

ARTICLE VIII.

EXPLANATION OF DIFFICULT TEXTS.

By an Association of Gentlemen.

I. GENESIS, CH. IV. v. 7.

"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, *sin lieth at the door*: and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."

THIS passage is so closely connected with the preceding context, that it is necessary to turn our attention to that for a moment, before we proceed to its explanation. Cain and Abel brought an offering to God, in accordance with the their respective employments: the former, "of the fruit of the ground," and the latter, "of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof." But the Lord did not have the same respect for the offering of Cain that he had for that of his brother, on account of which, he was enraged, and, as a natural consequence, appeared down-cast. The Lord rebuked him by the significant questions: "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" and adds, in the verse now under discussion: If thou doest well, instead of this down-cast expression of countenance, thou wouldst naturally lift up thy head, and have a cheerful countenance as those do, who are conscious of rectitude of purpose and action. But if thou doest not well, but indulgest hatred on account of this distinction made between thyself and thy brother, sin croucheth at thy door, as a wild beast for his prey. Thou art a sure victim of thy sinful passions. Sin (which is here called a *lier-in-wait*) desireth to have possession of thee, but thou hast the power to resist and overcome it. The little heed given to this warning of the Most High, as well as its appropriateness, is but too plainly told in the unnatural and bloody tragedy that soon ensued, as a result of which it is said: The voice of thy brother's blood calleth for vengeance from the ground.

It will readily be seen that some change or explanation of the text, as it stands in our English version, is necessary in order to make out the connected idea given above. The clause, *shalt thou not be accepted*, seems to have been suggested to the translators by referring the phrase, "if thou doest well (אם תעשה צדקה)," directly to the offering of sacrifice; that is, according to this interpretation, it was said to Cain: If thou offerest sacrifice rightly, thine offering shalt be accepted; which,

although undoubtedly true, yet does not appear to be the exact sense here. The Hebrew word, which is rendered *shalt thou be accepted*, is אָצַר, a form of the infinitive mode, from אָצַר, and signifies: a *lifting up, elevation*, and with the ellipsis of אָצַר, or rather here, אָצַר, a *lifting up of the countenance, a cheerful confidence*. It is, accordingly, the opposite of the preceding אָצַר אָצַר, for which, as indicative of anger and ill will, Cain is rebuked. These words are also used for the same idea in Job 11: 15, where it is said to Job, that if he will put all iniquity far from him, he shall lift up his face (אָצַר אָצַר), and be steadfast and not fear; and in 22: 26, "Thou shalt have delight in the Almighty and shalt lift up thy face (אָצַר . . . אָצַר) unto God." Ellipsis of a similar kind is so frequent in the Old Testament, that it occasions no difficulty here. Cf. Isa. 42: 2. Job 6: 27 et al saep. Several of the older translators give a different interpretation to this clause, but the one which we have given above, is substantially that of all the modern expositors, as Rosenmüller, Maurer, Tuch, Baumgarten, and others, and seems so apposite to the context, and so much in accordance with the Hebrew idiom, that it is unnecessary to spend much time in confuting them. The Sept. version comes under the same condemnation with our own English, and the inappositeness of the translation of Onkelos and the Vulgate, in which אָצַר is supplied with אָצַר, and the meaning is: it [thy fault] shall be forgiven thee, is sufficiently apparent, since it would be difficult to perceive what need there is of pardon for one who *does well*. Calvin, in his commentary on this passage, says of those who give this interpretation: "Because they imagine a satisfaction which derogates from free pardon, they dissent widely from the meaning of Moses."

The figurative language in the clause: *sin lieth at the door*, needs some explanation. אָצַר, sin, is impersonated and called a אָצַר, a *liar-in-wait*. This word is a participle used as a noun, as the participle frequently is, from the verb אָצַר, *to lie down, recline*, and specif. *to lie in wait, lurk*. So the verb is used of a lion in Gen. 49: 9, and in Arabic رَبَّاصٌ, رَبَّاصٌ, from a corresponding root, is used as a designation of the same animal. And the sinner himself is frequently represented by the simile of a wild beast. It will not escape the notice of the student that אָצַר, in the masculine gender, is joined as predicate with the feminine אָצַר. For this use of the participle, when it partakes of the nature of a noun, see Stuart's Gesenius's Grammar, § 144, note 2, and Ewald, § 569. b. The language אָצַר, *at the door*, is accommodated to the person who is laid in wait for, rather than to the *liar-in-wait*, and the whole phrase vividly represents the danger that will be incurred by the first wrong doing, the indulgence of unjust anger.

In the following clause, *וְיִשְׁתַּקְרוּ*, the suffix pronoun *י* refers to *יָרֵךְ*, the *lie-in-wait*, and the preposition *אֵל* designates a direction of the mind towards. The figure then is changed from the preceding clause, and the force of the word *וְיִשְׁתַּקְרוּ* is plain if we refer to ch. 3: 16, where it is used in a different connection. The desire of sin is towards thee, that is, it will strive to obtain the mastery over thee, but (*וְ*) thou hast dominion over it; it is in your power to refrain from your unjust anger and escape from the dominion of sin. The interpretation which refers the suffix *י* to Cain, and supposes the last part of the verse to be addressed to Abel, as in our English version, is too harsh and inapposite to need confutation.

In conclusion, two practical truths of great importance lie on the face of this admonition to Cain: 1st. The danger of entering upon a course of wrong doing, which is but too forcibly illustrated in the subsequent history, since the unrestrained anger of Cain led directly to a brother's murder. Secondly, the responsibility of the wrong doer. The evil one lurketh as a lion for his prey, but he has no power over those who are watchful against him. Herder says: "God spake with Cain as with a froward child, and dissuaded him from yielding to that which was sleeping in his heart and lurking at his door like a beast of prey . . . What God did to Cain, he does to every man, if he will but look to his own heart and listen to the voice of God in his conscience."¹

II. GENESIS, CH. IV. vs. 23, 24.

"And Lamech said unto his wives Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech; hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt; if Cain shall be avenged seven fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold."

This passage is found in connection with the genealogy of Cain. Lamech was the fifth in descent from him, and his son Jubal was the inventor of musical instruments, and Tubal-Cain was the first to fashion metallic weapons. After this last fact was mentioned, the writer immediately adds, in order to distinguish the Lamech here mentioned, and give some idea of his character, what seems to be a quotation from a triumphal song, addressed by him to his wives, probably after the invention by his son, although it is not certain that it has special reference to that. These verses are plainly poetical, both in the use of words, as *וַיִּשְׁתַּקְרוּ* with *וְיִשְׁתַּקְרוּ* and in the parallelism, so prominent in all Hebrew poetry. They are properly arranged, according to Lowth, (Lectures on

¹ Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, Vol. I. p. 197.

Hebrew Poetry, transl. by Prof. Stowe, p. 41,) "into three distichs, and the two parallel and as it were corresponding sentiments in each distich." Thus we may translate :

Ye wives of Lamech, hear my voice
 And listen to my word :
 For a man I slew, because he wounded me ;
 A young man, because he assaulted me :
 If indeed Cain be seven times avenged,
 Then Lamech seventy times seven.

The circumstances commemorated here, seem to be as follows : Lamech appears to have been guilty of manslaughter, and in order to quiet the fears of his wives, he says, that he did it in self-defence ; i. e. for, or on account of, wounds inflicted upon himself, לְחַבְרָתִי and לְחַבְרָתִי ; and if one who slays Cain, a wilful murderer, as it is said in verse 15, shall be avenged seven fold, surely he who is so much less guilty shall receive vengeance seventy and seven fold, especially as the invention of his son gives so much greater facility for its accomplishment. The hero, in his self-confident exultation, forgets that it was by the command of God himself that the life of Cain was thus protected, and for the purpose of making him an example to those among whom he dwelt.

Whether this was merely the beginning of a more extended song, or complete in itself, cannot be determined, as no further traces remain, if it existed. The fact that such popular songs were not unknown among the Hebrews is plain from such passages as Num. 21: 14, Judg. 16: 23, 24, 1 Sam. 18: 7, etc. This insertion in a genealogical record, of something indicative of individual character, is natural, especially when, as here and in ch. 5: 26 seq., two persons of the same name are mentioned.

Several philological peculiarities deserve notice in these verses. The parallelism of the several *stichoi* is so manifest that it cannot escape the notice of the Hebrew scholar. The use of the Praetense חָבַרְתִּי indicates an actual occurrence and not a supposed case. The suffix pronoun ׀ in the words לְחַבְרָתִי and לְחַבְרָתִי, is to be taken objectively, i. e. the wound or stripe *one inflicted upon me*. See Grammar, § 5 and remark, and such passages as Jer. 51: 35. Ex. 20: 20, etc. The preposition לְ here signifies *on account of*, or *because of*, and designates the ground or reason. So it is used in Isa. 14: 9. 15: 5 and often elsewhere.

This passage is not without interest to the Biblical scholar, as being the oldest specimen of Hebrew poetry extant. To be sure, there is much of the sublimity, the true spirit of poetry in the narrative of the

creation, but the precise form of poetical lines, which is so conspicuous here, is not found there. We are almost unavoidably led to the conclusion that poetry was very early not merely invented but cultivated among the Hebrews. For, aside from the poetical spirit which pervades their early records, one passage so perfect in form and finish cannot be supposed to have existed alone.

III. GENESIS, CH. VI. v. 3.

"And the Lord said: My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

A more accurate version of the original, would be as follows: My spirit shall not be subject to [dwell in] man forever; on account of his transgression he is flesh, and his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. The general idea is, that the vivifying, life-giving spirit of God shall not remain with man and continue his existence on the earth, as it has previously done; for, by reason of his sinfulness, he shall be weak and his life fleeting, the boundary of his earthly existence shall be the comparatively¹ short space of 120 years. But as this passage is generally misunderstood by the unlettered reader, and often misquoted in popular addresses, it may not be amiss to enter into a somewhat minute examination of the more prominent words upon which its meaning depends.

In the first place, we will inquire, what is to be understood by "my spirit" (רוּחִי). The original significations of רוּחַ, *breath, breathing, wind*, etc., are of course out of question here; also the kindred meanings, corresponding to נְפֶשׁ, the Greek ψυχή, the Latin anima, animus, *life, soul, mind*. In Gen. 1: 2, the Spirit of God is represented as brooding over the chaotic elements of the creation so as to bring order out of confusion, and inform with life. By it God garnisheth the heavens (Job 26: 17), and reneweth the face of the earth (Ps. civ.), and giveth life to his servants (Job 27: 3. 33: 4). So this mysterious but unseen agency of God, in creating and upholding life, is indicated in this verse, and רוּחַ is opposed to בָּשָׂר, flesh that soon passes away (Isa. 31: 3), that is like grass that withereth (Isa. 40: 6, 7), a breath, the wind that passeth, but never returneth. Hence the spirit of the Lord here, is the author and supporter of life, that which, according to 2: 7, breathed into the yet lifeless form, composed of the dust of the earth, constitutes man a living soul.

The verb יִרְדּוּ next comes under consideration. The ancient ver-

¹ The previous age of men was as follows: Adam, 930 years; Seth, 912; Enos, 905; Canaan, 910; Jared, 965; Methuzelah, 969, etc.

sions vary so much as to render it not improbable that there were various readings, as רָדִיר, רָדִיר, רָדִיר. The Septuagint reads: οὐ μὴ ἀταμεῖν ἢ τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐν τοῖς ἀσθενήουσιν, x. τ. λ., *shall not remain*, etc. The Vulgate and Persian correspond with it. The Syriac and Saad.: *shall not dwell*, etc. The Targum of Onkelos paraphrases it by: shall not suffer to continue or exist forever. Several of the other Targums, together with our English version, make רָדִיר to correspond in meaning with רָדִיר: shall not contend with, strive with as before a judge, i. e. shall immediately punish. But it is only in the second form (Hiphil) that this meaning belongs to רָדִיר, whilst this word must be in the first form (Kal), and accordingly would mean with the ב following: will *not judge* among, as in Ps. 110: 6. The inappositeness of this interpretation will be evident to every one without a remark. The explanation of this word given by Maurer, although it expresses the sense of the passage well, seems not to be philologically well authorized. To judge, *judicare*, he considers as = *regnare*, and paraphrases the passage well: My spirit shall not always actuate (agitate) men, i. e. I will take away from them the head and fountain of life, my vital spirit; not so long a time as their ancestors shall these men continue in life, etc. We arrive at substantially the same meaning more directly and naturally, by supposing that רָדִיר corresponds to

the Arabic رَدَا, *to be inferior, low, subject to*, and hence in this passage, my spirit shall not always be brought down, subject to mortals, i. e. descend from heaven to accompany them and preserve them in existence; a shorter term of life shall be theirs, hereafter.

לְעֵלָם, *forever*, is of course used in its limited sense, as in 1 Sam. 1: 22. 20: 15, and has reference to the long period of life previously enjoyed by mortals.

The word רָדִיר seems to have been entirely misunderstood by most of the earlier interpreters, who considered it as made up of the preposition רָ, the fragment of the relative אֲשֶׁר, וְ and the particle בָּ. Thus in our English version it is rendered, *for that also*; in the Sept., διὰ τὸ εἶναι, x. τ. λ. But the philological objections to this interpretation are insuperable. For, in the first place, בָּ is redundant; then, in case the word were thus compounded, the vowel points would be רָדִיר and not רָדִיר; and finally, the use of וְ for אֲשֶׁר in such a compound, belongs to later Hebrew, or to the Chaldee dialect. There is no passage which could be considered as at all parallel with this in the older Hebrew writers. It is accordingly necessary to look elsewhere for the explanation of this word; and we unquestionably find it as an Infin. in the first form, from רָדִיר, with the prefix prep. and suffix pronoun and with the meaning, *on account of their wandering, transgression*.

Cf. the use of derivations from this root in Num. 15: 28, and Lev. 5: 18, et. al. The employment of the plural pronoun, referring to the collective noun עַמִּי, is in accordance with an idiom common in almost all languages. For the form of the infinitive מָא see Grammar § 66, note 3; Ewald § 571, and Jer. 5: 26, מָא; Ps. 119: 22, מָא, etc. The consequence of the transgression of man is, that he shall become, as it is indicated in the first clause by a withdrawing of the vivifying influences of the spirit of God, flesh, i. e. frail, weak, perishing, and his life shall be circumscribed to 120 years. Onkelos, Calvin and others refer the 120 years not to individual life, but to the time of repentance to be granted to the whole world. But when we compare chap. 5: 32, with 7: 11, it is difficult to make out the 120 years before the flood, unless we suppose that the designation, 500 years, is used indefinitely in 5: 32, and that Noah was towards 500 years old, that is, about 480.¹ But when we take into account the reduction of the time of life that ensued in connection with the natural meaning of the words as they stand, we do not hesitate to give our assent to the explanation of most of the ancient interpreters, as well as to Josephus,² and to Tuch, Baumgarten and others, among more recent expositors. And in doing this, it is not forgotten that subsequent to this time, the patriarchs exceeded the age of 120 years. For we do not suppose it necessary that this punishment of sin should, from the moment of the declaration, go into rigid execution upon every individual of the race. This is not according to the usual course which God pursues in reference to man. There is generally a gradual development of his purposes. So here we find that the life of man was materially shortened after the flood, and although the patriarchs, in consequence of "walking in the ways and keeping the statutes" of the Most High, were gathered to their fathers in a good old age, yet, they could well say when they looked back to former generations: few and evil have been the days of our pilgrimage, Gen. 47: 9.³ Besides, as we see, the age of man was soon reduced to this specified boundary. Joseph was 110 years old when he died, Gen. 50: 26; Moses attained to the prescribed 120 years, Deut. 34: 7; Joshua died when 110 years old, Josh. 24: 27; Eli was blind by reason of age when 98 years old, 1 Sam. 4: 15, 18. According to 1 Kings 1: 1, David was "old and stricken in years" although not yet seventy, as it appears from 2 Sam. 5: 4. In Ps. 90: 10, four

¹ Compare Calvin's Comm. on Gen., translated by Rev. John Kenly, p. 243, 4.

² Antiquities, I. 3. 2, et al.

³ Abraham died when 175, Gen. 25: 7; Isaac, 180, 35: 28; Jacob, 147, 47: 28. Cf. Tuch's Genesis, S. 130.

score years is spoken of as an age not usually attained by man.¹ Besides it is often intimated in the Old Testament in accordance with the spirit of this passage, that "the fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." Cf. also 1 Kings 8: 13, Isa. 58: 17, and many other passages. It is also interesting to notice that there is among almost all nations a tradition of an early age when men, free from diseases, lived far longer than now.²

But another reason for referring this numerical designation to the duration of the life of man, is found in the succeeding narrations. The determination of God to destroy man from the face of the earth and the reason for it, is formally introduced in the following verses as something different from what has gone before: God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, . . . and it repented the Lord that he had made man . . . and he said, I will destroy him from the face of the earth, etc. v. 5—7.

IV. GENESIS CH. IX. vs. 4—6.

VERSE 4. "Only the flesh with its life, its blood, ye shall not eat, v. 5. But your blood, for your lives, I will require; at the hand of every beast I will require it; and at the hand of man, at the hand of man, his brother, I will require the life of man; v. 6. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God, he made man."

"In giving you permission to eat animal flesh, there is one restriction; ye may not eat of its blood. Nevertheless, your blood cannot be poured out on the ground, like that of beasts; "for your lives," i. e. for the preservation of your lives, I will require your blood. Every beast that killeth a man shall make expiation for it; and at the hand of the brother of every man, I will require the life of man. Every murderer stands in the relation of brother to the murdered. Both have a common father, a common Creator. But I will require it at *the hands of man*; I delegate my power in the case to him; the punishment on the murderer shall be executed by man."

¹ Tuch's Genesis. 8. 130.

² Cf. Josephus I. 3. 9. where these traditions of a life of a thousand years among the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Phœnicians, and others is mentioned; Hesiod Works and Days, line 125 sq.:

"Whilom on earth the sons of men abode,
From evil free and labor's galling load;
Free from diseases that with racking rage
Precipitate the pale decline of age.
How swift the days of manhood haste away,
And misery's pressure turns the temples gray.

And also Tuch's Genesis, 8. 131.

v. 4. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל is in apposition with בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל and defines it more exactly; it is not necessary to repeat the preposition, Ewald § 605, ed. 1835. Not to partake of blood was one of the most stringent prohibitions among the precepts relating to food, comp. Lev. 3: 17. 7: 23. 1 Sam. 14: 32. Acts 15: 20, 29. It was thought that the blood was the seat of life. Lev. 17: 11, "The life of the flesh is in its blood." v. 5. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל to require from, to punish bloodshed, to avenge murder, Ps. 9: 18. V. 5, "for your lives," Dative of advantage, in order to preserve life, for your safety; see the parallel passages Deut. 4: 15. Josh. 23: 11. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל is coordinate with the preceding וְיִשְׂרָאֵל, and serves to bring out and define the thought. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל, every one, Ewald § 558, is placed first by emphasis. V. 6. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל is emphatic and therefore precedes. "Whoso sheddeth," Part. in the widest sense; the reason too is alike and to the same extent, applicable to all ages. Man is made in the image of God. In the commission of murder, that image is defaced; an insult is, as it were, offered to God's majesty. This injury can be repaired only by the death of the murderer. So the argument founded on the paternal relation of man to man is alike applicable to all ages. For a further exposition of this passage, see B. S. IV. 270.

V. GENESIS CH. XLIX. v. 10.

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the staff from between his feet,
Until rest shall come,
And unto it shall be the obedience of the nations."

"Judah shall possess an eternal kingdom. In him shall be fulfilled the highest blessings of the Pentateuch; not merely kings and whole nations shall descend from Abraham's race; sorrowfully will Israel for a long time be deprived of kings, Gen. 36: 31; the related tribe of Edomites had kings earlier than Israel; the promises will not be thus limited. As the promises made to Abraham culminated in Jacob, so Jacob's blessings culminate in Judah, yet the crown of all lies in Judah's glorious, eternal kingdom. This is the root of the Messianic idea, the germ of that which subsequently became a personal Messiah. Never shall the sceptre depart from Judah; the royal power for Judah shall never fail, nor the staff, the royal sceptre, from between his feet." וְיִשְׂרָאֵל means, first, a lawgiver, ruler, Deut. 33: 21, Judges 5: 14; second, the instrument which the ruler uses, Num. 21: 18. Ps. 60: 9, the staff of office, the sceptre. Those who interpret it *lawgiver*, ruler, understand it as a euphemism: from his posterity a ruler shall never fail. In support of it, appeal is made to Deut. 28: 57. But there the

expression "between the feet," is used of a woman who brings forth, and is not pertinent here. The meaning *staff*, also, corresponds to *sceptre* in the other clause. With oriental monarchs the sceptre rests between the feet. They are represented sitting or standing with the emblem of authority resting between their feet. Thus king Agamemnon leans on his sceptre, when he utters his decisions, II. II. 100. On the ruins of Persepolis, a Persian king appears sitting on the throne, and at his feet he holds a large royal sceptre, Niebuhr's Travels II. tab. 29. "Till the time of rest, or rest comes." There are three principal explanations of שֵׁלוֹ. 1. Many MSS. read שֵׁלוֹ without the ך; the word however is written defectively for שֵׁלוֹךְ; but some are thus induced to alter the vowels and read שֵׁלוֹ, i. e. אֲשֶׁר לוֹ, "until he comes to whom it belongs." But there is no necessity for altering the vowels. Ezek. 21: 32, without doubt refers to this passage, where הַשָּׁמַיִם corresponds to שֵׁלוֹ in our passage, for peace will be established through righteousness. The abbreviated form of אֲשֶׁר belongs, too, with few exceptions, to the later books, Ges. § 36, Ewald § 463. 2. Others take the word for a proper name Shiloh, "until he (Judah, or they) comes to Shiloh, i. e. forever," the author believing that the sanctuary would be permanent in Shiloh. But Shiloh as a place is not mentioned in Genesis; it occurs, indeed, in the later history, in the time of the Judges, but it has little historical importance; there is nothing decisive in the later Hebrew history which would lead one to suppose that here such stress was laid on the possession of Shiloh. Besides, the wholly general character of our prophecy does not accord with the mentioning of such a place as Shiloh and the abode of the sanctuary there; the sacred character of it was rather temporary than permanent. 3. The right explanation is probably that which makes it an appellative noun from שָׁלוֹ to be at rest; it is formed after the analogy of the abstract nouns קִישׁוֹר and קִדְדוֹר. It has been taken in a personal sense, referring to the Messiah, as pacificator, prince of peace; but the thought appears to be expressed more in general, abstractly; it thus agrees with the parallelism. We have accordingly the meaning, *rest, condition of peace*, until a peaceful time shall begin. עַד until his dominion shall become one of peace, comp. Ps. 110: 1. יִקְרָא is an old verb to be obedient, from which comes יִקְרָאוּ, Const. יִקְרָאוּ, Daghesh Forte Euphonic, comp. עֲקָבָי v. 17, Ges. § 20. 2. b. And to it all nations shall be obedient, Ps. 2: 1. The point is that *all* nations shall obey. עַמְּמִים means, not tribes, but nations in general. In v. 8, Judah is represented as having power over his enemies. See the Commentaries of Tuch 1838, Baumgarten 1843, and Hävernicks Lectures on Theology, etc. 1848, p. 214.