HE WAS A GOODLY CHILD

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it." ***Proverbs 22 verse 6***

Every child is not born a Moses, and no amount of training would make him his equal as a man. We have everything to say in accord with the Golden Text, and not a word in opposition; nevertheless, the foundation for greatness must be laid before the birth. It is a great mistake made by many and one to which they are assisted by false theological views that each child is a special creation of God, so that, if an idiot, God may be blamed; and if well-endowed and balanced mentally and physically, God receives the credit. The Scriptural proposition is to the contrary of this, namely, that all God's work is perfect (Deuteronomy 32 verse 4). that Adam was his workmanship, and that he is not responsible for the defects and imperfections which mar every member of our race. In a sense, of course, all that we have, even though imperfect, is of God, since he is the author of all life and indirectly our Creator. Exodus 4 verse 11.

But our defects are explained to us in the Scriptures to be the results of sin, and the natural development of its death penalty, working in the race under the laws of heredity. We are all born in sin, shaped in iniquity, in

sin did our mothers conceive us. (Psalm 51 verse 5). But we are not all born in the same degree of degradation. While fallen parents cannot bring forth a perfect offspring they can, and sometimes do, produce types higher than themselves. This is accomplished by a law of nature affecting the mental conditions of the parents, and especially of the mother (and she is always susceptible to favorable or unfavorable mental and moral influences from her husband). during the period of gestation.

According to this divine law, therefore, parents are to a considerable degree responsible for the prominent traits of character in their children. If this matter were more thoroughly understood, more fully appreciated by parents, the result would be a great improvement in the natural quality of the children born. The husband would endeavor to make the surroundings favorable to the highest emotions and sentiments and aspirations on the part of his wife; who, in turn, would cooperate and set her affections on noble and good and pure and generous things, with meekness; and the result would surely be the birth of children much more resembling Moses than the majority do in nobleness of character combined with humility.

Nothing herein stated, however, is intended to encourage the begetting of children by the Lord's consecrated people living in this "harvest" time. That begotten and born of the flesh is flesh; while that

begotten and born of the spirit is spirit. (John 3 verse 6). The "new creatures" in Christ Jesus have a still higher and grander work before them than the producing of even perfect children, were such a matter possible. They have the privilege of cooperation with God in the development of the "new creatures," the spiritual sons of God: and like our Lord and the apostles they prefer this highest of all privileges. Not that we dispute for a moment the Apostle's word: "Marriage is honorable in all;" but that we emphasize with him that he that marries does well, but he that marries not does better. (1 Corinthians 7 verse 38; Hebrews 13 verse 4). So now we emphasize that he that brings forth natural children of the highest type does well, but he that cooperates with God for the begetting of spiritual sons does better.

Our information respecting the birth and childhood of Moses is very meager. We know that his father's name was Amram, which signifies "Noble people." His mother's name was Jochebed, which signifies, "Jehovah is glorious." Though they were Hebrews, and as a race in bondage to the Egyptians, these names imply that this family of the tribe of Levi were persons of moral and religious sentiments noble people in the proper sense of the word. This is implied also in the Apostle's statement, that they acted from faith. Hebrews 11 verse 23.

As we saw in a previous lesson, the Egyptian rulers of the new dynasty were fearful that the rapid increase of the Hebrews would ultimately mean that they would become the dominant race, or else that they would take their departure as, indeed, they expected to do, according to the traditions which they reverenced, and which instructed them respecting the time of their sojourn in Egypt, and of the promise of God respecting their ultimate deliverance, by the interposition of his power. The Egyptians did not wish to lose the Hebrew people, as their efficiency as laborers had been demonstrated, and as they were profitable to the Egyptians in the way of trade. They neither wished to drive them away nor to kill them off. What they did desire was that they should not increase so rapidly. To hinder this phenomenal increase various expedients were tried, none of them effective; and finally, as a repressive measure, an edict went forth that all the male children of the Hebrews should be put to death, the intention evidently being the curtailment of the race for a time only, permitting children to be born later on.

It was about this time that Moses was born; evidently there had been no such restriction at the time Aaron, his elder brother, was born. Moses was the third in the family; his sister, Miriam, the second, was the little maid mentioned in our lesson. The babe Moses was secreted by his mother for three months, in violation of the king's command, and at the risk of her own life as well as his; and the reason given is that she perceived

that he was a goodly child fine-looking, giving promise of the great man which he afterward became. The Apostle declares that the parents had faith not faith in the child, nor yet in themselves, nor in the king; but faith in God, that he would bless and preserve the child; and we cannot doubt that this faith was accompanied by prayer to the Lord. We cannot doubt that even before the child was born, under such peculiar circumstances, the godly, faithful parents consecrated it to the Lord, to be trained for him, and instructed to the best of their ability, and to be the Lord's servant to whatever extent he would be pleased to use him. Without some such hopes and prayers the faith which the Apostle mentions would be inappropriate. Faith and prayers and consecrations usually go together, hand in hand, anyway, both as respects us, our children, and all with which we must do.

It was a very shrewd device which the parents adopted for the child's preservation, and it either shows a divine guidance or an inventive mind, with a good knowledge of human nature, or all of these. Moses' parents read human nature well when they concluded that the princess of Egypt, if she found the babe at the time of the taking of her bath (perhaps a religious rite), would be sure to be touched, and her heart appealed to by any child, and especially by so "goodly" a boy. It was a cunning arrangement, too, to have Miriam, his sister, nearby, at the time of the finding of the babe in the

bulrush basket, and to have her suggest the getting of a Hebrew woman to nurse the child and then getting his own mother. Undoubtedly the Lord's hand and wisdom were behind the entire matter; but even so, it teaches us the lesson that God is pleased to use human instrumentalities in the accomplishment of his purposes. The parents did right to exercise their ingenuity for the preservation of their child, while they exercised faith in the Lord. And so with us: our faith is not to be of the indolent kind which refuses to act and would thus fail to be in the way to be used of the Lord; but rather ours also is to be a faith manifested by works. It is such faith that the Lord is pleased to bless.

The princess is supposed to have been Neferari, the wife of Rameses II, and daughter of the preceding monarch; all Egyptian kings being called Pharaoh. She adopted the waif as her own son, yet was willing that he should be nurtured in a Hebrew home for a time it is presumed, until he was either seven or twelve years of age; after which she had him brought to the royal palace and instructed in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians. How apt the thought of the poet in respect to Moses' case when he says: "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform!"

How appropriate it was that the leader of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, as a type of the great Messiah, should be an educated or learned man; and yet how still more necessary it was that he should first have well

fixed in his mind, in infancy and childhood, the basic principles of religion; and how marvelously the Lord arranged for both of these elements of his education. We cannot doubt that the parents, whose faith already had been manifested, would instruct the boy in respect to the Abrahamic promises, in which they trusted; namely, that as the seed of Abraham they were ultimately to be great, and to be used as the Lord's channels for blessing all the families of the earth; and that, as foretold to Abraham, the time when the Lord would bring his people forth from Egyptian bondage with a high hand and an outstretched arm of power was well-nigh up. He was no doubt, thoroughly informed respecting his relationship to the Israelites, and no doubt not only faith in the promises, but a patriotic feeling of devotion to his people was liberally inculcated because these qualities stand out nobly throughout his entire life, as they could not do unless they had been thoroughly implanted and cherished.

Comparatively few parents seem to realize the privileges and responsibilities placed within their hands in connection with their own offspring. The Christian mother who has a growing family has certainly a wide scope for the use of all her talents, if she will but use them, in giving instructions in righteousness and in the reverence of the Lord, to her little ones. And it is a mistake frequently made, to suppose that children cannot appreciate religious principles, and that therefore they should not be given even "the milk of the

word," or primary lessons along the lines of the divine law. We believe, on the contrary, that while children are born with a certain amount of depravity and predilection to evil, nevertheless, their little minds are in a large measure blank page, upon which principles either for good or for evil are sure to be deeply engraved. If their minds be not directed in the lines of justice and mercy and love and patience, and if they be not taught that these are the divine requirements, and their reasonable service, we may be sure that they will be taught the reverse of these, as they come in contact with the various depraving influences of life the world, the flesh, the devil. Those parents who consider their children to be each a little garden-spot, and who faithfully plant in these the seeds of justice and love and patience and meekness and gentleness, and all the fruits of the spirit, to the extent that they may be able, will be sure to find a rich reward in the graces of character that will result, under the Lord's blessing especially if the children have been consecrated to him from infancy, or better, before birth.

On the contrary, those who do not take the time to implant the seeds which would produce these graces, these mental and moral flowerets, will find, even as with an earthly garden, that it will not stay vacant until maturer years have come, and a more convenient season; but, instead, noxious weeds of evil disposition will grow, flourish, go to seed repeatedly, and bring forth bitter fruitage, to vex not only the individual

himself, but also the parent, and society in general. Let each parent, therefore, so far as possible, see to it that any children he may bring forth will be "goodly," well-favored, by helpful prenatal influences; and let him see to it also that having assumed the responsibilities of a parent he does good work in these little gardens, which are under his care that the weeds of error are promptly plucked, and that the seeds of good are liberally sown.

Although Moses was born over thirty-six hundred years ago, and therefore comparatively near to the time when the evolution theory claims that man was only "one step above a monkey," we find that not only was he a wonderful child and a wonderful man even before the Lord specially blessed him in making him the leader of Israel, and putting his power upon him but we find also high standards of mental and moral attainment amongst his people the Hebrew Joseph, for instance. We find, additionally, that in Moses' time there was a distinct and well-advanced civilization amongst the Egyptians. For instance, the city of Zoan, one of the capitals of Egypt, near which Moses was born and reared, is shown by modern research to have been a most wonderful city as compared with modern times. Of it a celebrated writer says: "The ruins show it to have been a marvelous city, the Athens of Egypt. An Egyptian poet of that day says of Zoan: 'She is beautiful, beautiful! Nothing like her is found amongst the monuments of Thebes the very secret of pleasures of life. Her bowers bloom with gardens. Each garden is

perfumed with the smell of honey. Her granaries are full of wheat. Flowers for nosegays are in the houses. Her ships come and go every day. The joys have fixed their seat there.'" And concerning the development of literature and arts in that day our quotations further on will show that they were far advanced.

If as a child Moses was remarkable and attractive, so that Stephen calls him "exceeding fair" or margin "fair to God" (Acts 7 verse 20), signifying refined, elegant; and if it be true, as Josephus says, that those who met him as he was carried along the streets forgot their business, and stood still to gaze at him, we may well suppose that his early training by pious parents, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and his subsequent instruction "in all the learning of the Egyptians," as the adopted son of the monarch the result must have been a very noble, refined and handsome man. And yet, strange to say, that with all these accomplishments by nature and education, he is described to us as having been "the meekest man in all the earth." Who can doubt that this very quality of meekness was largely inculcated by the poverty of his parents, and their subjection to bondage, and the humble sentiments inspired by their consecration of Moses to the Lord from the time of his begetting? Certain it is that very rarely are those who are the natural children of princes and rulers humble-minded. Yet this meekness was another of the qualities essential to Moses as the leader of God's people. As it

was, we find that his forty years' dealing with the Israelites in the wilderness, as their leader and the mediator of their covenant with God, so far overcame the meekness of Moses that he was hindered from entering the promised land, because he took to himself, instead of ascribing to God, some of the credit of bringing water out of the rock, saying, "Ye rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" smiting the rock.

Under all circumstances we must think it very remarkable that a man so really great, and occupying so exalted a position for such a length of time, should have overcome the haughty "spirit of princes" in which he was reared, and have maintained his meekness with so slight an exception down to the very close of his career. We may well ask ourselves what would have been the result had God chosen for the leader of Israel a man who was naturally haughty and proud, or any other man than one who was very meek indeed. No other than a meek character could possibly have stood such a strain as Moses so grandly and so faithfully endured. There is a lesson for the Lord's people here. The Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus, was also meek and lowly of heart, and those whom God is now calling from the world to be joint heirs with Jesus, members of his body as the great anti-type of Moses, to lead mankind out of the bondage of sin and Satan these all must have likeness to their Lord and Head in this quality of meekness, if they

would attain to his general character in other respects. We do well to remember continually the Apostle's injunction, that we "Humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt us in due time" so that we may be meet (fit). for the inheritance, the Kingdom.

Concerning Moses and the educational opportunities of his time, secular history gives us some intimations. The library of Rameseum at Thebes over whose gate was the inscription, "For the healing of the soul" contained twenty thousand books, and it is significant as indicating the intellectual activity of that time, that this structure was built by Rameses II, by whose wife Moses is supposed to have been adopted. Stephen declares (Acts 7 verse 22). that "Moses was both mighty in words and in deeds," and Stanley's "Jewish Church" says respecting him, "He learned arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, medicine and music. He invented boats, and engines for building, instruments of war and of hydraulics, hieroglyphics, division of lands." It declares further that he taught Orpheus, and was hence called by the Greeks Musaeus, and by the Egyptians Hermes.

Footnote for the November 26th Manna

We know not how substantial the basis for these traditions is, but we do know that they are not of accord with the Scriptural records of Moses as a great leader. A lesson for us to learn in this connection is that God

has his own way of preparing for all the various features of his own great plan. He knew the praying people who, at the proper time, brought forth their son. He knew how to direct so that the child, the youth, the man, should be an instrument ready for his own purposes; and yet in all of the divine dealings, here as elsewhere, we notice that God does not coerce those whom he uses for his work; but that rather he uses instruments ready, willing, desirous of being used. Let us each, therefore, seek by humility, by zeal, by love for the Lord and for his cause, by faith in his power, to be in that condition of heart and mind which will make us ready to be used, and useful in any department of the divine service to which the Lord may be pleased to call us.