely less horrible were the last hours of
Paine. That miserable scoffer, after having done
untold mischief to the ignorant and unstable, after a
career of successful villany, found himself, in the end;
′forsaken,′ as he expressed it, ′by God and man.′
Friendless and unpitied, on a foreign shore, he lin-
gered out his latter days, racked with pain, and sur-
rrounded with filth and destitution; his fool-hardiness
failed him altogether, his pride vainly struggled to
suppress his horrors, alternately he prayed and blas-
phemed, abject was his wretchedness, and piteous
were his moans.—These, infidelity, are the consola-
tions thou reservest for the hour of nature's agony;
it is thus thou smoothest the pillow of thy dying
votaries! Nor will it vindicate thee to point to the
boasted calmness with which Hume and others met
their end, for their calmness was forced, and there
was effort in their peace. Recent disclosures indicate,
that even the torpid Scotchman had his shivering
forebodings; and, independently of these, his levity
in dying was as indecent, as we believe it was un-
real. No one acquainted with the desperate pride of the human heart will wonder to see how mightily it can wrestle to retain the mask of consistency, even amid the expiring agonies of unbelievers; but, spite of every effort, if the visor do not always drop, yet it rarely fails to be so far discomposed as to betray the real features which it is designed to hide.”—Stowell.

How different are the characters which Christianity is calculated to form. How soothing and sustaining are the hopes which she inspires “when heart and flesh fail.” And how benign is the lustre with which she lights the believer’s footsteps, as he passes through “the valley of the shadow of death,” to the inheritance in heaven—

“Beyond the narrow vale of time,
Where bright celestial ages roll;
To scenes eternal, scenes sublime,
She points the way and leads the soul:
At her approach the grave appears
The gate of paradise restored;
Her voice the watching cherub hears,
And drops his double flaming sword.”

This is the genius of Christianity—a religion which emanated from the wisdom and grace of the almighty Creator—centres in the cross of Christ—is under the special agency of the Holy Ghost—governs the heart and life of its subjects—is promotive of the salvation and happiness of the whole human race—gilds the bed of death with the descending radiance of heaven, and prepares the soul for a blessed immortality. This was the system of intelligence, purity, and joy which, according to our text, was to illumine the ancient church after its long depression, and was to beam on the darkness in which Jews and Gentiles were enveloped and lost. “Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

As, therefore, Christianity, thus resplendent with beauty and brightness was the divinely appointed means for the conversion of the nations, it will be desirable to look at those prophecies that foretold its
PROPHECY FULFILLED IN THE

introduction, diffusion, and success, that we may witness their accomplishment as another portion of evidence in confirmation of the authenticity and veracity of the holy Scriptures.

In surveying these predictions it will be seen that, in the enlightened estimation of the Hebrew seers, the days of the Messiah were to form a golden era. And no feature, in that productive age, was more conspicuous to the enraptured contemplation of prophetic foresight, than the conversion of the Gentiles. That was a beneficent novelty hitherto unknown. But in the economy of the Gospel, as was repeatedly predicted, the Gentile world was to be visited with the light of life as well as the Jews.

In support of this opinion we refer to the following passages. Psa. ii. 7: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." So extensive were to be the limits of the Messiah's kingdom, of whom David thus sanguinely spake. We may also advert to Psalm lxxii.: "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. All kings shall bow down before him, all nations shall serve him." And in proof of the merciful character of the Messiah's reign, it is added: "For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that hath no helper. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." It requires but little discernment to perceive that the accomplishment of this prophecy secured the triumphs of Christianity, so inseparably blended with the Saviour's kingdom.

The prophet Isaiah, so clear in his mental perceptions,—so animated by the genial glow of holy
love,—so rich in beautiful language, would be sure to strike a chord to this inspiring theme. We, therefore, find him frequent and fervent in his descriptive sketches of the kingdom and glory of the promised Redeemer, and the triumphs of his holy Gospel, chapter xi. 10: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." Chapter xlii. 4: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." How applicable to the great salvation, to the liberty which the incarnate Son of God came to confer on Satan's captives!

Similar language, replete with grace and consolation, is recorded by Isaiah, chapter xlix. 6: "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Chapter lii. 10: "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Verse 13—15: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."

If we proceed to chapter lv. 4, the same sanguine hopes are enkindled in the prospect of the Messiah's coming and the glory of his kingdom: "Behold, I
have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee, shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee." The 62nd chapter exhibits a fine collection of glowing imagery: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

There is also an animating prophecy in Micah, chapter iv. 1: "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." A similar strain of joyful hope was recorded by Malachi i. 11: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."
Other prophecies of a similar import might be added, but these are sufficient to substantiate our opinion respecting the character and triumphs of Christianity. It was to emanate from the ancient church, made luminous by the glory of the Messiah, and was to extend far and wide, through the kingdoms of the world. In tracing this oft-predicted prosperity of pure and undefiled religion in the Gospel dispensation to its source, there is a very prominent and important feature in the representation with which it is essential that we should be familiar. I refer to the agency of the Holy Spirit, in connexion with Divine sovereignty and beneficence. Several passages in the prophetic writings exhibit that fact, with instructive significance by a description of imagery, which, especially in oriental countries, could not fail to be highly appreciated. Thus, whilst the Saviour's grace with which his church was to be beautified and made happy, is described by the light and lustre of the sun, the influences of the Spirit are compared to the fructifying rain. Psalm lxxii.: “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.” Isaiah xxxii. 15: “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.” Joel ii. 28: “And it shall come to pass, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall
come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” If we refer to Isaiah xliv. 3, we shall find that this beneficent effusion was not to be confined to persons of maturity; even children were to participate in the fructifying communication. “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”

This was the celestial influence that was to descend upon the kingdom of the Messiah, as the source of moral and spiritual fruitfulness and beauty. So well aware of the importance of this promised effusion of the Spirit, and of the certainty of the prophetic grant, was Hosea when exhorting the people to repentance, that he said, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn and he will heal us, he hath smitten and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us, and in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” And Peter, on the day of Pentecost, reminded his auditors both of the predicted outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and of the promise of grace “to them and to their children.”

We are now in full possession of every part of the prophetic picture, respecting the successful diffusion of Christianity. An era of extended piety is enunciated, which was to be characterized by knowledge, purity, and happiness, of which the element of light was the well-selected emblem. This aggregation of beauty
and bliss was to emanate from the ancient church of God, divested of all its shadows and imperfections by the glory of the Messiah. Gentiles, quickened to newness of life, were to be brought into a holy, fraternal amalgamation with the Jews; and by the concurrent effusion of the Holy Spirit, barrenness was to give place to fruitfulness, and death to spiritual life.

But when with these sanguine predictions in our hand, we pass the boundary line of the Old Testament economy, and stand and gaze on the deplorable condition of the nations at the period of the Messiah's coming; when we survey the lowliness of his condition, and that of his apostles; when we investigate the purity and requirements of his religion, so likely to be offensive to the proud heart and the depraved nature of man; when we look at the numerous impediments which Christianity would have to surmount, and the opposition by which it was likely to be assailed; and when we observe the very simple mode by which it was to proceed "from conquering to conquer," without the aid of royal authority, or legislative protection, or secular influence, or literary fame, we are ready to ask, Is it possible that the bright visions of prophecy will ever be realized? is it likely that our fallen race, with so many evil passions and prejudices, can be converted by such a system, and by such humble means?

Let us advert, a moment, to the state of the nations when "the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings;" for in proportion to the unpropitiousness of its moral condition, the triumphs of Christianity will be greater, as the skill of the statesman in the cabinet, of the pilot in the storm, or the physician in the chamber of sickness, is heightened by the difficulties with which they have had to contend. The first chapter of the epistle to the Romans may be referred to as an affecting specimen of what the two most celebrated nations, the Greeks and Romans, were at that period. There we find
that the grospest idolatry, blended with the most unbridled licentiousness, made up the sad amount of their depravity. They had philosophers, orators, poets, and other persons of renown, but "the world by wisdom knew not God." There were a few virtuous teachers, who, deriving their mental light from the magnificent works of creation, looked through them indistinctly to the Author and Ruler of the universe: and though they had some few elements of truth, which they derived from the Hebrew Scriptures, then widely circulated in the Greek translation, their opinions but little accorded with the popular systems of the day, and had no influence on the mass of their countrymen. They talked much of virtue, but they had no power to produce it; witness the existing mythology, their religious rites, their debasing superstitions, their inhumanity, and the character of their principal cities: truly "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people," as our text foretold.

Nor were the Jews in a much better state: though not gross idolaters, like the heathen, they were equally alienated in the spirit of their minds from the love of God and the governing power of vital religion. They were filled with national pride and prejudice; they acknowledged the Divine authority of the holy Scriptures, and read them in their synagogues, but the effect was neutralized by the corrupt traditions of their elders. They boasted of their privileged descent from the patriarchs, but proved themselves the children of those who murdered the prophets. They professed to reverence the temple, but they desecrated it with their merchandise, and made it a den of thieves; they "drew nigh to God with their mouths, and honoured him with their lips, but their hearts were far from him, and they taught for doctrines the commandments of men." The scribes and Pharisees occupied the seat of Moses, and under the garb of superior sanctity, offered long prayers in the public highway, but "they destroyed widows'
houses, and ate the bread of the fatherless;’’ thus he who knew their hearts compared them to ‘‘whited sepulchres.’’ From the spirit of these blind guides we may judge of the condition of the blind people who held them in admiration and followed them: thus Jerusalem and Judea, like the localities of the heathen world, were covered with the unillumined shadow of death.

This was the unpenetrated mass of pagan idolatry and Jewish degeneracy on which Christianity was to work its moral miracles; this was ‘‘the dry and thirsty land’’ on whose unfertilized wastes the heavenly rain was to descend: how unlikely were such moral deserts to resemble ‘‘the garden of the Lord!’’ or, in other words, how improbable did it appear, morally speaking, that the truth as it is in Jesus would achieve its predicted conquests among such a people. For, we must recollect what are the ethics of Christianity; what it requires, what it prohibits, and how it addresses its auditors even after it has succeeded in gaining their attention. It is the avowed enemy of all sin, and demands personal holiness in every part of our mental and moral character. It places all ranks upon the same level, as fallen, guilty, helpless creatures, condemned by the righteous law of God, to which we are all amenable and which we have all broken. It declares the worthlessness of the form without the power of religion. It points all men to the same atoning sacrifice for pardon and eternal life; and it urges every one to come in the same spirit of contrition for acceptance, righteousness, and peace, through the infinite merits of ‘‘Jesus Christ, and him crucified;’’ and then to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him ‘‘through evil report and good report, through honour and dishonour.’’ How humbling to the pride of the human heart! how abasing to the self-importance of rulers, philosophers, priests, and teachers of religion; and how offensive to men of rank, of literary fame, of abounding wealth, and of personal courage! But these have
ever been the requirements of Christianity: thus its Divine Founder declared, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." How unlikely was such a system to gain its converts: surely pride, self-sufficiency, and carnal policy, would universally spurn it with utter contempt, as an insult to persons of consequence, as an offensive libel on the supposed dignity of human nature.

Then we must reflect on the lowly character of Christ and his apostles, by whom this unpopular theory was propagated, and its predicted triumphs were to be achieved. Among men much depends on patronage, on circumstances, and outward appearances. Hence great undertakings are usually confided to persons of note, whose station, talents, or connexions, are likely to command respect, whilst they go forth under the sanction of superiors, and arrayed in all the outward forms of respectability and importance. If, therefore, the Messiah had entered the world as he left it, when he visibly ascended in a bright cloud, attended by a retinue of angels; or if he had lived, during his temporary sojourn on earth, in kingly state, the reception of his religion would not have been surprising; but the entire reverse of this, distinguished the character and condition of the Son of God. He was born in a stable, was cradled in a manger, was the offspring of poverty and obscurity, lived in a lowly condition, had no place in which to lay his head, travelled on foot, and was often weary, weak, hungry, thirsty, and derided. Nor were his disciples in better circumstances. Who were they? Like their Master they were poor, with no influence to attract, with no eloquence to persuade to the obedience of faith. Contrast, therefore, such persons with the Jewish priesthood, with heathen philosophers, or pagan rulers, and say if Christianity had the smallest chance of success from such agents? We must also contemplate the mode by which the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus was to be pro-
The Jewish rabbis carried their sway by the antiquity of their creed, however mutilated and inert: it was the faith of their country, it was the faith of their fathers, the only theory which Heaven was supposed to sanction. What an apparent safeguard to Judaism was this! The Greeks and Romans were equally secure and impregnable by the influence of the priesthood, the policy of the state, the popularity of the system, so dazzling to the senses, so gratifying to the passions, whilst their orators and the civil power were prepared to guard it with a jealous care. But Christianity had no such patronage, no such advocates, no such protectors. It was upheld by no royal sanction, was enforced by no imperial edict, was accommodated with no splendid temples, was sustained by no showy rites, by no expensive sacrifices, nor attractive processions, nor consecrated debaucheries, nor juggling mysteries, deceptive and beguiling. It had nothing to attract the ambitious, to gratify the licentious, to please the superstitious, or to reward the covetous. Simplicity characterized all its doctrines and institutes. Nor did it employ bribery, terror, or force. Mahomet propagated his religion by the sword, and his followers still preserve its domination by the threatened penalty of death in the event of desertion. The pure and pacific religion of Christ repudiates these carnal weapons. It is a religion of freedom, not of constraint; of benevolence and love, not of persecution and intimidation. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword," consequently, oppression for conscience' sake is not the religion of the Prince of peace. Its standard of authority and of appeal is the Bible, and that alone. Its modes of influence and of action, in gaining its conquests, are its addresses to the understanding and the heart, accompanied by the renovating agency of the Holy Ghost: and the doctrines of the cross are the brightest gems in the constellation.

This is Christianity as it was instituted by the supreme Head of the church; as it was propagated by
his apostles and ministers among degenerate Jews and licentious pagans. Again, we say how unlikely was such an unpatronised, unpopular, and self-denying theory, to succeed against the combined power, policy, and enmity of earth and hell?

Here we pause till the next Lecture, as the subject is too copious to be included in one discourse. The genius of Christianity is now fully before us, in which we have seen what it was calculated to accomplish, the prophecies which foretold its prosperity, and the obstacles which it had to surmount. The next Lecture will exhibit its triumphs. In the mean time let us be unfeignedly thankful to the God of all grace for the establishment of such a system of intelligence and happiness. Let us be devoutly concerned to receive and value it, that we may all be “the children of light.” Let us “walk worthily of the vocation wherewith we are called,” by “casting off the unfruitful works of darkness,” and exhibiting that transparency of character which is the best illustration of the purity of our principles. And let us pity, pray for, and seek the enlightenment and salvation of those nations “which are sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death.”
LECTURE XIV.

GENIUS AND TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIANITY. PART II.

Isaiah ix. 1—3. Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

The first appearance of the orb of day, when rising in silent majesty above the eastern hills, to disperse the gloom of night, and to smile on the nations, is exceedingly beautiful. It presents a scene which has often occupied the painter's pencil and the poet's pen; which has furnished the sacred writers with one of their finest similes, and aids the lofty conceptions of the pious mind when soaring from the creature to the Creator, from the blessings of salvation to the exalted Saviour, in whom they have originated. What a change does the presence of the great luminary of the world produce! The sombre gloom yields to the universal smile of cheerfulness; depression gives place to animation, obscurity is superseded by obviousness, and inactivity is succeeded by industry and enterprise. "The sun ariseth, man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." The beasts, the birds, the creeping things of the earth, are all in motion, to hail the opening day. The fields are vocal. The flowers unfold their hues, and spread their fragrance. And even the poor invalid, tired of watching the midnight lamp, greets the first descending beam, and faintly exclaims, "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" whilst a well-grounded faith
enables him to add, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" It is not surprising that the psalmist, a man of taste, and a warm admirer of nature, compared the celestial orb to an eastern bridegroom coming forth from his chamber, on the morning of his nuptial day, decked with purple, gold, and jewels, and "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race."

But our text, with the subject which we are about to resume, reminds us of a brighter Sun than the monarch of day, and of blessings infinitely superior to those which are produced by light and heat. We are to contemplate the brightness and beauty of that economy of truth and righteousness which emanated from the great Redeemer, and to which reference is made when we gratefully exult, "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." We are to expatiate on the rapid progress of the Gospel during the first era of its propagation. We are to follow it in its wide extent; we are to look at its present aspect; we are to contrast it with those systems that have ever been opposed to it; and tracing the stream to the fountain, we shall be constrained to exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

The former Lecture has exhibited the impediments that were calculated to obstruct the accumulating triumphs of "the Prince of peace." Alarmed at the appearance of the promised Messiah in our fallen world, the great enemy of our race mustered his forces, equipped his agents, formed his plans, and employed his stratagems to cut off the Redeemer in the midst of his days. He succeeded. Jesus was taken, "and with wicked hands was crucified and slain." But did Christianity expire with its Founder? Quite the contrary. He died "to redeem us to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue." His last exclamation on the
cross, "It is finished," was the signal of Satan's defeat. By the "decease which he accomplished at Jerusalem," "he reconciled all things unto God," and laid the wide and immovable foundation of his universal empire, of his countless conquests.

For though the Messiah was "cut off out of the land of the living, and made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," he rose as a mighty conqueror, proving that "he overcame death, and him that hath the power of death, which is the devil." And having fully satisfied the faith of his disciples as to his identity, by his frequent appearance, during forty days, he ascended to heaven in a bright cloud, in the presence of numerous witnesses; and ere long, granted to his waiting, worshipping followers, that celestial influence which, as we have seen, formed the repeated theme of ancient prophecy and of Christian hope. That preternatural boon was specially given to qualify the apostles for their arduous work; to co-operate with them in their ministrations; to predispose the minds of their auditors; to apply the word with regenerating power; and to give an impetus to the energies of the Christian church unknown before.

The effect of this Divine effusion was memorable. The apostles were endowed with new light and strength. They were no longer the unbelieving, contracted, timid disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, but became the intelligent, courageous, zealous, aggressive missionaries of the Lord of life and glory. And though not benefited by a liberal education, though not taken from the schools of philosophy, nor the halls of science, but from the humble occupations of maritime life, they became linguists upon an extensive scale, without the ordinary process of mental application, excessive labour, expense, or delay. This miraculous qualification became one of their credentials, attracted universal attention, tended to disarm prejudice, and opened before them an extensive field.
The time of this communication was also propitious. It occurred at one of the three national festivals of the Jews, when the male population of the country and of distant provinces were assembled at Jerusalem. Thus the witnesses of the wonderful effusion were numerous, three thousand of whom became converted to the Christian faith. Those from afar carried the influence and the intelligence to their respective localities, while the inhabitants of the metropolis, of whom we have a more particular account, "continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers; praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added unto the church daily such as should be saved." Thus, as was predicted, the Spirit was poured from on high like the fertilizing rain, and became "the Spirit of grace and of supplication," constraining the impenitent to "look on him whom they had pierced and mourn."

A few days subsequently, Peter and John,—vested with the power of performing miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus, cured a noted cripple, who subsisted on charity, at the gate of the temple. This increased their fame, added another public seal to their ministry, extended the celebrity of the Christian religion, and attracted and united a warm, admiring band of five thousand followers, who readily placed themselves under the banner of the Gospel. The work of conversion now commenced in earnest. Multitudes embraced the truth in Jerusalem, Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, Cesarea, and in many other cities and towns of Palestine. The tide rolled on. It became an irresistible flood. But it was the water of life. And it extended fruitfulness and beauty in its course.

The Jewish authorities took the alarm. They apprehended the two apostles who were the principal agents in this mighty revolution of mind and character. They threatened them; but under a renewed manifestation of the Holy Spirit the heralds of salvation continued their labours and success with un-
abated courage. They were apprehended a second time, and committed to prison, but the Angel of the Lord, by night, opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." They did so, early in the morning, no doubt with increased effect. A third time were they taken into custody; and after being reprimanded, beaten, and "commanded to speak no more in the name of Jesus, they departed from the counsel, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name; and daily in the temple, and from house to house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Thus they verified the promise of their departed Lord, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Persecution now assumed a more formidable aspect. Stephen, whose eminent piety, wisdom, and miracles made him conspicuous, was seized; was accused of blasphemy by false witnesses; but, though innocent of the crime alleged against him, he was martyred. The storm that thus swept away the first victim of intolerance scattered the disciples, but it subserved the cause which it was intended to annihilate. By the dispersion of the persecuted, the good seed of the kingdom was scattered; and though the fountain was less copious, the streams were extended and multiplied. Whilst this mighty work was thus advancing in all directions, Saul of Tarsus, hitherto a violent opponent of Christianity, and a zealous partizan of the falling cause of Judaism, was called to the knowledge of the truth by the Lord Jesus in his glorified state, when that virulent persecutor, who took a prominent part in the martyrdom of Stephen, was on a murderous expedition. That was a memorable achievement. He was a standard-bearer in the field of conflict between the cause of Judaism and Christianity. His cast of mind, his energy of cha-
racter, his personal courage, his bold, adventurous spirit, exactly fitted him for the Christian enterprise. The Jewish hierarchy, by whom Saul had been employed, became excessively alarmed. More than this, they were maddened to fury. They threatened. They exerted their influence. They employed their emissaries, and the life of Saul was placed in imminent danger. But beyond the power of persecution and bloodshed, what could they do to stop the progress of the Gospel? Not anything. Opposed by the omnipotence of the exalted Redeemer, "who has all power in heaven and on earth," they were thwarted, they were paralyzed.

Whilst Saul of Tarsus, now a disciple of Christ, was buckling on the armour of the Gospel, another memorable incident gave additional energy to the Christian church. Cornelius, a military officer, and formerly a pagan, was brought to the knowledge of the truth. This, connected with other analogous events which shortly transpired, and which were heightened in value by the determined obduracy and hostility of the Jews, who remained in unbelief, opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Paul, whose magnanimity broke through old prejudices and prepossessions, and disgusted by the opposition with which he had been assailed by his impenitent countrymen, resolved to enter that door, and pursue a new track. He had imbibed the generous spirit of Christianity, which is a religion for the whole world. He had studied the prophesies. He saw how graciously they smiled on the heathen. And from that period, instead of limiting the tidings of salvation to the descendants of Abraham, he became the avowed Apostle of the Gentiles, and with what success may be perceived by his Epistles and the instructive book of Acts. At Philippi, Athens, Ephesus, Corinth, Colosse, Nicopolis, Thessalonica, Berea, and elsewhere, near and remote, multitudes bowed the knee to Messiah the Prince, till at length the Gospel was carried to Rome, to
Spain, to Gaul, and to Britain. And whilst Paul was pursuing this successful course both by sea and land among the Greeks and Romans, other zealous missionaries were diffusing the tidings of salvation with great effect at Antioch, which became an important station; in Cilicia, Pisidia, and Pamphylia; in Phrygia, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Mesopotamia, Media, and Parthia; with their vicinities. “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

In these aggressive movements, the apostles and their brethren were greatly aided by the vast extent of the Roman empire, in which they lived. They were also wonderfully assisted by the gift of tongues, which opened a medium of communication among the different nations that were amalgamated under one sceptre, and by the miracles which they were honoured to perform, or were wrought by the invisible hand of God in their behalf. Diseases, in some instances, fled at their approach, or yielded to their voice or their touch. Prison walls were shaken by the echo of their praises, or the sound of their prayers. Prison doors flew open for their liberation, and their custody promoted the cause which they spent their lives to extend. So productive was the moral desert of fruit and beauty, after, “the Sun of righteousness” was high in the heavens, and the celestial rain descended “like the showers which water the earth.” It was then that the language of Jesus was fully understood: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” It was then also that the prophecy of Isaiah was seen in its beauty: “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand as an ensign to the nations, to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.” And what rendered the success of Christianity the more remarkable, in addition to the statements already made, was the previous character and avowed hostility of many who afterwards became converts—the opposition which
they unflinchingly bore from their love to the truth—the patient, gentle spirit which they evinced—and the pecuniary sacrifices to which they so readily submitted, when "they took cheerfully the spoiling of their goods." Nor did the prosperity of the cause of religion depend on the lives and ministrations of the apostles. It extended after the first founders of Christianity, like their beloved Lord and Master, were removed to their eternal rest, and even after Jerusalem, the place of its origin, was razed to the ground. For many years the sword of persecution was drawn against the holy cause of truth and righteousness, and the fires were kindled for the sacrifice of Christian martyrs. But though, according to the testimony of Jerome; nearly two millions of persons were put to death, under the despotic emperors of Rome, still the Gospel triumphed, and the church of Christ was never more pure and flourishing than when afflicted.

Now compare these achievements of vital piety over ignorance and vice, with the fruits of other systems then existing, with every facility arising from influence and patronage, and how remarkable is the contrast! "The philosophers of Greece and Rome were placed in situations nearest to those of the apostles. Arguments were their weapons; they employed no force; but their circumstances were more advantageous. They were admired and venerated, and regarded as the first of mankind; they were numerous; and they had all the countenance of authority, and all the influence of public opinion in their favour that their hearts could wish. Their system was more palatable than the pure, unbending maxims of Christianity. But what was their success in propagating their tenets, and reforming the world? Who were ever more eloquent than these men? Have greater energies ever been displayed by the human mind, than in the ingenuity of their speculations, in the charms of their composition, and the beauty of their style? They had the western world for many ages to themselves. One generation of philosophers had an opportunity of improving on
another, and of extending widely the united influence of speaking and writing to accomplish their purpose. But when the apostles appeared, what fruit of their labour was to be found? Where, O Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, shall we see the reformation which your philosophy has produced? We have read of a change in the life of Polemo, and a few individuals besides; but we look for greater things.

"Paul did more than this by the very first sermon he preached at Athens, while your brethren mocked and ridiculed the preacher. Tell us what nation we shall find imbued with philosophic morality? Why are you silent? Tell us, then, what city? Alas! we cannot find one single society of men who say, 'The philosophers taught us to reject the idolatry of our country, and to adore the one true God.' I am ready to think I must be wrong. I search again, but my search is fruitless. I can hardly believe that the gardens of Academus, the Stoic, and the Peripatetic walks, bring forth so little fruit:—but I am compelled.

"From viewing the toilsome but barren labours of the philosophers, I turn to the men of Galilee, and see societies formed in every place; and multitudes casting away their idols with contempt, and renouncing every idolatrous and immoral practice, and every impure disposition; and prostrating themselves with humble adoration before Jehovah. My astonishment increases; and I cannot refrain from crying out, 'Here is the finger of God!' Come hither, ye votaries of Socrates and his fellows, and survey the different effects of the sentiments of your sages, and of the preaching of Christ crucified by his chosen witnesses. Account for it if you can."—Dr. Bogue.

And who can estimate the vast amount of personal, domestic, and national benefits which Christianity has diffused from the primitive age to the present time? Think of the funds that have been raised by voluntary contributions for religious and humane
purposes; the willing agents who have sacrificed health, ease, and worldly advantages for a life of toil, comparative poverty, and suffering; on behalf of their fellow men; the myriads of copies of the Holy Scriptures, and other books of piety, which have been circulated; the numerous foreign translations of the inspired volume, which, after prodigious mental labour, have been effected; the incalculable number of the rising generation who have been gratuitously instructed; the places of worship, schools, hospitals, and asylums, that have been erected by Christian benevolence; the alms to suffering humanity which has been cheerfully dispensed; and the improvement which has been produced in the principles and character of some of the most neglected masses of mankind.

Christianity has extended the blessings of civilization far and wide. It has advocated the cause of the oppressed, the suffering, and the destitute. It has raised females, whom paganism degrades, to their proper rank in society. It has spread its protecting shield over infantile weakness and tottering age. It fosters those principles and cultivates the habits of life which are the most favourable to conjugal, parental, and filial happiness. And it aims at nothing less than the temporal and spiritual welfare of the whole world. Nor have its endeavours been abortive. Look at the individuals, the families, the districts on which the Gospel has shed its exhilarating influence, and what a change do you behold! In a moral sense it may be truly said, that the thorn has been supplanted by the fir-tree, and the briar by the myrtle-tree.

Oh, if we could collect into a condensed form all the gladdening facts which have been witnessed and reported by the religious societies of Christendom, during only the last half-century, how should we be amazed! Infidels, pagans, profligates, blasphemers, persecutors, have been brought into the way of peace and piety, and have lived and died as the brightest
ornaments of that religion which they once despised. And how much good has been accomplished, that was never known beyond the sphere in which it occurred! Ministering angels saw it and hailed it as the fruit of the Redeemer's sufferings, as a part of that glory which was to issue from the tragedy of his crucifixion.

Among these splendid triumphs of Christianity, which can hardly fail to astonish the statesman and the philosopher, and raise the admiring applause of the philanthropist, missions in heathen lands occupy a commanding position. They take the lead in the spacious field of benevolent enterprise. They present the finest specimens of pious heroism, patient endurance, and generous self-denial. And they have gained some of the most remarkable trophies that have ever been witnessed, in the sanctifying influence of the Gospel on the most degrading depravity. In these Christian labours, the various sections of the church of Christ have formed a noble confederacy, though differing in the non-essentials of our common faith. All are actuated by the same motives; are sanctioned and encouraged by the same Redeemer; are aided by the same Spirit; cheered by the same promises; and are permitted to gather large measures of fruit to the praise and glory of God. All are our brethren. There is room for all.

But without making an invidious distinction, may we not be permitted to point to the achievements of Divine truth in the South Sea islands and in Southern Africa as being singularly felicitous? Recollect the peculiarly degraded state in which those portions of the globe were found when the first heralds of the cross beheld them, and compare their former condition with their present state, and justice will inspire the sentiment of admiration, "What hath God wrought!"

It is well known that when the missionaries landed at Tahiti, they found that the vices which prevailed, together with the intestine wars that so frequently
raged, not only shook the very framework of society, but threatened the ultimate depopulation of these beautiful islands. They were indeed “dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty.” In proof of the sanguinary character of the natives, it is stated, that at an early period of the mission, after one of their wars, Pomare, the king of Tahiti, was seen standing on the sea-shore, and employed in the horrible work of superintending the loading of canoes with the dead bodies of his vanquished enemies, to be carried to the Marae, to be offered in sacrifice to their favourite god Oro. They were about a hundred in number, and had been lacerated, trampled on, and treated with every indignity by the conquerors. When the priest of this idolatrous shrine required a human victim, he generally despatched a message to that effect to the king, who sent a small stone to one of his chiefs as a signal. The person selected for the slaughter was sometimes one of his own guests who was eating beneath his roof. And when at midnight the sacred drum, as it was called, announced the commencement of the horrid rite, many of the terrified inhabitants fled to the mountains in alarm. Infanticide also prevailed to a fearful extent, and its usually accompanying vice, the desertion of the sick and the aged when they became burdensome to their families. Females were never permitted to eat with the other sex; and their sons, in every instance, took precedence of their mothers.

But notwithstanding the mild, pacific, civilizing, and elevating influence of the Christian religion, “having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,” which the missionaries laboured to introduce, as a substitute for dissension, despotism, injustice, and desperate depravity, for how many years did they seem to utter their voice to the wind, and scatter the good seed of the kingdom upon the surface of a rock! No one believed their report,—to none was the arm of the Lord revealed. All was dark as the shadow of death, and sterile as
Everywhere they met with the most stinging ingratitude. When travelling in their self-denying vocation, they endured both bodily and mental pain; but no one sympathized, none were softened. On some occasions they were distressed for the want of food; but the natives, for whose welfare they had sacrificed all the endearments of kindred and country, frequently refused to supply them, after twelve long years of toil and patience, or even to receive them into their dwellings. And when they obtained the rights of hospitality, after days of fatigue and privation, their nights were often sleepless in the miserable sheds of the people, being infested with insects and other annoyances.

When in conversation on the most impressive topics, or preaching the Gospel with the greatest affection and earnestness, the missionaries received the grossest insults, their hearers stigmatizing their messages of grace as "nonsense and lies," raising the derisive laugh by their gestures and grimaces, or speaking sarcastically of the Saviour. Many of them lay down and slept during the service, whilst others amused themselves with remarks on the person and dress of the preacher. They also accused the missionaries of bringing diseases into the island, declaring that those maladies were sent by the god of England, as Oro, their national god, was too good to inflict them. Nor did they omit to upbraid their self-denying teachers with their inability to cure the disorders of the body, while they pretended to offer salvation for the soul.

And yet, after years of patient suffering and of enduring perseverance, what a wonderful change did those holy men live to behold! The king and the people of Tahiti and of Eimeo not only abandoned their idols, but treated them with the utmost contempt. Some they burned. Others they sent to this country as memorials of their former degradation. And of the god Oro, to which so many human sacrifices had been offered, Pomare made a post in
his kitchen, after having destroyed the idol's temple. Among many other proofs of the pleasing change, it may be mentioned that from this period, when the missionaries itinerated, they had no longer occasion to go in search of the people, and entreat them to come and hear the Gospel: they came willingly, and received the word with delight. And not satisfied with public worship, they followed their worthy instructors to their dwellings, to be present at family devotion, and often kept them awake, during the greater part of the night, with their inquiries respecting holy things. Others came early in the morning with their books, for explanation, or to recite what they had learned. Moral as well as spiritual effects resulted from the wonderful change. Formerly, theft was one of their common vices: now, those who stole, not only stole no more, but brought to the missionaries the different articles which they had purloined from foreign ships when lying at anchor, requesting to have them restored to their rightful owners, resolving to keep them no longer.

In every part of the island the missionaries found small chapels which had been spontaneously erected by the natives, for private or social devotion, nearly seventy of which were in Tahiti alone. In other spots favourable for more public worship, spacious structures were formed, in which thousands of anxious hearers at a time assembled to listen to the word of God. In this almost miraculous manner the transforming influence of the Gospel extended from island to island, suppressing idolatry—softening cruelty—diffusing civilization, education, and knowledge—promoting peace—multiplying the comforts of social life—and preparing the soul once sunk to the lowest depths of degradation and misery for a blessed immortality. Several of these converted natives, some of whom were monsters of iniquity, became Christian teachers, and itinerants to other islands; and, after having suffered, in some instances, the greatest insults, and, in others, the risk of their lives, were.
honoured by the God of all grace and love in turning many an untutored savage "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." If these are not triumphs of Christianity, where shall we look for specimens?

Nor have the achievements of the Gospel in Southern Africa been less illustrative of the mighty power of God in taming the ferocious passions of the savage into the meekness of the lamb and the gentleness of the dove. A remarkable proof of that pleasing fact stands recorded in the character of Africaner, formerly a lawless predatory chief, who was the terror of the country to a wide extent, and the cause of considerable trouble to the government at the Cape; and for whose apprehension a large reward was offered. His history may be inferred from the following narrative.

"While engaged in an interesting conversation with Africaner," says Mr. Moffat, the excellent missionary, "the idea darted into my mind that he would do well to accompany me to Cape Town, and I at once made the proposal. The good man looked at me again and again, gravely asking whether I were in earnest, and seemed fain to ask if I were in my senses too, adding, with great fervour, 'I thought you loved me; and do you advise me to go to the government, to be hung up as a spectacle of public justice?' and putting his hand to his head, he asked, 'Do you not know that I am an outlaw, and that one thousand rix-dollars have been offered for this poor head?' These difficulties I endeavoured to remove, by assuring him that the results would be most satisfactory to himself, as well as to the governor of the Cape. Here Africaner exhibited his lively faith in the gracious promises of God, by replying, 'I shall deliberate, and commit (or, as he used the word according to the Dutch translation,) roll my way upon the Lord; I know he will not leave me.'

"During three days this subject was one of public discussion, and more than one came to me with grave
looks, asking if I had advised Africaner to go to the Cape. On the third day the point was decided, and we made preparations for our departure. The kindness of the people, and the tears which were shed when we parted from them, were deeply affecting.

“Arriving at Pella, (the place to which some of the people from Warm Bath had retired, when the latter was destroyed by Africaner,) we had a feast fit for heaven-born souls, and subjects to which the seraphim above might have tuned their golden lyres. Men met who had not seen each other since they had joined in mutual combat for each other’s woe. Warrior met with warrior, bearing in their hands the olive-branch, secure under the panoply of peace and love. They talked of Him who had subdued both without a sword or spear; and each bosom swelled with purest friendship, and exhibited another trophy destined to adorn the triumph of the Prince of peace, under whose banner each was promoting his blessed reign.

“Here we spent some pleasant days, while the subject of getting Africaner safely through the territories of the farmers to the Cape was the theme of much conversation. To some, the step seemed somewhat hazardous. Africaner and I had fully discussed the point before leaving the station, and I was confident of success. Often did I lift up my heart to Him in whose hands are the hearts of all men, that his presence might go with us. Some of the Dutch farmers on the borders of the colony congratulated me on returning alive, having often heard, as they said, that I had been long since murdered by Africaner. Much wonder was expressed at my narrow escape from such a monster of cruelty, the report having been spread, that Mr. Ebner had but just escaped with the skin of his teeth. While some would scarcely credit my identity, my testimony as to the entire reformation of Africaner’s character, and his conversion, was discarded as the effusion of a frenzied brain. It sometimes afforded no little entertainment to
Africaner and the Namaquas, to hear a farmer de-
nounce this supposed irreclaimable savage. There
were only a few, however, who were sceptical on this
subject.

"At one farm a novel scene exhibited the state of
feeling respecting Africaner and myself; and likewise
displayed the power of Divine grace under peculiar
circumstances. It was necessary, from the scarcity
of water, to call at such houses as lay in our road.
The farmer referred to was a good man, in the best
sense of the word, and he and his wife had both
shown me kindness on my way to Namaqualand.
On approaching the house, which was on an emi-
nence, I directed my men to take the wagon to the
valley below, while I walked toward the house.
When within a few yards, I addressed him in the
usual way, and stretching out my hand, expressed
my pleasure at seeing him again. He put his hand
behind him, and asked me, rather wildly, who I was.
I replied that I was Moffat, expressing my wonder
that he should have forgotten me. 'Moffat!' he
rejoined, in a faltering voice; 'it is your ghost!' and
moved some steps backward. 'I am no ghost.'
'Don't come near me!' he exclaimed, 'you have
been long murdered by Africaner.' 'But I am no
ghost,' I said, feeling my hands, as if to convince him
and myself too of my materiality; but his alarm
only increased. 'Everybody says you were mur-
dered, and a man told me he has seen your bones.'
And he continued to gaze at me, to the no small
astonishment of the good wife and children, who were
standing at the door, as also to that of my people,
who were looking on from the wagon below. At
length, he extended his trembling hand, saying,
'When did you rise from the dead?' As he feared
my presence would alarm his wife, we bent our steps
toward the wagon, and Africaner was the subject of
our conversation. I gave him, in a few words, my
views of his present character, saying, 'He is now
a truly good man.' To which he replied, 'I can
PROPHECY FULFILLED IN THE COUNTRY OF AFRI

believe almost anything you say, but that I cannot credit; there are seven wonders in the world, that would be the eighth.' I appealed to the displays of Divine grace in a Paul, a Manasseh, and referred to his own experience. He replied, 'These were another description of men, but that Africaner was one of the accursed sons of Ham,' enumerating some of the atrocities of which he had been guilty.

"By this time we were standing with Africaner at our feet, on whose countenance sat a smile, well knowing the prejudices of some of the farmers. The farmer closed the conversation by saying, with much earnestness, 'Well, if what you assert be true respecting that man, I have only one wish, and that is, to see him before I die; and when you return, as sure as the sun is over our heads, I will go with you to see him, though he killed my own uncle.' I was not before aware of this fact, and now felt some hesitation whether to discover to him the object of his wonder: but knowing the sincerity of the farmer and the goodness of his disposition, I said, 'This, then, is Africaner!' He started back, looking intensely at the man, as if he had just dropped from the clouds. 'Are you Africaner?' he exclaimed. He arose, doffed his old hat, and making a polite bow, answered, 'I am.' The farmer seemed thunderstruck; but when, by a few questions, he had assured himself of the fact, that the former bugbear of the border stood before him, now meek and lamblike in his whole deportment, he lifted up his eyes and exclaimed, 'O God, what a miracle of thy power! what cannot thy grace accomplish?' The kind farmer, and his no less hospitable wife, now abundantly supplied our wants; but we hastened our departure, lest the intelligence might get abroad that Africaner was with me, and bring unpleasant visitors.

"On arriving at Cape Town, I waited on his Excellency the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, who appeared to receive with considerable scepticism my testimony, that I had brought the far-famed Africaner
on a visit to his Excellency. The following day was appointed for an interview, when the chief was received by Lord Charles with great affability and kindness, and he expressed his pleasure at seeing thus before him one who had formerly been the scourge of the country, and the terror of the border colonists. His Excellency was evidently much struck with the result of missionary enterprise, the benefit of which he had sometimes doubted. I remembered, when I first arrived at Cape Town, the reply to my memorial for permission to proceed to my destination in Great Namaqualand was, that his Excellency had cogent reasons for not complying with my request; and I was obliged to remain eight months in the colony. Whatever he might think of his former views, his Excellency was now convinced that a most important point had been gained; and, as a testimony of his good feeling, he presented Africaner with an excellent wagon, value eighty pounds sterling.

"A short time previous to my visit to the Cape, a deputation from the London Missionary Society, consisting of the Rev. J. Campbell and Dr. Philip, arrived, for the purpose of examining the state of our African missions; and to them Africaner's visit was a subject of deep interest. It appeared to be one of the happiest moments of Mr. Campbell's life, to hold converse with the man, at whose very name, on his first visit to Namaqualand, he had trembled, but on whom, in answer to many prayers, he now looked as a brother beloved. Often while interpreting for Mr. C., in his inquiries, I have been deeply affected with the overflow of soul experienced by both, while rehearsing the scenes of by-gone days.

"Africaner's appearance in Cape Town excited considerable attention, as his name and exploits had been familiar to many of its inhabitants for more than twenty years. Many were struck with the unexpected mildness and gentleness of his demeanour, and others, with his piety and accurate knowledge of the Scriptures. His New Testament was an interesting
object of attention, it was so completely thumbed and worn by use. His answers to a number of questions put to him by the friends in Cape Town, and at a public meeting at the Paarl, exhibited his diligence as a student in the doctrines of the Gospel, especially when it is remembered that Africaner never saw a catechism in his life, but obtained all his knowledge on theological subjects from a careful perusal of the Scriptures, and the verbal instructions of the missionary."

Here are triumphs which no sophistry can invalidate, which no scepticism can deny. And the specimens of the power of the Gospel are equally striking in other sections of Christian enterprise; for what the religion of Christ has done in one spot, or upon one order of mind and character, it can effect to the widest extent.

Now contrast these heart-cheering scenes with the fruits of infidelity, which, alas! its abettors prefer to that economy of revelation which forms the basis and glory of the Gospel. The experiment has been tried for a nation to live without the saving and sanctifying influence of the Christian religion. During the French revolution, infidelity had an open field in which to prove the effect of its principles and its spirit. It had possession of the throne, the altar, the senate, the seat of justice, the army, the navy, the bulk of the population. To remove every obstacle to its progress, "the ordinances of religion were abolished, the decade was substituted for the sabbath, death was proclaimed to be an eternal sleep, the Bible was publicly burnt by the common executioner, reason was enthroned instead of God, and—horrible to tell—a prostitute was charioted through the streets, as a personification of their fictitious goddess! What, then, were the results of the experiment?—made, be it remembered, under the most favourable circumstances, not in a savage, illiterate, impoverished country, but in one the first for science, education, luxury, and refinement of that day,—one
just emerged from despotism, and exulting in its new-born liberty,—what were the results of the great experiment? Come, my brethren, and gaze on the millennium of infidelity, the Eden which she made, the tranquillity, the happiness, the social brotherhood which she produced! The guiltless king and queen, after undergoing fiendish indignities, were the first brought to the block; their murder was the prelude to murders untold, the Seine was literally crimsoned with blood; no age, nor sex, nor rank, was spared; rapine, proscription, assassination, rape, and massacre, raged unrestrictedly. One band of assassins, under the name of rulers, rapidly succeeded and butchered another; atrocities were perpetrated which cast New Zealand and the Caffreland into the shade; a wolfish ravening for blood, and a devilish delight in crime, such as the depraved human heart had never before developed, were displayed on every side; the whole nation reeled to and fro, like a stormy ocean; it was as though hell had been let loose and men transformed to fiends; Europe stood aghast, and the world was filled with horror at the scene. These were thy trophies, infidelity; these the imperishable memorials of thy power! Fearfully and faithfully has thy reign been designated, "THE REIGN OF TERROR!"

"Returning from the contemplation of the mischievous effects of infidelity on a more extended scale, let us advert to its more confined and private influence, under our own eyes. Our appeal shall be to experience. Is there, then, a father whose calamity it is to have a son who, having abandoned the faith of his childhood, has imbibed sceptical notions, and learned to sit in the seat of the scornful? We ask that father—Has unbelief improved your child? Is he more steady, more dutiful, more affectionate than before? Do you bless the day when he cast off the restraints of revelation, and became a disciple of Paine? May we not anticipate the father's reply? Or, is there a devoted wife, whose husband, once her
companion at the sanctuary, has been entangled by the scoffers at truth? We appeal to her,—Has your husband undergone a happy change since he adopted his novel opinions? Have you found him more faith-ful, more tender, more domestic? Is he a better father, a kinder neighbour, and a soberer man? Do you bless the day when he cast Christianity behind him, and bless the companions who led him to do so? What answer will that wife return? We have heard the testimony of more than one whom such a calamity had befallen, and little did it redound to the credit of infidelity. We have known of many persons whom it had transformed for the worse; never of one whom it had transformed for the better.

"For the sake of argument, let it be supposed that a full experiment of the darling schemes of modern infidels were to be made on our own immense popu-lation: let it be imagined that our sanctuaries were demolished; our ordinances of religion, social as well as public, suppressed; our ministers stripped of their functions, the Bible destroyed from amongst us, death believed to be an everlasting sleep, and every-thing eternal the fiction of priestcraft; let it be fur-ther supposed, that our prisons were pulled down, our soldiers disbanded, our police cashiered, all laws abrogated, and all authority laid aside, every man left, a law unto himself, to follow the dictates of his own mind, or obey the inclinations of his own heart—were such a state of things to be tried only for a single week, I ask any person, whether believer or unbeliever, would not the consequences be tremen-dous? Would you not wish yourself and your family amongst the fellest savages of the forest, rather than in civilized England?"—Extracted from a Lecture on Infidelity by the Rev. H. Stowell, M.A., of Manches-ter, published as a tract by the London Religious Tract Society, and—deserving of the widest circu-lation.

This is infidelity—the fruit of untutored reason—the consequence of an abandonment of Divine revelation.
Thus have we surveyed the genius and triumphs of Christianity, by examining its theology, its ethics, its influence, its diffusion; and by comparing it with other systems which have been opposed to it. By these representations we have witnessed the pleasing fulfilment of the prophecy in the text. The ancient church of Christ did arise, did shine; for the glory of the Lord rested upon her; whilst "Gentiles have come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising." Let us now conclude with the following reflections:

1. How much are those persons to be pitied who prefer the laxity, and risk the results of infidelity, rather than embrace the sublime representations, the luminous instructions, the soothing and sustaining consolations, the moral influence, the salutary discipline, and the immortal hopes of Christianity, so divinely authenticated, so accurately tested by men of the first class of intellect, who have welcomed it as among the noblest gifts of Heaven.

2. How thankful should we feel that God has given us a revelation "which is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," "to which we do well to take heed, as to a light that shineth in a dark place."

3. With what a determined zest should we embrace, profess, maintain, and exemplify the Gospel, which is calculated to produce, as we have seen, so many happy results on individuals, families, neighbourhoods, and nations, declaring "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

4. How readily should we support the laudable institutions which aim at the dissemination of Divine truth, at home and abroad! Bible societies, Missionary societies, Tract societies, Educational societies, and all other institutions of a similar description, are entitled to the liberal and cheerful patronage and aid of the Christian public. They are the
means which the great Lord of the church has appointed and sanctions for the promotion of his glory and the extension of his kingdom in the world.

5. Nor let us forget, that the achievements which Christianity has gained are an earnest of its future triumphs. As a system, it is unimpaired by use, uninjured by age, unaffected by the flight of time. It has all its original elasticity and adaptation. The promises which ensure its success have never been revoked. The blessing of the Lord has never been withdrawn. It is still the cause of Christ, "who has all power in heaven and on earth:" and thus whatever obstacles appear, whatever discouragements arise, whatever changes occur in the kingdoms of this world, the determination of the Most High is authoritative, unchangeable, and inciting: "My word shall not return unto me void, it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I have sent it."
LECTURE XV.

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND DISPERSION OF THE JEWS.

Luke xix. 41. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

When the sentence of death is passed on a criminal at the bar of his country, the scene is usually impressive. The solemn aspect of the judge; the style of the address; the breathless silence of the spectators; their sympathetic sighs, mingled with their falling tears; the haggard countenance and convulsive trepidation of the prisoner, invest the occasion with the most touching interest. But what a tribunal! what a sentence! what a spectacle are presented in the text! Here is a scene without a parallel, whether we refer to the dignity of the judge, the court of assize, the party arraigned, or to the punishment that was awarded. The presiding Judge was the Son of God. His court of justice,—Judea. His judgment-seat,—the Mount of Olives. The prisoner at the bar,—"Jerusalem, which had killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her." And the sentence—utter destruction. But when we listen to the tones of compassion with which the penalty was announced, and behold the tears with which it was bedewed, we see the tenderest pity blended with sovereign power, and the merciful Saviour in the just Judge, who feels no pleasure in consigning to merited punishment the incorrigible,
whom no overtures could soften, or forbearance subdue.

With the civil and religious privileges of the Hebrew nation you are familiar. God chose them as "a peculiar people;" made "an everlasting covenant with them to do them good;" adopted them as the ancient church of the Messiah; and honoured them as the medium of invaluable blessings to the world. On this basis Canaan, proverbial for its beauty and fruitfulness, was assigned them for a possession, which became the theatre of celestial manifestations and mercies, whilst instructions the most beneficial, blended with religious ordinances of Divine appointment, and exactly suited to their state, increased the amount of their national obligations. Thus adopted as the chosen people of God, their history became conspicuous, and we can easily account for the many significant appellations and warm congratulatory expressions which were applied to them. It was in the contemplation of these advantages that Moses said, in his parting address, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, in a waste howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." How tender the image! What so safe, so well guarded as "the apple of the eye!" "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." And at the conclusion of his discourse, thus touchingly delivered, the holy man, having reviewed the whole of their history, exclaimed, "Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like
unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

This was not the complimentary language of an adventurous leader, nor the poetic effusion of oriental fervour, merely incited by consanguinity and patriotism. It was the language of truth and justice. It was the incense of pious gratitude, the genuine glow of pure affection. It was founded on the incidents which had been hitherto witnessed in the history of this favoured people, the relation in which they stood to the Lord most high, his promises, and the occurrences that were foreseen by the prescience of prophecy. Nor was the inspired lawgiver misled in his sanguine calculations. In their own land; in Babylon; after their restoration from their captivity; and when subject to the Persians, the Macedonians, and the Romans, what proofs had they of Divine superintendence, notwithstanding their disobedience! what parental discipline! what unremitting watchfulness and care! what kind interpositions! what signs and wonders attested the privileged position in which they stood!

Their country was the ark of mercy amid the widespread deluge of pagan idolatry, and was honoured to become the school of the most important instructions; the temple of true religion; the birthplace and the cradle of Christianity. There the Son of God frequently appeared in the angelic form ages before his incarnation, "whose delights were with the sons of men." There celestial, ministering spirits, to accomplish some high commission, were often visible. There providential deliverances the most seasonable and remarkable were vouchsafed. In the Holy Land, Samuel and all the prophets received the gift of inspiration, taught the great truths of revelation, and uttered their predictions "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Aaron and his successors ministered in holy things as types of the great
High Priest of our profession. And David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Josiah, and Hezekiah reigned under the patronage and benediction of "the King of kings and Lords of lords." In that favoured land were the house of God, the ark of the covenant, the shechinah, the cherubims, the mercy-seat, and the cloud of glory, indicative of the special presence of the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth. And within the favoured precincts of Canaan, the Saviour of the world became incarnate, established his kingdom, and purchased redemption by his atoning blood; the Holy Spirit was granted from above; and the Gospel commenced its renovating career for the ultimate evangelization of the whole human race. This was Judea. These were the peculiar privileges of the people of Israel, "to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: whose were the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

Thus favoured, above all others, it was to be expected that the Jews would have been patterns of piety to the world. They were called, by way of distinction, the Lord's portion; his inheritance; his flock; his children;—epithets which implied peculiar advantages, and required a course of conduct harmonizing with the connexion in which they were placed by the adopting grace of God.

Here, we lament to say, the Hebrew nation as a body have been lamentably defective, and if our astonishment were not silenced by the recollection of our own unworthiness, we should be lost in amazement that the love of God should have fixed its regards on such a people, from whom it was distinctly foreseen that so small a portion of "the peaceable fruits of righteousness" would be received. We can only ascribe the choice to the infinite riches of sovereign and unmerited grace—to that grace which has so extensively abounded above and beyond the preva-
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lence of sin; which is "great unto the heavens and reacheth even unto the clouds;" and whose unmeasured latitude is "as far as the east is from the west." Never were a people more ungrateful and rebellious. Look at the character of their forefathers, the sons of Jacob, from whom they descended, and whose names they bore. Look at their own unbelief; their murmurings; their disobedience; their declensions. Think of their addictedness to idolatry, for which they were so frequently chastened; their turbulence; their rejection of the prophets whom God raised up at different periods to warn and admonish them; their incorrigibleness under Divine rebukes; their violation of the most solemn promises; their national pride; their prejudices, obduracy, and untowardness, notwithstanding the frequent oppression which they suffered from neighbouring nations as a punishment for their sins. Call to your recollection also, the destruction of their country and their temple by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; their seventy years' captivity; and the different vicissitudes through which they passed from the period of their restoration, till their final subjugation by the Romans, and you will see much to deplore in their spirit and conduct. That there were many happy exceptions, many "Israelites indeed," the devoted and exemplary servants of God, at every period of their history, although sometimes few in number, we have gladly stated on a former occasion; but taken as a nation, we regret to say that truth obliges us to describe them, according to the testimony of their own Scriptures, in no very favourable terms. May "the time past suffice them to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." May their conversion and restoration present an abundant harvest, as a recompense for their former sterility.

But of all the sins with which the Jewish people have been charged, the deepest, broadest, blackest blot upon their character, was their rejection of their long-promised Messiah, and of the Gospel of his...
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grace. That was unbelief of the clearest evidence; ingratitude amid the greatest mercy, rebellion against the most unparalleled love. That the incarnate Son of God, "who made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and appeared in the likeness of men," was of their race, and that their country was chosen above all others for the accomplishment of his great salvation, placed them in a position on the scale of nations, which laid them under lasting obligations, and demanded their most undissembled homage, their most unreserved subjection to his government. But notwithstanding the near relation in which they stood to the Redeemer, his presence with them, his instructions, his example, his ministry, and his miracles; although invited to drink of the first streams which issued from the fountain of mercy, and to partake of the first-fruits of the tree of life which grew in the midst of them; they no sooner saw the Messiah's lowly character, "whose kingdom was not of this world," than they rejected him with disdain. They blasphemed his Divinity, contemned his humanity, derided his condition, ascribed his performances to satanic agency, heaped upon him the grossest epithets, persecuted his followers, thirsted for his blood, and at length, by bribery and the aid of false witnesses, consigned the Lord of Glory to the ignominious death of a felon slave. Theirs was the unblushing guilt which said, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Theirs was the heinous sin that cried, "Crucify him, crucify him! away with him, away with him!" Theirs was the infatuated cry which invoked his blood upon themselves and their children. Theirs were the uplifted hands which nailed him to the cross, and the unsoftened hostility which derided his sufferings in the agonies of death. And though many an obdurate Jew who incurred this tremendous guilt became the trophy of converting grace in the early triumphs of Christianity, it is certain from the records of the Acts of the Apostles, that a considerable
number remained hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, "loved darkness rather than light," rejected the counsel of God against themselves, became virulent persecutors, and died in their sins.

It was in reference to these persons, laden with guilt, and to their posterity, who were likely to tread in their steps, that our Lord, in the foresight of the heavy calamities which would befall them, poured forth his pity, and bedewed with his tears the lamentation in the text. He had already accused them when he said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore, ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." And the Lord had also yearned over them when he exclaimed, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Matthew xxiii. 29—34.

In looking at their rejection of the Messiah, we
I cannot help asking where was their acquaintance with their Scriptures? Where was their patriotism, and their regard to the wants and woes of their fellow men? Jesus was a public Benefactor, as well as a Saviour. He cured bodily diseases the most inveterate without pecuniary recompense, frequently without solicitation. He also fed the hungry, instructed the ignorant, reformed the immoral by his converting grace, and freely offered the blessings of salvation. And yet they reviled him, and put him to death. Nor did the enmity of the Jewish mind pause and yield at the crucifixion. The phenomena which distinguished that event were appalling, when the sun was darkened, and the rocks were riven, and the temple veil was rent, but they braved its terrors. Thousands of their countrymen on the day of Pentecost, and subsequently, from place to place, and from period to period, became penitent, embraced the Gospel, and bowed to the sceptre of the Saviour's grace, but the unbelieving Jews included in the indictment and denunciation in the text remained incorrigible.

Evidences of the mighty power of God with his church multiplied around them in every variety of form, but they closed their eyes and stopped their ears against the truth. In vain did they witness the miraculous gift of tongues, so convincing to others, so palpable a fulfilment of their own prophetic writings. In vain did they behold the cure of the lame beggar at the gate of the temple—the deliverance of the apostles from prison—the healing of the diseased, both near and remote—and the liberation of demoniacs. Nor had the faith of the multitude who "brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least, the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them," (Acts v. 15,) the least effect on their unpenetrated obduracy. Dorcas, well known for her benevolence, was raised to life; the cripple at Lystra was cured; the Philippian jailer was converted; many of their own priests became "obedient to the
faith,” and “those who used curious arts came and confessed their deeds, and brought their books, and burned them before all men; and counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver,” (Acts xix. 18, 19;) but still the unbelieving Jews felt not the force of the most irrefragable evidence, but pursued the same course, “contradicting and blaspheming.” Witness their hostility at Thessalonica and Berea, their public insurrection against the apostle Paul at Jerusalem, and their frequent attempts upon his life.

It was in the foresight of this glaring enmity, which no evidence could enlighten, which no appeals either to the understanding or the heart could subdue, that the compassionate Saviour uttered the maledictory prophecy recorded in the text. He knew how near to overflowing was the measure of their national guilt. He saw the distant storm which would burst with unexampled destructiveness upon their country. And thus giving expression to the burden of his spirit, and the sorrows of his compassionate heart, he said, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate.”

It is a remarkable fact that Moses, in whose economy the unbelieving Jews sought refuge, foreboded their heinous guilt, and the heavy calamities which it would entail. And though he penned his cautionary strains fifteen hundred years previous to the Saviour’s advent, his predictions possess all the force and minuteness of history, instead of being a prophecy of the distant future; see Leviticus xxvi., and especially the following passage in Deuteronomy xxviii. 49, to the end: “The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed; which also shall not leave either
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corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedest throughout all thy land; and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee; so that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat; because he hath nothing left him in the siege and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her children which she shall bear; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and in the straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates."

"And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude, because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God. And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even
wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind; and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, thou shalt see it no more again; and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you."

This was one of the most alarming menaces that human lips ever uttered. It was the climax of the orator's address. It was well calculated to rivet the attention, and impress the memory and the heart of his numerous auditors. It was almost sure to seal the weighty instructions by which it was preceded. It was placed in a commanding position, like the warning beacon to guard the mariner against the perils of shipwreck. It was perpetuated from age to age, for the benefit of posterity, and is now referred to as a standard of appeal, as an ancient monument corroborative of the truth of prophecy.

In this most emphatic collection of alarming denunciations, to be fulfilled in the event of national disobedience, we see the nation by which this tremendous punishment was to be inflicted. They are described by their remoteness, and their warlike character, combining the elements of invincible courage, fierce determination, and vindictive severity. Such were the Romans. They are also represented by their assimilation to the eagle, the identical symbol which constituted the Roman standard; by their mode of attack, which was to be by a siege; and by the fearful consequences that were to result from the
invasion, under the horrible forms of famine, starvation, slaughter, banishment, slavery, and death. These were the prophetic threatenings of the Jewish lawgiver, by Divine direction, in the event of national apostasy, or as the consequence of rejecting the dispensation of mercy when proclaimed by the great prophet in the person of the Messiah.

Now if we compare these denunciations, after the lapse of fifteen centuries, with the predictions of Christ our Lord, in the foresight of the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans, as recorded by the evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we shall see not only the exactness with which the Saviour's language accorded with that of Moses, but also some additional particulars respecting the portentous signs which were to be the precursors of that tremendous catastrophe. We shall also witness the Saviour's advice to his followers, in the prospect of the imminent dangers to which they would be exposed.

There were to be "false Christs, and false prophets," convulsions in nature, the horrors of war, famines and pestilences, fearful sights in the heavens, bitter persecutions against the primitive Christians, apostates from the truth, and the universal spread of the Gospel—for the ark of mercy was still to float on these troubled waters, amid the fury of the storm.

The first part of the Saviour's prophecy respecting the deceivers who were to appear as "false Christs," and "false prophets," was verified shortly after his crucifixion, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, confirmed by the testimony of the Jewish historian Josephus. Thus we read of "Simon Magus, who bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he was some great one, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God," Acts viii. 9, 10. There was also an impostor of the name of Theudas, referred to by Gamaliel, who persuaded a multitude
to follow him into the wilderness, with their property, declaring himself a prophet, who was slain by the Romans, Acts v. 36. A few years subsequently, in the reign of Nero, according to the statements of Josephus, impostors appeared so frequently, that many were apprehended daily, and put to death. There was likewise a prophetic pretender in the person of an Egyptian alluded to by the centurion who apprehended the apostle Paul, supposing him to have been that deceiver, Acts xxi. 37. These were the false Christs and false prophets foretold by our Lord, who were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. There were to be "wars and rumours of wars." In confirmation of this prediction, Josephus, though not a Christian, nor even a friend to Christianity, but an impartial historian, who simply relates what he saw, informs us, that insurrections in the Lesser Asia, at that period, were frequent. In Mesopotamia a disturbance was occasioned by the indiscretion of two Jews, in which 50,000 of their countrymen perished. In the year 49, a tumult occurred, when 20,000 Jews lost their lives. At Cesarea, a contention arose between the Jews and Syrians, when several thousands fell, and the city was cleared of its Jewish inhabitants. At this blow the whole Jewish nation was exasperated, and burnt and plundered the neighbouring cities and villages of the Syrians and slaughtered numbers of the people; but, by a powerful retaliation on the part of the Syrians, the whole country was in arms, and many fell on both sides. At Scythopolis, at Askelon, at Ptolemais, in Tyre, in Gadara, at Damascus, at Alexandria, and elsewhere, wars and commotions between the Jews and the Gentiles but too fearfully fulfilled the predictions of Christ.

3. Our Lord foretold "famines, pestilences, and earthquakes." The former of these calamities is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and by ancient writers. Several pestilences followed at Babylon, Rome, and in other parts. And earthquakes
occurred at Laodicea, Campania, Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Rome, Hierapolis, Colosse, and Judea, according to the testimony of different authors.

4. **Persecutions** were to be inflicted on the primitive Christians, as another precursive sign of Jerusalem's destruction; and some who bore the Christian name were to become apostates and betrayers of their brethren. The book of Acts furnishes many affecting proofs of the correctness of this prediction, which is corroborated by ecclesiastical historians. If we turn to the two Epistles to Timothy, we see lamentable instances of apostasy from the truth. Thus in 1 Tim. i. 18—20, the apostle says, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." 2 Tim. iv. 10, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." 14—16, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Paul also, when enumerating his dangers and sufferings, speaks of his "perils among false brethren," 2 Cor. xi. 26.

5. But, notwithstanding the wars and convulsions in different countries; the earthquakes, famines, and pestilences "in divers places;" the violence of persecution, and the apostasy of the insincere, who "having no root, endured for a season, and in the time of temptation fell away," Jesus prophesied that his Gospel should extend far and wide. Nor could there have been a more decisive proof of its divinity and genuineness. If it had been a system
of human device, "a cunningly-devised fable," it would have been exterminated by the powerful opposition that assailed it, like "the wood, the hay, and the stubble" in the fire. But it extended and gathered strength, like the palm-tree, when most oppressed.

We learn from authentic sources that, during the forty years that intervened between the date of our Lord’s prediction in the text, and the calamities of the Jews, which he foretold, Christianity spread its influence and multiplied its triumphs in Idumea, Syria, and Mesopotamia. In Media, Parthia, and many parts of Asia Minor. In Egypt, Mauritania, Ethiopia, and other regions of Africa. In Greece and Italy. As far north as Scythia, and as far west as Spain and Britain. These were the predicted events which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews.

We shall now describe that tremendous visitation, as recorded by Josephus, who took an active part in the disastrous war.

Both Moses and the Lord Jesus foretold the mode of attack. It was to be by a siege. "Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side." They did so. In consequence of the strength of the city walls and fortifications, the efforts of the invaders were unsuccessful, without considerable delay. They, therefore, resolved, like the Medes and Persians in the subjugation of Babylon, to form a circumvallation, by surrounding it with a wall, to prevent the escape of the inhabitants, and to starve them to a surrender. From this moment, the Jews became their own destroyers, being given up to blindness of mind and hardness of heart. For, instead of making common cause against the enemy at their gates, their passions, like the fire of a volcano, burst forth into dissensions, recriminations, and factions, which terminated in intestine war. Thus while they suffered from the invaders without, their misery was much increased by the fiend-like
fury that raged within. In one night 8500 fell by mutual slaughter; and, in another, 13,000 were slain in the unnatural conflict. In their maddened hostility, they set fire to their provision-stores, which greatly increased their miseries; for having consumed their means of subsistence, starvation and death were inevitable. This was another prominent feature in the prophecy. And to such an extent did the calamity reach, that they satisfied the cravings of hunger by the leather of their accoutrements and sandals, and even by straw and the ordure of cattle. And, in one instance, a woman, of a distinguished family, killed her infant and dressed it for food, which was particularly foretold by Moses, in the passage we have quoted. The multitudes of the dead became also a scourge to the living. Unable to bury, or to remove them from the city, they shut them up in spacious buildings, but the decomposition of the bodies added the horrors of pestilence to the existing miseries of famine.

It was likewise declared by our Lord, that the temple, remarkable for its beauty, on which account it was compared to a mountain of marble glistening with gold, and celebrated for the prodigious magnitude of its stones, should be destroyed: that the city should be razed to the ground: and that the desolation should be so complete that one stone should not be left upon another. This exterminating malediction was literally accomplished. It was the particular wish of Titus, the Roman general, to spare the temple. But such was the maddened fury of the besieged and the besiegers, when their mutual hostility reached its climax, that they seemed to vie with each other in the dreadful work of destruction. All order was at an end. Fire and sword spread ruin and slaughter in every direction. The temple was burnt to ashes, with multitudes who had fled to it for refuge; and every other building in the city fell under a similar catastrophe. And, at length, so complete was the spoliation that the very foundations
of the guilty place were dug up, and a plough was drawn over the field of ruins, as a triumphant proof of the completeness of the desolation.

Thus fell Jerusalem, the once favoured city of the Lord of hosts, after upwards of a million of the guilty inhabitants had perished by famine, sword, pestilence, or fire. Thus sank to ashes the temple, long ago bereft of its glory, and desecrated as "a den of thieves."

Here let us pause and open our Bibles, that whilst we survey this wreck we may read the sure word of prophecy: "The virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. If I go forth unto the field, then behold the slain with the sword! And if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! Yea both the prophet and the priest go about into the land that they know not," Jeremiah xiv. 17, 18. And again, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high place of the forest," Micah iii. 12.

But a lamentable fate was to befall the survivors, with the exception of the primitive Christians. When foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, our Lord commanded his disciples to flee to the mountains as soon as they saw the approach of danger, promising that not a hair of their head should perish. That they would comply with this injunction is to be presumed from their allegiance to Christ their Lord. That they did not partake of the insurrectionary spirit of their turbulent countrymen, may be inferred from their character and from the persecutions they suffered from the disaffected; and that they did escape the general havoc is attested by history.

In enumerating the calamities which befell the Jews, it is stated that in addition to the vast multitudes who fell during the conflict, amounting to more than a million, nearly 100,000 were taken prisoners. Some were reserved by Titus, the conqueror, to
grace his triumph at Rome. Some were consigned to the public works which the Romans were constructing in Egypt, thus literally fulfilling the last clause in the prophecy of Moses already quoted, who declares, "The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt, and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies, and no man shall buy you." In corroboration of this fact it is stated, that "vast numbers of the captives were sent for sale into Egypt and other countries, where they were sold for the lowest pittance, and in some cases at the rate of thirty for a penny, for the meanest offices; and many thousands were left to perish from want, for the multitude was so great that purchasers could not be found for them at any price."—Comprehensive Bible. Dr. Gill.

Not a few of the captives were sacrificed as gladiators by wild beasts in the theatres of Rome. Multitudes were banished, or fled and perished with hunger. And so many were crucified in the view and near the walls of Jerusalem, that Josephus, who was an eyewitness of the scene, declares that there was not room for the crosses to stand beside each other, and at last there was not sufficient wood with which to make them; so fearfully was their prayer answered, when they demanded the Messiah's crucifixion, vociferating "His blood be on us and on our children." And to this day the people of the Jews, once so highly favoured, have been exiles from their own land, scattered among the nations as strangers and foreigners, without an ancestral home, without a temple or priesthood, or spiritual consolation.

And during their wide dispersion, our Lord declared that Jerusalem should be trodden down by the Gentiles. Nor could any event have been more distinctly foreseen or correctly stated. From the remote period of its destruction by the Romans, in the year 70, to the present day, Jerusalem has been under the iron footsteps of foreign rulers. It has been successively trodden down and spoiled by the Romans, the Saracens, the Franks, the Mamelukes,
and the Turks, to whom it is still in subjection. And what remains of it is inhabited by Turks, Arabs, and nominal Christians of the Armenian, Greek, and Romish churches, with a small number of Jews. The aged Israelites go thither to die among the tombs of their fathers, and the young to dwell in poverty and oppression, with the hope of seeing their country rise again to importance on the scale of nations. Thus has Jerusalem fallen. Her cities are overthrown, her country is laid waste, and her people scattered to the uttermost ends of the earth, as prophecy foretold, and as Jehovah's justice threatened.

Here we might close our series of Lectures, having traced the stream of prophecy in its several meanderings from Canaan to the land of Ammon, and Moab, and Edom, and Philistia, and Tyre; through Arabia to Egypt; and from thence to Assyria, and Babylon, and Persia, Greece, and Rome; but having, in the course of investigation, collected a few beautifully written paragraphs from popular authors, in reference to the Holy Land, either as the result of their personal researches, or as the fruit of their distant contemplations, we shall concentrate those extracts, as a supplementary Lecture on the present state and probable destiny of that interesting country.

In the meantime let us recollect that we have witnessed another impressive proof of the evil of sin; of the all-pervading knowledge, justice, power, and government of God; the certainty that human depravity is frequently detected and punished in the present life, as well as in a future world; that no external advantages or privileged descent can shelter evil-doers from the weight of Divine wrath; and that God is never at a loss for means to fulfil his threatenings as well as his promises.

And whilst we think of the Saviour's tears, which he shed upon the Mount of Olives when he wept over Jerusalem, let the repentant sinner, let the con-
trite backslider, take encouragement in their anxiety to obtain pardoning mercy. Jesus is still a compassionate Saviour; he waits to be gracious; he pleads for us in heaven; and in language most condescending and kind, he still invites us by his word, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And his promise has never been revoked, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." It is therefore undeniably evident, that "whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."
LECTURE XVI.

PRESENT STATE AND PROBABLE DESTINY OF THE HOLY LAND.

Lamentations i. 1. How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!

Amos ix. 14, 15. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them.

And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

We left Jerusalem a burning heap: her cities destroyed; the country a spoil to the horrors of war; and the inhabitants slain by the Roman sword or the ravages of famine, carried into captivity, or scattered by proscription. From that period the holy city, once the seat of Jehovah's presence, was desecrated by contemptuous pagans. On the mount of Sion, formerly occupied by the house of the Lord, a temple was erected to Jupiter, in the portico of which a sculptured swine was placed, by order of the emperor, as an object of derision to the vanquished Jews. And on the spot reported to have been the place of our Lord's sepulchre, a temple to Venus was reared by the hands of insulting idolaters. Even the venerable name of Jerusalem was blotted out, after it had existed two thousand years. And having been successively trodden down by the iron footsteps of the Romans, Persians, Arabians, Egyptians, and Ottoman Turks, it presents at this day an affecting monument of fallen greatness. No city, no country has passed through so many reverses. It is not wholly deserted. It is not an unvisited solitude, like the neighbouring land of Edom. It is not a silent
mausoleum, occupied only by the sleeping dust of the forgotten dead. A wretched population of Jews, Turks, and nominal Christians, with all the gaudy trappings of a degenerate church, inhabits it; but its glory is gone, like the beauty and vigour of youth, once rich, virtuous, and honourable, but now poor, fallen, decrepit, and deserted.

Still with all her guilt and poverty, Judea will never fail to present high attractions, and to interest the best feelings of the heart, for what she has been. Though, as our text intimates, she is now a poor widow, lonely, bereaved, and sad, we cannot forget her original importance, when "she was princess among the provinces, and great among the nations," when "her walls were salvation and her gates praise."

We cannot fail to recollect that she has seen better days; that our fathers ate of her bread and drank at her fountain, were cheered by her wine and milk, and were enlightened by her instructions; and that her fall has conduced to our elevation, as the tide ebbing in one part of the globe rises to enrich the other. Neither can we cease to remember the benefits which we have reaped, and still enjoy, from her patriarchs, her histories, her prophecies, her holy books, her religious rites, her vicissitudes, and especially from her Messiah. We can therefore never be indifferent to a country whence we have received so many blessings.

But though the local aspect of the country is changed by the vicissitudes through which it has passed, many of its principal features are unaltered: "The hills stand round about Jerusalem, as in the days of David and Solomon. The dew falls on Hermon, the cedars grow on Lebanon, and Kishon, that ancient river, draws its streams from Tabor, as in the times of old. The sea of Galilee still presents the same natural accompaniments: the fig-tree springs up by the way-side, the sycamore spreads its branches, and the vines and olives still climb the sides
of the mountains. The desolation which covers the cities of the plain is not less striking at the present hour, than when Moses with an inspired pen recorded the judgments of God. The swellings of Jordan are not less regular in their rise than when the Hebrews first approached its banks; and he who goes down from Jerusalem to Jericho still incurs the greatest hazard of falling among thieves. There is in fact in the scenery and manners of Palestine, a perpetuity that accords well with the everlasting import of its historical records, and which enables us to identify, with the utmost readiness, the local imagery of every great transaction."—Palestine.

It is this, among the reasons already assigned, that endears that land to the Christian traveller and the Christian reader. "The antiquities of other cities, however renowned for human genius, and which link the men of the present generation with the wise and the great who have long since mouldered into dust, are not to be compared with the antiquities of Palestine, with the garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, the place called Golgotha, and the holy hill of Zion. The former remind us only of the vanity of human greatness, and the weakness of human power, whilst the latter call to our recollection, the recovery of our race, the infinity of Divine mercy, the triumphs of Divine love, and the glories of futurity. In all the world there cannot be a spot more worthy of reverent regard, or of diligent investigation, than where Abraham bound and offered his son Isaac, where the Lord of hosts appeared between the cherubims, where prophets uttered their predictions, and apostles ministered in holy things; and where the Son of God became incarnate, delivered his instructions, wrought his miracles, instituted his holy Gospel, and laid down his life as a ransom. In every age this has been sufficient to attract all those who, like St. Paul, gloried only in the cross of Christ."—Dr. M'Caull.

Or to use the descriptive language of another able
There is a city whose case is quite peculiar. Captured, ravaged, burnt, razed to the foundation, dispeopled, carried captive, its departed citizens sold in slavery, and forbidden by severest penalties to visit their native seats again; though eighteen centuries have passed, and strangers still tread its hallowed soil, that city is still the magnet of many hearts, and awakens from time to time, pangs of as keen emotion as when its fall was recent. Ever and anon, and from all the winds of heaven Zion's exiled children came to visit her, and with eyes weeping sore, bewail her widowhood. No city was ever honoured thus. None else receives pilgrimages of affection from the fiftieth generation of its outcast people. None else, after centuries of dispersion, could at the first call gather beneath its wings the whole of its wide wandering family. None else has possessed a spell sufficient to keep in remotest regions, and in the face of the mightiest inducements, its people still distinct; and none but itself can now be repeopled with precisely the same race which left it nearly two thousand years ago. The reason of this anomaly must be sought, not in Jerusalem, but in the purposes of God.”—Hamilton.

Such is the deep and glowing interest which is felt by the scattered children of Israel in their fatherland. In that interest we fully participate, for the reasons repeatedly assigned, and by the recollection of the prominence and frequency with which the localities of that country meet the eye when we peruse the sacred volume, and occur to our recollection when expatiating on the blessings of that salvation which was to be proclaimed to all nations, “beginning at Jerusalem.” That the desolation of the Holy Land was repeatedly threatened by the prophets in the name of the Lord, and was literally accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, has been circumstantially witnessed in the eighth Lecture. But were those menaces to be confined to the captivity of the Jews, and the destruction of
Jerusalem by the Babylonians? Were they not also applicable to the scourge which was employed by the Romans? If the same causes produced the same effects in both cases, is it a misapplication of prophetic denunciations to infer, that the predictions which were fulfilled in the first calamity pointed with the same unerring accuracy to the second? We think not. In surveying, therefore, the present state of the once favoured land of Caanan, to which we think we are justified in appropriating the general threatenings of the prophets in the event of national disobedience, there are two passages which appear affectingly striking, although written in the present tense, so common with the inspired penman. Isaiah i. 7: "Your country is desolate: your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."

Call to your recollection the leading features of the last Lecture, and say, if any representation could have been more historically correct. The cottage thus depicted was a mere temporary hut formed of frail materials, as a shelter for the watchman whilst guarding the vineyard or garden, during the ripening of the fruit, after which it was deserted, having served the purpose for which it was erected. Thus, it was to be with Jerusalem, after all her magnificence and importance. She was to be forsaken, and left exposed to the fury of the storm, like the frail booth in the garden, or as a city besieged, pillaged, and ruined.

The prophet Isaiah's testimony, which he recorded under Divine direction, chap. vi. 11, is also singularly appropriate. Having been informed of the state of penal obduracy, in which the incorrigibly impenitent Jews were to be left, he humbly asked,
for how long a period this penalty was to remain. The following was the Lord's reply: "Until the cities be wasted, without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly destitute." This dreadful menace was literally fulfilled when the people of Israel were exterminated by the Romans, and no Jew was suffered to approach within sight of his paternal inheritance under the penalty of death. Dr. Keith also, who recently visited that stricken country, gives us the following affecting statement: "Cities there are without inhabitants and without claimants. Houses there are numbered by hundreds, and single localities without men, open to any casual inhabitant that may choose to enter them. Over a large portion of Israel's inheritance, the rights of property in houses, or in lands, are altogether unknown. The right of possession is never challenged, and need not be contested, where there are empty dwellings ready for occupation, and fertile plains that cry in vain for culture. The government (of the Turks), to whom alone all property belongs, has no power to protect it. And the cities and the land are without possessors, as if they pertained to a people that are no longer there. There is room for a million of human beings to form a new colony in the country beyond Jordan, which was formerly partitioned among the two and a half tribes of Israel. And while the wandering tribes that traverse the country and move incessantly from place to place, are sojourning in a land that is not theirs, and dwelling in tents, amid cities in which no man dwells, the wanderers (the people of the Jews) throughout the world, who can call no other region their own, are numbered by millions."—The Land of Israel.

To these statements we may add the testimony of another popular author who, a few years since, visited the Holy Land under peculiar advantages, which enabled him to form a correct estimate of the real state of that country. Of Jerusalem, once distinguished above all other cities, he says: "Not an
ancient tower or gate, or wall, or hardly even a stone remains. The foundations are not only broken up, but every fragment of which they were composed is swept away, and the spectator looks upon the bare rock with hardly a sprinkle of earth to point out her former gardens of pleasure, or groves of idolatrous devotion. And when we consider the palaces, and towers, and walls about Jerusalem, we are not more astonished at the style, and skill, and perseverance by which they were constructed, than shocked by the relentless and brutish hostility by which they were shattered and overthrown, and utterly removed from our sight. A few still remain on the sloping base of mount Lebanon. Watered from the pool of Siloam, the gardens of Gethsemane are still in a sort of ruined cultivation, the fences are broken down, and the olive trees decaying, as if the hand that dressed and fed them were withdrawn. The mount of Olives still retains a languishing verdure, and nourishes a few of those trees from which it derives its name; but all around about Jerusalem, the general aspect is blighted and barren. The grass is withered, the bare rock looks through the scanty sward, and the grain itself, like the staring progeny of famine, seems in doubt, whether to come to maturity, or die in the ear. The vine that was brought from Egypt is cut off from the midst of their land. The vineyards are wasted. The hedges are taken away, and the graves of the ancient dead are open and tenantless!

"'How has the gold become dim, and everything that was pleasant to the eye withdrawn! Jerusalem has heard the voice of David and Solomon—of prophets and apostles! and 'He who spake as never man spake' has taught in her synagogues and in her streets. Before her legislators, her poets, and her apostles, those of all other countries became dumb, and cast down their crowns, as unworthy to stand in their presence. Once, she was rich in every blessing, victorious over all her enemies, and resting in peace, with 'every man sitting under his own vine, and
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under his own fig-tree,' with none to disturb or to make him afraid. Jerusalem was the brightest of all the cities of the East, and fortified above all other towns—so strong that the Roman conqueror thereof, and the master of the whole world besides, exclaimed, on entering the city of David, and looking up at the towers which the Jews had abandoned, ‘Surely we have had God for our assistance in the war: for what could human hands have done, or human machines do, against these towers? It is no other than God who has expelled the Jews from their fortifications.’ Their temple was the richest in the whole world! Their religion was the purest. And their God was the ‘Lord of hosts!’ Never was there a people favoured like this people! But they set at nought the counsel of their God, trusted in their walls, and walked after the imagination of their own hearts. Their city was given up to the spoiler. The glory departed from Israel, and the sceptre from Judah. The day of vengeance arrived, and the rebellious sons of Jacob are ‘scattered and peeled,’ and driven under every wind of heaven, without a nation, or country to call their own, unamalgamated, persecuted, plundered, and reviled, like the ruins of a blighted tower, whose fragments remain to show the Power that smote it. What a tremendous lesson for the kings and people of the earth to learn wisdom, and, in the midst of their prosperity, to recognise the hand from which their comforts flow!”—Dr. Richardson.

The Holy Land is now, as you are aware, in possession of the Turks; but as Jerusalem is esteemed a holy city by Mohammedans as well as Jews and Christians, members of these respective bodies dwell there. The number of inhabitants has been computed at 11,000, in the following proportions: 4,500 Mohammedans; 3,500 Christians; and 3,000 Jews. But, as the population is constantly fluctuating, from the immense number of pilgrims who resort thither, it is not easy to state with accuracy its exact amount. The Christian population is divided into the Greek and
Roman communions, who have their churches and convents; and the Mohammedans their mosques, or houses of prayer. But the whole of the inhabitants, with few exceptions, are sunk in error and superstition, without an atom of the power of vital godliness. On Mount Zion, once occupied by the temple of the Lord, and filled with his glory, "whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord," there now stands a splendid Mohammedan mosque, built by the caliph Omar, upon an elevated platform of polished marble, in the midst of a spacious quadrangle, 1,489 feet by 995 in extent. At the southern extremity is another mosque, which was originally the church by which the Christians distinguished the site of the Jewish temple. These structures are deemed so sacred, that it would be death for a Christian to enter them, unless he embraced the Mohammedan religion.

"This sacred inclosure is the sunny spot of Moslem devotion. There is no sod like that which covers the ample area of its contents, and no mosque at all comparable to the Sackhara. Here the god of day pours his choicest rays in a flood of light, that, streaming all round upon the marble pavement, mingles its softened tints in the verdant turf, and leaves nothing to compare with, or desire beyond it. It seems as if the glory of the temple still dwelt upon the mosque, and the glory of Solomon still covered the site of the temple. On the same spot, and under the same sun, the memory conjures up a thousand delightful remembrances, and contemplates in review, the glorious house; the dedication and prayer of the wisest of kings, spreading forth his hands in the midst of his people; the fire descending upon the burnt offering and the sacrifice, and the glory of the Lord filling the house, with the people bowing down with their faces to the pavement, and worshipping and praising the 'Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.' The spectator forgets that it is a
house of foreign devotion, and feels as if the radiant opalescence of its light and inviting ray was sent forth to the heart of every returning Israelite, to this ancient centre of prayer.”—Dr. Richardson.

The Jews inhabit their own locality in Jerusalem, called the Jewish quarter, the appearance of which is very poor. They have a number of synagogues; and near the walls which surround the hallowed spot formerly occupied by the temple, a place for lamentation. But even for this privilege of assembling to weep where their fathers ruled, they are obliged to pay the Turks who tyrannize over them. “The Christian population is not in a more intelligent and elevated state than their Jewish neighbours. They live in such irreconcilable hatred to each other, especially the Greeks and Roman Catholics, that even their children never associate, and their dissensions not unfrequently break out into violent hostilities. Missionaries of the English and American societies labour there, and have already seen the fruit of their exertions in the conversion of some of the Israelites in Jerusalem, and many more, we trust, will be induced to ‘believe to the saving of the soul.’”—Jerusalem as it was, and as it is.

To that desire we readily respond, adopting the ancient prayer of the psalmist: “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.” “The appearance of a poor Jew in Jerusalem,” says Dr. Richardson, “has in it something peculiarly affecting. The heart of this wonderful people, in whatever clime they roam, still turns to it as the city of their promised rest. They take pleasure in her ruins, and would lick the very dust for her sake. Jerusalem is the centre around which the exiled sons of Judah build in airy dreams the mansions of their future greatness. In whatever part of the world he may live, the heart’s desire of a Jew, when gathered to his fathers, is, to be buried in Jerusalem. Thither they return from
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Spain and Portugal, from Egypt and Barbary, and other countries among which they have been scattered. And when, after all their longings, and their struggles up the steeps of life, we see them poor, and blind, and wretched in the streets of their once happy Zion—he must have a cold heart who can remain untouched by their sufferings, without uttering a prayer that the Day-star of Bethlehem may arise in their hearts.”

Did space permit, we might now proceed from Jerusalem, and traverse the whole extent of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. We might ascend its principal mountains, perambulate its valleys, skirt its rivers, and inspect its numerous ruins. In each of these localities, we might open our Bible, recall the incidents which occurred on the different spots we occupy, and present to our imagination the presence of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the incarnate Son of God. We might visit Bethlehem, and Bethany, and Bethphage. We might go to Nazareth, Cana, Bethsaida, and Nain. We might stand and gaze on Mount Carmel, and Lebanon, and Tabor, and on the river Jordan, the lake of Galilee, and the Dead Sea—places which furnish themes for pious contemplation and valuable lessons of instruction. For, though the cities and towns once celebrated in Scripture history are no more, the mountains, the valleys, the rivers, and the localities are the same. But though we can only name these spots, there are two or three others of surpassing interest at which we may pause, and indulge in the eloquent reflections of those who have visited them. These are, Nazareth, in which our Lord passed his early years; the sea of Tiberias, or lake of Galilee, as it is often called, which was the scene of so many of the Saviour’s visits, miracles, and discourses; and Gethsemane, in which he agonized under the pressure of mental sorrow and human guilt, the penalty of which he undertook to bear in order to its expiation.
On approaching Nazareth, says M. Lamartine, "I felt entirely different impressions from those with which my journey to the Holy Land had hitherto inspired me. I had never before the soul and the heart as on reaching the land of prodigies,—the land of Jehovah and of Christ,—the land all the designations of which had been thousands of times lisped by my childish lips,—all the ideas of which had first given colour to my young and tender imagination! I felt within me, as if something till now cold and dead was warmed and reanimated. I prayed to God in silence, I gave thanks to him that I was permitted to live long enough to cast my eyes upon the sanctuary of the Holy Land. It seemed to me also, as I scaled the last hills which separated me from Nazareth, that I was going to ponder at its mysterious source on that great and fruitful religion, which 2000 years ago wrought its channel of mercy in the universe, and has refreshed so many generations with its life-bestowing waters. There was its source, in the hollow of that rock on which I trode. That hill, the last steps of which I was clearing, had borne on its sides the Saviour—the life, the light, and the hope of the world. It was there, that the Son of God had taken birth among men, to draw them by his word and example from the ocean of error and corruption in which the human race was immersed. If I considered that matter only as a philosopher, it was the starting point of the greatest event which has ever agitated the moral and political world. It was there that the most exalted of men had arisen from obscurity. There was his cradle. There the theatre of his actions, and his affecting sermons. From thence had flowed Christianity from an obscure spring, but which has bathed with its unexhausted water the past, the present, and the future. If, therefore, I had been incredulous as to the divinity of this occurrence, still would my mind have been powerfully overawed, and I should have laid bare my head and bowed my face before that Almighty Power,
which had made such things spring from so weak a commencement. While I made these reflections, I perceived at my feet, at the end of the valley, the white houses of Nazareth. God alone knew what was then passing in my heart, but by a spontaneous and involuntary movement I cast myself at my horse’s feet, on my knees, in the dust, upon the path we were descending. I remained in that position some minutes, absorbed in silent contemplation, in which all the ideas of my sceptical and Christian life rushed so confusedly into my head, that it was impossible to discriminate them. These words only escaped my lips: ‘And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ I uttered them with the sublime, deep, and grateful sentiment which they embody, and which this spot so naturally inspires. Then bowing my head reverently to the ground, which had borne the Christ, I kissed it in silence, and moistened with tears of repentance, love, and hope, that soil which has seen so many shed.”—Lamartine.

From this interesting spot, in which the incarnate Saviour passed his early years, we proceed to the lake of Genesareth, which is variously termed, the lake of Galilee, the sea of Tiberias, and the sea of Cinerroth, from the adjacent country, or the principal towns upon its shores. It was on the margin of that lake that Jesus called Andrew and Peter, James and John, to the knowledge of the truth, commanded them to follow him, and promised that by the preaching of the Gospel they should become “fishers of men.” There the Lord walked upon the waters in the fourth watch of the night; stilled the tempest; granted his disciples a miraculous draught of fishes; prepared the repast for their entertainment; and proposed the thrice-repeated question to Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” an inquiry which he still urges on each of us. And it was on these shores that our Lord preached, and denounced the impenitence of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum,
threatening them with destruction for their impenitence and unbelief. How fully his maledictions have been executed may be seen by the following testimony of an American gentleman, who not long since visited that interesting locality. "Our Saviour and his disciples travelled this road, he looked on these scenes, and here he wrought his miracles, and preached the tidings of salvation to the cities on its banks. But where are those cities now? Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, which were exalted to heaven? The whole lake (extending eighteen miles in length,) is now before me, supplied by the river Jordan, and running into the Dead Sea; but there is no city—no habitation of man, all is still and quiet as the grave! Not a boat was upon the lake once so busy. I was the only living being on its shores! I almost felt myself alone in the world. I passed the night and slept on its banks in an adjoining chamber. For more than an hour my eyes were fixed on its calm and silvery surface, and the last sounds that broke upon my ears were the murmurs of the waters."—Stephens.

But of all the places of touching interest in the Holy Land, now "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," none supplies more affecting reminiscences, than the mount of Olives, on which the Saviour wept and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem; and the garden of Gethsemane at its base, in which the Lord, as "a man of sorrows," suffered the most convulsive agony, even to the shedding of great drops of blood. The following reflections have been presented by Lamartine, which, though somewhat overwrought by a poetic imagination, like his other sketches, may be excused, by a recollection of the peculiar localities which he occupied, and the excitableness of his national temperament. "After descending from Jordan across the brook Cedron, to the garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the mount of Olives," he says, "I seated myself on the aged and widely extended roots of one of the most lonely and
aged of these trees, which are said to have been standing ever since the days of Christ, and which bear the marks of great antiquity. Its branches intercepted the view of the walls of Jerusalem, and its large trunk concealed me from the observation of the Arab shepherds, who were feeding their flocks on the slopes of the mount of Olives. Not a murmur arose from the waterless brook Kedron—not a leaf shook upon the tree above me! I closed my eyes, and carried back my thoughts to that night, the evening of the redemption of the human race, in which the Divine Messiah drained the cup, the dregs of that cup of agony, before he received death from the cruel hands of man, and I asked my part of that salvation, which he had borne to the world at so high a price.

"I represented to myself the flood of anguish which must have poured upon the heart of the Son of God, when he contemplated at one view all the miseries, the darknesses, the woes, the vanities, the wickednesses, in the lot of mortals, and when he wished to remove that load of crimes and griefs under which all humanity, bowed down and groaning, passes into the narrow vale of tears,—when he found, that not even a ray of truth and consolation could be imparted to mankind, but at the price of his life,—when, recoiling with affright from the shadow of death which he already felt upon him, and at which his human nature shuddered, he prayed, that if it were possible, the cup might pass from him.

"I arose, and gazed in admiration at this spot, divinely chosen for the most agonizing scene in the passion of the Saviour. It was a valley, narrow, entombed, and deeply sunk, closed on the north by the gloomy and bare ridges which bore the tombs of the kings of Judah, and overshadowed on the west by the sombre and colossal walls of the city of iniquity. At a few paces distant, a black and naked rock stood out, like a promontory from the foot of the mountain, and suspended over the Kedron and the valley, which
bore some ancient tombs of kings and patriarchs, and appeared like the bridge of death over the vale of tears, whilst the garden of Gethsemane lay beneath, hollowed out, like a nest of sorrow, in the narrowest and nakedest depth of that valley.

"The man of opprobrium, the man of grief, might hide himself there, among the trees of that solitary garden, and the rocks of the adjacent torrent, under the triple shadow of the city, the mountain, and the night! Could the Saviour have chosen a more fitting place for his tears? Could he have moistened with his bloody sweat a land more ploughed with misery, more naked with sadness, more drowned with lamentation? From the bottom of this gloomy narrow vale, whose naked sides are sheathed with black and white, as if they were the emblem of death, rises an immense and broad hill. No tree can fix its roots there, nor can even the humble moss hang its slender filaments, so that nothing is now presented to the eye but a surface of dry and withered earth—like heaps of ashes."

These are specimensof the present forlorn and deserted state of the holy land, once proverbial for its fruitfulness and prosperity. Judea now sits a solitary widow in her gloomiest attire, clothed with sackcloth, covered with ashes, as if resolved to perpetuate, by her poverty and tears, the sad remembrance of her Messiah's rejection, sufferings, and crucifixion.

But where are her children, whose forefathers, by their guilt, entailed this heavy penalty of ruin and expatriation on themselves and their posterity? They are scattered through the kingdoms of the Gentiles. They are wanderers over the face of the earth, derided, persecuted, oppressed, unprotected. And this has been their lot for nearly eighteen hundred years. And yet they live. The bush, though burning, has never been consumed. Other nations once rich, populous, and potent, have been exterminated so entirely, that nothing is known of them but their names;
whereas the Jews, though scattered far and wide like the down of the thistle by the fury of the hurricane, still survive every storm, are numerous, and retain their identity, their language, their rites, and their features, as "a peculiar people."

And for what purpose has the protecting shield of Jehovah’s providence been thrown over this scattered, afflicted nation, who are "chastened, but not killed, cast down, but not destroyed?" Let us appeal to the testimony of prophecy, in which their singular preservation, conversion, and restoration to their forfeited inheritance seem to be promised as clearly as language could explain the purposes of the God of all grace. Jeremiah xxxi. 27: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict, so will I watch over them, to build and to plant, saith the Lord. Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; but this shall be the covenant that I shall make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The language of Hosea, chap. iii. 4, is of the same import. "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king and without a prince, and
without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." The apostle Paul entered fully into the believing expectation of Israel’s conversion, Romans, chap. xi., in which, after having expatiated upon the severment of unbelieving Jews from their Messiah, and their land, concludes with this cheering announcement: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Similar language occurs in 2 Cor. iii. 15, 16. The same gracious intentions to be productive of the same results, are recorded in Ezekiel xxxix. 27, 29; xxxvii. 21—24; Hosea ii. 20.

Thus converted from their long-existing blindness, enmity, and depravity, thus made "to pass under the rod, and brought into the bonds of the everlasting covenant," the next step in their national resurrection from "dry bones to an exceeding great army," vivified by the heavenly breath of the Spirit of the Lord, seems to be, their restoration to their own land. Several prophetic promises appear to sanction that conclusion. Jer. xxxiii. 7—9: "And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them, and they
shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all
the prosperity that I procure unto it."

The particulars of the prosperity thus promised
to Jerusalem and Judea are stated in the following
terms: Ezekiel xxxvi. 28: "Ye shall dwell in the
land that I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be my
people and I will be your God. And I will also save
you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for
the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon
you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and
the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more
reproach of famine among the heathen." Verse 35,
"And they shall say, This land that was desolate is
become like the garden of Eden." Verse 38, "As
the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn
feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks
of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord."
To the same purport is Ezekiel xxviii. 24—26: "And
there shall be no more a pricking brier to the house
of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round
about them, that despised them. And they shall
dwell safely therein, and shall build houses and plant
vineyards: yea, they shall dwell with confidence
when I have executed judgments upon all those that
despise them round about them: and they shall
know that I am the Lord their God."

We might also appeal to the following passages as
additional proofs of Israel's conversion and restaura-
tion, Joel ii. 25—27; chap. iii. 20; Amos ix. 11;
Zechariah viii. 20; and chap. xiv. 20; Jeremiah
xxxiii. 10—14.

In the investigation of these promises, it is evi-
dent that they present the olive-branch to God's
ancient people. But have they been fulfilled? If so,
they must have had their accomplishment in the
era that intervened between the cessation of the
Babylonian captivity, and the destruction of Jerusa-
lem by the Romans; for ever since that period, the
Jews have been "scattered and peeled." But where,
during that space, shall we find the bright pages in
their history which these enunciations lead us to anticipate? At what date did they enjoy the unparalleled prosperity, and exhibit the universal piety here depicted, when no enemy disturbed them, and all nations respected and admired them? We look for it in vain, either during their connexion with the Persians, or the Macedonians, or when under their own Maccabean rulers. We must, therefore, calculate on the future—for in vain do we summon the reminiscences of the past—and we are encouraged to do so. Better days are in reserve for the Holy Land. Brighter prospects await her scattered children. Thus stands the promise: "Whereas thou hast been forsaken, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders, but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation, I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

We have thus finished the interesting circuit of fulfilled prophecy, which we marked out for our investigations, as verified in the destruction of ancient nations, so amply confirmed by the diversified testimony of oriental travellers—in the vicissitudes of the Jews, so fully attested by sacred and profane history, and by actual observation—in the advent and character of the Messiah, in whose person, mission, and mediatorial performances so many prophecies centred—and in the genius and triumphs of Christianity, so luminously depicted by the pencil, so distinctly foreseen by the prescient eye of prophecy. Can we have a more convincing proof of the Divine authenticity of the Holy Scriptures? For in tracing the movement to the mainspring, is it not natural to ask, Who invested the prophets with that
mental perception by which they were enabled, with so much exactness, to penetrate the distant future? What omniscient teacher communicated those magnificent revelations, in all their latitude, variety, and momentous importance, to short-sighted man, whose native perceptions are so limited by the narrow confines of the passing moment, that he knows not what a day may bring forth? The answer is incontrovertible: "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." The information which embraced so wide a scope, and grasped so many portentous or propitious events, in different countries and at different periods near and remote, could have been derived alone from "the Lord of all power and might," with whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

On this point, therefore, the whole question respecting the truth of prophecy may be balanced—here is a collection of sublime predictions, recorded in legible characters, though in symbolic forms, by different writers, in different ages, on subjects of the greatest magnitude, and in a style of surpassing beauty and force. If these predictions fail, their authors were either deceived by the influence of an ill-directed imagination, or were deceivers. But if their prophetic enunciations, so numerous, so diversified, come to pass, are we not brought to the irresistible conclusion, that "this work is of God, and we cannot overthrow it?"

That question has been amply discussed, and is now fully before us, with the various forms of evidence, which the most sceptical can hardly fail to receive as a satisfactory reply. Our mode of entertaining the question has been, not by the ingenuity of subtle argumentation, but by a simple appeal to facts. If these fail to convince the gainsayer, "he would not be persuaded though one were to rise from the dead." But let me cherish the sanguine hope that they are sufficient, and that those persons who have been wrought upon by infidel sentiments,
so unscriptural, untenable, and dangerous, are open to conviction; that they relent; that they are aware of the direful consequences which they risk, and that they are ready and willing to seek that "joy and peace in believing," which the great Redeemer died to procure, and the Gospel of his grace so affectionately proclaims. Then will they happily prove that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." Nor let me omit once more to caution young persons, most earnestly, against the delusions of error, however fascinating the language, however veiled the form in which it may be presented. The least deviation from "the truth as it is in Jesus," may prove ruinous to the soul in time and through the countless ages of eternity.

"None sends his arrow to the mark in view,
Whose hand is feeble, or his aim untrue;
For though, ere yet the shaft is on the wing,
Or when it first forsakes the elastic string;
It err but little from the intended line,
It falls at last far wide of its design:
So he who seeks a mansion in the sky
Must watch his purpose with a stedfast eye;
That prize belongs to none but the sincere,
The least obliquity is fatal here."

My dear young friends, guard against this obliquity. Avoid the society of dangerous associates. Dread the poisonous contact of erroneous books. Beware that your faith is never shaken, nor your love to the Bible intimidated, by the sceptical railing that is sharpened by wit. And pray that you may never be beguiled by the example, or swayed by the influence of superiors in station, who make light of Divine revelation. And as they are the most safe whose hearts are imbued with love to Christ, let it be your ceaseless prayer that he may be "the guide of your youth, the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever."

And finally, as the honour of religion is so insep-
rably blended with the active and passive graces of
the Christian character, let us not forget the indis-
penisible necessity of acting in accordance with the
divinity, purity, and requirements of that system of
revealed religion which we profess to revere and love,
as the avowed servants of Christ. Woe to us if we
become a stumbling-block to the inquiring, the con-
fiding, the sceptical, and discerning; if by any dere-
liction of principle, we "cause the way of truth to
be evil spoken of." For, though Christianity is im-
mutably the same, whether its professors exemplify
or disgrace it, that fact is seldom entertained by
those who reject the system of Divine revelation.
Honoured, therefore, as "the epistles of Christ,
known and read of all men," let it be our fervent
desire, our constant study, our perpetual aim, in
humble dependance on the grace and Spirit of God,
to be "sincere and without offence until the coming
of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus whilst we act in
character, and cherish a benevolent concern for the
welfare of our fellow-men, and the extension of the
Redeemer's kingdom, the aspect of prophecy, exci-
ting the spirit of Christian love and zeal, will con-
strain us to exclaim, "Blessed be the Lord God, the
God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and
blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the
whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and
Amen."
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