

Scripture, perhaps by the gentleman from Howard, (Mr. Sands,) and afterwards commented on by the gentleman from Kent, (Mr. Chambers,) who seems to have turned commentator, and to have interpolated some words at the end of that passage of Scripture which totally change its signification. We are all, I presume, disposed to acknowledge the ability of the gentleman as a jurist; but when he touches that sacred volume, and puts words into the mouth of Deity which were never uttered, and insists upon a signification that was never designed, he lays himself open to criticism; and I have no hesitancy whatever in acting as a critic under the circumstances. I understood the gentlemen, after quoting the passage in question, to add, at the end of it, "where the children sin;" that is, that God visits the transgressions or the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation where the children sin. There is no such language used in the passage of Scripture to which reference is made.

Mr. CHAMBERS. I did not profess to give a quotation of the language, but of the spirit. While the sins of the father were visited upon the children, those that continued in sin, there was not in the spirit of the gospel any such doctrine in regard to the children who were righteous children of sinful parents. I did not profess to make a quotation from Scripture, but to give what I maintain is the spirit of the gospel.

Mr. TODD. I am ready to meet the gentleman upon that point. The passage of Scripture to which reference has been made, is contained in the Decalogue. It was graven upon the tables of stone which were given to Moses amid the smoke and lightnings and thunders of Mount Sinai, and was re-enacted by our Saviour when he said to the world, that the first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." These enactments, whatever may be said of other Scripture, other laws and usages practiced among the Jews as a nation, have never been revoked. They stand the same to-day as they have always stood; and they will stand unchanged and unchangeable until the end of time. Christianity is but a re-enactment of the principles they contain. I will read the words to which reference has been made. They are contained in the twentieth chapter of Exodus:

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

Now upon this passage of Scripture, I have consulted Dr. Clarke and Mr. Scott, both eminent commentators.

"Idolatry," says Dr. Clarke, "is particularly intended, and visiting sins of this kind refers principally to national judgments. By withdrawing the Divine protection the idolatrous Israelites were delivered up into the hands of their enemies, from whom the Gods, in whom they had trusted, could not deliver them. This God did even to the third and fourth generation, i. e. *successively*; as may be seen in every part of the Jewish history."

Scott says—"It is evident that children in general are sufferers by the crimes of their parents; but Israel was under a peculiar covenant, which idolatry violated in its primary condition. If then the parents forfeited the covenant-blessing, their posterity must suffer the effects of the forfeiture. As this was intended to restrain them from sin by means of natural affection, the third and fourth generation only are mentioned; for they could not expect to see more of their posterity: or it may imply, that the Lord being ready to forgive the effects would cease after that period unless the children persisted in the sins of their parents."

It will be seen from this, that it is held by scribes as eminent for their research into the teachings of divine truth as is the gentleman from Kent for his erudition and complete mastery of human enactments, that it is not inconsistent with the recognized justice of the divine Being, the great Legislator of the universe, that the children should suffer on account of the sins of the fathers. Indeed the same doctrine is taught by what we see occurring around us every day, and have seen all our lives. We see the man who is addicted to his cups, and who in this way squanders his life, and his property, and brings poverty and disease and loss of reputation and dishonor upon his family succeeding him.

We have only to recur to an event in the history of our nation, to be satisfied that the particular question that now engages the attention of the Convention, treason against the Government, does in many instances transmit its stigma to succeeding ages. Men who occupied the unenviable position of Tories in the war for our independence, not only suffered the reproach themselves but the stain has fastened itself upon their children, and it has been to this day almost impossible for them to wipe out the stigma which attaches to the name of traitor; and men of the present generation may learn wisdom from what is past.

From the quotation I have made from the Scriptures, and from the commentaries upon it by Drs. Clarke and Scott, it will be seen that idolatry was the particular sin which Jehovah denounced in such bitter language and against which he enacted such fearful