

BIBLICAL NOTICES AND EXPLANATIONS.

EXODUS.

MOSES is empowered by three distinct signs to prove his mission from God to his Brethren: by the change of his rod into a serpent; by his hand struck with the leprosy and cleansed; and by the change of water into blood.

In the Revelations of God to man, sufficient, nay more than sufficient motives, are always granted to those who choose to attend to them, for believing in his word: and when once the word is so proved to be his; man is bound to believe whatever it reveals as it is the word of him, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. We are not therefore to regulate our belief in his word by our notions of what it reveals; for though he can reveal nothing evidently absurd, nothing directly contrary to the fixed principles of common sense and reason: yet who can deny to him the power of revealing to us what infinitely exceeds our knowledge or comprehension? *Who, says the Apostle, has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counsellor?* Rom. 11, 34.

To Moses, pleading against his mission, on account of his impeding of speech, and slowness of tongue; God answers: *Who made man's mouth? or who made the dumb and the deaf; the seeing and the blind? Did not I? Go, therefore, and I will be in thy mouth; and I will teach thee what thou shalt speak.*

Moses still pleading to be excused, displeased Almighty God; who therefore desires him to put his words into his Brother Aaron's mouth; assuring him that he would be in his mouth, and in Aaron's mouth, and shew them both what they must do. Aaron, says he, shall speak in thy stead to the people; and shall be thy mouth: but thou shalt be to him in those things that appertain to God. *And take this rod in thy hand, wherewith thou shalt do the signs.*

All those, whom God appoints to be guides to his people; he calls: and none have a right to hold themselves out, as guides to salvation, unless they be sent by God himself; nor are they to be received, or acknowledged as such; unless, like Moses, they can prove the lawfulness of their divine mission. Never in the whole Bible do we see any usurping the priestly functions; or acting the prophet, without the call of God; who was not punished by God, and condemned for his temerity. Witness the fate of *Core, Dathan, and Abiron*.—Numb. xvi. 10. Witness that of the Jewish Monarch, who usurped the priestly function of offering incense in the Temple. 2 Paral. xxvi. 18. And with regard to false, or uncommissioned prophets, Almighty God speaks thus by the mouth of Jeremiah: *I did not send prophets, and yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, and yet they prophesied.* Jerem. xxiii. 21. And again, *The prophets prophecy falsely in my name. I sent them not; neither have I commanded them: nor have I spoken to them. They prophecy unto you a lying vision, and divination and deceit; and the seduction of their own heart. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets, that prophecy in my name: whom I did not send; who say; sword and famine shall all these prophets be consumed. And the people, to whom they prophecy, shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem; because of the famine and the sword; and there shall be none to bury them; they, and their wives, and their sons and their daughters: and I will pour out their own wickedness upon them.* Jerem. xiv. 14.

Now, if God was so angry with self-commissioned false teachers and prophets formerly; is he not equally, nay more so at the present day? Nothing is more strongly reprobated in the New Testament by our Saviour and his apostles, than the guilty presumption of all who take upon themselves, un-

called by God, to exercise the pastoral charge; and preach without being sent. These are they, who enter not in by the door of lawful ordination; but who force their way into the sheepfold by the roof; whom the Saviour denominates thieves and robbers. John 10.

God's displeasure with Moses, on account of his reluctance to undertake the task enjoined; shews the readiness with which we ought to comply with what we know to be a call from God; discarding from our minds every consideration that might deter us from yielding to it.

Moses, in obedience to God's command, sets out for Egypt; taking his wife and sons along with him; and carrying the rod of God in his hand.

V. 24. &c. *And when he was on his journey in the Inn, the Lord met him, and would have killed him.—Immediately Sephora took a very sharp stone, and circumcised the foreskin of her son; and touched his feet; and said: a bloody spouse art thou to me. And he let him go, after she had said: a bloody spouse art thou to me.*

Moses had neglected to circumcise his son, according to the covenant made betwixt God and Abraham: and therefore was exposed to the wrath of the Deity; had not his wife Sephora; who must have been instructed as to the indispensable necessity of that rite, saved him by performing it.

Still in Sephora as we observed, the fathers find a figure of the Church, the spouse of the Redeemer; who may well address him in the words of Sephora: *a bloody spouse art thou to me:* for as he shed his own blood for us; so he requires, if necessary that we also her children, shed our blood for him: she is the Church of martyrs.

The Lord next desires Aaron to go into the desert to meet Moses; which he did in the mountain of God. Thus both were divinely commissioned to go and liberate their brethren from the Egyptian bondage. They go therefore together to their brethren in Egypt; and prove before them their divine mission by the signs they wrought so that the people believed.

Chapter 5.—Moses and Aaron next, in obedience to God's command, present themselves before King Pharaoh; requesting him to let the Israelites go to sacrifice by themselves to their God in the desert. This Pharaoh not only refuses to do; but augments their oppression. Yet he thus only fills up the measure of his iniquities; and provokes God the sooner to stretch forth his Almighty arm against him, in their defence. This, is exactly what happened all along, as history shews us; and what daily happens in the Church of God. After trying his people for a while, he interposes at last in their defence, destroying their oppressors, as he did the Egyptians; and preserving, sustaining and leading forward, towards Heaven, the true land of promise, his faithful worshippers; as he did the Israelites towards the Land of Canaan. Where are now all the once powerful persecutors and enemies of his church? Nothing of them is now to be seen, but their names on the page of history; while that Church, which they so persecuted; that religion, which they strove so to extirpate, exists still the same; the most conspicuous of any in every quarter of the globe; still Catholic, or universal; though insulated, as in the desert, from all other multiform and discordant worshippers.

Chapter 7.—Verse, 1, 10.—Moses is appointed the God of Pharaoh. & Aaron, his brother, his prophet. Moses speaks by deputy: Aaron is his in-

terpreter. Jesus Christ also speaks by deputy: by his Priesthood, represented by Aaron by those, whom he commands us all to hear, as we would himself, Luke 10. 16. The rod in Moses's hand is as we observed before, the kingly sceptre; that in Aaron's hand is the priestly sceptre of Christ. It was the last, that, when cast down before King Pharaoh, was changed into a serpent: and when the Rods of the Magicians were also cast down, and turned into serpents; it devoured them up. The magicians here represent the Hæresiarchs and false teachers; and their rods are the emblem of their power: the power of seduction; too successfully exerted against our mother Eve by the false serpent in Paradise: and still too successfully exerted against her more weak and short sighted children. Aaron's rod is but one, which swallows up the many rods of the Magicians. So, in the Church of Christ, his priestly rod, alone swallows up the rods of all her opposers. It has already swallowed up successively the rods of the Nicolaites, the Gnostics, the Manichæans, the Priscillianists, the Valentinians, the Arians, the Semiarrians, the Nestorians, the Eutychians, the Donatists, the Pelagians, the Wickliffites; the Hussites, the Albigenes, the Adamites, and a thousand others: who exist no more; and still that priestly rod is the same; and as much alive and ready as ever to devour every succeeding Magician's rod. Yet the triumphant miracle of Aaron's rod, made no salutary impression on the minds of Pharaoh and his Egyptians; nor does this perpetual miracle of the rod of Christ make his enemies relent in favour of his oppressed and persecuted followers.

Chapter 8.—Of the plagues with which God visited Pharaoh and the Egyptians by the hand of Moses and Aaron, two are mimicked by the Magicians: the changing of water into blood, and the calling up of the frogs: after which the power of their enchantments ceased; and they acknowledged in the third plague, which they were unable to imitate; in the change of the dust into cinis; the finger of God. Nor had they even the power of repelling the two plagues, which they were permitted to call forth. They could not remedy the mischief they had caused.

All this exactly happens to those, of whom they were the Prototypes. The spiritual magicians, or false teachers, who oppose the word of God; are permitted for a time to work their enchantments.—But the finger of God interposes in the end; and always shews their power surpassed by that of his lawfully commissioned servants. The magicians can bring in the plague upon the people; but none, but God's own deputed messengers can remove it.

The following plagues, the flies; the murrain among the cattle; the blains and biles on man and beast; the thunder, lightning, and hail; the locusts, and palpable darkness, were not capable of subduing the hardness of Pharaoh's heart: which shews how difficult it is to overcome the evil bias, and subvert the rooted prejudices of the human mind.

To be continued.