

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Satan, by means of a creature here called the serpent, deceives Eve, Genesis 3:1-5. Both she and Adam transgress the Divine command, and fall into sin and misery, Genesis 3:6, Genesis 3:7. They are summoned before God, and judged, Genesis 3:8-13. The creature called the serpent is degraded and punished, Genesis 3:14. The promise of redemption by the incarnation of Christ, Genesis 3:15. Eve sentenced, Genesis 3:16. Adam sentenced, Genesis 3:17. The ground cursed, and death threatened, Genesis 3:18, Genesis 3:19. Why the woman was called Eve, Genesis 3:20. Adam and Eve clothed with skins, Genesis 3:21. The wretched state of our first parents after their fall, and their expulsion from the garden of Paradise, Genesis 3:22-24.

Verse 1

Now the serpent was more subtle - We have here one of the most difficult as well as the most important narratives in the whole book of God. The last chapter ended with a short but striking account of the perfection and felicity of the first human beings, and this opens with an account of their transgression, degradation, and ruin. That man is in a fallen state, the history of the world, with that of the life and miseries of every human being, establishes beyond successful contradiction. But how, and by what agency, was this brought about? Here is a great mystery, and I may appeal to all persons who have read the various comments that have been written on the Mosaic account, whether they have ever yet been satisfied on this part of the subject, though convinced of the fact itself. Who was the serpent? of what kind? In what way did he seduce the first happy pair? These are questions which remain yet to be answered. The whole account is either a simple narrative of facts, or it is an allegory. If it be a historical relation, its literal meaning should be sought out; if it be an allegory, no attempt should be made to explain it, as it would require a direct revelation to ascertain the sense in which it should be understood, for fanciful illustrations are endless. Believing it to be a simple relation of facts capable of a satisfactory explanation, I shall take it up on this ground; and, by a careful examination of the original text, endeavor to fix the meaning, and show the propriety and consistency of the Mosaic account of the fall of man. The chief difficulty in the account is found in the question, Who was the agent employed in the seduction of our first parents?

The word in the text which we, following the Septuagint, translate serpent, is נָחָשׁ (nachash); and, according to Buxtorf and others, has three meanings in Scripture.

1.It signifies to view or observe attentively, to divine or use enchantments, because in them the augurs viewed attentively the flight of birds, the entrails of beasts, the course of the clouds, etc.; and under this head it signifies to acquire knowledge by experience.

2.It signifies brass, brazen, and is translated in our Bible, not only brass, but chains, fetters, fetters of brass, and in several places steel; see 2 Samuel 22:35; Job 20:24; Psalm 18:34; and in one place, at least filthiness or fornication, Ezekiel 16:36.

3.It signifies a serpent, but of what kind is not determined. In Job 26:13, it seems to mean the whale or hippopotamus: By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent, נָחָשׁ (nachash bariach): as נָחָשׁ (barach) signifies to pass on or pass through, and נָחָשׁ (beriach) is used for a bar of a gate or door that passed through rings, etc., the idea of straightness rather than crookedness should be attached to it here; and it is likely that the hippopotamus or sea-horse is intended by it.

In Ecclesiastes 10:11, the creature called (nachash), of whatever sort, is compared to the babbler: Surely the serpent (נָחָשׁ (nachash)) will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.

In Isaiah 27:1, the crocodile or alligator seems particularly meant by the original: In that day the Lord - shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, etc. And in Isaiah 65:25, the same creature is meant as in Genesis 3:1, for in the words, And dust shall be the serpent's meat, there is an evident allusion to the text of Moses. In Amos 9:3, the crocodile is evidently intended: Though they be hid in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, נָחָשׁ (hannachash) and he shall bite them. No person can suppose that any of the snake or serpent kind can be intended here; and we see from the various acceptations of the word, and the different senses which it bears in various places in the sacred writings, that it appears to be a sort of general term confined to no one sense. Hence it will be necessary to examine the root accurately, to see if its ideal meaning will enable us to ascertain the animal intended in the text. We have already seen that נָחָשׁ (nachash) signifies to view attentively, to acquire knowledge or experience by attentive observation; so נָחָשׁ (nichashti), Genesis 30:27: I have learned by experience; and this seems to be its most general meaning in the Bible. The original word is by the Septuagint translated ὄφις, a serpent, not because this was its fixed determinate meaning in the sacred writings, but because it was the best that occurred to the translators: and they do not seem to have given themselves much trouble to understand the meaning of the original, for they

have rendered the word as variously as our translators have done, or rather our translators have followed them, as they give nearly the same significations found in the Septuagint: hence we find that **לְזִיתִי**, is as frequently used by them as serpent, its supposed literal meaning, is used in our version. And the New Testament writers, who seldom quote the Old Testament but from the Septuagint translation, and often do not change even a word in their quotations, copy this version in the use of this word. From the Septuagint therefore we can expect no light, nor indeed from any other of the ancient versions, which are all subsequent to the Septuagint, and some of them actually made from it. In all this uncertainty it is natural for a serious inquirer after truth to look everywhere for information. And in such an inquiry the Arabic may be expected to afford some help, from its great similarity to the Hebrew. A root in this language, very nearly similar to that in the text, seems to cast considerable light on the subject. (Chanas) or (khanasa) signifies he departed, drew off, lay hid, seduced, slunk away; from this root come (akhnas), (khanasa), and (khanos), which all signify an ape, or satyrus, or any creature of the simia or ape genus. It is very remarkable also that from the same root comes (khanas), the Devil, which appellation he bears from that meaning of (khanasa), he drew off, seduced, etc., because he draws men off from righteousness, seduces them from their obedience to God, etc., etc. See Golius, sub voce. Is it not strange that the devil and the ape should have the same name, derived from the same root, and that root so very similar to the word in the text? But let us return and consider what is said of the creature in question. Now the nachash was more subtle, **חָכָם** (arum), more wise, cunning, or prudent, than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. In this account we find,

1. That whatever this nachash was, he stood at the head of all inferior animals for wisdom and understanding.
2. That he walked erect, for this is necessarily implied in his punishment - on thy belly (i.e., on all fours) shalt thou go.
3. That he was endued with the gift of speech, for a conversation is here related between him and the woman.
4. That he was also endued with the gift of reason, for we find him reasoning and disputing with Eve.
5. That these things were common to this creature, the woman no doubt having often seen him walk erect, talk, and reason, and therefore she testifies no kind of surprise when he accosts her in the language related in the text; and indeed from the manner in which this is introduced it appears to be only a part of a conversation that had passed between them on the occasion: Yea, hath God said, etc.

Had this creature never been known to speak before his addressing the woman at this time and on this subject, it could not have failed to excite her surprise, and to have filled her with caution, though from the purity and innocence of her nature she might have been incapable of being affected with fear. Now I apprehend that none of these things can be spoken of a serpent of any species.

- 1.None of them ever did or ever can walk erect. The tales we have had of two-footed and four-footed serpents are justly exploded by every judicious naturalist, and are utterly unworthy of credit. The very name serpent comes from serpo, to creep, and therefore to such it could be neither curse nor punishment to go on their bellies, i.e., to creep on, as they had done from their creation, and must do while their race endures.
- 2.They have no organs for speech, or any kind of articulate sound; they can only hiss. It is true that an ass by miraculous influence may speak; but it is not to be supposed that there was any miraculous interference here. God did not qualify this creature with speech for the occasion, and it is not intimated that there was any other agent that did it; on the contrary, the text intimates that speech and reason were natural to the nachash: and is it not in reference to this the inspired penman says, The nachash was more subtle or intelligent than all the beasts of the field that the Lord God had made? Nor can I find that the serpentine genus are remarkable for intelligence. It is true the wisdom of the serpent has passed into a proverb, but I cannot see on what it is founded, except in reference to the passage in question, where the nachash, which we translate serpent, following the Septuagint, shows so much intelligence and cunning: and it is very probable that our Lord alludes to this very place when he exhorts his disciples to be wise - prudent or intelligent, as serpents, ἵπτις ἰζὶ ἡμίφῳ ἰζὶ ἁΐῒ, ἰζὶ ἁΐῒ ἰζὶ ἡμίφῳ, Ἄ. and it is worthy of remark that he uses the same term employed by the Septuagint in the text in question: Ἰϋἱτῖϋ, ἰῖῖ ἵπτις ἰζὶ ἡμίφῳ ἰζὶ ἁΐῒ, ἰῖῖ, ἰζὶ, , the serpent was more prudent or intelligent than all the beasts, etc.

All these things considered, we are obliged to seek for some other word to designate the nachash in the text, than the word serpent, which on every view of the subject appears to me inefficient and inapplicable. We have seen above that (khanas), (akhnas), and (khanoos), signify a creature of the ape or satyrus kind. We have seen that the meaning of the root is, he lay hid, seduced, slunk away, etc.; and that khanas means the devil, as the inspirer of evil, and seducer from God and truth. See Golius and Wilmet. It therefore appears to me that a creature of the ape or ouran outang kind is here intended; and that Satan made use of this creature as the most proper instrument for the accomplishment of his murderous purposes against the life and soul of man. Under this creature he lay hid, and by this creature he seduced our first parents, and drew off or slunk away from every eye but the eye of God. Such a creature answers to every part of the description in the text: it is evident

from the structure of its limbs and their muscles that it might have been originally designed to walk erect, and that nothing less than a sovereign controlling power could induce them to put down hands in every respect formed like those of man, and walk like those creatures whose claw-armed paws prove them to have been designed to walk on all fours. Dr. Tyson has observed in his anatomy of an ouran outang, that the seminal vessels passed between the two coats of the peritoneum to the scrotum, as in man; hence he argues that this creature was designed to walk erect, as it is otherwise in all quadrupeds. Philos. Trans., vol. xxi., p. 340. The subtlety, cunning, endlessly varied pranks and tricks of these creatures, show them, even now, to be more subtle and more intelligent than any other creature, man alone excepted. Being obliged now to walk on all fours, and gather their food from the ground, they are literally obliged to eat the dust; and though exceedingly cunning, and careful in a variety of instances to separate that part which is wholesome and proper for food from that which is not so, in the article of cleanliness they are lost to all sense of propriety; and though they have every means in their power of cleansing the aliments they gather off the ground, and from among the dust, yet they never in their savage state make use of any, except a slight rub against their side, or with one of their hands, more to see what the article is than to cleanse it. Add to this, their utter aversion to walk upright; it requires the utmost discipline to bring them to it, and scarcely anything irritates them more than to be obliged to do it. Long observation on some of these animals enables me to state these facts.

Should any person who may read this note object against my conclusions, because apparently derived from an Arabic word which is not exactly similar to the Hebrew, though to those who understand both languages the similarity will be striking; yet, as I do not insist on the identity of the terms, though important consequences have been derived from less likely etymologies, he is welcome to throw the whole of this out of the account. He may then take up the Hebrew root only, which signifies to gaze, to view attentively, pry into, inquire narrowly, etc., and consider the passage that appears to compare the nachash to the babbler. Ecclesiastes 10:11, and he will soon find, if he have any acquaintance with creatures of this genus, that for earnest, attentive watching, looking, etc., and for chattering or babbling, they have no fellows in the animal world. Indeed, the ability and propensity to chatter is all they have left, according to the above hypothesis, of their original gift of speech, of which I suppose them to have been deprived at the fall as a part of their punishment.

I have spent the longer time on this subject,

1. Because it is exceedingly obscure;
2. Because no interpretation hitherto given of it has afforded me the smallest satisfaction;
3. Because I think the above mode of accounting for every part of the whole transaction is consistent and satisfactory, and in my opinion removes many embarrassments, and solves the chief difficulties.

I think it can be no solid objection to the above mode of solution that Satan, in different parts of the New Testament, is called the serpent, the serpent that deceived Eve by his subtlety, the old serpent, etc., for we have already seen that the New Testament writers have borrowed the word from the Septuagint, and the Septuagint themselves use it in a vast variety and latitude of meaning; and surely the ouran outang is as likely to be the animal in question as נָחָשׁ (nachash) and ὄφεις (ophis) are likely to mean at once a snake, a crocodile, a hippopotamus, fornication, a chain, a pair of fetters, a piece of brass, a piece of steel, and a conjurer; for we have seen above that all these are acceptations of the original word. Besides, the New Testament writers seem to lose sight of the animal or instrument used on the occasion, and speak only of Satan himself as the cause of the transgression, and the instrument of all evil. If, however, any person should choose to differ from the opinion stated above, he is at perfect liberty so to do; I make it no article of faith, nor of Christian communion; I crave the same liberty to judge for myself that I give to others, to which every man has an indisputable right; and I hope no man will call me a heretic for departing in this respect from the common opinion, which appears to me to be so embarrassed as to be altogether unintelligible. See farther on Genesis 3:7-14, etc.

Yea, hath God said - This seems to be the continuation of a discourse of which the preceding part is not given, and a proof that the creature in question was endued with the gift of reason and speech, for no surprise is testified on the part of Eve.

Verse 3

Neither shall ye touch it - Did not the woman add this to what God had before spoken? Some of the Jewish writers, who are only serious on comparative trifles, state that as soon as the woman had asserted this, the serpent pushed her against the tree and said, ἄρα ἔσθι, thou hast touched it, and art still alive; thou mayest therefore safely eat of the fruit, for surely thou shalt not die. ἄρα

Verse 4

Ye shall not surely die - Here the father of lies at once appears; and appears too in flatly contradicting the assertion of God. The tempter, through the (nachash), insinuates the impossibility of her dying, as if he had said, God has created thee immortal, thy death therefore is impossible; and God knows this, for as thou livest

Such limits God certainly assigned from the beginning: Thou shalt come up to this; thou shalt not pass it. And as he assigned the limits, so he assigned the means. It is lawful for thee to acquire knowledge in this way; it is unlawful to seek it in that. And had he not a right to do so? And would his creation have been perfect without it?

Verse 7

The eyes of them both were opened - They now had a sufficient discovery of their sin and folly in disobeying the command of God; they could discern between good and evil; and what was the consequence? Confusion and shame were engendered, because innocence was lost and guilt contracted. Let us review the whole of this melancholy business, the fall and its effects.

1.From the New Testament we learn that Satan associated himself with the creature which we term the serpent, and the original the (nachash), in order to seduce and ruin mankind; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9; Revelation 20:2.

2.That this creature was the most suitable to his purpose, as being the most subtle, the most intelligent and cunning of all beasts of the field, endued with the gift of speech and reason, and consequently one in which he could best conceal himself.

3.As he knew that while they depended on God they could not be ruined, he therefore endeavored to seduce them from this dependence.

4.He does this by working on that propensity of the mind to desire an increase of knowledge, with which God, for the most gracious purposes, had endued it.

5.In order to succeed, he insinuates that God, through motives of envy, had given the prohibition - God doth know that in the day ye eat of it, ye shall be like himself, etc.

6.As their present state of blessedness must be inexpressibly dear to them, he endeavors to persuade them that they could not fall from this state: Ye shall not surely die - ye shall not only retain your present blessedness, but it shall be greatly increased; a temptation by which he has ever since fatally succeeded in the ruin of multitudes of souls, whom he persuaded that being once right they could never finally go wrong.

7.

As he kept the unlawfulness of the means proposed out of sight, persuaded them that they could not fall from their steadfastness, assured them that they should resemble God himself, and consequently be self-sufficient, and totally independent of him; they listened, and fixing their eye only on the promised good, neglecting the positive command, and determining to become wise and independent at all events, they took of the fruit and did eat.

Let us now examine the effects.

1.Their eyes were opened, and they saw they were naked. They saw what they never saw before, that they were stripped of their excellence; that they had lost their innocence; and that they had fallen into a state of indigence and danger.

2.Though their eyes were opened to see their nakedness, yet their mind was clouded, and their judgment confused. They seem to have lost all just notions of honor and dishonor, of what was shameful and what was praise-worthy. It was dishonorable and shameful to break the commandment of God; but it was neither to go naked, when clothing was not necessary.

3.They seem in a moment, not only to have lost sound judgment, but also reflection: a short time before Adam was so wise that he could name all the creatures brought before him, according to their respective natures and qualities; now he does not know the first principle concerning the Divine nature, that it knows all things, and that it is omnipresent, therefore he endeavors to hide himself among the trees from the eye of the all-seeing God! How astonishing is this! When the creatures were brought to him he could name them, because he could discern their respective natures and properties; when Eve was brought to him he could immediately tell what she was, who she was, and for what end made, though he was in a deep sleep when God formed her; and this seems to be particularly noted, merely to show the depth of his wisdom, and the perfection of his discernment. But alas! how are the mighty fallen! Compare his present with his past state, his state before the transgression with his state after it; and say, is this the same creature? the creature of whom God said, as he said of all his works, He is very good - just what he should be, a living image of the living God; but now lower than the beasts of the field?

4.

This account could never have been credited had not the indisputable proofs and evidences of it been continued by uninterrupted succession to the present time. All the descendants of this first guilty pair resemble

their degenerate ancestors, and copy their conduct. The original mode of transgression is still continued, and the original sin in consequence. Here are the proofs. 1. Every human being is endeavoring to obtain knowledge by unlawful means, even while the lawful means and every available help are at hand. 2. They are endeavoring to be independent, and to live without God in the world; hence prayer, the language of dependence on God's providence and grace, is neglected, I might say detested, by the great majority of men. Had I no other proof than this that man is a fallen creature, my soul would bow to this evidence. 3. Being destitute of the true knowledge of God they seek privacy for their crimes, not considering that the eye of God is upon them, being only solicitous to hide them from the eye of man. These are all proofs in point; but we shall soon meet with additional ones. See on Genesis 3:10 (note), Genesis 3:12 (note).

Verse 8

The voice of the Lord - The voice is properly used here, for as God is an infinite Spirit, and cannot be confined to any form, so he can have no personal appearance. It is very likely that God used to converse with them in the garden, and that the usual time was the decline of the day, *וְעֶשְׂרִית יוֹם* (leruach haiyom), in the evening breeze; and probably this was the time that our first parents employed in the more solemn acts of their religious worship, at which God was ever present. The time for this solemn worship is again come, and God is in his place; but Adam and Eve have sinned, and therefore, instead of being found in the place of worship, are hidden among the trees! Reader, how often has this been thy case!

Verse 10

I was afraid, because I was naked - See the immediate consequences of sin. 1. Shame, because of the ingratitude marked in the rebellion, and because that in aiming to be like God they were now sunk into a state of the greatest wretchedness. 2. Fear, because they saw they had been deceived by Satan, and were exposed to that death and punishment from which he had promised them an exemption. How worthy is it of remark that this cause continues to produce the very same effects! Shame and fear were the first fruits of sin, and fruits which it has invariably produced, from the first transgression to the present time.

Verse 12

And the man said, etc. - We have here some farther proofs of the fallen state of man, and that the consequences of that state extend to his remotest posterity. 1. On the question, Hast thou eaten of the tree? Adam is obliged to acknowledge his transgression; but he does this in such a way as to shift off the blame from himself, and lay it upon God and upon the woman! This woman whom Thou didst give to be with me, *וְהָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נתַּתְּ לִי* (immadi), to be my companion, (for so the word is repeatedly used), she gave me, and I did eat. I have no farther blame in this transgression; I did not pluck the fruit; she took it and gave it to me. 2. When the woman is questioned she lays the blame upon God and the serpent, ((nachash)). The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. Thou didst make him much wiser than thou didst make me, and therefore my simplicity and ignorance were overcome by his superior wisdom and subtlety; I can have no fault here, the fault is his, and his who made him so wise and me so ignorant. Thus we find that, while the eyes of their body were opened to see their degraded state, the eyes of their understanding were closed, so that they could not see the sinfulness of sin; and at the same time their hearts were hardened through its deceitfulness. In this also their posterity copy their example. How few ingenuously confess their own sin! They see not their guilt. They are continually making excuses for their crimes; the strength and subtlety of the tempter, the natural weakness of their own minds, the unfavorable circumstances in which they were placed, etc., etc., are all pleaded as excuses for their sins, and thus the possibility of repentance is precluded; for till a man take his sin to himself, till he acknowledge that he alone is guilty, he cannot be humbled, and consequently cannot be saved. Reader, till thou accuse thyself, and thyself only, and feel that thou alone art responsible for all thy iniquities, there is no hope of thy salvation.

Verse 14

And the Lord God said unto the serpent - The tempter is not asked why he deceived the woman; he cannot roll the blame on any other; self-tempted he fell, and it is natural for him, such is his enmity, to deceive and destroy all he can. His fault admits of no excuse, and therefore God begins to pronounce sentence on him first. And here we must consider a twofold sentence, one on Satan and the other on the agent he employed. The (nachash), whom I suppose to have been at the head of all the inferior animals, and in a sort of society and intimacy with man, is to be greatly degraded, entirely banished from human society, and deprived of the gift of speech. Cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field - thou shalt be considered the most contemptible of animals; upon thy belly shalt thou go - thou shalt no longer walk erect, but mark the ground equally with thy hands and feet; and dust shalt thou eat - though formerly possessed of the faculty to distinguish, choose, and cleanse thy food, thou shalt feed henceforth like the most stupid and abject quadruped, all the days of thy life - through all the innumerable generations of thy species. God saw meet to manifest his displeasure against the agent employed in this melancholy business; and perhaps this is founded on the part which the intelligent and subtle (nachash) took in the seduction of our first parents. We see that he

was capable of it, and have some reason to believe that he became a willing instrument.

Verse 15

I will put enmity between thee and the woman - This has been generally supposed to apply to a certain enmity subsisting between men and serpents; but this is rather a fancy than a reality. It is yet to be discovered that the serpentine race have any peculiar enmity against mankind, nor is there any proof that men hate serpents more than they do other noxious animals. Men have much more enmity to the common rat and magpie than they have to all the serpents in the land, because the former destroy the grain, etc., and serpents in general, far from seeking to do men mischief, flee his approach, and generally avoid his dwelling. If, however, we take the word (nachash) to mean any of the simia or ape species, we find a more consistent meaning, as there is scarcely an animal in the universe so detested by most women as these are; and indeed men look on them as continual caricatures of themselves. But we are not to look for merely literal meanings here: it is evident that Satan, who actuated this creature, is alone intended in this part of the prophetic declaration. God in his endless mercy has put enmity between men and him; so that, though all mankind love his service, yet all invariably hate himself. Were it otherwise, who could be saved? A great point gained towards the conversion of a sinner is to convince him that it is Satan he has been serving, that it is to him he has been giving up his soul, body, goods, etc.; he starts with horror when this conviction fastens on his mind, and shudders at the thought of being in league with the old murderer. But there is a deeper meaning in the text than even this, especially in these words, it shall bruise thy head, or rather, ח"ח"ח"ח" (hu), He; who? the seed of the woman; the person is to come by the woman, and by her alone, without the concurrence of man. Therefore the address is not to Adam and Eve, but to Eve alone; and it was in consequence of this purpose of God that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin; this, and this alone, is what is implied in the promise of the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent. Jesus Christ died to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and to destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. Thus he bruises his head - destroys his power and lordship over mankind, turning them from the power of Satan unto God; Acts 26:18. And Satan bruises his heel - God so ordered it, that the salvation of man could only be brought about by the death of Christ; and even the spiritual seed of our blessed Lord have the heel often bruised, as they suffer persecution, temptation, etc., which may be all that is intended by this part of the prophecy.

Verse 16

Unto the woman he said - She being second in the transgression is brought up the second to receive her condemnation, and to hear her punishment: I will greatly multiply, or multiplying I will multiply; i.e., I will multiply thy sorrows, and multiply those sorrows by other sorrows, and this during conception and pregnancy, and particularly so in parturition or child-bearing. And this curse has fallen in a heavier degree on the woman than on any other female. Nothing is better attested than this, and yet there is certainly no natural reason why it should be so; it is a part of her punishment, and a part from which even God's mercy will not exempt her. It is added farther, Thy desire shall be to thy husband - thou shalt not be able to shun the great pain and peril of child-bearing, for thy desire, thy appetite, shall be to thy husband; and he shall rule over thee, though at their creation both were formed with equal rights, and the woman had probably as much right to rule as the man; but subjection to the will of her husband is one part of her curse; and so very capricious is this will often, that a sorer punishment no human being can well have, to be at all in a state of liberty, and under the protection of wise and equal laws.

Verse 17

Unto Adam he said - The man being the last in the transgression is brought up last to receive his sentence: Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife - "thou wast not deceived, she only gave and counseled thee to eat; this thou shouldst have resisted;" and that he did not is the reason of his condemnation. Cursed is the ground for thy sake - from henceforth its fertility shall be greatly impaired; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it - be in continual perplexity concerning the seed time and the harvest, the cold and the heat, the wet and the dry. How often are all the fruits of man's toll destroyed by blasting, by mildew, by insects, wet weather, land floods, etc.! Anxiety and carefulness are the laboring man's portion.

Verse 18

Thorns also and thistles, etc. - Instead of producing nourishing grain and useful vegetables, noxious weeds shall be peculiarly prolific, injure the ground, choke the good seed, and mock the hopes of the husbandman; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field - thou shalt no longer have the privilege of this garden of delights, but must go to the common champaign country, and feed on such herbs as thou canst find, till by labor and industry thou hast raised others more suitable to thee and more comfortable.

In the curse pronounced on the ground there is much more implied than generally appears. The amazing fertility of some of the most common thistles and thorns renders them the most proper instruments for the fulfillment of this sentence against man. Thistles multiply enormously; a species called the Carolina sylvestris

חַיָּים (chai) to the Greek ζῶντες, both of which signify the living.

It is probable that God designed by this name to teach our first parents these two important truths:

1. That though they had merited immediate death, yet they should be respited, and the accomplishment of the sentence be long delayed; they should be spared to propagate a numerous progeny on the earth.

2. That though much misery would be entailed on his posterity, and death should have a long and universal empire, yet One should in the fullness of time spring from the woman, who should destroy death, and bring life and immortality to light, 2 Timothy 1:10. Therefore Adam called his wife's name Life, because she was to be the mother of all human beings, and because she was to be the mother of Him who was to give life to a world dead in trespasses, and dead in sins, Ephesians 2:1, etc.

Verse 21

God made coats of skins - It is very likely that the skins out of which their clothing was made were taken off animals whose blood had been poured out as a sin-offering to God; for as we find Cain and Abel offering sacrifices to God, we may fairly presume that God had given them instructions on this head; nor is it likely that the notion of a sacrifice could have ever occurred to the mind of man without an express revelation from God. Hence we may safely infer, 1. That as Adam and Eve needed this clothing as soon as they fell, and death had not as yet made any ravages in the animal world, it is most likely that the skins were taken off victims offered under the direction of God himself, and in faith of Him who, in the fullness of time, was to make an atonement by his death. And it seems reasonable also that this matter should be brought about in such a way that Satan and death should have no triumph, when the very first death that took place in the world was an emblem and type of that death which should conquer Satan, destroy his empire, reconcile God to man, convert man to God, sanctify human nature, and prepare it for heaven.

Verse 22

Behold, the man is become as one of us - On all hands this text is allowed to be difficult, and the difficulty is increased by our translation, which is opposed to the original Hebrew and the most authentic versions. The Hebrew has חַיָּים (hayah), which is the third person preterite tense, and signifies was, not is. The Samaritan text, the Samaritan version, the Syriac, and the Septuagint, have the same tense. These lead us to a very different sense, and indicate that there is an ellipsis of some words which must be supplied in order to make the sense complete. A very learned man has ventured the following paraphrase, which should not be lightly regarded: "And the Lord God said, The man who was like one of us in purity and wisdom, is now fallen and robbed of his excellence; he has added knowledge of the good, by his transgression the knowledge of the evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever in this miserable state, I will remove him, and guard the place lest he should re-enter. Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, etc. This seems to be the most natural sense of the place. Some suppose that his removal from the tree of life was in mercy, to prevent a second temptation. He before imagined that he could gain an increase of wisdom by eating of the tree of knowledge, and Satan would be disposed to tempt him to endeavor to elude the sentence of death, by eating of the tree of life. Others imagine that the words are spoken ironically, and that the Most High intended by a cutting taunt, to upbraid the poor culprit for his offense, because he broke the Divine command in the expectation of being like God to know good from evil; and now that he had lost all the good that God had designed for him, and got nothing but evil in its place, therefore God taunts him for the total miscarriage of his project. But God is ever consistent with himself; and surely his infinite pity prohibited the use of either sarcasm or irony, in speaking of so dreadful a catastrophe, that was in the end to occasion the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, the death and burial, of Him in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, Colossians 2:9.

In Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:27, we have seen man in the perfection of his nature, the dignity of his office, and the plenitude of his happiness. Here we find the same creature, but stripped of his glories and happiness, so that the word man no longer conveys the same ideas it did before. Man and intellectual excellence were before so intimately connected as to appear inseparable; man and misery are now equally so. In our nervous mother tongue, the Anglo-Saxon, we have found the word God signifying, not only the Supreme Being, but also good or goodness; and it is worthy of especial note that the word man, in the same language, is used to express, not only the human being so called, both male and female, but also mischief, wickedness, fraud, deceit, and villany. Thus a simple monosyllable, still in use among us in its first sense, conveyed at once to the minds of our ancestors the two following particulars:

1. The human being in his excellence, capable of knowing, loving, and glorifying his Maker.

2. The human being in his fallen state, capable of and committing all kinds of wickedness. Obiter hic notandum, says old Mr. Somner in his Saxon Dictionary, evenit, Saxonibus et Deum significasse et

Bonum: uti et hominem et nequitiam. Here it is to be noted, that among the Saxons the term God signified both the Divine Being and goodness, as the word man signified both the human being and wickedness.â€• This is an additional proof that our Saxon ancestors both thought and spoke at the same time, which, strange as it may appear, is not a common case: their words in general are not arbitrary signs; but as far as sounds can convey the ideal meaning of things, their words do it; and they are so formed and used as necessarily to bring to view the nature and proper ties of those things of which they are the signs. In this sense the Anglo-Saxon is inferior only to the Hebrew.

Verse 24

So he drove out the man - Three things are noted here:

1. Godâ€™s displeasure against sinful man, evidenced by his expelling him from this place of blessedness;
2. Manâ€™s unfitness for the place, of which he had rendered himself unworthy by his ingratitude and transgression; and,
3. His reluctance to leave this place of happiness. He was, as we may naturally conclude, unwilling to depart, and God drove him out.

He placed at the east - $\times\check{z}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}$ (mikkedem), or before the garden of Eden, before what may be conceived its gate or entrance; Cherubims, $\times\text{'}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}$ (hakerubim), The cherubim. Hebrew plurals in the masculine end in im: to add an s to this when we introduce such words into English, is very improper; therefore the word should be written cherubim, not cherubims. But what were these? They are utterly unknown. Conjectures and guesses relative to their nature and properties are endless. Several think them to have been emblematical representations of the sacred Trinity, and bring reasons and scriptures in support of their opinion; but as I am not satisfied that this opinion is correct, I will not trouble the reader with it. From the description in Exodus 26:1, Exodus 26:31; 1 Kings 6:29, 1 Kings 6:32; 2 Chronicles 3:14, it appears that the cherubs were sometimes represented with two faces, namely, those of a lion and of a man; but from Ezekiel 1:5, etc.; Ezekiel 10:20, Ezekiel 10:21, we find that they had four faces and four wings; the faces were those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle; but it seems there was but one body to these heads. The two-faced cherubs were such as were represented on the curtains and veil of the tabernacle, and on the wall, doors, and veil of the temple; those with four faces appeared only in the holy of holies. The word $\times\text{'}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}$ or $\times\text{'}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}$ (kerub) never appears as a verb in the Hebrew Bible, and therefore is justly supposed to be a word compounded of $\times\text{'}$ (ke) a particle of resemblance, like to, like as, and $\times\text{'}\times\text{'}$ (rab), he was great, powerful, etc. Hence it is very likely that the cherubs, to whatever order of beings they belonged, were emblems of the All-Mighty, and were those creatures by whom he produced the great effects of his power. The word $\times\text{'}\times\text{'}$ (rab) is a character of the Most High, Proverbs 26:10: The great God who formed all; and again in Psalm 48:2, where he is called the Great King, $\times\check{z}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}\times\text{'}$ $\times\text{'}\times\text{'}$ (melech rab). But though this is rarely applied as a character of the Supreme Being in the Hebrew Bible, yet it is a common appellative of the Deity in the Arabic language. (rab), and (rab'ulalameen) Lord of both worlds, or, Lord of the universe, are expressions repeatedly used to point out the almighty energy and supremacy of God. On this ground, I suppose, the cherubim were emblematical representations of the eternal power and Godhead of the Almighty. These angelic beings were for a time employed in guarding the entrance to Paradise, and keeping the way of or road to the tree of life. This, I say, for a time; for it is very probable that God soon removed the tree of life, and abolished the garden, so that its situation could never after be positively ascertained.

By the flaming sword turning every way, or flame folding back upon itself, we may understand the formidable appearances which these cherubim assumed, in order to render the passage to the tree of life inaccessible. Thus terminates this most awful tragedy; a tragedy in which all the actors are slain, in which the most awful murders are committed, and the whole universe ruined! The serpent, so called, is degraded; the woman cursed with pains, miseries, and a subjection to the will of her husband, which was never originally designed; the man, the lord of this lower world, doomed to incessant labor and toil; and the earth itself cursed with comparative barrenness! To complete all, the garden of pleasure is interdicted, and this man, who was made after the image of God, and who would be like him, shamefully expelled from a place where pure spirits alone could dwell. Yet in the midst of wrath God remembers mercy, and a promise of redemption from this degraded and cursed state is made to them through Him who, in the fullness of time, is to be made flesh, and who, by dying for the sin of the world, shall destroy the power of Satan, and deliver all who trust in the merit of his sacrifice from the power, guilt, and nature of sin, and thus prepare them for the celestial Paradise at the right hand of God. Reader, hast thou repented of thy sin? for often hast thou sinned after the similitude of thy ancestorâ€™s transgression. Hast thou sought and found redemption in the blood of the Lamb? Art thou saved from a disposition which led thy first parents to transgress? Art thou living a life of dependence on thy Creator, and of faith and loving obedience to him who died for thee? Wilt thou live under the curse, and die eternally? God forbid! Return to him with all thy soul, and receive this exhortation as a call from his mercy.

To what has already been said on the awful contents of this chapter, I can add little that can either set it in a

clearer light, or make its solemn subject more impressive. We see here that by the subtlety and envy of the devil sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and we find that death reigned, not only from Adam to Moses, but from Moses to the present day. Flow abominable must sin be in the sight of God, when it has not only defaced his own image from the soul of man, but has also become a source of natural and moral evil throughout every part of the globe! Disruption and violence appear in every part of nature; vice, profligacy, and misery, through all the tribes of men and orders of society. It is true that where sin hath abounded, there grace doth much more abound; but men shut their eyes against the light, and harden their hearts against the truth. Sin, which becomes propagated into the world by natural generation, growing with the growth and strengthening with the strength of man, would be as endless in its duration, as unlimited in its influence, did not God check and restrain it by his grace, and cut off its extending influence in the incorrigibly wicked by means of death. How wonderful is the economy of God! That which entered into the world as one of the prime fruits and effects of sin, is now an instrument in his hands to prevent the extension of its contagion.

If men, now so greatly multiplied on the earth, and fertile in mischievous inventions, were permitted to live nearly a thousand years, as in the ancient world, to mature and perfect their infectious and destructive counsels, what a sum of iniquity and ruin would the face of the earth present! Even while they are laying plans to extend the empire of death, God, by the very means of death itself, prevents the completion of their pernicious and diabolic designs. Thus what man, by his wilful obstinacy does not permit grace to correct and restrain, God, by his sovereign power, brings in death to control. It is on this ground that wicked and blood-thirsty men live not out half their days; and what a mercy to the world that it is so! They who will not submit to the scepter of mercy shall be broken in pieces by the rod of iron. Reader, provoke not the Lord to displeasure; thou art not stronger than he. Grieve not his Spirit, provoke him not to destroy thee; why shouldst thou die before thy time? Thou hast sinned much, and needest every moment of thy short life to make thy calling and election sure. Shouldst thou provoke God, by thy perseverance in iniquity, to cut thee off by death before this great work is done, better for thee thou hadst never been born!

How vain are all attempts to attain immortality here! For some thousands of years men have been laboring to find out means to prevent death; and some have even boasted that they had found out a medicine capable of preserving life for ever, by resisting all the attacks of disease, and incessantly repairing all the wastes of the human machine. That is, the alchymistic philosophers would have the world to believe that they had found out a private passage to the tree of immortality; but their own deaths, in the common order of nature, as well as the deaths of the millions which make no such pretensions, are not only a sufficient confutation of their baseless systems, but also a continual proof that the cherubim, with their flaming swords, are turning every way to keep the passage of the tree of life. Life and immortality are, however, brought to light by the Gospel; and he only who keepeth the sayings of the Son of God shall live for ever. Though the body is dead - consigned to death, because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness; and on those who are influenced by this Spirit of righteousness, the second death shall have no power!