SACRED HISTORY,

FROM THE

CREATION OF THE WORLD TO THE DESTRUCTION
OF JERUSALEM.

For the Use of Schools and Families.

WITH

QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINATION AT THE END OF EACH CHAPTER.

EDITED BY HENRY WHITE,
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PREFACE.

In an age when the value of education is so highly appreciated, and when educational volumes have been so greatly multiplied and improved, the importance of Sacred History in the instruction of the young has been generally recognised. It furnishes indeed the key to all other history, by illustrating the designs of Providence in the movements of kingdoms, and by connecting earth with heaven, and time with eternity. The recognition of God as the great Ruler of the nations, and Man as the heir of a life to come—principles so distinctly taught by the sacred record—are thus made available for the right understanding of secular history, and the elucidation of those great political changes that are otherwise of little meaning or value.

Such has been the purpose kept anxiously in view in the following Epitome. The work also, while chiefly designed for Academies and private Schools, has been arranged to suit the purposes of domestic tuition, and for the perusal of the young in general, to whom every kind of history should be made as useful as it is attractive. With this brief explanation, the volume is submitted to the rising generation, and to those by whom their minds are formed and their studies directed.

EDINBURGH, May 1851.
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SACRED HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD TO THE FALL OF MAN.

Creation of Angels—Their Fall—Creation of the World—Of Adam and Eve—Their Temptation and Fall—Consequences of their Fall—The Mercy of their Sentence—The Promised Deliverance.

A. M. 1. B. C. 4004.

1. INTRODUCTION.—At the very commencement of Sacred History, our thoughts are thrown back upon that previous eternity when time and space had no existence, and when there was nothing but God. Angels were then called into being; and we are taught that before our world was formed they dwelt in the brightness of their Creator, and rejoiced in his bounty. And then, there was war in heaven. Among a large portion of these beings created so holy and so happy, sin had entered; and being no longer fitted for their high estate, they were banished from that pure heaven which they defiled, into the darkness and misery which their fall had merited. These great events, which occurred before this little world of yesterday existed, are unfolded to us in Revelation, briefly indeed and obscurely, in compassion to our feeble intellects that cannot comprehend ideas so spiritual and vast, but at the same time so distinctly, as to instruct and warn us. They are the threshold of Sacred History, by which we must enter, if we would understand aright the admission of sin into the world, and the perverse character of fallen man; and they are the interpreters of
those important doctrines which Revelation subsequently unfolds, and in which we have such interests at stake.

2. CREATION.—After these events, it pleased the Creator to summon time from eternity, and the world from nothingness; and here it is that Sacred History properly commences. It begins with, “Let there be light!” The different processes of that act of creation are described by Moses with a simplicity that constitutes the perfection of grandeur. At each successive stage the voice of a king was heard; and at the summons, the element or object named rose into being, and took its appointed place. Six times that voice was heard; and during the six days or periods of creation, light arose at the call, a firmament spanned the earth, the sea and land were separated, the soil was clothed with herbage, and fruit, and every kind of vegetation; the sun, and moon, and stars appeared; the sea was peopled with fishes, and the air with birds; the earth stored with its variety of living creatures, and finally, Man created. This last act, as related by the sacred historian, peculiarly demands our notice. During five days of the process, a simple “Let it be” had sufficed. But on the sixth, when man was to be created, for whom this world was to be nothing more than a dwelling-place, a different process was adopted, to mark the superior importance of the deed. “God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” The manner also of man’s formation was different from all that had preceded; for instead of merely calling him from non-existence, like the other living creatures, we are told, that “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”

3. ADAM AND EVE.—Such was the origin of Adam, the last, as well as the most important of the six days’ work of creation. Being formed in the image of God, he was the perfection of his kind, intellectually, morally, and physically; free from sin and feebleness, and exempt from pain and death. Although the wide world was his inheri-
TO THE FALL OF MAN.

stance, a home was also provided for him, even the garden of Eden, where the divine bounty made to grow "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food," while his easy task was only "to dress it, and to keep it." By way of regal investiture also, God brought all the birds and beasts to Adam, that he might give them names, which he did—thus giving proof of an intuitive wisdom that was commensurate with his other high endowments. Still, however, there was a blank in creation, for Adam was alone: not one of all these inferior creatures whom he had named was fitted to be his companion, while God himself declared, that it was "not good that the man should be alone." Loneliness and happiness are thus incompatible even in paradise itself: they can only be combined in Him who is infinite, and has need of nothing. But with God, to declare a want was also to provide a remedy. Adam was thrown into a deep sleep, a rib was extracted from his side, and God having fashioned it into a woman, brought her before the man. His exulting exclamation was, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh!" He saw, that by this second self, the loneliness of Eden would be dispelled. They were wedded; and God himself who gave her, pronounced the nuptial benediction.

4. The Fall.—As a state so happy could only be based upon perfect holiness, manifested by complete obedience, a pledge of this obedience was prescribed to the pair by their Creator. Of all that grew in the garden they might freely eat, except of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that grew in the midst of the garden: this they were not to taste, nor even to touch, for if they did so, they should assuredly die. But this was not all. If they sinned, what else could they bring forth but sin? If they sickened and died, the children born of them must sicken and die also. They would thus, by inevitable consequence, diffuse guilt and suffering over the earth as long as their progeny endued, even to the end of time. So strong was the motive given for their obedience, so slight, apparently, the temptation to fall. And yet they fell, even as the angels, still nobler creatures than themselves, had previously fallen. It was also by the chief of these fallen but superior intelli-
gences that the temptation was to be presented. Satan, bent upon marring the works of the Almighty, and involving his favourite creatures in his own misery and guilt, stole into the garden, and selected the woman as the weaker victim of his guile. He approached her in the lithe and unsuspected form of a serpent, and after leading her into conversation upon the forbidden tree, he assured her that the menaced penalty was a delusion; and that if she and her husband ventured to pluck and eat, instead of dying, they should become as gods, and know both good and evil. It was only his old temptation adapted to present circumstances, and in either case, exciting the creature to rise above his proper sphere, and be independent of the Creator. Instead of closing her ears, and turning away, Eve listened, paused, and argued; but she was no match in argument for him who had seduced the host of heaven. She yielded, and plucked, and ate. There needed now no serpent to assail the stronger intellect of Adam, for she who was bone of his bones would be a more effectual tempter; and having sinned, she was eager, in the spirit of him who had perverted her, to obtain participators in her crime. She therefore persuaded her husband and prevailed, so that she gave him of the tree, and he also ate. And then, indeed, the promise of the deceiver was fulfilled, for their eyes were opened to know good and evil; but it was as devils, not as gods: they knew evil for they had committed it, and good because they had renounced it. The first effect of their crime, was to make them see that they were naked, and to blush at the discovery, for hitherto there had been no sin in Eden, and therefore no shame; and they instantly covered and disfigured that image of God in which they were created, by clothing themselves with fig-leaves. Their next step was to equivocate with God himself, who descended to judge and punish. On being summoned from their hiding-place and questioned, Adam laid the blame upon his wife, and his wife upon the serpent. The shame, the selfishness, and hypocrisy of this first act of human guilt, have continued to characterize all earthly sin; so that every creature who trespasses, only seeks a lie to hide, or an apology to justify it, nay, even some party on whom to entail the penalty.
5. Effects of the Fall.—In every case, divine purity is opposed to sin, and engaged to punish it, for were it otherwise, holiness would be holiness no longer. On this account, God ejected from heaven the angels who rebelled, beautiful and bright though they were, and doomed them to everlasting anguish. Man must therefore undergo a similar ejectment from paradise, and become a wanderer upon the face of the earth. But this was not all. The ground was accursed on account of his crime; so that instead of bringing forth fruits and flowers spontaneously, it was to yield thorns and thistles, and only give him bread by toil, and in the sweat of his brow. As for the woman who had been the first to transgress, and who led her husband into crime, she was no longer to be his equal but his servant, and to bring forth children in sorrow and pain. And even when they had endured and surmounted all these penalties, they were to suffer anguish and sickness, only to be relieved by death at last, when they should be resolved into their kindred dust. And yet all this justice, apparently so stern, was pervaded throughout with mercy. Eden could no longer be a happy home for them, nor endless life a desirable boon, for both would only have been filled with bitter remembrances and unavailing regrets. Adam and his sons were to make war upon the thorns and thistles; but by this struggle they were to learn resistance to evil, as well as to clothe the soil with abundance and beauty. Even by the curse of the woman also, her domestic happiness was to be enhanced, and her maternal affections purified. But what should await them after death, when all this had been suffered and enjoyed? Were they to be consigned to the endless punishment of the fallen angels whose guilt they had imitated? Such would have been the case according to the requirements of divine justice, but for the remedy that had been already provided, in anticipation of their fall. And that remedy—they were unfitted to learn it at present, sullen as they were, and striving to conceal their crime even from the Omniscient. It was therefore intimated under the form of a threat, and it constituted the first part of the denunciation; it was addressed also, not to them, but to the serpent. Enmity was thenceforth to exist between it and
the woman, and her seed was to bruise its head, but to have his heel bruised in the conflict. That adversary who had so fatally tempted them, even Satan himself in the reptile’s form, was yet to be conquered and crushed, although not without struggle and suffering. Here was the promise of Him who, in the fulness of time, should become the son of woman, that he might deliver and redeem.

It is thus we are taught of the entrance of sin into the world, and the way in which the world was to be delivered. Without these two principles, Sacred History would have little value or meaning; and therefore they are carefully to be kept in mind, and applied, during the course of the narrative. As we go onwards we have, on the one hand, the effects of the fall, illustrated in the perversity and sinfulness of human action; and on the other, the manner in which the whole course of action was overruled by the Almighty for man’s recovery. It is the history of the world lost and restored.

EXERCISES.

1. What beings were created before Man? What caused their fall? What was their punishment? How is their history recorded in Scripture? What do we learn from it?

2. With what process does Sacred History commence? How many processes during the six days of Creation? What were they? What was the last? How did it differ from the others?

3. In what condition was man created? Where was he placed? What was still the defect of his condition? Who was created to supply it? How was Eve created?

4. What were the terms of man’s obedience? What the consequences of breaking them? Through whose temptation did our first parents fall? How was their temptation like that of the fallen angels? What were the effects of their fall? What was their conduct on detection?

5. What was Adam’s punishment for his trespass? What was Eve’s? How did it descend to their posterity? How was it lightened? By whom was it finally to be cured? What are the two great principles of Sacred History?
CHAPTER II.

FROM THE FALL OF MAN TO THE DISPERSION AT BABEL.

Cain and Abel—Corruption of Society—Noah—The Flood—The World partitioned and repopulated—Babel—Fresh Corruption of Society.

A.M. 1 TO A.M. 1770.

1. CAIN AND ABEL.—No children were born to our first parents before the Fall, making it probable that their continuance in innocence had been but brief. Indeed, the character of Cain, their first-born, showed that he had been conceived in sin, as well as brought forth in iniquity. After some time, Abel was born also; and as their inheritance was one of toil, according to the divine denunciation, the elder became a husbandman, and the younger a shepherd. In the narrative that follows in sacred writ, we have sufficient evidence, that even after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, God condescended to commune with them, and instruct them; for they practised the rite of sacrifice, by which they were taught to anticipate the future coming of the Son of Man, and avail themselves by faith of his bloody expiation. But even the observance of this holy rite was soon defiled with human guilt. On one occasion, Abel offered a sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock, according to the divine appointment, while Cain presented nothing more than a thank-offering of fruits. It is not unlikely that he thus expressed his unbelief, or even contempt, of the doctrine of the Atonement, and was the earliest of infidels as well as murderers. His offering was rejected, while that of his brother was honoured by divine acceptance; but this, instead of warning, only inflamed him with envy. Even when God also vouchsafed to remonstrate with him, his stubbornness continued, and at last he crowned his guilt by murdering his righteous brother. ‘Challenged by the Almighty for this fearful crime, he attempted to deny it; and on being convicted and denounced, instead of repenting, he only showed the most hard-hearted selfishness.
He complained of nothing but the severity of his punishment, and only feared that some one would slay him in requital; and when he was assured that this fear was groundless, he migrated to a distant region, and built a city, as if the world was his only dwelling-place and hope.

2. The Flood.—Another son was born to our first parents, called Seth, from whom, as well as from Cain, descended a numerous progeny. In this way, the infant world began to be peopled from two large families. A very different character separated these two races; for while the children of Cain were distinguished by their inventions in the arts and even the luxuries of life, those of Seth appear to have been of simple manners, and pure devout worship. But the two races intermarried, and the piety of the one was swallowed up in the profanity of the other. And then were born of that union giants, men of renown, showing that kingdoms grew, and wars originated from that unadvised union. And to what crime, the fruit of his fall, must Adam have been a witness, during the nine hundred and thirty years that he lived upon earth! This seems to have been the average standard of the term of human life before the Deluge; and from such a long existence, we may judge how rapidly the earth was peopled, and how greatly men increased in wisdom, skill, and refinement. But crimes multiplied and guilt increased in still greater proportion, so that at last the Holy One could endure it no longer, and he resolved to accomplish the work of purification by nothing short of a general destruction. The earth was to be submerged by a deluge in which the whole human race was to perish, except the righteous Noah and his family, who were to be preserved, to become the parents of a new world. Being forewarned of God, and instructed how to escape the coming ruin, Noah constructed an immense ark or ship, in which himself and those who belonged to him, as well as specimens of every class of bird and beast, were to be preserved; and during the hundred and twenty years that elapsed before the Flood, he preached repentance, and announced the coming danger. But neither his exhortations, nor the busy stir around the mountain-like ark as it slowly rose cubit by cubit, could wake them to alarm and reformation. The last stroke of the ham-
mer on the timber edifice sounded the knell of an impenitent world. The birds and beasts were collected and housed, Noah and his wife, his three sons and their partners, in all eight persons, entered the ark, where the Lord "shut them in" for safety, after which, the rains descended, and the fountains of the great deep were broken. During forty days, these upper and nether torrents continued, until the mountains were covered, and all flesh died. Nothing was visible but a world of water, and the ark, like a solitary speck, floating upon its surface.

3. The Dispersion.—When the earth was dried, Noah and his family descended from Mount Ararat, upon the summit of which the ark rested; and God who had preserved, came to bless, comfort, and instruct them. And yet, as in the family of Adam, sin began quickly to manifest itself; and Ham, the second son of Noah, now more than a hundred years old, committed a crime that called down upon himself and his posterity a father's righteous curse. Such an event betokened but too surely the characteristics by which the new races of mankind would be distinguished. As the world was repopulated by the descendants of the three sons of Noah, we have a copious account in Scripture of the sources of different nations, which, from the change of names, and obscurity of early history, has given rise to much controversy and conjecture. It is sufficient here to state, however, that from Shem were descended the Asiatic nations, and especially the Jewish people, from whom the Hope of the world was to be born. From Japhet, the "isles of the Gentiles" were to be peopled, an expression, by which Europe in general was designated. As for Ham, the nations of Africa, and part of India, were to be derived from him, and also the Canaanites, with whom the Jewish history is closely connected. The idea of a dispersion over the earth, for the purpose of planting it with communities and nations, appears to have been highly distasteful to Noah's descendants; and that they might be able to dwell together as one people, they resolved to build a city, and a tower "whose top should reach to heaven." For the whole world in all ages to come, there was to be but one metropolis, of which themselves should be the founders and builders.
To work therefore they went upon the plains of Shinar, a level district fitted for their purpose, and abounding with clay for the making of bricks, as well as bitumen for cement. But God, who had otherwise decreed, soon interrupted their toil by such a division of their common language that cooperation among them was at an end. Family became unintelligible to family, and tribe to tribe, for already they spoke those different dialects that were afterwards to be amplified into languages by their descendants. Aply therefore was the place, which they were compelled to abandon, called Babel, which means, Confusion. The city thus commenced was afterwards finished under the well-known name of Babylon; and the remains of a vast building that still exist are supposed to be the ruins of the tower.

4. Life shortened.—In this way the world was divided into nations and tongues. It is also to be observed, that the progress of society was no more to be determined, as before the Flood, by two or three long-lived generations, but by a rapid succession of race after race, each of whom was to enter into the labours and advance the improvements of its predecessors. Noah, who was six hundred years old when the Flood came, lived three hundred years after, and this last period became, for a time, the standard of human life. The early postdiluvians could thus enjoy, for about six hundred years, the instructions of men who had conversed with Noah and his sons, and who could tell to their children what they had learned from the fathers of the new world, concerning the events of the old, and the dealings of God with men. When we come to the period of the patriarchs, a time when such traditionary instruction was less needed, the term of life had become considerably shortened, so that Jacob appeared a very old man at the age of a hundred and thirty. But when we arrive at the period of David, we find that it had diminished to the brief span of threescore years and ten, and that all beyond was nothing but labour and sorrow, even as in the present day.

5. Progress of Corruption and Idolatry.—Although Noah, by the appointment of God himself, had assigned to the races of his three sons their respective portions of the earth, this distribution was soon disturbed by the usual
agencies of cupidity and ambition. The tribe that coveted a better portion than had fallen to their lot, invaded that of their neighbours; and he who wished to be a hero or a king, endeavoured to accomplish his aim by deeds of slaughter and aggression. Thus, although to Ham and his descendants the more distant parts of Africa were assigned, yet the race of Canaan his son took possession of Palestine, which rightfully belonged to Shem. In the same way, Nimrod his grandson, instead of departing with his tribe to Africa at the dispersion of Babel, availed himself of the ascendency he had acquired as a mighty hunter, to found an empire upon the city itself, after he had driven out Ashur, to whom the district belonged. It was thus that the sinful strifes of families, and the feuds of tribes, were prevalent at an early period, and were afterwards expanded into great national wars.

It was a natural consequence that communities so irreligious should also become idolatrous, for man cannot wholly be without religion. If he finds the true creed too strict for his evil practices, he corrupts it into a superstition; and when he forsakes the living God, he must have an idol in his room. In this way the pure and primitive faith which Noah bequeathed to his descendants was soon found to be at variance with the growing iniquity, and because they “did not like to retain God in their thoughts,” they first forsook, and afterwards forgot him. Thus idolatry arose, not from human helplessness or ignorance, but from human perversity. The progress, too, of this idolatry kept pace with the growth of crime. For at first it appeared in the form of superstitious observances, and a lax morality engrafted upon divine truth. Afterwards, the sun, moon, and stars were worshipped, as the fittest representatives and symbols of Him who created them, and finally, as gods themselves. And soon afterwards, when the world became impatient that every trace of the true God should disappear, they selected some founder of an empire, or inventor of a useful art, whom after death they enthroned, and worshipped as a god. All these stages of idolatry we more or less discover among the different states of society, before the last of the early patriarchs had closed his career.
EXERCISES.

1. Who were the first of Adam's family? What were their offices? What did the rite of sacrifice teach? Why was Cain's offering rejected? What was the consequence of this rejection? How did he behave before his divine Judge? What became of him?

2. Into what families was the world at first divided? What was their character? What was the progress of society? With what punishment was the world to be visited? How was it to be repeopled? What was the effect of Noah's warnings?

3. How was the world divided among Noah's sons? What plan was adopted to avoid dispersion? How was this plan frustrated?

4. What was the standard of human life after the Flood? What means of instruction did the earliest races possess? By what progress did the term of life diminish?

5. How was Noah's partition of the earth violated? How by the posterity of Ham? And by Nimrod? How did idolatry commence? What was its first appearance? What its second? And its third?

CHAPTER III.

FROM THE CALL OF ABRAHAM TO THE DEATH OF ISAAC.

Abraham's Call—Settles with Lot in Canaan—Birth of Isaac—Trial of Abraham's Faith—Death and Burial of Sarah—Death of Abraham—Isaac's Family—Jacob's Fraud—His Flight—Death of Isaac.

A. M. 2083 TO A. M. 2288.

1. ABRAHAM'S CALL.—The warning of the Flood, the teaching of Noah, and the recollections of sacred tradition having been thus tried, and found insufficient for human perversity, God mercifully resolved to select a chosen people, to whom he would reveal himself with greater distinctness and impressiveness, and by whom his law and worship should be retained in the midst of universal idolatry. But who was to be the father and founder of this honoured people? The divine election was made in the tent of a shepherd chief, named Terah, a descendant of Shem, who dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees (now the town of Urfa) beyond the river Euphrates. Three sons were born to Terah; and to the youngest of these, called Abram, now sixty years old, the divine command came to arise, and leave his father's tents
and his native country, and go to a land that would afterwards be pointed out, with the promise that he should become a great nation, and that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This blessing to the world at large, which was to spring from Abram, intimated that from him the promised Deliverer should descend, by whom the serpent's head was to be crushed, and the world redeemed. It was necessary, however, first of all, that he should turn his back upon the idols of his father's dwelling, and go forth an uncertain wanderer, trusting wholly and implicitly in God. In this way he was to become the father of the faithful, and the pattern of all that should afterwards tread in his footsteps. He obeyed the call without hesitation, and at last settled in Canaan, the land of promise, which God himself indicated, and was accompanied by Lot his brother, their families, and their flocks, herds, and servants. It was one of those primitive emigrations out of which a great kingdom was to originate. In Canaan, under the divine blessing upon his obedience, he became a wealthy and powerful shepherd-sovereign, and more than a match for the petty kings by whom he was surrounded. On one occasion, four of these made war upon five, whom they defeated, and took Lot, who dwelt among them, prisoner, with all his cattle and possessions. Abram, on learning this, armed his retainers, gave chase to the victors, and by a bold night-attack put them to the rout, recovering both his brother and the spoil.

2. Ishmael and Isaac.—But notwithstanding his prosperity and power, Abram soon found that he stood alone. He was surrounded by communities so depraved, that upon four of their principal cities the Lord rained fire and brimstone from heaven until they were destroyed. The divine promise that he should become a great nation was yet unfulfilled, and Sarai his wife was already so old as to make the prospect of offspring hopeless. But still the promise was continued, with the assurance that his posterity after four centuries should possess the country in which he now dwelt, from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. Impatient to realize this promise in his own way, Abram, by the counsel of his wife, took one of her handmaids, an Egyptian
woman, as his concubine, who bore to him a son named Ishmael. But though Ishmael was to be the founder of a great and invincible people, even the Arabs, it was not from him that the promised blessing of the nations was to descend, but from a child that should be born to Abram of Sarai herself. In pledge of this, the Lord changed the Patriarch's name from Abram, which means a mighty father, into Abraham, or Father of a great multitude, while that of Sarai (my princess) was changed into Sarah (eminent princess). At length, when all appeared utterly past hope, a son was born to them, whom they called Isaac, or Laughter, because Sarah had laughed incredulously when she was assured that in her old age she should become a mother.

3. Abraham's Trial.—When Isaac was about twenty years old, the faith of Abraham was to be tried and proved to the uttermost. He was commanded by the Lord to take the young man, his son, whom he so tenderly loved, to Moriah, and there offer him up as a burnt offering, upon a certain mountain that would be pointed out to him. Abraham knew that the voice was from God, and therefore he hastened to obey. He rose early in the morning, and commenced his journey, accompanied by Isaac; and although it occupied three days, he persevered, reached the appointed spot, built an altar, laid upon it his beloved son, and raised the sacrificial knife to strike. But here the hand of providence interposed. A voice from heaven ordered him to hold, and his eyes were directed to a ram entangled in a thicket, which he killed instead of Isaac. It is worthy of notice that on this very mountain the great sacrifice of the Son of God was afterwards offered by which the world was redeemed; and Isaac, by his obedience, as he lay stretched on the altar, was the type of his blessed descendant. The faith of Abraham, that had thus endured to the last, was so acceptable, that God repeated the promises he had formerly made, and confirmed them by an oath. His offspring was to be as numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands on the seashore, and in them all nations were to be blessed.

4. Death of Sarah and Abraham.—After this event, Sarah died at the age of a hundred and twenty-seven years.
TO THE DEATH OF ISAAC. 23

She had accompanied her husband in his wanderings, and shared his trials; and, in addition to these, she had been exposed to danger at the hands of the kings of Egypt and Gerar, on account of her beauty, as well as disquieted by the dread of the rivalry which her son might encounter from the fierce Ishmael, whom, with his mother, she caused to be banished into the wilderness. On the death of Sarah, Abraham, still a stranger in a land that was the promised inheritance of his race, purchased the cave of Machpelah as a place of sepulture. The chiefs of the district, who regarded him as a mighty prince, sought to procure his favour by offering the cavern and its field as a gift; but as his acceptance would have been a pledge of amity with a people whom his descendants were to supplant, he shunned the proffered alliance, and secured the property by full payment. The cave became the burying-place of his family, and reminded them that the land in which it was situated was their proper country and heritage. The same solicitude to shun an alliance with a people doomed to destruction, made him anxious that his son Isaac should contract no marriage among the daughters of the land, but with one of his own kindred. He therefore sent his servant, Eleazer, to Haran near Chaldea, to select for his son a wife from the family of his brother Nahor. The mission and its result give a striking picture of the pastoral state of society at that early period. It was successful, for Rebecca, the daughter of Nahor, consented to depart with the messenger, and become the wife of one who, although her cousin, was also an utter stranger. After this, Abraham again married, and became the father of six sons, whom he richly endowed before his death, and who became the founders of powerful tribes. But to Isaac, whom he still regarded as his child of promise, he bequeathed the chief part of his property. He died at the age of a hundred and seventy-five, his whole life showing how justly he had earned the title of "Father of the faithful."

5. ESAU AND JACOB.—Little is told us of the life of Isaac, who seems to have been a man of contemplation rather than action, and who, to the pastoral life which his father had followed, added the practice of agriculture. He also re-
paired the wells which Abraham had constructed,—an important process in those days, by which waste or unoccupied land became the property of him who supplied it with the means of irrigation and pasturage; and the Philistines of the country, who understood this right of possession, had not only stopped them up, but endeavoured to hinder the servants of Isaac from repairing them. He had two sons, Esau and Jacob, born at one birth, of whom Esau, the first, and therefore considered as the head of the Abrahamic race, on attaining manhood, became a bold and active hunter, and the favourite of his peaceful father, perhaps from that law of contrast which so often regulates the strongest attachments; while Jacob, who was addicted to domestic life and pastoral pursuits, was the favourite of his mother. Thus, there was a divided family in the home of Isaac, and the younger son, aided by his mother, was already plotting to supplant the elder. This spirit soon broke out into action. One day Esau, returning from hunting weary and faint, longed for a mess of pottage which his brother had prepared, but Jacob, finding that he had now the advantage, demanded the transfer of Esau’s birthright as the price. Esau yielded, as if the claims of hunger were of more importance than the highest of spiritual blessings, and “sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.” For this price he consented that all the blessings which God had entailed by solemn covenant to the line of Abraham, should descend to the posterity of his younger brother, instead of his own. This selfish act of Jacob was followed in after-years by one still more flagitious. When Isaac was old, and his eyes so dim that he could not see, he ordered Esau, his brave and best beloved son, to go into the field and kill some venison, and make of it a savoury dish, that he might eat, and bless him before he died. This patriarchal blessing would have entitled him to all the privileges of the first-born, notwithstanding the fraudulent deed that had preceded. But his mother, overhearing this injunction, instructed her favourite to obtain the blessing by fraud, even as he had obtained the birthright by selfishness. Disguised in Esau’s attire, and with his hands and neck covered with the skins of the young kids of the goats which he had just dressed like a dish of venison, that
he might the more effectually counterfeit his shaggy athletic brother, Jacob came before his blind father, assured him that he was in very truth Esau, his first-born, and submitted his hair-covered hands and neck to the touch of the suspicious patriarch. Isaac, deceived by these tokens, pronounced the blessing that made Jacob the heir of the Abrahamic covenant, and the lord of his brethren. Detection of the fraud soon followed on the return of Esau from the field, and Jacob was obliged to flee for his life, as his offended brother had resolved to slay him. But before he departed, Isaac, who had by this time recognised him as the true heir of the promises, repeated and confirmed the blessing he had given him, and dismissed him in peace.

6. Jacob.—Although Jacob, in obtaining both birthright and blessing, had only procured what the Almighty had designed for him, yet the criminal way in which these had been won were now to be visited with fitting punishment. Obliged to flee from his father's house, he, the heir of its honours and abundance, crossed the Jordan with nothing but his staff, to obtain the subsistence of a menial; a deceiver, he was obliged to endure for years the deception of his employer. His mother was also punished for her share in the crime, for she never more beheld the son for whom she had so deeply sinned. Jacob repaired to Mesopotamia, to Laban, his mother's brother, with whom he served seven years as a shepherd, to obtain the hand of Rachel, the younger daughter of the family, but had Leah her elder sister, for whom he cared not, imposed upon him; after which he was obliged to toil seven years more that he might also win the true object of his affections—for in those days, even good men had forgotten that God formed only one woman for the first man in paradise, and made them "one flesh;" and on account of this forgetfulness they would have more than one wife. After a long period of servitude, which was imbittered by the avarice of Laban, Jacob became rich in cattle, and longed to return to his father; but to do this he was obliged to depart as he had come—in the character of a fugitive. Laban pursued him in his flight with the purpose of doing him harm, or at least of bringing him back by force; but God so overruled the hard-hearted man, that
he was obliged to part with his son-in-law in peace. But when Jacob had recrossed the Jordan with his two wives, his children, and numerous flocks and herds, a still greater danger menaced him; for he learned that Esau, now the chief of a powerful tribe inhabiting Mount Seir, was advancing to meet him with a train of four hundred armed men. Here also the divine goodness interposed, so that the two brothers met, not in hostility, but in generous fraternal affection. Esau, who was also called Edom, returned to his mountain fastnesses after this interview, and became, as his father had predicted, the founder of a powerful nation called the Edomites, or Idumeans, long subject to the yoke of the stronger race of Jacob, whose name was changed into Israel, but who, when the appointed time arrived, broke loose from their dominion. It is enough to mention, that this brotherly reconciliation continued to the end, and they both mourned over the grave of their father, who died when he was a hundred and eighty years old.

EXERCISES.

1. What was the divine purpose in selecting a chosen people? From whom were they to descend? Whither did Abraham repair? How did he succeed in Canaan?

2. What was the character of Abraham’s neighbours? What was the promise given of a son?—and of his descendants? How did Abraham seek to realize it? Who was the son of promise? Why was he called Isaac?

3. What was Abraham’s trial? Where was Isaac to be sacrificed? How was the sacrifice prevented? How was Abraham’s faith rewarded?

4. What had been the trials of Sarah? Where was she buried? Why did Abraham refuse the place as a gift? Whence was a wife to be selected for Isaac? What is Abraham’s title?

5. What was Isaac’s character? And occupation? What was the character of his sons? How did Jacob obtain the birthright? And the blessing?

6. How was Jacob punished for his fraud? And his mother? What were the wages of his servitude? What were the dangers of his departure? What the dangers of his return? What people descended from Esau?
CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE DEATH OF ISAAC TO THE DEATH OF JOSEPH.

Slaughter of the Shechemites—Joseph's Dreams—He arrives in Egypt—Is unjustly imprisoned—Interprets the Dreams of the Butler and Baker—And of Pharaoh—Is made Governor of Egypt—His Trial of his Brethren—Jacob and his Family are settled in Egypt—Death of Jacob—Death of Joseph.

A.M. 2288 TO A.M. 2369.

1. SLAUGHTER OF THE SHECHEMITES.—The punishment of Jacob's unrighteous deceit did not end when his brother was reconciled to him; on the contrary, his crime became a characteristic in his family, by which his life was imbittered until nearly its close. When he returned to the entrance of the promised land, and settled there, he was the father of eleven sons, and one daughter called Dinah. The latter having captivated the profligate affections of Shechem, the young prince of Shalem, was dishonoured by him, in consequence of which her brothers resolved, in the spirit of eastern revenge, to inflict a deadly retribution upon her seducer. To effect this, they acted smoothly, and pretended to give ear to the overtures of Hamor, king of Shechem, for an alliance between his son and their sister, and between the two tribes at large, only stipulating that the men of Shechem should submit to be circumcised like themselves, so that they might become one community. The proposal was eagerly accepted, for Jacob, like his father and grandfather, was a powerful prince, whose friendship was of the utmost importance. When the Shechemites had been thus treacherously put off their guard, Simeon and Levi, two of the sons of Jacob, at the head of their armed attendants burst into the town, and put all its inhabitants to the sword.

2. JOSEPH'S DREAMS.—A deception if possible still more atrocious succeeded. At the command of God, Jacob entered into Canaan, and during this journey, which was uninterrupted by the allies of Hamor and his son, the fear of
God having fallen upon them, his beloved wife, Rachel, died, after giving birth to Benjamin, his twelfth and last son. On settling at his appointed destination, the malignity of Jacob’s family broke forth against Joseph, the elder of the two sons of Rachel, and who, of the whole family, was so much the favourite of his father, that he clothed him in a coat of many colours, the mantle of princely distinction. Their envy at this preference was aggravated by another circumstance. In those days of unwritten revelation, God spoke to his people by dreams, and inspired the spirit of interpretation. Joseph dreamed that as they were all binding sheaves at the harvest, the sheaves of his brothers rose, and bowed themselves to his. The interpretation was so obvious, that his brothers indignantly exclaimed, “Shalt thou indeed reign over us?” Another dream followed, as if to confirm the former; and it was, that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars did obeisance to him. His astonished father said on this occasion, “Shall I, and thy mother, and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?” His brothers went off in a rage to Shechem, to attend their flocks, and treasure up vengeance against him who was pointed out as their future master. The opportunity soon arrived. Joseph, now a stripling seventeen years old, was sent by his anxious father to Shechem, to see how it fared with his brothers. As soon as he appeared in the distance, conspicuous by his many-coloured garment, they exclaimed derisively, “Behold this dreamer cometh!” and forthwith resolved to murder him. They then relented so far as to cast him into a deep pit, that there he might perish with hunger; and afterwards, combining avarice with cruelty, they sold him as a slave to a troop of Midianitish merchants who were passing by on their way to Egypt. And how account to their father for his absence? They took Joseph’s princely coat of which they had stripped him, dipped it in the blood of a young kid, and presented it to Jacob, declaring they had found it, and asking whether it was not Joseph’s garment? The old man knew it at once, as they had wished, and exclaimed, “An evil beast hath devoured him!” and to all their attempts to comfort him, replied, “I will go down into the grave to my son mourning.” Thus was his own craft
practised by his children upon himself, and with such delusive semblances as those by which he had beguiled Isaac his father.

3. JOSEPH IN EGYPT.—In the meantime Joseph was carried down to Egypt, and purchased by Potiphar, the captain of the king’s guard. With his new master the Hebrew youth so ingratiated himself, that Potiphar intrusted him with the management of his household and all he possessed, for he saw that everything prospered in his hand. Unfortunately however, Potiphar’s wife, allured by his beauty, cast eyes of sinful affection upon him, and endeavoured to seduce him into crime; but being baffled by his holy resistance, her guilty love was changed into equally guilty hatred, and she accused him to her husband of the very crime into which she had sought to tempt him. Either doubting the truth of the charge, or not willing to proceed to extremities with one by whose services he had been so greatly benefited, Potiphar hushed up the affair, and perhaps quieted his own conscience also, by committing the youth to prison. Here, however, Joseph evinced the same amiable character, and the same activity, skill, and talent for management that had distinguished him in Potiphar’s house, so that the chief jailor, instead of treating him as a captive and criminal, invested him with the superintendence of the prison, and trusted implicitly in his faithfulness. In this way, he was in training for those high offices, in which the future preservation of his people, as well as the prosperity of Egypt, were so deeply implicated. In the course of his duties, an event occurred on which his liberation and rise depended. Two officers of the royal household, the butler and baker, who had been imprisoned, and intrusted to his keeping, were observed by him one morning to be perplexed and downcast; and on asking the cause, they informed him that they had each dreamed a dream, but were without an interpreter. Joseph replied that interpretations belonged to God, and encouraged them to tell him their dreams. They did so, and his solution was prompt, clear, and decisive: that of the butler indicated, that in three days he should be set free, and restored to his former office; but that of the baker, that at the same period he should be given over to capital exe-
cution. He then besought the butler to remember him when he was liberated, and to use his influence to deliver him from prison, for that he was a stranger, and innocent of crime. The two dreams were fulfilled; but when the butler returned to the palace, he forgot the interpreter.

4. Joseph’s Promotion.—At the end of two years after this incident the time of Joseph’s deliverance arrived, and in a way which showed that the God of his fathers had prepared the event. The Pharaoh or king of Egypt (Thoutmosis) dreamed two dreams that filled him with anxiety, as they seemed to foreshow some great public disaster; but although he summoned his wise men and magicians, they were unable to interpret them. When the royal perplexity had reached its height, the remembrance of the Hebrew captive suddenly flashed upon the mind of the butler, and he forthwith told how accurately Joseph had read the dreams of himself and his fellow-prisoner. In consequence of this, Joseph was sent for in all haste, and as soon as the king had related his dreams, he proceeded to interpret them. Like his own, they were reduplications of one and the same event, and intimated, that seven years of plenty were about to visit the land, but to be succeeded by seven years of extreme dearth and famine. Having announced this solution in language so simple that the whole truth at once stood manifest, he proceeded to suggest the propriety of appointing some wise and discreet man to store up the abundance of the first seven years as a provision for the famine that was to follow. The king, struck with the political wisdom of this advice, as well as the heaven-derived knowledge of the interpreter, exclaimed, “There is none so discreet and wise as thou art!” and immediately appointed Joseph to the office he had suggested. In this way, the Hebrew stranger was suddenly transported from a prison to a palace, and seated upon a chair of office next to the throne itself. He was all but king over the greatest and most populous of ancient empires; and all its complicated policy was to be managed, as well as its future safety ensured, in a most perilous emergency, by one as yet only thirty years old, and who had seen nothing of courts and councils. But the stewardship of Potiphar’s house, and the superintendence of the prison,
had been a thorough although a stern training for the duties of his singular and important office, while the favour of the God of Abraham, which had hitherto led him, was still at hand to direct him. It is worthy of remark also, that as it was by two dreams he was sold and carried to the slave-market of Egypt, it was by two similar dreams that he was raised to the highest office in the kingdom.

5. FAMINE IN EGYPT.—During the seven years that followed, the Nile overflowed and fattened the soil of Egypt, and one rich harvest followed another in overwhelming abundance. And now was the time for Joseph to act. He studded the whole land with granaries and storehouses, purchased and stored up the superfluous grain that otherwise would have been wasted, and stood prepared for the expected emergency. And then came the seven years of dearth, with which not only Egypt, but all the surrounding countries were visited; and the loud cry of a famishing nation for bread was raised,—a cry that has driven kings from their thrones; but the calm and satisfactory answer of the Pharaoh was, “Go to Joseph.” The storehouses were opened, the corn sold, and the people preserved. The neighbouring communities also repaired to this land of hoarded plenty, to purchase corn; and thus the provident wisdom of Joseph not only saved whole nations from perishing, but enriched the treasury of Egypt, established the royal revenue and dominion, and provided for the future welfare of the people over whom he was called to rule.

6. JOSEPH’S TRIAL OF HIS BRETHREN.—The famine in its progress had reached Canaan, and Jacob sent his ten sons to buy food in the great Egyptian granary. They set out accordingly; and when they came before Joseph, they bowed themselves to the ground, for they could not recognise the stripling whom they had sold for a slave in the powerful and honoured prince before whom they abased themselves—and Joseph remembered his dreams! It was now his turn, as well as his duty, to chastise and purify them. He therefore questioned them roughly, as if they were spies; and though he allowed them a supply of corn, he charged them, at their next return, to bring their youngest brother Benjamin, that he might ascertain the truth of their story,
in the meantime retaining Simeon as a hostage. Ignorant that this stern ruler understood their language, they began to rebuke themselves for their former cruelty to their brother, for which sin, as they alleged, they were now justly punished—and at their words Joseph stepped aside and wept. Still it was not time to reveal himself, and he sent them homeward, having first ordered the price of the corn to be hid in their sacks—either to deepen their inquiry and self-reproach, or to strengthen the necessity of their return. The provision which they brought home being soon exhausted, Jacob proposed that they should make another journey to Egypt, which they refused, unless Benjamin was allowed to accompany them, according to the harsh governor's command. The old fond father reluctantly consented, and they returned not only with the young man, but with double money, and a present besides, to prove their truth and integrity. When they appeared before Joseph even more humbly than before, he gave orders that they should dine with him; and in placing them at table, he caused them to be ranged according to their seniority, while they were astonished at his knowledge of their respective ages. He could not contain himself at the sight of Benjamin, his own mother's son, and therefore doubly his brother, but was obliged to retire and weep, before he could calmly sit down with them; and on rejoining them, he conferred upon him, although by far the youngest, the highest amount of honour, by sending him the largest portion from his own table.

A last trial was to be made of his brethren, before Joseph revealed himself. He had already distinguished Benjamin above the rest; and he was now anxious to prove whether they retained towards the young favourite the same malignant envy with which they had visited himself. He therefore caused his silver cup to be hid in Benjamin's sack, and on their departure from the town he ordered them to be pursued, arrested, and accused of having carried off the vessel by stealth. Astonished at the charge, they protested their innocence, invited a strict search, and declared, that not only the person with whom it was found should die, but all the rest be condemned to slavery. The steward of Joseph, who had hid the cup, now conducted the search;
and the brothers were thunderstruck when they saw the rich vessel brought out from its hiding-place among Benjamin's corn. The steward told the ten, that as for them they might go home in safety; but they would rather die with their father's best-beloved than return without him. Bitterly and long they had repented of their crime to Joseph, and become wiser and better men; and now they returned with the youth to plead his cause, and sustain the full brunt of the governor's wrath. When they came before Joseph, this touching proof of their filial and fraternal devotedness, their appeals in behalf of Benjamin, and their moving description of the misery of their aged father should he be bereaved of his most cherished son, so assured and affected their still unknown brother that he burst forth, after a long fit of weeping, with, "I am Joseph! doth my father yet live?" He then hastened to excuse their former cruelty, by assuring them that it was God himself who had sent him into Egypt, to preserve the land as well as his father's house. He informed them also that five years of famine had yet to elapse; and invited them to return with their father, and settle in Egypt, where he would provide for their sustenance. The tidings that Joseph had found his brothers rang through the palace, and reached the ears of the grateful Pharaoh, who rejoiced in the happiness of his deputy as if it had been some national triumph. He therefore seconded Joseph's invitation, and sent a long train of waggons to expedite their return to the land. Jacob, his family, and their offspring, in all seventy persons, on their arrival in Egypt were received by the powerful monarch with kindness and distinction, and invested with the rich pastoral district of Goshen, where they could best pursue their wonted avocations.

7. DEATH OF JACOB AND JOSEPH.—During the rest of the famine, so effectual were the preparations of Joseph, and so wisely administered, that not only the welfare of the country was secured, but provision made for its future greatness and stability. Seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, Jacob died, and while pronouncing upon his deathbed a blessing on his twelve sons, he prophetically announced the character and destination of the tribes that
should descend from them. Above all, the distinction of Judah was remarkable, as the source from which the long-promised Redeemer was to be born. By his strict orders, Jacob was buried in the cave of Machpelah, thus reminding his family that Canaan was their final home, and Egypt only their resting-place. Fifty-four years after, Joseph also died at the age of a hundred and ten, honoured by a nation which he had saved, as well as by his own people to whom he had been a father. Yet he too, instead of seeking a princely grave in the place of his grandeur, looked forward to the land of promise, and pledged the race of Jacob by an oath, that when God summoned them to arise and go thither, they should carry his bones with them out of Egypt.

EXERCISES.

1. How did Jacob's punishment continue? What was the offence of the Prince of Shalom? What were the proposals of Jacob's sons to the Shechemites? How did they gratify their revenge?

2. How did Jacob manifest his preference for Joseph? What were Joseph's dreams? How did his brethren receive them? On what occasion did their resentment break out? How did they treat him on meeting? In what manner did they deceive their father? For what crime was Jacob thus deceived?

3. How was Joseph treated by his Egyptian master? To what temptation was he exposed? How was he treated by the jailor in prison? What was his interpretation of the butler's and baker's dreams?

4. What was the occasion of Pharaoh's perplexity? How did this event call Joseph from prison? What was his interpretation of the king's dreams? What was his advice on the occasion? What was the effect of his advice? How had he been trained for his high office?

5. How was Joseph's interpretation verified in Egypt? What were his preparations for the famine? What was their effect?

6. Why did Joseph's brethren come to Egypt? How did they fulfil his dreams? How did he begin to try them? What steps did he take to procure their return? How did he receive them at their return? What was the last trial he imposed on them? In what manner was it made? How did it succeed? What was its effect on him? How were the tidings received in the Egyptian court? How were Jacob and his family received by Pharaoh?

7. What was Jacob's dying benediction? Who of his sons was to be most distinguished? What was Joseph's dying charge?
CHAPTER V.

FROM THE DEATH OF JOSEPH TO THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT SINAI.


A.M. 2369 to A.M. 2514.

1. Moses.—After the death of Joseph, the descendants of Jacob, now called the Israelites, from a small tribe gradually expanded into a numerous people, with this political disadvantage, that they were separated from those among whom they dwelt by origin, language, habits, and religion. Egypt, too, had undergone changes, during which the services of Joseph were forgotten; and a new dynasty appears to have occupied the throne, the chief of whom was that Pharaoh under whose reign the afflictions of the Israelites commenced. This jealous tyrant, apprehensive that, from their wealth, numbers, and favourable situation, they might join the next invaders of Egypt, or at least become independent of its authority, resolved to prevent such a result, by using the right of the stronger while he possessed it, and waste them away by oppressive servitude. He accordingly compelled them to the task of building cities and public edifices, toiling in the brick-kilns, and performing all the hardest offices of the field. And yet, though their lives were made bitter, they only seemed to increase the more rapidly from the injuries and burdens that were heaped upon them. On finding this, he issued orders that every Israelitish male child, as soon as born, should be thrown into the river, and only the female infants suffered to live; but in the generality of cases this unnatural edict seems to have been eluded. In one case, however, where this could not easily be done, his precaution only prepared the way for the danger which he sought to escape. A male child
was born to a man and his wife of the family of Levi; and moved by the infant's beauty, as well as by parental tenderness, they hid him for three months, until farther concealment was impossible. They then made a little water-tight cradle of bulrushes, in which they placed the child, and laid it upon the brink of the Nile, in the hope, it may be, that God would interpose at the last moment of danger. Their hope was not in vain. The king's daughter (Thermuthis) came down to the spot to bathe: she saw the cradle, and commanded it to be brought to her; and as she looked at the beautiful infant, he wept. What woman's heart could resist such an appeal? She caused him to be nursed and educated as her own child, and gave him the name of Moses, because she had drawn him out of the water. Thus boldly did she announce that her adopted was a child of the doomed race whom she had saved from perishing. When Moses had reached the age of manhood, we are told, he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," the most learned and accomplished people of the day, and became "mighty in word and deed," making it probable that he not only possessed influence in the Egyptian councils, but had occasionally, according to Jewish tradition, held command in the army. But on reaching the age of forty, he preferred the society of his enslaved brethren to a princely place among strangers; and having on one occasion seen an Egyptian maltreating an Israelite, he slew the oppressor, and buried his body in the sand. On the following day, seeing two of his countrymen contending, he endeavoured to part them, upon which one of them taunted him with the murder of the Egyptian. Finding that the deed was known, and fearing the consequences, Moses fled to Midian on the eastern side of the Red Sea, where he married Zipporah, daughter of the pastoral prince and priest of the district, and devoted himself to that shepherd life which was practised by the most distinguished men in those early ages of society.

2. Moses' Commission.—Forty years were thus spent in the pastoral wilderness of Midian, and Moses had attained the period when a life of action terminates. But here his history was properly to commence, by his becoming the leader and lawgiver of his nation. One day, as he was feeding his
flock on the slopes of the mountain of Horeb (or Sinai) he saw a bush enveloped with fire, yet not consumed; and when he drew near to behold more distinctly, a voice issued from the midst of the bush. It was the voice of God. The time of His chosen people had arrived when they were to be delivered from their burdens; and Moses himself was to be the messenger who should repair to the king, and command him to let the children of Israel go. Moses hesitated, doubted, and would have rejected the commission; but all his objections were graciously answered by the divine speaker, and two miracles were given to show that the mission would be successful. Yet still Moses objected: he was, he alleged, of slow speech and not eloquent, and therefore unfit to go before Pharaoh with such a message; upon which he was told that Aaron, his elder brother, who was coming to meet him, would accompany him, and be his spokesman. Hesitating no longer, Moses took leave of his family, and with his brother repaired to the Egyptian court, and announced his commission. The Pharaoh (Amenophis) who now occupied the throne heard it with scorn, and caused the burdens of the Israelites to be increased until they became intolerable. But now that words had failed to persuade, miracles were to be given to punish and compel. Nine plagues were successively sent from heaven upon the land, and as often the heart of Pharaoh trembled and relented; but as each infliction was removed, he became more obsturate than ever. Even when at last he seemed to concede, it was with some limitation that made the grant worthless. At first he would allow the Israelites to sacrifice to their God; but they must perform it in the land, instead of going out into the wilderness, as was demanded. His next concession was, that the adults might go forth, but as for their wives and children, these must be left behind as hostages. And wrung yet further by the anguish of a fresh plague, he would allow the whole people to go upon their three days' journey into the wilderness; but their flocks and herds, which constituted their subsistence and their wealth, must be left behind, as pledges of their return. - In every case the Israelites were to be recalled to their bondage, and therefore his offers were rejected.
3. Deliverance of the Israelites.—At last the tenth and decisive plague was to be inflicted, that was to carry death to all the first-born of Egypt both of man and beast, after which the Egyptians themselves would be eager for the departure of the Israelites. A solemn preparation was to be made by the chosen people, who had hitherto been untouched by these calamities, for the terrible visit, and the deliverance that was to follow. They were all to hold themselves in readiness at midnight for the journey. They were to eat, each family by itself, a lamb killed for the purpose, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; and they were to eat it in haste, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands. But the most solemn part of this significant rite, which was thenceforth to be an annual observance, was, that they should sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon their door-posts, so that the destroying angel, while passing over the land, should recognise this token of divine exemption, and spare the inmates of the dwelling. Such was the institution of the Passover. The tenth plague descended; and at midnight there was a terrible cry over all Egypt, for not a house had been spared from palace to hovel, except where the door-posts were marked with blood. It was then that the hard heart of Pharaoh seemed utterly subdued, so that he even entreated Moses and Aaron to take their people, and all they possessed, and rid Egypt of their presence. The Israelites departed accordingly, but not without some portion of the wages of their long servitude; for they were directed by Moses, at the command of God, to borrow (or, as the word may be rendered, to demand) from the Egyptians gold, silver, and rich apparel, which were bestowed upon them without stint or scruple. This momentous exodus of the Israelites occurred 430 years after Abraham's arrival in Canaan, and 215 years after Jacob had settled in Egypt. The population that went out numbered six hundred thousand men able to bear arms, which, according to the usual proportion of women and children, will make in all two millions and a half of Israelites. They were thus grown into a nation, and only needed a territory to occupy. But besides these, the genuine descendants of Jacob, there went with them a large mixed multitude, consisting
probably of Egyptians and their tributaries, who either from affection or necessity joined in the departure, that they might share the prosperous fortune of a heaven-conducted people.

4. DESTRUCTION OF PHARAOH.—It might have been thought that the route of the Israelites would have been direct for the land of promise, to which a few days of journeying would have brought them. But they were a people who had been born in bondage, as well as crushed beneath it, and therefore were as yet unfit to cope with the now great and warlike nations of Canaan. Moses therefore, by divine direction, led them by a circuitous march through the desert, during which they should come to Mount Sinai, and there receive from heaven the institutions of their religious faith and civil polity; and that their course might be in full confidence, a miraculous pillar went before, to conduct them, that appeared as a cloud in the light of day, and all fire through the gloom of night. But still there was an enemy in their rear who threatened to exterminate them at the very outset. This was Pharaoh. His land, by their departure, must have been almost half depopulated, as well as impoverished by the loss of their cheap services; and on recovering from his stupor, he resolved to pursue and drive them back like runaway slaves to their burdens and brickkilns. This too appeared an easy task, for he knew from the route they had taken that they must be hemmed in by the Red Sea in front and the mountains in their rear. He therefore pursued them with all his war-chariots, and on the third day found them encamping on the seashore. Their situation was desperate, for their retreat by the head of the gulph was cut off, while the whole chivalry of Egypt was ready to charge upon their wavering and cooped-up multitudes. But still God was on their side, at whose command Moses stretched his rod towards the Red Sea, and immediately the waters parted asunder, giving them a miraculous pathway to the opposite shore; while the pillar, that had hitherto preceded them, moved to the rear, throwing darkness upon the pursuing Egyptians, but giving light to the fugitives. Pharaoh should have trembled and retired at the sign; but with the infatuation of madness, he drove
headlong into the opened gulf with all his chariots. Towards morning, the Israelites having safely reached the shore, Moses was commanded again to stretch his rod over the waters; and at the signal, they instantly closed upon the pursuers, so that at daybreak the Israelites saw the whole shore covered with the corpses of their enemies, not one of whom had escaped.

5. DISCONTENT OF THE ISRAELITES.—This benign interposition was quickly followed by the unbelief and ingratitude of the Israelites. Only three days after, they murmured because of the bitterness of the water which they drank, and Moses had to perform a miracle that it might be sweetened. This discontent was succeeded by a cry for food when the provisions they brought from Egypt had failed; and they reproached Moses and Aaron for having led them away from the flesh-pots of their masters, where their hunger was sated to the full. Again a miracle was granted, for at evening the encampment was covered with quails, and on the morning with manna, which they baked into bread. This manna continued to follow them upon their journey, so that they were plentifully fed; but again they raised the outcry against Moses, that he now meant to kill them with thirst, and they actually threatened to stone him. In every case they not only forgot their wonderful deliverance from Egypt, but closed their eyes upon the divine presence marshalling their way by the pillar of cloud: they even exclaimed, “Is the Lord among us or not?” And still God pitied them, and sent them relief. By divine command, Moses struck the rock in Horeb with his rod, and from its dry recesses the waters gushed out. The people were now to be tried with the dangers of war as well as the pangs of hunger and thirst, for the Amalekites, whose borders they approached, attacked them at Rephidim. Moses placed a select portion of the armed host under the leading of Joshua to resist the aggressors, and ascended to the top of a mountain that overlooked the field of conflict, attended by Aaron and Hur. The battle joined; and as long as Moses held up his rod the Israelites were successful, but when he let it down Amalek prevailed. On perceiving this, and that his hands were growing weary, Aaron and Hur held them up
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till sunset, so that the Amalekites were routed with great slaughter. For this unprovoked assault Amalek was doomed to be blotted out from the list of nations, and the Israelites were to execute the sentence.

6. SINAI.—Israel was now encamped before Mount Sinai, where God was to invest them with their high appointment as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The conduct of the people had hitherto shown that the grossest ignorance as well as the most stubborn unbelief must be removed before they would be fit for such a vocation; but their divine Sovereign and Head vouchsafed to accommodate himself to that ignorance and unbelief. Moses fenced the mount with solemn prohibitions that neither man nor beast should touch it on pain of death, and sanctified the people for the promised coming of the Most High. On the third day the trump of God sounded; the mountain shook and smoked like a furnace, because the King of heaven had descended; and the whole camp saw and trembled, while Moses, summoned by a voice from the darkness, went up to receive the Law which God himself was to deliver. And that law was worthy of Him who gave it, by the spiritual truths it unfolded, and the morality it inculcated. Jehovah was thenceforth to be recognised as the only God whom they were to worship, as well as the only sovereign who was to be acknowledged King of Israel. Upon these two great principles, their religious faith and observances and their civil polity were based, and they were thus set apart and separated from all the nations of the earth. And still throughout their whole ritual, one great truth predominated—man’s need of pardon and redemption; while every symbol more or less prefigured that glorious one by whom the redemption was to be achieved. What the passing shadow is to the living substance which it precedes, such was Judaism to Christianity.

EXERCISES.

1. What were the disadvantages of the Israelites in Egypt? What did Pharaoh apprehend? How did he try to weaken the Israelites? And to diminish their numbers? What were the circumstances of the birth of Moses? And of his exposure? How was he preserved? What was his character on reaching manhood? What occasioned his flight to the wilderness?
2. How did God appear to Moses at Horeb? What was the commission given to him? How was he persuaded to accept it? How was his message received by Pharaoh? What were Pharaoh's limited concessions under the influence of the plagues?

3. What was the tenth and last plague? How were the Israelites to prepare for their departure? By what precautions were their houses to be guarded? Upon what terms were they dismissed from Egypt?

4. Why were the Israelites not led directly into Canaan? By what miraculous guidance were they conducted? What caused Pharaoh to pursue them? What was the danger of their situation? In what way was a path of escape opened? What was the effect upon the pursuers?

5. What was the first complaint of the Israelites in the wilderness? What the next? How were they relieved in both cases? What was their complaint at Horeb? How was it answered? By what enemy were they assailed? How did Moses contribute to the victory?

6. What important office were the Israelites to fulfil? How were they as yet unfitted for it? In what manner did God descend upon Sinai? What was the character of the law he gave them? What were the two great principles upon which it was based? What great truth predominated through the whole?

CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE ARRIVAL AT SINAI TO THE DEATH OF MOSES.


A. M. 2514 TO A. M. 2553.

1. THE GOLDEN CALF.—So awful had been the lightnings of Sinai, with the sound of the trumpet and voice of thundering, that the Israelites, unable to endure these terrors, had entreated Moses to be the medium of the divine communications, "But," said they, "let not God speak with us, lest we die." Moses complied, and entered within the thick veil of darkness, where he was hid from their sight forty days. It is to be observed also that the first commission which he here received from the divine Being was, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto
you gods of gold." This, indeed, was the very sin into which they were about to fall. Impatient of their leader's delay, they were ready to continue their journey without him; and they clamoured to Aaron to make them gods that should go before them, in the room both of Moses and the cloudy pillar. Aaron weakly and sinfully yielded, and having received their golden jewels and ornaments for the purpose, he melted and fashioned them into the form of a calf, probably in imitation of the worship of Osiris, which they had witnessed and perhaps sometimes joined in Egypt. Delighted with this strange substitute for Jehovah, whose dark sanctuary was still visible upon the summit of the mountain, they triumphed, played, and danced round their idol, till the whole encampment rang with their jollity. On being warned by God himself of this apostasy of the people, Moses hastened down the mountain with two tables of stone, on which the Ten commandments were engraven by the finger of God; but, on approaching the scene of such foul idolatry, he cast the tables from his hands, and broke them—an awful announcement of the nature of their crime, by which all divine legislation had been made void. He ground the idol to powder, and strewed the brook with it, that the people might drink of their shame; reproved Aaron for his share in the crime, and caused three thousand of the offenders to be put to the sword by the tribe of Levi. It was a stern demonstration of the guilt of idol worship, and yet not enough for future warning. Moses in the meantime having interceded with God for the people and prevailed, was ordered to hew out two tables of stone like the first, which he did, and returned to the mountain, where he abode other forty days, and the divine institutions were again inscribed upon durable monuments for the instruction and conviction of posterity.

2. The Israelites Murmur.—When the wandering nation broke up their encampment at Sinai, new causes of discontent and rebellion were found. The first ebullition was at Taberah, and the indignation of the Lord visited it with fire from heaven, by which the chief rebels were destroyed. Again they murmured at their daily fare, that manna which was so excellent as to be called angel's food,
and sighed for the variety of savoury messes which they had eaten in Egypt; and to punish them God sent them quails for a whole month, until they became loathsome to their palates, and further visited them with a pestilence by which multitudes were consumed. On reaching the wilderness of Paran the toils of their journey seemed to be ended, for the promised land lay before them, into which they might enter and take possession as God had enjoined. Moses therefore sent twelve spies into Canaan, that they might bring a report of the people and country, before military operations were commenced. They returned after forty days, and described the land in glowing terms as flowing with milk and honey, and for proof showed the rich fruits which they had brought with them; but they added, that the people were strong and powerful, that there were giants among them, and that the cities were so strongly fortified with walls that it would be hopeless to assail them. At this report the Israelites were so dismayed that they broke forth into lamentations of despair, wishing that they had died either in Egypt or the wilderness: they even talked of electing a new captain to lead them back to their former bondage; and threatened to stone two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, who had exhorted them to go forward, and assured them that all would be theirs, under the guidance of Him whose chosen people they were. This utter unbelief in the promises of God, and forgetfulness of his power, and revolt against his authority, completed their guilt, and brought down its appropriate punishment. They were not to be permitted to enter the good land, but to wander in the wilderness until they had perished, after which their children were to enter into possession. None but Caleb and Joshua were to be exempted from the doom of all who had left Egypt, from twenty years old and upwards, because they had neither doubted nor rebelled. This sentence from God was announced by Moses to the people, at which they wept bitterly; and passing at once, as cowards sometimes do, from faint-heartedness to the extreme of rashness, they were eager to make an instant attack upon those Amalekites and Canaanites who lay nearest. This haughty repentance fared as it deserved; for in spite of the warnings of Moses,
they ascended the hill and attacked the enemy, but were defeated with great slaughter, and chased to Hormah. The Israelites now saw by bitter experience that God himself had excluded them from the country, and therefore they returned to the wilderness to undergo their punishment.

3. The Forty Years.—The years of wandering that ensued are briefly recorded, and the principal events were the sins of the people, and the divine chastisements that followed. The first incident was a rebellion of the chief men of the tribes, headed by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, against the heaven-appointed authority of Moses and Aaron, the former as leader, and the latter as high priest of the nation, showing thereby an intention to step into their room. But God, who had invested the chosen pair with office, vindicated their commission, by causing the earth to open and swallow up the proud revolters, and by sending a pestilence among those who complained of their punishment. A sign was also given of the sacred appointment of the office of high priest in Aaron and his descendants, which had been made at Sinai, by causing his rod miraculously to blossom and bring forth almonds. It is to be observed that hitherto the priestly office, as in the days of the patriarchs, had been performed by the fathers of families and the heads of tribes; but now that God himself had established the mode of worship, he was henceforth to be approached and propitiated in that way, and no other. The next revolt was from the scarcity of water; and this needful element was supplied by Moses striking, at the command of God, the dry rock with his rod, upon which, as formerly, whole floods of water gushed forth for the sustenance of man and beast. But on this occasion even Moses and Aaron forgot the former divine interpositions, and joined in the popular discontent; and for this they were sentenced to die in the wilderness with the rest, instead of leading the people into Canaan. Afterwards Aaron died, and was buried on Mount Hor. On skirting the boundaries of Edom, through which the Israelites were churlishly denied a passage, and approaching the Red Sea, they broke out once more into complaints against the light manna upon which they had fed nearly forty years, and clamoured for more substantial nourish-
ment. To punish them for thus speaking "against God and against Moses," fiery serpents were sent among them that stung them to death; and the evil was only removed by the brazen image of a serpent raised upon a pole by divine injunction, upon which those who were dying looked and were cured. This miraculous image, the type of the blessed Redeemer, was carefully preserved by the Israelites, until, from an object of grateful national commemoration, it became an idol of sinful worship, on account of which it was destroyed nearly nine hundred years after by the righteous Hezeckiah. Such was precisely the way in which Popery, after Christianity was established, set up the worship of certain splinters of wood, which were asserted to be relics of the cross on which Christ had suffered; and such would be the complete justification of destroying that very cross itself, if it still existed, and was made, as it would probably be, the object of idolatrous worship.

4. Balaam.—The time had now come when the Israelites were to commence their conquests before they crossed the Jordan and entered into Canaan; and their first movement was in consequence of the refusal of Sihon, king of the Amorites, to permit their march through his kingdom. He even sallied out to attack them, but was utterly defeated, and the Israelites took possession of his territory. This onward step brought them in contact with Og, the gigantic king of Bashan, who advanced to revenge the fall of his neighbour Sihon; but he too was put to the rout, and his kingdom of fertile pastures was occupied by the conquerors. It was now the turn of Balak, king of Moab, to tremble, as he was ignorant of the command of God to the Israelites to respect the territory of the children of Moab, who were the descendants of Lot; and knowing his own inability to resist such a numerous host, he resolved to have recourse to the miracles and incantations of magic. He accordingly sent for Balaam, a noted prophet and magician, to come and curse this people, hoping that thereby their strength would be utterly withered. But God laid such restraints upon Balaam, that three several times, when he struggled to lay a curse upon the Israelites, the malediction was changed into a blessing and a prediction of their future
greatness. Thus baffled, yet still covetous of the promised reward of Balak, the prophet suggested that the Israelites should be tempted into idolatry, through the blandishments of the women of Moab and Midian, by which God would be provoked to destroy them or cast them off. This foul device succeeded: the Israelites were seduced into the worship of Baal Peor, the obscene idol of a riotous Midianitish festival, by which the anger of God was kindled against them; and it was only averted by hanging the chief leaders of the idolatry, and the destruction of twenty-four thousand of their followers by a plague. Soon after, the Midianites were punished for being the chief actors in the temptation; for twelve thousand armed Israelites were sent against them, who defeated them with great slaughter, and pillaged their territory, while Balaam himself was among the slain. The newly conquered districts were assigned to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manassch, as they were chiefly a pastoral people, on condition that their armed men should continue to accompany the march of their brethren until the conquest of Canaan was completed.

5. Death of Moses.—After this vengeance upon Midian, the expiatory wanderings of the Israelites were at an end. All that had come up from Egypt at the age of manhood had died, according to the word of the Lord; and the new race, who were to enter into the inheritance which their parents had forfeited, were a free-born generation, accustomed to a life of activity and ready for instant enterprise. But a solemn and sad event had yet to intervene: this was the death of Moses, the most patient of men, who had borne the chief burden of their sufferings, but who was not to be permitted to enter the good land, because at last his patience and faith had failed. In every trespass of the Israelites he had interposed between them and the anger of God; and even when tempted with the offer of being made founder and head of the promised nation, after the whole present race should be utterly swept away in their sins, he refused, and pleaded for the rebellious people, although they were ready to stone him. Can all the annals of disinterested patriotism show a parallel to such a refusal? There was a heavenly grandeur in his final departure correspondent with
his illustrious career. After a solemn recapitulation to the people of all that had befallen them since the departure of their fathers from Egypt, the duties they owed to God, the conduct they were to observe on their settlement in Canaan, and closing all with predictions of the fearful judgments that should follow their apostasy, he was summoned by the voice of God to the top of Mount Pisgah, that he might behold the promised land, and there die. After surveying the rich and far-stretching prospect he closed his eyes in peace, no man being at hand to witness his departure; and God himself, who was with him in his last moments, buried him in a grave which none might find, lest they should exhume his relics, and make them objects of idolatrous worship. When Moses died he was a hundred and twenty years old, and yet, as we are informed, "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated."

EXERCISES.

1. What entreaty did the people make to Moses at Sinai? How was it complied with? What was his first commission to the Israelites? How was it necessary? How did Aaron comply with the popular wish? How did Moses act when he returned to the camp?

2. What was the first rebellion of the people after they left Sinai? How was it visited? What was the next? How visited? What was done to explore the promised land? What was the report of the spies? How did the people behave on this occasion? What was their punishment? How did they seek to escape it?

3. What is the chief history of the forty years' wandering? What was the first rebellion? How was it punished? How was Aaron's office of high priest vindicated? What was the next rebellion? How did it affect Moses and Aaron? What discontent next occurred? What was the origin of the brazen serpent? What its subsequent history? What its parallel in after-ages?

4. What were the first conquests of the Israelites when their wanderings had expired? What remedy did the King of Moab adopt? How was it baffled? How were the Israelites afterwards led astray? How were they punished? What chastisement was inflicted on the Midianites?

5. In what condition were the Israelites to enter Canaan? What event had previously to occur? What was the character of Moses? What were his parting advice to the people? What was the manner of his death?
CHAPTER VII.

FROM THE DEATH OF MOSES TO THE DEATH OF SAMSON.


A. M. 2553 TO A. M. 2887.

1. THE CANAANITES.—After the days of mourning for Moses had ended, the Israelites proceeded to enter into possession, by sending two men to spy out Jericho, the city that lay nearest on the opposite side of Jordan. As yet unaccustomed to war, they were to invade warlike nations; and without besieging-weapons, or skill to use them, they were to attack cities walled and secured with gates of brass. In this view, the attempt seemed an effort beyond their strength. But, on the other hand, they had the express promise of that God who had divided the Red Sea before them, and supported them in the wilderness by miracles for forty years, and before whom armies and ramparts were but as dust before the wind. Thus judged even the Canaanites themselves, who had heard the wondrous narrative, and beheld the fall of Og and Sihon, so that “their hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man;” and already the more wise and prudent of their number were abandoning a country which was so visibly given up to these favoured strangers. As for those who remained, they had evidently hardened their hearts against such unequivocal tokens, and in fighting against Israel had shown themselves ready to fight against Israel’s God also, in which case the destruction that awaited them was as merited as it was certain. Even the harlot Rahab also, who received and hid the spies when they were detected and pursued, was able to discover this inference, so that in giving them shelter she covenanted for the safety of herself and her family, as if Jericho was already in their hands.

2. TAKING OF JERICHO.—The Jordan was now in flood,
so that an army in ordinary circumstances could not have crossed it. But Joshua, the appointed leader after the death of Moses, marched the whole nation at the command of God to the river’s brink, the priests going in front with the ark of the covenant; and as soon as their feet had touched the water, it parted as the Red Sea had done, so that the whole people crossed over upon dry ground. Thus Jericho was unexpectedly reached; but still its inhabitants were sheltered within strong walls from an enemy that had no battering engines. Here again the divine sovereign of Israel interposed. By his command, the army marched round the walls once each day for six days in succession, the priests going before them and sounding upon rams’ horns. But on the seventh day, when perhaps the people of Jericho had recovered from their terror, and looked from their ramparts upon what seemed an idle procession, the march went seven times round the city; and at the seventh, when the rams’ horn trumpets sounded, the Israelites, by the command of Joshua, raised a loud shout, and in an instant wall and rampart went down to the ground, and gave them free access into the streets. All the inhabitants with their king were slain; all their cattle and beasts perished also; nothing was spared but Rahab and her family, according to the agreement made with the spies, and all the precious metals, which were to be consecrated to the service of the Lord.

3. Ai.—A dismaying check followed this wonderful success; for the men of Ai, an insignificant town that was next besieged, sallied out upon the detachment sent to take it, defeated them, and chased them off the field. Although only thirty-six men had fallen, “the hearts of the people melted, and became as water,” for they saw in this a token that God was displeased and had forsaken them. To detect the culprit whose crime had brought this judgment upon their heads, lots were cast, and Achan was declared the criminal; upon which he confessed that he had secreted a wedge of gold, two hundred shekels of silver, and a rich garment from the plunder of Jericho. As this was a violation of the express command of God, in a case where the temptation to break it was so strong, a signal example was
necessary, and Achan was stoned to death. After this ex-
piation, Ai was taken, and by a simple stratagem. At the
second assault the Israelites pretended to flee, as they had
done at first, and the inhabitants pursued; upon which an
ambush stationed for the purpose entered the defenceless
city, and set it on fire, while the retreating army suddenly
turned upon the pursuers and easily overwhelmed them, so
that every one belonging to Ai was put to the sword.

4. The Gibeonites.—Terrified by the fall of these two
cities, and knowing their own inability to resist, the Gibe-
onites resolved to obtain by craft that exemption from
the doom of destruction which neither treaty nor submission
could purchase. They therefore sent certain of their num-
ber, who feigned themselves ambassadors from a far distant
country, come to seek alliance with the Israelites; and in
proof of their long journey, they appealed to their faded
raiment that had been worn out, and their provisions that
had become mouldy by the way. Deceived by these fraud-
ulent tokens, and without consulting the divine will, Joshua
and the princes of the tribes made a league with them, and
ratified it by a solemn oath. They soon learned, however,
that these Gibeonites were their neighbours, inhabiting four
cities that should have been visited with the destruction of
Ai and Jericho, but which must now be spared according
to the treaty. But the deceivers, although their lives were
granted, were reduced to serfage, by being condemned to
hew wood and draw water for the Israelites. This secession
of a powerful tribe so alarmed five confederate kings of
Canaan, that they first assailed the Gibeonite cities, with
the intention of chastising them, and afterwards making
head against the invaders. Joshua hurried to the rescue
of his unworthy allies, and was successful: the confederate
army was destroyed by the swords of the Israelites, but still
more by great hailstones that were shot upon them from
heaven; while at the command of Joshua the sun and moon
stood still for a whole day, that the victory might be com-
plete. The five kings were taken prisoners and hanged,
and their kingdoms were occupied by the conquerors. This
tide of miraculous success went steadily onward, until in all
thirty-one kings were defeated and their territories won,
extending from the mountains of Seir to those of Lebanon, in the short space of five years. The land thus gained was parted among certain of the tribes by lot. A desultory warfare followed with the still unconquered districts, during which another partition of territory occurred; and in this, as in the former case, the lot fell to each tribe precisely according to the predictions which Jacob had uttered on his deathbed, and Moses subsequently repeated. All were provided for except the tribe of Levi, who were to discharge the duties of priests and teachers among the community at large, and who would have been disqualified for their office had they been settled in any particular locality. Full provision, however, was made for them by an allotment of four cities in each tribe for their general residence, and by a sacred inheritance composed of tithes and religious offerings.

5. Jewish Polity.—It happened unfortunately for the Israelites that after their first settlement in the land they became remiss in their stern duty of rooting out the Canaanites. The consequence was, that the spared communities increased in numbers and strength, and became formidable enemies to Israel. But this was not the worst, for their foul idolatries became a snare to the Israelites, by which they were seduced from the worship of the true God. This, however, did not occur during the days of Joshua, who died at the age of a hundred and ten, nor of the elders who survived him. The form of government established for the people when they became a settled nation cannot now be distinctly ascertained: we know that its general character was that of a theocracy, in which God was the acknowledged king and lawgiver, whose will in all great cases of trial or difficulty could be ascertained by the high priest in the Tabernacle, which had been erected in the wilderness, and thence transported to the promised land. But the usual agents of government were called Judges. These were sometimes the high priest, sometimes a man of influence among the tribes, and sometimes a national champion who had delivered them in the hour of need. Independently of these, each tribe seems also to have been provided with its own patriarchal prince or chief, who ruled in his own locality assisted by a council of the elders. Every duty, how-
ever, was so expressly defined in their sacred code received at Sinai, and every penalty so distinctly prescribed, that as long as they adhered to it, the management of national affairs was both easy and simple. Sometimes, indeed, an earthly head appears to have been unnecessary; and we read of periods when there was “no judge in Israel,” and when “every one did that which seemed good in his own eyes.”

6. Judges.—The history of the Israelites during the long period of the Judges was but a succession of apostasies from God and lapses into idolatry, not only on the part of the nation at large, but of individual tribes; and these were invariably followed by a correspondent punishment. Thus, for their first great trespass of this kind, they were visited by Chushan-rishathaim, a king ruling in Mesopotamia beyond the Euphrates, who subdued the tribes on the eastern side of Palestine, and tyrannized over them for eight years; but on crying to God, he mercifully delivered them by Othniel, the nephew of Caleb. Only forty years later the national crime was repeated, and for this they were again given up to an enemy, the one selected on this occasion being Eglon, king of Moab, whose oppressive sway over them lasted eighteen years, until they felt that there was no help but in heaven; and on repenting, Ehud was sent to deliver them. Eighty years elapsed, when a new enemy appeared before whom Israel was often to tremble: these were the Philistines; but on their first invasion they were defeated by a body of husbandmen, led on by Shamgar, who had no better weapon than an ox-goad. Unwarned by past experience, the people again sinned, and were given up to the Canaanites, whose leader Jabin, king of Hazor, was so powerful that, besides a very numerous army, he had nine hundred chariots of iron. For twenty years he so oppressed the tribes of the north, that they lay crushed and helpless beneath the enemy, until they were set free by Deborah, a prophetess of Mount Ephrain, and Barak, a man of the tribe of Naphtali. On this occasion, with a small army, they routed the countless Canaanites; the river Kishon suddenly swelling, drowned the fugitives in heaps; and their great general Sisera only escaped from the field to fall by a woman’s hand.
7. Gideon.—Still these warnings and deliverances were in vain: after forty years the Israelites were again idolaters, and were given up to still more terrible foes: these were the marauding hosts of Midian and Amalek, joined by the fierce robber-tribes of the desert, who wasted the country seven years by a succession of such merciless invasions that their victims were fain to hide themselves in caves and dens, leaving their harvests a prey to the spoilers. At length, Gideon, a man of the tribe of Manasseh, was divinely commissioned by an angel to deliver his countrymen; and having received, like Moses, repeated miraculous proofs to assure him that the call was from God, and would be successful, he boldly addressed himself to his mission. At the war-signal of his trumpet, thirty-two thousand men gathered round him; but as the deliverance was to be by miracle, not human might, this number was repeatedly reduced, until only three hundred remained with him. This handful he armed with nothing but trumpets, and earthen pitchers that had lamps concealed in them; divided them into three bands of a hundred each, and assailed the camp at midnight in three different places, his followers at the same moment blowing their trumpets, breaking their vessels, and shouting, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” according to his instructions. The terrible war-signal from so many quarters, the crash of pitchers, and the sudden glare of lights, so confounded the half-wakened enemy that they fell upon each other, while their multitudes only increased the confusion and swelled the carnage. A hundred and twenty thousand fell in mutual slaughter, and the remnant of fifteen thousand that escaped were pursued by the three hundred, overthrown, and utterly defeated. Elated with so wonderful a deliverance, the people would have invested Gideon with the sovereignty of the land, but he modestly refused the tempting honour, declaring that Jehovah alone was king of Israel.

8. Jephtha.—Forty years of comparative tranquility ensued, under Gideon as judge, who was succeeded in office by Tola, of the tribe of Issachar, and afterwards by Jair a Gileadite. After the death of the last-named judge, the sins of Israel again provoked God’s anger, and in just requital he gave them up to the people after whose gods they
had gone astray. These were the Philistines, and especially the Ammonites, who wasted the Israelites by a destructive war for eighteen years. The nation cried again in their extremity to Him whom they had forsaken; but were answered by the divine oracle with an enumeration of their past deliverances, imbittered by the deserved taunt, “Go, and cry unto the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.” But yet again a champion was raised for them. This was Jephtha, an illegitimate Gileadite, who had been driven from his home into the wilderness, where he became captain of a troop of outcasts like himself, and was distinguished by his valour and success. To him his countrymen applied, and having persuaded him to accept the leadership of the nation, he marched against the enemy, after having made a solemn vow that, should he be victorious, he would sacrifice the first creature he met at his return. The Ammonites were completely defeated, and Jephtha came home a conqueror; but his joy in a moment was turned into anguish, for his only child, a young and beautiful maiden, was the first to greet him on his arrival. On learning the cause of his grief, the heroic girl encouraged him to fulfil his vow, which he did; but whether by actual immolation, or dooming her to perpetual celibacy, we have no means of ascertaining.

9. Samson.—After Jephtha, three judges followed in succession, at the close of whose brief government the Israelites relapsed as they were wont, for which the Philistines, now a powerful people, were selected as the instruments of their chastisement. Forty years of bondage also, a longer period than usual, composed the term of punishment, while Eli, the high priest and judge, appears to have been of too mild a character to resist such an enemy. But God still pitied his apostate people, and raised for them a man suited to the emergency. This was Samson, who was neither judge, general, nor prophet, but simply a champion of supernatural strength and prowess, who went to and fro among the enemy unaccompanied, and whose right arm alone was more than a match for thousands. His daring but eccentric career made the Philistines tremble at his name, and regard him as the only barrier to a complete conquest of Israel. At last the
warrior, whom none could subdue, was conquered by his own weakness and lusts. Being drugged with wine, which as a Nazarite he was warned never to touch, his head, which was consecrated from the razor, was shaved; and with his hair his strength departed from him, so that he became "like any other man." In this helpless plight he was easily overpowered, deprived of his eyes, and sent to the mill to grind like a slave or beast of burden. A feast was proclaimed in honour of Dagon, the chief god of the Philistines, for the capture of Samson; and while the large temple was thronged with the noblest of the land, the blinded captive was brought in as a trophy of their idol's might, and to be the butt of their merriment and scorn. But their triumph was brief, for the strength of Samson had returned with the growth of his hair. He laid hold of the two pillars on which the roof of the temple rested, and having prayed to the God of Israel to be strengthened but once more for a final effort, he bowed himself with his whole force, so that the pillars were rent asunder in his grasp. The building fell, three thousand Philistines were crushed in the ruin, and Samson himself was involved in the common destruction. In this way the choicest of the enemy were destroyed, and the tide of Philistine invasion retarded.

EXERCISES.

1. How were the Israelites apparently unfit to conquer Canaan? What was in their favour? What was the apprehension of the Canaanites? How did they act?

2. How was the Jordan crossed? How was Jericho besieged? How destroyed?

3. What check did the Israelites receive at Ai? What was the cause? How was the offence expiated? How was Ai taken?

4. What was the cause of the Gibeonite deception? What the manner of it? What was its result? How were the five confederate kings defeated? How was the conquered land partitioned? What was the provision for the tribe of Levi?

5. What were the effects of sparing the Canaanites? What was the Jewish form of government after the death of Joshua? Who were the Judges? How was the government simplified?

6. What was the history of the Israelites under the Judges? How were they punished under Chushan-rishathaim?—under Eglon?—under the Philistines?—and under Jabin? How were they delivered in each of these cases?

7. What was the nature of the next invasion? How was Gideon called? What was his army? What the mode of his attack? What was its success? What was Gideon's forbearance after victory?
8. What was the next invasion? What was God’s answer to the Israelites? Who was Jephtha? What occasioned his grief at his return?
9. What was the next occasion of deliverance? What the character and career of the new champion? How was Samson deprived of his strength? What was the occasion of his being brought from prison? What was his last victory?

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM THE DEATH OF SAMSON TO THE DEATH OF SAUL.

Doom of the House of Eli—Capture of the Ark—Samuel’s Administration—Saul appointed King—He relieves Jabesh-Gilead—His Offences—David’s Election and Victory—He is driven into the Wilderness—Defeat and Death of Saul—David’s Lamentation.

A. M. 2887 TO A. M. 2949.

1. Eli.—After the death of Samson the government continued under Eli, who was judge as well as high-priest of Israel. One day, while officiating in the latter capacity, an anguish-laden woman, who was childless, entered the tabernacle, prayed for a son, and vowed if her request was granted to devote him to the Lord. Her prayer was heard. In due time she had a son, whom she called Samuel, or “given of God,” and to God she returned him, by bringing him to the tabernacle according to her vow, where the boy waited upon Eli, and discharged such duties of the holy place as he was capable of performing. But the pious Eli was a too indulgent father, and his sons Hophni and Phinehas, who served at the altar, were guilty of such abominations that the public religious services became odious to the people. The line of Eli was therefore to be set aside and his sons destroyed, and this doom was revealed to Samuel, now twelve years old, by a voice from heaven, as he slept at night in the sanctuary. On learning this sentence, Eli meekly said, “It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth to him good.”

2. The Ark taken.—Ten years afterwards the denunciation was fulfilled. The Israelites assailed the Philistines, but were defeated, on which they ordered the ark of God to be brought from Shiloh to the camp, hoping that its mere
presence would ensure them victory. But God himself had departed from them, without whose favour the ark was but a coffer and nothing more. In the next battle the Israelites were routed with such slaughter that thirty thousand fell, Hophni and Phinehas being among the slain; but, what was still more terrible, the ark was taken by the enemy. Eli heard the tidings calmly until the capture of the ark was announced, when, dismayed at this token of divine abandonment, he fell from his seat and died. This was not all. His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was in the act of bringing forth a son, but at the tidings she too expired, after naming the new-born child Ichabod, for the glory of Israel had departed with the ark. The people felt as if the divine presence had left them with its symbol. The ark itself was carried down by the triumphant idolaters to Ashdod, as if the God of the Hebrews had been conquered, and placed in the temple, and before the image of Dagon, their deity, to whom they attributed their victory. But they soon discovered their mistake, for the image bowed itself and fell before the ark, and was broken to pieces, while the whole district was speedily overrun with mice that devastated the land, as well as by a loathsome and deadly disease that consumed the people. Eager to be quit of such a dangerous trophy, they sent the ark to Gath, but that province too was visited with the same calamity; after which it was hurried to Ekron, where the same consequence followed. They found that the God of Israel could act independently of this coffer, and therefore were eager to be quit of it, and they sent it back with humble trespass-offerings in token of their repentance.

3. Saul chosen King.—Samuel was now recognised as a prophet of God, and invested with the office of judge. This he so faithfully discharged during a long administration, that at the close he could make to the people this unwonted appeal of an Asiatic ruler: "Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whom have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?" Not such however were his sons, to whom in his old age he delegated his authority, for they "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." A reaction in the popular feeling
ensued, and that too into the opposite extreme. Weary of such abuse of authority, and mindful perhaps of the evils they had sustained from it under the sons of Samuel's predecessor, the people demanded of the old prophet-judge that he should make them "a king to go before them." They were weary of the simple government that had hitherto predominated, though God himself was its recognised head, and longed for the stability and splendour of regal dominion. Samuel was grieved at this rejection of divine rule, but he was enjoined by the Lord to yield to an appointment for which the Mosaic law had already provided. Even the person whom he should anoint as king over Israel was also pointed out to him. This was Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, whose special appointment to that high office was afterwards confirmed before the assembled people by the testimony of the lot. The new sovereign, although possessing those personal advantages so necessary for one elected from the people, was yet, as might have been expected, the object of much envy and discontent, and many refused to acknowledge his superiority until it was tested by some great achievement. This was soon done. Jabesh-Gilead, an important town on the farther side of the Jordan, was besieged by Nahash, king of the Ammonites; and when the townspeople in their extremity were ready to capitulate, they were offered such severe and insulting terms that death itself seemed scarcely a worse alternative. In this difficulty they craved seven days of respite before returning a final answer. As soon as these tidings reached the new king, who was returning with a yoke of oxen from field-labour, he hewed the animals in pieces, and sent the fragments to the different tribes, commanding them to muster at a time and place appointed, and threatening that thus also the oxen of those who refused should be destroyed. This instance of stern decision was so effectual that three hundred and thirty thousand warriors mustered at his command, at the head of whom he unexpectedly assailed the Ammonites, and scattered them so utterly that "two of them were not left together." This signal victory so assured the people, that but for his generous interference they would have put to death those who had murmured at Saul's promotion.
however, he was inaugurated anew at Gilgal by the whole
kingdom, amidst solemn sacrifices and festivals.

4. Saul's Reign.—It was not long before the new sover-
eign began to show that impatience of theocratic restrictions
which formed the chief temptation of Jewish kings. In a
moment of extreme doubt and danger he usurped the func-
tions of the priesthood by offering sacrifice—a deed that was
now peculiarly sinful, as God himself had expressly sepa-
rated the regal from the sacerdotal office; and for this it
was announced to him by Samuel that the kingly rule should
be taken from his family, and given to one who should be
a man after God's own heart. Another rebellion against
divine authority followed. Saul was commanded so utterly
to destroy Amalek as to spare nothing that breathed, but
he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the cattle,
which he carried away as a spoil. Again he was confronted
by the stern rebuke of Samuel, and told that for his greed
and sinful clemency the kingdom was that very day rent
from him and given to a better than himself. The person
thus indicated was a stripling, the youngest of a family of
eight sons, whose sole occupation hitherto had been to tend
his father's flocks and guard them from the lion and the
bear. Such was David, afterwards the hero, king, prophet,
and poet, whose lays will not perish until the earth itself shall
pass away. He was privately anointed by Samuel, after
which he retired to his sheepcots. As for Saul, "an evil
spirit from the Lord troubled him," that manifested itself
by periods of gloomy sadness, intermingled with sudden
bursts of rage. He felt that he was no longer king but by
sufferance, and that no dynasty of his race should be estab-
lished on the throne. So the Lord had decreed, who was
king of the kings of Israel, and who could set them up or
pluck them down according to His good pleasure.

5. David's Trials.—An occasion soon arrived that sum-
moned David from his flocks to be trained for a more im-
portant guardianship. The nation was at war with their
formidable enemies the Philistines, and David was sent to
see how it fared with his three brethren in the camp. On
reaching the Israelite army he found it in great confusion,
for a Philistine giant of enormous stature, and armed with
corresponding weapons, had paraded before it during forty days, challenging their bravest to single combat—an invitation at which they trembled and were silent. Animated by a holy confidence in God, David offered himself as the giant’s opponent, and, having obtained the permission of Saul, he entered the lists with no other weapons than a sling and five pebbles. A stone, discharged by his vigorous arm and carried by divine direction, stretched the bulky Philistine in the dust; and confounded at this instance of supernatural success, his countrymen fled, and were pursued with great slaughter. This deed at once marked out the youth as a chosen national hero, so that the king retained him in his employ and made him his son-in-law. But the “evil spirit” that haunted the breast of Saul had now found its mark. David’s high qualities and popular acceptance provoked him, and perhaps he already suspected that this was no other than the “man after God’s own heart” by whom his race was to be supplanted. He therefore sought his destruction by engaging him in dangerous enterprises; and when this was unsuccessful, through the valour and prudence of David, he plotted his death by assassination. The youth was thus obliged to flee to the wilderness, and become a captain of men of broken fortunes like himself; and for years his life was endangered, sometimes from the relentless pursuit of Saul, who at every interval from war gave chase to his son-in-law among the mountains and caverns, and sometimes from the national enemies with whom he kept up a partisan warfare. Twice also he had Saul completely at his mercy, but on each occasion he magnanimously spared him, declaring that he would not stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed.

6. Death of Saul.—At length these trials, having accomplished their purpose of schooling the wanderer for sovereignty, were brought to a close by the death of his implacable enemy. The Philistines invaded Israel, and encamped upon the plains of Esdraelon, upon which Saul drew up his army against them on the mountains of Gilboa. As a battle was inevitable, the anxious king in his extremity sought counsel from God, but received no answer either by dream, urim, or prophet. He then applied to forbidden
sources, by repairing to a witch who dwelt at Endor, and desiring her to raise the ghost of Samuel;—and the phantom, whatever it was, that appeared in the form of the prophet, informed him that his kingdom was transferred to David, and that by the morrow himself and his sons should be with him in the land of spirits. On the following day the battle commenced, and the close ranks of the Israelites were thinned and driven back by the archery of the Philistines, while Saul himself was dangerously wounded. Finding his end inevitable, his proud spirit scorned the thought of falling into the hands of the "uncircumcised," and therefore he died upon his own sword. This defeat was not only a heavy calamity to Israel, but also to David himself; for among the three sons of Saul who fell in battle was his friend Jonathan, the eldest of the royal house, who was conscious from the first that David was to supersede him in the royal succession, but who seems to have loved him only the more on that account. Never, indeed, was human friendship more disinterested and more intense. In the words of David's lamentation, it was in truth "wonderful," and "passing the love of women."

After the battle an Amalekite, who had been prowling among the carcasses, lighted upon that of the fallen king; and knowing the already popular belief that David would succeed to the crown, he stripped the body of its royal insignia, and repaired to Ziklag, a town of the Philistines, where David resided, with these tokens that his persecutor was no more. Thinking that his tidings would ensure him the favour of the future sovereign, he even added a falsehood, by asserting that his own hand had inflicted the death-wound at the urgent request of Saul himself. Instead of rejoicing, David rent his clothes, and spent the day in weeping and fasting. Nor did the false Amalekite escape. By his own confession he had slain the Lord's anointed, and therefore David commanded that he should be instantly put to death. In this his first act of sovereignty he evinced that he understood the dignity as well as the duty of a righteous king.

EXERCISES.

1. What were the circumstances of Samuel's birth? How was his boyhood employed? What warning did he receive about the family of Eli? How did Eli receive the message?
2. Why was the ark brought to the camp of Israel? What ensued on its capture? What calamities did it bring among the Philistines? What did they finally do with it?

3. What was the character of Samuel as Judge? Why were the people discontented? What did they demand? How was Saul appointed king? What event called him into action? How was his victory requited?

4. What was the first error of Saul’s government? What the next? What was denounced on these occasions? Who was appointed his successor? What was the punishment of Saul?

5. What brought David into public notice? How did he slay the giant? How did the victory affect the mind of Saul? What was his conduct towards David? What was David’s resource? What his conduct in the wilderness?

6. What was Saul’s difficulty before the battle of Gilboa? What remedy did he seek? And with what result? What was the manner of Saul’s death? How did this event affect David? How were the tidings brought to him? How were they received? How was the Amalekite punished?

CHAPTER IX.

FROM DAVID’S ACCESSION TO THE DEATH OF SOLOMON.

David proclaimed King—His Victories—Desires to build a Temple—His Sins and their Punishment—His Death—Solomon succeeds—His Wisdom—He builds the Temple—His Apostasy—His Punishment and Death.

A. M. 2949 TO A. M. 3028.

1. DAVID MADE KING.—On the death of Saul, the tribe of Judah recognised the divine appointment of David by proclaiming him king. But the other tribes, either jealous of this interference on the part of Judah or desirous of an hereditary succession, elected Ishbosheth, the only surviving son of Saul. War followed between the rival sovereignties, in which the cause of David grew daily stronger, while that of his opponent decreased. At last the latter was forsaken by Abner, his ablest adherent, and assassinated by two of his own servants, upon which David, after having reigned seven years and a half over Judah, became king of all Israel.

2. DAVID’S REIGN.—Even after this appointment, by which civil war was extinguished and his power greatly
augmented, the life of David was so eventful that a brief notice can only be given of his principal military achievements. He won from the Jebusites the fort of Zion, hitherto deemed impregnable, and fixed upon Jerusalem, which he enlarged and ornamented, as the metropolis of the whole kingdom. He defeated the Philistines so effectually that, from being the conquerors and oppressors of Israel, they dwindled into insignificance. He completely subdued the Moabites, and reduced the Syrians and Edomites to tributaries. In this way the kingdom, that had struggled for mere national existence during the previous reign, became free, rich, and powerful, while God had made for him "a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth." In the midst of these labours also the interests of religion formed his chief care, so that he caused the ark to be set up in Jerusalem, and composed for the public ritual those beautiful psalms which have so long formed an important part of the worship both of Jews and Christians. It was the fondest wish of his heart to build such a temple at Jerusalem as would be worthy of Him who should be served and invoked in it, for he thought it unmeet that he himself should dwell in a house of cedar, while the ark of God rested only within curtains. But on being warned from God by the prophet Nathan that he had shed too much blood for such a work, and that his son and successor, who should be a man of peace, would accomplish it, he set aside the rich spoils of his conquests and the wealth he had accumulated as a fund for the undertaking; and in this pious disinterestedness he was animated by the divine promise that the "throne of his kingdom should be established for ever"—an announcement that from his own descendants that future sovereign was to be born who should rule over the whole world, and of whose dominion there should be no end.

3. David's Crimes.—From such a picture it is melancholy to turn to the sins of David, by which his piety was tarnished, his comfort for life embittered, and even his crown repeatedly endangered. But Sacred History, unlike all other history, has unfolded the evil as well as the good of its brightest characters, and recorded their best and worst
ns with the same distinctness and impartiality. In the
seventh year of his reign, while the army was in the field
1st the Ammonites, and David dwelling at Jerusalem,
committed the foul crime of adultery with Bathsheba,
wife of a brave soldier; and afterwards, to conceal his
, contrived that the husband should be slain by the
try as if in one of the usual chances of war. It was
old expedient adopted from the beginning of trying to
one crime with another, and he summed up all by
Bathsheba to the number of his wives. But a fear-
nd open punishment was denounced upon his secret
the sword was never to depart from his house, so that
ould become a home of constant strife and violence;
his wives were to be subjected to degradation in the
of the sun, and the infant born to him in adultery
to die and not live. All fell out as was predicted.
child died, his wives were openly violated by Absalom,
wn best-beloved but rebellious son; and even to the
of his death there was discord among his family, and a
ingle for the royal succession. And yet, fearful as was
ishment, it did not exceed the depth of his repentance,
ich the anger of God was appeased, so that the second
Solomon, whom Bathsheba, the instrument of his crime,
to him, was the one who was appointed to succeed him
he throne, and build that glorious temple to which his
hopes had been so ardently directed.
other crime of David, after he had been victorious over
his enemies, was to number the people, that he might
tain the amount of military service upon which he
safely calculate. This, however accordant with the
p of policy in common governments, was sinful in a
sh sovereign, whose only law was the law of God, and
ly trust was to be in the promises of God. If the
adhered to the true faith, one man of them could
a thousand; but if they apostatised, all their armies
of no avail even against the weakest of their enemies.
tartling a conclusion the whole tenor of Jewish history
itherto illustrated and confirmed. It was even ob-
to Joab, the most unscrupulous of all David's officers,
rom the census was intrusted, and therefore he took it
so remissly that it was left incomplete. It appeared, however, even from this imperfect survey, that the Israelites had more than doubled their number since they departed from Egypt. It was only when the deed was done, and followed by the commencement of national affliction, that David exclaimed, "I have sinned greatly!" He was commanded from God to choose for his punishment three years of famine, or three months of dangerous and calamitous warfare, or three days of the sword of the Lord by a pestilence; and he chose the last, saying, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord!" The pestilence came accordingly, and seventy thousand died. David, beholding the sword of God's angel stretched over Jerusalem ready to strike, humbled himself in the dust, and prayed that the visitation might fall upon himself and his family, and not upon his innocent subjects—and at his fervent intercession the plague was stayed. By the divine command he built an altar upon the spot where the pestilence had stopped, and laid upon it burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; and the fire of the Lord descended from heaven to consume them, thereby showing that the anger of God was turned away.

4. DEATH OF DAVID.—After a life of trial and anxiety, in which his youth had been exposed to manifold dangers, and his maturity been vexed not only with the cares of royalty but those of domestic rebellion, the end of David drew nigh. As yet he was not more than seventy years old; but he had done and suffered so much, that even in those days of long life he was already a worn-out and bedridden old man. Even yet, however, his double sin of murder and adultery pursued him, by the rebellion of Adonijah his eldest son against the divine appointment of Solomon's succession to the throne. On this occasion David acted with his characteristic energy, so that the conspiracy was quashed, and Solomon proclaimed king amidst the acclamations of the whole people. His last charge to his successor was about the building of the temple of the Lord, for which he had accumulated such a mass of treasure; and he left his sick-bed to recommend the same duty to a great national council. He then died beloved and lamented as few kings have been, or have deserved to be.
5. Solomom's Wisdom.—By the victories of David the kingdom of Israel had become so dreaded and powerful, its army was so numerous and disciplined, and the royal treasury so overflowing, that Solomom, who ascended the throne at the early age of twenty, had no foreign enemy to fear. The energy also with which he extinguished a rebellion meditated by his elder brother, and cut off those turbulent subjects whom his father had been compelled to spare, showed that the prudence and courage of the young king were equal to his love of peace. The commencement of his reign was further distinguished by an incident that proved him worthy of rule. After a solemn sacrifice at Gibeon, God appeared to him in a dream, and bade him ask what gift he most desired; upon which Solomom requested an understanding heart for the government of so great and important a kingdom. This petition was so acceptable, that not only a wisdom surpassing that of the wisest was granted to him, but also gifts which he had not requested, although the most desired by sovereigns—length of days, and glory, and wealth. An event soon followed that attested his wisdom. Two women appeared before him with a dead and a living child, but each claiming the latter as her own, while their rival claims were so balanced that they would have reduced an ordinary judge to despair, or made him decide at random. Solomom discovered the truth in an instant by commanding that the living child should be cut in two and shared between the claimants. It was the true test of maternal affection, for the real mother hastily entreated that the child should be delivered alive and unharmed to her rival. The king restored the infant to the rightful parent, and this wondrous discovery of truth was applauded throughout the whole country.

6. Building of the Temple.—After being firmly established in the government, the great work of Solomom was to build that glorious temple for which he had been set apart. The ark, that oblong wooden coffer overlaid with gold, surmounted with the figures of two golden cherubim, and containing the two tables of stone given to Moses at Horeb, the Book of the Law, Aaron's rod that blossomed, and a pot of that miraculous manna with which the nation
had been fed in the wilderness, was still farther aggrandized by the bright Shekinah, the token of the divine presence, that rested over it. And yet, notwithstanding its vast national importance, it had been exposed to the wanderings in the wilderness, and afterwards to the dangers of war and revolution, while its only shelter was a movable tent or tabernacle. This tabernacle was to be expanded into a temple rooted in the living rock of Mount Zion. Three years were spent in preparations for the work, to which seventy thousand men were set apart for carrying burdens, eighty thousand to hew stones in the quarries, and three thousand six hundred overseers to superintend the operations. On the fourth year the building was begun, and in seven years it was finished. Never had the earth witnessed a structure so magnificent—and yet how poor a dwelling for the Infinite! This Solomon himself felt at its dedication, when he exclaimed in his sublime prayer, “Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee: how much less this house which I have built!” God himself returned a gracious answer by a miraculous fire that descended from heaven upon the altar and kindled the burnt-offerings and sacrifices. All Israel, “from the entering in of Hamath to the river of Egypt,” attended as one man at this most momentous of national festivals, after which they returned to their homes in triumph. They had seen with their own eyes the temple of the living God, and the approval with which He had entered and taken possession; and they felt as if the divine presence would dwell for ever in Palestine, and be the pledge of perpetual glory and prosperity.

7. SOLOMON’S APOSTASY.—From this period the grandeur of Solomon continued to increase. His palaces, his gardens, and great architectural works, were multiplied from a wealth that seemed inexhaustible, the produce of the foreign commerce he had established; his parables, proverbs, and songs, indicated the wondrous power and versatility of his talents; while his fame was so widely spread, that “all the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.” But the time was at hand when he was to proclaim all this pre-eminence and pomp to be but “vanity and vexation of spirit”—imbittered too with the conscious-
ness that this result had followed from his own guilt. Solomon the wisest of men was to fall, as Adam the most perfect of human beings had fallen, through the persuasiveness of woman. The king of Israel, after the fashion of eastern sovereigns, endeavoured to augment his grandeur by numerous marriages, in which he was so extravagant that he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Many of these also were “strange women” from the surrounding idolatrous nations with whom the Israelites were in no case to intermarry, “for surely,” the divine prohibition added, “they will turn away your heart after their gods.” This truth was now attested by the strongest of all examples, for at their instigation Solomon in his old age built temples to those idols whose rites were polluted with obscenity and cruelty—built them opposite the temple of the true God, and even joined his wives in their impious worship. Could such monstrous guilt go unpunished, or be expiated by a slight infiction? The punishment denounced was, that the kingdom should be rent from him, with the exception of two tribes, that were to be continued in his family for David his father’s sake. Roused from his uxorious sloth, Solomon endeavoured to destroy Jeroboam, a man of Ephraim, who had already been announced by a prophet of God as the future sovereign of the ten tribes; but Jeroboam fled to Egypt, and was protected by its king, Shishak. A rebellion of the Syrians and Edomites, whom David had reduced to subjection, followed; and, warned by these symptoms of the decay of his empire, the merited penalty of his crime, Solomon repented, and was permitted to depart in peace. He died at the age of sixty, after a reign of forty years.

EXERCISES.

1. Why was David not at first king over all Israel? By what event did he attain the full sovereignty?

2. What was David’s success over the Jebusites?—and the Philistines? What were his chief conquests? What services did he render to religion? What was his chief purpose? How was it prevented? By what promise was he animated?

3. How does sacred history differ from all others? What was David’s first crime? How was it aggravated? What was the punishment denounced? How was it fulfilled? What ensued on his repentance? What was his next offence? How was it a crime? In what light did
it appear to Joab? What alternatives were offered to David as punishment? What was his choice? How was the destroying angel arrested? How was the divine anger appeased?

4. What was the condition of David’s old age? How did the punishment of his offences still continue? What did he on this occasion? What was his last charge?

5. In what state was the kingdom when Solomon succeeded? How did he show his fitness to rule? What were the particulars of his great choice? How was it answered? What incident proved his wisdom?

6. What was Solomon’s great work? Wherein consisted the importance of the ark? How had it been accommodated before the temple was built? How many men were employed in the building? How many years? What was the chief feeling of Solomon when it was completed? How was its completion celebrated?

7. What was the grandeur of Solomon as a king? What as the wisest of men? How did his grandeur prove a snare to him? How was he led into idolatry? What punishment was denounced? How did he seek to prevent it? What was the close of his history?

CHAPTER X.

FROM THE DEATH OF SOLOMON TO THE DOWNFAL OF ISRAEL.

Revolt of Israel from the House of David—Reign of Jeroboam—Of his Successors—Decay and Ruin of the Israelitish Kingdom—The Samaritans.

B.C. 976 to 721.

1. KINGDOM DIVIDED.—A national calamity was now to ensue, which the popularity and military power of David had been sufficient only to retard: this was the rending asunder of Israel into two separate and hostile kingdoms, as had been announced by the word of the Lord. For the fulfilment of this every thing now concurred. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, who succeeded to the crown at the ripe age of forty-one, exhibited a melancholy contrast to his father’s wisdom, being rash, frivolous, and arrogant, while the people, impatient of the heavy imposts that had been laid upon them during the previous reign, had resolved to endure them no longer. The popular discontent was the more dangerous, that it was headed by Jeroboam, a daring and crafty man, who had returned from Egypt to enter into his promised succession. Delegates from the tribes waited on the newly-
crowned Rehoboam, to unfold their grievances and crave redress; but instead of listening graciously, he drove them from his presence with an insulting refusal. At this reception the Jewish signal of mutiny was raised, "To your tents, O Israel!" and open revolt commenced. As had been predicted, the united tribes of Judah and Benjamin adhered to the house of David, and continued their allegiance to Rehoboam, but the other ten chose Jeroboam for their king. Thus the nation was parted into two kingdoms, each having a separate history of its own. But the renown of David and the grandeur of Solomon had raised the country to its utmost height, and from this period its history presents a gradual downfall into degradation, corruption, and decay.

2. JEROBOAM.—After being established on his new throne, Jeroboam was alarmed at the insecurity of his royal tenure. For both kingdoms there was but one temple as there was but one faith; and from the obligation of all Israel to repair to Jerusalem to worship, he feared that the people might thus be led back to their former allegiance. To prevent this, he conceived the impious device of establishing a worship of his own, by which Israel and Judah should be kept apart for ever. He therefore persuaded the tribes that this journeying to the temple of Jerusalem was troublesome and unnecessary; and having accomplished this, he set up two golden calves at the opposite extremities of his kingdom, the one at Dan and the other at Bethel, as symbols of the divine presence, and therefore sufficient for religious worship. It was but a repetition of the device of Aaron and the sin of the Israelites at Sinai. As no Levites would preside over such manifest idolatry, he selected the lowest of the people for that office, and became himself their pontiff, thereby uniting the sacerdotal with the royal authority. Thus not only the theocratic principle of the Jewish polity was violated, but God himself insulted by a mocking resemblance of his own worship. On seeing this, all the Levites and the most devout of the ten tribes forsook their homes to take up their residence in the land of God's own temple; and from this valuable acquisition the kingdom of Judah was so much strengthened as to be a match for apostate Israel in the wars that afterwards ensued.
3. **Kings of Israel.**—The course of Israel in this career of crime was what might have been expected—change, strife, and confusion—which may be briefly illustrated by a summary of its royal successions. Jeroboam died after a reign of twenty-two years, and an unsuccessful war with Judah; but so firmly had he established the idolatrous ox-worship of Egypt, that he is ever after designated in Scripture as “Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.” He was succeeded by Nadab his son, who, after a brief reign of two years, was assassinated by Baasha, a man of the tribe of Issachar. Baasha stepped into the vacant throne, and not only followed the courses of him whose son he had murdered, but even attempted to exceed them, by building a barrier town and fortress at Ramah, so as to prevent all access to Jerusalem. After a reign of twenty-three years, Baasha was succeeded by his son Elah, who at the end of two years was assassinated by Zimri, one of his officers, in the midst of a drunken revel. Zimri was now king, but only for seven short days; for Omri, a captain of the forces, who was set up by the army against the usurper and murderer, was so successful, that Zimri, being shut up in the palace, and seeing no means of escape, set fire to the building, and perished in the flames. Omri then reigned eleven years, and his character is briefly summed up in Scripture as “one who did worse than all that were before him.” And yet a still worse than he was to follow, by whom the climax of iniquity was to be completed. This was Ahab his son, who was not only like Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, but “did sell himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord.” To understand the enormity of his guilt it is sufficient to mention that, not content with the worship of the calves as symbols of the God of Israel, he, at the instigation of Jezebel his wife, a Sidonian princess, introduced the idolatry of the Phoenicians and Babylonians, and overspread the whole kingdom with the worship of Baal. Four hundred and fifty prophets of that idol, and four hundred prophets of the groves, who ate at Jezebel’s table, attested the zeal with which the foul innovation was supported, while of the true worshippers in Israel there were only seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal. The
guilt of Ahab too was a desperate and persevering struggle
to the last against better light and conviction; for Elijah,
the mightiest of prophets since the days of Moses, lived
during his reign, whose denunciations and miracles however
failed to arrest him. At length, after a reign of twenty-
two years, he fell in battle against the Syrians by a random
arrow, and dogs licked the blood that flowed from his armour
and chariot in the very place where he had caused an in-
famous murder to be committed, according to the prediction
of Elijah.

4. Israel's Decay and Fall.—On the death of Ahab,
his son Ahaziah succeeded him, an imbecile as well as sinful
sovereign, whose life, after a short reign of two years, was
terminated by an accident. He was succeeded by his bro-
ther Jehoram, who opposed the foreign idolatries of his
father Ahab, but not the ox-worship of Jeroboam, and in
whose reign the prophet Elijah was carried in a chariot of
fire to heaven without tasting of death. During this reign
also Israel was hard pressed by the victorious Syrians, and
only saved from ruin by the interposition of a miracle. Hav-
ing been wounded in battle, Jehoram retired for cure to
Jezreel, but was there slain by Jehu, who, at the command
of the Lord through the prophet Elisha, had been anointed
king. With him also perished his mother Jezebel, and
the whole house of Ahab, according to divine prediction.
The new sovereign Jehu, an active soldier, who had been
raised up to execute these judgments, commenced a zealrous
war against the Baal-worship established by Ahab; but
after he had utterly destroyed it, instead of returning to the
worship of the true God, he contented himself with the calves
of Jeroboam, which he restored to their former supremacy.
In this way the opportunity of a great national reform was
recklessly thrown aside. To reward the zeal of Jehu, de-
fective though it was, his posterity for four generations was
continued upon the throne, which they enjoyed for the un-
usual period of a hundred years; but during this time the
country was gradually sinking under its enemies, and es-
pecially the Syrians, who had risen from their depression
and become a powerful nation. So greatly indeed were the
military resources of the Israelites diminished, that in the
reign of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, they could muster no more than ten chariots, fifty horsemen, and ten thousand infantry. Zechariah, the last of the dynasty of Jehu, after a brief reign of six months, was deposed and slain by Shallum, who in like manner was destroyed by Menahem after he had been one month a king. Menahem having thus won the crown in the usual fashion of his predecessors, was compelled to become a tributary of the great Assyrian empire. This last power had now risen into pre-eminence, and become the master of Israel, which in its distresses sought refuge in an alliance with Egypt; but this stay was only a broken reed, for the Israelitish kingdom, after having existed in its separate state two hundred and fifty-four years, found its days numbered and its career of apostasy terminated. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, invaded it during the reign of Hoshea, and was so successful that, in accordance with an old principle of eastern policy, he rooted up the population of the ten tribes, and dispersed them among the distant regions of his vast empire. What were the places of their exile, or where the descendants of these tribes are now to be found awaiting the time of their restoration, is still the perplexing problem of the antiquary and theologian.

5. The Samaritans.—The rejected people of the Lord being thus torn from the land of promise which they had so completely forfeited, their places were filled by the people of other countries which the Assyrians had subdued, and who were planted in Palestine merely to prevent the land from becoming utterly desolate. These new comers allied themselves with the remaining residents, the mere refuse of Israel whom the conqueror had spared; and from the union a population sprang up called Samaritans, from the name of Samaria, the capital of the late kingdom. It was a notion of ancient idolaters that every country had its own guardian gods, to whom it especially belonged, and whose favour it was wise to cultivate; and as the new colonists were desirous, from this motive, to worship the God of Israel, they were instructed for that purpose by a priest who dwelt at Bethel. At first indeed they mixed this worship with their own native idolatry, but after a long process of time their faith assumed the form it exhibited during the time of our Saviour.
It seems to have become more pure than that of the Jews, as they adhered more rigidly to the written word, instead of following the traditions of the elders, while they were more open to inquiry and conviction. Still, however, they were loathed and despised by the proud legitimate descendants of Abraham, and even to the final dispersion the Jews had "no dealings with the Samaritans."

EXERCISES.

1. What national calamity ensued on the death of Solomon? What tended to produce it? How did Rehoboam offend the people? What was the consequence?
2. What caused Jeroboam's alarm? How did he seek to prevent it? What priests did he select? How was Judah increased by the idolatry of Israel?
3. What was the end and character of Jeroboam? What was the history of his successor? What of Baasha?—of Elah?—of Zimri?—of Omri? What was the character of Omri's successor? Wherein consisted the enormity of Ahab's guilt? What indicated his zeal for idolatry? How did he sin against better knowledge? What was his end?
4. What was the history of Ahab's successor? What the character of Jehoram? What miraculous event happened in his reign? How did he die? For what purpose was Jehu anointed? How did he execute his task? How was his defective zeal rewarded? How was Israel now decaying? What was its state under Jehu's successor? What was the history of Zechariah?—of Shallum?—of Menahem? To what condition was the kingdom now reduced? How did the Assyrian king treat the conquered country?
5. How were the places of the ten tribes filled up? From whom were the Samaritans derived? From what motive did they turn to the worship of the God of Israel? What was finally the character of their creed? How were they regarded by the Jews?

CHAPTER XI.

FROM THE REIGN OF REHOBOAM TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.


B.C. 976 to 676.

1. KINGS OF JUDAH.—After this brief outline of the history of the kingdom of Israel, we turn to a similar account of that of Judah. The reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solo-
mon, that had commenced with such folly, was continued in a still worse spirit, for he soon turned to the abominable idolatries of the Canaanites, and made his subjects participators in his guilt. To punish him, Shishak, king of Egypt, was sent against him, who entered Jerusalem as a conqueror, and plundered both palace and temple. Rehoboam repented, and the Egyptians were withdrawn; but he again returned to his iniquities, in which he died, after a reign of seventeen years. He was succeeded by his son Abijah, who gained a signal victory over Jeroboam, and seemed destined by his talents to raise the kingdom of Judah; but his life was prematurely terminated, after a reign of three years. Asa his son then ascended the throne, and swept away the foreign idolatries that had entered the kingdom under Solomon and Rehoboam, and was requited by the discomfiture of an immense army of Ethiopians, by whom Judah was invaded. But he forgot his trust in God and the victory that rewarded it, by hiring the idolatrous Syrians to aid him in his wars against Baasha, and imprisoning the prophet Hanani, who had rebuked his sinful distrust. The same forgetfulness marked his old age; for being diseased in his feet, he gave his confidence wholly to the physicians, men who probably wrought by charms and pretended miracles, instead of seeking divine aid. He died after a reign of forty-one years, and a splendid funeral with which he was buried attested the esteem of his subjects.

2. Jehoshaphat.—Asa was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat, a still better king and more consistent worshipper of God; and under his reign Judah was becoming great, prosperous, and happy. The Philistines and Arabians he reduced to tribute; the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, who invaded him, were divinely struck by a frenzy under which they attacked and destroyed each other, while Jehoshaphat and his army stood by, singing the praises of the Lord, without striking one stroke. But unhappily for his character he formed an alliance with the idolatrous Ahab, and afterwards with Ahaziah his son, that involved him in disasters from which he was rescued only by divine favour. He reigned twenty-five years, and was one of the best of those sovereigns whom sacred history has recorded.
3. Athaliah.—The following reign was of a very different character. Jehoram, the son and successor of Jehoshaphat, had married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, whose crimes and idolatries she followed, and into which she led her husband. After a reign of eight years, he was struck with a loathsome disease of which he died, and his subjects expressed their abhorrence of his reign by withholding the usual honours of a royal burial. He was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who ruled in the same spirit, but only for a single year, as he was slain, along with his kinsman, Jehoram king of Israel, by Jehu at Jezreel. The reins of government then fell into the merciless hands of Athaliah, the queen-mother, who caused the whole royal family to be destroyed, that she might occupy the throne without a rival. An infant, however, named Joash, the son of Ahaziah, escaped the carnage, being carried away by his aunt, and concealed in the temple by Jehoiada the high-priest. Athaliah now pursued a career worthy of her infamous mother, by setting up the worship of Baal, and by persecuting the servants of the true God. At the end of six years, the high-priest, unable any longer to endure this impious tyranny, caused his youthful charge Joash to be anointed and proclaimed king in the temple, surrounded by a strong body-guard of armed Levites, amidst the blast of trumpets and joyful acclamations of the people. Alarmed by these sounds, Athaliah hurried to the spot, but was instantly arrested, dragged from the temple, and summarily put to death beyond the precincts of the sacred building by command of the high-priest, as a traitress against the laws and authority of God, the real sovereign of the nation.

4. Joash—Amaziah.—Joash having thus succeeded to the throne at the early age of seven years, was placed under the protectorship of Jehoiada the high-priest, by whose vigorous administration the temples of Baal were destroyed, and the cause of true religion cherished and advanced. But after the death of Jehoiada, the young king fell into the hands of evil advisers, so that all these wise measures were reversed, and even the son of his preserver, Zachariah, now high-priest, was murdered in the temple itself for denouncing his apostasy. After a guilty and dishonoured reign, in which he
was overpowered by the Syrians, and compelled to purchase their forbearance, he was assassinated by two of his servants, having reigned forty years dating from his early coronation. Amaziah, his son and successor, commenced his reign with much respect for the divine law, and zeal for the worship of the true God, and the divine approbation made his course prosperous. He routed the Edomites, and took their capital; but on returning he brought with him the idols of the conquered people, and set them up for worship in Jerusalem. Amaziah did not escape unpunished. He provoked Jehoash, king of Israel, to war, and was routed and taken prisoner; after which the conqueror entered Jerusalem, and plundered the temple. Amaziah was left in possession of his dishonoured crown; but his reign became so hateful to his subjects that they conspired against him and slew him at Lachish, after he had been king twenty-nine years.

5. Uzziah—Jothan—Ahaz.—Uzziah his son was only five years old when his father was slain, and was called to the throne at the age of sixteen. His rule at first was able and virtuous, and attended with success, so that he defeated the Philistines, Arabians, and Ammonites, and made the kingdom respected as in former days. But in the height of his prosperity, and when he had reigned twenty-four years, he fell into the worst crime of a Jewish king, by seeking to join the priestly with the kingly office. He commenced by attempting to burn incense in the temple, but the high-priest withstood him; and while the king persisted, he was suddenly struck with leprosy, so that he had to be hurried from the sacred building, and placed apart in a solitary dwelling like a common leper, until the day of his death. Jotham, who had held the regency during the seclusion of his father, succeeded, and warned by its formidable consequences, he avoided his father's crime, and was blessed with a prosperous reign of sixteen years. Not such, however, was the character and fortune of Ahaz, by whom he was succeeded; for he hurried into idolatry, and not only set up the worship of Jeroboam's calves, but the idols of the surrounding nations. For these crimes, in which the people participated, he and Judah were punished not merely with disastrous wars against Israel and Syria, but by invasions of the Philistines and
Edomites, through which the kingdom was reduced to the brink of ruin. Ahaz then called in the doubtful aid of the Assyrians, by whom he was reduced to vassalage. Still, however, he persevered in his unholy and unkingly courses, until he died, after a reign of sixteen years, and was denied the honour of a royal sepulchre.

6. Hezekiah.—Hezekiah, the best of Jewish kings since the days of David, was now seated on the humbled throne of Judah. His first proceedings were to root out every trace of idolatry, in which he was so earnest that he destroyed the brazen serpent of Moses, because it had become an object of popular worship. He also opened the gates of the temple, which his father had closed, and restored the sacred worship that had been banished. After having thus laboured to purify the land, and restore it to its former integrity, he ventured to throw off the Assyrian yoke that had been imposed upon his father, and was in consequence attacked by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, at the head of an immense army. Jerusalem was besieged, and brought to the verge of ruin, while the boastful enemy denounced fearful menaces, mingled with impious blasphemy. But at midnight the destroying angel passed through the camp of the Assyrians, and in the morning it was filled with a hundred and eighty-five thousand human corpses. After this miraculous deliverance, Hezekiah fell sick, and was warned by the prophet Isaiah that he should die and not live; but at the earnest prayer of the pious king his life was spared fifteen years longer, while a miraculous sign of the sun going back ten degrees upon the dial assured him that thus long he would be continued on earth. The subsequent reign of Hezekiah was holy, peaceful, and prosperous, “and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death.”

7. Manasseh.—The history of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, who succeeded his father at the age of twelve years, was eventful and striking. Eager to undo the previous reformation, he restored the foreign idol-worship, and went so far as to build heathen altars and set up an image within the temple itself. He also persecuted and put to death the true servants of God, and it is traditionally re-
ported that he even caused the illustrious Isaiah to be sawn asunder. While he thus drove onward, the people madly followed him, so that they became worse than the godless heathens around them, whom they were eager to imitate. But the terrible Assyrian, so lately the scourge of God upon apostate Israel, was once more brought up to Jerusalem; and Manasseh, taken captive, was bound with fetters, and thrown into a dungeon in Babylon. Here he had opportunity to repent—and he repented. For this, He who beheld and pitied his afflictions, restored him to his throne, but probably as a tributary to the Assyrian king. The rest of his reign was occupied in undoing his former evils, and he cast out of the city the altars and images which he had formerly set up. This example little availed with his son Amon, who succeeded, for he only imitated the worst parts of his father's character, until he was slain, after a reign of two years, by a conspiracy of his own servants. He was succeeded by his son Josiah, whose reign was like a bright gleam of sunset upon the temple of Jerusalem, before the night of darkness and desolation settled over it.

8. Josiah.—This exemplary sovereign, who succeeded when only eight years old, has given his name to princes whose first years were full of excellence and future promise, and who have been suddenly snatched away from the love and expectations of their people. Distinguished for piety even in earliest boyhood, he commenced a vigorous reform, by which not only his own kingdom was purified from idolatry, but also the territories that had lately belonged to four of the expatriated Israelitish tribes. In the course of these proceedings, during the eighteenth year of his reign, the original book of the law, written by Moses himself, and deposited beside the ark, was found by Hilkiah, the high-priest; and on hearing it read, Josiah rent his clothes, when he thought how utterly the whole code had been violated, and of the punishments denounced by Him who cannot lie against the national guilt. In his anguish he sent to consult the prophetess Huldah; but her answer was, that all these predictions would assuredly be fulfilled. As for the king himself, on account of his excellence, he was mercifully to be removed before the evil day, so that he should not witness
the calamities of his people. He was thus removed accordingly. In the thirty-first year of his reign, Necho, the Pharaoh or king of Egypt, marched through Palestine, with the purpose of invading Assyria,—an invasion which Josiah, as a tributary to the Assyrian kingdom, felt himself bound to resist. He therefore encountered the Egyptians at Megiddo, but was defeated; and in a few days after he died at Jerusalem of the wounds he had received. As he was the last, so perhaps he was also the best of the good kings of Judah.

9. Jerusalem's Downfall.—At his death, Josiah left three sons, of whom Jehoahaz, the second, was called by the people to the throne; but after three months he was deposed by Necho, who set his elder brother Eliakim in his place, changing his name to Jehoiakim, to indicate his vassalage to the Egyptian crown, and imposing a tribute on the nation. Jehoiakim was an idolater, and the people showed their inclination for idolatry by setting aside the previous reformations and following in his steps. In the meantime, the eastern supremacy having passed from Nineveh to Babylon, the Jewish king became the tributary of the latter power; but having had the hardihood to rebel against his new master, Nebuchadnezzar came against him, besieged and took Jerusalem, and carried away not only many of the nobles and chief families of Judah, but also the sacred vessels of the temple. Jehoiakim, who now continued to reign by the mere permission of his conqueror, again revolted; upon which Nebuchadnezzar returned full of indignation, utterly swept the city and temple, and brought the rebel king to Babylon, where he put him to death, and threw out his carcass into the fields, a prey to the birds and beasts. Jehoiachin his son succeeded; but as the new king was elected without Nebuchadnezzar's permission, a third Chaldean descent upon the kingdom was the consequence, by which inroad it was stripped of its remaining wealth and all the best of its artificers, while Jehoiachin himself was deposed after a short but iniquitous rule of three months, and Zedekiah, the third son of Josiah, raised in his stead. But neither the terrible warnings of the late disasters, nor the utter feebleness of his denuded kingdom, could prevent Zedekiah, after a sinful reign of nine years, from rebelling
against his powerful superior,—a crime which Nebuchadnezzar, that "hammer of the whole earth," was the least likely to leave unpunished. Accordingly, after a siege of eighteen months, Jerusalem was again taken, when its streets flowed with blood and were filled with corpses; even the temple was no longer a shelter to those who had abandoned its worship and rebelled against its God. Zedekiah, after beholding his sons murdered before his face, had his eyes put out; and thus dishonoured, childless, and blind, he was sent to end his days in a prison in Babylon. Jerusalem and the temple were then burnt down and destroyed by command of the conqueror, and a final gleaning made of the population of Judah, which was so complete that none were left behind but the poorest of the land, to be vine-dressers and husbandmen. The land thus stripped of its people was not colonized by the Chaldean king as Israel had been by the Assyrians: instead of this it was to undergo seventy years of desolation, during which time it was to be the monument of God's righteous indignation and of the guilt by which it had been provoked.

10. The Prophets.—Thus fell both Judah and Israel, but not unwarned; for, independently of the predictions of Moses that foretold with terrible accuracy the consequences of their apostasy, prophets were sent to them in rapid succession, who denounced not only the sins of the people, but those of their priests, princes, and kings. But either the exhortations of these prophets were disregarded and their predictions despised, or if regarded it was only with a short-lived repentance. Often, indeed, these faithful messengers of God were required not merely with contempt or imprisonment, but even suffered a violent death. These prophets were of two kinds: those whose warnings and predictions were chiefly for passing emergencies, and who left no writings behind them; and those whose predictions embraced a distant futurity of years and ages, and which required therefore to be made permanent by writing for the conviction and instruction of posterity. These are the prophets whose writings constitute so large a portion of the Sacred Volume, and whose prophecies anticipate the history of the world in reference to God as its king even to the end of the world itself. It
is consoling to think that, however these illustrious men were unheeded, misunderstood, or persecuted in their own day, they still continue to speak and be listened to with affectionate reverence, and that there is "no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

EXERCISES.

1. What was the character of Rehoboam's reign? How was he punished? What was the history of his successor? How did Asa show his distrust in God? What became of him?

2. What was the character of Jehoshaphat? What were his successes? What was his fault?

3. What was the history and character of Jehoram? What his end? What of his successor? What were the crimes of Athaliah to obtain the government? How was Joash preserved? How crowned? What was the fate of Athaliah?

4. What was the early reign of Joash? What followed to reverse it? What was the prosperous commencement of Amaziah? How was it changed? What was his end?

5. How did Uzziah begin his reign? By what crime was it defaced? How was he punished? What was the history of his successor? What were the crimes of Ahaz? How were they punished? What was his resource?

6. What was the character of Hezekiah? What were his proceedings? What were the particulars of Sennacherib's invasion? How was Hezekiah's life miraculously continued?

7. What were the atrocities of Manasseh? How were these visited? What was the nature and effect of his repentance? What was the history of his successor?

8. What was the character of Josiah? What the reformations of his reign? What occurred when the Book of the Law was discovered? What was the end of Josiah?

9. What was the history of Jehoahaz?—and of Jehoiakim? By whom was Jerusalem invaded? What became of Jehoiakim? What was the history of Jehoiachin? What were the particulars of the last capture of Jerusalem? What became of Zedekiah? To what condition was Judah reduced by the conqueror?

10. By whom had the fallen kingdoms been warned and denounced? How were the prophets received? Of what kinds were these prophets? What are the prophetic writings?
CHAPTER XII.

FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM TO THE DEATH OF MATTATHIAS.

Captivity of the Jews in Babylon—Belshazzar’s Feast—Daniel—Return from the Captivity—Alexander the Great favours the Jews—Judah under Alexander’s Successors—Successful Revolt of Mattathias.

B.C. 676 TO B.C. 255.

1. THE CAPTIVITY.—Hitherto the sins of God’s favoured people had been visited with a corresponding punishment. The infliction of a famine or pestilence, the subjugation of an offending tribe, or even of the whole nation for a limited period, had usually been the worst; and in every case the visitation had been calculated more for warning and reformation than for chastisement. But at length their iniquity had become so great, and their apostasy from God so confirmed, that nothing less than the most formidable of national calamities could suffice to fit them for the high purposes that were yet in store for them. Seventy years of banishment from their beloved land were now to be undergone, during which they were to weep by the rivers of Babylon beneath the oppression and taunts of their conquerors. And this terrible warning was not ineffectual. It so convinced the Jews of the sin of following strange gods, that they no longer were liable to relapse into idolatry as they had hitherto been; and by being scattered among the heathen, to whom their religion was a subject of wonder and inquiry, they tended to arrest the growing career of human ignorance and guilt, and to elevate the conceptions of a benighted world with regard to the attributes of the divine character and the nature of good and evil. In this way their calamitous dispersion became not only a benefit to themselves, but a blessing to mankind at large.

2. DANIEL.—At the commencement of their expatriation it happened favourably for the Jews that several of their countrymen who had been previously carried away captive
by Nebuchadnezzar were in high office at court. Of these the chief was Daniel, who had been brought to Babylon as a hostage during the reign of Jehoiachin, and whose divine illuminations, as well as religious probity and political sagacity, had recommended him to the favour of Nebuchadnezzar. An event occurred during the reign of Belshazzar, the conqueror's grandson, by which the God of Israel was magnified in the eyes of the heathen, and the influence of Daniel to protect his countrymen increased. The young Babylonian sovereign having prepared a splendid banquet for his lords, at which the idols of the nation were extolled as superior to all others, conceived the impious idea of illustrating that superiority by using the sacred vessels which had belonged to the temple of Jerusalem for the purposes of their festive riot. The vessels were brought at his command, and filled with wine; but in the midst of the merriment of the king, his satraps, and concubines, a shadowy hand came forth, and traced an inscription upon the wall which none could read. Confounded at the sign, the wise men were summoned to decipher and explain the writing, but in vain; the wisdom of learned Babylon was speechless, although the highest rewards were offered. At length Daniel was called in; and after sternly rebuking the king's profanity, he read the inscription, which announced that Belshazzar's hours were numbered, and that his kingdom was given to the Medes and Persians. On that night the king was slain by a body of conspirators, and in the following year Darius the Mede incorporated Babylon with his own dominions. So high was the favour of the prophet-prince with this new sovereign, that the courtiers envied him and sought his downfall, by obtaining from the unwary king, that through all his dominions none should supplicate any deity except himself for thirty days, on pain of being thrown into a den of lions. As they had anticipated, Daniel continued his wonted prayers to his God; and being watched and detected in the act, he was consigned to the den, the king being unable by the royal laws of the realm to reverse his own decree. On the following morning the prophet was taken out unhurt, and his accusers being thrown into his place were instantly devoured by the lions. The effect of this miraculous interposition
was manifested by an order sent by Darius to all the provinces of his vast empire, commanding them to “fear the God of Daniel, for,” it added, “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.”

3. The Restoration.—After the death of Darius, Babylon revolted from the government of Media and Persia, but was recovered by Cyrus his nephew, a sovereign whose greatness and worth are attested both by sacred and profane history. This distinguished conqueror appears to have been aware of the important part he was to perform in the restoration of the Jews, having been probably shown by Daniel, who was still alive, the prophecies of Isaiah, in which he was not only described but expressly announced by name as the promised deliverer. The seventy years had now expired, and therefore in the same year that Babylon was taken Cyrus issued his memorable edict, giving the Jews full permission to return to their country, and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. It is remarkable how few embraced the opportunity: only fifty thousand from Judah, Benjamin, and Levi returned, at the head of whom was Zerubbabel, the grandson of Jehoiachin. By so small a handful from the captive but widely-spread and numerous population, the rebuilding of the holy city was commenced, and the foundations of the second temple laid; but a long period had to elapse, and heavy trials to be endured, before the work was completed. These obstacles chiefly arose from the Samaritans, who were eager to identify themselves with the Jews, that they might share in the royal bounty; but being rejected in their insidious offers, they so opposed the work of building that it was abandoned during the reign of Cyrus and of his two successors. It was at last resumed during the government of Darius Hystaspes; and the long-forgotten decree of Cyrus, now the national hero of Persia, having been appealed to and produced, in which every assistance was ordered to be given for the restoration of Jerusalem, the Jews recommenced the work with fresh vigour, animated by the exhortations of the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, and directed by Ezra and Nehemiah. The latter was cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the Persian king, and had influence
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to be appointed Tirshatha, or governor of Judea, and obtained
a commission to complete the building in spite of the surrounding
hostility. About a hundred years elapsed after the return
under Zerubbabel before the city was finished and protected
by a wall, which was erected upon the old foundation.

4. ALEXANDER THE GREAT.—After the death of Nehem-
iah, Judea was governed by its high-priests, the lineal
descendants of Aaron, but subject as a tributary province
to the Persian crown. This was favourable to the country
in its second infancy, as it thereby enjoyed the protection
of a powerful superior, while its religious rights were un-
touched. A change, however, was at hand, by which it was
to be transferred to a new master. Alexander the Great,
in his victorious career, having destroyed the city of Tyre,
resolved to inflict the same punishment upon Jerusalem for
its faithful allegiance to the Persian government. Its ruin
seemed inevitable, and Jaddua, the high-priest, clothed in
his pontifical robes and accompanied by the priests and chief
citizens, came out in mournful procession to deprecate the
wrath of the conqueror. To the astonishment of all his gen-
erals, Alexander hastened forward to meet the venerable
Jaddua, and bowed his proud head before him in humble
reverence. On being asked why he whom all men wor-
shiped should thus worship a Jewish high-priest, he replied,
that it was not him whom he had thus honoured, but the
sacred name of the God of the Jews which was engraved
on his golden frontlet. He also declared, that while he was
anxiously revolving at home the question of the Persian
expedition, this very priest, attired in the same remarkable
vestments, had appeared to him in a dream, and exhorted
him to cross over boldly into Asia, for that the Persian
empire should be his. This circumstance, and the statement
generally received that Jaddua showed the young king those
prophecies in which his successful career was announced,
will sufficiently explain the favour shown to the Jews, and
the privileges he conferred on them. These chiefly consisted
in the entire enjoyment of their own laws and religious pol-
ity, and exemption from tribute every seventh year, during
which the land was to lie uncultivated, according to the
Mosaic requirement.
5. Alexander’s Successors.—Under the successors of Alexander, the Jews participated in the troubles of the divided governments that were then set up. As their country was included in the kingdom of Syria, which was at war with Egypt, Ptolemy Lagus, the Egyptian king, laid siege to Jerusalem, which he took on the Sabbath, as the Jews from their mistaken reverence for that day would neither hinder his entrance nor take arms in self-defence. The conqueror, however, was merciful; and although he carried a great number of Jews to Alexandria, his capital, it was as colonists rather than prisoners, for he conferred upon them all the civic privileges that were only bestowed upon his most favoured subjects. A still more important event connected with the reputation of the Jews and their heaven-derived religion occurred during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the successor of Lagus. This learned prince caused the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament to be translated into Greek, and laid up in his famous library of Alexandria; and by this version, called the Septuagint, the scholars of every country with whom Greek was a common tongue had the opportunity of learning a nobler faith and purer morality than human research could furnish. Under Antiochus the Great, Judea once more reverted to the Syrian dominion, and during the reign of this king and his successor the privileges of the Jews were still farther increased. But not only the favour, but even the hostility, of their foreign sovereigns tended at this time, under the good providence of God, to advance the interests of his chosen people. A remarkable instance of this occurred during the reign of Seleucus Philopater, king of Syria. Being in want of money, and hearing an exaggerated account of the wealth deposited in the temple of Jerusalem, he sent Heliodorus, his treasurer, to seize it and bring it to Antioch. But no sooner had this heathen intruded into the sacred precincts than he was dazzled and thunderstruck by an awful vision, so that he hastily left the city, proclaiming that it was under the protection of a power which none could resist.

6. Persecutions of Antiochus.—Evil days, however, were at hand under Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, or the Illustrious, but more aptly pronounced by his enemies Epi-
TO THE DEATH OF MATTATHIAS.

manes, or the Mad, the successor of Seleucus. His reign was so oppressive to the Jews that they rejoiced at a false rumour of his death; and enraged at this, he entered Jerusalem, gave it up to a three days' massacre and plunder, and carried away the chief ornaments of the temple, after defiling it by sacrificing a sow upon the altar. This invasion was followed by one still worse, when Antiochus was thwarted by the Romans in his hostile designs upon Egypt. Burning with impotent resentment, he sought to quench his fury upon helpless Jerusalem, to which he sent his general Apollonius, with an army of 22,000 men, and a commission to slay all the male inhabitants, and sell the women and children into slavery. Apollonius entered the city unsuspected, for no hostile purpose had been proclaimed, and waited quietly till the services of the Sabbath had commenced. It was then that he let his soldiers loose, and an unresisted massacre commenced: the priests were slain at the altar, and the people in the courts of the temple, while the streets were every where defiled with human blood and corpses. The city was then plundered and set on fire, the wall beaten down, and a fortress erected upon the heights that commanded the temple, so that all entrance for the purposes of worship might be prevented. Even this was not the worst. Antiochus, who seems to have been mad in earnest, and therefore worthy of his corrupted title, conceived the idea of reducing all his subjects of whatever creed to the Greek idolatry, and accomplishing it by war and persecution. He therefore commenced with the Jews, whose faith had hitherto been respected by Babylonian, Persian, Syrian, and Egyptian, and he set up the idols of Greece in the towns of Judea, and commanded the inhabitants to worship them on pain of death. But the Jews were not now so compliant as they had been under their native kings; the seventy years of national captivity had warned them; and in many instances they preferred martyrdom, under the most excruciating tortures, to apostasy. But these affecting appeals entered into the ears of the God of Sabaoth, and deliverance was at hand, not only from a merciless oppressor but a foreign yoke.

7. REVOLT OF JUDEA.—As on former occasions, God's
heritage was to be freed from an unsuspected quarter, and by unlikely instruments. In the little town or village of Modin dwelt an old priest, called Mattathias, a descendant of the elder branch of the house of Aaron; and as he was in high esteem from his descent, age, and piety, the commissioner of Antiochus imagined that, by prevailing upon him to sacrifice to the Greek idols, he would induce the whole district to follow his example. Mattathias, however, not only refused, but at the head of his five brave sons killed an apostate Jew who was in the act of sacrificing, and assailed the commissioner himself, whom he slew, with several of his soldiers. Then raising the war-cry of liberty, "If any one be zealous for his country and his God, let him follow me!" he retired to the desert with a few followers, who soon increased into a formidable band. There he was first assailed by a party of the king's troops on the Sabbath, and suffered some loss from the unwillingness of his people to defend themselves on that day; but Mattathias, superior to his countrymen, at last persuaded them that it was lawful to save their own lives even upon the Sabbath. It was an important principle established for the coming wars, as the insurrection might otherwise have been extinguished in a few hours. He was soon able to sally out from his hiding-places into the villages and towns, where he overturned the altars, demolished the idols, and put to the sword the persecutors who worshipped them. A year of such heroic efforts on the part of the brave and patriotic priest sufficed to check the enforced idolatry and lay the foundation of national independence, when he died, exhorting his sons with his last breath to follow his example, and complete the work which he had begun. He recommended also that, from his remarkable prudence, Simon should be their counsellor, and, on account of his valour, Judas be followed as their general. He then closed his eyes in peace and hope. From his grandfather, who was named Asmoneus, the descendants of Mattathias are distinguished in history under the name of the Asmonean family.

EXERCISES.

1. How had the Jews been hitherto punished for their sins? Why were they now visited with the heaviest punishment? What good effects followed?
2. What was in favour of the captive Jews at Babylon? Who was Daniel? What impious deed was committed at Belshazzar's feast? How was it interrupted? How was the inscription interpreted? In what manner did the courtiers plot the destruction of Daniel? How was their design frustrated? What was the effect on Darius?

3. What was the character of Cyrus? How was he affected towards the Jews? What decree did he issue in their behalf? How did they avail themselves of it? How was the rebuilding of Jerusalem hindered? How were these obstacles surmounted? Who was Nehemiah?

4. What was the government of Judea at the restoration? By whom was Jerusalem menaced? What steps were taken to appease Alexander? What was his conduct on this occasion? What concessions did he make to the Jews?

5. How was Jerusalem taken by Ptolemy? How did he treat the Jews? What increased their reputation in the following reigns? What remarkable event happened in the temple of Jerusalem?

6. What was the conduct of Antiochus Epiphanes towards Jerusalem? How was he again incensed against the Jews? How was Jerusalem taken and treated by his general? What innovation did Antiochus meditate upon his subjects? How did he commence it in Judea? What was the result?

7. By whom was the revolt commenced? In what manner? What was the first difficulty of Mattathias? How did he obviate it? What was the career of Mattathias? What were his dying charges? Of what family was he the founder?

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM THE RISE OF THE MACCABEES TO THE COMING OF OUR SAVIOUR.


B. C. 255 TO A. D. 1.

1. JUDAS THE MACCABEE.—A new and glorious era was now to dawn upon Jerusalem under the sons of the brave old priest of Modin. As he had recommended, Judas, although the third of the illustrious brotherhood, was called to the chief place, by being elected their leader. The war indeed to which he fearlessly addressed himself would, to mere human calculation, have seemed utterly hopeless. As yet in their new national infancy, the Jews had for their relentless enemy the most powerful sovereign of the day; his
generals were brave, and inured to the whole science of warfare; while his armies were numerous, perfect in discipline, and animated with the recollection of Alexander and his countless victories. What could Judas and his undisciplined handful, however brave, oppose against such resources? But they knew that they were still the chosen people of God; and being arrayed in his cause, they believed in the promise, that one of them would chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. The days and the faith of Joshua and Barak, of Jephthah and Gideon, had returned with the trials of ancient times. Such was the spirit, and such was to be the close, of that warfare to which the signal of onset had been already sounded.

With only six thousand men, the intrepid Judas took the field. The standard which he raised on this eventful occasion had inscribed upon it, Mi Camo-ca Baalim Jehovah (who among the gods is like unto thee, O Lord?), and from the initial letters of these words he and his successors were called the Maccabees. His first antagonist was Apollonius, governor of Samaria, whom he defeated, and by this victory recovered many of the towns and fortresses of Judea. He was next assailed by an overwhelming army commanded by Seron, a skilful general, but him also he routed with great loss. The conflict for liberty then went onward, in the course of which five victories succeeded in one year, so that the renown of Judas and his brave companions was spread abroad among the nations. In the meantime, Antiochus became involved in a war with the revolted Persians and Armenians that required his presence elsewhere; but alarmed at this formidable Jewish insurrection which he had so rashly provoked, he ordered Lysias, his deputy at Antioch, to make every exertion to repress it. A Syrian army of 60,000 foot and 5000 horse accordingly marched against Judas, and with such confidence of success that a large body of slave-merchants accompanied them to purchase the Jews who should be taken prisoners. But the Maccabee, who was as skilful as he was brave, manœuvred his little army of less than 10,000 men among the mountains to seize a favourable moment of onset. This came in consequence of the enemy's dividing his forces, the more securely to envelop him;
upon which he rushed down upon them at Bethzur, routed them in two successive engagements, and plundered and destroyed their camp. Notwithstanding these signal successes, his few followers were still imperfectly armed; but another decisive victory gained beyond the Jordan, by which a collection of military stores fell into his hands, enabled him to equip his army, after which he entered the ruined Jerusalem in triumph, and proceeded to repair the city and restore the interrupted worship. The temple was dedicated anew, amidst the joyful melody of psalms, and the clang of armour from its brave champions; and this solemn act was commemorated to after-ages by a newly established annual festival called the Feast of Dedication. Thus was Jerusalem raised from the dust and replaced upon her mountain throne. Soon after, Antiochus Epiphanes, the merciless persecutor of the Jews, died, while meditating a terrible retribution for their revolt. The strange disease with which he was suddenly stricken, and under which he expired in great agony, made him confess in his last moments that the hand of God was upon him for the miseries he had inflicted upon his Jewish subjects.

The war against Jerusalem was continued by Lysias, now regent of Syria, who resolved by one great effort to crush the Maccabees, by whom his arms had been formerly disgraced. He therefore commenced a fresh Jewish campaign at the head of 100,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 32 elephants, and 300 chariots armed with scythes. Judas not being strong enough to meet such an army in open battle, alarmed them by a bold night-attack in which 4000 Syrians fell. He then retreated to Jerusalem, which Lysias besieged, and probably would have taken, had not tidings arrived which obliged him to hurry to Antioch. Judas was now recognised as legitimate governor of Judea, while Aelius was appointed high-priest; but the latter was so deeply tainted with the Greek idolatry that the Jews banished him from the country. Enraged at this expulsion, Aelius, accompanied by a band of Jewish traitors, hastened to the court of Demetrius Soter, now king of Syria, with complaints against Judas and his adherents, in consequence of which a new invasion of Judea was commenced. But both in this
and another that followed, Judas was so successful, that of the last army sent against him not a man returned home. Still apprehensive, however, for the security of his country, exposed to so powerful an enemy, Judas formed an alliance with the Romans, at that time the refuge of all oppressed states, in consequence of which the Roman senate sent their commands to Demetrius to forbear his aggressions against their new allies. But before this order was known in Judea its heroic defender fell, having been obliged, in consequence of the desertion of his little army, to resist at the head of eight hundred soldiers twenty-two thousand Syrians. He died as bravely as he had lived, and was buried at Modin, amidst the tears and lamentations of his country.

2. Jonathan.—After the death of Judas, his youngest brother Jonathan, whose military reputation was scarcely inferior to his own, succeeded, by whom the war was at last successfully terminated; and being appointed high-priest as well as civil ruler, he was enabled by his twofold authority to compose the internal dissensions by which the country had been divided and weakened. In consequence also of his brother’s victories and his own, Judea had already risen to great political influence; while the civil wars in which Syria was now employed made the adherence of Jonathan so important that each party vied in the concessions with which they sought to win him. In this way, the Jewish state obtained greater advantages than a course of distinguished victories would have ensured. But to these Syrian divisions Jonathan himself fell a victim, for at Ptolemais he was treacherously assassinated by Tryphon, who in his attempts upon the crown of Syria discovered that the righteous Maccabee would be a powerful obstacle to his ambition.

3. Simon.—When tidings of Jonathan’s murder reached Jerusalem the whole nation trembled; but another of the noble brotherhood still survived to defend them. This was Simon, the sagacious head of counsel, according to the appointment of Mattathias, while Judas had been selected as the right arm of their fallen country. He merited the distinction by continuing the successful career of his brothers, and by the capture of the Syrian fort erected by Antiochus Epiphanes over the temple, which had been a
source of annoyance to the Jews from the commencement of the war. On the renewal of hostilities by Antiochus Sidetes, king of Syria, Simon sent his two sons, John surnamed Hyrcanus, and Judas, against the enemy, who gained a distinguished victory. But it seemed as if treachery was always to succeed in removing the members of a family whom their enemies could not conquer in the field. Simon was assassinated, and that too not by an avowed foe, but by his own son-in-law Ptolemy, the governor of Jericho, who sought by this foul murder to usurp the government of Judea. Two of the sons of Simon shared his fate; but John Hyrcanus escaped to Jerusalem, where he was invested with the offices of governor and high-priest. He was soon assailed by the perfidious Ptolemy, aided by a Syrian army; but the traitor was put to the rout, and chased into his merited obscurity.

4. John Hyrcanus.—The government of John Hyrcanus, so named from his victories in Hyrcania, obtained during the lifetime of his father, accomplished successfully the arduous work that had been commenced by his illustrious grandsire. He recovered the entire independence of his country from the Syrian yoke; defeated the Samaritans, and destroyed the temple which they had built on Mount Gerizim, in rivalry of that of Jerusalem; subdued the Edomites or Idumeans, who had become a formidable power during the troubles of Judea, and incorporated them with the Jewish nation. In this way he extended his power on every side, and secured it by favourable treaties with the Romans. Unlike his predecessors he died in peace, after a warlike and prosperous administration.

5. Aristobulus.—John Hyrcanus was succeeded by his son Aristobulus, who was so eager for rule that he caused his mother to be starved to death in prison, because she had been appointed regent by his father during his minority. Not content with this, he imprisoned his three younger brothers, and even caused Antigonus, the best beloved and most worthy of his brethren, to be put to death upon a groundless charge. He was the first Jew who, since the captivity, assumed the royal diadem and the title of king. His reign was as brief as it was tyrannical, for he suddenly died with
anguish, on learning the falsehood of the accusation to which Antigonus had fallen a victim.

6. ALEXANDER JANNÆUS.—On the death of Aristobulus, the newly erected throne was occupied by his brother Alexander Jannæus, whose valour was successfully employed against the ancient enemies of Judea. He subdued the Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites; and on giving them the choice to quit their country or embrace the Jewish faith, they chose the latter, and were incorporated with their hereditary foes. The same terms had also previously united the Edomites and Itureans to the faith and citizenship of Israel, so that by these adoptions the extent and population of the kingdom were greatly increased. But with these advantages, an evil had been growing up that rent Judea into two factions, and occasioned much disturbance and bloodshed. These were the Pharisees and Sadducees, the former of whom endeavoured to enthrall the multitude by excessive pretensions to sanctity and veneration for the law, while the latter, imbued with the heathen literature and licentiousness of Greece, endeavoured—like too many of our modern sceptics—to ally their infidelity with the divine code. Alexander Jannæus sided with the Sadducees, whose tenets were in accordance with his own sensual character, upon which the Pharisees declared themselves his enemies; and provoked by his oppressions, their hostility was soon ready to break out into action. At last, while the king was officiating in his capacity of high-priest at the Feast of Tabernacles, they openly insulted him, by pelting him with the citrons which they carried according to the usage of the festival. Fired at this indignity, Alexander commenced a civil war against the party, while the Pharisees, having called the Syrians to their aid, were able to offer a formidable resistance. One horrid act of retaliation during this war sufficiently illustrates the character of the king. Having taken Bethome, he caused eight hundred of the prisoners whom he brought to Jerusalem to be crucified, after their wives and children had been massacred before their eyes, himself in the meantime sitting in eastern pomp surrounded by his wives and concubines, immersed in revelry, and gazing with delight on the spectacle. The end of this profligate tyrant was in conformity
with his character. Returning a conqueror from Arabia, he resigned himself so completely to sloth and drunkenness, that he contracted a disease of which he died, after languishing under it for three years.

7. Roman Interference.—The calamities of Judea now deepened with its guilt. Conscious at last of the power of the Pharisees, and the obstacles they might oppose to his son’s succession, the king had advised Alexandra his wife, on his deathbed, to conciliate such a popular party in the regency, which he committed to her keeping, and be guided by their counsel in all her public measures. This she did; but the consequence was that these arrogant men lorded over both queen and nation more oppressively than their rivals the Sadducees. When she died, after a regency of nine years, in which she was nothing but a tool in the hands of the Pharisees, the latter party placed Hyrcanus II., the elder son of Alexander, on the throne. But after he had reigned only three months, he was deposed by his younger brother Aristobulus, and chased from the kingdom. With the aid of Aretas, king of Arabia, he returned at the head of an army of foreigners, and assailed his brother, who had fortified himself in Mount Zion, with such vigour that Aristobulus was fain to apply for aid to the Romans, now the masters of the East. They interposed their lordly veto so effectually that Aretas was obliged to withdraw from the siege, and in his hasty retreat he was attacked by Aristobulus, and defeated with great loss. The Romans having thus been invoked, were now, according to their wonted ambitious policy, the umpires between the contending parties, and with their usual show of political justice they gave the preference to the royal claims of the elder brother, Hyrcanus. This decision enraged the fierce Aristobulus, who openly rebelled against the all-powerful umpires; upon which Pompey, now commander of the East, and at the height of his power, advanced against Jerusalem. The gates of the city were opened to his entrance by the party that adhered to Hyrcanus, and he laid siege to Aristobulus, who had fortified himself within the temple. Knowing that on the Sabbath the Jews wholly confined themselves to defensive warfare, the Romans carried on their constructions for the siege during that day unmolested, in
consequence of which they entered, and stormed the temple, the priests allowing themselves to be slain while they were officiating at the altar, as if no enemy had been at hand. Such were the sincere but bigoted men who taught that it was wrong to pull an ass or an ox out of a pit upon the Sabbath day! Being master of the sacred building, Pompey had the temerity not only to explore the interior, but to enter the Holy of Holies; and for this profanation it was observed that he never prospered afterwards, and at length he died in a strange land, by the dagger of an assassin. Afterwards, Crassus, another of the Roman triumvirs, while setting out on his Parthian expedition, plundered the temple of those treasures which Pompey had spared, after which he and his army perished miserably in the desert by the arrows of the enemy. In this way God vindicated the honour of his own house at a time when Jew and Gentile united to profane it. Hyrcanus was restored to his rule, and the office of high-priest, but without right to wear the crown; while his authority was limited to the old territory of Judea, the late acquisitions beyond it being added to the new Roman province of Syria. As for Aristobulus, he and his family suffered the usual fate of the vanquished, being carried to Rome to grace the triumph of the conqueror. Thus was the sceptre departing from Judah,—a solemn warning that the world's greatest event was drawing nigh.

8. HEROD.—A new family now appeared, before whom the Asmonean race, already so corrupted and decayed, was utterly to pass away. This was the family of Antipas, the Idumean, better known by the name of Antipater, who, as the favourite of Alexander Janneus, and governor of Idumea, had amassed great wealth, and was in close alliance with Julius Caesar, by whom he was raised to the chief authority of the country, under the title of Procurator. Antipas had two sons, of whom Herod the younger was appointed governor of Galilee, in which situation he behaved so arrogantly as to alarm the Sanhedrim, by whom he was driven into exile. But on the death of Antipater, who was poisoned at a banquet, Herod, who had rendered great services to the successful party at Rome in its civil wars, was raised by Mark Antony to the rank of tetrarch in Judea.
But again his haughtiness and tyranny procured his expulsion; upon which he had recourse once more to his Roman patrons, with whom he was in such favour that they appointed him king over all Judea, and had him solemnly inaugurated in the capitol of Rome. To strengthen his new authority by that of the Asmonean race, he espoused Mariamne, the granddaughter of Hyrcanus, and, backed by a powerful Roman army, he returned to win his hostile kingdom by the sword. He invested Jerusalem; and after a year's siege it was taken, and exposed to all the merciless havoc with which the capture of that city, so visited for its flagrant sins, was usually attended.

Thus was an Edomite seated upon the throne of David when the Son of David himself was about to appear. Herod, indeed, was marked among the illustrious of that age of distinguished men by the title of "the Great," and few better deserved it according to the principles on which it is usually bestowed. He was a man of noble presence, great intellectual endowments, and persuasive eloquence, a bold and successful soldier, and so politic that, amidst the dangerous changes of Rome, in which so many successively perished, he rose while others fell, until he was borne by every wave of the tempest to the highest place of safety and grandeur. With a wealth and prosperity that seemed to equal that of Solomon, he also succeeded to nearly the whole of Solomon's vast dominions, for his kingdom extended not only from Dan to Beersheba, but over districts that stretched far and wide beyond the Jordan. He was also, like Solomon, a magnificent builder, so that aqueducts, bridges, palaces, and cities, such as the country had never hitherto possessed, rose at his command. And all this was even outdone by the new temple which he constructed upon the site of the old; and upon which such taste, labour, and wealth were lavished, that all who beheld it, whether native or foreigner, were compelled to exclaim in irrepressible wonder and delight, "See what manner of stones and what building is here!"

Such was Herod the Great, and such was the character of his reign and achievements. But behind this attractive glitter there was a meanness and foulness which no titles could beautify nor greatness conceal. This truth is best
illustrated by a brief notice of his principal crimes. He procured the cruel and ignominious execution of Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus, because in him he had a dangerous rival, whose claims to the crown were superior to his own. He caused Hyrcanus, his early patron and his father's, to be allured from his distant place of safety to Jerusalem, and there to be treacherously put to death. Aristobulus, a youth of noble promise, and brother of his wife Mariamne, who was the beloved of the nation as the last representative of the Asmoneans, the tyrant also sacrificed to his jealousy, after having raised him to the office of high-priest. Even the beautiful Mariamne, whom he loved as few despots have been able to love, excited his suspicious frenzy; and her too he removed from the world, although afterwards he would have given his throne to recall her. And yet this was not the worst. Two of his sons, born to him by Mariamne, fell under his dark surmises, on account of their maternal descent from the Maccabees; and for this they were imprisoned, and afterwards strangled by his unnatural sentence. In such deeds who can fail to recognise the spirit that commanded the massacre of Bethlehem? After a reign in which his people were impoverished by his selfish grandeur, crushed by his tyranny, and decimated by his massacres and executions, the end of this miserable man was in conformity with his whole life and character. When he had reached the age of sixty-nine, he was attacked by a painful and loathsome disease, which at last he was aware would be fatal; and knowing that the whole nation was exulting in the hopes of his decease, he resolved that at his death there should be lamentations enough even if the mourners wept only for themselves. He therefore caused the heads of the principal families of Judea to be collected and confined within the walls of the Hippodrome, and, sending for his sister Salome and her husband, he conjured them with his last breath to let loose the soldiers among the captives for a general massacre as soon as he died, so that the whole nation might be compelled to shed tears at his departure. After this fiendish mandate, which happily was not fulfilled, he passed away from a world that was polluted by his presence—away to the judgment-seat of Him who but lately
had been born a babe in Bethlehem, and whose throne on earth he had usurped, whose life he sought, and in whose presence all his past grandeur and achievements would be of no avail.

EXERCISES.

1. Who succeeded Mattathias? What were the dispiriting prospects of the Jews? What their likelihood of success? What was the standard of Judas? What was his first victory? And his second? What army was now sent against him? What was the result? What was his next victory and its advantages? What followed his entry into Jerusalem? How was Antiochus Epiphanes punished? Who continued the war against Jerusalem? What were his preparations? How did Judas oppose them? How was the government of Judea now bestowed? What was the treacherous conduct of the high-priest? How did Judas repel the invasion? What alliance did he form? With what success? What were the circumstances of his death?

2. By whom was Judas succeeded? In what twofold capacity did he rule? What were the advantages of his situation? What was his end?

3. By whom was Jonathan succeeded? What was the character of Simon? What were his first successes? How was the war conducted against Antiochus Sidetes? What was the end of Simon?

4. What was the previous history of John Hyrcanus? What were his successes? What was his end?

5. How did Aristobulus show his eagerness for rule? How did he treat his brothers? How did he die?

6. What were the successes of Alexander Jannaeus? What terms did he offer to the vanquished? What was their effect? What were the two sects that now prevailed? What was their character? To whom did Alexander adhere? How was he treated by the Pharisees? What ensued? What was his revenge? What caused his death?

7. What had been the dying advice of Alexander? What was its result? Who succeeded as king? By whom was he opposed? To whom did Aristobulus apply in his difficulties? How did the Romans decide between the brothers? What was the conduct of Aristobulus in consequence? How did Pompey take Jerusalem? And the temple? How did Pompey profane the temple? What was the punishment? What was the conduct and end of Crassus? What final arrangement was made by the Romans? What became of Aristobulus? What did the present events announce?

8. By what family were the Asmoneans superseded? What was the history of Antipas? What was the early history of Herod? How was he restored to the country? How again driven out? How was he favoured by the Romans? How did he strengthen his new authority? How did he obtain Jerusalem? What were the great qualities of Herod? What the extent of his sway? What the character of his public works? What was the chief of them? What was his real character? How was it shown in the case of Antigonus?—of Hyrcanus?—of Aristobulus?—of Mariamne?—of his two sons? What were the effects of his reign? What was his dying purpose? How did he try to accomplish it?
CHAPTER XIV.

STATE OF RELIGION AT CHRIST'S COMING.


1. STATE OF JUDEA.—The condition of the world at the period of our blessed Saviour's coming but too well evinced the necessity of a divine Teacher to enlighten, as well as a Redeemer to save. Men had become not only ignorant of the way of redemption, but utterly unconscious of its necessity. They lived and died contentedly in their sins, and departed either blind to the knowledge of a future life or recklessly prepared to brave it. A short glance at the state of society at large, both Jewish and heathen, will fully show not only the necessity for our Saviour's advent, but the stupendous favour which God bestowed upon the world by such a gift, and the unworthiness of the world to receive it.

To begin, then, with the condition of Judea, it will be seen from the foregoing narrative that the tendency to idolatry by which the early Jews were distinguished, had been completely interrupted since the warning of the captivity. That great national punishment had not only convinced them of the futility of trusting in false gods, but of the terrible consequences that would attend it; and therefore since the time of their restoration they had been distinguished from every heathen country by the worship of the One God, and their abhorrence of every kind of symbolical or idolatrous worship. But even divine truth itself, in the hands of a corrupt people, may become as pernicious as idolatry, by the manner in which it is perverted; and the idolatrous tendency of our fallen nature may be manifested not only by the utter abandonment of divine instruction, but by the way in which that instruction is subjected to all the evil purposes of which idolatry is the parent. If the heart is alienated from the true God, it does not greatly matter
whether its confidence is placed in a dead idol or a living substance; and if it rests its hope of salvation upon mere forms and ceremonies, the result is similar, from whatever source of truth or falsehood these substitutes may be derived. Of the virtues of the Jews therefore at this time it might be too often said, "Do not the publicans the same? Do not even the heathens the same?" while their spiritual knowledge might be summed up in that short sentence uttered upon the most awful of all earthly occasions: "They know not what they do."

2. Pharisees and Sadducees.—Judea was at this time divided into the two great parties of Pharisees and Sadducees, of whom it would be difficult to tell which had most departed from Moses and the prophets—the former by their slavish superstition, and the latter by their cold indifference and flippant scepticism. As for the Pharisees, they had merged the whole spirit of religion into mere external observances; and finding the law not sufficient for the purpose, they overloaded it with a mass of frivolous observances, under the name of the "Traditions of the Elders." And these traditions, which chiefly consisted in personal ablutions, the washing of cups and vessels, the scrupulous external regard of the Sabbath, the pompous display of long prayers and almsgiving, and the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, were used as cheap substitutes for the unostentatious realities of faith and holiness. Thus with them it was no longer "Thus saith the Lord," but "Thus teach the scribes;" and while they performed every jot and tittle of these outward requirements, they made sure not only of their own especial favour with God, but scowled at all other men as far beneath their standard and unworthy of their regard. As for their rivals the Sadducees, so called from Sadoc, their founder, they were distinguished in character and conduct by an equally faulty extreme. Appearing at a time when Grecian literature was at its height, and Grecian rule at its full ascendancy in Judea, they endeavoured to reconcile not only the refinement and learning, but also the profanity and scepticism of Greece, with the high standard of their own heaven-derived faith, and to enjoy at once the luxuries of the former with the spiritual privileges of the
latter. Thus they only believed as much of revelation as would comport with their sensual or intellectual indulgences, while all beyond was disregarded and renounced. Hence it was that they had no belief in a spiritual world, no faith in the resurrection or a life to come; the world was their heaven, and time their eternity. As might be expected, the Sadducean was the fashionable, while the Pharisaic was the popular creed; and while the former was to be found in gay halls and palaces, the latter took its stand in the market and the chief places of the synagogue. And while the land was divided between them into two parties that hated each other with a bitter hatred, they combined in nothing but a fierce persecution of the righteous, by whom their worthlessness was revealed and their crimes condemned.

3. Christ’s Reception.—When two such parties predominated, it was not to be expected that the advent of our blessed Redeemer would either be rightly understood or duly welcomed. The bruising of the serpent’s head, the restoration of the world from sin and misery, and the recovery of the blessings of paradise by the renewal of its holiness, were matters which such men could neither desire nor comprehend. On the contrary, they imagined that the coming of the promised One was to be that of a conqueror of the Romans, for the purpose of making Jerusalem the queen of the world, and themselves the lords of its crowns and kingdoms. In this vain-glorious hope the morose Pharisee and frivolous Sadducee were at one, for each expected that he might thus succeed to the wealth of the east, or the throne of the Cæsars. Hence their common disappointment and rage when Christ appeared among them. His miracles confounded and his arguments silenced them, but still they would not be convinced. The announcement of a life of self-denying holiness, an unceasing conflict with Satan and sin, and the inheritance of a world not present but to come, so thwarted their expectations and kindled their rage, that they did not rest, after they had crucified our Lord and persecuted his apostles, until they were themselves crushed beneath that utter ruin which they had sought to inflict upon the very name of Christianity.

4. The Heathen World.—While true religion was thus
so corrupted at the very fountain-head, the condition of the heathen world at large may be easily surmised. Men had at last succeeded in their impious struggle to exclude the Eternal from his own creation, by utterly banishing him from their thoughts. Every where over the wide earth there were temples, but not one, save that at Jerusalem, for the only living and true God; and even that was now converted into a "den of thieves." Neither was the absurdity or the foulness of these idolatries to be measured by the intelligence and refinement of their votaries, for even the refined Greek and majestic Roman bowed down to creeds as depraved, and practised rites as gross and abominable, as did the poor Scythian or Indian. A mere glance at the writings of the accomplished poets who at this time adorned the Augustan court sufficiently illustrates such a melancholy truth. The idea of one God, or of the divine attributes of infinite Holiness, Justice, Mercy, and Power, had utterly vanished from the world, as if these had been but the dreams of its early childhood. Instead of a great Creator and Preserver, they had gods of the heaven above and hell beneath, gods of the earth and sea, gods of mountains and valleys, of rivers and fountains, of trees and flowers, of towns, provinces, and countries. They had not only gods male and female, but of every variety of brute and human form; and as if all this had not been a sufficient degradation of the divine into the mean and bestial, they had even presiding deities also for the most trivial and loathsome animal functions. Still, this was not the worst. There was not a crime which man can commit or even imagine but had a god to patronize and his example to sanction it; so that even the liar and the cheat, the adulterer, the assassin, and the parricide, could point to the history of some god of the popular creed by whom these deeds had been committed with circumstances of peculiar atrocity.

5. The Philosophers.—Among those, however, who prostrated themselves before such gods, and yet laughed at them in secret, there were minds of a more honest and reflective character, whom the popular creed could not satisfy. They suspected that there must be a life still better than the present, and beings higher and nobler than man. But
where could they acquire the knowledge of such stupen-
dous realities? The image which they worshipped could
not speak, and the oracle was dumb to their inquiry. Intent,
however, upon the discovery, and perceiving that it must
be made elsewhere, they wandered through the world with
that solemn question upon their lips, "Where is God my
Maker?" India, Egypt, Persia, Chaldea—perhaps even
Palestine itself—were explored by these Greek wanderers,
for ages, in their search after religious truth; and on their
return to their own land each propounded what he had dis-
covered, or even surmised, upon the doctrines of a God and
a hereafter. But they had sought throughout the world
for Him who is everywhere, and only adopted those doctrines
that corresponded with their own likings; and therefore all
were different and contradictory, and all were wrong. These
men, philosophers or lovers of wisdom though they called
themselves, were as helpless as the world at large, for "by
wisdom they knew not God."

This was apparent in the first and most important of their
investigations, comprised in the question, "What is God?"
That reply, which every Christian child can give, was utterly
beyond the reach of the profoundest of ancient sages, and
the answers they returned were but proofs of their utter
helplessness. One class defined him to be Harmony, another
said that he was Nature, and a third that he was the Uni-
verse. Some averred that the Air was God, others that
he was the Expanse of Heaven, others that he was the Soul
of the Universe. But what or whom had they here to love
and worship, even if they came to a final agreement? These
definitions were but words without knowledge—a jargon that
was thought to be profound because it was unintelligible.
Equally unsatisfactory and profitless were their researches
into the nature of that ever-living principle within them
whose weal or woe was so dependent upon the issue. What
is the Soul?—what is my soul that so yearns within me to
discover its present nature and future destinies? "The soul
of man is nothing but the Brain," said one class of phil-
osophers: "no, it is Air," said another; "no, it is nothing
but Æther," said a third. Some again thought that the
soul was Fire, others that it was the Blood, and others that
it was the Breath. One class contended that the soul was nothing but the Nerves; while others, who would seem wiser than their fellows, declared that it was an Abstract Idea. And can this strange something, whatever it is, exist independently of the body, to enjoy a futurity of good, or endure one of evil? A few thought that it might live in the form of a lonely ghost after the body had perished, but only for a few years, after which it would be annihilated. And small was the number of those philosophers who thought that the soul might possibly live for ever. But how? or where? or for what?—they could not tell. Their conclusions were nothing more than guesses to themselves, and dreams to all the world besides.

Such in the utmost of its power and grandeur, its wisdom, learning, and refinement, was the condition of the world at the coming of our Saviour, and such therefore the necessity of his advent. The many slept contentedly the sleep of death, while the reflective few were like blind men wandering among graves, and knowing not at what they stumbled. Jerusalem, the city of the living God—Athens, the home of philosophy, and Rome, the metropolis of the world and its creeds, had all been tried and found wanting. Nothing less than He who now descended from the highest heavens was found sufficient to enlighten, as well as to regenerate and redeem.

EXERCISES.

1. What was evidently needed at Christ's coming? What was the religious condition of mankind? How were the Jews affected towards idolatry? How had they been repelled from it? How may truth itself be made as pernicious as error? How was this illustrated by the Jews?

2. What parties now predominated in Judea? How had the Pharisees corrupted religion? How the Sadducees? How did they divide the country between them? In what did they agree?

3. What were the benefits to be produced by our Saviour's advent? How were these valued by the Jews? What had they expected? What was announced instead? How was the announcement received?

4. In what had men at last succeeded? What was the state of the world at large? What were the creeds of even the most refined? What were the many gods of their worship? What was the character of their gods?

5. What was the character of dissent from the national creeds? What was surmised by the reflective? What method did they take to discover divine truth? What was the result? What were their definitions of God? What their definitions of the soul? What their conjectures of a future state?
CHAPTER XV.
FROM CHRIST'S BIRTH TO HIS BAPTISM.


A. D. 1 TO A. D. 30.

1. Christ’s Birth.—The time predicted by the unerring language of prophecy for the coming of our Saviour had now arrived. Although the sceptre had not yet departed from Judah, every circumstance in the history of the Jew intimates that it would soon be removed: the temple was in ruins, Christ was to glorify with his presence was raised and completed, so that it only waited for his coming before it should pass away; and a universal calm pervaded the world. The period by the cessation of Roman warfare, and the peace and supremacy of Augustus Caesar. Such, the prophets declared, would be the condition of that season at which Son of the Highest should appear. Even the town that was to be his birthplace had been foretold; and an event tried in itself, and of a merely political character, had occurred to verify this part of the prediction. Herod the Great offended his greater patron Augustus, upon which the latter by way of punishment, resolved to inflict upon Herod’s subjects a capitation tax, from which they had hitherto been exempted. Cyrenius, a Roman commissioner, was sent cordially into Judea to make a registration of the inhabitants; and as they had to be enrolled in the towns to which their families belonged, Joseph the reputed father, and Mary the mother of our Lord, as being of the lineage of David were obliged to repair to David’s town of Bethlehem. ready Mary had been told by an angel of the highest order that she was to be the mother of the world’s Redeemer, whose father was none other than the Holy Ghost; and now knew that the hour of his birth was at hand. The town of Bethlehem was so crowded with those who came...
be enrolled, that the caravanserai, or public inn, had no room to receive the strangers, and therefore they were obliged to adjourn to the stable that belonged to it. It was in such a place that He was born for whom the world had been created, and of whose coming it was not worthy. No earthly voice indeed proclaimed this most important of arrivals, but heaven was awake and attentive; and at midnight a band of angels appeared to a few shepherds in the neighbouring fields announcing the event, and singing “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” To such lowly men the annunciation was first made, and to them the high privilege was conceded of being the first to behold and welcome the coming of the long-expected child of promise.

2. The Wise Men.—To others who dwelt at a distance a similar revelation, but more obscure in its character, had been made. In the east, the birthplace of divine tradition, an expectation from time immemorial had prevailed, that in Judea a divine personage should arise, to whom was to be given a universal dominion. It was a faint remembrance of the first promise given in Eden, and repeated to Abraham and his successors, to which the few good men of every age had wistfully clung amidst the darkness by which they were surrounded; and when the unrighteous Balaam exclaimed, “There shall come a star out of Jacob,” he expressed nothing more than a hope that continued to linger on until the coming of the reality. And now the star of Jacob appeared. Certain Magians, or wise men, belonging to a distant country in the east, who probably had been watching the signs of the times, and seeking to read them in the firmament, had been suddenly struck with the appearance of a new star or luminous body rising and moving along in a course of its own; and being admonished by a surer testimony than that of astrology that it was the herald of the promised one, they implicitly followed its guidance, until it led them to Judea, and then to Jerusalem. Thus, the first announcement of Christ’s coming was made to the humblest of the Jews; the second to the most inquiring of the Gentiles. When the Magians had reached Jerusalem, they hastened, as was natural, to the palace of Herod, as the fittest place for an
answer to their anxious question, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" The jealous tyrant was startled and dismayed: less than this, as we have already seen, was enough to drive him on to the most merciless deeds. As these men, however, were evidently heaven-conducted, it was necessary that he should first discover the object of their search; and therefore he advised them to continue it, and when successful to return to him with the tiding, that he might go and worship the royal stranger also. It is evident, from the conversation of both parties, that they spoke of one whom they believed to be more than a king. The inquirers departed; the star reappeared, and went before them, until it halted at the town of Bethlehem, and over the lowly birthplace; and when they saw the infant, "they fell down and worshipped him," and presented to him "gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." After this solemn act of eastern adoration, they went back to their own country, being warned of God in a dream not to return to Herod. Their non-appearance increased the tyrant's alarm; and having learnt that the town of Bethlehem was our Saviour's predicted birthplace, he issued a merciless order for all its children two years old and under to be slain, hoping thus to make sure of the death of the heaven-born infant in a universal massacre. But how impotent was the power of Herod the Great against God! Joseph and Mary had been already forewarned from heaven, and directed to flee with the child into Egypt, where they remained in safety until the tyrant's death, which occurred soon after under the circumstances we have mentioned before.

3. JUDEA BEFORE CHRIST'S MINISTRY.—On the return of Joseph and Mary with their sacred charge from Egypt, they did not settle in Judea, where Archelaus, the eldest son and successor of Herod, now reigned, a man as cruel as his father, but without his father's commanding talent or occasional fits of magnanimity. They retired to Nazareth, a city of Galilee, from which circumstance Christ was afterwards called a Nazarene, as had been predicted by the prophets. Here, however, while his youth was spent in obscurity and among humble occupations, in a way that has not been revealed to us, and while he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in
favour with God and man,” we turn to a summary of the national course of events by which the public ministry of Christ and the progress of Christianity itself were subsequently affected.

At his death Herod impaired that splendid kingdom which he had so ably enlarged and consolidated, by parting it among his three sons. Of this division Archelaus received the greatest portion, comprising Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; to Herod Antipas was assigned the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea; and to Philip, the youngest, four more remote provinces, the chief of which was Trachonitis. But the cruelties and oppressive conduct of Archelaus so disgusted his subjects, and the kingdom was so overrun with strife, rapine, and bloodshed, the effects of his weak administration, that in the tenth year of his reign he was deposed by Roman authority, and exiled into Gaul. But, tyrant though he was, the Jews had little cause to exult in his removal, for he was not replaced by a native sovereign. Instead of this, Judea was annexed to the Roman province of Syria, and governed by a foreign procurator; while the people were constantly and painfully reminded that they were no longer free, by having Roman troops quartered upon them, and heavy taxes imposed on them, not only for the maintenance of government, but to enrich their alien masters. This, at all times galling to their national pride, was especially so at present, for the Jews thought that now the time was assuredly at hand when, instead of being vassals, they were to be made lords and possessors of the whole earth, under the banner of their conquering Messiah. These imposts therefore, as badges of national degradation, were hateful to all classes of the people, the most violent of whom declared that it was sinful for the chosen of God to pay taxes to heathen rulers, on which account they were continually rebelling against the Roman sway, and punished in every revolt with merciless severity. Such were the Zealots, every struggle of whom only tightened the national chain, and by whose fierce infatuation the country was finally undone. Even those who submitted in silence only did so from a sense of their own weakness, and from the hope that the hour of their emancipation was drawing nigh. In the meantime,
the whole nation were at one in detesting those of their countrymen who, with unpatriotic avarice, employed themselves in farming or levying these taxes, so that “publicans and sinners” were generally joined together, while the former were the more hated of the two. “God, I thank thee,” said the proud Pharisee in his prayer, “that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers—or even as this publican!”

Thus was Judea, which properly constituted the land of promise, enslaved and discontented, while the other dominions of the two younger sons of Herod the Great were left in their former independence. The Roman procurators also, by whom Judea at this time was ruled, appear to have been such as Rome was now wont to furnish for the government of her subdued provinces—men not only proud and tyrannical after the fashion of their dominant countrymen, but needy, rapacious, and in debt, whose only desire was to wring a princely fortune from the people during their temporary administration, that they might hasten back with it to the costly luxuries of the Roman capital. Such were the procurators of Judea, who followed each other in rapid succession, until Pilate, the worst of them all, was appointed, about five years before the commencement of our Saviour’s public ministry. Not only did he drain and oppress the people to the uttermost; but, as if this had not been enough, he must needs madden them into open rebellion, by bringing into Jerusalem the idolatrous military ensigns and images of Rome—well knowing that the Jews, fallen though they now were, would rather submit to torture and death, as their fathers had done in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, than consent to so foul a profanation. Such was the character of the man to whom the country was given up as a prey, and such was the condition of the people who were gazing heavenwards for the promised deliverer, when Christ came unto his own. And yet—“his own received him not!”

4. JOHN THE BAPTIST.—The day, the very hour, had now arrived, when He was to step forth from the obscure and despised town of Nazareth, for whom the world had waited, and which he came to save. Although no trumpet or banner heralded his approach, yet it was not without a still
higher grandeur, for he who was proclaimed the greatest of those born of women was sent to announce his coming. This was John the Baptist, who had been divinely commissioned to go before his master in the spirit and power of Elias, and whose miraculous birth and solemn seclusion in the wilderness had trained him for this most august of offices. When the moment came that his proclamation was to be made, he took his station upon the banks of the Jordan. Not only was his presence like that of the Tishbite, for he was clothed with a garment of camel's hair, and girt with a leather girdle, but his preaching was like Elijah's also, for it was stern, searching, and unsparing, while its prevailing theme, as well as its commencement, was, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" At his call, the whole nation seemed to start into life; and Pharisees, Sadducees, publicans, soldiers, priests—men of every station, and character, and opinion—thronged onward to the Jordan as if at a resistless summons, and were baptized by him in the river, confessing their sins. Such, indeed, was the spiritual grandeur of the Baptist, and the controlling power of his preaching, that the question speedily arose, "Is not this the Christ?" and at Jerusalem it excited such anxiety that a deputation of priests and Levites was sent to the Jordan to have it solved. The answer of John was brief and decisive. After disclaiming that sacred title, he added, "There standeth one among you whom ye know not: he it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." Jesus himself was in the crowd and advancing to be baptized; but recognising, through the premonition of the Spirit, the divine personage who was thus about to submit to the rite, John hesitated, exclaiming with holy awe, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" A few words from him who had already submitted to circumcision, and was finally to commit himself to death, reassured the Baptist. He descended with Christ into the water; and when the rite was finished, the Holy Ghost descended like a dove over the head of the newly baptized, and a voice from heaven exclaimed, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
EXERCISES.

1. What circumstances showed that Christ was about to be born? How had these been intimated? In what town was Christ to be born? How was this prediction fulfilled? What sent Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem? In what circumstances was Christ born at Bethlehem? How was that birth announced?

2. What traditions of Christ's coming had there been in the East? How had these been derived? What of Balaam's prophecy? What appeared to the eastern Magians? What sign did they consider it? What were their proceedings? What did they on their arrival at Jerusalem? How did Herod receive their question? What charge did he give to the Magians? How did they discover the infant Jesus? What was their conduct on that occasion? What was it afterwards? How did Herod seek the death of Christ? How was Christ delivered from him?

3. By what kind of king was Herod succeeded? Where did Joseph and Mary settle at their return? In what manner was the Jewish kingdom now divided? What was the history of Archelaus? How was Judea governed after his deposition? How were the people treated? How did this disappoint them? How were the Roman taxes regarded? By whom were they chiefly resisted? How were the publicans or tax-gatherers regarded? What kind of rulers did Rome send to Judea? Who was the worst of these? What were his proceedings?

4. By whom was the commencement of Christ's ministry announced? How was John qualified for his office? How did he resemble Elijah? What was the character of his preaching? What question was proposed to him by the priests and Levites? What was his answer? How did he receive Christ's offer to be baptized? What occurred at Christ's baptism?

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY.


A. D. 30. TO A. D. 34.

1. DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE JEWS.—The commencement of the Baptist's ministry seemed the promise of a new and better era in the history of the Jewish people. The inquiry of every one had been, "What shall I do?" and they had been baptized in multitudes, confessing their sins. The immediate coming of the promised One had been announced,
and they seemed to have prepared in earnest for his arrival. They had repented, and now they waited in expectation. Many must have even witnessed with their own eyes the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the head of the Redeemer, and heard with their own ears the attestation with which it was accompanied. And yet all this was to pass away apparently as quickly as the drops of water that fell from their bodies as they ascended out of the river. Christ proclaimed as the well-beloved Son of the Highest, and that too by the voice of Jehovah himself, appeared among them; but they saw in him no form or comeliness for which he should be desired. Where were the external indications that announced the future king and conqueror? It was for this and this only that they had waited so long, and assembled with such eagerness. But when he proclaimed himself as the only one who should be given them, and unfolded those lessons which distinctly declared that his kingdom was not of this world, they cried out in scornful disappointment, “Is not this the son of the carpenter? Is he not from Nazareth? And can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” His miracles, indeed, so far surpassing all that had hitherto been done in Israel, at length shook their obduracy, and compelled them to listen, but still it was with a sensual and selfish attention. They thought that such transcendent power would at length burst from its lowly obscurity to achieve the triumphs and erect the empire so congenial to their wishes and their hopes.

2. Christ’s Teaching.—At the age of thirty the public ministry of our Saviour commenced, and at the age of thirty-four it terminated. Brief as was the period that thus intervened, it was sufficient for the accomplishment of those great events upon which the fate of the world for eternity depended. We cannot at present follow the events of his life, more especially as these are recorded by the four evangelists in such a manner as to make every other attempt superfluous. We content ourselves with a brief reference to his public instructions during that period, by which the hearts of his followers were to be fitted for that redemption which he afterwards achieved.

The fullest and most complete specimen of our Saviour’s
mode of teaching is exhibited in the Sermon on the Mount, and in it are to be found instructions both in religion and morals such as the world had never yet heard. The purity not merely of action but of thought which it inculcated—the love of enemy as well as friend, both being alike the children of our great common Father—the endurance of wrong—the affectionate forgiveness of injuries, and requital of evil with good—the humility, the sincerity, and simplicity with which God was to be worshipped and his favour sought—in each of these there was a novelty and completeness such as man had never yet discovered, and never would have been able to discover. And all delivered with such clearness and unostentatious simplicity! Only one of these many precepts, if discovered by a mere human being after a whole life of study, would have entitled him to the grateful love and commemoration of mankind to the latest of ages, and in announcing it, it would have been followed by whole volumes of argumentative proof and illustration. But in the Sermon on the Mount every sentence is a new and glorious truth brought fresh from its fountain-head in heaven, and every word of it is weighty with meaning. The lessons of a merely earthly preceptor must be enforced by demonstration; but here none was vouchsafed, for none was needed. Well therefore might it be that, "when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

3. PARABLES.—The modes also in which the great Teacher of the world communicated divine truth were such as to bring the loftiest or the most profound ideas within the understandings of the ignorant and simple. A city set on a hill, a sower going forth to sow, a fisherman occupied upon the lake of Gennesaret, the temple towering upon Mount Zion—objects that were before the eyes of those whom he successively addressed, were all adopted by Him whose manner of teaching as well as coming was "meek and lowly." But above all, the Parables of our Lord were the most striking as well as effectual forms in which his lessons were delivered. It must be remembered, that the imaginative character of the eastern mind has always most delighted
in that kind of instruction which embodies itself in form, object, and action, whether as story, fable, or parable; but as the two former would have been unworthy of the sacred truths that were to be taught, that of the parable was adopted by the divine wisdom of our Saviour. It was also congenial to the habits of the Jews, among whom it had prevailed at least since the early days of Jephtha. In a few lines it delineated a simple character or incident, the application of which was easy to be understood and certain to be remembered. The parables of the importunate widow, the unjust steward, the sower, the wedding garment, the lost sheep, are all corroborative of this statement. In simple pictures that were familiar to their eyes, and by allusions to events that were of usual occurrence or of recent national history, truths which would for ever have been inaccessible to the unaided human intellect were made intelligible not only to manhood and old age, but even to childhood. Thus in the parable of the good Samaritan, the traveller, while passing from Jerusalem to Jericho, along a mountainous road full of gloomy caves and deep defiles, and at that period infested by numerous robbers, is represented, probably in reference to some recent and well known occurrence, as falling among thieves and being cruelly maltreated. So in that of the nobleman who went to a far country to receive a kingdom, and who intrusted his affairs to faithless servants, by whom his goods were wasted and his rule disclaimed, the journey of Archelaus to Rome was described, as well as the deputation that was sent from Judea to Augustus, praying that he might be deposed, and the vengeance which Archelaus inflicted when he returned invested with royalty. It sometimes happened also that, along with spiritual and eternal truths which were embodied in the parable, there were foreshadowings of great national changes, to which, if the Jews had taken heed, they might have avoided much national as well as individual calamity. Of this character was that of the prodigal son, who wandered from his father’s home, wasted his goods in riotous living, and afterwards, on returning penitent and in rags, was received by his gracious parent with welcome, and reinstated in his former abundance. Here the erring Gentile was delineated, and the favour
with which his restoration was to be rewarded; while in the conduct of his elder brother, Jewish jealousy, self-sufficiency, and pride, were justly though gently exposed and reproved. And still farther was this important lesson carried in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The former was the Jewish nation revelling in their high privileges to the full, and deaf to the warnings of Moses and the prophets; while Lazarus was the poor Gentile, denied even the crumbs of the Jewish feast of fat things, but finally to be exalted far above the abundance of the haughty and luxurious son of Abraham.

4. Miracles.—While such was the character and manner of our Redeemer's teaching, it was necessary that he should fully attest his commission as an instructor sent from God. Thus had it ever been in Jewish history. As there had been false prophets as well as true, it was not enough to declare, "Thus saith the Lord." A miracle must also be wrought by the speaker to show that he was indeed a messenger from God—a miracle, too, so transcending the course of nature that no human art or power could possibly produce it. This being furnished, all further argument on the part of him who brought the message was unnecessary, and the only duty of the hearers was to believe and obey. Thus therefore did Christ vindicate his commission to teach, and enforce the authority of his teaching. The grandeur also of these miracles surpassed all that had formerly been wrought, to testify that a greater than Moses and a wiser than Solomon was now the teacher. He rebuked the winds in a tempest, and immediately there was a calm; he walked upon the waves of a stormy sea at midnight; twice he fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, while the fragments that were gathered up far exceeded the original meal; with a word or a touch he made the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dying to start into instant health, and even the dead to come out of their graves. And independently of the stupendous power of these miracles, by which Christ was attested to be more than a prophet, he showed that this power was animated by a spirit more holy and heavenly than that of the prophets. He called no fire from heaven upon his enemies, he never inflicted death or suffering upon those
who refused to receive him; on the contrary, all his miracles were fraught with mercy and blessing to those for whom they were wrought. That these proofs were abundantly sufficient to the humble and disinterested inquirer was well declared through the voice of Nicodemus at the commencement of our Saviour’s ministry, when he said, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.”

5. Christ’s Character.—While the miracles of Christ thus attested the authority of his mission and the truth of his doctrines, a still higher sanction than even this was impressed on them by the whole tenor of his life and actions. And that such was absolutely necessary was evinced by the miraculous deeds of Moses and the prophets. For where was their permanent influence upon the hearts of those who witnessed them? The Israelites rebelled as soon as they had crossed the Red Sea, and became idolaters when the thunders of Sinai had scarcely ceased. Miracles may convince and yet not persuade; they may rivet a doctrine upon the mind that was previously unable or unwilling to receive it, and yet fail to vivify that doctrine into a vital principle of action. Something more endearing must follow after the startling effect of the miracle has passed away, not only to compel belief but to produce a willing obedience. And this was given by the whole course of our Saviour’s life, which was a beautiful incarnation of what he taught. What sacrifice did he exact which he did not also yield? what self-denial which he did not practise? what humiliation which he did not meekly endure? He the greatest was also the lowliest; he the mightiest was also the gentlest: even the assumption of the human form by the Son of the Highest was in His eyes not enough, unless accompanied with all its weakness and affliction, that he might thereby illustrate to the uttermost its duties and its excellencies. His conduct to his parents, to his friends, to the woman of Samaria, to her who was a sinner, to his rancorous enemies, to his credulous and erring disciples, to his accusers and judges, and finally to his murderers, are the living impersonations of every excellence which he taught, while in each we hear a warning voice that says in
his own words, "Learn of me." The philosophers of antiquity, wise as they undoubtedly were, endeavoured with their utmost power to delineate the "perfect man,"—that being whom they had never beheld, but whose likeness they fain would see if only in a dream of their own fond imaginations. They therefore gathered together every moral excellence they could find or invent, and out of these materials endeavoured to fashion the image or portray the picture of an all-excellent and complete human being. But in every case they failed, for in each attempt much was distorted and much was wanting. How indeed could it be otherwise, when every artist added his own defects, mistaking them for positive excellencies? None but the perfect man can describe perfection, and Christ alone was that perfect man. His delineation too was no mere statue or picture, but a living reality—it was himself, even as he lived and laboured, and as he suffered and died.

6. CONCLUSION.—Such was Christ as he appeared in the world, and such for four years was the nature of his ministration. And what were the fruits? If any thing is as wonderful as his excellence, it is only to be found in the spirit of man that could reject, oppose, and persecute it. In the trembling Nicodemus who came to him in the night, the Roman centurion whose faith was such as could not be found in all Israel, the woman of Canaan who would not be rejected, the tenth leper, the despised Samaritans of an obscure village—in these, and such as these, we shudder as we read the only visible fruits of his instructions, his sufferings, and his toils. The nation stood aloof from him, the powerful and the wise despised and afflicted him, the pretenders to greatest sanctity were his bitterest enemies. But even this too had been predicted, and thus therefore it behoved to be. His own Judea was to be the land of his afflictions and sufferings, but not of his victories and triumphs; and through other countries and climes these lessons were to go forth, and be received with faith and love, when Jerusalem was sown with salt, and not a stone of its temple remained. And still that voice will go onward through all time, until it forms a part of the coming eternity. Heaven and earth will pass away, but his words will not pass away.
EXERCISES.

1. How had the Baptist been received? How was his ministry re-
quited? How did the people regard Christ when he came among them? What did they at first expect from his miracles?

2. How old was Christ when his mission commenced and terminated? How is a minute account of his life unnecessary? What of Christ's Sermon on the Mount? What does it chiefly inculcate? How did it differ from all previous teaching? What was its effect on the people?

3. What was the mode of Christ's teaching? What the figures by which he impressed it? Why are parables suited to the Eastern mind? And to the Jews? What is the usual construction of a parable? How were those of Christ fitted to convey truth? From what was the parable of the good Samaritan taken? And that of the nobleman who went to receive a kingdom? What is remarkable in the parable of the prodigal? And in that of the rich man and Lazarus?

4. Why were miracles necessary? How were they so to the Jews? What was their duty when the miracle was given? How were the miracles of Christ especially remarkable? What were his principal miracles? How did his miracles chiefly differ from those of others? What did they tend to prove?

5. What was needed besides miracles to enforce Christ's teaching? How is it proved that something more was needed? How was this given? Wherein did Christ impersonate what he taught? What was the attempt of philosophers? How did it fail? How did Christ succeed where they failed?

6. What is chiefly wonderful besides Christ's excellence? What were the scanty fruits of his ministry? How did the Jews at large receive him? Where are we chiefly to find the fruits of Christ's ministry?

CHAPTER XVII.

Christ's Entry into Jerusalem and Trial.

Christ's triumphal Entry into Jerusalem—Plots devised to entrap him—The Last Supper—His Apprehension, Trial, and Sentence.

1. Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.—After Christ had thus taught in words that were not to fall to the ground, however they might for the time be unheeded, he addressed himself to the still greater task of purchasing for men that immortality which they had been so unable to prize, and that heaven which they had so justly forfeited. The conflict with the Prince of Darkness was to be renewed at the close, as it had marked the commencement of his career,—a contest by which the world was to be torn from the grasp of the evil one, and that triumph of our blessed Redeemer won for which so great a price was to be paid. The few days there-
fore that preceded Christ's crucifixion were so momentous and eventful, that we may not dismiss them as we have done the previous parts of his biography with a brief notice. They comprise the whole spirit and importance of the world's history in reference to God and eternity, so that without them it might as well have remained unwritten; and every moment the conflict was deepening in which that world was to be lost or won.

The last week of our Saviour's public ministry having now arrived, it was necessary that he should go up to Jerusalem, there to suffer all that his Father had appointed, and achieve the victory that had been decreed. It was now also that he was to be truly a King, and proclaimed as such, though he had hitherto refused the title, and his entrance into his own capital was to be made in the regal character. But it was to be such also as would fully show that his kingdom is "not of this world." Accordingly, when he arrived at Bethphage, a village beside the Mount of Olives and nigh to Jerusalem, he sent two of his disciples to bring him an ass, which they were to find in a certain place, and when they brought it he commenced upon it his triumphal progress, attended by the twelve humble fishermen of Galilee who followed him as his disciples, and by a throng of the meanest of the people from the surrounding villages. Such was the royal procession of Him who with a word could have surrounded himself with all the grandeur of a Roman triumph, and who will finally come in the clouds of heaven with myriads of angels and glorified saints. Even yet, however, the people could not understand the nature of his sovereignty, and they hoped that now, after so much delay, he would ascend the throne of Herod, and commence his career of grandeur and universal conquest. They therefore spread their clothes, and strewed branches of trees in his path, and rent the air with acclamations of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" But in a very few days after how strangely their cry was altered! Another event, characteristic of this profoundly significant procession, also occurred. When Christ came nigh to the city, he wept over it. He knew that Jerusalem was still blind to this the day of its merciful visitation; and he saw the coming hour of retribution, when of its mag-
significant temple and of all its gorgeous palaces not one stone should be left upon another that should not be thrown down.

2. ENSNARING QUESTIONS.—In this manner Christ entered the city amidst the murmurs and remonstrances of the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees, who were indignant at the acclamations of the multitude when any thing was lauded but themselves, and besought him to silence them. He then went to the temple, and finding it filled with merchants and traffickers, he drove them out of the sacred building, as he had done once before, because they still persisted in making his Father's house a "den of thieves." This act of sovereignty he proceeded to vindicate by miraculously curing the blind and lame who repaired to him in the temple. His place of abode at this time was the neighbouring village of Bethany, to which at evening he retired, and in the morning returned to the temple, where he taught the multitudes that resorted to him. Thus it was until the third day, when his enemies, having recovered from their confusion, but still afraid to proceed to violence, endeavoured to entrap him with ensnaring questions. The first who attempted this were the chief priests, scribes, and elders, who found their office superseded not only by his teaching, but by his purification of the sacred building; and they asked, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee that authority?" Christ, who knew their purpose, and how obdurate they were to all divine conviction, replied, that he would tell them if they answered him one question, which he thus proposed: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" By this query they were suddenly involved in their own net; for if they said, "From heaven," they knew that it might be retorted, "Why then did ye not believe him?" but if they answered, "From men," they feared that the people, who reckoned John as a prophet, would stone them for their blasphemy. In this strait they were reduced—they the teachers and guides of Israel—to the humbling reply of, "We cannot tell;" upon which Jesus said, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

After these baffled querists had retreated, another party entered. These were certain of the Pharisees and Herodians,
men who hated and despised each other, but who were now united in a common work of iniquity. Feigning themselves to be righteous men, and professing high admiration of Christ's boldness and integrity in teaching the truth, they proposed the trying question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" Whether the answer might be Yeas or Nay, a fearful danger was involved; for by assenting to the lawfulness of the tribute, the Pharisees could stir up the multitude against him as a betrayer of their liberties, while by declaring it illegal the courtly Herodians would be able to charge him before the Roman tribunal as a teacher of sedition. Christ, who knew their most secret thoughts, commanded them to show him the tribute money; and when it was presented, he asked whose image and inscription were stamped upon it? They replied, "Cæsar's." He then said to them, in language which implies that it was not his calling to alter the relations and duties of civil society, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's;"—and upon this, it is graphically added by one of the sacred biographers, "When they had heard these words, they marvelled and left him, and went their way."

This was not the last of the treacherous devices by which the enemies of Christ endeavoured to circumvent him. After the defeat of these different parties, the Sadducees attempted the task, and that too by a question turning the doctrine of a future state, which they contemned, into ridicule. They therefore stated the case of a woman who had been married to seven brothers successively that had died and left no children; and they wished to know whose wife of the seven she should be at the resurrection. Christ replied, that in the world to come people neither married nor were given in marriage, but were as the angels of heaven; after which he showed to them from Moses, whom they had quoted and pretended to believe in, that the doctrine of a future life was no fiction, but a stern reality. They also were silenced; and so conclusive was the argument, that even some of the scribes were compelled to exclaim, "Master, thou hast spoken well." It was now time that Christ should question in turn, and he selected the proud Pharisees for the purpose. On their acknow-
ledging that the Messiah was to be the son of David, he quoted to them the passage of the psalmist, “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I have made thine enemies thy footstool,” and then asked, “How David’s son was also called David’s lord?” This question struck at the root of their perversity, that recognised nothing more than a mere earthly saviour, and not his divine origin and nature, and they too were utterly discomfited; “nor did any man from that day venture to put any more questions to him.”

3. The Last Supper.—After Christ had thus silenced his enemies, he continued to teach not only publicly to the people, but privately to his disciples. All the while the rage of his antagonists was so aggravated by their defeats that they sought to destroy him, the time and the manner being the only subjects of deliberation. These were soon offered by Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, who repaired to the chief priests and magistrates, and for the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver agreed to deliver his master into their hands. The eve of the Passover had arrived, and Jesus, after making the necessary arrangements, sat down with the twelve to eat his last meal with them, in anticipation of the paschal feast. It was then also that he instituted that more important rite by which the Passover was to be superseded—the commemoration of his own death for the salvation of the world,—a far more stupendous event than the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. Judas was present at this supper, although he had already completed his infamous bargain. As they ate, Jesus began to be sorrowful, and said, “One of you shall betray me;” and on each man asking in amazement, “Lord, is it I?” Judas had also the hardihood to repeat the same question. Without giving an express answer to indicate the individual, Jesus turned to the traitor, and said, “That thou dost, do quickly;” and the latter instantly departed. The company, although thus rid of the “son of perdition,” were still far from perfection, and another announcement from their master startled the eleven: it was, that they all should be ashamed of him, that they all should forsake him that night; and on Peter’s declaring that though the others should forsake him he would
not, his assurance was rebuked with the information that even before the hour of cock-crowing he should thrice deny his Lord.

4. GETHSEMANE.—After this solemn institution, attended with such mournful circumstances, Jesus repaired with his disciples to the garden of Gethsemane. It was then that his soul became “exceeding sorrowful even unto death,” and he prayed to his heavenly Father, that if it were possible that last bitter cup might pass from him, while his sweat “was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.” No human intellect, no mind short of the infinite, can comprehend that hour of unutterable anguish, commonly called the Passion of our Lord. It was indeed the hour and the power of the Prince of Darkness, and the conflict had commenced in which the humanity of our Lord was to be bruised and crushed, as had been predicted from the beginning of time; but over all his voice was, “Father, not my will, but thine be done.” And now the second stage of his trials had commenced; for Judas, who knew the place of his resort, advanced at the head of an armed band that had been furnished by the chief priests and rulers to apprehend him. Even then, however, our Saviour showed that he was a willing victim, for after his calm reply of “I am he,” at which his captors recoiled and fell to the earth, he submitted his hands to be bound. As for his disciples, “they all forsook him and fled.”

5. CHRIST’S TRIAL.—It was at night, on the fifth day of the week (Thursday) that our Saviour was apprehended; and he was immediately brought before Caiaphas the high-priest, as it was on matters of religion that he was to be arraigned. All the chief priests, scribes, and elders quickly assembled, a court was formed, and the trial was hurried on. They had resolved that he should die; but for what crime?—this they could not find or fabricate, even though they suborned false witnesses for the purpose. At length, on being solemnly adjured in the name of the living God by the high-priest, to tell them whether he was the Son of God, Jesus assented; upon which Caiaphas rent his clothes, while the whole assembly declared that Christ had uttered blasphemy, and was therefore worthy of death. But although
they had thus pronounced the sentence, they could not execute it without the sanction of the Roman procurator—for thus low had the liberties of Judea now fallen. To obtain this permission they must wait till sunrise; but even already the punishment commenced, for the servants, unchecked by the council, spat upon the face of our blessed Redeemer, blindfolded him, smote him with the palms of their hands, and derisively bade him declare who had struck him. During this interval also two events occurred in which the difference between remorse and repentance was fearfully exemplified. The first was given by the traitor Judas. When he saw our Lord condemned to death, he reproached himself and his employers for the sin of having betrayed innocent blood; and casting down before them the thirty pieces of silver, the price of his guilt, he rushed out and hanged himself, and went to his own place. The other was that of Simon Peter. On recovering from his terror, he returned and pressed into the porch and court of the judgment-hall, to see what would become of the Master whom he loved; but on being questioned by a damsel, and charged by the bystanders as one who had been with Christ, he thrice denied the charge, declaring that he knew him not, and even added oaths and imprecations to his denial. But Christ looked upon him, and the cock crew. Peter remembered the prediction of that night, and instantly departed, not however to consummate his crime by self-murder, but to weep bitterly, while his tears were graciously accepted by Him who had warned him of his weakness and predicted his temporary apostasy. Thus, even out of two of the disciples of our Lord, one was taken and the other left.

After that night of trial and condemnation, the high-priest hastened at sunrise to Pilate the proconsul, to obtain a ratification of the sentence. The accusers repeated their charges, and Christ stood silent, at which Pilate wondered. The principal accusation was that he had called himself a king, thereby subverting the authority of Cæsar, a charge to which a Roman governor would be particularly sensitive; but Pilate was compelled to declare that he could find no fault in him. Knowing, however, that he could not justly condemn one whom he had declared to be innocent, yet overpowered by
the popular outcry, and afraid to release Jesus lest a tumult should follow, he eagerly laid hold of the intimation that Christ was a Galilean. The whole affair might thus be devolved upon Herod Antipas, as king or tetrarch of Galilee, who at that time was in Jerusalem. Herod was not only gratified by this deference on the part of Pilate, with whom he was at variance, but eager to see Christ himself, in the hope that some miracle would be wrought by him to gratify his vain curiosity. But when this sinful wish was not complied with, and when no answer was returned to his questions, he and his courtiers presumed to set at nought Him who was King of kings; and having clothed him in mockery with a gorgeous robe, they sent him back in this state to Pilate. The Roman's perplexity was deepened by this remand, as was evident by his subsequent proceedings. It was the custom for the governor at the feast of the Passover to release a criminal condemned to death, as an act of homage to that great national rite, and Barabbas, a notorious robber and murderer, was at that season awaiting his doom. Pilate therefore proposed the alternative to the people of releasing Christ or Barabbas, hoping that, from the infamous character of the latter, the former would be spared; but to his astonishment the people exclaimed, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Another expedient was then adopted. After declaring that Christ had been found blameless both by Herod and himself, Pilate proposed that he should first cause him to be scourged as a criminal, and then absolved as innocent—and this strange perversion of justice was forthwith executed. The flesh of the sinless One was mangled with rods; his brow was torn by a crown of thorns that was pressed upon his head, to deepen his sufferings and aggravate the mockery of his treatment; and in this state he was produced before the multitude, in the vain hope that they would be moved to pity. Had Pilate acted as he had been wont when his own wishes were to be gratified, or when his personal interests were at stake, he would have summoned his legionaries around him, and have let them loose upon the multitude. But thus it behoved to be, and the governor's heart was hardened. He knew that he was unpopular with the Jews, and that they intended to forward an appeal against his
government to the emperor; and fearing the consequences, and caring only for his own security by propitiating the infuriated crowd, he yielded up into their hands the cause of him whom he had repeatedly declared to be innocent. He consented that Christ should be crucified. Something, however, was necessary to silence his own conscience, and therefore he washed his hands before the people, and said, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it!” Their answer was, “His blood be on us and on our children!” Never was imprecation so terrible, or so terribly fulfilled. For eighteen hundred years of suffering it has lasted, and to whatever part of the wide earth the Jew turns his weary foot, he still finds the blood of the Redeemer in his path.

EXERCISES.

1. What was Christ’s office after his teaching was finished? From whom was the world to be rescued? What is the importance of this part of Sacred History? Why was it necessary that Christ should go to Jerusalem? In what character was he to enter the city? What commission did he give to two of his disciples? In what manner did he enter Jerusalem? What did the Jews expect of him? Why did Christ weep over Jerusalem?

2. How was Christ’s entrance into Jerusalem received? How did he purify the temple? How did he justify his authority to do this? Who first tried to entrap him? In what manner did they attempt it? How did Christ answer them? Why did his question perplex and silence them? Who followed in the attempt to entrap him? In what way did they make it? How were they foiled? By whom was Christ next assailed? What was their question? What was Christ’s reply? How was it received? What question did Christ propound in turn? With what effect?

3. What did Christ’s enemies now seek to accomplish? How were they aided in their design? What commemorative rite was now instituted? What was the behaviour of Judas at the Last Supper? What that of Peter?

4. Whither did Christ now repair? What were the particulars of his agony in the garden? What was to be accomplished by it? How was it endured? By what event was it followed? What was Christ’s proceeding on this occasion? What was the behaviour of his disciples?

5. What followed Christ’s apprehension? How did the council seek to find him guilty? What was the proceeding of the high-priest? What its effect? How was Christ then treated? What was the conduct of Judas on the occasion? What that of Peter? What was Peter’s repentance? What occurred at sunrise? What was the behaviour of the parties? What was the chief charge against Christ? How did Pilate receive it? How did he seek to avoid condemning Christ? What was the behaviour of Herod? What was the next expedient of Pilate? How did the people treat it? What was Pilate’s last proposal? What effect had it? Why did Pilate yield to the demand of the people? How did he seek to absolve himself from the guilt? What was the imprecation of the Jews? How has it been fulfilled?
CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION.

Christ conducted to Calvary—Raised on the Cross—Behaviour of the Bystanders—Miracles at Christ's Crucifixion—His Burial—Resurrection—His Rising misrepresented.

1. BEARING THE CROSS.—The conflict commenced in Gethsemane was to be consummated on Calvary, where the Redeemer of the world was to be crucified according to the demand of the Jewish multitude. Even his death was not enough to satisfy them, unless it was accompanied by revolting torture and ignominy, for the punishment of the cross was not only abhorrent to the Romans, who reserved it for their slaves and the vilest of their criminals, but also accursed in the eyes of the Jews, according to the tenor of the Mosaic law. He was led forth at the third hour, that is, at nine o'clock on Friday morning, to undergo the iniquitous sentence. The place to which he was to be conducted, called Calvary or Golgotha (the place of a skull), from its fancied resemblance to a human head, stood outside of Jerusalem to the north-west, forming part of the chain of Moriah, on which the temple stood, and where Abraham had been summoned to offer up his son Isaac. Here it was that the dreadful type was to be realized, and a devoted son to submit himself to death without the hope of a substitute. It was the custom of the period to compel the condemned person to carry the transverse beam of his cross, that thereby he might undergo greater degradation, and taste the bitterness of death before it came. But Christ was found so enfeebled by his previous tortures as to be unable to bear the burden; and apprehending that he might sink too soon for their vengeance, the Jews laid the beam upon Simon, a Cyrenian, whom they compelled to bear it. As Christ went along in this mournful procession, certain people followed him, who had not yet forgotten his words of wisdom and miraculous deeds of kindness, and among them were women who bewailed him with loud lamentations. To these Christ turned,
and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children"—and he then predicted the calamities they should endure in the downfall of their guilty country.

2. THE CRUCIFIXION.—The place of punishment was reached, and the fearful process commenced. The victim was nailed to the tree, which was then raised upright that all might behold the sufferer, and over his head was fastened a placard, by appointment of the governor; but instead of announcing the alleged crime of Jesus, it had for its inscription, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, "This is the King of the Jews." These were words of truth though Pilate knew it not, and he would not alter them although the rulers entreated him to that effect. At the same time there were two thieves crucified with Jesus, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left,—indicating the wish of his enemies to have it thought that his guilt was as great as theirs, by which they were involved in a common doom. It was usual at such executions to give the sufferer a stupefying draught to deaden the acuteness of his anguish; and this, though offered to our Saviour, was refused. Not one pang of all that world of suffering would he avoid, for he was resolved that the debt should be paid to the uttermost. Nigh the cross, and mixed with the multitude, was his mother, accompanied by affectionate friends, among whom was John, who bears in the sacred history that most honoured of titles, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Even at that moment Christ thought of them, and cared for them, and he transferred his mother thenceforth to the care of his friend, in the terms of filial and parental adoption. He said to Mary, "Behold thy son," and to John, "Behold thy mother."—"And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home."

But far other characters and events were also at hand to imbitter the last moments of the sufferer. The rulers, the priests, the people, who crowded the hill, raised against him a mingled cry of derision, reminding him of his former miracles upon others, and challenging him to employ them in his own behalf—taunting him with having called himself the Son of God, and defying him to come down from the cross to which they had fastened him. When he exclaimed
in his dying agonies, "I thirst!" the soldiers raised to his lips a sponge soaked in gall and vinegar—the beverage which he had previously refused to taste—while they said, in mockery, "If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself!" Even the malefactors joined in these reproaches, either to deaden their pain by a burst of malignant rage, or in the vain hope that he would yet interpose at the last moment to save them along with himself. And to all this his only answer was the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And was there no heart to relent among all that host of persecutors? There was but one instance, and that so strange that it stands alone without a parallel. It was in the case of one of the crucified malefactors. A sudden light from heaven had flashed upon his soul, and in an instant a wretch unworthy to live was made meet for heaven. He rebuked his companion, who continued to rail on, and turning his dying eyes towards him whom he now recognised as the author of salvation, he exclaimed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" His prayer was answered by Christ's gracious assurance, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And yet both were at the moment suffering and expiring, while the universal scorn perhaps grew louder at these words! Men have sometimes madly delayed their repentance to the last hour, in the hope that, like the dying malefactor, they would be accepted; but who since his day has ever exhibited, or can possibly exhibit, a faith like his?

3. Death of Christ.—Although no miracle was wrought at the cross to accomplish his own deliverance, or even to lessen his sufferings, still the dying moments of the Redeemer were accompanied by such wonders as to show that his death was a willing sacrifice, and to be followed by the most momentous results. At the sixth hour, the hour of noon, the sun disappeared, as if unable to endure such a spectacle, and there was darkness over the land until the ninth hour. As that period approached, Christ exclaimed, under the last and worst pressure of his anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and when the ninth hour came, at which the conflict was to terminate, he cried, no longer in feeble pain-wrung tones, but with a loud voice
triumph, “It is finished!” after which he said, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit,” and “bowed his head, I gave up the ghost.” Then it was that the veil of the temple, which separated the Most Holy Place from the temple itself, was rent from top to bottom, but by no human hand—owing that thenceforth there was no need of an earthly high priest to enter there and make atonement for the sins of the people, or veil to keep the people themselves apart from the hidden things of the kingdom of God. An earthquake shook the ground, and rent the rocks asunder. But the astonishing still, the graves were opened, and the bodies of the dead saints rose, and entered into the holy of holies, and appeared to many. What more effectual witnesses could have attested that the kingdom of Death was overthrown, and his sceptre broken? And yet again a voice was heard at the cross when that of the malefactor had been stopped: it was the utterance of the Roman centurion and his soldiers, who guarded the execution, and held its accompanying miracles, and who exclaimed, when it was over, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

4. Burial of Christ.—Even though life was now extinguished, the malignity of Christ’s enemies was not satisfied. The miracles that had sufficed for the dying thief and the heathen soldier were as nothing in the eyes of the proud scribe and fastidious Pharisee—showing that light is the living conviction is the most hopeless of all denials. The deed was consummated on Friday afternoon; as the Jewish Sabbath would soon commence, which was measured from sunset to sunset, and as that which was then of special importance, being the Passover Sabbath, the priests and rulers could not endure the thought that the bodies should remain where they were, to profane solemnities of that “high day.” They therefore entreated Pilate that these should be forthwith removed, but that their legs should be previously broken to make full assurance of their death. It was evidently at Christ alone that this caution pointed. Their request was complied with in the case of the two criminals; but on coming to Jesus, their legs were withheld by a supernatural power: it had been dictated long before by divine prophecy that not a bone
of him should be broken. One of the soldiers, however, thrust a spear into his side, from which issued blood and water, indicating that the heart itself, the seat of life, was pierced. All the offices of funeral were prepared. Joseph of Arimathea, a man of high rank and place, who was a believer in Christ, but secretly from fear of the Jews, now came boldly forward, when all hope seemed to be extinguished, and requested of Pilate that the body might be given him for interment. This was done; and after the corpse was hastily swathed, as the hour of Sabbath was at hand, Joseph caused it to be laid in a new tomb which he had constructed for himself in his garden. But even thither also the malevolence of Christ’s enemies repaired. They remembered his prediction, that after his death he should rise again on the third day; and they besought the governor that the grave might be made sure until the third day, that the fulfilment of his prophecy might be defeated. They feared, or pretended to fear, that his disciples might steal away the body, and afterwards give out that he had risen from the dead. Pilate, now that all was over, was willing to gratify them to the utmost: he allowed them therefore an armed guard to watch the sepulchre; and in addition, they closed up its entrance with a mass of stone, and sealed it with their seal. Thus they had adopted every precaution that power, and suspicion, and prudence could devise; but He that sat in heaven laughed, the Lord had them in derision.

5. Christ’s Resurrection.—The Friday had thus passed away; Saturday also elapsed, in which Jerusalem was filled with worship which the crime of the people had made a mockery; and the morning of the first of Christian sabbaths arrived, involving a period of three days, according to the Jewish mode of computation. The religious obligations of the previous day having now expired, the friends of Jesus were anxious that his body, so hastily deposited in the grave, should be embalmed with the sweet spices that they had prepared for the purpose. This was especially the case with Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome,—three women whose pious devotedness had attended their Lord in life and death, and who now, before
the first light of the morning dawned, hastened to the sepulchre, which they reached at sunrise. They had anxiously asked each other by the way, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” but on arriving they were astonished to find their solicitude unnecessary: the stone had been removed, and the guards were no longer there. A stupendous event had previously occurred. No sooner had the predicted time that Christ was to occupy the grave expired than a great earthquake made the ground to reel; an angel descended, whose countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow; and at his appearance the keepers shook, and “became as dead men.” He rolled away the stone; and when the soldiers recovered from that paralysis of terror which the bravest of their brave nation would have been well justified in obeying, they left the grave and its mysterious tenant to the divine guardian who had superseded them in their charge, and fled to the city. The women arrived, and the angel said to them, “Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified: he is not here, for he is risen as he said.” He then bade them behold the empty grave, and tell his disciples that Christ had gone before them into Galilee, and that they should meet him there. They hurried from the spot in a mingled feeling of fear and great joy, and as they went, Jesus himself met them—he whom they so lately had buried—and confirmed the tidings of the angel. Being thus freed from their agitation of terror, and convinced beyond further hesitation, they reported these events to the disciples; but even the disciples believed not: their love and faith could not remember those predictions of their Master, which the malignity of his enemies had not forgotten—that on the third day he should rise again from the dead; and the communications of the women seemed to them as idle tales. Peter and John, the one the boldest and the other the most affectionate of the disciples, ran to the grave to ascertain the truth by personal observation; but on reaching it they found nothing except the linen clothes in which the body had been arrayed. The guards were gone,—the tomb open and untenanted, and then only they believed.

6. Resurrection denied.—While the affectionate fol-
lowers of Jesus were thus so hard to be persuaded, even by
the evidence of prophecy and miracle, far different was the
course pursued at a meeting of his enemies. The guards, who
had fled from the sepulchre, hurried to the chief priests and
rulers, to give an account of their watch, and the strange
event by which it had been baffled. Christ then had risen
indeed, and their precautions had only tended to confirm
the unwelcome truth! Still, however, with such evidence
of the fact, they would neither repent nor succumb, and this
resistance only deepened their impenitence, and redoubled
their hatred. In their frenzy they determined to bid defiance
to every miracle, and make war against the divine power it-
self that had worked it, because it opposed their own impious
purposes. It was necessary therefore not merely to silence
the guards as to the truth, but to teach them a lying tale;
and therefore they counselled them to say that they had
fallen asleep at the grave, and that the disciples had come and
stolen away the body. As such a confession of falling asleep
upon military watch was a crime punishable with death,
they also not only engaged to procure their pardon from the
governor, but bribed them with money to propagate the un-
soldier-like falsehood. This the soldiers did, and the tale
was believed by many who had armed themselves against
conviction. For how easily might a brief examination have
refuted the flimsy pretext! How, it might have been asked,
had the disciples become so anxious for Him when dead,
whom they had deserted while living and in the hour of his
greatest need? By what new courage, and with what ad-

cantage of weapons, had they set forth at midnight to over-
come a band of Roman soldiers? Or if they trusted to mere
stealth, how could they be certain to find these soldiers asleep
—and not only asleep, but so soundly that the grave's mouth
might be opened and the body removed without occasioning
alarm? And, finally, had the soldiers been asleep, as them-
selves alleged, how could they still be aware of the mode and
agency by which the corpse had been abstracted?

Thus it was that, amidst a strange series of contradictory
characters and events, Christ was crucified, and raised again
from the dead. Thus also the verity of these important
facts was confirmed to all future time. All indicated that
a superior power was at work for the accomplishment of a mighty but unsuspected result, and that the actors themselves were but blind instruments plotting and toiling under their individual impulses and principles to accomplish they knew not what. Such were Pilate, Herod, the priests, the rulers, the Pharisees, the scribes—such the clemency, hatred, scorn, fear, bigotry, selfishness, revenge, and cunning, that were strangely gathered together, and mingled up in this wondrous proceeding. And yet, amidst so extraordinary and complex a mechanism, every portion, however minute or insignificant, accomplished its appointed work. For centuries previous, every important step in our Saviour's life, death, burial, and resurrection, had been predicted by the unerring word of divine prophecy; and at each we are reminded by the divine historians that thus it behoved the Scriptures to be fulfilled.

EXERCISES.

1. What was to take place on Calvary? How was the punishment of crucifixion estimated? What were the local particulars of Calvary? What type was here to be realized? In what way was the punishment of crucifixion usually aggravated? How was Christ freed from it? How did Christ address the women who followed?

2. What was the process of crucifixion? What was placed over Christ's head? Who were crucified with Christ? What did our Saviour at this time refuse? What friends of Christ were near the cross? How did he address his mother and John? What was the behaviour of the multitude? What of the soldiers? What of the crucified malefactors? What was afterwards the change in one of them? How was it expressed? In what way has this example been abused?

3. What miraculous event occurred at the sixth hour? What was Christ's dying exhortation? What his exclamation at the ninth hour? How was it followed? What was the first miracle that occurred on his death? What the second? What the third? What was the conduct of the centurion and his soldiers?

4. Why was the burial of Christ hastened? What previous precautions were adopted by his enemies? How was Christ's death fully insured? By whom was Christ to be interred? How was the interment accomplished? What was the proposal of Christ's enemies on this occasion? What precautions did they use to prevent the resurrection?

5. What was further to be done in Christ's funeral when the Sabbath had ended? Who addressed themselves to the task? What was their chief difficulty? How did they find it obviated? What circumstances had occasioned this? How did the angel address the women? By whom were they met on their return? How did the disciples receive the tidings? What was the conduct of Peter and John on this occasion?

6. What did the guards after they fled from the sepulchre? How were their tidings received? How were the guards tampered with?
By what inducements were they persuaded? What is the first question by which their falsehood might have been detected? What the second? What the third? What the fourth? What was the tendency of all these agencies and events? What was indicated thereby? How can it be shown that all this was inevitable?

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FORTY DAYS AFTER CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

Hesitation of the Disciples to believe in Christ's Resurrection—Christ's Appearance to two of them at Emmaus—Continuing Doubts of the Disciples—Christ's Appearance to them in Jerusalem—And at the Sea of Galilee—They are invested with Apostleship—Christ's Ascension into Heaven.

1. Christ's Reappearance.—Thus had Christ risen from the dead and appeared to his faithful followers, to show that the mighty conflict was over, and the important victory achieved. Sin and Death were conquered, the divine justice appeased, and immortality purchased for the race of fallen man. His sufferings had expiated our guilt, and opened the gates of heaven to our entrance. Now, however, that he had risen and stepped forth into the light of day, it was not to his countrymen at large that he was to show himself, but only to his disciples, who were to be the chosen witnesses of his resurrection. Indeed, the past conduct of the Jews had evinced not only that they were unworthy of such a manifestation, but that it would have tended to nothing more than to imbitter their hatred and harden their impenitence. After having resisted the miracles he had wrought, and the appeals he had addressed to them, and so malignantly pursued him to the death, his reappearance would have failed to convince them; and they would have alleged that he was not Christ, but some person like him—that he was an impostor, a phantasm, an optical deception—that, in short, he was any one or any thing rather than him whom they had crucified on Calvary, but was now risen
from the dead to witness against them and put them to utter shame.

2. Journey to Emmaus.—We have already seen the manner in which Christ appeared to the women immediately after his resurrection. These revelations were quickly followed by others in which the utmost kindness and condescension were manifested. The first of these was given on the same day that he arose to two of his followers, one of whom was named Cleopas; the other was probably Luke himself, who records the event with cordial minuteness. They were travelling to Emmaus, a town of some importance, afterwards called by the Romans Nicopolis, that was distant about seven miles from Jerusalem; and as they journeyed, they talked of Him whom they had loved and lost, and of whose resurrection they still seemed more than doubtful, notwithstanding the wonderful reports of that morning to the contrary. While thus employed, Christ joined them like a wayfaring man, “but their eyes were holden that they should not know him.” On his asking the meaning of those matters on which they conversed with such sadness, they instantly unfolded the subject that lay heaviest upon their hearts, by mentioning the crucifixion of their Lord, “a prophet mighty in deed and word before all the people,” and the narrative of the women who had visited the sepulchre, and declared that he was risen from the dead. They talked also of their former hope that this Jesus of Nazareth was he who should have redeemed Israel, as if it had now faded into a mournful uncertainty. Their narrative exhibited an equal conflict between faith and doubt. After gently rebuking their slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had written concerning Christ, he proceeded to show how all these events had been predicted, and that it was necessary for him to have suffered these things, and finally to enter into his glory. Never but by one had these eager listeners been so taught! Such were the charms of his language, and the clearness and conclusiveness of the hopes he opened up to them, that when they approached Emmaus they besought him to remain and lodge with them, for the day was far spent. He turned in with them accordingly to the place of their sojourn. When they sat down to meat, “he took bread, and blessed
it, and brake, and gave to them." It was thus he had done at the commencement of the Last Supper; it was thus he had probably been wont to do when he presided at their simple banquets—and "their eyes were opened, and they knew him." He then instantly vanished: his words had enlightened and his presence fully assured them, so that nothing further for the present was needed. Their mutual exclamation after this event was characteristic: "Did not our hearts burn while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures!" Being now the happy bearers of good tidings, they were anxious to impart them, and therefore, instead of resting, they returned to Jerusalem, and hastened to the eleven disciples, and those who were with them. And now, even while unfolding their narrative, Christ himself suddenly appeared in the midst of the company with the salutation of "Peace be unto you!" but they were struck with terror, supposing they had seen a spirit. Their fainting faith had not even yet revived. Jesus condescended to their weakness, by bidding them handle him, to be certified that he was living flesh and blood; asked for food, and ate before them; and having thus assured them, he proceeded to open up to them the prophecies of Scripture as he had done on the way to Emmaus, and showed how all had been fulfilled.

3. FURTHER APPEARANCES OF CHRIST.—In the several earlier appearances of our Lord to his disciples after he had risen, as recorded by the Evangelists, the hesitation, the doubts, and misgivings with which he was received are worthy of careful attention. Had these men been like the rest of the world, their eagerness to believe so desirable an event would have overcome every scruple, while its miraculous nature would only have enhanced its value. But so it was not with the disciples. "He upbraided them," we are told, "with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." And again, we are told, "when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted." Even in its most excusable form, "they believed not for joy, and wondered." This hesitation and these scruples, although so culpable in them, were ultimately beneficial to the truths they preached, and to
the world that was required to receive them. For these disciples were to testify that Christ had died and was risen from the dead, even though incredulity, and scorn, and persecution, and death itself would be their reward for so doing; and well was it therefore for their testimony that they showed no rash eagerness to believe his resurrection from mere hearsay, or on slender evidence, but upon the most substantial and irrefragable proof. In this way they preached what they knew, and testified what they had assuredly seen. This extremity of caution and hardness to be convinced was especially the case with Thomas, one of the eleven, who had not been present with the rest when our Lord appeared among them. Although they told him of the event, yet he declared that he would not believe that Christ was alive until he had seen the prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and touched them with his fingers, and put his hand into his side which the spear had pierced. Even this excess of incredulity was patiently endured by the risen Redeemer, who, at the next interview, submitted his hands and his side to the inquiry of the over-scrupulous disciple. The faith of Thomas was now as strong as his unbelief had formerly been, so that he addressed his Master with the highest and most sacred of all titles, “My Lord and my God.”

Another important manifestation which Christ made to his disciples collectively was at the sea of Galilee, otherwise called the sea of Tiberias. Although the time was at hand in which they were to proclaim Christ to the world, and make all its grandeur and power submit to his authority, yet they were so poor that, even although their divine Master had already risen, they were obliged to pursue their wonted occupation of fishermen to procure a daily subsistence. They were thus busied with their nets not far from the land, when they saw Christ standing on the shore, but did not recognise him. He questioned them, “Children, have ye any meat?” and on their answering “No,” he bade them cast their net once more on the right side of the vessel, assuring them that the trial would be successful. This they did, and the net was immediately filled with great fishes, and yet remained unbroken. This miraculous interposition opened their eyes, and John exclaimed, “It is the Lord!” upon
which Peter, with his wonted ardour, threw himself into the sea, that he might be the first to reach his master. When all the disciples had landed, they found a fire kindled on the shore, and the materials for a meal in preparation; and on Christ inviting them to come and eat, they sat down to the repast. After it had ended, Peter’s faith and self-denial were tried by Christ’s thrice putting the question to him, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” On a former occasion, as we have seen, Peter had declared that though all should forsake his master, yet he would not; but the result of that trial had taught him wisdom and humility, and he would no longer rate himself above his brethren. His answer therefore at each question was in these modest words, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” It is worthy of notice, that as often as he had previously denied our Saviour, and declared that he knew him not, so often the question was now asked and an answer given; after which Christ foretold to him the martyrdom by which he should evince the reality of his love, and show forth the glory of God.

For forty days was Christ thus seen among his chosen followers, during which time he spoke to them of the “things pertaining to the kingdom of God;” and if the words of a dying teacher are so impressive, what must those have been that were uttered by Him who had died and was risen from the dead! He was now to ascend from earth to heaven, and resume the glory which he had laid down for our sakes, while his disciples were to witness to the world the verity of that ascension, as well as of his resurrection. But still it remained to invest them with that solemn commission for which they had been originally set apart. “He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as he said unto you,” was the message of the angel at the tomb to the disciples on the morning that Christ had risen; but notwithstanding the appointment, and this solemn repetition, the eleven seem to have forgotten it amidst the fluctuations of their hopes and fears. Now, however, that momentous assembly was held, for “the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.” Disciples no longer, they were now to be Apostles, and as such to pre-
side over their Master's cause upon earth with apostolic authority and power. The words with which Christ confirmed their high investiture will echo through his Church to the end of time: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth [to establish the kingdom of God]. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

4. Christ's Ascension.—The ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father was a more than kingly act, by which he confirmed his declaration in the eyes of those to whom he had given it, that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth. He led out the eleven as far as Bethany, to the Mount of Olives—that mountain which had witnessed the poverty of his entrance into Jerusalem, and the degradation of his capture, but was now to behold the grandeur of his triumph. And still—alas, for our fallen nature!—even yet these followers, so highly privileged, so divinely taught, could not divest themselves of their national and exclusive feelings, which as Jews they had been trained from infancy to cherish; and therefore, although such a glorious consummation was near, they could still hazard the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" His indirect but gentle reply was sufficient to inform them that spiritual blessings were no longer to be engrossed by the race of Abraham, but to be extended to all the children of Adam; for he told them that they should be witnesses to him "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." After this final declaration, he rose heavenwards and ascended, until a cloud received him out of their sight; and as they gazed upwards at his departure, two angelic messengers stood by them in white apparel, who declared to them that even as they had seen him go into heaven, in like manner he should return. It was but a repetition of his own assurance to the high-priest upon his trial: "Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Notwithstanding this departure, by which they were so utterly forsaken, the eleven
were now fully assured that He in whom they trusted was
none else than the King of Glory, the Son of the Highest,
and would be with them to the end of the world; and there-
fore "they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with
great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and
blessing God."

EXERCISES.

1. What did Christ’s resurrection evince? What was the victory now
won? To whom did he confine his appearances? Why were the Jews
unfit to behold him? How would they have been likely to treat his re-
appearance?

2. To whom did Christ first show himself after having appeared to the
women? How were the two disciples employed on their way to Emmaus?
How did Christ join them? What was his question and their answer?
What was the state of their minds? How did Christ instruct them?
What occurred when they sat down to supper? What did the two dis-
ciples after he had disappeared? Where did Christ next appear? How
did he remove the fears of his disciples? How instruct them?

3. What is to be observed of the disciples on the first appearances of
our Saviour? How would ordinary men have acted? What instances
are given of the doubt of the disciples? How does that doubt confirm
their testimony? How did Thomas express his incredulity? How was
it satisfied? Where did Christ again appear? How were the disciples
employed? Under what circumstances did Christ appear to them?
What happened on their reaching the shore? How was Peter now tried?
What was the result of his trial? How long did Christ remain with his
followers? How was he employed among them? What remained to
be done? How were the disciples invested with apostleship? With
what words?

4. What was the character of Christ’s ascension? Where did it oc-
cur? In what frame were the disciples still? How did Christ check
them? How did Christ ascend? Who appeared to the disciples after-
wards? In what spirit did the disciples return to Jerusalem?

CHAPTER XX.

FROM THE DAY OF PENTECOST TO THE CONVERSION
OF CORNELIUS.

First Meeting of the Apostolic Church—Descent of the Holy Ghost—
Peter’s Sermon—Miracle in the Temple—Death of Ananias and Sap-
phira—Martyrdom of Stephen—Conversion of Paul—Jewish Preju-
dices removed by the Conversion of Cornelius.

A. D. 35 TO ABOUT A. D. 50.

1. THE DAY OF PENTECOST.—The first meeting of the fol-
lowers of our Lord for the commencement of operations as
a church was an august historical event, far transcending the convocations of senates or the deliberative meetings of princes and potentates. The object of their gathering together also was of the highest importance, being nothing less than the election of a new apostle in the room of Judas, who had so miserably perished; and the choice had to be made from among those favoured ones who had followed Christ and witnessed his deeds from the period of his baptism in the Jordan to his ascension. The decision was made by lot, after a solemn invocation to the Searcher of hearts, and it fell upon Matthias, who was thenceforth numbered with the twelve. And yet that meeting was held, and that deed so utterly beyond the power of emperors and kings was performed, in an upper room in Jerusalem, the whole congregation at this time consisting of not more than a hundred and twenty men and women. It was the small grain of mustard-seed, from which that tree was to spring whose wide-spreading branches were soon to embrace whole nations with their shelter. Another event, even more solemn still, was to ensue; it was the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, for the coming of which they were commanded by their Lord to wait at Jerusalem, and without which they would have been unfit for their apostolic mission. The expected descent occurred on the day called the Feast of Pentecost, or Fiftieth, so called because it was the fiftieth day after the Passover. The apostles were all assembled with one accord in one place, when suddenly a sound came from heaven like that of a mighty rushing wind, filling the house in which they sat, while cloven tongues as of fire descended and sat upon the head of each. The effect produced was still more miraculous than the appearance, for instantly these illiterate men, who hitherto knew nothing but their own language, began to speak in all the tongues of the chief nations of Europe and Asia. The multitude that heard them were astonished. Whence had these poor Galileans so suddenly acquired such an amount of learning as a long life of study can seldom impart? These languages too were intelligible to those who thus wondered, for in the crowd were devout persons from every country in which they were spoken, who had assembled for the Pentecostal feast at Jeru-
salem, and who now heard the wonderful works of God preached to every man in his own tongue. But there were also mockers at hand, probably native Jews, who understood no speech but their own, and they profanely derided the miracle, declaring that the speakers were filled with new wine. Peter, still the foremost, was on this occasion also, as formerly, the first to answer; but his ardent impetuous temper was now exalted into a pure heavenly zeal and fervid eloquence which his gainsayers could not resist. He repelled the foul insinuation of drunkenness, and showed that the event which they derided had long ago been predicted in the prophecies of Joel. He then talked of his divine Master whom they had so lately crucified, announced to them his resurrection from the dead, and assured them that God had made that Jesus whom they had slain to be "both Lord and Christ." Never before or since was speech so effective as that sermon of Pentecost! The scorners were quelled and cut to the heart; they saw, as if in a sudden blaze of light, the enormity of their crime and the magnitude of their danger; and they exclaimed to the apostles, with one voice, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" "He that repenteth and is baptized shall be saved," had been one of the parting declarations of our Saviour; and Peter therefore answered their anguish-wrung question with, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The result was that three thousand received the rite of baptism, and thus, by the first apostolic sermon, the infant church of Christ was increased nearly thirty-fold.

2. Miracle in the Temple.—It was now that the demonstration of miracles was to be added to the power of preaching, to show that Christ, though no longer seen upon earth, was still present by his spirit and power. Peter and John, in going up to the temple to pray, beheld a man lame from his birth, who was laid at the chief gate to ask alms of those that were entering in. Peter, addressing the man, commanded him in the name of Jesus of Nazareth to rise up and walk, and, taking him by the hand, lifted him up. In an instant the man received new strength: he not only walked but leaped, and entered the temple in this Eastern
fashion of expressing holy gladness, while he praised the Lord for the new life that had been given him. On the people gathering round to wonder at the miracle, Peter explained to them in whose name and by what power the man had been made whole—even that of Jesus whom they had put to death; and entreated them therefore to repent and be converted that their sins might be blotted out. Five thousand more through the instrumentality of this discourse abjured their errors and became believers. The apostles were still in the act of speaking, when they were arrested by command of the high-priest, and on the following day brought before his tribunal. The council consisted of the chief priests and their adherents, most of whom were Sadducees, to whom Peter appealed as he had done to the multitudes; but in this case he was addressing hardened infidels, men who had neither faith nor fear. They would perhaps have put the apostles to death, but they dared not—or denied the miracle, but they could not, for the cured man stood before them, and was known to the whole city. All that they could do was to expostulate with Peter and John, and threaten them, and dismiss them unpunished.

3. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.—The church, a few days before so small, had now become numerous in Jerusalem; and as great sacrifices were necessary for a cause so new and important, and in which so many of the converts were of the lower orders, who would be subjected to still harder privations than before for embracing a creed which the majority opposed, these demands were answered and these sacrifices made by the richer brethren in a devoted spirit of faith and love. Those who had property sold it, and placed the money in a common fund, which was superintended by the apostles themselves. In this way the Christian church commenced its existence as one great family, where rich and poor were equally cared for, and all things were in common. But even into a state so pure crime could enter, and punishment was needed. A man named Ananias sold his possessions, and laid the money, as the other benefactors had done, at the feet of the apostles. But he did not lay down all as they had done: instead of this, he kept back part of the money, thus endeavouring to reconcile the enjoyments of
avarice with those of ostentatious liberality. His wife Sapphira was also a partaker of his crime. Peter asked the man if this indeed was the whole price of his possession, and Ananias declared before them all that it was. He thus lied not to men but to God, by lying to the Holy Spirit under whom the apostles exercised their office. On being charged with his crime he fell down dead, and was carried forth to be buried. A few moments after his wife entered, and ignorant of what had happened, she persisted in the same falsehood, and in like manner instantly died. Thus dreadfully at the outset was hypocrisy punished, and men were warned to examine their own hearts before they professed Christianity. But this single miracle of judgment was followed by so many of benevolence and mercy, that even the sick were brought out in beds and couches, and laid in the streets, that the shadow of Peter as he passed by might fall upon them and heal them: Still therefore the cause grew and the converts continued to multiply, and again the high-priest, with his Sadducean council, endeavoured to oppose the progress of the faith. They could devise no better method than that of imprisoning the apostles; but by night the angel of the Lord set them free, so that at morning the prison-house was found empty, and the apostles were preaching in the temple. The affrighted council, after threatening them in vain, were obliged to content themselves with inflicting the punishment of stripes; and the apostles, far from being dispirited, went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ.

4. Martyrdom of Stephen.—As the duties and emergencies of the church had now increased with its rapid expansion, the office of deaconship was introduced, and seven devout men, "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," were set apart for the office. Their duty was to attend to the secularities of the church and the wants of the poor, so that the apostles might wholly devote themselves to the more important spiritual affairs of their calling. One of these deacons, Stephen, was so eminent for his piety and miracles, and so irresistible in argument against the enemies of the faith with whom he reasoned, that they resolved to silence an adversary whom they could not refute, by making him a
martyr to the cause for which he pleaded. They therefore suborned witnesses to testify that he had spoken blasphemy against Moses and against God. Upon the trial a supernatural brightness lighted up the countenance of Stephen, so that the whole council "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." His defence was a summary of the chief points of Jewish history, in which the continued impenitence and guilt of the nation were illustrated, until all was crowned by the crucifixion of our Lord. At these faithful charges, so repulsive to their national pride as well as personal convictions of their own late crime, the enraged judges "gnashed on him with their teeth;" but when he looked up, and told them that he saw the "heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," their rage burst into utter delirium. They stopped their ears that they might hear no more, shouted to drown his voice, rushed upon him, dragged him from the city, and there stoned him to death. The expiring words of this first of martyrs were true to the example of Him for whom he died. In the midst of his agonies, he cried, with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"—"and when he had said this, he fell asleep."

5. Conversion of Saul.—The martyrdom of Stephen was but the commencing signal of persecution: it was the first blow struck, the first blood drawn of the battle against Christianity that has been waged to the present hour, and which has covered every country with its victims. An able and active instrument in this persecution was a young man called Saul, who had been one of the chief witnesses against Stephen, and who now "made havoc of the church," entering into every house, and dragging both men and women to prison, so that the believers were scattered abroad into other countries. But in this way, as by every subsequent persecution, the gospel was more widely preached, and lands were enlightened that would otherwise have remained unvisited. But Saul was not content that these Christians should merely be driven into exile; he must needs also pursue them to their hiding-places, and for this purpose he procured a commission from the high-priest to search the city of Damascus, and bring whatever Christians he detected, whether men or
women, bound to Jerusalem. Thus authorized, and provided with assistants, he commenced his journey, and had nearly reached Damascus, when suddenly a great light shone upon him, so that he fell to the earth, while a voice from heaven exclaimed, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" On asking, "Who art thou, Lord?" he was answered, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." He was ordered by the same voice of divine authority to go to Damascus, where it would be told him what he should do. Saul rose from the earth, blinded by the brightness of the vision, so that those who were with him led him to the city, where he remained sightless three days, and without taking any food. A believer in the city, called Ananias, was then commanded by the Lord in a vision to repair to the house in which Saul lodged, who was even now praying, and restore him to sight. Ananias trembled, and ventured to reply, that this Saul was the notorious persecutor who was commissioned to apprehend the Christians of Damascus; but he was immediately silenced with the information that Saul was a chosen vessel for the purpose of carrying the name of the Lord "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Thus assured, Ananias obeyed, and putting his hands upon the heaven-struck penitent, bade him, in the name of Him who had appeared to him in the way, receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. In this way Saul, the persecutor of Christians, became Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ. He retired for three years to Arabia, that he might become fully qualified for his office, at the end of which time he returned to Damascus a preacher of righteousness. The whole city was astonished to hear him proclaiming Christ in the synagogues, while the infuriated Jews, who were unable to refute his arguments, lay in wait to assassinate him; but from this danger he was delivered by the Christians of Damascus, who let him down from the wall in a basket while his enemies watched at the gates. He repaired to Jerusalem, where the apostles hesitated to receive him, fearful perhaps that his profession was but a new stratagem to entrap them, until Barnabas, afterwards the companion of his toils and travels, informed them of the circumstances of his conversion, upon which he was received
into the full brotherhood of the twelve. He had not indeed beheld our Lord upon earth and witnessed his miracles, but he had seen him in his glory, and been called by him from heaven. In addition to this, he was afterwards "caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Thus, though he was, as he himself expresses it, an apostle "born out of due time," yet in these revelations he enjoyed such honorable marks of apostleship as made full amends for the lateness of his call, and vindicated his claim to the office.

The conversion of Saul, thenceforth better known by the name of Paul, was an important event in the history of the Christian church. So fierce a persecutor thus changed was a powerful argument in behalf of the truth; and while he preached, men would naturally wonder and inquire how he, the most relentless enemy of Christianity, had become its warmest friend and advocate. But more than this, Paul was fitted in a way superior to the other apostles for the work to which he had been summoned. Born a Pharisee, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the most learned of Jewish teachers, and distinguished by his proficiency above his equals, he was completely acquainted with all the mazes of Jewish casuistry, and well qualified to expose its absurdities and refute its errors. But besides this, he was also thoroughly conversant with Gentile philosophy and literature, and was thus able to address himself to the habits, the tastes, and national feelings, not only of Greek and Roman, but the accomplished of every country throughout the civilized world. Thus he was indeed "a chosen vessel" to carry the name of Christ "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:"—the high of rank and the proud in knowledge, the Hebrew rabbi and the heathen sage, could in him find either an irresistible controversialist or a winning persuasive teacher. The conversion of such a man also was a distinct sign to the church that the partition wall between Jew and Gentile was about to be thrown down, and that the whole world was henceforth to be gathered together as one great family, under the comprehensive and universal power of Christianity. He who was eminently "the apostle of the Gentiles" being thus called and ready for the work, an
event followed by which the door was opened, and a way prepared for his entrance.

6. Gentile Conversion.—The event to which we allude was the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion. This man, a convert to the Jewish faith, and eminent for piety and charitable works, saw one day in a vision an angel of God, who told him that his prayers and alms were acceptable to the Most High, and commanded him to send to Joppa for one Simon, surnamed Peter, who lodged with Simon a tanner, at a house on the seashore, who should tell him what he ought to do. He sent accordingly three of his attendants from Cesarea, the city of his residence, to Joppa, to request the visit of the apostle. During their journey, Peter was divinely prepared for the arrival, while he prayed upon the housetop, and was hungry with fasting. He saw in a vision a great sheet let down from heaven to earth, filled with all kinds of beasts, and fowls, and creeping things, while a voice called out to him, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat!” He refused, declaring that he had never eaten anything common or unclean; to which he was answered, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” Thrice the command was repeated, and all was withdrawn again into heaven. While he wondered at a command so contradictory to the law of Moses—that law now abolished by Christianity—the messengers arrived, and related the vision which their master had seen, and the purpose of their coming. Here was the solution of his difficulty. God himself had vouchsafed to visit this Gentile soldier; and what man then would dare to call him unclean, or refuse to recognise him as a brother and an equal? He accompanied the messengers to Cesarea, entered the house of Cornelius, with whom he found many Gentiles; and while he was preaching to them Christ and his cross, the Holy Ghost fell upon all who listened. The Jewish Christians who had accompanied Peter were astonished at the event: here were men uncircumcised, yet speaking with tongues and magnifying God as if they were the children of Abraham! But Peter doubted no longer, and he said, “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” He baptized them accordingly, and
remained with them several days, living in close intercourse and sociality among them—a most startling compliance in a Jew. Of this he was sharply reminded by the brethren when he returned to Jerusalem, and their accusation was, “Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.” Peter related the whole event to them from the beginning, and they were satisfied. “They held their peace and glorified God, saying, ‘Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.’”

EXERCISES.

1. What was the character of the first meeting of the Christian church? What was its object? How was this accomplished? What was the state of the church at this time? What was the event that next followed? In what way did it occur? What were its effects? How were these regarded by the people? What was the nature of Peter’s sermon? What were its effects?

2. What demonstration was now to be added to preaching? What was the miracle in the temple? How did Peter address the people? With what result? What steps did the council take to check the progress of Christianity?

3. Under what necessity was the church now placed? How was this met? Of what fraud was Ananias guilty? With what crime was it followed? How were Ananias and his wife punished? What gentle dispensations followed? How did the council again interfere? What followed?

4. What new office was created in the church? What was its purpose? What was designed against Stephen? What were the circumstances of his trial? What was the nature of his defence? How was it received? What were the particulars of his death?

5. What followed the death of Stephen? What were Saul’s proceedings at Jerusalem? What was his next attempt? In what manner was he arrested on the way to Damascus? How was he to be cured of his blindness? How was the commission received by Ananias? How fulfilled? How was Paul’s preaching received in Damascus? How was he received by the apostles at Jerusalem? How was his conversion important to the church? What were his qualifications as an apostle to the Jews? And what also to the Gentiles? Of what was his conversion a sign to the church?

6. What was the character of Cornelius? What were the particulars of his vision? How was Peter prepared for the message of Cornelius? What was his perplexity? How was it removed? What was the effect of his sermon at Cesarea? What followed after he baptized the Gentile converts? What was the charge brought against him at Jerusalem? How was it answered?
CHAPTER XXI.

TRAVELS OF PAUL.

Sphere of Apostolic Labour widened—Paul’s Journeyings—His Labours at Paphos—Antioch—Iconium—Lystra—Antioch—Philippi—Athens—Ephesus—Miletus—Jerusalem—He is apprehended and tried at Jerusalem—His Voyage to Rome—His last Labours and Martyrdom.

A.D. 37 to A.D. 72.

1. APOSTOLIC FIELD EXTENDED.—By the events related in the preceding chapter we have seen how vastly the apostolic work was amplified. Judea was no longer to be its exclusive sphere, or the children of the circumcision the sole objects of its blessings. The gospel was to be preached until the whole world was converted. And as Paul was so especially the apostle for whose mission the civilized portion of the world as then known was destined, the book of the Acts of the Apostles is principally occupied with an account of the toils he underwent, the dangers he encountered, and the successes he achieved during his manifold and active pilgrimages. We briefly glance at these, the more especially as they teach us the character of the apostolic work in general, and the results with which it was crowned.

The persecution that ensued on the death of Stephen having scattered many Judaic converts into other countries, those who were Hebrews by nation preached only to their own countrymen, while others, natives of Cyprus and Cyrene, preached the gospel to the Greeks who were of common lineage with themselves. The labours of this latter class were so successful, especially in the populous city of Antioch, that many converts were made to the faith, and it was there that the believers in Christ first received the name of Christians. On hearing these gratifying tidings, the apostles sent thither Barnabas, a Levite, but born in Cyprus, one of those who had given their all to the common fund; and under hisministrations the cause became so successful, that he repaired to Tarsus, the native city of Paul, whom he brought to Antioch to join him in his labours.
They continued a year in the work, and the converts of this rich city had soon an opportunity, which they gladly embraced, of showing the sincerity and liberality of their Christian faith. A prophet named Agabus, from Jerusalem, predicted a general famine to be at hand, and in consequence of this, although the destitution would pervade their own streets also, they collected a liberal contribution, which they sent by Paul and Barnabas for the support of the poorer Christians of Jerusalem. On the return of the pair from the city of the world's redemption, the Holy Spirit commanded the brethren to set Paul and Barnabas apart for their great office as missionaries to the Gentiles; and this was solemnly done by the church at Antioch, with prayer, and fasting, and the imposition of hands.

2. Paul at Paphos—Antioch.—Thus the journeyings of St Paul commenced which were only to terminate with his life. Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, the first stages of their pilgrimage, are dismissed in almost as many words. In Paphos they found an inquiring Roman, Sergius Paulus, the ruler of the district, who sought to hear the preaching of the strangers, but was opposed by a wretched sorcerer or juggler called Elymas, who endeavoured, probably through false miracles as well as sophistries, to turn him away from the faith. But his fraud was impotent when it encountered the apostle's miraculous power. Paul denounced upon him the punishment of blindness, and immediately the helpless deceiver was groping at noon-day for some one to lead him by the hand. The two resumed their travels, and came to Antioch in Pisidia, where was a synagogue, which they entered on the Jewish sabbath, and, as was the custom of the time, the strangers were desired to address the people if they had any word of exhortation. Paul complied, and after a brief recapitulation of Jewish history, bearing chiefly upon the promised advent of the Saviour, he announced the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and showed that He and no other was the expected one in whom they were to trust, and by whom alone they could be saved. So acceptable were these "glad tidings" to many, that he was requested to repeat them on the following sabbath, which he did, with nearly the whole city for his audience. This en-
raged the Jews: they were "filled with envy," either because such doctrines were so popular, or because they were not exclusively confined to themselves, and they opposed the statements of Paul with contradiction and blasphemy. Upon this, he and his fellow-labourer boldly told them that to them the word had first been addressed, as was necessary; but since they rejected it, they would now turn to the Gentiles as God had commanded. The Gentile hearers rejoiced in the assurance; many believed, and the gospel was preached over the whole district. But Jewish malignity was not to be thus baffled, and as the Jews of the city were rich and influential, they so stirred up the aristocracy of Antioch against Paul and Barnabas, that the latter were expelled. The apostles, in accordance with the divine command, shook off the dust of their feet, as a testimony against those who would not hear them, and departed to Iconium. Here they went not to the temple, but the synagogue; the offer of salvation was first to be tendered to the Jews, as the first-born and lawful heirs of the promises; and here also many persons both Jews and Greeks believed. But although Paul and Barnabas made a considerable stay in Iconium, and exhibited their heaven-derived authority by signs and wonders, the Jewish malignity of Antioch followed them thither, and with such effect, that the city was rent into two factions, one siding with the Jews, and the other with the Christian converts. The former prevailed; so that Paul and Barnabas, finding their enemies prepared to stone them, escaped in the tumult, and fled to Lycaonia.

3. LYSTRA.—In this province the fugitives resumed their labours with undiminished courage, and preached in the cities of Derbe and Lystra. Their arrival in the last mentioned city was distinguished by remarkable events. Paul perceiving among his hearers a cripple lame from his birth, commanded him in a loud voice to stand upright upon his feet; upon which the man instantly leaped up and walked. The astonished crowd who looked on, imagining that the wonders of their false mythology were realized, cried out that the gods were come down to them in the likeness of men, and thought that Barnabas was no other than Jupiter, and Paul Mercury; while the priest of Jupiter brought oxen crowned
with garlands to make a solemn sacrifice to their divinity. Shocked at this blind impiety, Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes, rushed among the multitude, and vehemently disclaimed these honours, declaring that they were nothing more than mortals of like passions with themselves, whose only aim was to turn them from these delusions to the worship of the only true God. Even then they could scarcely persuade the people, and prevent their impious homage. It was not wonderful that such men as they of Lystra should at last rebound from one false extreme to another. The hostile Jews of Antioch and Iconium entered the city, and so wrought upon the multitude, that they stoned Paul until they believed him to be dead, and dragged the body beyond the walls. But his time was not yet come, and many such deaths he was still to endure before his course was finished. While the disciples gathered and lamented over him, he rose up, returned with them to the city, and on the following day went to Derbe. And wonderful indeed was the devoted courage of Paul and Barnabas, who, after all they had suffered, were again the visitants of Lystra, Antioch, and Iconium, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

4. ANTIOCH—PHILIPPI.—While these zealous labourers were continuing their course, in which many districts and cities were successively visited and enlightened, a mischievous heresy had begun to be preached at Antioch by certain Christian teachers from Judea, who taught that without circumcision, according to the requirement of the law of Moses, salvation was unattainable. Such was the doctrine of the converts from among the Pharisees, who still retained a portion of their old leaven. Thus the church even in its infancy would have been a house divided against itself, had not the question been promptly referred to the great council of the church—the apostles and elders assembled at Jerusalem. It was carried thither by Paul and Barnabas, who for this important purpose were deputed by the church at Antioch. The decision was conciliatory and satisfactory. It restricted the Gentile converts to the moral law, and required them in addition to abstain from those offensive prac-
trices that were mixed up with the religious festivals and daily observances of the heathen among whom they dwelt. Paul returned to Antioch with their decree, and after labouring some time there, he was anxious to revisit the places in which he had formerly preached: he was accompanied however on this occasion not by Barnabas, his former fellow-traveller, with whom he had a dissension, but by Silas, a prophet, who had accompanied him from Jerusalem. After passing through several districts of Asiatic Greece, and strengthening the churches wherever he came, and not even omitting those cities in which he had been the most opposed and persecuted, a dream which he had at Troas encouraged him to pass over into Macedonia. He obeyed; and at the memorable city of Philippi, an event occurred that was characteristic of Greek superstition. A prophetess or pythoness was there; one of those wretched creatures who, under the agonies of frenzy raised by demon-possession, was supposed to predict future events, and who on that account brought great profits to her masters. This damsel, seeing Paul and Silas passing onward with their companions to prayer, cried out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, who show to us the way of salvation!" This conduct she repeated for several days, until Paul, grieved that the foul spirit within her should soil the spotless purity of truth even by testifying in its behalf, commanded the demon to come out of her; and instantly she was in her right mind, but a prophetess no longer! Enraged that their gainful oracle should be thus silenced, her masters dragged Paul and Silas before the magistrates, who, without farther examination, caused them to be beaten with rods, and afterwards shut up in prison, and made fast in the stocks. But at midnight, while the captives, under the testimony of a good conscience prayed and sang praises in their place of confinement, an earthquake shook the prison, opened the doors, and made the chains fall from their limbs. The affrighted jailor awoke, and thinking that his prisoners had escaped, was about to fall on his own sword, when Paul checked him with the cry, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here!" Calling for a light, the poor man sprang in trembling, fell at the feet of Paul and Silas, brought them out,
and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," they replied, "and thou shalt be saved and thy house." On that night the jailor and all his family became converts to the Christian faith. In the morning, the magistrates, with the same thoughtless levity they had shown in punishing the apostles, now ordered them to be dismissed unquestioned; but such a liberation Paul and Silas refused: they had been punished openly and without trial, although they were Roman citizens, and were not therefore to be thus liberated. On hearing this the magistrates trembled: they had now committed the deadliest of treasons against the majesty of Rome, that so jealously protected the rights of its citizenship. They therefore came to the prison in the fashion of suppliants, and implored the captives to leave the city in peace,—a request with which they humanely complied. Might it not be that such generous and forgiving conduct made some of these rulers afterwards follow the example of the penitent jailor?

5. Athens.—The resumption of Paul's journey was an advance to new labours, trials, and dangers, which were confronted, endured, and overcome by that heroism which Christianity alone can inspire. At Thessalonica, after being successful with the Gentiles, he was again thwarted by the perversity of the Jews, who raised such a tumult that he and his associate were obliged to leave the city by night. At Berea, which was his next stage, he was consoled by the conduct of its Jewish inhabitants, who, instead of listening to deride or contradict as the others had done, gave respectful attention to his preaching, and tried it by the infallible test of Scripture. But even here also the Jews of Thessalonica followed, and so stirred up the people that Paul had to remove to Athens for shelter. The coming of such a teacher into that beautiful metropolis of the world's learning and refinement was a new event in its history, eminent though it had so long been for the visits of great intellects from every part of the earth. Still, Paul was not such a teacher as Athens had learned to value, for so gross was its idolatry, that it was derisively charged with having more gods than citizens. Every street was filled with temples and images, and every grove with altars; and as if the
invention of the craving worshippers had been exhausted, several of these altars were inscribed "To the unknown God." This formed the apostle's text, when he was taken before the council of the Areopagus as a setter-forth of new gods, for they had heard him preach of Jesus and the resurrection, and imagined that these were two separate deities. But although his speech was such as the eloquence of Athens had never surpassed, and though it embodied doctrines far transcending any thing that its citizens had ever learned, "some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." Although no Jewish self-sufficiency was at hand, yet the pride of Athenian learning was in its room, and the scowling Stoic and sensual Epicurean were as hard to be convinced as the Pharisee and Sadducee. Only a very few listened, reflected, and believed in that city of Socrates and Plato.

6. Miletus—Jerusalem.—Paul's next journey was to Corinth, where his successes were mingled with the usual amount of trouble and opposition, arising, as before, from his own countrymen. He then laboured in Syria, Galatia, and Phrygia, afterwards passed into Achaia; and finally made a considerable stay in the rich city of Ephesus, until his mission was interrupted by the silversmiths, who throng by making silver models of their far-famed temple, and feared that by the preaching of Christianity their craft would be ruined. A long series of apostolic visits to the principal parts of Greece and Asia Minor succeeded; after which, on his return, he stopped at Miletus, and there, sending for the elders of the church of Ephesus, he delivered to them a solemn farewell charge, because they were to see his face no more. It was necessary that he should go to Jerusalem, although he knew not what would befall him there; but he knew, as he said, that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him. But all his anxiety was to finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received from the Lord. It was an affectionate and a tearful farewell. Soon after his departure, and when he had reached Cesarea, it was there prophesied to him by Agabus, that at Jerusalem he should be bound and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles; and upon hearing this, his Christian friends with one
voice implored him not to go thither. But to all their entreaties the heroic answer of Paul was, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." He accordingly resumed his way, whether it might lead to imprisonment or martyrdom. The prediction of Agabus was faithfully verified. As Paul entered the temple with certain Asiatic Jews who were Christian converts, an outcry was raised that he had brought Greeks thither to pollute the holy edifice: a terrible tumult ensued, and he would have been torn in pieces, but for the opportune arrival of the captain of the temple guard. It was in vain when silence was restored that Paul addressed the multitude; such was their madness against Christ and his doctrines, that they clamoured for the death of the apostle, like famished wolves ravening for their prey. On the following day he was produced by his Roman protectors before the Jewish council, that he might have at least the benefit of an orderly trial; but here too matters were not amended, for the judges, part of whom were Sadducees and part Pharisees, quarrelled about him so fiercely, that again he narrowly escaped being torn asunder. This was not all. Forty ruffians banded themselves by a solemn oath that they would assassinate him on the following day while on his way to the council for further trial, in consequence of which the commander of the garrison, knowing that Paul was a Roman citizen, sent him by night to the procurator Felix at Cesarea, escorted by a strong guard. The arraignments of the apostle which followed, and his appearances before the tribunal of Felix and that of Festus his successor; the troubles he endured from the malignity of his Jewish accusers, and the avarice or timidity of his Roman judges; and the true grandeur and nobleness of his deportment that made Felix tremble, and King Agrippa be almost persuaded to become a Christian,—these are well worth the study of all who wish to learn how Christianity can elevate as well as purify and refine the heart of fallen man. At last, the apostle finding the decision of his case protracted by the artifice of the Jews, and having been assured by his divine Master in a vision that he was to testify of Him at Rome as well as Jerusalem, brought the tedious delay to a crisis by appealing from the provincial judges to
the trial and sentence of the emperor himself. This appeal was his right of citizenship which neither Festus nor Agrippa could disobey, nor even the Jews counteract. To Rome he was sent accordingly, and the description of his voyage and shipwreck at the island of Melita (Malta) has given this commanding bulwark of the Mediterranean an importance that will continue to last until the rock itself has passed away, as well as the waves that since the creation have rolled around its base.

7. **Paul's Labours and Martyrdom.**—To understand aright the travels and labours of Saint Paul, it is necessary not only to follow them as they are detailed in the Acts of the Apostles, but also in the scriptural charts which have been constructed for the benefit of the young inquirer. As for the troubles with which these journeyings were attended, the following emphatic summary which he has given will here suffice: “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” And be it remembered too, that in a life of endurance and activity such as none have ever surpassed, there were superadded his labours as a common tentmaker, to procure the resources of daily sustenance as well as those of journeying. He could thus affectionately appeal to the elders of Ephesus when he bade them farewell: “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.”

With Paul’s arrival in Rome, and his residence two years there on parole, the book of the Acts terminates his eventful narrative. Still we long to know what succeeded in the life of this prince of the apostles until he became “Paul the aged,” and how he entered into his rest after the “good fight” was ended which he had fought so bravely. On these uninspired ecclesiastical history somewhat enlightens us.
At Rome he was set free, and his converts were to be found even among the imperial household. He then preached in various parts of the Roman empire, and is supposed in the course of his travels to have visited Britain, the last and remotest mark of Roman ambition and occupation. He also revisited Greece and Asia, where he confirmed the churches he had planted or strengthened. He finally returned to Rome, and was beheaded in a general persecution raised against the Christians, in which his fellow-apostle Peter was also a martyr. This event occurred on the 29th of June A.D. 72, according to the common computation.

EXERCISES.

1. To whom was the gospel now to be extended? What portion was assigned to Paul? With what is the book of the Acts chiefly occupied? What was the general effect of Stephen’s martyrdom? What particularly at Antioch? How did the converts of Antioch show their sincerity? What occurred when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch?

2. What were the first stages of Paul’s travels? How was he opposed at Paphos? How was Elymas punished? What was the first reception of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch? What was Paul’s sermon in the synagogue? How was it received? What opposition followed? How did this opposition at last succeed? How did Paul and Barnabas proceed at Iconium? What ensued?

3. What miracle did Paul perform at Lystra? What effect did it produce on the multitude? How were the people checked in their idolatrous attempt? Of what opposite extreme were they guilty? What was Paul’s course after being stoned at Lystra?

4. What heresy was taught at Antioch? To whose decision was it referred? What was the decision? Who was the new companion of Paul’s travels? What was the course of his journeying? What was the conduct of the prophetess at Philippi? What miracle did Paul work on this occasion? How was he requited? What happened in the prison? What was the conduct of the jailor? What that of the magistrates? What occasioned their alarm? What followed?

5. What was the nature of Paul’s journeys? What befell him at Thessalonica? What at Berea? In what condition was Athens at Paul’s arrival? How did he address the Athenians? With what effect?

6. What was Paul’s next course? How was he opposed in Ephesus? What was his proceeding at Miletus? What was the nature of his farewell to the elders of Ephesus? What was prophesied to him at Cesarea? What was his conduct on this occasion? What ensued on his entering the temple of Jerusalem? How was he treated by the council? To what danger was he now exposed? What character did he exhibit before his Roman judges? How did he bring the trial to an issue? What occurred on his voyage to Rome?

7. In what way can the travels of Paul be best understood? What were the troubles that attended them? What was his disinterestedness? What was his course after he was set free at Rome? What was the close of his history?
CHAPTER XXII.

THE APOSTLES.

Church at Jerusalem—Peter—John—James—The other Apostles—
Greatness of the Apostolic Work—Origin of Heresy in the Christian
Church.

1. The Apostles.—Having thus adverted to the individual
history of St Paul, worthy as it is of notice and commemo-
ration, we must now return to the Christian church at large,
and to those honoured instruments that were chosen for its
advancement. We therefore advert once more to Jerusalem,
where after our Lord’s ascension the first church was formed.
It was not only the germ from which the others sprang, but
the pattern upon which they were formed and governed in
those countries where Christianity was subsequently in-
duced. We have already seen the scanty numbers that
composed its first meeting, and the humble circumstances
under which it assembled. But the twelve apostles and
the seventy disciples were there, men especially selected by
the Head of the church while he dwelt among men, to
labour in the great work of the world’s conversion. And
above all, their Master, to whom all power was now given,
was still with them, though unseen, to direct them in their
efforts, and crown them with success. At length the Holy
Ghost descended, and conversions were made by thousands;
but still the apostles lingered at Jerusalem: their national
and religious love of Zion, and the daily successes that re-
warded their efforts, made them unwilling to depart. Fi-
nally, however, they were enabled to understand that their
commission was to go forth to every nation, upon which they
addressed themselves to the solemn task, and each man went
upon his respective way.

2. Peter.—Next to the life of St Paul, that of St Peter
seems to have been the fullest in enterprise and incident.
After having laboured successfully in Galilee, he was sent
with John to Samaria, in consequence of the acceptance of
the word through the preaching of Philip among the Sama-
ritans; and a people whom the Jews loathed, and upon
whose heads even John would have called down fire from heaven only a short time before while Jesus lived, now listened humbly, and were converted in multitudes to the faith. It was here also that Peter was obliged to administer a stern rebuke to Simon, a sorcerer and pretended convert, who hoped to obtain from the apostle the power of conferring the Holy Ghost, and the miraculous gifts that accompanied it, by the offer of a sum of money. To Peter also it was first revealed, by the striking example of Cornelius the Roman centurion, that the labours of the church were no longer to be confined to his countrymen, but given to the world at large; while the persecution of Herod Agrippa, in which he escaped premature martyrdom only by a miracle, convinced him that he had no longer a secure home in Jerusalem. After these events we find him at Antioch, and also in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. It is also thought, but on very slender foundation, that he came to Rome about the year 63. In this manner he appears before us in passing glimpses, but in every place incessantly toiling and striving in the great work of his Master. At last the time predicted to him by our Lord arrived when others were to gird him and not himself, and to carry him whither he would not. During the terrible persecution raised against the Christians by Nero, tradition relates that Peter's Christian brethren, anxious for his safety, besought him to retire from Rome. He complied; but as he was approaching the city gate he met Christ (probably in a vision) as if about to enter the imperial capital; and on asking whither he was going, our Lord replied, "To Rome, to be crucified anew in my servant." Peter saw in this an admonition to return and die; and afterwards, on being apprehended, he suffered crucifixion, as the warning had announced. A short time before his wife had fallen a martyr in the same persecution, and his last words to her, as she was led out to execution, were, "Remember the Lord."

3. John.—John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, must next be mentioned. He was present at the general church council at Jerusalem, upon the important question of circumcision and other Judaical observances, held A.D. 50, and does not appear to have left his native country until after that period. He then directed his course to Asia Minor, which became
the chosen field of his apostolic exertions, and especially the city of Ephesus. Here he lived until the year 95, when he was banished by the Emperor Domitian to the lonely island of Patmos, and it was here that he was favoured with those signal revelations in which the history of the world and the church to the end of time is prefigured. Afterwards he returned to Asia, and died at the age of a hundred, having survived not only all his brethren, but even Jerusalem itself and the liberties of his fallen country. An incident told of his last years is too characteristic to be passed without notice. Being too much enfeebled by extreme old age for the labour of preaching, he at last reduced his sermons to this short sentence, "Children, love one another;" and on being asked the cause of such frequent repetition of the charge, he replied, "Nothing else is needed."

4. James.—Among the apostles there were two who bore the name of James. The first, called James the Greater, probably because he was the elder of the two, was the son of Zebedee by Salome (who is also called Mary), the cousin-german of the mother of our Lord. His career was brief, for he was the first martyr after Stephen, having been put to death by Herod Agrippa, who sought to win popularity by persecuting the Christians. We are told that when he was led out to be beheaded, his accuser, who looked on and saw his readiness to die, was so affected by the spectacle that he instantly declared himself a Christian, and was forthwith executed with his victim. The other, called James the Less, and also the Just, had a longer and more eventful career. He was called the brother of our Lord, because he was the son of Joseph the carpenter, by his first wife Escha. He superintended the Christian church that was established at Jerusalem after the other apostles had gone to their several places of action; and such was the holy integrity and gentleness of his character, which procured him the title of the Just, that the Jews themselves, much as they hated the very name of Christianity, were compelled to love him. On this account he escaped amidst the tumults and persecutions that were so frequent in Jerusalem, until Paul’s appeal to Cæsar, after being arrested in the temple, called forth the full vindictiveness of those who hated Christianity. By that appeal
one apostle was removed beyond their vengeance, and they resolved to have another who was still within their reach. The time too was favourable for their purpose, as Ananias the high-priest, a Sadducee and persecutor, held rule in Jerusalem during the short period between the death of Festus and the arrival of his successor. James was summoned before the council, and accused of breaking the law of Moses; but the charge could not well be established, as he had scrupulously conformed to its observances where they were not incompatible with Christian liberty. They then took him up to a balustrade of the temple, and from that eminence required him to harangue the people, assembled for the Passover, against the Christian faith; but instead of complying, he declared with a loud voice that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God, and would come in the clouds of heaven. Enraged at this, his enemies threw him down, and proceeded to stone him, while he continued to exclaim upon his knees: "I pray for them, Lord God and Father, for they know not what they do." A priest, moved with pity, cried to the murderers, "Hold! what mean ye?—the just man prays for you;" but it was too late. A man, with the blow of a fuller's club, ended the life and sufferings of the martyr.

5. THE OTHER APOSTLES.—Of the other apostles little can be stated with absolute certainty. These heroic self-denying men were not their own historians: they were content to be nothing so that their Master might be all, and their deeds were such as the world is not wont to commemorate. At a subsequent period also, when Christianity had obtained full ascendancy, the errors of Romanism, that like tares grew up with the harvest, not only perverted the interpretation of Scripture, but the history of the church; and the apostles, who were set up not as teachers to be studied, but idols to be worshipped, had lives invented for them as extravagant and profitless as nursery tales. The little that can therefore be relied upon is easily summed up. Andrew, the brother of Peter, had for his sphere of action the shores of the Black Sea, the Byzantium of the ancients, where Constantinople was afterwards erected, and probably also Greece. He was at last put to death by Egidius, the Roman proconsul of Achaia, whom he endeavoured to convert; and the mode
of his martyrdom, which was that of crucifixion, was peculiarly cruel and unwonted, for instead of being fastened to the cross with nails, he was bound to it with cords, that his death might be the more lingering. Of Philip, the first of the apostles who were called by our Lord, it is only known that he preached in the districts of Upper Asia, and at last died at Hierapolis, a city of Phrygia. Thomas, whose apostolic field was a considerable portion of Asia, appears to have travelled eastward, through Parthia, Media, and Persia, and at last to have ended his career in India, where he was assassinated by the Brahmins, whose gross idolatries he reprobated, and whose ascendancy over the blinded people he endangered. Bartholomew preached in Arabia, Matthew in the countries now comprised under Modern Persia, and Lebbeus or Jude in the northern province of Syria, called Edessa; while of Simon the Canaanite nothing is known that can be relied upon.——And this is all that can be told of men whose labours might be said to have created the world anew, and of whom an unmindful world has shown itself so unworthy! Alas for him who, unmoved by their example, has no higher hope than the mere applause of men or the commemoration of history! Alas for even him who can rest contented with the approbation of the wise and the good!

6. The Apostolic Work.—If any thing is more wonderful than this scantiness of intelligence respecting the lives and actions of the apostles, it is the magnitude of the work they accomplished, by which the whole earth was speedily changed. Of that at least there can neither be doubt nor misunderstanding. The all-pervading power of Rome and the learning of Greece, the strength of political dominion and the refined subtleties of intellect by which the delusions of the world were so securely bulwarked and Christianity opposed, were to be assailed, stormed, and overthrown. Creeds that had been entwined, not only for centuries but for thousands of years, with the whole existence of every nation, were to be torn up and cast forth as weeds. And to be exchanged for what?—a faith requiring such purity, and sacrifice, and self-denial as the whole world had hated and opposed from the beginning, and for which these creeds and systems of delusion had been adopted as cheap and easy.
substitutes. And by whom was so vast a revolution to be accomplished?—by a handful of mechanics from a country which the world united in despising as barbarous, selfish, and superstitious, and whose holy attempts they alternately derided and persecuted. And yet the great work was accomplished, and accomplished so quickly! The establishment of Christianity was the miracle of miracles in which all the others were concentrated. From every falling superstition, from every dreary temple now forsaken of its worshippers, from the smokeless altar and the decaying shrine, one common testimony came forth, whose echoes shall go onward to the end of time, in the exclamation, "This is the finger of God!"

7. Commencement of Heresy.—It is mournful however to add, that the conflicts of Christianity were not ended when the absurdities of heathen superstition were swept from the world. These had lasted during a long night of error; but on the rising of the Sun of righteousness they vanished like shadows, for they were unable to withstand the light. Yet still there was a Satan to tempt and fallen human nature to be perverted, and therefore as soon as Christianity arose and flourished religious error was implanted in the same soil. It was error also adapted to those truths which it was designed to counteract and destroy. It was too late now to revive the absurdities of paganism; but if delusion could be made to assume the appearance of the newly revealed truths, the end would be more effectually accomplished. From this period therefore Satan transformed himself not into a heathen deity but an angel of light; and the spirit who seduced men from the truth was to address them with the Judas kiss of Christian love, and in the language of Scripture. Even during the time of the apostles heresies had sprung up, as a foretaste of the evils that were yet in store for the Church. These were the systems of the Docetæ or Gnostics, and the Ebionites. The first taught that Christ had no proper humanity, that his existence upon earth had been shadowy and illusive, and that he died upon the cross in appearance only, and not in reality. As for the Ebionites, they held that Christ was a real man of the highest qualities and greatest excellence, but still nothing more than a man. In either
case their aim was to show that the doctrine of redemption by the death of the God-man was but a fiction. Even already, too, Antichrist was beginning to exist in the form of gentle and unobtrusive prejudices, which, being afterwards matured into doctrines, were to leaven the whole body of divine truth, and reduce the soul of man to its former bondage. Such was the state of Christianity at the very commencement of its triumph: when the perils from without were overcome, they were succeeded by perils from within, and its foes were they of its own household. Thus also it has gone on to the present hour: the tares and the wheat have grown together, and flourished side by side. At the last great harvest, and not till then, the final separation will be made, and the grain gathered into the garner of eternity.

EXERCISES.

1. Where was the first Christian church formed? What is observable of it? How was it strong though so weak in numbers? Why did the apostles linger in it?

2. What is observable of the life of St Peter? Among whom did he first labour? Whom did he rebuke in Samaria? How was he taught that his labours were not to be confined to his own country? In what countries was he chiefly occupied? What incident befell him at Rome? What was his martyrdom? What his wife’s?

3. When did John leave his country? What was his field of exertion? What of his banishment? What was his end? What is remarkable in his last sermons?

4. Who was James the Greater? What occurred at his martyrdom? Who was James the Less? What was his character? Why was he apprehended? What was his trial? What were the circumstances of his martyrdom?

5. What is the first cause of so little of the rest of the apostles being known? What the second? Where did Andrew labour? How did he die? What is the history of Philip?—of Thomas?—of Bartholomew?—of Matthew?—of Lebbeus?—of Simon the Canaanite? What does this brevity teach?

6. What is chiefly remarkable in the history of the apostles? What was the greatness of their work? What the difficulty from the nature of Christianity itself? What from the condition of the apostles? What is taught us by the result?

7. What kind of error succeeded the heathen superstitions? How was heresy made attractive? What were the first heresies in the Christian church? What of Antichrist? When will the final extinction of heresy occur?
CHAPTER XXIII.

LAST WAR OF THE JEWS.


A. D. 36 to A. D. 67.

1. PUNISHMENT OF CHRIST'S ENEMIES.—While Christianity was thus so firmly established and so widely preached as to be daily advancing towards a general ascendancy, it is necessary to revert to that Judaism which it superseded, and therefore to the Jews with whose national existence the laws of Moses were identified. The great spiritual building was now completed of which the Jewish creed was but the platform, and the removal of that platform implied the extinction of the priestly office, and the cessation of all public rites and sacrifices; in fact, the utter ruin of Jerusalem and its glorious temple, and the banishment of the people from a land so hallowed by miracles and sacred remembrances. And all this punishment they had incurred, and were now to endure. Fifteen hundred years previous it had been foretold to them while they were still a nomade people; and now that they had committed the crime by which their guilt was completed, they were again to become homeless and wanderers under greater miseries than their fathers had ever experienced, while the whole earth was to be their wilderness, and every nation successively the Egypt of their afflictions. Their house was indeed to be left to them desolate. A ruin such as no nation had ever experienced, followed by a living death of ages such as no people had ever felt, was to be the punishment of a crime which far transcended all that man had ever yet committed or even imagined.

The first strokes of divine chastisement fell upon those who had been the most directly instrumental in the death of our Saviour. As for Pilate, he continued his oppressive rule, until he crowned it by an iniquitous slaughter of the
Samaritans assembled upon Mount Gerizim; and in consequence of the complaints against it that were sent to Rome, he was deposed by the emperor, and banished to Vienne in Gaul, where he is said to have committed suicide. Such was the end of him who, to escape a popular clamour, gave up Christ to be crucified, and then washed his hands to cleanse himself from the guilt. About the same time, Caiaphas, the iniquitous judge who presided at the trial of our Saviour, was deposed from the office of high-priest by the authority of Vitellius, president of Syria. Nor was Herod Antipas, he who with his men of war "set Jesus at nought," and after clothing him in a robe of mock royalty sent him back to Pilate, suffered to escape. That very robe too became the type of his punishment. Envious of the honours bestowed by the emperor upon Agrippa, who was invested with fresh tetrarchies and aggrandized with the title of king, Antipas would needs be a king also, and went to Rome for the purpose; but instead of winning the empty title, his kingdom itself was taken from him and given to Agrippa, and he was banished to Vienne, as if to complete that reconciliation with Pilate, his fellow-exile, which had commenced under such awful circumstances. Nor did even the proud, incestuous, adulterous Herodias, the murderess of the baptist John, and participator in her husband's crimes, escape amidst these righteous retributions. It was she who had urged her partner in his vain-glorious claim, and, scorning the pardon that was offered her, she accompanied him to his place of banishment to end her life in poverty and obscurity. How or when this ambitious woman died, history has not vouchsafed to mention.

2. Herod Agrippa.—Herod Agrippa, who was the grandson of Herod the Great, on the deposition of the envious Herod Antipas, not only had the dominions of the latter added to his two tetrarchies of Trachonitis and Abilene, but soon after the countries of Judea and Samaria, so that the divided dominions of his grandfather were once more consolidated into one powerful kingdom. The death of his patron Caligula also, instead of impairing only increased his prosperity; for Claudius, now emperor, not only confirmed him in his dominions, but enriched him with new dignities.
LAST WAR OF THE JEWS.

But this blaze of national grandeur, that seemed to promise a fresh history to Palestine, was but the last flash of an expiring lamp. Haunted by an eager love of popular favour, the fortunate king sought the applause of his subjects by persecuting Christianity in the most distinguished of its champions, so that he not only put James the Greater to death, but intended the destruction of Peter. He had thus sealed his own doom. A short time after (A.D. 44), while celebrating splendid games at Cesarea in honour of the emperor, amidst which he gave public audience to the Tyrian and Sidonian ambassadors, the setting sun, at the end of his harangue, shone with such brightness upon his jewels and robe of silver tissue, that the idolatrous crowd burst forth with the cry, “It is the voice of a god and not of a man!” Soon after their god was a worm, and the prey of worms. Almost instantly he was struck with a loathsome and excruciating disease, under which he died four days after, while his death was hailed with indecent triumph and merriment by those very heathen subjects whose flatteries had been so loud and impious.

3. Beginning of Troubles.—On the death of Herod Agrippa, his son of the same name was too young to succeed him, being only seventeen years old; but three years after, the Roman emperor gave him the kingdom of Chalcis, with the government of the temple of Jerusalem, and the power of appointing the high-priest. But again Judea became a Roman province, which it remained to the end; and Cuspius Fadius was made its procurator, under whose short administration and that of his successor the severe famine prevailed which had been foretold by Agabus at Antioch. And famine was not the only grievance with which the country was afflicted; for one of those false Messiahs appeared whom the multitude were now so eager to follow after they had rejected the true. This wretched impostor, whose very name is uncertain, after leading his followers to the Jordan, with the promise of dividing it for their march like a second Joshua, was attacked by a Roman force, who slew and dispersed the crowd, cut off his head, and sent it to Jerusalem to be exposed to the people. Fadius was soon glad to resign his office, and was succeeded by Tiberius Alexander, a Jew,
who had apostatized to the idolatry of the Gentiles. He in turn was replaced by Ventidius Cumanus, under whom those national woes commenced for which the sins of the people had so fully prepared the way.

The first outbreak of the Jews occurred A.D. 48, and was occasioned by a foul insult offered to their religious worship by a Roman soldier while Jerusalem was crowded during the Passover. The people applied to the procurator for satisfaction; but none being given, the whole city rose in an uproar, and Cumanus, finding himself unable to still it, let loose his soldiers among the remonstrants, so that ten thousand fell beneath their swords. Another deed of military violence soon followed. An imperial servant, while travelling in the neighbourhood of Bethoron, was plundered by robbers, upon which the villages of the quarter where the crime was committed were given up to the soldiers, and the chief of their inhabitants were thrown into chains. During the execution of this atrocious act, a soldier, who found a copy of the law of Moses, tore it before the people with blasphemous insults; and such an outburst of popular fury ensued, that Cumanus was glad to appease it by causing the soldier to be beheaded. An event more fatal still, as it precipitated the final war of the country, afterwards occurred. Samaria was the highway through which the Jews of Galilee went up to the temple to worship; but as the Samaritans were bigoted in favour of their own Gerizim and against Mount Zion, the Galilean pilgrims were subjected, as in the days of our Saviour, to insults on the journey. At length a Jew, while travelling through Samaria on his way to the temple, was murdered; while Cumanus, who was bribed by the Samaritans, refused to punish the offenders. Here again the Jewish religion was insulted; and the people, finding that they could obtain no redress, proceeded to execute judgment at their own hand, by attacking and laying waste the Samaritan villages. Thus even already war was declared against Rome; and bands were raised and organized over the country that, under the name of robbers, subsisted by general rapine, and were ready to join every popular discontent that they might drive it into open revolt. False prophets also were not wanting to encourage these popular
confusions with promises of miraculous success; and false Messiahs were on the watch to head the bands of malcontents, and dupe them onwards with promises of national liberty and revenge.

4. Felix—Festus.—Such was the state of the country when Cumanus was displaced from the office which he was so unworthy to occupy, and succeeded by Claudius Felix; and from the foregoing account it will scarcely appear surprising if even St Paul himself should have been asked by a Roman centurion, “Art not thou that Egyptian which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?” It was too common in those days to find an insurgent or robber chief combining with these characters the pretensions of prophet, preacher, and worker of miracles, the more securely to establish his hold upon his followers. Felix acted with merciless rigour against these popular insurrections, that were almost of daily occurrence; but his private character was that of a selfish, sordid profligate. He caused the high-priest Jonathan, to whom he mainly owed the procuratorship, to be murdered by assassins; and although he had already two wives living, he married a third, Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa, whom he persuaded to leave her husband, Azizus, king of Emesa, who had become a convert to Judaism for her sake. It was no wonder therefore that such a man should tremble at the righteous preaching of St Paul, or be ready to take a bribe for his liberation. After a rule of ten years he was deposed in consequence of the complaints of the Jews, and Portius Festus was placed in his room. Festus was a more able ruler as well as a better man than his predecessor; but the difficulties of government that had accumulated under former procurators had now become so great, that no worth or talent of any one man could suffice to obviate or surmount them. Jerusalem swarmed with assassins called Sicarii, from the short sword or poniard (Sica) which they wore concealed under their cloak; and while the streets, and even the temple itself, were polluted with murders, the rural districts were overrun by those powerful troops of banditti, who were ready to sell their services to the highest bidder. Even the teachers and guardians of re-
ligion also, instead of composing only embroiled this state of trouble; for while the office of high-priest was continually changing its occupants, so that any one who, like Paul, had been absent for a short time from Jerusalem, might be unaware at his return what "whited wall" presided in the Sanhedrim, yet those who had been displaced continued to exact the tithes of office as if they still officiated,—an oppressive claim that not only intercepted the sustenance of the acting priesthood, but stirred up tumult and bloodshed among the people, by whom it was resisted.

5. Albinus—Gessius Florus.—Festus, as if he had been too good a ruler for such a country, was removed by death after a short administration of three years; and during the interval that followed before the appointment of a successor, Ananus the high-priest, a proud and worthless Sadducee, held rule, under whom James the Just suffered martyrdom. But Ananus did not escape the punishment of a crime which was regarded with horror by all the virtuous in Israel, for he was soon after deposed from the high-priesthood. Albinus was the next procurator of Judea, a ruler so devoid of shame as well as common honesty that the robbers who fell into his hands might easily purchase from him their acquittal if they could but procure money enough for the purpose; and to obtain this, their associates had only to seize some opulent person and subject him to a ransom equal to the governor's demand. After a year Albinus was recalled, and Gessius Florus was appointed his successor. This wretch was the last and worst of Judea's oppressors,—the drop in the cup of her affliction that was to make it overflow. The former governor had sold pardons to apprehended robbers; but Florus not only practised this iniquity upon a still wider scale, but connived at their marauding expeditions, and shared in the plunder. Such indeed was the enormity of his crimes, and the shamelessness with which they were committed, and such the oppression of his rule, under which all classes were plundered, that the wisest of the Jews began to abandon their country, as if the condition of homeless and wandering exiles were the milder alternative. Even too when Cestius Gallus, the president of Syria, visited Jerusalem at the Passover in the year 65, and when the
Jews thronged round him, beseeching him with tears to have mercy upon their country, by freeing it from the tyranny of the procurator, all that Cestius would promise was, that he would advise him to be more merciful in his rule for the future. Gessius Florus, who stood by laughing at their complaints, showed how little that advice would be regarded. He persevered in his career of iniquity, selling not only justice but religion itself in the office of the high-priesthood, which the veriest wretches might obtain for a sum of money; while he so goaded the people as to make it evident that he wished to drive them into open rebellion, that his crimes of government might be lost sight of amidst the confusion and havoc that would follow.

6. Commencement of the War.—An effectual cause for that rebellion was soon afforded. The city of Cesarea, which was next in consequence to Jerusalem itself, had long been an object of disputed claim between the Jews and the Syro-Grecians. The former declared that it was theirs, as it had been built by their king, Herod the Great, and with the money which had been drawn from them by taxes levied for the purpose; while the latter party maintained that Cesarea was a Greek city, and as such had been intended by its founder from the beginning. It was a great national religious question as to whether Judaism or Paganism should hold the ascendancy in the second city of Palestine. At length the decision was given in favour of Syria; upon which the heathen inhabitants of Cesarea celebrated their triumph, by insulting the Jews and heaping injuries upon their faith; and when the latter complained to the procurator, they were only treated with contempt. Thus the flame kindled in a single city was wantonly scattered over the whole country, and the first action that followed was the surprise of the strong fortress of Massada, near the Dead Sea, by a band of daring young men, who put the whole Roman garrison to the sword. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were not slow to throw themselves into the contest. They discontinued the usual sacrifices offered in the temple for the prosperity of the empire, thus proclaiming themselves in open revolt; slew the Roman garrison stationed in the city, fired the public offices and the palace of Agrippa, and killed the high-priest
Ananus, who was found concealed in the arch of an aqueduct. All Judea was now in a state of war against Rome. The Romans and Syrians were assailed and massacred wherever they could be attacked with hope of success, and they in turn inflicted fearful requital in every place where their arms could obtain the mastery. It was then too that the robbers, now distinguished by the name of Zealots, poured down from their fastnesses and concealments, no longer bands but armies, no longer as plunderers but patriots; and in every town and village those conflicts were rife that inflict greater misery and occasion more wasteful bloodshed than the greatest national trial of arms where the fate of a whole kingdom is staked upon the issue.

It was not the wont of Rome to be still when a province had rebelled. Accordingly Cestius Gallus, as governor of Syria, assembled his forces and advanced to crush the insurrection. His first operations were in Galilee, in all of which he was successful; upon this he advanced to Jerusalem, and encamped against it while the people were holding the Feast of Tabernacles. Scarcely, however, had he taken ground, when the inhabitants, although it was the Sabbath, made a desperate sally, slew five hundred of the enemy, and retired with such little loss as showed that the city could not easily be taken. Gallus, compelled to greater caution, waited three days before the walls, during which time he tried to persuade the people to a peaceful surrender; but finding them resolved to hold out, he resumed hostilities on the fourth day, by setting fire to the suburb of Jerusalem called Bezeitha, and advancing to the upper city. Even then, Josephus informs us, had he attacked the walls he might have obtained an entrance at once, and thus have finished the war at the outset; but it was not thus slightly that the guilty city was to be chastised—not thus that it was to be so ruined that one stone should not be left upon another. At the moment when success was within his grasp, Cestius Gallus hesitated, wavered, and ordered a retreat. Conduct that would have been strange in any other leader was a very phenomenon in a Roman general; and the citizens were astonished to see his well-appointed army drawn off without a blow, as if it had been baffled and beaten from the field.
But the Romans were not to retire thus easily. Animated by what looked like a miracle in their behalf, the Jews rushed out, hung upon their rear, shook the heavy-armed ranks, and made such slaughter among them for two days during this disgraceful retreat, that on the third it was changed into a flight, and a chase that was continued as far as Antipatris. The Romans left behind them most of their heavy weapons, and all their war-engines; and these, which were afterwards used in the defence of Jerusalem, as well as the victory that animated them to resist, were the most fatal boon that could have been conferred upon the Jewish people.

But while the triumph was at its height in Jerusalem, there were also mournful looks in the streets that rebuked the general exultation; and a silent stir and mustering had commenced that spoke of far other purposes than resistance. In this victory the Christians read the sign of Jerusalem's approaching downfall, and a warning to themselves "to flee to the mountains." For had they not seen "the abomination of desolation stand where it ought not," and "Jerusalem encompassed with armies?" And were not these the signs which their divine Master had announced thirty-three years before, of "affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be?" To the mountains of Perea, and especially to Pella beyond the Jordan, the Christians fled accordingly, and there they had safety and light in their dwellings as it had been in Goshen of old, while the whole land was overwhelmed with a darkness that might be felt.

EXERCISES.

1. What did the abrogation of Judaism imply? How had this abrogation been predicted? With what afflictions was it to be connected? How had the Jews deserved it? On whom was punishment first to fall? What was the fate of Pilate? Of Caiaphas? Of Herod Antipas? Of Herodias?

2. What was the prosperity of Herod Agrippa? How was it augmented? How did he seek to win popularity? What was his pompous display at Cesarea? What its end?

3. What occurred on the death of Herod Agrippa? What calamity now befall the nation? What was added to the calamity of famine? What caused the first outbreak of the Jews? How was it suppressed? What was the next? What was the third popular outbreak? What was now the state of the country? By what deceivers were the people misled?
4. What strange question was asked of St Paul? What was the state of matters that prompted it? What were the proceedings of Felix? What his character? What his crimes? What became of him? What was the character of his successor? What was the state of Jerusalem? What of the country? What was the condition of the priesthood?

5. What became of Festus? Who was his successor? What became of Ananus? What kind of ruler was Albinus? By whom was he succeeded? How did Florus govern? What effect did his rule produce? How did the Jews remonstrate against it? How was his rule continued? What seemed to be its purpose?

6. What was the contest about Cesarea? How was it decided? What followed the decision? What occurred at Masada? What at Jerusalem? What over the country at large? What were the first proceedings of Cestius Gallus? What skirmish occurred at Jerusalem? In what manner did Gallus commence the siege? What was his prospect of success? What was his unaccountable conduct afterwards? What was the result of his retreat? What was the conduct of the Christians on this occasion? What warning did they read in these signs? What was the consequence?

CHAPTER XXIV.

FALL OF JERUSALEM.

Preparations for War—Alarming Signs in Jerusalem—Progress of the War—Siege of Jerusalem—The Famine—Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple—Conclusion.

A.D. 67 TO A.D. 70.

1. PROPHETIC SIGNS.—The defeat of Cestius instead of exciting the fears only roused the indignation of Rome: its power had been defied, and one of its armies ignominiously defeated by a country that was reckoned a mere second-rate province. Never perhaps had the Roman arms sustained such indignity, except in the destruction of the army of Crassus in Parthia, or that of Varus in Germany. An instant retribution was sure to follow, and Vespasian, the best Roman general of the day, commanded the expedition by which the Jewish rebellion was to be crushed and its injuries avenged. Never had Rome made such an effort without bringing it to a speedy and fearful fulfilment.

While ruin was thus gathering over Jerusalem, that won-
drous city of prophecy was not to fall without sign or warning. Heaven and earth were full of tokens that the time was at hand. Four years before the war commenced, and while all was apparent peace, a peasant called Jesus, the son of Ananus, who had come up to Jerusalem to the Feast of Tabernacles, cried aloud, in the hearing of the crowds: "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" As if impelled by an irresistible power, he continued to thunder the denunciation night and day in the streets, and though opposed by the people and chastised by the rulers, he still repeated the cry. At length he was taken before the procurator Albinus, and scourged till his bones were laid bare; but to every stroke of the whip, as well as to every question, his only answer was, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" During the next four years he remained secluded, and nothing was heard of him but his solitary cry, until the war commenced, when it became louder than ever, especially during the festivals. The end of this strange denouncer was in character with his prediction. One day during the siege, when he had uttered his wonted exclamation of "Woe, woe to the city, and to the people, and to the holy house!" he suddenly added, "Woe to myself also!" and at that instant a stone from a Roman war-engine silenced his forebodings for ever. This too was not the most alarming of the indications. A star or comet, in the shape of a sword, stood over the city for a whole year. The eastern gate of the inner court of the temple, that was of brass, and so ponderous that the united strength of twenty men was needed to move it, opened of its own accord during the night. At the Feast of Pentecost also, while the priests were going by night, according to custom, into the inner court of the temple to perform their religious offices, they felt a shaking, and heard a loud noise, after which there was an exclamation as of the voice of a great multitude, "Let us go hence!"

2. The War.—While these signs were addressing a people foredoomed to ruin and too deaf to be warned, the work had commenced by which that ruin was to be consummated.
Vespasian, being joined by his son Titus, moved his army, consisting of 60,000 soldiers, from Antioch, the capital of Syria, in the spring of A.D. 67, and carried the war in the first instance into Galilee, which was thickly studded with cities and populous villages. He took Gadara, the inhabitants of which he put to the sword, and afterwards laid siege to Jotapata, a city defended by the celebrated Jewish historian Josephus, which held out forty-seven days. Joppa and Tiberias afterwards fell, and other cities followed, the principal of which was Gamala. But these successes of the Romans were achieved with such difficulty, owing to the stubborn resistance of the Jews, that a whole campaign was occupied with the conquest of Galilee alone. Even from the commencement also the war assumed its distinctive character: it was a war of extermination, so that when a town was taken all the male inhabitants were butchered, and the women and children if spared (which was very seldom) were sold for slaves. While Vespasian was thus slowly but steadily proceeding in his purpose, he was urged by his officers to advance upon Jerusalem at once, and end the war by its capture, but this he prudently refused. He had already tried the desperate valour of the Jews, and seen that something more than mere conflict would be necessary to take that venerated capital. He was also aware of its condition, where the miseries of famine and the swords of the hostile factions would more than half accomplish the work even though his legions should look idly on. The course of events justified his calculations. Three parties already occupied the city, parties who partitioned it into as many portions for the purposes of mere strife and ambition; and while they made the blood of each other flow like water in the streets, and even the temple itself, they agreed in nothing but to resist the Romans as soon as the siege should begin.

3. The Siege.—At length that event so long retarded was commenced. The war that had continued for three years was now to be signalized by the investment of the city; and in A.D. 70, Titus, to whom the finishing of the war had been committed, his father Vespasian having been previously elected emperor, advanced with his whole army to the walls. It was a fearful season for the siege of such a city as Jeru-
salem, for that season was the Passover—the time when the whole country was wont to pour its multitudes into the sacred metropolis for worship; and thus it was crowded with victims collected for the slaughter. The storehouses and provisions had also been destroyed by the insane recklessness of the rival factions, so that even with its ordinary population Jerusalem would soon have been subdued by famine. It was probably from the hope of a peaceful surrender under such desperate circumstances that Titus had chosen his time of action; but little did he know the Jewish spirit, that now transcended all common rules of calculation. His earnest desire also even to the last was to save the city and the temple; but a mightier authority than his had decreed the ruin of both, and selected him as the passive instrument by which that doom was to be accomplished.

And never has history been obliged to record a ruin more terrible and more complete. Of the three parties, the Idumeans had already left the city, after having inflicted upon it such miseries that it seemed as if, like their ancestors, their motto had been, "Raze it, raze it even to the foundations thereof!" Of the two that remained, the Zealots, under their chief Eleazar, occupied the inner court of the temple; while the other party, under John of Gischala, fortified themselves in the rest of the building. Thus was the house of prayer not only made a "den of thieves," but a stronghold of assassins and murderers; and while they employed every breathing interval for the work of mutual destruction, they silenced every voice that dared to whisper of submission to the Romans, and closely watched the gates that none should escape from the death that was inevitable within. And yet these ruffians accounted themselves the champions of their holy faith, and believed even to the last moment that heaven itself would descend for their deliverance! Finding that a long siege would be necessary, Titus surrounded the whole city with a wall, which he fortified with towers; and having thus closed in the people, he stood upon the defensive, in the sure trust that famine would accomplish its work. And that famine—men have shuddered for eighteen hundred years at the tale as if it had been an event of yesterday. The loathsome and scanty food to which the Jews were
soon reduced—the foul meats and garbage which their laws prohibited, and the failure of even these resources, attested by the gaunt corpses of the rich, the noble, and the delicate lying heaped in the lanes, and houses, and cellars, where hunger had stretched them in thousands—and over all, the prowling bands of Zealots, who, like obscene birds, scented their prey from afar, and snatched the last morsel from the lips of the dying—composed a picture of misery such as had never before been seen among any nation or people. And yet even this was not the whole amount, as one instance recorded by Josephus sufficiently attests. A lady of rank, wealth, and noble descent, who had fled to Jerusalem for shelter during the war, had been plundered in the city not only of her treasures but of whatever food she had contrived to conceal. Frantic at length with hunger, she murdered the infant at her breast, to whom she could supply nourishment no longer; and having dressed and eaten a portion of this frightful meal, she reserved the rest for the spoilers, who were in the daily habit of exploring her house for whatever provisions they might find. “This is my own son,” she shrieked to them; “come, eat of this food, for I have eaten of it myself!” Steeled though they were to all common sympathy, the wretches were so scared that they fled in horror, and all Jerusalem shuddered at the tidings. Titus also heard of it, and declared that a city in which such a deed had been done was no longer worthy to stand in the light of the sun. And yet even this monstrous event, at which Jew and Gentile so recoiled, had been predicted by Moses to the Israelites in the wilderness as one of the calamities with which their apostasy should be visited. After describing the final ruin that should be brought upon them by a “nation from far, from the end of the earth,” whose tongue the Jews would be unable to understand, and announcing the miseries of their last siege, he added, “The tender and delicate woman among you that would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness . . . her eye shall be evil toward her young one . . . and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress
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thee in thy gates." This was now fulfilled, and all that followed was but the completion of his prophecy.

After the lower city was taken, notwithstanding the three strong walls with which it was defended, and the indomitable valour and obstinacy of the besieged, the temple, which in itself was an almost impregnable fortress, held out for fifteen weeks longer. At length it too was stormed and destroyed, notwithstanding the last and mightiest of Jewish struggles to defend, as well as the earnest wishes of Titus to preserve it. In the hottest of the attack a Roman soldier mounted upon the shoulders of his companion, and hurled a burning firebrand through the golden window of the edifice; the whole building was soon a mass of flame that lighted the whole city and surrounding country. This was the destruction of the last hope of the Jew; and at the sight, which announced that God had utterly forsaken them, the dying expired, and the living resigned themselves to despair. And yet even then a false prophet had power to persuade whole multitudes to take shelter in the cloisters of the outer court, assuring them that such was the command of God, and that there they should be miraculously delivered. They obeyed, and perished in the flames. The upper city, which was the last refuge of the besieged, was soon after taken, and with its capture the whole war was ended. Four months the siege had continued, and during this period eleven hundred thousand Jews had perished—an incredible number for a city of such moderate dimensions, unless we take into account the season at which the siege commenced, when the bulk of the nation was contained within the walls of the capital. A still larger number are supposed to have fallen during the previous three years' war, while the slaughter had been so merciless that scarcely a twentieth of the whole (97,000) had been reserved as prisoners. But their fate was even worse than that of those who had perished; for after witnessing the miseries and surviving the fall of their country, they were sent to the Egyptian mines and Roman quarries, destroyed by the swords of each other, or by wild beasts in the amphitheatre, or offered for sale in the slave markets till no one cared to buy them.

4. Conclusion.—Thus fell Jerusalem, the city of God's messengers and prophets, but who had been stoned in her
streets—the fair heritage of the Son of God himself, but who had been murdered by her children. The glory, and the guilt, and the ruin that compose her history were each in turn without a parallel.

But still the wondrous history of that people continues, although Jerusalem is reduced to a heap, and Palestine, that land of milk and honey, converted into a wilderness. After such a fall every other nation has melted away, and in vain do we now search for the legitimate descendants of the Athenian and the Roman. They are like the snows of a hundred years ago, that have been dissolved into other elements, and reproduced under new forms and designations. But amidst these changes of eighteen centuries, in which all has been dissolved and reproduced, the Jew, more durable than the living granite, remains unchanged. Without a country, he is the most national of men—without an altar or a priest, he is the most devout or the most bigoted. Trodden under foot, persecuted, crushed wherever they have wandered, this indestructible people are still as numerous as they were during the splendid reigns of David and Solomon; and although as yet debarred from senates, they are the men of real power, by whom the changes of peace and war and the destinies of Europe are determined. Let us no longer allege that the age of miracles has passed away, for every Jew is a living miracle. For how has he survived in such a furnace where all else has been consumed? And for what has he been thus preserved? Jewish history is not yet ended: even yet, if prophecy is understood aright, a new epoch awaits it, whose glories shall eclipse the past. "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son;" and this deep penitent wail, like the hanging of their harps of old upon the willows, will be the prelude of their national restoration.

EXERCISES.

1. What effect had the defeat of Cestius on the Romans? What did they to repair it? What sign first announced the coming ruin of Jerusalem? What was the second? What the third? What the fourth?
2. How did this war commence? What cities were taken by Vespasian? How were the conquered Jews treated? Why did not Vespasian immediately advance on Jerusalem? How were his calculations justified?
3. How was Jerusalem invested? What was its condition when the siege commenced? By what parties was the city ruled? What were the wishes of Titus? How did Titus blockade the city? How did the famine affect the besieged? What was the conduct of a woman on this occasion? How did it affect both Jews and Romans? What had been the prediction regarding it? How was the city taken? How was the temple destroyed? What was the conduct of the Jews at its destruction? How many perished in the siege? How many in the war? What was the fate of the prisoners?

4. What is remarkable in the history of Jerusalem? What in the survival of the Jewish people? What has been the continuing history of the Jews? What shall be the probable close of that history?

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