

nials were different among the pagan nations from those followed by the Jews who alone treated the remains of the dead in such a manner, as to show they felt that they were to arise again at the last day with the same bodies they had in this life. One of the greatest stains on the character of the ancient Romans arose from the circumstance of their not showing the same respect to their dead as amongst other nations; for the slaves and all those who were not able to pay the expenses of a funeral, were most shamefully treated after death. This was not the case amongst the more enlightened Greeks; while among the chosen people of God the distinction between persons of different rank was still less regarded. The practice adopted by the ancient pagan nations was, to consume by fire the remains of those who departed this life, and then to place the ashes in funeral urns, which were afterwards preserved. But far more endearing to Christians, and more consonant to the principles of our religion, is the practice pursued by all Christian nations, of burying the remains of their departed brethren in the earth; so that the sentence pronounced by the Almighty on our first parents after their fall, might be verified; namely, that man, sprung from dust, should return again to that earth from which he came. Reverting to the times of the Patriarchs, we find in the Book of Judges that Abraham purchased a cemetery for himself and for his wife Sarah; and we know from sacred history, that not only they, but also Isaac and the Patriarch Jacob, with his son Joseph, both of whom died in a distant land, all expressed their desire to be buried in the same place.

“The religious feelings of survivors to have their ashes mingled after their death with those of their departed relatives, is thus, as may be seen from the sacred scriptures, of very high antiquity. As the Jews had different feelings respecting death, from other ancient nations, so their mode of interment was also different; they were in the habit of embalming their dead bodies, to preserve them from decay and corruption. The Egyptians also embalmed their dead with a similar object. By the law of Moses, all persons were forbidden to touch the bodies of the departed under the pain of becoming unclean; but this was ordered, not for the purpose of creating any disrespect towards the dead, but in those countries where contagion is so dangerous, it was adopted as a salutary precaution to prevent the spread of disease, and so far from creating a disrespect towards the departed, we know the very contrary to have been the fact, and that amongst the people of God the greatest respect was always paid to the remains of their brethren. Saul was buried under a tree; Moses, Joshua, and others, were buried on the tops of mountains. We are informed that the people mourned for thirty days after the death of Moses, and that there were great lamentations throughout all Israel. We also know, that among the Jewish people, one of the greatest afflictions that could befall any person, was to be deprived of the ceremonies prescribed for the interment of the dead after death, and hence this was one of the threats held out against those who disobeyed the law of God, by the prophet Jeremiah. In that country where perfumes and spices were procured with so much facility from Chanaan, the practice of embalming was easily continued. Their sepulchres were generally by the sides of thoroughfares, and often in gardens, and we al-