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THE
DIVINE PLAN OF REVELATION:

AN
ARGUMENT FROM INTERNAL EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT
OF THE STRUCTURAL UNITY OF THE BIBLE.

BEING THE
BOYLE LECTURES FOR MDCCCLXIII.

BY THE
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"THE SOUL'S LIFE," "THE FAMILY OF GOD," ETC.

"Humana omnia dicta argumentis et testibus egent, Dei autem sermo ipse sibi testis est."—SALV. *de Providentiâ*, l. iii.

"Magnifice et salubriter Spiritus Sanctus ita scripturas modificavit, ut locis apertioribus fami occurreret, obscurioribus autem fastidia detergeret. Nihil enim fere de illis obscuritatibus eruitur, quod non planissime dictum alibi reperitur."—AUGUST. *De Doctrina Christi*, l. ii. c. 6.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Lectures contained in this volume were preached in 1863,—the third and last year of my office as Lecturer in the foundation of the Hon. Robert Boyle. The Lectures for 1861 were published in the same year, under the title of *The Bible and its Critics*, and were received in a much more favourable manner than I could have ventured to anticipate. The Lectures for 1862 dealt with *The Conflict between Science and Infidelity*, and were directed to prove that the principles of judgment applied by modern rationalism to the Sacred Scriptures were contradictory to the principles applied to other scientific inquiries, and were subversive of the very foundations of human knowledge. Such thought, as the claims of a lectureship held for three years and the pressure of ministerial engagements have allowed me to give to the subject since then, has confirmed me in my belief of the solidity of this view. But the treatment of the subject involved so wide a range of inquiry and so great a variety of topic that I have been anxious to give it a more thorough reconsideration than circumstances have hitherto rendered possible. The Lectures for 1863 are now printed in this volume, with slight additions and revision from the original manuscript. The publication has been delayed by the varied occupations

incident to a change of residence and the entrance upon a new sphere of ministerial labour. In giving them to the world, I am actuated by a sense of the pressing importance of the question discussed in them, and of the duty incumbent on every man to contribute, to the best of his power, to the vindication of the Bible from sceptical attack and the consolidation of its evidences. I am fully sensible of their many defects; but venture to hope that they contain suggestive matter for further inquiry and research,—the first rude cultivation of a field of thought which may hereafter yield, perhaps to the sickle of some future Boyle Lecturer, an ample harvest to the glory of God, and to the faith and consolation of the Church. I humbly pray that the Spirit of God may be pleased to honour this effort meanwhile.

EDWARD GARBETT.

*Christ Church Parsonage, Surbiton,
June 2, 1864.*

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The authorship of the Bible must be determined by the proof page
either of its fragmentary character, or of its structural unity. Modern rationalism has set itself to prove the first alternative, while Christian orthodoxy has ever maintained the second. The critical reasons adduced in favour of its fragmentary character have not touched the positive external evidences for the historical veracity and Divine authority of the Bible; and, could they be proved, they would only bring the argument to this dilemma,—that one line of evidence positively affirms the authoritative inspiration which another line of evidence invalidates. Hence arises the necessity for a closer review and analysis to detect the latent fallacy. This may be done: 1. Negatively; by disproving the hostile conclusions of rationalism. 2. Affirmatively; by adducing counter internal evidence in favour of the unity of the Bible. The present Lectures will follow the latter plan, and will contain an argument from design, analogous to the proof adduced by natural religion, for the existence of God. If the doctrine of final causes be admitted, the adaptation of means to ends constitutes a competent proof of design, and a design involves a designer. If this can be proved to exist throughout books confessedly varying so widely in their date as the books of the Bible, the intelligent mind that framed and executed it must be the mind of God, because no human intellect can have extended its action over such a sphere. The evidence to be adduced in proof of a Divine plan of

revelation will be threefold:—I. It rests on the argument from final causes. An examination of the Bible proves that it is constructed on an intelligent plan; generally, inasmuch as it holds towards Christianity at large the relation of a means to an end; specifically, because the dealings of God recorded in the Scriptures, and the Scriptures which record them, consist of an unbroken series of causes and effects, involving the adaptation of means to ends at every stage. Hence we intuitively deduce design and a Designer. This is the only proof available to natural religion, and if it be admitted to have force in natural, it must equally have force in revealed religion. II. The existence of a plan is implicitly stated in the general doctrines of Scripture on the personality of God, His creative right over the world, His moral government, His active and minute Providence, and His attributes of infinite wisdom and power. Amid such truths there can be nothing fortuitous or undesigned. III. Scripture itself explicitly states the plan on which revelation has been constructed. It is not found formally expounded in any one place; but there are a variety of statements which, in their combination, form a logical, consistent, and perfect whole. The necessity imposed upon men of studying and combining these separate statements is so thoroughly in accordance with the whole mode of God's teaching, both in the scheme of Scripture and the scheme of Divine Providence altogether, that no objection can be raised to the one that is not equally fatal to the other. The very fact that these statements are scattered up and down the Bible, equally proves a Divine intention, and disproves a human intention. The line of thought, thus opened, rebukes all human speculation, and makes it necessary for the student to follow strictly and solely the revealed declarations of God Himself. 1

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Existing controversies have rendered it desirable to substitute for the Christian instinct which accepts the unity

of the Bible, a more formal and logical conviction. An examination of the Scriptural books makes us acquainted with patent evidences of unity which enable us to recognise it as a fact, without affording a full explanation of its cause. A closer analysis enables us to see the reason, because it enables us to see the objects contemplated by God in His dealings towards mankind, and the plan for their accomplishment. The objects must first be recognised, because the perfection of a work consists not in any theoretical completeness, but in its relative adaptation to the contemplated end. The primal object of God towards man is declared to have been His own glory and the happiness of His creatures, two purposes which to our minds are indistinguishable. His immediate purpose was the salvation of man from the ruin of the fall, through the meritorious atonement of the Son of God, and the efficient operations of the Holy Ghost. Such a purpose necessarily involved, I. A revelation; because the restoration of the moral union between God and man broken by the fall, could not be effected without making man acquainted with the relation he held towards the creating and redeeming God. This revelation was needed for man in general. To make it effective for this purpose we cannot conceive any plan but that of successive revelations adapted singly to the generations immediately receiving them, and yet so constructed as to make in the aggregate one complete and indivisible revelation for the whole world; the supposition of one revelation only given at some one time, being surrounded with difficulties irreconcilable with God's primary purposes. This twofold relation of inspired Scripture is strongly affirmed by itself. II. A revelation involves a moral probation attached to the possession of it, for the spiritual regeneration of mankind could not be accomplished without moral discipline. From this discipline arose the further necessity for a graduated development of revealed truth adapted to enlarge the religious capacity, and to meet it when enlarged. III. Moral probation includes a work of preparation, both upon the individual soul and upon mankind in general. The fact that a certain moral suitability to the Gospel existed at the time of our Lord, is historically proved. The most efficient instrument in producing it was the ancient Scriptures, and the truths they extended among man-

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kind by direct teaching and by illustrative example.	
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V. This nation would afford an example of the dealings of Divine Providence on a large scale, not only by virtue of their special commission and miraculous history, but also by virtue of the revelation which supplies God's own interpretation of them. These five conditions are necessary to supplement each other, and yet constitute together one plan, every part of which moved on at once harmoniously towards its completion. Their mutual relation and community of source and object are illustrated by the mode in which Scripture identifies one age of the Church with a succeeding age, and by the thread of prophecy interweaved throughout the whole, ever ending and yet ever beginning. These conditions are, therefore, distinct but never separate, and are gathered with unbroken consistency around that manifestation of the Divine glory in the good of His creatures, which constitutes the central purpose of them all	50

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Unity of design in diversity of detail is the characteristic of all God's works in nature, and may therefore be expected to exist equally in God's works of grace. The Divine plan of revelation, made known to us in the Bible, and having its various parts grouped round the central purpose of manifesting the Divine glory, is in strict accordance with reason and experience. Such a plan has necessarily two sides, for a revelation must take its character from the peculiarities of the party who receives it, as well as from the qualities of the party who gives it. It was the free and sovereign will of God to save man, the same race of men, that is, who had sinned and fallen. Consequently the necessities of the race on the one side, and the mental and moral

capabilities of a finite and fallen creature on the other, conditioned the character and mode of the revelation, not by virtue of any outward force put upon God, but as the result of His own eternal purposes. Certain peculiarities of the Bible have arisen from this human side of the Divine plan, and cannot conceivably have been absent: I. The communication of the Divine will could only be made through the vehicle of human language, used according to its natural laws, and not exempted, even by God's perfect use of it, from its own inherent imperfections. Such a revelation, moreover, could only be conveyed through human instruments. For if it had been conveyed by supernatural agents, whether angels or glorified saints, the appearances of these messengers must have been either infrequent or frequent. If infrequent, the message would have admitted of no authentication; if frequent, they could not have co-existed with the ordinary course of human action. But the use of human messengers rendered it unnecessary and unbecoming that their writings should contain that formal and reiterated assertion of their own authority, on the absence of which sceptical writers have laid great stress. The position and official authority of the men attested the inspiration of their message to those who first received it, while their testimony combined with the character of the writings themselves, attest it to subsequent ages. II. The employment of human language and human instruments gave to revelation its human side, and opened the door for possible unbelief. Hence arose the probation of faith, and probation involves the use of moral conviction and persuasion only, and the absence of all compulsion or restraint on the ordinary operations of the human mind. From this followed the permission of unbelief, and of all the guilt and punishment entailed by it, because the permission was inseparable from moral responsibility. And since God would not contradict the nature He has Himself given to man, the mental and moral education to which He has submitted the world has been progressive, consecutive and slow, measured throughout every stage by man's capacity to receive it. III. The permission accorded to the existence of human unbelief involved a similar permission to human disobedience. God's plan must have been adapted to human nature as God Himself has described it, fallen, corrupt,

impotent. The disturbances caused by the passions of His creatures were, therefore, included in the design of God from the first, and all the contingencies arising from them were foreseen and fore-provided for. This is illustrated in the history of the Jewish nation. The purpose determined by God in regard to them was fixed and irrevocable, but in the mode of its accomplishment, God admitted two alternatives ; either obedience and a special blessing, or disobedience and a special punishment. In any case, the mission intrusted to them was to be fulfilled, and actually has been fulfilled. But inasmuch as the Divine dealings were conditioned by the alternatives chosen, and consequently by the variations of human conduct, the dealings themselves have worn various aspects. But these aspects constitute variations and not discrepancies ; since variations in the mode of acting are very distinct from diversities in the principles on which we act. The alleged differences of tone and spirit, asserted to exist between the Old and New Testaments, are wholly of this kind, so so far as they can be proved to exist at all. Under both dispensations, the revealed character of God is one and identical, and the mode of His revealed actings varies so far only as they are adapted to the varying circumstances of human conduct 112

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Our conception of the Divine plan being complete, in regard to the purposes included on its Divine side, and also the peculiarities involved upon its human side, we must now compare the plan with its execution. In doing this, we find everywhere the sovereign will of God acting in concurrence with the moral responsibility of man. The point of contact between the two lies beyond our searching out, but the fact must be accepted as equally in accordance with the nature of things, with God's positive declarations, and with the events of revelation. We must now trace the outgoings of the Divine Will from the beginning. The stand-point from which the Book of Genesis and

its events must be considered, is to be fixed at the commencement of the written revelation by Moses. The Books of Scripture generally synchronise with the events recorded by them. But there are two exceptions: the Book of Genesis, which looks back from the beginning of the written revelation, and the Book of the Revelation, which looks forward from the end of it. We must place ourselves, therefore, at the date, and under the circumstances, of Moses. But when we do so, we see that the Book of Genesis was addressed to the generation of the Exodus, and was directed to supply them with the information they needed, both for the duties of personal religion and for the discharge of the trust to which they were nationally elected. This information included the knowledge of God; of their relation towards Him; of their condition as fallen creatures, and their privileges as an elected race, bound by solemn covenant to the God of their forefathers. The object of the Book of Genesis is, therefore, religious, and the conveyance of religious information. It was not intended to be a book of science, or a secular history. Not only so, but it could not have been a book of science without contradicting the very purposes for which it was given. I. No doubt God could have given a scientific account of the Creation, for instance, perfect beyond possible objection or criticism. But had He done so, such a revelation would have been utterly unintelligible to the Hebrew people, to whom it was immediately given, and to all the early generations of mankind altogether. II. By allying itself to one philosophical system, and a system far beyond the knowledge, or even the comprehension, of mankind, it would have become subject to a prejudice and incredulity fatal to its influence. III. By the mere fact of conveying scientific instruction it would have been out of joint with the very purposes of revelation, and have destroyed the testimony which it bears, under existing circumstances, to spiritual truth and its predominance above all other truth. The existence of any prominent scientific element in Scripture would have been fatal to its very objects. On the other hand, the existence of scientific mistakes in Scripture would be fatal to its inspired authority. An examination of the conclusions of physical science as announced by its highest masters, with special re-

ference to four debated points ; 1, the Creation ; 2, the antiquity of man ; 3, the descent of the human race from a single pair ; 4, the deluge, conclusively shows that no such mistakes have been proved, and that, on no one single ascertained point, are the statements of the Bible and the conclusions of science at variance with each other. Taking, therefore, our stand-point at the date of Moses, and recognising the religious object for which Genesis was written in accordance with God's declared purpose of revelation altogether, the entire book is found to be framed with wonderful consistency. The fulness and precision of the religious teaching is strikingly contrasted with its comparative and carefully adjusted reticence on other subjects. This is illustrated in the inspired narrative of the creation, the fall, the deluge, and the dispersion of mankind at Babel. When the disastrous and hopeless condition of mankind, and the total inability of man to save himself, had been exhibited, then the first actual commencement of the Divine plan is described, the chosen race standing out from the general darkness into the foreground. The personal histories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are constructed upon this view ; and the attempt to frame the inspired narrative into a merely secular story, however successful as a work of human art, is absolutely destructive to the perfection of the Divine revelation, and reverses all its distinctive principles . 183

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The constitution of the Hebrew nation belongs to an epoch of its own. The history divides itself into three stages : the first containing the settlement in Egypt ; the second, the sojourn in Egypt ; the third, the Exodus and the giving of the Law. The last of these most demands attention, because the law itself can only be estimated by its adaptation to the work it was intended to accomplish, and this work depends upon the condition of the people to whom it was given, morally, politically, and religiously. The Mosaic law

cannot broadly be assumed as a type for all legislation, because it was a special instrument for a special work, adapted to a special stage of national civilisation. A just estimate of the condition of the Hebrews of the Exodus is, therefore, the first condition of the inquiry. An examination of the Scriptural narrative shows that the Hebrew nation was not a perfectly pure-blooded race, but consisted of very heterogeneous elements gathered round a few families of pure Abrahamic descent on the male side. These families constituted a natural aristocracy, and, as the heads of the future tribes, exercised the government of Israel. Thus, a national organisation existed from the first and grew with the growth of the people. The distinction of rank suggests a further distinction of character. Among the Hebrews, from the times of Abraham downwards, the same diversity of religious character has existed as exists among ourselves. On the one side, we find the portraiture of the true saints of God reflecting the spiritual type of the Church of Christ; on the other side, the numerical majority were probably marked by the same religious indifference and unbelief as exist at our own day. The downward tendencies of human nature were strengthened in the case of the Hebrews, by the Etemptations of gyptian profligacy and idolatry, and by the degrading effects of their bondage. Accordingly we trace a strong distinction between two classes of the Hebrews; the one retaining the faith of their forefathers, sighing under their oppression and looking towards God for deliverance; the other caring only for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and anxious to be left alone that they might serve the Egyptians. These loose materials were compacted into national unity; 1. By their separation in Goshen, and the abhorrence in which their occupation as shepherds was held by the native inhabitants. 2. By the bond of the monotheism which the authority of Joseph and his successors sufficed to maintain. 3. By their community of suffering in the iron furnace of their bondage. 4. By the separation made during the plagues of Egypt between Goshen and the rest of the land. 5. By the fear engendered in the minds of their masters of all the Hebrews alike, and the eagerness with which at the last they were thrust out of the land. 6. By the peculiar enactments

of the Mosaic law which stamped on the still unformed people the imperishable characteristics of the Jew. The law was qualified for this purpose by the enactments laid down by Divine authority for (1) the religious instruction, (2) the moral guidance, (3) the social life, (4) the civil rights, (5) the political government of the nation. The regulations relative to these five spheres constituted not so many isolated codes, but the harmonious parts of one indivisible code, closely related to each other. The entire code, thus inseparably compacted, was characterised (A) By its singular beneficence and humanity, as specially illustrated by its sensitive tenderness over human life. (B) By the mode in which it took up in itself the whole life of the Hebrew, and assumed the regulation of his conduct in all his relations both towards God and man. (C) By the prominent position occupied in the law by God Himself, not only as giving authority to the whole, but as being Himself its living centre and the active executor of its sanctions of reward and punishment. The visible symbol of His presence, and the miraculous circumstances of their history, concurred to deepen in the Jewish mind the consciousness of this ever-present and awful God. This office of fixing a definite stamp upon the Hebrew nation has actually been accomplished by the law; and the result, conspicuous in the subsequent history, survives even to our own day 272

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An examination of the Mosaic Law, as conveyed in detail in the Pentateuch, illustrates its admirable suitability to the office of impressing a definite national character upon the Jewish people. But since all moral influences are gradual in their action, this effect could only be produced by degrees, and during a considerable period of time. Two great problems needed to be answered: 1. By what means would God secure so prolonged an influence for the law, as to enable it to stamp upon the Jews its own characteristics. 2. By what means,

when this was effected, would God provide for the influence of this peculiar race over the world at large. The answer to the first question is contained in the post-Mosaic books of the Old Testament Canon, and in the national history they record. The life of the complete and consolidated nation was commenced under every possible advantage. This was true of the generation of the Exodus, for whom all was done consistently with the ordained methods of the Divine action. It was still more signally true of the generation specially trained during the forty years' wanderings, alike by the instruction of the law, alike by the miraculous circumstances of their history for the grand future which God had in store for them. The alternative of obedience and a special blessing, or disobedience and a special curse, had been emphatically set before them by Moses and was repeated with equal earnestness by Joshua. It now remained to be seen by the event which they would permanently choose. During the first years of their settlement their obedience was accompanied by such a period of blessing that it constituted the golden age of Jewish history. Upon the death of Joshua, the time came for that utter destruction of the Canaanitish nations which was the crucial test of their sincerity. The sentence was judicial, and they were its appointed executioners. Unhappily they adopted another policy, and the disobedience involved in it speedily produced all the evils against which they had been warned. They adopted the corrupt and profligate idolatry around them, and entered upon a course of assimilation to the heathen, the completion of which would have destroyed the identity of the Hebrew race, and made the fulfilment of the mission providentially intrusted to them impossible. God interfered to prevent this catastrophe. The withdrawal of this special protection from Israel enabled the Canaanites to assume the superiority and to become masters instead of tributaries. A series of tyrannies; falling at first upon different tribes and then upon the whole collective nation, drove them back upon themselves and upon God, and by a community of interest and suffering again compacted them into a separate people. The book of Judges, at first sight very fragmentary, proves to be the exact and orderly record of these events, marking one by one the foot-

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steps of God, and characterised even in its minor episodes by consistency of design. The adoption of the monarchical form of government did not really interfere with this series of events, for it was itself a contingency foreseen and foreprovided for in the law. The character of the kings, as specially illustrated in Saul, David, and Solomon, was part of a further design, and pregnant with direct religious teaching. Hitherto the nation had not become so prosperous as to make them conspicuous to the world, or as to show by public proof that the Divine blessing might not possibly have overcome the inveterate spirit of rebellion, which the Divine punishment had proved inadequate to prevent. It pleased God to meet this want in the imperial glory of the reigns of David and Solomon. But experience proved that the innate corruption of human nature had made a permanent prosperity impossible. Accordingly the later history of the kingdom is that of religious declension and national decrepitude. The Scriptural books, including the mutual illustrations afforded by the historical and prophetic writings to each other, supply the narrative of this conflict between God on the one side and human rebellion on the other, and are at the same filled with details of which the evidential value cannot be overrated. But while these books, illustrate the decline of the earthly empire and its causes, they throw into ever-increasing prominence the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, till at last it fills all the view, throwing the hopes of mankind forward to the promised days of the Son of Man. As the human empire fails, the Divine empire stands forth in the universality of its objects and the grandeur of its promises	359

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Of the two questions propounded in the preceding Lecture, how God would secure the permanent influence of the Mosaic law over the Jew, and how, having secured it, He would bring the nation into contact with the

world, the first is answered generally by the events before and during the Babylonish captivity, and the second in the period intervening between it and the times of the New Testament. After the captivity the Jew is found to have assumed his permanent and distinctive characteristics. The type was, in part, true to the Divine purpose, in the confidence of the Jew in his national election, his unchanging hatred of idolatry, the maintenance of his national isolation, and his reverent care for the written law. But, in part, it was corrupted by human perversions, as in his exclusive pride, his adherence to the letter instead of the spirit of the law, and the concentration of his hopes on temporal promises. The human perversions only disturbed and weakened the Divine type to which they were superadded. Yet the elements of suffering they involved did not neutralise the great mission, or destroy the characteristic influence of the elected nation. The first question being thus answered, the second finds its solution in the extraordinary fortunes of the Jewish race, isolated on one side, yet of all races ever known the most cosmopolite and universal upon the other. The Jew has held a place in the history of every nation without exception that has ruled the world, and has left his traces behind him in their religion, literature, and legislation. The accomplishment of these events occupied the four hundred years between Malachi and Matthew. During this period, I. Inspired history ceased, because uninspired became sufficient for the purpose; II. Miraculous interpositions ceased, because enough had been done to impress its distinctive character on the Hebrew race; III. Immediate revelation ceased, because sufficient truth to prepare the world for Christ had already been given, and the pause permitted to intervene served at once to disprove the pretensions of false Messiahs, and to concentrate attention upon the true; IV. The dispersion of the Jew was effected, bringing him into connexion with the dim yearnings of the human conscience awakened throughout the world; V. The inability of human wisdom, at its greatest height, and under the most favourable circumstances, to meet the spiritual wants of the world was proved by actual experiment; VI. An universal language was provided for the dissemination of the Gospel, and an

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universal empire to furnish facilities for its propagation. The period between the Old and New Testaments thus occupied, formed no interruption of the Divine plan, but constituted an integral portion of it. Exactly where it closed, the New Testament Canon begins, taking up authoritatively into itself the events of the whole previous periods from Adam downwards. The New Testament books exhibit the same characteristics as those of the Old, and fit in consistently to the same plan. The foundation of the Church is recorded in the personal work and ministry of Christ contained with admirable order and method in the Gospels. The commencement of its aggressive enterprise upon the world, and the nature of its instruments, human and Divine, are given in the Acts of the Apostles. Its grand doctrines are comprehensively, and yet minutely, explained in the Epistles. While its sufferings, conflicts, and final triumph are presented for the guidance and consolation of the saints, in the book of the Apocalypse	433

LECTURE VIII.

God's Word Written.

The argument pursued in the preceding Lectures requires one admission only to be made by the rationalist. This is an admission which he cannot refuse, inasmuch as it is involved in the theory on which his own system of thought rests. It is that the Bible is not an imposture of any one date, but consists of documents written by different men at very different periods. For whatever the number of these documents may be, the unity of design proved to pervade them remains all the same, and the greater the variety of human authorship and date the more irresistible is the conclusion that the action of the Divine mind alone can possibly have produced this unity. For the books as they exist exactly follow out the plan obtained by combining the various statements of the Bible, and which commends itself to our own minds as the only conceivable plan by which the revealed objects of God could be secured. However the Bible

was composed and compiled, at all events, it is so indissolubly connected throughout, that of the books no one could be omitted without making the others unintelligible; and this is especially true of the five books of Moses. Or if we turn from the record to the dealings of God recorded, the same moral sequence meets us, so that no part of them could be taken away without rendering the dealings, before and after the facts omitted, incredible and impossible. An examination of the supposition that the Pentateuch was probably composed by Samuel illustrates the statement, and shows the inextricable difficulties produced by breaking either the literary, or the chronological, or the historical sequence by which the Scriptural books are as a matter of fact pervaded. This unity is traceable: 1. In the plan itself and the detailed statements which make up its completeness. 2. In the orderly construction of the various books comprised in the Canon of the inspired Scriptures. 3. In the historical sequence of the dealings recorded. 4. In the mutual dependence and reaction of the dealings on the record, and the record on the dealings. These points being proved, the argument for the Divine authorship and authority of the Bible rests on the doctrine of final causes, and the confession that design proves a designer, whose action must be coincident with the formation and execution of the design. I. An intelligent plan pervades the whole books. II. The design is found to exist just where *à priori* reasoning would lead us to expect its existence. III. The Divine origin of the plan is proved by its very existence in books of widely different dates and secondary authorship, and by the fact of its exact accomplishment. But the authority given to the Bible by the proof of the Divine plan, must extend to the whole of the books comprised within the plan without exception or limitation. The distinction drawn between the religious portions of the Bible and its secular portions is lost in the common design comprehending them both. As the parts of some delicate machinery may differ in their respective offices and importance, and yet may all be equally necessary to the perfection of the whole, so portions of the Bible may differ in their immediate subject-matter, and yet the infallibility of each portion be equally involved in the Divine

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authority of the whole. It follows, lastly, that objections against the supernatural character of some portions of the Bible cannot be maintained where the whole is supernatural, and involves, by the very hypothesis of a revelation from God to man, the miraculous and spiritual elements throughout. Without them the Bible could neither be "a faithful saying," nor "worthy of all acceptation." . . .	515

THE
DIVINE PLAN OF REVELATION.

LECTURE I.

Evidences of Design.

“THE SECRET THINGS BELONG UNTO THE LORD OUR GOD; BUT THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE REVEALED BELONG UNTO US AND TO OUR CHILDREN FOR EVER, THAT WE MAY DO ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LAW.”—DEUT. xxix. 29.

THE authorship of the Bible, and the mode of its production, constitute the great religious question of our day. It has become the crucial point of the controversy between Christianity and Infidelity to decide whether the Bible is organically one book or a loose collection of fragments. The inquiry involves the whole authority of Revelation and its relation to the human heart and conscience, but is itself, in the first place, literary and critical. The voice of Christian faith pronounces decisively in favour of the unity of Scripture. The sacred writers themselves speak of the preceding revelation as one, under the distinctive title of “the Word of God.” The Christian writers of the early ages re-echo the same language, and employ single terms to describe all the books of the Scriptural

Canon.* The Church of England, in her formal statement of doctrine, designates them "God's Word written." Her greatest divines have consistently adopted the same and synonymous expressions,† and their words have become the familiar language of the Church. To express this belief in the unity of Scripture, in any real sense of the words, is tantamount to an acknowledgment of its Divine inspiration and infallible authority. If various writings, the production of which has extended over a period of fifteen hundred years, are yet organically one book, that unity can only arise from the immediate action of the Divine intelligence impressing its own unity of thought and purpose on the various utterances of successive generations.

On the other hand, it is loudly declared that this mode of viewing the Scriptures is not consistent with an exact criticism of their contents. The Bible, it is asserted, is only one in the sense that it contains within the limits of a single volume the religious writings of the Hebrew people, but not in the sense of an internal and structural unity. It is placed on the same footing as other collec-

* "ἡ βίβλος γραφῆς," and "ἡ γραφή" simply are used by Clement of Rome, Cyril, Gregory, Athanasius, Basil, Origen, Theodoret; or, in the Latin, by Cyprian, Tertullian, Origen, the Sixth Council of Carthage, Novatian, Gaudensius, &c.

† The expression "God's Word," and its equivalents, are constantly used by Cranmer, Bullinger, Whittaker, Parker, Hooker, Hall, Laud, Jeremy Taylor, Chillingworth, Stillingfleet, &c.

tions of ancient writings which reach back into pre-historic times, and must be considered as partly mythical, partly traditional, partly speculative, partly the utterance of superstitious ignorance, or of an undeveloped and unenlightened religious consciousness; but as being under all these aspects as wholly human as other productions of antiquity. Gleams and fragments of precious truth are embedded in it, as we find gold embedded in worthless earth and stone; but, like the gold, it must be carefully sifted by human agency from the dross which accompanies it, before it can be used either to enlighten the intellect or to guide the conscience. To adopt this reasoning is to deny the Divine inspiration and authority of the Bible in the sense in which the Church of Christ has used the words, for it places the paramount authority, not in the revelation without, but in the faculties which recognise and attest it.

This mode of viewing the Scriptures escapes many of the difficulties attached to the earlier and coarser view, which regarded the Bible as simply a human imposture, and no more. It admits the antiquity of the sacred writings, not only accepting the books of the New Testament as the genuine productions of that age, but according the same character of antiquity to the Old Testament likewise. It finds its policy in rather exaggerating than depreciating the remote period of their composition, so as to separate their earlier portions as widely as possible from the times of

authentic history. It thus eludes all the cogent arguments for their antiquity which have been accumulated by the learning of other times. With similar frankness it allows all the books of the New Testament, and the later books of the Old, to be the productions of the authors whose names they bear, stretching this admission as far back as the days of David or Samuel. It admits, consequently, the sincerity of the writers, and their earnest belief in their own religious system, however great may have been their ignorance, and however numerous the unconscious errors with which it was united, and thus escapes the argument drawn by Paley and other Christian apologists from the sacrifices made, and the persecutions suffered, by the Apostles and their immediate successors. It is, further, consistent with a belief in the historical Christ, and all the external facts of His life; with His superiority to the age in which He lived, His life of self-devoted obedience, and His death of undeserved suffering; though it is, I believe, utterly incompatible with any true belief in His Divinity. Admitting all these things, it throws its point of attack backward to the most remote portion of the sacred writings, where the very antiquity of the events has given to the narrative itself a condensed brevity which inevitably leaves points of detail open to the assaults of speculative criticism, and removes the record itself from the possible contact of those corroborative testimonies which the later books receive

from profane history. It thus eludes the force of the evidence during the later periods, where independent testimony exists, and concentrates attack upon the earlier period, where it is necessarily absent. The Pentateuch, thus violently dislocated from its historical relations, is considered to be a chaos of fragmentary traditions, in which, by some inexplicable process, the religious belief of the ancient Hebrew Church was cradled into life. It thus appears how considerable a portion of the time-honoured evidences of Christianity has become inapplicable to this particular phase of modern unbelief.

We must not, however, suppose that any part of these evidences has therefore become worthless, and may safely be neglected. They still stand in their ancient place among the battlements of Zion ; and though the assault thunders for the moment against another portion of the walls, we cannot tell how soon the tide of battle may rebound in this direction. There is no portion of the purely external evidences, however inapplicable to present circumstances they may appear, from which the Church of Christ may not gather confidence alike from their permanent value, and the place they hold in the general scheme of the Christian argument.

As regards what may be called the positive evidences, as distinguished from those which simply repel objections, the present condition of the controversy makes it necessary to assert them

with the utmost prominence and distinctness. It is the peculiarity of our present position, that these positive proofs are not even touched at any single point by the weapons of modern criticism. Such, for instance, is the proof of the historical reality of early Hebrew history, including the Exodus and the giving of the Law, elaborated to moral demonstration by Leslie, Faber, Graves, Blunt, and others. Such is the evidence of the Divine authority of the Christian revelation derived from the miracles which accompanied its first promulgation, as formally stated by Campbell, Douglas, and Paley. Such is the argument from fulfilled prophecy, stretching from ancient days to our own times, as stated by Newton, Keith, and Davidson. Such is the testimony to the existence of a Divine energy in Christianity, drawn from its marvellous career of triumph, its identification with the highest results of human civilisation and progress, and its effects alike on individual character and national happiness, as illustrated in the works of Ryan, Horne, and Chalmers. These great arguments may be asserted to be unanswerable, since, pregnant as they are with the most cogent motives, alike for the intellect and the conscience, no serious effort has ever been made to answer them. They move on totally different lines altogether from those occupied by modern criticism, and stand unmoved amid the conflict of opinion,—the firm barriers of truth against every conceivable form of attack.

For, let the most extreme case be supposed in favour of our opponents, let it be assumed that an unfriendly criticism has succeeded in establishing all the positions for which it demands credit, and this so firmly that the Christian advocate is unable to detect any fallacy in the argument. Let it, consequently, be supposed that the Pentateuch is proved to be unhistorical; that, instead of being the consistent work of the great Jewish lawgiver, it is a compilation of discordant materials of a mythical and traditional character, loosely put together by a subsequent compiler, and consequently that the later books of the Christian Scriptures, inasmuch as they assume these ancient myths to be veritable history, cannot be divinely inspired. Let all this be assumed; what then? Are the positive arguments by which the authority of the Christian revelation is attested on the affirmative side thereby disproved? The answer must be given unhesitatingly in the negative. Not a proposition of them has been overthrown; not an argument has been weakened; not a fact changed; not a conclusion even involved in doubt. The position in which we should stand in this case would be, indeed, equally singular and unsatisfactory. For we should have two wholly independent lines of argument, so distinct from each other, that they do not even come into contact on any one material point, each of them on the supposition equally cogent and unanswerable, and yet resulting in diametrically opposite con-

clusions,—the one affirming the Divine origin and supreme authority of the Christian revelation as confidently as the other denies it. Would it be reasonable, in such a case, for the advocate of the one argument to ignore or forget the other; or dogmatically to assert for himself that preponderance of proof which each party claims with equal confidence and earnestness? The utmost which could follow would be a verdict of not proven, since the evidence on one line would be neutralised by the evidence upon the other. The logical balance would be held in equipoise; and in that equipoise of evidence the appeal to the human heart and conscience would remain the same as ever. Individual men would believe or disbelieve, according to the influence exercised by the pride of intellect and indifference to spiritual things on the one side, or by the intuitive recognition of a God and the craving wants of the living human soul upon the other.

But while it is important for us thus to define the limits within which the logical value of the rationalistic argument must be confined, the position attained would be too unsatisfactory for any minds to acquiesce in it. Truth is one and indivisible, and in the nature of things Christianity must be true or false; it cannot be both at the same time. We could not rest on the conceivable possibility that two arguments, contradictory in their conclusions, can both be sound. We feel instinctively that an undetected fallacy must lurk

somewhere in the proofs. The arguments must therefore be reviewed on both sides, and rigidly sifted by their appropriate tests. The Christian advocate must extend his attention from those external and positive evidences, on which the battle has already been fought and won, to those other portions of the field where the conflict is most actively waged. He must follow his opponents into the sphere of criticism, and, submitting the contents of the Bible to an investigation at once minute and comprehensive, must wrest from rationalism its latest and choicest weapon, and wield it for the truth. We must not be content, till beneath our analysis the internal evidences of the Christian revelation are shown to be as full and forcible, as the controversies of days gone by have already shown the external to be.

Such an investigation may be pursued negatively or affirmatively. In the first case, attention will be directed to the objections urged against the credibility and historical veracity of the record, with a view to expose the inaccuracy of their data, or the fallacy of their conclusions. Thus we may examine the theory relative to the production of the Bible which it is proposed to substitute for the Church's belief of a Divine inspiration, and point out the inherent contradictions and impossibilities which it involves. For example, it has been said that the Pentateuch consists of fragmentary traditions, which were compiled, probably by Samuel, into a connected form as a kind of speculative

experiment on the credulity of his age, without any intention of claiming for them an historical authority.* We may take this theory, and assuming our standpoint at the erection of Solomon's temple, when the events of ancient Hebrew history became imperishably fixed in its very structure, its mysterious sacrifices and symbolic ritual, may show the almost ludicrous inadequacy of such a theory to explain the facts of Jewish life and institutions. Or else we may sift the objections themselves, and disprove, one by one, the various elements on which they rest, till the whole fabric is blown to the winds. This has been done by various competent scholars, with recent arguments against the Pentateuch, with so close and complete an analysis, that any further effort in the same direction would be a simple waste of time and strength.†

Or the investigation may be affirmatively pursued in a different line altogether, and may be directed, not to disprove the conclusions of a hostile criticism, but to affirm the conclusions of a friendly one, and gather out of the contents of Scripture

* Bishop Colenso's *Critical Examination of the Pentateuch*, Part II. p. 368.

† Among many valuable publications of this character, *An Examination of Dr. Colenso's Difficulties*, by the late Dr. M'Caul; *The Exodus of Israel*, by Rev. T. R. Birks; and *Bishop Colenso on the Pentateuch Revisited*, by Professor Porter of Belfast, may especially be mentioned. The work of Mr. Birks has permanent value, and as an examination of the arithmetical difficulties involved in the Pentateuch, stands alone.

itself the evidences of its authority. This is a work of permanent interest; for in this case we shall no longer deal with the ephemeral variations of infidel argument, but with the actual utterances of the Word itself. It is as if we should enter into the courts of the temple of God, and listen to the audible voice of Deity which speaks within it. Here the soul may rest, adoring and content. It may cease to weary itself in chasing every flickering shadow which human ignorance may throw on some distant nook and corner, while it contemplates the grand sunshine of the Divine Wisdom, which fills the whole glorious structure with light and beauty. To this work the exigencies of the controversy imperatively call us; and whether we fix our attention on the finished perfection of the details, or rather delight ourselves in measuring the proportions of the whole, we shall trace the same impress of God everywhere, and catch the accents of the same Voice amid the solemn thunders of Sinai, or the soul-subduing mysteries of Calvary.

It will be my object, in the present series of lectures, to furnish a contribution towards this work. I propose to adduce, in support of the indivisible unity of Scripture, and the authoritative inspiration of its every part, an argument from design, analogous in its general scope to the proof gathered from creation of the existence of an intelligent Creator. In every department of the natural world we find the constant adaptation of

means to an end. Each order of living things is, for instance, adapted to its particular place by its special structure: the bird is adapted for flight, the fish for its abode in the waters, the beast of the field for the forest or the prairie. In each case there exists that special provision of appropriate means which the exigencies of the mode of life require, and the provision is in all cases co-extensive with the want, neither exceeding it nor falling short of it. Up to this point, the variations of opinion lie within a very narrow compass. It is admitted that there exists in nature that adaptation of means to ends which, in human things, we designate as design. The difference of opinion only extends to the mode of its origination. One school of scientific thought refers the fact to a self-adapting power in nature itself, but frankly confesses, at the same time, the result to be so amazing as to be at first sight incredible;* while another school only

* "To suppose that the eye, with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest possible degree. Yet reason tells me, that of numerous gradations from a perfect and complex eye to one very imperfect and simple, each grade being useful to its possessor, can be shown to exist; if, further, the eye does vary ever so slightly, and the variations be inherited, which is certainly the case; and if any variation or modification in the organ be ever useful to an animal under changing conditions of life, then the difficulty of believing that a perfect and complex eye could be formed by

goes further, and declares it to be incredible altogether, and the more incredible the more closely and carefully it is examined; but all agree as to the adaptation which we ordinarily term design. The Christian argument is, that a design can only proceed from a designer; that a designer must be an intelligent mind, and that this mind can only be the mind of God.

Now, this mode of arguing in regard to God's works I propose to adapt to God's words. It might be expected beforehand that if nature and revelation have the same author, they would be stamped with the same characteristics. The occurrence of anything fortuitous or unforeseen to a perfect mind, natural selection, though insuperable to our imagination, can hardly be considered real."—DARWIN'S *Origin of Species*, p. 186.

In answering Mr. Darwin Dr. Bree observes, "The eyeball is an optical instrument as well as a light-seeing organ, and the whole mechanism is so beautiful, that one almost trembles with delight in recognising there the unmistakable evidence of Creative Wisdom and design."—*Species not Transmutable*, p. 140.

"Thus we find amongst the earliest organic remains an optical instrument of most curious construction, adapted to produce vision of a peculiar kind in the then existing representatives of one great class in the articulated division of the animal kingdom. We do not find this instrument passing onwards, as it were, through a series of experimental changes from more simple to more complex forms; it was created at the very first in the fulness of perfect adaptation to the uses and condition of the class of creatures to which this kind of eye has ever been, and is still, appropriate."—Dr. BUCKLAND, *quoted by* PROFESSOR OWEN, *Ibid.* 144.

which, because perfect, embraces all things, all times, all persons, all results in one glance, would be self-contradictory. The rigid economy of means which exists alike in nature and in providence may the more confidently be expected to exist in grace, in proportion as the sphere of action is higher, and the results more momentous in the one case than in the other. It may be more difficult to trace it in the world of mind and spirit than in that of matter, and the adaptation of means and ends which we are able to trace may consequently be less minute and detailed ; but it must be there, nevertheless, and must be essentially the same.

It will not be necessary, in tracing this argument, to assume any antecedent principles, or to make use of conclusions which the labours of Christian apologists have already established. It will be enough to take the Scriptural books just as we find them, and to deal with them as if we were entering afresh upon the examination of their contents. The more clear the ground can be kept of other matter, and the more simple the conditions of the inquiry, the greater will be the force of the argument. Nor will it be necessary to embarrass the proof with any discussion of the critical questions which have been raised relative to the number of the sacred writers, or the varied sources of information of which they may be supposed to have availed themselves. If all the conclusions of the "higher criticism" were admitted, and each

integral portion of the Word were distributed among an indefinite number of authors, they would not alter in the least the facts to be adduced, and would only strengthen the conclusion to be drawn from them. I take the Scriptures as a collection of ancient books, and, with no further information than can be gathered from an examination of their contents, shall hope to establish the following conclusions:—

1. The various books of the Scriptural Canon are not only united by a community of subject and identity of principle, but are framed throughout upon a definite plan.

2. The existence of this plan is asserted in Scripture itself. Not that the particulars of it are collected in any one place, or are stated in any formal method; but that, in exact accordance with its mode of teaching throughout, they are scattered up and down the various books. When these particulars are put together and collated, they are found to be intimately related to each other, and to constitute one plan, definite, consistent, and complete.

3. The design thus declared involves certain conditions relative both to the dealings of God's wisdom, and to the mode of His revelation, which follow so necessarily from the plan, that the one being supposed, the other cannot conceivably be absent. These conditions are asserted in Scripture itself. They answer, moreover, to the plain characteristics of the Divine government and the

Divine revelation, and explain the peculiarities which mark the course of them both.

4. The books of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation inclusively, are so closely moulded alike in matter and in manner upon this revealed plan, that those parts of them which appear at first sight most fragmentary and unimportant, fall into their appropriate place when measured by this standard, and occupy their distinct position in the order and mutual relations of the whole design.

If these propositions can be established, the supposition of a governing mind forming the plan, and working out the details of its accomplishment, is the only explanation of which the facts can admit. For the coherence throughout is a fact, and not a speculation; a fact which no criticisms in detail can destroy, and which they only serve to make more conspicuous and more wonderful. For if we shatter the Scriptures into fragments, the fact will still remain that these dislocated fragments alike contain the assertion of a design and the evidence of its accomplishment. The more criticism increases the number of the fragments, the more inexplicable the fact becomes, except upon the supposition of a Divine mind framing and overruling the whole. For if we once admit that God is the author of the Bible, it becomes a secondary question to adjust the number and the exact nature of the instruments He may have employed. All details will necessarily be subordinated to the one grand principle, that the Bible is

a Divine book, bearing throughout the stamp of a Divine author.

Here arises the preliminary question, What kind and amount of proof will be accepted as sufficient to establish the existence and nature of the Divine plan of revelation? We must guard against the objection, that in imputing to the assumed author of the Scripture a recognised design, we are but transferring into the sphere of Divine things our merely human notions, and engrafting rudely from without the after-thought of a technical theology on the utterances of a simpler and less advanced age. It is perfectly consistent with the view of modern thought, that the writers of the later Scriptural books, ignorantly accepting the earlier records as Divine, and grafting their own system of belief upon them, should have adopted the language, and intentionally have moulded their own principles on the teaching of their predecessors. A considerable number of texts in the New Testament, which assert very clearly God's objects in earlier times, become, comparatively speaking, inapplicable to my present purpose, because they may conceivably admit of such an explanation. All passages, therefore, which may possibly be the mere re-echo of an earlier revelation, I shall intentionally omit; not because of any depreciation of their value, but in order to place the proofs of the Divine design, as far as possible, above suspicion. For the same reason, I do not propose to lay any prominent

stress upon the argument from prophecy, although it is too important to be passed over unnoticed. For, on the supposition of a Divine inspiration acting on the minds of the Scriptural writers down the long line of their succession, every prediction given is the expression of a design, and every fulfilment of a prediction is the attestation to its accomplishment.

There are, however, a considerable number of prophecies to which the suspicion that the prediction may have secured its own fulfilment cannot reasonably be applied. It was natural enough that the Jews should desire to bring to completion the prophecies of their own Scriptures ; but such design cannot be imputed to Gentiles, who neither believed in the Scriptures, nor, perhaps, knew of the existence of the prophecy. Still less can it be supposed that this motive could have entered in any substantial degree into the action of human politics, and those complicated influences of passion and interest by which nations are actuated. Thus, for example, it would be simply absurd to suppose that the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs, in overthrowing Israel and Judah, were actuated by a desire to fulfil the prophecies contained in the sacred writings of the people they conquered ; or that the Babylonians destroyed Nineveh in order to accomplish the predictions of Nahum ; or Cyrus conquered Babylon in order to attest the prophetic inspiration of Isaiah ; or that the varied fortunes of the Grecian and Roman empires sprang out of

the prophecies of Daniel. There exists, moreover, another class of prophecies to which the imputation would be similarly inapplicable, though both the prediction and the accomplishment are contained within the same circle of national life. Will any one suppose that the Jews of our Lord's day procured His crucifixion in order to fulfil the inspired words of David, a thousand years before; or that they were the conscious and willing agents in their own national calamities and dispersion? In all these cases, the prophecies lie beyond the reach of any possible suspicion that the prediction itself wrought the accomplishment of the event. The argument for design, founded on the Scriptural prophecies and their fulfilment, furnishes a collateral proof of no little weight, though it may not be thought desirable to give it a prominent place among the direct testimonies to the Divine plan.

Leaving these collateral sources of evidence on one side, there remain three arguments by which the existence of a defined plan in revelation may be supported. These I propose to consider in their order.

1. It may be rested on the doctrine of final causes. The argument proposed in these lectures is analogous to that province of natural religion, so called, which from the phenomena of the created world infers the existence of design, and from design the action of a designer. If the same conditions can be proved to exist in regard to the Word of God, as in regard to His works, the same

force must be allowed to the conclusion. These conditions are three in number—two of them facts, and one an inference. The facts are, that a certain end is accomplished by certain means, and that these means are calculated to produce that end, and that end only—not any other which may be casually suggested. Thus, a bird flies by means of its wings; or a fish lives and swims by means of certain organs, so constructed as to enable it to support life and motion in the water, and which make it unfit to support them anywhere else; or we may take any other of the familiar instances which not natural history alone, but every other branch of human knowledge, supplies with singular profusion. We have the fact of an end, and of means to the end. Hence we argue that the bird was designed to fly; the fish designed to swim; and so on indefinitely;—that is, from the adaptation of means to ends we infer design, and from the design we instinctively deduce the designer. Of this last step we can, indeed, offer no further proof, and its cogency wholly depends upon our recognition of final causes.* This belief is there-

* “The assumption of an end or purpose in the structure of organised beings has prevailed from the earliest to the latest ages of geological research; appears to be fastened upon us alike by our ignorance and our knowledge; and has been formally accepted by so many great anatomists, that we cannot feel any scruple in believing the rejection of it to be the superstition of a false philosophy, and the result of the exaggeration of other principles which are supposed capable of superseding its use.”—WHEWELL’S *History of the Inductive Sciences*, iii. 382.

fore held to be fundamental—one of those primary conceptions of the human mind which admit of no further evidence, and for which we can give no further reason than that we accept them intuitively and without proof.* The belief is, in all probability, closely intertwined with our own personal consciousness, and the experienced modes of our own mental and physical life; but no human thought has searched out those inner mysteries of our mental constitution in which the belief has its seat. That the belief which intuitively identifies an effect with a cause—an orderly effect with an intelligent cause—is fundamental, is not doubtfully witnessed by the fact that men need to educate themselves out of it, and that where no such artificial process has been undergone, the belief in final causes is immediate and universal.

On this belief I rest the first ground-work of my argument. Where it is absent, all appeal will be useless. Such minds must be beyond the range of reasonable proof. But those who admit its force must acknowledge it to be worth as much in one branch of thought as in another. Let it be admitted in regard to God's works, and it must be equally valid in regard to God's Word. If it can be shown that revelation has produced certain results, and that these results have followed from certain means, calculated to produce them and no others, I shall be entitled to draw the same con-

* Whewell's *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, ii. 79, 80.

clusion here as in natural religion. All the books of the Scriptural Canon in which this adaptation of consistent means to a consistent end can be shown to exist, must be admitted to be part of a common design, and the designer can only be God. The authority of God will be stamped on every part of the plan which has been conceived by His wisdom and executed by His power.

For example, Christianity, since its promulgation by our Lord and His Apostles, has been accompanied by a definite series of results, alike upon individual men brought within its influence and upon the nations into whose life it has been incorporated in the form of a visible Church. In individual men it has wrought a change of character, both consciously within and visibly without. The drunkard has become sober under its influence, the liar true, the profligate chaste, the selfish generous, and the churl liberal. Habitual pleasures have become distasteful; old objects indifferent; old interests lost in higher sympathies and associations. This change is not an alteration in a variable direction, but in all cases it is a change in one definite direction, and in that only. In nations, it has planted a new brotherhood of union and a new spring of life. It has stimulated thought, enlarged benevolence, and planted deeply and solidly the foundations of a rational freedom, the very nature of which was unknown among mankind till Christianity entered upon its career of triumph. On the one side, it has produced these

effects, and these only—not these among others of an opposite character; on the other hand, no other system than itself has produced them. They are not the results of any or all forms of religion, but of this one form of it, and of this one form only; and this so distinctively, that other forms of religion have only served to intensify the very evils which Christianity remedies. Hence, did no other proof exist, we should be justified in regarding these results as a designed end, and Christianity in general as the means intelligently adapted to produce them. In this particular instance we have a further evidence; for the Christian Scriptures, proved to have been written before they were known to the world in general, and therefore before these larger and permanent effects had been produced, distinctly declare both the universality of the influence, and specify the precise character of the effects.

But this conclusion only constitutes the last link in a long series of ends and means, all of which have contributed to this result; and we claim design for them all, just as in natural religion we claim it, not only for the wing which enables the bird to fly, but likewise for the details of structure which fit the wing to be the organ of flight. Christianity has produced these effects by virtue of certain characteristics which are as peculiar to itself as the effects they have produced. I may specify, as an illustration, the doctrine of atonement for sin through the vicarious sufferings of a

perfectly holy Being, uniting the Godhead and the manhood in one indivisible person. This truth is found to exercise a power over the human heart and conscience, to which the dreadful sacrifices of heathen idolatry cannot furnish the shadow of a parallel. The latter have but deepened and intensified the terrors of conscience, of which they are themselves the no less terrible expressions; while the Christian doctrine of the atonement bestows a peace of conscience, and excites a tenderness of grateful love, to which heathenism has ever been an utter stranger. It holds so central a place in the entire scheme of the Christian faith, and stands so prominent among the motives of a Christian experience, that Christianity would no longer be Christianity without it. Hence we are justified in regarding it as a designed means, of which the salvation of men is the designed end.

Or we may trace the links of the chain further and further back. Here the atonement next becomes the end, and the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God the means for its accomplishment. Or, further still, the sufferings and death of Christ may be regarded as the end in view, and the blind bigotry of the Jews, in connexion with the special political circumstances of their nation at that time, the fore-ordained means for their accomplishment. Or—a step backward still—the incarnation may be regarded as the end, and the provision of the chosen race, of whom according to the flesh Christ should come, the

means for its completion. In short, we may trace through the entire history of revelation a connected series of such means and ends,—all of them constituting the special peculiarities of the Christian revelation, and all of them converging to one grand whole, in the regenerating influences of Christianity on a fallen and sin-distracted world.

Now, if it be true that wherever we can trace the adaptation of definite means to definite ends, we are justified, by a fundamental law of our being, in inferring design, and an intelligent designer, the rule must hold good here as elsewhere. If I know the shape of a piece of metal, I know likewise the shape of the mould in which it has been cast. If I know the impression on the wax, I know equally the form of the seal which made the impression. If I find effects, I conclude that there must be causes corresponding to the effects. Inferences, all resting on the same general law of causation, are so familiarly engrained into all the mental acts of our daily life, that we cease to be conscious of them.* The sight of an ingenious

* “There are certain signs, marks, or indications, by which we are enabled to recognise the agency of an intelligent voluntary cause. That the mind naturally infers the existence and operation of a designing cause from the appearances of skill and contrivance in the works of nature, is evinced by universal experience; but if we investigate the origin of this inference, we shall find that the mind proceeds on the same kind of evidence, which is held alike legitimate and conclusive in ordinary life, as well as in every department of sound philosophy.”—BUCHANAN’S *Faith in God*, i. 333.

mechanism, of an orderly building, of a painting where a hundred varying hues blend into one effect, of a gallant ship, of a frowning fortification, of a bridge, from the slightest rope-bridge ever framed to the engineering wonder which crosses the precipitous cataract or stretches over the strait—in short, of any work of human art whatever—suggests at once the one invariable train of ideas. We may not trouble ourselves about it; but the intelligent design and the skilful execution of it, we know, must have been there. The correspondence of cause and effect, if it be but exact and specific, is proof of design. If, therefore, we could do no more than point out in revelation specific results, and specific causes which have produced them, this would be enough. So long as the doctrine of final causes is admitted, we might confidently argue the fact of a design from the fact of the effects, and the character of the design from the corresponding character of the effects.

At this point the argument of natural religion ends, and the outward creation can supply no means of carrying it any further. The adaptation of means to ends we can prove as a fact; the existence of an intelligent design we can only deduce as an inference. But, in relation to God's Word, we possess another element of proof beyond the intuitive conclusion which connects cause and effect together. Independently of this necessary process of the mind, we have positive testimony in the Scriptures themselves to the same fact. So

that the existence of a Divine plan is no longer an inference of the reason, however cogent and unanswerable it may be, but a formal statement of revelation itself.

2. The existence and general character of the plan of revelation are necessarily involved in certain dogmatic principles which pervade both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, being largely illustrated by example and reiterated by positive precept. The evidence thus supplied is the stronger, because it is not in this particular relation that these truths are taught, but rather in relation to the conscience and the conduct of practical life. A glance at these truths, in the order in which they naturally follow each other, and in relation to our intuitive belief in final causes, will show how much they involve, and how distinct is their testimony.

Foremost among them in natural order stands the being of God Himself. He is ever presented as a personal God, in opposition to the pantheistic notions which have identified the Deity with His own creation, and have, therefore, obliterated the distinction between the human and the Divine. He is one God, or rather the one God, and there is no other, in opposition to polytheism, and the materialising tendency which would multiply deities out of heaven, and earth, and air. He is the one living and true God, and therefore there is no other who could limit the Infinite, or impose conditions on the Absolute, or thwart the purposes of

the Omniscient, or defy the power of the Omnipotent, or change the will of the Eternal. As all life flows from Him, so there is no other source of existence. This world is a creation, and He is its Creator. The world, therefore, inasmuch as it is not self-evolved, not developed out of an eternal series of causes, but the production of His will, belongs to Him, in a sense incomparably more absolute than is involved in any human possession; and this right extends to things animate as well as to things inanimate, and to the intelligent as well as the unintelligent creatures of His hand. Their first creation and their continued subsistence alike spring from Him. They are His, created for His pleasure, and destined for the manifestation of His glory. How grandly, above the clashing rivalries of human passion, and interest, and ambition, sounds the solemn acknowledgment, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof!"

Not less distinct than the assertion of God's creative right over the world is the proclamation of His moral government. He is not, as epicurean philosophy blindly dreamed, a God idly withdrawn from all interference with human things; not a God too absorbed in His own magnificence to notice the petty concerns of this little world; not so infinitely great as to overlook the details of human joy or suffering. He is a King seated on His throne, and holding in His own hands the reins of government. He pervades with His personal presence every part of His universe, from end to end, so

that literally there is not a solitary spot where God is absent. He rules not arbitrarily, but for moral purposes, making known His will to His intelligent creatures, and controlling the whole framework of the world, with all its varied and multitudinous details, in accordance with that moral government whereby He recompenses the right and punishes the wrong.

Hence we are taught that God acts by a providence as minute as it is comprehensive. In a world where every great thing is but a result and accumulation of many little things, a particular providence cannot be conceived separately from a general providence, even as a matter of reason. Any difficulty we may experience in associating the action of Infinite wisdom and Almighty power with things which appear to ourselves small and trivial, is the effect solely of our human weakness and ignorance. Were we capable of grasping at once the relations knitting together all life, from its highest to its lowest forms, the difficulty would disappear. The language of our Lord Himself asserts these minute actings of God's wisdom and power with a precision, doubtless as literally true as it is to our minds amazing. Not a sparrow is forgotten; the very hairs of our head are numbered. That nothing happens without God—nothing good without His doing it—nothing evil without His knowledge and permission—is the positive teaching of Scripture, none the less to be accepted because the details of God's providential

dealings involve mysteries which are at present beyond our explanation. Thus, in the Old Testament, it is repeatedly asserted that the circumstances of Jewish history were God's doing, and not done without a cause. And similarly, in the New Testament, all the violence of the Jews against our blessed Master Himself was but the fulfilment of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In crucifying the Lord of life and glory, they only did what an over-ruling Providence had "determined before to be done."

Lastly, we are assured that this Providence is guided by a wisdom to which ignorance and mistakes are things unknown, and operates by a power to which failure is impossible. The weakest instruments touched by His hand become adequate to the mightiest results. Out of the very stones might spring children to Abraham. The mouth of babes and sucklings perfects praise; and by their feeble hands He stilleth the enemy and the avenger. Nay, we are assured that God purposely employs means the most apparently feeble in order to show that the effectual strength which works in them is His alone. Thus He places the ministry of the Word in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the gift might be of Him. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not,

to bring to naught things which are." And for what purpose all this?—"that no flesh may glory in His presence."

Now, when we put these truths together—a personal God, a moral government over the world, an infinitely minute providence to execute it, and attributes of perfect wisdom and power to give it effect—what room is left for anything which can be called casual or fortuitous? Do not these doctrines necessarily involve that all God's dealings spring out of a design, and that His revelation, therefore—both in its general character and its details, both in its objects and its effects—has all been wrought in accordance with a plan, so minute as to omit no detail, so comprehensive as to include all results? The conclusion which Reason herself is compelled to draw from the adaptation of the means to the end produced by them, is thus confirmed by an irresistible inference from the dogmatic teaching of the Word of God itself. As if to seal this inference with the stamp of Deity, the one grand climax which still lies in the future, and to the accomplishment of which all God's dealings with man are instrumental, is formally announced. This is "the mystery of His will, which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Eph. i. 10.)

3. To this positive assertion, that a definite design pervades God's dealings, linking as by a thread

of gold all particulars in one counsel, we are able to add a knowledge of the plan itself on which revelation has been specifically moulded. We find in Scripture many separate statements of the purposes which God intended to accomplish by different parts of His dealings. When we place these statements together, we find that they fit into each other with a certain definite connexion between them, and form one whole, not simply harmonious and consistent, but so logically connected in the relation of part to part, that the one involves the others for its own completion. Just as we should conclude that the parts of a machine, which fitted exactly together, were intended for mutual adjustment and operation, so we can put together these separate statements, and can gather from their union a connected view of the great outlines of God's plan of revelation.

When we have done so, we must consider the result not to be a human speculation, but a revealed truth. If all the parts are Divine, the whole constituted of them must be Divine likewise,—the transcript of the mind of God, the mould into which the whole structure of revelation has been thrown, the standard according to which it has been adjusted.

Nor is this conclusion at all affected by the circumstance that this plan has been revealed to us in fragments, scattered without any apparent connexion up and down Scripture. Because this mode of conveying truth characterises the Bible

altogether; and if its existence be any just objection to the authority of one truth, it must be equally fatal to the authority of all. A formal and synthetic digest of doctrine nowhere occurs in the Word. Truth is found embodied in narrative; expressed in the utterances of devotion; blended up with warning and exhortation; incidentally dropped, as it seems, in the course of explanatory statements; and inferentially gathered from allusions. A technical creed, such as the primitive Church embodied in the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, such as every local church has found it necessary to adopt as a bond of membership and a protest against error, constitutes no part of revelation; although hints as to the early existence of such symbols, of a very simple and condensed kind, may be found here and there in the Epistles. The formal creeds of a later age sprang out of the necessities of controversy, and the growth of heresies which attempted to find a footing even within the Church herself. There is not a single exception to this rule; not a single doctrine, the full proportions of which are not gathered by a process of human inquiry out of different passages of the Word. An immense stimulus has thus been supplied to the faith of the Church, and a constant motive suggested for a close study of revealed truth, of which the natural darkness and sluggishness of the human mind stands much in need. The whole powers and faculties of man have thus been enlisted, and the

knowledge of truth itself, instead of lying outside the progressive course of human thought, as it would otherwise have done, has been incorporated into it. Every truth clearly seen and vindicated has developed a capacity for knowing more truth, and has thus served a double purpose, one direct in its own value, another indirect in the spiritual discipline of which it has alike been the result and the instrument. I hope to point out, in a subsequent lecture, that this mode of conveying truth arises necessarily from the Divine plan, and was essential alike to its progressive development and to its probationary purposes. At present, it is enough to assert the fact, which is undeniable. It is, therefore, consistent that the rule should apply to all revealed truth; for a full technical statement of one truth, while others were left to inference and deduction, would have been a manifest incongruity, pregnant with danger, and destructive to the analogy and proportion of faith. The necessity of gathering a full conception of the Divine plan in revelation, by carefully piecing together the detached statements of the Word, is no more an argument against the certainty of the conclusion on this point than it is on others. Would we know what is the revealed nature and character of God Himself, no view can be complete which does not consistently contain every glimpse of truth from one end of the Bible to the other. Would we prove the true doctrine relative to the person of Christ, and show that He was human, against

the Gnostic, and Divine, against the Arian, many separate passages must give their light to compose the one harmonious truth. Would we gather the true doctrine of the atonement, we must derive it alike from type, and prophecy, and history, and the dogmatic teaching of the Apostles. What wonder is it, then, that when we would form a conception of the plan on which God has acted in revelation, we should have to gain it by the same process, and carefully combine together into one consistent view the separate and occasional statements scattered throughout the Word?

Nor should it be forgotten that the same law regulates every branch of man's knowledge, and is not peculiar to that relating to his spiritual being; nay, it applies to the whole of human life, and every department of human industry, without exception. Labour is the appointed discipline of man, and his necessities are the spur to quicken it. Difficulty and energetic exertion are the invariable conditions of all that is great and valuable in human achievement. Men of all opinions have willingly recognised in this as a beneficent arrangement, the absence of which would have been fatal to human progress. In that higher state of being in which angels live, and which is the ultimate object of Christian hope, the impulse thus supplied may be unnecessary, and probably will be absent. In that blessed world, the whole reach of knowledge and of possession may be spread out before the delighted soul at once, not only to the utmost stretch

of its capacity to know and to enjoy it, but so infinitely beyond it, that the growth of capacity to the full measure of glory may be the very essence of the everlasting life. But at present it is different. Would a man know himself, or the world in which he lives, or the wonders of the heavens above and the earth beneath, it is only by a patient and prolonged investigation that he can acquire it. The four thousand years which have nearly elapsed since the deluge have seen a constant progression in knowledge. Yet, truly wonderful as are the discoveries of modern science, unmeasured stores of wonder still remain. A generation upon which even the ends of the world are come does but find itself, in Newton's words, playing upon the shore of the vast ocean of undiscovered truth. Would a man achieve even earthly competence or honour, the secret of individual success is in patient labour. Would we examine the sources of national wealth, we find them in the busy hives of industry, in the depth of the mine, amid the whirl of machinery, the sound of the axe and the hammer, and all the din and smoke of toiling thousands. Labour is the condition of life, and why should we expect the condition to be absent in regard to God's words any more than in regard to His works, since they proceed from the same mind, and are stamped everywhere with the impress of the same attributes?

Hence we find an answer to another objection which may possibly be advanced against the argument suggested in these lectures. It may be urged

that the plan thus gathered from Scripture succeeded and not preceded portions, at all events, of the revelation, and may, therefore, be suspected to be a later idea growing out of the circumstances, and not an antecedent design which moulded them. But the fact that a law of labour governs the acquisition of all human knowledge supplies the answer. For our knowledge of a thing is not to be confounded with the existence of the thing known. The date of the discovery does not mark the birthday of the discovered object. The plan of God may have existed before the foundation of the world, and yet—in perfect consistency with His dealings in other things—may not have been fully made known till the later ages of His Church. The wonderful forces of nature which modern science has discovered, and through the adaptation of which to human purposes modern genius and enterprise have achieved their greatest triumphs, are themselves old as the framework of creation. No change has been made in them. They remain what they were before discovery, neither more nor less. They existed in full activity when the human mind had little conception of the strange mysterious laws which were acting all round about it. The discovery has explained the physical changes of ages long past; and in the immense convulsions to which our globe has been subject during those enormous periods of time of which geology speaks, we see the proof of their existence and activity. The forces which have now

become the ministers of human convenience; putting into motion the machinery which, in the delicacy and complexity of its work, appears almost to be gifted with intelligence; speeding the communication of man's thoughts from over land and sea, and conveying his daily traffic to and fro with a speed inconceivable to other generations—what are they but the self-same forces which in other times and on a grander scale have submerged the continent and uplifted the ocean bed, and changed the outward features of the globe? No sane man would measure the period during which these forces have existed by the date of their discovery. And it should be borne in mind that the reason why they were not discovered earlier is, not that the intellect of other times was less acute and sagacious than the intellect of our own day, but only that earlier generations had not gained that preparatory knowledge, nor acquired those processes of investigation which rendered their discovery possible. Just thus it is with the Divine plan. Its full proportions have only been made known in the New Testament Scriptures, but the scheme itself was framed in the Divine mind before the worlds began. It already took effect during generations which were utterly unconscious of the power and wisdom which were at work on every side of them, and had no conception of the grand plan in which themselves, and the circumstances amid which they lived, were all the while included. But now that the finished revelation of Christ has

made the plan known, we can trace it in the far distant past, and watch the successive steps by which from generation to generation it has moved on towards its accomplishment.

But it must further be remembered, that the supposition on which the objection rests is only very partially true. In the words of our Lord and His Apostles we find our most abundant source of information; but they are not the exclusive source of it. The plan is less fully, but not less positively, asserted in many parts of the Old Testament likewise. The indications of it co-exist with the first written revelation of Moses, and the glorious company of the Apostles do but repeat more minutely and circumstantially the lessons already taught by the goodly fellowship of the prophets.

But we can see clear reasons why the full plan on which God had acted from the beginning should not have been perfectly revealed before the event. The salvation of the human race was not potentially wrought till the incarnate Son of God had been born, and had lived, and suffered, and died, and rose again, and entered into His glory. These were the objective acts in which the redeeming purposes of God received their full accomplishment. Till they had actually taken place, revelation could only deal with a salvation—present, indeed, as regarded its efficacy, but future as regarded its act. Accordingly, just enough of the future was revealed to strengthen faith, direct hope, and convey comfort under existing difficulty;

just so much as was needed for the preparatory and probationary discipline to which the Church of God has been subjected at all periods,—but no more. In the fulness of time the Son of God took flesh, and completed upon Calvary the one sacrifice made once for all, to which the revelations of the past—in symbol, type, and prophecy—had more or less distinctly pointed. In His resurrection and ascension, He completed the triumph of which David sang, and established the kingdom of grace, yet to culminate in the future kingdom of glory. Now all was done; and on the day of Pentecost the prophecy of Joel entered upon its long course of fulfilment, when God poured out His Spirit upon all flesh. Here, accordingly, all delay, all reticence, ended. Immediately was preached the full counsel of God. The whole plan was laid open for human instruction. The Apostles dwelt constantly, and as if out of the fulness of hearts running over with adoring wonder, on the fact that the Gospel completed in the death and resurrection of Christ was one plan, schemed from the beginning. The thought stands prominent in their teaching everywhere. Peter declared it in his first sermon, on the day of Pentecost, to the wondering crowds from every nation under heaven, who pressed to hear, each man in his own tongue, the wonderful works of God. He re-affirmed it to the people gathered together in Solomon's Porch by the healing of the lame beggar. The thought pervades the entire defence of the proto-

martyr Stephen, when he traced the beginning of the Gospel back to the time when the God of glory appeared unto Abraham. Paul declared it in the synagogue of Antioch, when he first preached the risen Jesus to the Jews of Asia, and took up the wondrous history with the deliverance from Egypt. In the Epistles both of Paul and Peter—in the former the more fully only from their greater length—the same truth reappears, of the mystery “which in other ages was not made known, but was then revealed to the holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” Thus, it appears that while the plan was but partially accomplished, it was but partially revealed; but the moment that the full event took place, and the counsel of God was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of the Incarnate God, then was the veil uplifted, and the whole plan revealed in its length and breadth of wonder.

Now, suppose that this had been differently ordered, and that the entire design of God had been revealed from the first, two results would have followed, which have actually been avoided. In the first place, such a revelation would have been inconsistent with the probationary and preparatory discipline of the earlier Church. I hope to show, in a subsequent lecture, that these purposes constituted an essential part of the Divine plan, and that they involved the gift to each succeeding generation of exactly that measure of light and knowledge of which it was intellectually

and morally capable. This probation, essentially the same in language, has yet been varied in its form and circumstances. To the ancient Hebrew Church, it consisted of faith in a salvation still incomplete, and but partially revealed. To the Jewish Church of our Lord's day, it consisted in the state of suffering humiliation in which the Messiah was presented to them, and in the faith needed to recognise in the son of the carpenter of Nazareth the Christ of whom all the prophets spoke. To the Christian Church, it consists in the absence of sight, and in the faith needed for belief in a Saviour no longer seen, a revelation no longer miraculously attended, and a glory not yet accomplished. To such a probation, so far as the ancient Church of God was concerned, the full revelation of the entire plan of God's dealing would have been plainly contradictory.

But, in the second place, the gift of such an explanation from the first, instead of removing a difficulty in the evidence, would infinitely have increased it. Should we not then have been told that the plan had wrought its own accomplishment? In every stage of the history, men would have been consciously doing what they positively knew that God had determined to be done. Either the knowledge would have compromised their freedom of action, or it would have suggested the mode of it. They would have acted in order to fulfil the plan. The conscious human agent would have appeared everywhere, and the foreseeing knowledge

and the over-ordering strength of the God would have been thrown into the background. Thus the evidences of revelation would have been weakened, and that part of the Divine plan which referred to the adequate provision of them frustrated. As the fact is, God revealed at each stage of the work enough for the exigencies of the present, and concealed enough for the wants of the future. Had He revealed less, the faith of the ancient Church would have died out for want of object; had He revealed more, the faith of our own day would have languished for want of evidence. Should we not read the wisdom of our God in this harmonious provision for every period? Should we not see in it the impress of the Divine mind, which comprehended the whole course of human history in one omniscient glance, and neither omitted a single link of the chain, nor failed to forge with the strength of adamant the indissoluble unity of the whole? The marvellous proportion in which the creating God has balanced the various forces of the natural world, one against another, does not bear more conspicuously stamped upon it the impress of an intelligent design, than does the proportion with which in the spiritual world the specific purpose of each individual part has been harmonised with the strength and perfection of the entire revelation.

Nor should the mind fail to notice with admiration the severity of the test to which revelation has thus voluntarily submitted itself. If the Scriptures could be supposed to be one imposture

of one and the same date, originating in one and the same mind, or a combination of minds deliberately confederate with each other, it would be easy to understand how the assertion of a plan, and the appearance of its fulfilment, could have been incorporated into the same series of books. For, upon this supposition, the writer of later date must have fabricated all the facts of the alleged history out of his own brain, and therefore could have made them just what he liked, with all the facility possessed by a writer of fiction in our own day. But modern criticism has disposed of this supposition for ever. We need only to call on the rationalist himself, and to appeal to his own choicest theories, in evidence that the Scriptural books compass a vast lapse of time and intervening intervals of ages, and that the earliest of them must be referred to a very remote antiquity. Under these acknowledged circumstances, the difficulty of devising a plan in the later books, the scope of which should be extended all down the course of fifteen hundred years, and which should apply to all the details of the whole from first to last, would be so enormous as to make the notion itself incredible.

Suppose St. Paul, for instance, writing his Epistles at a recognised historical date, and yet tracing the recondite harmonies between the life and death of Jesus—facts just accomplished—and the ancient sacrifices of the Hebrew law, such as they were known and proved to exist for centuries before. I can quite understand the suppo-

sition that the Apostles were superstitious and ignorant fanatics, whose excited imaginations conceived the existence of mystical meanings which the more vigorous sense of other men repudiated; or I can understand the supposition that they were fraudulent impostors, who consciously took advantage of the old Jewish history and ritual as a foundation for their own pretensions. On either supposition, it would be natural enough that they should have used boastful and magniloquent assertions of their own wisdom, and loudly claimed, like the Gnostics of their day, a superior light, into which ordinary minds were not capable of being admitted. But, in this case, two characteristics would have been present. On the one side, the existence of this deep plan would have been prominently stated, in order to catch attention; on the other, the statement would have been vague and ambiguous, and would carefully have shrunk from details, in order to elude detection. In the Scriptures, these characteristics are exactly reversed—the pompous assertion of a great design is absent, and the statement of exact details is present. The design is there, as I trust to show beyond all possible question, and yet it is latent; not obtrusive, but needing to be carefully searched out and patiently combined. And, when this is done, the results present us with a plan so sharply marked and definite, that its failure or its accomplishment may be traced as with a sunbeam in every stage of the whole marvellous history.

It is impossible to discuss such a subject as this without a deep consciousness of solemnity, and an awful sense of that immediate presence into which we are entering. To look into the mind of God, and watch His counsels from eternity, is to occupy ourselves with the grandest theme with which the human reason can be possibly engaged. We pass beyond His created works—the earth, which is His footstool, and the heavens, which are His throne—up to Him who fills them, and around whom rests the insupportable glory which no man can approach unto. Nay, higher still, we are to deal, not with His existence, His nature, His attributes, His commands, but with the inner purposes of the Divine mind itself. Who can contemplate such a sight of the very God without an overwhelming sense of the infinite distance separating him and the glorious Being on whom he gazes? What human strength shall climb those heights; what human thought measure those depths; what human eye endure that light? It is not alone the sense of our mortal weakness which, in the presence of such an argument, should fill us with holy reverence and fear; but still more the consciousness of the moral corruption which has defaced the Divine image upon man, and separated us from Him by a gulf so broad and deep, that the personal righteousness of a God incarnate could alone bridge it over. With such thoughts alone can we approach the argument—wonderingly, solemnly, adoringly, as when Moses drew nigh to

the burning bush, and out of the mysterious fire heard the voice, "Come not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

How, then, shall I venture to tread in such a sphere of thought, save by confining myself rigidly to the limits of revealed truth, and not transgressing them even by a step? "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God;" but these "secret things" are the things not revealed, and over them God has been pleased to leave an inscrutable veil. Let us not endeavour to lift it, nor seek to look into these hidden things even by one rash speculation. To do so would be equally a crime and a folly,—a crime, for it would be to annul God's purpose, and question the wisdom involved alike in what He has revealed and what He has left unrevealed; a folly, because it would be to judge where we have not the slightest means of forming a judgment. But with revealed things it is different. Why should we shrink from examining into God's truth to the very utmost limit of His revelation? What He has revealed He must have intended to be known, and to be made the subject of careful study. The same reverent faith which turns away from the secret things of God fixes its enraptured gaze steadily on what has been revealed. "The things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever;" and why?—"that we may do all the words of this book."

It is within these limits, therefore, that I shall

strictly confine my inquiry, and shall ascribe to God no purpose which is not either specifically revealed, or derived by direct inference from some statement of the Word. It may be that outside this circle there lie further and grander mysteries which do not affect us, and of which, in the absence of any inspired declaration, we must be absolutely ignorant. Even within the sphere of revelation, I do not dream for one moment of being able to exhaust one-half of God's deep things, or catch the deeper tones of that Divine voice which speaks within the temple of His Word the profounder secrets of His wisdom. But beyond this, at all events, I shall not move, and, confining my footsteps within it, shall move, even there, with the deepest reverence and humility.

It is a grand argument which this line of thought suggests—a grand spectacle for some higher intellect, steeped in the spirit of the Word, and all impregnated with the power of the Holy Ghost, to present for the contemplation of his fellow-men. It is the very march of God Himself coming visibly out of His place, and in the development of His great plan riding gloriously across the whole firmament of human thought. This is the highest unity—the circle most approaching the Infinite—into which we can search; for the whole system of human things, visible and invisible, physical and spiritual, are subordinate parts of it. In tracing its progress, as out of the depths of the Divine wisdom it has become more and more con-

spicuously revealed, all details of human action pass comparatively out of view. The grandest pictures which human life can suggest—and there are none so grand as the sacred history describes—sink into subordinate importance. Not only individual men, but peoples and empires, thrones, and states, and revolutions, are but secondary adjuncts, where the central figure is God Himself, in the object of revelation, its mode, its course, its accomplishment—God alone, coming out of the eternity before time, and lost to present view in the eternity after time, like the natural sun moving from one horizon to the other, in a cloudless flood of light and glory.

LECTURE II.

 Outlines of the Divine Plan.

“GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE.”

LUKE, ii. 14.

THE organic unity of the Bible has been recognised more distinctly as a fact in Christian experience, than it has been examined and vindicated as a proposition in theology. The language of the Scriptures, in which they describe under a single expression the whole revealed will of God, has, indeed, been consistently maintained by a long line of witnesses from the earliest age of the Church till our own times. With equal fidelity the doctrine pervading the New Testament writings, that the promises of the Gospel are but the lineal fulfilment of a salvation, declared even in Paradise, and renewed from time to time all down the whole course of prophecy, has been incorporated into the doctrinal teaching of the great Christian divines of every age. The Church of England re-echoes the same truth in her Seventh Article, in which she repudiates the notion that the Fathers of the ancient Hebrew Church looked

only for temporal promises, and declares that "both in the Old and New Testaments everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ." But still, in all this, attention has been fixed more prominently on the doctrine consistently maintained during all stages of the revelation, than on the organic and structural unity of the records which contain it. The identity of truth has been asserted, without formally examining the cause in which it originates.

The devout heart of Christian faith has, meanwhile, been led by a kind of intuition to rest upon the same fact. It has been conscious of listening all through the inspired Word to the utterances of the same Voice, and the same grand tones of majesty and power. In the records of the ancient Church it has found many of its sweetest consolations, and has incorporated the very language of the old promises into its habitual devotions. In the Psalms, Christian experience has recognised the truest and profoundest expression of its own wants and emotions, its own hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. To the declarations of the Prophets and their descriptions of Messiah's sufferings and kingdom, it has turned back, fresh from the study of the New Testament narratives, to catch the inner meaning of the eventful life recorded in the pages of the Evangelists. Amid the local circumstances which enter largely into the books of the minor Prophets, it has nevertheless recognised the utterances of truth universal for all times and

for all men. The familiar use of texts, the topics chosen for the public ministry, the application of solemn declarations of the Old Testament to the circumstances of our own time, have all served to show how familiar this belief in the unity of the Bible has become to us, and how it has been incorporated into our unconscious modes of feeling, thinking, and speaking.

The assertion of some modern critics, that the Bible is essentially fragmentary in its character, one book in its outward circumstances only, and in its diversity of contents and authors many books, has fallen upon this popular mode of thinking with painful suddenness, and has awakened emotions of mingled surprise and alarm. Its effect has been to throw the Church back upon the grounds of her belief, and to bring into absorbing prominence the question of the evidences on which it rests. If the Church be wrong, it is difficult to say how far backward, and how deeply into the very vitals of Christian doctrine, the conclusions of rationalism will not reach. We see at once what the proof that the Bible is fragmentary will destroy, but it is far less easy to see what it will leave undestroyed. The whole character and aspect of Christianity, its whole authority and position, are at stake. If, on the other side, the ordinary faith of the Church be, as I believe, right—right equally as a question of Scriptural interpretation and of philosophical induction—then modern rationalism, spite of all its claims for special

enlightenment, must be a calamitous retrogression in religious and theological thought.

The examination into the contents of Scripture to which this objection calls us, will scarcely be commenced before it brings to light irrefragable proofs of a common unity pervading the whole volume. These proofs have already been stated in a previous course of lectures.* A glance at the preceding argument supplies a necessary groundwork for the further conclusions which it is my purpose to establish in this series. On the very surface of the Scripture lies the ostensible fact that a series of writings, extending over a period of fifteen hundred years—and some of them, if modern criticism is right, reaching to a yet remoter date—is yet capable of being regarded as one consistent and harmonious whole. It is not possible to find in profane literature any parallel to this case, for no other authentic remains of antiquity can claim anything like so remote an origin. Profane history is acknowledged to have nothing certain further back than eight hundred years before Christ,† while the supposition recently advocated, that the earlier portions of the Pentateuch were compiled into a connected story by Samuel,‡ takes us back at once some hundreds of years beyond that point. His materials are said

* *The Bible and its Critics*, Boyle Lectures for 1861. Lect. II.

† Grote's *History of Greece*, vol. i., Preface.

‡ Bishop Colenso's *Critical Examination of the Pentateuch*, Part II., p. 368.

to have been ancient myths ; but search may, I believe, be made in vain to find any national legends in the world which would admit of being framed into a connected history, and this not an isolated history, but linking itself on by unbroken succession to the known facts of later days. Even in the possible appearance of unity the Bible stands alone.*

This, however, is but the first step ; for this collection of books, of various date and authorship, is found to be pervaded, not alone by an historical sequence, but by an actual unity of design. It contains the gradual development of a scheme of salvation of which no one part can be taken away

* No descendant of any ancient nation survives except the Jew. But, leaving this out of the calculation, all other ancient records labour under such manifest defects in one direction or another, as make comparison with the Hebrew Scriptures out of the question. Of ancient Egypt nothing remains beyond the fragments of Manetho, which have come to us second hand, and are themselves no earlier than the third century before Christ. (See Bunsen's *Egypt's Place in History*, vol. i. p. 23.) Berosus, the Babylonian, wrote his history of Chaldæa in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, B.C. 285; and the fragments which have been preserved link themselves to the Hebrew Scriptures and their narrative more than to anything else. The Zend-Avesta, or sacred writings of the Persians, had no aggregate existence till A.D. 226, and the earliest portions of them are not referred back later than B.C. 400. (See Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters*. Part IV. p. 158.) Neither Greece or Rome have any sacred writings. The legends of early Roman history recorded by Livy have no historical value. (See Niebuhr's *Lectures on the History of Rome*.) They

without rendering some other part unintelligible. For instance, if we separate the Epistles from the narrative of the Gospels, and suppose the latter never to have been written, the former become a building without a foundation—a riddle without any possible key for its solution. Suppose that the Old Testament was unknown to us, what a mass of strange contradiction and mystical paradox would not all the contents of the New Testament become! The very life of our Lord would be as inexplicable in its facts, as the writings of His Apostles in their doctrines. Destroy the Pentateuch, and the whole fabric of ancient Hebrew history would be a system without an origin, a polity without a beginning. And there

bear no relation whatever to the authentic facts of later history, and need themselves to be critically interpreted before they become intelligible. The Armenian history of Moses of Chorene is based upon the Bible, and only dates B.C. 150. (See Rawlinson's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 342.) The Hindu Vedas possess no unity, and a distinctly recognisable change is perceptible in their later portions from the doctrines of the earlier. The remotest date which can now be claimed for them is the time of the Exodus. Historical sequence between them and the known facts of history there is none. (See Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters*. Part II. p. 26.) The ancient writings of China constitute "a labyrinth" which the wisest of the Chinese have entered "only to come out of it more bewildered." The furthest date that can be recognised is B.C. 1144. The real literature of China begins with Confucius, B.C. 551. (Hardwick, Part III.) Buddhism, the existing religion of the greatest numerical proportion of mankind, dates from the same period, B.C. 550. (Elphinstone's *History of India*, p. 112.)

are two points in which this historical dislocation of consistent causes and effects would reach to our own day, answering to the two great lines of Jewish and Gentile descent. For, let the historical credibility of the Old Testament be destroyed, and what human ingenuity can ever account for the existence of the Jew? Destroy the New Testament, and what human ingenuity can account for Christianity and the Christian?

But, further, we find, as a simple matter of fact—let the explanation of the fact be what it may—that the same truths relative to God and man pervade all these writings. In the distinctive form in which they appear everywhere in this one series of writings, they appear nowhere else. In the traditional superstitions of mankind a trace of some of them is very distinctly seen, but in the works of men's learning and philosophy even this trace disappears, as if all human learning did but darken counsel by words without knowledge. But in this collection of ancient writings we find them everywhere, more and more fully explained in the later than in the earlier compositions, but just as definite and positive in the earlier as in the later. Such are the doctrines touching the nature of God, the unity of the Deity, His attributes and character, the fall and corruption of man, human sin and condemnation, salvation through the vicarious sufferings of the Messiah, regeneration by the Spirit, a moral government over the world, the action of a particular Providence, human

obedience, and rewards and punishments. It is impossible to enumerate the list without feeling that such truths lie beyond the possible sphere of the unassisted human intellect, since they deal with heavenly things on which we can have no data for thought. They exactly touch those questions on which human philosophy has gone furthest wrong, and has most absolutely contradicted the inalienable belief and instinctive cravings of the human soul.

Such arguments prove the unity of Scripture as a fact. They supply, however, no theory, and therefore do not absolutely foreclose the question as to the ultimate source of this unity. The conclusion to which they amount is this, that the identity of plan and will under so great a variety of date and authorship cannot be explained, except by referring it to the action of one mind; and as no human mind could live and act over such a period, that mind must be the mind of God. The Scripture, therefore, is authoritatively inspired, and represents God's dealings with mankind from the first, His plan of saving us by Christ being interrupted by human sin, resumed from time to time more and more clearly in the course of the revelation, and finally, spite of all opposition of men and angels, accomplished in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.

My object is not only to confirm this conclusion, but to carry it a step further. Not only was the redemption wrought by Christ the fulfilment

of an eternal purpose in the mind of God, but all that lay between were but the parts of one consistent plan, in which every step of the work was indissolubly connected with what went before and what followed after; in which even the irregular contingencies of human conduct were foreseen and provided for, and which is stamped throughout in the orderly completion of every part and the grand harmony of the whole result, with the wisdom, power, holiness, truth, and infinite benevolence of its Author.

The first step for the establishment of this view is to form a definite conception of the purpose of revelation, and of the relation of God towards man out of which it sprang. Revelation implies a thing revealed, and the fact that God should make the revelation implies that the truth to be revealed had reference to man, and that the knowledge of it was necessary for his well-being. We may be sure that the God, all whose operations, alike in nature and in providence, are marked by a most rigid economy, would not have given it without a cause. We shall see, moreover, that from the time of Moses to the close of the Apostolic days, the accomplishment of God's work in salvation was inseparably united with the progress of His word in revelation; the thing revealed and the revelation of it advancing towards completion together. Two books of Scripture alone lie beyond this sphere, being within it as regards their authorship, but outside

it as regards their subject. The book of Genesis supplies the necessary information before the union of the two objects began. The Revelation of St. John predicts the fortunes of the Church after it had ceased. Between these two points no sharp line of separation can be drawn between the revelation and the work which it revealed; between the purpose of God in saving, and his purpose in making known His salvation.

Hence arises the importance of clearly conceiving the object and end of revelation—the first revealed thought of the Divine mind towards man out of which it grew. For the perfection of a plan is relative throughout to the object to be attained by it. Perfect wisdom is seen in the provision of means, neither exceeding nor falling short of it. The accumulation of means to a given end, which characterises man's works, is simply the expression of his weakness—the confession of a conscious possibility of failure. Means are perfect from their adaptation to the ends to be accomplished by them—a perfection not absolute, but relative. It is necessary to reiterate this with the utmost distinctness, in order to guard against a frequent ambiguity of thought. Thus men argue, that a perfect God must necessarily work perfectly; and they are right as to the fact, but they become wrong if they imply by it a theoretical perfection relative to that one particular act, and not stretching further into the general design

of God, of which that particular act is itself a part. For instance, a teacher desires to draw an outline map in order to exercise the knowledge of his pupils by their filling in the details. Suppose that, in a fit of abstraction, he should fill in the details himself; this work would be more perfect in one sense, and in relation to itself alone, but more imperfect in another and a higher sense, in relation to the purpose for which it was intended. For the perfect finish of the map would frustrate the object for which the master drew it; and as the educational instrument for which he designed it, its very perfection would make it imperfect. Means must be tested by their adaptability to the end for which they are designed, and are perfect so far as they neither fall short of it nor exceed it.

In this sense God works perfectly in exact relation to His design in working. The plan of revelation must be tested, therefore, by the purpose for which it was intended. All further question as to the perfection of the purpose itself must be put on one side, as touching upon subjects with which we are not competent to deal. For who shall dare to judge God, and to pronounce what specific objects ought, and what ought not, to have occupied the mind of the infinite and unsearchable Deity? Upon no such questions, too high for human thought, will my present argument touch. I simply aim to put on one side the

design, such as God has revealed it, and over against it on the other the plan whereby it was carried into effect, and the perfection of its execution.

The ultimate design of God in the creation of the human race is the manifestation of His own glorious perfections; since "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." That it must have involved a knowledge of the sin and fall of man is certain, since it involved likewise the salvation of man by the blood of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," whom God fore-ordained (*προέθετο*) "to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." (Rom. iii. 25.) "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world (*προεγνωσμένου πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου*)." (1 Pet. i. 20.) But while the whole purpose of God, in thus creating a being whom He knew would fall, is not to be measured as yet by human thought, the Word itself justifies us in referring it to the wider manifestation of God's glorious attributes among the intelligent inhabitants of His universe. Thus we are told, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil?" (Prov. xvi. 4.) The force of this expression, "for Himself," is further explained in another place: "I have made him for my glory." (Isa. xliii. 7.) And in the passage above cited from the Romans, the object of the eternal ordination of Christ is stated to be the manifestation of

the attributes of God—"to declare His righteousness (εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης)." * That the manifestation of the Divine attributes to the unfallen angels more fully than could be done in their own condition of blessedness entered into God's purpose, we are expressly told; for, referring to the hidden counsel which included the Gentiles as well as the Jews in the range of redeeming mercy, St. Paul says that "God created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent (ἵνα γνωρισθῆ)† that now unto

* "In order to the manifestation of His righteousness: this is the aim of the putting forth of Christ as an expiatory victim." (Dean Alford *in loco.*) It is equivalent to ἵνα ἐνδειξηται. (Eph. ii. 7.) Vaughan, on the Romans. *Eis*, with an accusative, used "figuratively of ideal relations, denotes any aim or end." (Winer's *Grammar of New Testament Diction*, vol. ii. p. 415. Clarke.)

† "ἵνα, in order that, to the end that." (Winer's *Grammar*, vol. ii. p. 478.) The writer goes on to combat the opinion that this conjunction is used in the New Testament to denote a result which has actually taken place. "It is especially to be remarked, that hitherto most expositors have overlooked the fact that the meaning of ἵνα is frequently to be determined by a reference to the Hebrew teleologia, which interchanges in phraseology the events of this world with the designs and decrees of God, or rather represents every (important, and, especially, every surprising) event as intended and decreed by God." In other words, and as we should express it on the theory of plenary inspiration, the Scriptural *usus loquendi* gives to this conjunction the force of specific intention on the part of God. Winer, in the further discussion of the subject, proceeds to vindicate the teleological use of ἵνα in twenty-three passages where an ecbatic sense only had been given; and among these he enumerates Eph. iii. 10.

the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. iii. 10.)* In precisely the same relation the Spirit declares by St. Peter, that "into these things the angels desire to look." (1 Pet. i. 12.) There remains another passage which implies a still closer interest on the part of angelic beings in the revelation of God. I refer to the words of the angel in the Apocalypse, when St. John fell down to worship before his feet. "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book." (Rev. xxii. 9.)† We conclude, from these passages, that the design of God in creating man, such as he was created, and capable of falling, had reference to the manifestation of God's glory throughout the universe, and that this

* "Restat itaque, ut in eorum sententiam discedamus, qui diversos Angelorum, bonorum scilicet ordines, hic innui censent. Ita hæc interpretari recte visum est antiquis doctoribus, Chrysostomo, Theophylacto, Oecumenio, et Hieronymo." *Wolfii curæ Philo: et Crit. in loco.* "πρόβλεπον τῶν αἰώνων, the purpose of the ages (eternal purpose) concerning the ages, and before the angels."—*Bengel in loco.*

† It has recently been suggested that the person whom John fell down to worship was not an angelic intelligence in the ordinary use of the word, but one of the Old Testament prophets—probably Isaiah. But the suggestion is too purely speculative to deserve any weight; and, indeed, the estimable author does not himself lay stress upon it.—*Isaiah's Testimony to Jesus* (Rev. W. B. Galloway), c. i. p. 13.

manifestation is coincident with the highest good of the creatures to whom it was made. Yet, when we have said this, we may feel that we do but look at the outskirts of mysteries which have not been revealed, and into the length and depth of which we are consequently unable to penetrate.

Thus far the light which guides us is imperfect; but when from this ultimate object we pass into that narrower circle which comes into contact with man, we advance at once into the full daylight. For, coincident with the knowledge of the fall, was the gracious purpose of recovery through a Redeemer. The pre-existence of the Son in glory with the Father before the world was, His coming into the world to fulfil a mission entrusted to Him by the Father, and the fulfilment of that commission, in saving a people whom the Father had given Him out of the world, are purposes directly asserted by our Lord Himself in the wonderful prayer contained in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. The same advent to accomplish a definite work was foretold by David in a passage applied by inspired authority to our Lord. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." (Ps. xl. 7.) On which St. Paul comments: "Above, when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second." (Heb. x. 7-9.) Nay, he goes on to specify the

object to which the promise was directed. "By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The same purpose he has elsewhere expressed in other words: "It pleased the Father ὅτι εὐδόκησεν,* having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself (ἀποκαταλλάξει τὰ πάντα),† whether they be things in heaven, or things on earth." (Col. i. 19, 20.) The reference in our Lord's own prayer to those whom the Father had given Him is explained in the deeply mysterious language of the 49th chapter of Isaiah,‡ in which it is declared that Gentiles and Jews were alike included in the saving purposes of God, and in the promise contained in the 53rd chapter, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." In these

* "'Because,' confirmation of the Divine purpose in reference to Christ's precedence ἐν πᾶσιν: He in whom the whole πλήρωμα (of the θεότης) was pleased to reside, must needs have had His precedence in all things eternally designed and contemplated."—Bishop ELLICOTT *in loco*.

† *To restore all things*, not "prorsus reconciliare," Mey. (comp. Chrys. κατηλλαγμένοι, ἀλλὰ τελείως ἕθει), but with the natural force of ἀπὸ in similar compounds (ἀποκαθιστάνειν, ἀπευθείνειν) "in pristinam conditionem reconciliando reducere."—*Ibid*.

‡ "Non Esaias hic loquitur, ut vult Grotius, sed Christus, ut patet: 1. Quia non Judæos sed Gentes, hic compellat. 2. Quia non Esaias, sed Christus, ab utero vocatus est; nomenque accepit quum in utero esset, Luc. i. 31. 3. In Christo, non in Esaia, gloriatur Deus, juxta v. 3. 4. Non Esaias, sed Christus, missus est tum ad restaurandos tribus Jacob, tum in lucem gentium, juxta v. 6. 5. De Christo intelligunt Judæi in Beresehith Rabba ad Gen. xli. 41."—POLK, *Synopsis Crit. S. Scrip. in loco*.

passages we see that God proposed to save man; that this salvation could only be wrought by the personal work of the Son of God; that the Son of God came into the world for this object; that it was accomplished by His blood; that the effects of this death reach both to heaven and to earth; and, lastly, that every step of this—the saving design, the mission of Christ to execute it, and the means of its accomplishment—was wrought by God, “according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.—*ἦν προεθετο ἐν αὐτῷ*—that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” (Eph. i. 9, 10.)

But the manner of this salvation is still more precisely defined with constant reference to a design, of which the work of Christ was the accomplishment. Thus we are taught that the salvation of man through the death of Christ had reference to the vindication of God’s justice, in the fulfilment of the sentence pronounced against sin. Thus we are justified freely through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to declare (*πρός τὴν ἐνδείξιν*) His righteousness; that He might be (*εἰς τὸ εἶναι*) just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. (Rom. iii. 26.)* Into

* “Of both the things affirmed, it is said that it was necessary” they should be so from God’s institution and appointment. There was no necessity in the nature of the things themselves, that the patterns of heavenly things should be purged with these sacrifices; but, on supposition that God

the exact mode in which the atoning death of Christ satisfied the Divine justice, it does not fall within my purpose to inquire. I am only concerned to show that this was the revealed purpose to which the plan of revelation was subordinate. Without shedding of blood there was no remission of sin (Heb. ix. 22); and it was necessary (*ἀνάγκη οὖν*) that His blood should be better than the blood of bulls and goats, even the blood of One who was Himself “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” Hence “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin,” that He might bear our sins in His own body on the tree—“by whose stripes we are healed.” To this great work the life and death of Christ had immediate relation. It was all squared to a moral necessity, not imposed on God from without, but originating wholly and solely from the sovereign will of God Himself in the salvation of mankind. Hence the incarnation of the Son of God, since it behoved Him (*ᾧφείλε*)*

would in them, and by them, represent the purification of the heavenly things, it was necessary that they should be thus purged with blood. And on the supposition of the same Divine ordination, that the heavenly things themselves should be purified, it was necessary that they should be purified with better sacrifices than these, which were altogether insufficient unto that end.”—OWEN on the Hebrews *in loco*.

* “It behoved Him not: *ᾧφείλε* used of the eternal purpose of God (Luke, xxiv. 26), but implying a moral necessity in the carrying out of His mediatorial work.”—Dean ALFORD.

“Unde debuit,” “whence He ought.” So Beza, Syriac, for which cause (or wherefore) “it was just,” “meet,” or “equal;”

who was to bear our sins to be made like unto His brethren. (Heb. ii. 17.) Hence His earthly state of humiliation and sorrow, because it “became Him, (ἐπὶ ἡμῶν) for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. ii. 10.) Hence our Lord, in the agony of His soul in Gethsemane, prayed that “if it were possible (εἰ δυνατόν ἐστίν), this cup might pass from Him” (Matt. xxvi. 39); that is, if it were possible consistently with the redeeming purpose for which He came into the world. Hence He asked the disciples at Emmaus, “Ought not (οὐχὶ ἔδει)* Christ to have suffered these things?” (Luke, xxiv. 26); and again, to the assembled Apostles, “Thus it behoved (οὕτως ἔδει) † Christ to suffer, and others, “wherefore it was due,” “it was convenient,” “wherefore it behoved him:” so ours, ὀφείλω, joined with an infinitive mood, as here it is, signifies commonly, “oportet me,” or “necesse est,” or “debeo,”—“I ought,” “it behoveth me,” “it is necessary for me,” and denotes more than a mere contingency or expediency, even such a kind of necessity as ariseth from that which is itself just and equal, which the Syriac expresseth.”—OWEN *on the Hebrews*.

* “Christ quoted the individual prophecies of Scripture concerning Himself, and expounded them to the two disciples, showing them that the suffering of the Messiah was necessarily connected with the perfecting of His whole work, and with the completion of his δόξα. This Divinely decreed necessity was what the prophecies of the Old Testament expressed.”—OLSHAUSEN, *Comm.*

† Dean Alford omits this word as an interpolation from v. 26, but as the same word ἔδει occurs in v. 44, the question is unimportant.

to rise again from the dead." Thus every part of our Lord's life and death was but the fulfilment of a determinate counsel, already revealed by Moses and the prophets, and from which no part could be omitted without frustrating the design of redemption schemed in the mind of the Indivisible Deity before the world began.

But the same Scriptures which foretold beforehand the objective salvation of the world by the vicarious sacrifice of a Redeemer, foretold also with equal explicitness the subjective work of grace upon the soul, without which the atonement of Christ, however potentially complete, would be practically ineffective. The necessity and nature of spiritual regeneration, and the office of the Holy Spirit, who should work it, are, indeed, more fully explained in the New Testament than in the Old; and this was natural, since the New Testament times constitute distinctively "the dispensation of the Spirit." But they are clearly contained in the Old Testament likewise. Thus St. Paul illustrates the doctrine of justification by the explicit language of the thirty-second Psalm. The doctrine of regeneration, and that by the power of God acting directly upon the soul, is expressed in the fifty-first Psalm in language so definite, that Christian experience can find no fitter utterance for the new creation to which the consciousness of a child of God witnesses. The language of our Lord and His Apostles relative to the new birth echoes the predictive promises of the new heart and the new

spirit uttered by Ezekiel six hundred years before. The doctrine of faith towards God, as asserted by St. Paul, is but the fuller exposition of the language of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. And to establish the identity between the promises of the Old Testament and their fulfilment under the New still further, we need only refer to special texts. Thus St. Paul asserts that the Scripture preached before the Gospel (*προεφηγγείσατο*, Gal. iii. 8) to Abraham, that all believers are the children of Abraham, and that the gift of the Spirit through faith is the inheritance of the promise to Abraham. (Gal. iii. 14.) In another epistle he teaches that the admission of the Gentiles to be fellow-heirs was part of the mystery not made known to other ages. (Eph. iii. 6.) And, writing to the Thessalonians, he identifies their admission to all the spiritual blessings of the Gospel covenant with the counsel of God from all eternity. "Because God hath from the beginning (*ἔλετο ἀπ' ἀρχῆς*) chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. ii. 13.)*

* *ἀπ' ἀρχῆς* must be taken in the general sense as in reff. Not in the special, from the beginning of the Gospel, as Philip. iv. 15. It answers to *πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων*, 1 Cor. ii. 7, *πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου*, Eph. i. 4, *πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων*, 2 Tim. i. 9, all of which are spoken of the decrees of God. (Dean Alford *in loco*.) "Electionem ad salutem ab eterno, et quidem in Christo factam, hic innui constat ex 1 Thess. i. 3."—WOLFF *curæ Phil. et Crit. in loco*.

"*Ἐλετο ἀπ' ἀρχῆς*. He does not say *ἔξελεξάτο*, but in this one place and on this subject he uses *ἔλετο*. That effect was

There are some further truths which necessarily follow from these, and which, therefore, we may include as parts of God's declared design, although they are less clearly revealed in this particular relation. That the scope of the Gospel was to undo the consequences of man's fall, and restore him into the state forfeited by sin, is not only involved in the connected story of salvation, but is positively asserted. The future state, in which our Lord taught His Apostles that all their sufferings for the Gospel's sake would be infinitely repaid, when they should sit on thrones, is termed the "regeneration" (*παλιγγενεσία*), (Matt. xix. 28), or, in another place, as "the times of the restitution of all things (*ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων*), which God hath spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began," (Acts, iii. 21.) When we follow this clue, and examine the nature of the state predicted by these prophets, we find it described as one of individual and collective happiness, in which pain, sin, tears, and death shall be no more, and in which all the elements of mutual contention which at present pervade so largely all the relations of man with man shall be swallowed up in the extension of universal right—produced by the success of evangelical calling; and yet there is added from the beginning, *i.e.* from eternity (comp. 1 John, i. 1), because believers are fortified and claimed as such by the eternal decree."—BENGEL *in loco*.

* "The glorious restoration of all things, the *παλιγγενεσία*, which, as Peter here says, is the theme of all the prophets from the beginning."—Dean ALFORD *in loco*.

eousness and peace. The details of this glory are freely described in both Testaments, and consequently must be included, not by implication only, but on the authority of express statements, in the eternal purposes of God towards mankind. The elevation of individual character, the correction of national evils, the infinite amelioration of the outward circumstances of man's life, and hence a state of higher happiness, to be commenced in probation and completed in recompense, must all be included in the design.

The conception thus formed of the purpose out of which revelation grew, and to which it was directed, is both definite and comprehensive. The ultimate object was God's glory and the good of the creatures. The immediate purpose was the salvation of mankind from the ruin of the fall. The central agent was the Son of God incarnate. The meritorious cause was the atonement wrought by His sufferings and death. The effect contemplated was reconciliation between man and God. The condition was faith. The source of faith was the operation of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit was the regeneration of man's sin-corrupted nature, and its result his final restoration to a condition of primeval happiness, which should include himself and his outward condition, his body and his soul, his life, alike for time or for eternity. These objects are not guesses of the human understanding, but positive assertions of the inspired Word; and in putting them together into one view, and endeavouring to grasp them as

a whole, I am but looking at God's purpose as God Himself must have looked at it, and as He has taught us to look at it, subject to the limitations of a finite understanding and the imperfections of all human knowledge.

Now, let us endeavour to fix our minds steadily on this purpose, and ask by what plan it could have been carried out. Can we not trace, step by step, certain conditions so necessarily inherent in its very scope, that they could not conceivably be absent from the plan? In doing this, I do not suppose that the human mind, left absolutely to itself, could have conjectured either the grandeur of the object or the perfection of the plan. But, taking the purpose as it is revealed, and then taking the plan likewise as it is revealed, I suggest, as the thesis of sanctified thought, to put the two together, and see how the one necessarily and consistently grew out of the other.

I. In the first place, it is evident that the plan must necessarily have included a revelation from God to man. If the purpose had involved no more than the remission of the positive punishment due to human sin, it need not have been so. For then the result of the work would have reached to God only, and consequently need have been known to God only. The penalty of sin might have been borne, and mankind through this propitiation have been left undisturbed in the condition in which they were found, without their knowing anything either of their danger or their deliverance. In

the same way the members of a family may sleep while the father of the family watches against the hidden foe, and may be wholly unconscious of the efforts of the protecting parent to whom they are indebted for their preservation. In the same way a nation may be exposed to the most serious calamities, and yet the great bulk of the people remain totally ignorant of the existence of the danger, and of the prudence and sacrifices by which it has been averted. It is evident, therefore, that if the Divine purpose had extended no further than to the remission of a contracted penalty, the revelation of the atonement of Christ to the creatures to be saved by it would not have been necessary, and the whole transaction might have been accomplished in the higher sphere of the heavenly world. Or, if the necessity for the incarnation and death of the Son of God rendered this impossible, the work of Christ might have been wrought on earth without mankind knowing either the object or the deep mystery of the transactions which were being enacted in the midst of them. Undeserved sufferings and cruel deaths have been too common in the history of the world to excite any prominent attention. Judging from the actual event, it appears to me evident, that if there had been no prophecies beforehand to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah, no supernatural signs to attest His advent, no mighty miracles wrought in confirmation of His authority, no disciples commis-

sioned to be the witnesses of His resurrection and the preachers of His Gospel, the life of Christ might have been lived, and His death might have been died, without attracting the attention of the fallen creatures for whose salvation they were accomplished.

But directly we extend the design beyond the remission of an incurred punishment to a restoration of man to his original condition, and the moral regeneration of his nature, a revelation becomes forthwith indispensable. For a moral work can only be wrought by moral means, and must be adapted to act on the understanding and the conscience. A blind impulse of a supernatural power acting on the soul it did not know whence, without definite motives it did not know how, or without conscious objects to be wrought it did not know why, would miss the elements of a spiritual regeneration altogether. The recovery of the human will, and affections, and understanding into union with the Creating Deity, from whom they had been separated by sin, is the very essence of the work to be done. Without the knowledge of God Himself, and of His purposes towards mankind, and of His agency in executing them, it would be palpably impossible. Even should it be supposed that the human mind, left to itself, could have discovered the facts of its own existence and of the purposes of God towards it, such a knowledge, in the absence of positive assurance from God Himself, could have been only a guess; and, inasmuch

as it was self-derived, and not God-given, must have failed in placing the human mind into that relation towards God which it was the purpose of God to establish.

But another step follows from this. For the declared object of God was the salvation of man—not of this particular generation of men, or this particular race (for there is no respect of persons with God, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him), but of man at large. The revelation needed, therefore, to be co-extensive with those who should be redeemed by it, and reach, as it actually has done, down the whole line of human history. Hence the peculiar form into which God's Word has been thrown, of a collection of various books of different dates and authorship, followed necessarily from the design. No one book, at one date, containing at one time the whole revelation of God's will, is conceivable. For let us imagine this to have been done, and the Bible to have been one single communication, made once for all; and the question immediately occurs, At what date in the world's history could such a communication possibly have been given? Evidently, it could not have been given till after the objective work of salvation had been completed, in the life, and death, and resurrection of our Lord. The further question, Why this objective work could not have been accomplished earlier in the world's history? will be answered at a later stage of the analysis. But, supposing the

date to have remained what we know it to have been, this one complete revelation could not have been earlier; for the supposition is that it was complete, and could admit of no later revelation. But, had it been given before the objective work of Christ was accomplished, it would necessarily have been incomplete, since it could only have recorded an intention on God's part, and not the fulfilment of it as an historical fact, already done and attested by its appropriate evidence. This one revelation, therefore, could not have been given earlier than the date of the New Testament.

Let us, then, suppose it to have been given at that date, and the following consequences will immediately follow. First, All the generations preceding would have been left without a revelation at all—without any knowledge, that is, of God, and of those purposes of His mercy towards mankind which it was essential for them to know. In the strong language of the inspired prophet, they would have sat in darkness, without one ray of Divine light to enlighten it—one recognised act of the Divine mercy to make it tolerable. They would have been left universally in that state of terrible misery which was the lot of ancient heathendom, without those correcting and alterative influences which, it will be seen hereafter, did actually flow from the one chosen people of God far and wide throughout the heathen world.

But, secondly, in the absence of any previous revelation, it would have been impossible for men

to recognise the Messiah when He came, since those prevenient signs, the concurrence of which, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, pointed Him out as He of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, would have been necessarily absent. The mode in which these signs became more and more definite all down the line of revelation, till they converged in that one age—that one nation—that one person, is one of the marvellous proofs of design which meet us almost everywhere in the history of inspiration. The mode in which it has become impossible that these signs should ever concur again in one consentient witness, is one of the most striking features in the history of Providence.

And, further still, the supposition of one complete act of revelation, and one only, would have been inconsistent with the provision of those accumulated evidences which now attest the Divine origin and authority of the Scriptures. It would then have been one isolated act, with no parallels whatever in the previous experience of mankind, and, standing alone, the difficulty of securing evidence for it would have been enormous. It would have become liable at once to the suspicion of an imposition on human credulity, framed by a human conspiracy. Its style must then have been as homogeneous as its contents, and the argument for its Divine origin, derived from its unity of plan amid its diversity of authors, would have been lost. It would not have left those points of contact with the

profane history of the past by which the genuineness of the Old Testament books is at present authenticated. In short, in many points, the exact statement of which would be a matter more of curiosity than of importance, both the external and the internal evidences of revelation would have been destroyed. That revelation should consist of a variety of books, consecutively extending along the course of human life to the times of Christianity, and not of one single book, was indispensable to the very purpose for which revelation was intended.

Nor is it less evident that this diversity of date and authorship needed to be blended in a unity of plan and subject. For if it was necessary that the generations before Christ should not be left without a knowledge of God's will, it was equally necessary that the revelation should be fitted for a permanent and abiding life throughout the generations after Christ. To do the same work twice over, in one form for ancient times, in another form for modern times, would have been inconsistent with the economy of all God's dealings. It would have conveyed to men the impression of two plans of God towards men, instead of one; would have constituted two Churches, not one; would have destroyed the sympathies which now unite the experience of the saints under the old dispensation with the experience of the saints under the new; if, indeed, it had not frustrated the common purpose of them both. The unity and universality of God's dealings could not have been destroyed without con-

fusing men's conceptions of the unity and eternity of God Himself. It was needed, therefore, that revelation should at once supply the wants of every generation by communications adapted to their local and occasional circumstances, and yet that these communications, when collected, should be one revelation, conveying one connected view of the Divine dealings, and supplying in one authoritative record the whole counsel of God towards His fallen creatures.

The two necessities involved just such a Bible as we have got, and no other—a variety of writings, and yet one essential and indivisible book; many revelations, and yet one revelation, in which the whole course of God's wondrous dealings with man may be seen in their gradual development and completion, each stage blending gradually into those which preceded and succeeded it; as harmoniously consistent, and yet as steadily progressive as the progress of the natural day, as from the first faint dawn it rises more and more into the blazing noon.

Now, when we turn from these conclusions of the reason to the positive statements of the Word, we find that this double purpose is distinctly asserted. It will be needless to adduce proofs that the various books of the Old Testament were intended for the instruction of the ages to which they were respectively given, for it is involved in their very structure, and will appear everywhere when we come to trace the actual execution of the

Divine plan as recorded in the Word. But that these earlier revelations had a prospective intention, both in relation to the times of our Lord, and again from the times of the Apostles onward through our own day to the end of the world, admits of Scriptural proof so reiterated and redundant, as to embarrass the Christian advocate by its very copiousness. The evidence is furnished forward from the Old Testament, and backward from the New. The promise given to Abraham; the declarations repeated to Moses; the predictions of the Messiah's kingdom declared by David; the promises recorded by the Prophets, almost without an exception of any of their number, are couched in express language, which throws their accomplishment forward beyond the times of the Jewish polity, to the days when the Gospel should become the free inheritance of every tribe and nation under heaven. The promises to the Gentiles, which actually pervade the prophetic books, and on which the Apostles, in pleading alike with Jew and Gentile, put emphatic weight, imply the same lesson. That which the Old Testament writers explicitly or implicitly declare, the New Testament writers openly and positively claim. The Apostle asserts not simply a fact, but a purpose on God's part in the fact. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning" (*εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν διδασκαλίαν*). (Rom. xv. 4.) "These things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition (*πρὸς*

νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν), upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Cor. x. 11.) In referring to the legal prohibition of muzzling the oxen which tread out the corn, the Apostle asks, "Doth God take care for oxen, or saith He it altogether for our sakes;" and he replies, "For our sakes (δι' ἡμῶς) no doubt this is written." (1 Cor. ix. 9.) Peter, speaking of the ancient prophecies, and of the fact that the Prophets did not always understand the full scope of their own predictions, says, in the same spirit as St. Paul, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you." (1 Pet. i. 12.) Thus clearly do the Apostles claim for themselves, and the Church they established, the inheritance of the ancient promises; and not less clearly is it asserted, that the mind of God intended the whole collected Scriptures for the ages after Christ. Our Lord Himself, in His last prayer, extended His promises from the Apostles to all those who should hereafter believe through their word. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe in me through their word." (John, xvii. 20.) The object of St. John's Gospel is stated to be, that "Ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ." That the Gospel thus recorded should have a world-wide sphere, is expressed in our Lord's words, "This Gospel shall be preached in all the world (ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ)." (Matt. xxiv. 14.) The closing book of the Scriptural Canon is one long

declaration of the same fact, since it sketches the whole history of the Church of Christ till the time of her Master's return in glory, and seals up the completion of the Canon itself with the solemn warning against adding "to the words of this book." Thus the fact that the separate books of the Christian Bible were intended for every age, and for all ages, and were so ordered that in their collected form they should constitute the one Bible of the Christian Church, is equally confirmed by conclusions drawn from the very nature of God's revealed design, and by the positive declarations of the Word itself.

II. From the gift of revelation there follows necessarily the idea of a moral probation attached to its possession. For every privilege involves a responsibility for the right use of it, and for the results on the life and character which should be produced by it. Probation is, moreover, involved in the moral objects contemplated by revelation itself. For it is directed to work a spiritual and heavenward change on human nature, lifting it up to a higher stage of humanity through the great motives which are supplied by the fear and love of God, the glorious work of Christ, and the prospect of future reward and punishment. But the opportunities which elevate in their use may degrade by their abuse. The great choice of good and evil, life and death, is set before men, and the message which presents the alternatives must ever be, in every stage of the moral disci-

pline, whether under the law or under the Gospel, either the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. The very design of God in revelation implies a condition of moral trial, in which men may either be restored to the condition lost by the fall, or, rejecting the blessed opportunity and turning it into an occasion of sin, may plunge themselves into a deeper ruin than before.

Of this probationary purpose, to be wrought by revelation, there are many precise statements in Scripture. Thus God "did tempt Abraham." (Gen. xxii.) Thus God "proved Israel at the waters of Meribah." (Ps. lxxxi. 7.) The principle was embodied in all God's dealings with His ancient people, and was the subject of public appeal by the great Lawgiver. "Remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." (Deut. viii. 2.) Thus David uttered his experience; "Thou hast proved mine heart; Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing." (Ps. xvii. 3.) It was in the "great trial of affliction" (*ἐν πολλῇ δοκιμῇ*) that the Churches of Macedonia showed the abundance of their joy. (2 Cor. viii. 2.) Among the triumphs of faith, St. Paul enumerates the unknown saints who had trial (*πειραν ἔλαβον*) of cruel mockings and scourgings. St. Peter bids the elect strangers not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which was to try them (*πρὸς πειρασμὸν*

ὑμῶν) (1 Pet. iv. 12), since the very object of the mysterious Providence which permitted it was, that “the trial of their faith (τὸ δοκιμίων ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως) (1 Pet. i. 7), being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” St. James’s words convey the same truth. “Blessed is he that endureth temptation, for when he is tried (δοκιμος γινόμενος) (Jam. i. 12), he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.” Nay, we are expressly told that this probation extends to the intellect as well as to the heart—to the doctrines we believe as well as the objects we pursue. For the Corinthians are warned of God’s purpose towards them in this respect, “There must be (Δεῖ γὰρ) also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you (οἱ δοκιμοὶ φανεροὶ γένωνται.)” (1 Cor. xi. 19.)

Into all the conditions involved in the idea of probation, and how they have modified God’s dealings, I do not propose to enter till another lecture; but there is one effect which falls so strictly within the outlines of the Divine plan, that it cannot be omitted in this place. I have already shown that the necessities of the case required not one act of revelation, but many combined in one; but now we see that these separate acts needed to be arranged in a gradual and progressive series, in which higher, fuller communications of truth

were continually made as the fulness of the times drew on. For probation involves that the amount of truth conveyed should be adapted to the capacity of those who should receive it. If it fell much below it, there would be nothing to try sincerity and submission. If it reached above it, responsibility would be voided in exact proportion as capability was exceeded. It needed to be small, therefore, in those early ages, when the moral and intellectual capacity for receiving truth was small. When the capacity grew, as it necessarily did by exercise and development, the amount of revealed truth needed to be increased, for every truth we gain enables us to understand further truth, and the more we receive the more we become capable of receiving. Yet this development of Divine truth needed never to be complete—never to reach that point where there would be nothing more to be revealed. For if nothing was omitted in Scripture which we should like to know, there could be no submission of the created intellect to the uncreated; if nothing dark or doubtful, there could be no discipline for faith; if nothing incomplete, there could be no sphere for hope. It is perfectly consistent with such a design as the Omniscient God declares Himself to have had in view in revelation, that He should intentionally have left a certain obscurity over portions of the record; not only withholding what it was unnecessary for man to know; not only veiling under human images mysteries, which at

present we are incapable of understanding, but holding back something which might have been told us, had it not been God's purpose to discipline faith by this very reticence. If the Bible be God's Word, given for probationary purposes, and God, in giving it, exercised His Omniscience, its difficulties must be as intentional as its lessons, and the wisdom which has withheld as full of deep meaning as the wisdom which has revealed. How wonderfully does that gradual and progressive unfolding of truth which marks the inspired Scriptures grow out of the probationary purposes for which we know it to have been given!

III. But probation implies preparation. The knowledge of one age was the school for the higher knowledge of the succeeding. Thus, likewise, in the close interdependency which existed between the objective plan of salvation and the subjective revelation of it, the knowledge already conveyed prepared the world for the acts still to be accomplished. Thus, all the ages which preceded the Gospel times were included in the preparation of the world for the coming of Christ. Isaiah distinctly sounded the note. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." Malachi re-echoed it when he foretold the coming of Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. John the Baptist fulfilled the prediction, when in the wilderness of Judæa he proclaimed the awakening call, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." St. Paul expressly asserts

this preparatory character of the whole Mosaic dispensation. "The law was a schoolmaster (*παιδαγωγός*) to bring us to Christ." (Gal. iii. 24.) It is impossible to study the circumstances and the temper of the times at which our Lord came, without being struck with their adaptation to the events which God had determined to bring to pass in them. This state of preparation reached throughout the world, and consisted of elements negative and positive, and influences, religious, social, and political. I propose to refer to them again more fully. At present I would only point out that in this preparation the Scriptures of the Old Testament occupied the very foremost place.

Considering that the object of salvation has primary reference to the human soul, it is manifest that the preparation of the world for the coming of Christ, and the preaching of His Gospel, must have consisted of a certain religious habitude, called into existence at that time more largely than in any other circumstance. The political condition of the world in general, and of Judæa in particular, the blaze of intellectual light which had flowed from the schools of Greek philosophy, and the uniformity of empire which the iron power of Rome had impressed upon the world, all, doubtless, had their share.* But more prominent than they was the religious thought and feeling of the

* An admirable sketch of these preparatory circumstances will be found in Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, vol. i. c. i.

period. In producing this, the ancient Hebrew Scriptures had done more than all other secondary causes together, or rather, I should say, the ancient Jewish Scriptures illustrated by the marvellous events of ancient Jewish history. The two acted together, the Scriptures throwing over the history a blaze of light, now glorious with the blessing of God, now lurid with His chastisements; the history supplying the living comment on the Scriptures, and extending far and wide throughout all the great nations of the old world the sphere of their influence. Thus it was in individuals: the preparations of the heart are of the Lord. "Lord, prepare their heart unto thee," was the petition of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. St. Paul describes the saints as vessels of mercy, prepared before to glory (*ἡ προητοίμασεν*) (Rom. ix. 23), and exhorts Timothy to be a vessel unto honour, prepared (*ἡτοιμασμένον*) unto every good work. (2 Tim. ii. 21.) As with individuals, so it was with the world at large. The heart of humanity beat with the great truths which God had kept alive by His revelation, and, sick with its miseries, looked upward, blindly, it may be, but plaintively, for a redemption. Such truths were the unity of God; the sin of man; the doctrine of human accountability; the need of an atonement; rewards and punishments after death,— truths which flash out everywhere from the pages of revelation, and had become inwrought into the very instincts of the human conscience.

That God intended the religious lessons of His revelation to reach beyond the chosen people to the world at large, is expressly affirmed in the earliest of all the Scriptural books. Thus the rainbow was appointed after the deluge to be the sign of the covenant, "for generations, for ever." "My bow have I set in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between me and the earth." "This is the sign of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth." (Gen. ix. 12-17.) The blessing of Abraham was specifically extended to "all families of the earth." (Gen. xii. 3.) In renewing the covenant to Moses, God declared that His name, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob," should be His "memorial to all generations." (Exod. iii. 15.) Pharaoh was raised up that God might show him His power, and that His name "might be declared throughout all the earth." (Exod. ix. 16.) Isaiah extends the same effect, both as a purpose and as a fact, to all the great dealings of God in old time. "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth." (Isa. xii. 5.)

An examination of the adequacy of the Old Testament Scriptures to produce such a work brings to light another peculiarity of the relation between the Old and New Testament Scriptures. It would readily be conceived that the dissemination of the New Testament, with its clear didactic statement and precise doctrines, would issue in a

corresponding extension of religious ideas; but the sufficiency of the older Scriptures to awaken the consciousness of the human soul, and inculcate distinctive religious truth, is less apparent. But when we come to compare the two Testaments carefully together, we find that they are distinguished, not by any speciality of the truth revealed, but only by the mode of its revelation. What is conveyed in the New Testament by positive statement, is conveyed in the Old by illustration and example. We must recognise in this distinction the selection of means, at every period of the revelation, appropriate to the mental and moral condition of those to whom it was given. The education of the child differs from that of the man, and is carried on by different instruments.

The truth conveyed in the Old Testament through the channel of illustration and example, has a much wider range than might at first sight be supposed. It is impossible that the Mosaic books could ever have been read with ordinary intelligence, without their conveying a knowledge of the unity of God's nature, and the holiness of His character and law. His being, His hatred of sin, His mercy in delivering, and His justice in punishing, are themselves great and influential truths; but the instruction went much beyond this. If we confine ourselves to those illustrated truths of the Old Testament which are authoritatively explained in the New, the number is very considerable. Thus St. Paul argues for the atone-

ment from the sacrifices of the Mosaic law (Heb. ix. 12), and for justifying faith from the example of Abraham (Rom. iv. 1), and the express language of Moses. (Rom. x. 6.) The sovereignty of God, and the eternal purposes of His electing will, are taught from the choice of Jacob (Rom. ix. 12), the history of Pharaoh (Rom. ix. 17), and the events of the time of Elijah. (Rom. xi. 4.) The prototype of baptism is referred to the crossing of the Red Sea. (1 Cor. x. 1.) Patience is taught from the example of Job (Jam. v. 11), and the prevalence of prayer from the experience of Elijah (Jam. v. 17.) The claims of the ministry are defended on the provision of the law relative to the muzzling of the oxen (1 Cor. ix. 9, and 1 Tim. v. 18); the mutual duties of conjugal life illustrated by the creation of Adam and Eve. Such instances might be considerably multiplied, but the foregoing suffice to illustrate the identity of truth, and the variety in the mode of its revelation, which characterise the respective dispensations.

IV. From these preceding conditions arose the necessity of setting apart a given nation, through whom the revelation should be made and the processes of moral trial and preparation carried on. The plan of salvation by a vicarious sacrifice involved the provision of a chosen family, of whom the Son of God might take flesh. The revelation of that plan required that the promise should be fulfilled in a definite line of descent, capable of being clearly traced and marked out beforehand,

so that when the Christ came, these prophetic marks of identity might meet in His person. But thus far so large a platform as a distinct nation was not apparently indispensable. But the necessity arose from the selection of definite persons, who should be, so to speak, the trustees of God's truth for the world at large. Had these persons, who were the chosen voices of the Holy Ghost, been scattered casually up and down the world, each standing isolated and alone amid the thick darkness of the surrounding heathenism, it would have required a special miracle to prepare such men for their work, to give them prominence and position, and to preserve the sacred deposit of truth from being corrupted by the debasing idolatry around them. Such persons would have been like scattered and solitary spots of light struggling through a surrounding darkness. As the case really was, the miraculous interpositions of God's Providence, as well as the immediate and extraordinary action of His grace, were required every now and then to keep even the chosen nation from relapsing into idolatry, and quenching their light in heathenism. But in all God's dealings the occasions for supernatural interference are ever reduced to a minimum, and miracles are never wrought where natural arrangements, acting on the habitual motives of the human mind, would suffice for the purpose. It is evident that a divinely revealed truth, scattered here and there in many separate sparks, could neither have been

likely to attract attention, nor to survive in its original purity, to the same degree as truth combined, so to speak, into one system, gathered into one focus, and lifted up, as it were, before the world from the conspicuous platform of a national existence. If laid up in one definite line, and that line consolidated by all the associations of national life, it evidently became possible to fence the channel of communication round with special precautions, which would have been otherwise impossible.

The history of revelation itself clearly teaches this, for in the earliest period of human history, Divine truth was not the exclusive inheritance of any one race, but the common possession of all. There is not the slightest trace of a limitation before the call of Abraham. That Adam and his immediate descendants did not lock up within their own breasts the knowledge of the Divine will, communicated amid the intimate intercourse of Eden, is not an inference of our reason—though even then it would be unanswerable—but a positive statement of Scripture itself. For the chasm of years which separated creation from the deluge was crossed by two, at all events by three, lives, owing to the duration of human existence when life itself was young, and the physical constitution retained a portion of its primeval vigour. Two of these patriarchs are expressly said to have been active labourers in extending God's will. Enoch exercised the office of prophet amid his

generation, and Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Even after the flood the same freedom existed, and not till mankind had proved their inability to retain God's truth undefiled, without some special miraculous provisions for its maintenance, did the call of Abraham limit the great commission into one line of descent. Later still, flashes of this Divine truth are still to be caught beyond the Abrahamic covenant; as, for instance, in the mystical Melchizedek, in the person of the priest of Midian, and even amid the guilty covetousness of the prophet Balaam. For these instances must not be supposed to have exhausted the whole circle of the revelation possessed in scattered spots of the heathen world, but only to be illustrations of what existed on a much wider scale. Divine truth still remained, and yet, in this scattered and isolated form, it was neither able permanently to maintain its own purity, nor to exercise any substantial influence over the Gentile darkness on every side of it.

Thus, we see that the revelation itself, and the purposes intended by it, involved the selection of a definite nation to hold the truth in trust, or, perhaps I should say, the construction of a nation for that purpose, rather than its selection. For nations have their infancy as well as individuals—an infancy not simply of duration, but of moral and intellectual progress. The deep weakness of fallen humanity required that the education of any people for such a solemn trust as this should

be born with its birth, grow with its growth, and strengthen with its strength. Heathen idolatry had a poisonous power about it to corrupt nature even below its own corrupt level. A generation, inoculated from its birth with the principles of idolatry, would have come to such a trust at a disadvantage, already unfitted for its calling. In some degree the evil was inevitable, for a beginning of a nation there must have been somewhere, since it was not a new race of men created on purpose who were to be blessed in the promised seed, but the old race sprung from Adam's loins, and partakers of his sin. In beginning the work with a solitary individual, and making him the starting-point of the future nation, the evil was reduced to the narrowest compass, and the necessity for miraculous interposition not removed, indeed, but confined within the smallest practicable sphere.

It will be enough briefly to notice the fact, without dwelling upon it at length, that the same necessity for a chosen and separated nation, which we have seen to arise from the plan of a revelation, followed equally from the probation and preparation included in that plan. It followed from probation, because it was consistent with the Divine goodness and justice, that the creature should be put upon his trial with every possible advantage in his favour. So that the failure, when it occurred, should not be imputed to inevitable and irresistible difficulties, but solely to the guilt of man

himself. In all the three spheres in which probation may be traced this holds good. It holds good of the individuals who composed the nation, and who severally partook of the privileges of the whole; for much in every way was the advantage of the Jew sprung of the race to whom belonged the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. It holds good of the nation whose guilt was proportioned to its advantages. It holds good of human nature at large, for this, too, in the person of the Jew, was on its trial. It was to be seen whether humanity was competent to save itself, even by a divinely given law; and when the rebellion of the Jews, and their deep guilt, replied in the negative, it was not the voice of the Jew alone, but the voice of universal man, which made the confession. Not their special nature, but our common nature, was condemned; ours is the same weakness, and ours the same lesson.

Lastly, the necessity for a nation, out of whom should be gathered the line of the prophets, and through whom should be preserved the truth of God, as a priceless legacy for all the world, followed equally from the preparation purposed, and for much the same reasons. It needed a nation to make the truth which it possessed conspicuous, and present it on a scale sufficiently large to force attention and awaken interest. Who can doubt that the nations among whom were known the miracles of Hebrew history, and on

whom God put the fear of Israel, must have had their attention called to that peculiar religion which lay at the root, alike of their singularity and of their greatness? Some minds willing to learn, and touched by the grace of the common father of all, must have turned towards God. The number of Jewish proselytes who joined themselves, in every age and every land, to the people of Abraham, proves this.* But neither could this effect have extended so widely, nor could it have reached so deeply, as we shall see that it did, had it not been for the advantage which, humanly speaking, the grand national history of the Jew gave to the revelation of which he was the appointed channel.

The scriptural proofs that these objects formed part of the Divine plan are scattered so widely up and down the Word, as scarcely to admit of any condensed quotation. Thus, at the moment of first calling the great progenitor of the Hebrew race out of the surrounding heathenism, this was the promise given to Abraham—that God would make of him a great nation, and that this nation should be such a channel of mercy to the world,

* “A disposition to embrace Judaism had become so widely extended, particularly in several of the large capital towns, that, as it is well known, the Roman authors in the time of the first emperors often make it a subject of complaint. Thus Seneca, in his tract upon Superstition, said of the Jews, ‘The conquered have given laws to the conquerors.’”—NEANDER’S *Church History*, vol. i. p. 92.

that in him should "all families of the earth be blessed." This promise was repeated to Isaac and to Jacob; and when the great nation was already made, and was about to enter into possession of the promised land, God reminded them that their growth had been all His doing, and not their own. "The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath sworn unto your fathers." (Deut. vii. 7, 8.) The peculiar privileges accorded to them are pressed upon their consciences as a motive for obedience: "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?" (Deut. iv. 32.) And the object is expressly avowed, that their wisdom and understanding should be seen in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." (Deut. iv. 6.) So firmly was this plan of a nation fixed in the Divine mind, that when God's anger was kindled against the people for their rebellious purpose of returning to Egypt, and He threatened to destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven, no surrender of the plan was contemplated, but only the renewal of it from a

new stock: "I will make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they." (Num. xiv. 12.)

V. But, further, it followed necessarily that the nation thus chosen, entrusted with so great a commission as the guardianship of truth, and fenced about with peculiar providences for this purpose, should become itself a living illustration of the Divine dealings. Their conduct, and its results for good or evil, should constitute a comment on the Word with which they were put in trust, and be evidences of its unalterable truth. In short, it followed that they should become before the world a grand illustration of God's providence, and of His dealings towards nations in that dispensation of national prosperity, or of national suffering, with which He either recompenses or scourges them.

The need of fixing such a lesson deep and firm in the conscience of mankind was great and urgent. For the action of secondary causes, and the complicated influences of human interest and passion, assume, in regard to national events, so peculiar a prominence, that there ever has been danger of God being put out of sight. The supposition that the sovereignty of the Creator extended only to things spiritual, and not to things temporal, would be deeply dishonourable to Him. The unspiritual heart, with no care for heavenly things, would throw off all restraint, could he "un-God" the outward world, and persuade himself that there was no active moral Governor about his path, and around his

bed, and spying out all his ways. And if it be true that God's providence acts ever in subordination to the purposes of His grace—and if not, how could it be that those whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth?—then a recognition of the fact, that things temporal are ordered by the same hand as things spiritual, must be essential to the very object of turning the soul to God, which affliction is intended to accomplish. The assertion, that God is the God of nations, as well as the God of individuals, receives in Scripture the most emphatic expression. By Him “kings reign, and princes decree justice.” (Prov. viii. 15.) “The kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the governor among the nations.” “He breaketh the arrows of the bow, the shield, the sword, and the battle.”

We know, therefore, that His providence extends over all nations alike, but it is not over all nations equally perceptible. However firmly we may believe the fact, yet we have no authoritative interpretation of it; nor can our human wisdom trace, with positive assurance, the connexion of a sin and of its recompence. To us, God's providential government over nations is a thing of faith, not of sight; but to the Jew it was a thing of sight, as well as faith. The miraculous circumstances of his history make it suitable that God should have withdrawn in his case the veil, and supplied the interpretation of His own acts. God has thus given to the world a practical illustration of His providence, well-nigh long-lived as the

world itself, and has presented, on a grand scale, visible examples of the sovereignty which rules invisibly over ourselves. What do we see stamped on every eventful fortune of the chosen people, from the first call of Abraham down to the present time, but the mercy, justice, faithfulness, and power of God?

We see this, because down the whole line of Jewish history God has given us in His word, not only the record of His dealing drawn by Himself, but the interpretation of it likewise. We see smitten Israel flying before the men of Ai. Here is God's interpretation of the fact. "Israel hath sinned, and they have transgressed my covenant." (Josh. vii. 11.) We see the united kingdom torn by internal strife into two nations, and we trace the act to the political folly of Rehoboam. But there was a higher hand behind, for here is God's interpretation: "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and give it to thy servant." (1 Kings, xi. 11.) Is Israel trodden down beneath Gentile feet, even like mire in the street? Here is God's interpretation: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand was mine indignation." (Isa. x. 5.) The seventy-eighth and the hundred and fifth and two following Psalms consist of an enumeration of these retributive dealings of God with His people; and there is

scarcely a prominent event in their entire history in regard to which we are not led behind the veil, and taught to recognise the secret springs of events in the faithful promises or the retributive justice of God. Here, therefore, we have the Divine illustration alike recorded and explained by the inspiration of the Spirit, and stamped ineffaceably on the heroic fortunes and unparalleled sufferings of the chosen race.

That this purpose was foreseen and deliberately intended—an integral part of God's plan in revelation—is proved by a great accumulation of Scriptural evidence. Not only was it generally declared by Moses, but the very picture was portrayed of the stranger from a far land seeing the plagues and sicknesses that God had poured upon His people, and asking, "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land?" (Deut. xxix. 25.) The thought recurs constantly throughout the prophets: "I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee." (Ezek. v. 14.) How marvellously all this has been accomplished, let widowed Jerusalem, and the once fertile land, barren and desolate, and the undying people, scattered among all nations—let them bear witness. And while we listen to their voice, let us recall the fact that the same unchanging God has declared, in the same sure

Word, that Israel shall still witness in the future to His mercy, as he has witnessed in the past to His justice. For thus has God spoken through the same prophet: "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded, and the desolate land shall be tilled And they shall say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden.'" (Ezek. xxxvi. 33.)

Now we must remember that these purposes are parts of one and the same indivisible plan,—not separate plans, pursued one at one time and one at another, and carried out on separate and divergent lines, but one plan, in which every part has moved on together under the guidance of the one mind, and the impulse of the one power, towards its accomplishment. We see that it is one plan, not only because each asserted part has met in one and the same series of Divinely appointed events, and Divinely given revelations, but likewise because each part grows out of the others, and either springs from them, or is involved in them, by so strict and logical a necessity, that if any portion had been absent, the plan itself would have been manifestly incomplete. And yet it is not possible to say that one part has been more admirably designed or more perfectly executed than another, any more than we can separate the various coloured rays of the one sun which awakens nature into life and beauty. Indeed, the very distinction which we

make in our thoughts between one part and another is analogous to the distinction we make between the qualities of God ; and is, like that, wholly human and relative to the weakness of our own minds. God is all things, and only seems to us to exercise at one time one special attribute more than another, because our own relation to Him, and the necessities of that relation, vary. We are weak, and we speak of His strength ; ignorant, and we speak of His wisdom ; guilty, and we speak of His mercy ; suffering, and we speak of His love ; mortal and perishing, and we speak of His everlasting glory, and of His kingdom for ever and ever. As it is with God, so it must be really with God's plan : it is one, as Himself ; perfect, as Himself ; and, as Himself, eternal.

When, therefore, we speak of the purpose of God in revelation as springing out of His design to redeem man, and as comprehending the gift of a revelation adapted at once to every successive age and to all ages, a system of probationary trial, a process of preparatory discipline,—and as working through the selection of an elect nation, constituting a grand example of His own over-ruling providence, let us never forget that all these are the members of one body, the particulars of one design, the manifestations of one Deity, the stars in one crown of glory. Doubtless it is difficult to grasp the whole at once, where it comprehends so vast a lapse of time, so great a variety of events, so

complicated a system of dealing, and interests so infinite and awful. Yet how completely it has ever been so regarded by God Himself is illustrated by the identity which His Word frequently asserts between one age and another—the generation which inherits the promises of the preceding age being, in His counsel, actually identified with it. There are a considerable number of these passages, and some of them are very remarkable. Thus Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple, identified the Israel of his day with the Israel of the Exodus, praying that God would hear the supplications of those who worshipped within His house: “For Thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth.” (1 Kings, viii. 53.) So Jeremiah identifies the sins of his day with the experiences of the people in the wilderness eight hundred years before. “What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are become vain? Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt?” (Jer. ii. 5.) Again, the people besieged in Jerusalem are identified with Abraham their forefather, and hence spoken of as partakers of his act, recorded in Gen. xv. 10: “Which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof.” (Jer. xxxiv. 18.)* On the same principle, the Spirit

* Had this passage stood alone, I should not have ventured to quote it in this special relation. For the act of cutting the

spoke through Haggai to Zerubbabel and Joshua: "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you : fear ye not." (Hag. ii. 5.) So closely identified are the various generations with whom God has dealt with His covenant of mercy, that they become themselves one in the unity of the one plan, and the fulness of the one promise.

And, lastly, we can see that the various parts of this one plan were, so to speak, interlaced together by the golden thread of prophecy, which ran through them all, and united them one to the other. For in every age of the Church of God she has been strengthened by seeing the fulfilment of the prophecies of the past, and encouraged to new faith by receiving new prophecies for the future. Thus, for instance, to the Hebrew people at the Exodus, the fulfilment of the past prophecy to Abraham of their deliverance in the fourth generation, must have tended to establish faith in the prophecy given to themselves of the conquest of Canaan, and of the

calf in twain may possibly have been formally repeated on some unrecorded occasion, and thus Abraham's act only been one illustration of a habit, and the act referred to in the text another. "In fœdere pangendo dividēbant vitulum, et per medium transibant; significantes se, si fœdus frangerent, optare emori, &c., et imprecari sibi dissectionem sui. Hoc ritu usi sunt ut penetraret in eorum animos et ut horrerent fidem violatam."—POLE, *Synops. Crit. in loco.*

spiritual gifts of which the earthly Canaan was but the type. Thus the race who entered into Canaan were in their turn encouraged to trust the faithful God of whose truth their own settlement in the promised land was their visible guarantee. Thus the Jews taken into the Babylonian captivity saw in their own national sufferings the fulfilment of God's prophecies of chastisement, and thus looked forward with the firmer faith to His promises of restoration. Thus we of the Christian Church look back to prophecies fulfilled during every successive period of revelation; and does not that knowledge of the past enable hope with a loftier glance to anticipate the future, when the prophetic calendar shall at last be closed in the perfect sight and everlasting fruitions of heaven? Thus prophecy—ever ending and ever beginning, ever linking the Church at once back to the past and onward to the future, at once strengthening faith while it quickens hope—cements the whole plan together, and gathers, as it were, the several rays of truth and love into the one central Sun from whom they emanate.

Yet, at the same time, while we regard the plan as one, we must take care to look at it ever from God's point of view, that is, from the point of view in which it is presented in the Word. We need to refer the whole plan back to the grand purpose of salvation which it was designed to fulfil. However much revelation has been concerned in the temporal fortunes of the chosen

race, it is the spiritual ruin of universal man by sin which first occupies its utterances. If we turn to the New Testament, it is the same. What is the great figure first presented to us, and in what aspect? Is it not Jesus, who "shall save His people from their sins?" The spiritual salvation to be wrought by the death of Christ stands as the prominent and central thought of all. This exactly accords with our own position, and with the point of view in which a fallen and guilty creature must necessarily look at revelation. When the cripple was let down on his bed before Jesus, the first words of our blessed Master were directed to the soul, not to the body; they were not, "Take up thy bed and walk," but, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The order must be the same with us. For the need of forgiveness of sin through the blood of the covenant, and the regeneration of the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, is man's first great need, and till this is satisfied all other hope is vain.

It is no mistake, no human fanaticism, no earth-born superstition, which has filled the great message of the New Testament Scriptures with the soul's wants, hopes, consolations, and prospects. God will give thee all else, O Christian! even all that thou dost need. In this life He will supply our outward necessities—food, clothing, shelter, friends, competence; but the promise has a condition annexed to it, "Seek ye

first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto thee." Hereafter He will bestow such perfect exemption from all the evils of this suffering state, that not a tear shall dim for evermore the eyes of the saints who shall stand face to face to God. But let us not be impatient for that rest—not yet, child of God, not yet—the work of grace must be first completed before the inheritance of glory begins. So, also, it is on the larger sphere of the world. The Bible predicts the time when all the social and political evils which afflict mankind shall end—no more wars and tumults; no more grinding oppression and suffering innocence; no more bloody battle-fields and desolated homes; no more strife between man and man; no cruel ambition or restless revolution; not a wave of life's stormy sea breaking upon the shore. All evil shall end; but, again, not yet. It will not be till the Church has been gathered, and the number of the elect completed. Not till truth has triumphed over error, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord has covered the earth; not till the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He has come to reign for ever and ever. Everywhere in the Word it is the spiritual work first, because this is the object to which all the separate parts of the Divine plan were secondary and instrumental. There may be other

relations, other objects in the Divine purpose, which as yet we know not, to be wrought by the revelation he has given to man ; but, as far as we are concerned, the glory of God in the salvation of man is the groundwork to which revelation, probation, moral discipline, and providential circumstances, are all subordinate.

LECTURE III.

 The War on its Human Side.

“I CALL HEAVEN AND EARTH TO RECORD THIS DAY AGAINST YOU, THAT I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU LIFE AND DEATH, BLESSING AND CURSING: THEREFORE CHOOSE LIFE, THAT BOTH THOU AND THY SEED MAY LIVE.”—DEUT. xxx. 19.

UNITY in diversity is the characteristic of all the Divine dealings, and can only exist where the agent is omniscient and omnipotent. The combination of the two is strikingly apparent in the natural world. What an endless and profuse variety exists in every province of it! A thousand varied hues and flickering lights and shadows enter into the harmonious colouring of the outward landscape. In the structure of the material globe are included materials of very different character, and invested with very different properties. Every circle of organised life is united by common characteristics. In the vegetable world every plant and tree has its natural features sharply defined and rigidly maintained, each constituting a separate circle of its own, yet passing into

higher circles, which embrace in their specific peculiarities every living thing which grows upon the earth. The multitudinous orders of animate things, from the tiny insect that glistens upon the ground like a living jewel to gigantic birds and huge beasts, do but rise in an ascending scale of organisation, group beyond group, up to rational and immortal man. Hence no one branch of human knowledge is isolated, but intersects and is intersected by other branches; chemistry and mineralogy, geology, botany, and zoology mutually being dependent on each in one common and harmonious system.* If from our globe itself we pass in thought to the universe around, we find the same truth. Our planetary system moves round its central sun; and science, launching her adventurous course amid those systems of worlds which fill the starry firmament, has been able to point out the common centre round which the vast and complex system moves. From the lowest sphere of human inquiry up to the grandest we find unity amid diversity everywhere; system beyond system, and world beyond world, till they all meet in God. How strong is the argument for His unity of being from the universal order which reigns throughout; how clear the proof of His omnipotence whose power can effectually act in all these infinite directions at one and the same time; how strong the testimony to His omni-

* Dr. Arnold, *On the Division and Mutual Relation of Knowledge*.

science, who can combine the whole in one and the same plan ! *

We see the same truth conspicuous in providence as in nature. To the human eye, life is a strangely entangled scene of ceaseless changes which we call accidents, because we cannot trace their secondary causes. And yet that the events of the world do not take place at haphazard, but are directed by common principles and to common ends, is evident to the most secular philosophy. † The course of human history, infinitely diverse in its details, has yet in its general results been reached by such orderly progress as to make it palpable to every observer that there is unity somewhere. Unhappily, it has been often sought in the idea of a law, instead of seeking it in a living agent,—that God who is the one worker alike in nature and in providence, and who owns no law beyond His own constant will and eternal

* “All these facts, in their natural connexion, proclaim aloud the one God, whom men may know, adore, and love; and natural history must in good time become the analysis of the thoughts of the Creator of the universe, as manifested in the animal and vegetable kingdoms.”—WHARTON’S *Theism and Scepticism* (Philadelphia), c. iii. p. 63.

† The acknowledgment underlies the whole scheme of Mr. Buckle’s philosophy, as stated in his *History of Civilisation*: thus he terms the whole world “a necessary chain.” (vol. i. p. 9.)

“What we call a general law is, in truth, a form of expression including a number of facts of like kind. The facts are separate—the unity of view by which we associate them, the character of generality and law resides in those relations

purposes. There is unity in providence as in nature, because one and the same Deity governs and overrules them both.

It is, therefore, in strict consistency with the analogy of nature and providence that God's work in grace should present the same characteristics. Thus the farthest point back to which revelation enables us to trace the course of all the Divine dealings towards man, is the ultimate purpose of God's mind, which included alike nature, providence, and grace as separate parts of the one higher unity. The Divine purpose regarding the human race must have embraced the created globe prepared for his habitation, the moral law under which he should live, and the plan of redemption, by which his ruin, foreseen from the beginning, should be remedied, and made to subserve alike the higher happiness of the creature and the wider glory of the Creator. Descending

which are the object of the intellect. The law, once apprehended by us, takes in our mind the place of the facts themselves, and is said to govern or determine them, because it determines our anticipations of what they will be. But we cannot, it would seem, conceive a law founded on such intelligible relations to govern and determine the facts themselves, any otherwise than by supposing also an intelligence by which these relations are contemplated, and these consequences realised. We cannot, then, represent to ourselves the universe governed by general laws otherwise than by conceiving an intelligent and conscientious Deity, by whom these laws were originated, established, and applied."—WHEWELL'S *Bridge-water Treatise*.

from this higher unity into its subordinate spheres, we find in each of these spheres a corresponding unity of plan wrought out in a corresponding diversity of details. As it is in nature and in providence, so it is in grace. The redeeming purpose of God towards man is found to embrace particulars, each of which originates in some congruity of the Divine nature, and all of which are needed for the completion of the one work, though we are unable at present to know all the reasons, or to trace out the full width and compass of the results. God has enabled us by His Word, not only to trace this purpose, but to gather together the various parts of the plan by which it is executed. The plan is one, and the various parts so essentially enter into the whole, that, if any one of them were absent, the plan would become either imperfect or contradictory. Thus we see that the purpose of redemption, in that mode in which God schemed it, necessarily involved a revelation of His purpose and will to the creatures to be redeemed. From revelation it is impossible to separate moral probation, or from moral probation a gradual and successive development of truth, which should prepare the world at large, politically and socially, but, above all, morally and spiritually, for the coming of the Redeemer. For each and all of these purposes we can further see, that the adoption of a chosen nation was required, who should be the channel for the conveyance of the truth, and its public, abiding witness before the world.

And, lastly, this selected race must needs have become an illustration on a grand scale of the Divine providence which rules in heaven and earth. Between these various purposes we are able to trace a logical sequence and connexion, and can see how they all sprang out of one design, and, as a matter of fact, were accomplished in one and the same series of events. This logical sequence does not, however, justify us in asserting that this is God's one plan in its various provinces; for such conclusions, however clear they may be, must participate too largely in the uncertainty of all human reasoning to support, in their unassisted strength, so grand a result. But, both as regards the whole and each separate part, we have distinct statements in God's Word, in which the object is positively asserted, and in these we find the authority for first conceiving God's plan, and then comparing it with its execution.

But, before I proceed to do this, there is another side of the matter at which it is necessary to look, because there arise from it certain conditions by which the dealings of the Divine Being were, from the very nature of His own revealed purpose, necessarily guided. A clear conception of these conditions will narrow very considerably the sphere of reasonable objections against the Bible, for it will appear that some peculiarities of revelation, which have been alleged to be inconsistent with the operations of a perfect Being, are really inextricably involved in the very conditions

of the case. It would be manifestly unreasonable to raise objections against any scheme on account of peculiarities logically inherent in its very nature and objects. On the other side, certain demands advanced by rationalism from time to time relative to features which it conceives ought to have existed in revelation, on the supposition that it is Divine, and certain further evidence which it thinks ought to have been supplied, would have been wholly incompatible with the very purposes in view. It would be contradictory to expect in any scheme what would be fatal to its own declared objects. Hence, by distinctly recognising these conditions, we shall clear our way for following step by step the execution of God's grand plan down the whole course of His revelation.

In my last lecture, I stated the plan of revelation in what I may call the Divine side of it — its point of contact with the merciful purpose of redemption in the mind of God, out of which it grew. In my present lecture, it will be my purpose to present the same scheme on its human side. For there must be two parties to a revelation, the party who gives it and the party who receives it; and the peculiarities of both of these parties must be considered in the character of the truth revealed, and the mode of its revelation. If, on the one side, the mind of God has stamped His own eternal purposes upon the plan, on the other side the natural and moral conditions of the

creatures with whom He has condescended to be brought into relation have inevitably modified it upon the other. It would be a confusion of language to describe this as the imposition of a necessity upon the Omnipotent, because the necessity arises wholly and solely from the action of His own sovereign will, and from nothing else. Thus, in the case of the human artisan, the characteristics of the work he produces must follow the conditions of the material he chooses to employ. The artificer in wood, or iron, or marble, is limited by the nature of his materials, each material having its own advantages and disadvantages, which the skilful workman takes into his calculation when he selected it. Surely it would be ridiculous to suppose that these advantages and disadvantages limited the free volition of the artificer, when it was his free volition to select this particular material rather than another. He cannot give to the wood the qualities of the iron or the marble, but he might have chosen the iron or the marble had he pleased. He chose, let us say, the wood, and by his own choice, and for reasons known to himself, limited the exercise of his skill by the conditions of the material in which he chose to work. So it is with God. He could have given to man a different constitution had it so pleased Him ; or when man fell into sin, and thus violated the essential condition of his first estate, He might justly have left him to perish, had He seen fit to do so. But

when He made man such as we find man to be, and after the fall and its results was pleased to redeem him, and for this end to enter into a new relation towards His fallen creature, then not only did man's actual state of sinful condemnation involve in itself the kind of salvation which should be provided, but it necessarily modified likewise the manner of its execution. It was not some other race of beings for whom God provided a redemption, but man. The effect of human nature upon the conditions of a Divine action is a necessity of the same sort, and no other, as that which compels a man desirous of saving a drowning friend to stretch the hand that lifts him out of the water. At the back of all God's dealings towards man, and thrown boldly into view whenever the mind attempts to look beyond the mere outside of things into their higher causes, stands the free, absolute, unrestrained sovereignty of the Divine will.

The truth, however, that the relation borne by God's purpose towards man involved inevitable conditions is none the less certain or the less important. To trace these results, and show how the necessities of the case have impressed a human side upon revelation, is the task I propose to myself in the present lecture.

I. In the first place, it is evident that the communication of the Divine will could only be made through human language. For man possesses no other mode of conveying his own

thoughts to others, or of receiving from others the expression of their thoughts. The intuition which searches all things at a glance, and can perceive a thought as accurately as it can see an act or hear a word, is the attribute of a spiritual and omniscient Being alone. Language is the necessity of all human relationship, to which other modes of communication may be subsidiary, but which they cannot supersede. There is not a nobler or more mysterious endowment bestowed by the Creator upon man than the power of thinking, and then of projecting the result of thought from one mind into another by the power of words.

But, if we are only capable of receiving truth when conveyed in words, it is equally clear that the language employed must be human, and the same with which we are acquainted. To use a language which we are incapable of understanding would be practically the same as not using language at all. The interpretation of one human speech by another is comparatively easy, because language, under all its varieties, is united by certain unalienable affinities of its own.* But who can tell what may be the language of angels, or how impassable an abyss of difference may

* Hence Professor Max Müller has concluded that language was a Divine gift to man—an original and congenital instinct; thus expressing the witness of modern philological science to the truth of the Scriptures.—*Lectures on the Science of Language*, by Max Müller. London: Longman and Co.

separate it from the possible comprehension of mankind? To invest men with heavenly speech, or with the power of comprehending the mind of others, except through words, would have been to make man a different creature, separated from what he is by as great a diversity as that which distinguishes man himself from the inferior animals below him.* Unless this had been done, there is no conceivable mode in which the will of God could have been communicated to man with the slightest approach to distinctness and certainty, except through man's language. We ascribe, indeed, in a certain sense, the power of conveying truth to outward objects, whether symbolical or otherwise. We speak poetically of the language of nature,—the language of birds or flowers,—of the heavens which tell the glory of God, and the firmament which showeth His handy work,—because the sight of these things conveys to minds sensitive to such external impressions thoughts and feelings corresponding to those which may be uttered in words; but all will feel what a vast

* “Between animal voices and the language of men there is, however, very little analogy. Human language is capable of expressing ideas and notions, which there is every reason to believe that the mind of the brutes cannot conceive. ‘Speech,’ says Aristotle, ‘is made to indicate what is expedient and what inexpedient, and, in consequence of this, what is just and unjust. It is, therefore, given to men because it is peculiar to them; that of good and evil, just and unjust, they only, with respect to other animals, possess a sense or feeling.’” — *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article “*Language*.”

difference there is between these variable and ambiguous impressions, which differ with different minds, and that clear revelation of positive truth which a state of probation necessarily requires. Whatever the instrument of using it, human language alone can be the possible vehicle of a revelation.

This being admitted, it will follow that the language must likewise be used according to its ordinary and recognised laws. Words must be employed in the sense and with that latitude which belongs to them in the ordinary communications of man with man. The force of verbs and prepositions, the construction of sentences, the connexion of thought with thought, must all be accepted subject to their familiar conditions. To use the ordinary signs in an extraordinary and arbitrary sense, or to modify by an unknown caprice the common laws of verbal expression and grammatical construction,—as when men adopt an arbitrary cypher to convey secrets to the initiated while they conceal them from others,—would not only be to conceal truth, while in the apparent act of revealing it, but would involve a positive deception; for the speaker would use them in one sense, while perfectly conscious that those to whom he spoke were necessarily understanding them in another. The Bible must, therefore, be held to use human language according to its ordinary use and the recognised laws of its interpretation. Within those laws is included the use

of figures, tropes, illustrations,—all those appliances of language in which men are accustomed to express their meaning with special force and vividness. We have, therefore, no right to put these forms of speech into contrast with the literal truth of a statement, since it is the literal truth to the expression of which they are subservient. Whatever license is allowed to language in the communications of man with man must equally be allowed in the communications of God with man ; since language altogether, and its peculiarities, have reference not to the Deity who reveals, but to the humanity which receives the revelation.

But, in this use of language, God has evidently submitted the expression of His own perfect knowledge to human limitations — for speech in its highest form is but an imperfect vehicle of thought after all.* Every man is conscious that he possesses in his inward self certain emotions and thoughts for which he is unable to find appropriate words, and that, if able to give them utterance at all, the expression of them is very imperfect, and falls greatly short of the fulness, accuracy, and intensity of the inward thought. If we

* Thus Dugald Stewart, following Locke, puts foremost, among the causes of the slow progress of human knowledge, the imperfections of language. (See his *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*.) The immense amount of controversy in all branches of inquiry which has been employed upon the definition of words, and which has itself arisen from their ambiguous use, is striking evidence of this imperfection.

are conscious of this superiority of thought over language in ourselves, how far more must it be true of the infinite mind ; for though God, in using human speech, uses it perfectly, it is but the perfect use of an imperfect instrument. The imperfection is not in the God, but in the vehicle He condescends to employ, and in the human creatures to whom it is suited. Mortal language can no more adequately convey the full mind of God than the human body of our blessed Master could circumscribe the Deity which tabernacled within it. Hence, even in a Divine revelation, ambiguities and indistinctness cannot be entirely absent ; and to complain of them is to complain that God should have used the only mode of revealing His will to man which we can conceive to have been possible.

But this inadequacy of human language to convey all God's mind will be more apparent if we remember that the subjects revealed are such that the human mind has in itself no conception of them, and possesses no power of forming a perfect conception of them, because they are necessarily unlike all those earthly objects which enter into human ideas, and, therefore, into human language. In the variations of human speech, the absence of certain ideas is proved by the absence of the terms for their expression.* Where the

* "Language is the outward appearance of the intellect of nations. Their language is their intellect, and their intellect

idea is unknown the term for it is absent likewise. Hence, in the intercourse of more civilised with less civilised peoples, the introduction of new ideas carries with it likewise the introduction of new words. From this necessity arises the peculiar form of the New Testament Greek, for the language adequate to express all the ideas of the heathen mind contained no terms adequate to express the religious ideas to which the heathen mind was a stranger.* Thus likewise, in the translation of the Bible into heathen tongues in our own day, the introduction of new words, or the adaptation of old ones into definitely new meanings, is a matter of familiar experience.†

their language.”—WILLIAM VON HUMBOLDT, quoted in Donaldson's *Cratylus*, p. 56.

* “It is beyond question that the Apostles and Evangelists were accustomed to speak and write in such a style as was especially suited to the Hellenising Jews resident in Asia and elsewhere, who had introduced the spirit of the Hebrew language into their ordinary Greek discourse, and to whom the Greek translation of the Old Testament was evidently familiar — that translation which acted in subservience to the Divine design of making the Greek language the vehicle of the Divine Word.”—BENDEL'S *Grammar*, vol. vi. p. 45. (See Fairbairn's *Hermeneutical Manual*, p. 24.)

The following extract, which I have been permitted, through the kindness of the Rev. C. Jackson, Secretary to the British and Foreign Bible Society, to make from a letter of the Rev. H. A. Jäschke, written from Rylang, June 2, 1863, on the subject of a translation of the Bible into the Tibetan, will illustrate the argument of the lecture:—“The idea of righteousness in the sense in which Paul uses it cannot, of course, exist, and a term to express it must, in consequence, be

The same thing is true of human language altogether in its relation to Divine things. There are truths reaching at present beyond the comprehension of the most sagacious human intellect, because there is nothing exactly correspondent with them in the sphere of human knowledge. Such is the nature of God, the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Divine Being, the eternal generation of the Son of God, the procession of the Spirit. Such is, indeed, infinity and eternity—words significant more by our inability than our ability to grasp them. Yet it was needed that some knowledge of these things should be revealed to us, if it was only to teach us our ignorance by making us acquainted with the exist-

coined. But it is to be regretted that there is no term even adequately to express *justitia*, or *δικαιοσύνη*, in the worldly moral sense; and it must be added that even any conception of such an idea is far from the consciousness of the people. . . . That one should act simply from a conception of objective right or duty, and that this could be anything higher than, for instance, a selfish compassion, that is utterly incomprehensible to him; and it will, doubtless, be long before it will be possible to make him understand anything of the kind." That the same difficulty is experienced in other cases will be shown by the following extract:— "As the natives are never at a loss to express their thoughts and emotions, or to describe any of the qualities of matter with which they are acquainted, we have been obliged, in effecting our translations, to introduce but few new terms: these principally relate to the ordinances of the Christian religion, and to articles and ideas unknown prior to their intercourse with Europeans. Before admitting a new word we have generally considered whether it could be

ence of mysteries too high, too deep, too vast for our human knowledge. But, indeed, had we known nothing of these things, the whole course of God's redeeming purposes would have been hopelessly paradoxical to us. But how, in this proved inadequacy of human thought, and consequent poverty of human language, was it possible to communicate them except by analogies drawn from our human relationships towards each other, which, however true, as far as they go, and however sufficient for all the practical purposes of human belief and action, are yet in themselves of earth, not of heaven? The eternal truths themselves are perfect, but the human representation of them is imperfect; and it is no wonder that, in this imperfect representation, the ingenuity of

Polynesianised; that is, whether vowels could be inserted between every two consonants without destroying its identity; and, secondly, whether any terms exist in the native tongue with which it was likely to be confounded. When we could adapt English words, we preferred doing so; but these cannot be accommodated to the South Sea dialects so easily as words from the Greek. Of this the term 'horse' may afford an illustration. This, by the introduction of vowels, so entirely loses its identity, that horse would become *horeti*; but, as the omission of one *p* and the *s* from the Greek gives us *hipo*, we adopt that word, because it harmonises with the language, can be easily pronounced by the natives, and retains a sufficient resemblance to the original to preserve its identity. *Arenio*, for lamb, and *areto*, for bread, are examples of the same kind. In designating baptism, to avoid all disputes, we have adopted the original *baptizo*."—*Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, by John Williams, p. 528.

human unbelief should find occasions for cavil, nor that the sincere mind should sometimes find it difficult to square with the ordinary modes of human thought these partial glimpses of Divine realities. Above all, what wonder is it that we should find on all sides mysteries unfathomable to our reason, and should be like a blind man groping in a world unknown; safe so long as we trust implicitly the guiding hand of revealed truth, but directly we attempt to go further than it leads us, bewildered with inextricable perplexities.

But in connexion with this point we may take another step, and see how essential it was to the Divine purposes that the revelation should not only be made in human language, used in its ordinary acceptation, but should be conveyed by human instruments. It is not into all the aspects of this question that I now propose to enter, but to those only which refer to the alleged difficulties of unbelief. Hence I must not dwell upon the tenderness with which the whole counsel of God is invested, when, rich with the Divine love, it comes to us clothed also with all the human sympathies of the earthly messengers. The declaration of the fall and ruin of man might have sounded harshly from the tongue of beings who did not themselves partake of it. Who could so eloquently speak of the temptations of fallen humanity as those who themselves weep beneath its burden? What tongue so touchingly discourse of the redeeming righteousness of the dying Son

of God as his whose sins are cleansed in that fountain? Who so fitly tell of effectual grace, of the new life implanted by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of God's people, and of the joys of the children of God, as he who knows them by a blessed experience, and to whom they have become his very life — his daily hope and strength? But on this tempting theme I must not permit myself to dwell. It is enough to recognise the fact that there is, in the very selection of the instruments by whom revelation has been conveyed, a whole treasure of Divine congruities, into which the adoring soul may look and wonder.

But it closely concerns my argument to show that, consistently with the revealed purposes of revelation, no other instruments could have been employed. We have seen the necessity for human language; but conceivably human language might have been spoken by angels, as, for instance, has frequently been the case in their recorded ministrations to the heirs of salvation. Thus the songs of the angelic hosts celebrating the birth of the God incarnate were audible to the ears, and intelligible to the understandings, of the shepherds who watched their flocks at Bethlehem. Thus the angels in white who were found sitting at the empty tomb, announcing the fact of our Master's resurrection; or who, forty days later, declared His future return to the earth on which He suffered, evidently spoke with the tongues of men. That which happened sometimes might

conceivably have been adopted as the ordinary mode of revelation. Or it might have pleased God to employ the spirits of the just made perfect to convey the message, as He permitted the spirit of Samuel to come from the other world to announce to guilty Saul his approaching death. The errand would have been one worthy of such glorious beings ; and, no doubt, either angels or saints would have rejoiced in the commission ; while messages spoken by such lips, and authenticated by the visible glory of such messengers, would have been likely to arrest the attention of the most careless, and awaken the solemn convictions of the most reckless. Against such a course, however, there may have been very many reasons, and one we can distinctly see ; that such a disturbance of the ordinary course of things as would have been involved in it would have been inconsistent with life as it is, and the world as it is, and would have rendered its ordinary pursuits and occupations impossible. Its familiar hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, trials and interests, could not have gone on in the blaze of such a heavenly demonstration.

For, when we come to think of it, it is manifest that such an instrumentality would have required very constant and very special authentication. Let us suppose that these supernatural messages and messengers were occasional, happening now and then, in the same order and with the same

intervals of time as have marked the various books of the Canonical Scriptures. Such communications could only have exercised a wide or a permanent influence by being embodied in a written revelation. But this supposed writing, having emanated from the inhabitant of another world, who, having delivered his message, had returned again to his own native sphere, would have lain outside the ordinary course of human affairs, and, consequently, would have admitted of no inquiry, no evidence, no proof. The case would have been widely different to that which actually exists. For instance, Moses was an historical personage, well known to his own race and age from the part he occupied in its prominent events. His prophetic office was authenticated by many miracles. If, therefore, a person receiving a copy of the Books of Moses had desired to ascertain whether they were really his production, and whether he had authority for what he wrote, the means of inquiry and of proof were within his reach. The same may be affirmed, with suitable modifications, of David and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and of the whole line of the prophets. There the men were, mixing with their fellow-men, and bearing about them the credentials of their office. Such a proof would have been impossible in the case of angelic messengers, who came and went again, none could tell where. No authentication could, therefore,

have been afforded, and the occasional appearance of such angelic messengers would consequently have been insufficient for the purpose.

But suppose, on the other hand, that their appearances had been many and frequent; extended over so wide a portion of the earth's surface as to bring their messages to the knowledge, not of a small portion only, but of an appreciable proportion of mankind, and so frequent as to renew and perpetuate the revelation. In this case, the occurrence would have become so common and familiar as to destroy the influence which it is supposed that the supernatural character of the messenger would at first exercise; unless that character had been confirmed by special signs and wonders. Suppose these to have been given, and awful signs to have accompanied their ministry—the shaken earth, and the roar of the whirlwind; or the opened heaven, and the sights and sounds of the other world revealed to mortal eyes; strange spectacles and apparitions, dire judgments or marvellous miracles; the veil uplifted, and giant shapes, like the angel in the Apocalypse, “clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow upon his head, and his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, and his voice as when thunders uttered their voices,”—suppose such signs as frequent as the supposition requires, and is it not evident that amid such things the ordinary course of human action could not have been maintained? The whole natural framework of things would

have been lost in the supernatural, and the action of human motives and interests been merged in the visible sight and oppressive contact with higher beings, and of another world.

We may conclude, therefore, that the necessities of a revelation involved both the use of human language to convey Divine things, and of human agents by whose lips and pens it should be conveyed. But directly we adopt this conclusion, we gain a stand-point from which the eye passes continually on to still further consequences.

From the employment of human prophets, raised up at certain critical periods for this purpose, arose the personal peculiarities of the authors by which the different books of Scripture are characterised. These peculiarities have constituted the ground of many objections against the Divine inspiration of the Bible. But if I have been right in asserting the principle, that no reasonable objection can be raised against a design from the existence of peculiarities essential to its very object, this objection becomes palpably untenable. It is seen that the employment of the human instrument is inseparable from the nature and objects of the revelation itself. The union of the Divine and human elements in Scripture follows necessarily from the fact of a revelation made by a Divine revealer to human recipients. To object against the union, as if either of the two elements were destructive of the other, is to object against the fact of a revelation being given

to man at all, since we have seen that if the revelation is to be given, its condition must be modified by the Divine will on the one side, and the human capabilities on the other. Personal peculiarities of manner, style, thought; national peculiarities arising from the one chosen line, of which the goodly company of the prophets descended; local peculiarities of manners and habits, suggestive of special forms of argument and illustration; circumstantial peculiarities arising from the period at which they lived, and from the place they held in the succession of the whole design—are all inseparable from their office and its object. They serve to attest the authenticity of their writings, and link their prophetic authority on to the history of their times so intimately, that it has become impossible to deny the authority of the office without denying likewise the reality of the history.

Here also we find the conclusive answer to another objection. It has often been urged that the Scriptural books do not assert their own infallible authority.* We must clearly mark in what sense alone the alleged fact can be admitted to be true. There is a certain ground for the assertion, though the inference it is intended to draw from it admits of positive disproof. If it is meant that the Scriptural writers do not refer their messages to the authority of God; that they do not treat the

* *Brief Examination of the Prevalent Opinions on Inspiration.* With Introduction by Rev. H. B. Wilson, c. i. s. 2.

collective writings of every preceding period of the Church of God as Divinely inspired—David bearing this testimony to Moses, the later prophets to David, and our Lord and His Apostles to them all; or that the sacred writings do not claim to be believed as certainly true, and to be obeyed as certainly Divine,—then to such an assertion we reply in the negative, denying the assumed fact altogether. But if it is meant that each separate book, as a whole, is not invariably prefaced or concluded with a formal and elaborate assertion of its inspired authority, we fully admit the fact; but we add to the admission that the presence of such a statement would have been the wonder, not its absence. If each successive communication had been isolated and distinct from all the rest, or had they been brought by angelic messengers, with no stand-point within the circle of history and the events of the time when it was made, then such an assertion might, perhaps, have been expected. But, even then, it would have been useless except to the person to whom it was primarily given. To the men of a future age it could have carried no weight whatever. Would the objections of modern rationalism have been removed, in the least degree, by the existence of an elaborate claim of this sort repeated in each book of the Scriptures one after another? Would it not rather have been said, that this prominent assertion of the claim only proved how little ground there was for making it; that self-lauda-

tion was of no force, and only indicated a latent consciousness of weakness, supplying defect of proof by confidence of assumption? Such a retort would doubtless have been made, and, it seems to me, with great force.

The evidence for the authority of Scripture supplied by Scripture is incomparably stronger as the facts actually stand. The individual writers did not need this formal reiteration of their official authority, because they were themselves their own living witnesses. The position which, as a matter of fact, their writings obtained in the Jewish Canon would have been impossible in a nation so isolated by a peculiar polity, and so jealously tenacious of their religious principles, if the personal claim of the prophet had not been in each case beyond contemporaneous dispute. The entire Scriptures, as a whole, do not need it; first, because such an attestation was impossible till the Canon was completed, and then would have been suspicious; secondly, because the unbroken succession and internal congruity of the whole revelation, from the beginning to the end, constitutes the most conclusive of possible testimonies that the whole has emanated from one Author, and is invested with one authority. When to these considerations we add the tone of assured authority which pervades the whole, and those many repeated texts in which a Divine origin is claimed with a quiet consciousness of strength which disdains accumulation of

words, we shall need no other evidence. The Scripture does teach its own inspired infallibility throughout, not by reiterated self-assertion, which would have been useless, but by the miraculous mode of its promulgation, by the testimony of prophecy, by the grandeur and heavenly nature of its doctrines, and by the stamp of Deity impressed on the history it records, the lessons it inculcates, and the promises it conveys.

II. Another class of conditions follow from the probationary and disciplinary purposes which we have already seen to be inherent in revelation. The circumstances which give occasion to this trial arise from the union of the Divine and human elements. Had the agency at work been invariably and solely Divine, doubt or disbelief would have become impossible, and no disobedience could have existed, except it were an open rebellion, such as sets the lost spirits into avowed antagonism towards God. But immediately the human element is added, and room consequently made for confusing the Divine agency and the human instrumentality together, withdrawing the supernatural from prominent view under the veil of the natural, room is left for the agency of moral and responsible beings. Probation implies such a state of evidence, and no more, as may suffice for the conviction of the understanding when no moral obstacle is interposed by the will; but not such evidence as to compel belief, or

irresistibly force obedience by mere strength from without against the opposition of the will.*

Accordingly, we find that in every age of the Church this has been the method of the Divine dealings. In this sense He is verily a God that hideth Himself. Revelation has been accompanied during all its stages by such clear evidences as make disbelief inexcusable, because they exceed in variety and strength the testimony on which men are accustomed to act, without hesitation, in ordinary worldly matters; but it has never been such as positively to exclude unbelief. Thus, even during the miraculous period of the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness, there were those in Israel who wilfully imputed to the human agency of Moses the directly supernatural agency of God. On the very day after the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and when the memory of the terrible act by which they had perished was still fresh, and the gaping earth,

* "Nor does there appear any absurdity. The difficulties in which the evidence of religion is involved, which some complain of, is no more a just ground of complaint than the external circumstances of temptation which others are placed in; or, than difficulties in the practice of it after a full conviction of its truth. Temptations render our state a more improving state of discipline than it would be otherwise, as they give occasion for a more attentive exercise of the virtuous principle, which confirms and strengthens it more than an easier or less attentive exercise of it could. New speculative difficulties are of the very same nature with these external temptations."—BUTLER'S *Analogy*, part ii. c. vi.

which had opened her mouth and swallowed them up quick, was scarcely closed, the leaders of the conspiracy could charge the act upon the Law-giver: "Ye have slain the people of the Lord" (Num. xvi. 41); and it needed the mysterious stroke of the plague, loading the very air with death, to break down the stubbornness of their unbelief. Such instances occur constantly in the course of the sacred history. A very remarkable one is supplied by the infatuated conduct of the Jews at the very time that the anger of God was inflicting His foretold vengeance on their sins by the sword of Babylon. The certainty with which affliction had followed idolatry might have taught them to recognise the relation between them, as that of a sin and of its punishment; but because the punishment followed the sin they waywardly reversed the lesson. "We will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then we had plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out our drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine." (Jer. xlv. 17.)

If it be true, as St. Paul asserts, that these things were written for our learning, what is the

lesson which it was God's purpose to convey by recording this perverseness of Jewish unbelief? Is it not to show that God would not supersede His own purpose of probation, by merging moral evidence in a blaze of demonstration? In leaving room for human action, He has necessarily left room for human unbelief. Doubtless it would have been easy with God so to have revealed His will as to exclude the possibility of the one, but it would necessarily have excluded the possibility of the other likewise.* In another world the soul will be brought face to face with eternal realities by the actual sight of them; there will be a conviction of glory in the sight and enjoyment of heaven — of eternal anguish in the sight and

* "What it becomes necessary to explain, is not the cause of physical ills or deformities, which is easily arrived at, but the origin of pain and moral evil; and, further, we must understand that pain and moral evil are the necessary consequences of human liberty. In fact, to be free is to possess the power of choice, and of choosing between good and evil. This power of choice supposes the interference of pleasure and of pain; thus there are but two alternatives, to do away at once with pain, moral evil, and liberty, or to preserve liberty with its origin and consequences."—*Natural Religion*, by M. Jules Simon, part ii. c. 2.

"To speak accurately, God gives no physical concurrence to evil. His alleged moral concurrence is equally unfounded. It is clear, that to create man free, even while foreseeing the alienations of that freedom, is not to concur in it. God directly wills the liberty of man, because it is a good. He renders its abuse possible, because that is the condition of using it."—*Modern Pantheism*, by M. Emile Saisset, vol. i. p. 260.

endurance of hell. But such an open vision precludes all moral trial, and would be inconsistent with the disciplinary state which lies between the primeval condition and the final, eternal destiny of man. Here we need evidence for faith, not demonstration for sight.

In order to see that the same Divine principles pervade the Old and the New Covenants, we must remember that moral trial in no degree depends upon the amount of knowledge bestowed, but on the willingness to believe in the God who bestows it. Whether faith be fixed primarily on temporal promises, or on spiritual, is wholly indifferent to the character of faith itself, for this depends upon the act, and the condition of mind out of which it grows.* A child, with his half-developed understanding, may exercise trust at least as implicitly as a man with his matured power. Thus it is

* "I do not mean to go through, in detail, all the instances of the force of faith in God, which the Apostle takes from the lives of patriarchs, and prophets, and martyrs, to illustrate his general account of the principle. But by referring to the place you will easily see, that in all these servants of God, the principle, though existing doubtless in different degrees, and though tried and exhibited in very different ways, and upon very different occasions, is everywhere the same. That it is confidence in God, grounded upon such a manifestation of His character as He saw fit to make—a reliance so deep and sincere upon His power, His goodness, and His truth, as enabled them to hope undoubtingly for all that He promised, to endure patiently all that He appointed, and to perform resolutely whatever He enjoined."—Bishop of Ossory, *On the Nature and Effects of Truth*, third edition, p. 21.

with all moral qualities. Implicit obedience may be seen in the performance of trivial duties as much as in the performance of great ones. Worldliness of affection may exist as intensely in the beggar as in the noble. The occasion by which a grace is called into exercise does not enter into the essence of the grace itself. What a difference, for instance, there is between the knowledge of Divine truth possessed by the least in the kingdom of heaven, and by the loftiest of the ancient patriarchs, who could not sit, as we can do, beneath the Cross of Calvary, and read by its mysterious light the completed revelation of the Divine will. Yet they who knew only the substance of salvation exercised as true a faith in the promises as we do, who look into the full glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. Accordingly, we are told that the faith by which Abel offered unto God, and Noah prepared the ark, and Abraham left his home and was willing to sacrifice his son, and Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, and Jacob worshipped, and Joseph gave instructions that his bones should not be left in Egypt, and Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with his people than to enjoy the pleasures of Pharaoh's court, was the same faith—the same in essence and effect—as that which enables a man in our own day to rest his soul on the perfect righteousness of Christ. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, whatever may have been the extent of the promises. Faith is the evidence of things not

seen, whether its conscious range be fixed on the one truth of the unity and supremacy of God, or extends to the whole compass of revealed realities. Moral qualities are therefore independent of the variations of circumstance calling for their exercise; and probation, which has for its object the development and discipline of the moral qualities, must be independent of them likewise. A man's mind and heart might be equally exercised under the imperfect knowledge of the law, or the unclouded revelations of the Gospel, so long as the amount of his knowledge is adapted to his capacity, neither too little for effort, nor too great for power.

Equally must probation be independent of the kind of evidence on which belief rests. It depends upon the sufficiency of the proof, not upon its character. The kind of evidence afforded, and its amount, would naturally correspond in all cases to the truth revealed, and the severity of the trial through which faith is called to pass. Instances of the latter kind are of very frequent occurrence. Thus Moses was prepared for the difficulties of his great mission by the miracle of the burning bush. Ezekiel for his commission to a rebellious nation by the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord by the river of Chebar. The Apostles in general for the great trial of their Master's death, and separation from them, by the transfiguration on the mount. Paul for the sufferings of his life by the vision on the road to

Damascus ; and, again, for his journey to Rome, when the Lord stood by him in the prison of Jerusalem. The evidence was graciously strengthened with the strength of the temptation. It has differed, likewise, in kind at different ages of the world. To the Hebrew Church, it consisted in the visible cloud over the tabernacle, and the glory above the mercy-seat, and in those extraordinary interpositions in which God laid bare His arm, and through the veil of His glory permitted glimpses to be caught of His presence and His power. To the Jews of our Lord's day, they consisted in signs, and wonders, and miracles, wrought upon a smaller scale and within a narrower sphere, which made it necessary that they should be supplemented by the evidence of credible witnesses. To ourselves, again, they are different, and appeal not at all to the senses, but to the intellect and to the conscience. But in each stage it is immaterial, for the purposes of moral probation, what the nature of the evidence may be, so long as it is sufficient for belief, when the moral conditions are favourable. The trial of faith was the same to the Hebrew Church, and to the Jews of our Lord's day, as it is to ourselves, but the nature of the evidence, for reasons which will now be presented for immediate examination, was widely different.*

* "The Jews who lived under the succession of the Prophets, that is, from Moses till after the captivity, had higher evidence of the truth of their religion than those had who

If probation enters, therefore, alike into our own circumstances and those of the ages which preceded us, it can be no wonder that it should be stamped with the same characteristics. If, even in an age when the evidence was outward and sensible, the wisdom of God so modified it as to admit of the possibility of human disbelief, what wonder that the same possibility should exist when the evidence is moral and intellectual, and is brought into contact with the endlessly varying peculiarities of the human mind and heart. There is nothing, therefore, in the existence of infidelity, or in its considerable prevalence at certain times and in certain forms, to stagger faith, as if it were inconsistent with the Divine wisdom and goodness that He has not made the evidence such as to exclude its possibility. For this is but one of the conditions inseparable from the human side of revelation—one of the limitations to which God, in His own sovereign will, saw fit to submit His dealings, when He entered into relations with a creature not only finite and weak, but fallen, depraved, and corrupt.

We must deeply feel that the tolerance, on lived in the interval between the last-mentioned period and the coming of Christ. And the first Christians had higher evidence of the miracles wrought in attestation of Christianity than what we have had. . . . And we, or future ages, may possibly have a proof of it, which they could not have, from the conformity between the prophetic history, and the state of the world and of Christianity.”—BUTLER’S *Analogy*, part ii. c. vi.

God's part, of the open infidelity which not only despises, but avowedly attacks His revealed Word, is a profound part of that great mystery of evil with which the human mind has ever been greatly exercised. Bear in mind the dignity of the Speaker,—God, Creator, Preserver, King, who called the universe into being, “who sitteth upon the circuit of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are but as grasshoppers,” “who measureth the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.” Bear in mind the mysteries of the work of salvation, in the dignity of the three Persons of the Deity engaged in it—in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God; His resurrection and ascension, and the throne of glory on which He still sits in human nature, evermore interceding for His people. Bear in mind the immensity of the interests at stake, and the eternity of happiness or misery declared to hang on the issue in every one of the countless millions who have peopled this our globe. Bear in mind the number and dignity of the spectators, in the revealed fact that this work of God is the object of intense interest and importance to the various orders of intelligent and moral beings who throng the universe with life. Bear these things in mind, and it must needs appear a very wonderful and mysterious thing that God should permit this

opposition, and allow the shadow of an apparent possibility that His counsels should fail, even in the smallest and slightest part of them,—mysterious, that God should look on while His truth is denied, His name dishonoured, His will rejected, His very existence called into question, and should not interfere. Yet, however strange it may appear, it is but an inevitable condition of the whole work of revelation, and could not be avoided without changing either the nature which God has seen good to bestow upon man, or the salvation with which, in His infinite compassion, He determined to redeem him.

This is one of those cases in which the difference between human weakness and Divine strength needs to be recognised with great distinctness. We often adopt plans without recognising all their future results, and from which, could we thus see them, we should shrink in dismay. The sphere of these results may be so extensive as to oppress human weakness by its very magnitude. We may see a thing to be right and just, and may be competent to act on the conviction upon a small scale, but incompetent to act upon it upon a large one. We are overwhelmed by the vastness of the interests which make up the aggregate of human happiness or sorrow. How often we find the results of our own deliberate acts almost intolerable. The emigrant, were it any longer possible for him, amid the last bitterness of separation, to recall the voluntary act which takes him from

home and friends, would often do so from the mere weight of the immediate sorrow. Death is a very solemn thing to us in an individual case, but it actually appals us in the accumulation of cases. The man who undertakes to provide for the happiness of a family may be crushed by the weight of responsibility if called to provide for the happiness of a nation, and this wholly independently of the question of ability. The officer, who with singular judgment directs the movements of a detachment, may yet want the moral strength and courage to direct the movements of an army at some critical moment, when victory or defeat hangs doubtfully in the scales. In all these instances we see that finite weakness, alike intellectual and moral, may be crushed by the mere magnitude of the scale on which human happiness and misery may be affected.

But it is wholly different with God. He is infinite in all things—in nature; in attributes; in justice, as well as in love; in endurance, as well as in chastisement; in holiness, as well as in truth; in strength to do, as well as in wisdom to conceive. When God, therefore, accepts a thing, He accepts it in all its results, because He knows all, and is competent to do all. He does not act, and then shrink from the consequences of His own acting. His love and wisdom schemed human salvation in a mode which, doubtless, sprang out of congruities in His own nature and being, which we are no more competent to under-

stand than we are competent to measure the Infinite. All that would arise from this plan—the blessings and glorious happiness on the one side, the sin, and guilt, and misery, even deep as hell itself, to which it would furnish occasion on the other, and the final consummation of Divine glory and created happiness be achieved by them both, must have been all present to Him who “seeth the end from the beginning.” In a sphere so vast human weakness is lost. We can see that mere extension can make no change in what is right and good. What is just in a small sphere must be equally just in a large one. Tracing on a small scale the mode of God’s acting, we must still accept it where we can no longer measure it. We can see that revelation could not have been given without affording occasion for disbelief; and if we are appalled by its extent and audacity, and the mystery of the wisdom which permits it, we can but believe and trust. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

But, further, this truth extends to action as well as to faith. As God was capable of giving a perfect evidence, but man was incapable of receiving it, so God was capable of giving a perfect law, but man was incapable of keeping it. No doubt it was possible that God should force man to obey Him universally, just as a master forces a slave to labour from fear of the lash; for what resistance is there which Omnipotent strength could not crush?

But this compulsion would have destroyed all probation; for where there is no choice in the matter, but the creature must act in one given way, whether he will or not, there is no longer moral right or moral wrong. We may, indeed, say, with deep humility, that such a mode of acting would have been very incongruous with God's revelation of Himself; for, to make a moral being, and endow him with reason, will, and conscience, and yet not to allow him to exercise them, would be so self-contradictory as to be inconceivable. Certainly all discipline to the moral nature would have been out of the question, and reward or punishment as incongruous as they would be to the dumb elements; for no distinguishable difference would remain between deprivation of will and conscience, and total inability to exercise them. The same weakness of human nature which makes it inseparable from the gift of a revelation that God should permit the existence of disbelief, makes it inseparable from probation that He should permit the existence of disobedience,—permit it, not in the sense of condoning it, but in the sense of not using force to prevent it.

For, I suppose that compulsion of spiritual strength is as possible to the will as of physical strength to the body. The order of our nature is that the will should be influenced through the reason, the conscience, and the affections. Hence the operation of God the Holy Ghost upon the human soul is not a blind impulse, coming we

know not whence or why, but works through motives, rectifying and quickening, but not rudely disarranging the order of our constitution. But to act merely by force upon the will, without satisfying reason, enlightening conscience, and kindling affection, would be as truly compulsion as when the hand of a strong man grasps a weaker companion, and forces him, by sheer strength, to move in one direction. Hence God works on the human soul from within, recreating, restoring, renewing it from the effects of the fall into its original order and harmony, not forcing it from without. The spring and strength of this new nature lie in the personal influence of the Divine Spirit, not in any native energy of the human will. But the God who created man does not, in His work of restoration, violate His own principles, but operates ever in entire conformity with that moral and mental constitution which He has Himself bestowed upon His human creatures.

But if man is to be dealt with in accordance with his moral nature, his progress upward into a higher state must be both gradual and slow. This is experienced to be the case in individuals; for although conversion may be instantaneous, sanctification is invariably progressive. It is, therefore, the same with collective bodies, for they are but the aggregates of individuals. It holds good in every branch of human progress. By a long series of ascending steps each generation advances from the acquisitions of the generations

preceding it. We, who have inherited a high state of civilisation, are scarcely conscious of the long and laborious processes by which it has been accomplished. The growth of the race at large follows the analogy of the natural life, and progresses through infancy, youth, and manhood. Its learning, its arts, sciences, inventions, thus grow by accumulation—and in this growth no steps can be omitted, nor can it be conceivably possible to compass in a stride the progressive lessons of centuries. The process is silent and unconscious, and seen only in its results. In every period of the world men have been raised up here and there, enlightened beyond their generation, measuring, as it were, by prominent landmarks, the insensible results of years; just as the progress of the tide, while individual waves advance and retreat again, can only be perceived by the rocks, which one by one are submerged beneath the waters, or reappear again above their surface. But the course of the whole race, or of any considerable part of it, is slow, painful, laborious.

This upward progress of mankind is wholly to be attributed to the moral discipline, in which revelation has ever held a prominent place, and not to an innate power of its own.* The notion

* “In the ancient world, a dark fatality seemed to reveal itself in the rise and fall of nations—an irresistible cycle before which all human greatness must give place The popular religions of antiquity answered only for a certain

of a self-contained energy in man, which leads him inevitably onward to an ever-growing perfectability, is an idle dream, contradicted by many signal lessons of human history.* Left to the influences of its own depraved will, the tendencies of human nature are downwards, not upwards, retrogressive, not progressive. The true

stage of culture A culture devoid of all religious and moral grounds of support, such as might be capable of withstanding every shock, and indestructible under all changes, and torn from its connexion with the inner life that alone gives the vigour of health to all human efforts, could not but degenerate into false civilisation and corruption; there was as yet no salt to preserve the life of humanity from decomposing, or to restore the purity that was passing into decomposition.”—NEANDER’S *Church History*, vol. i. p. 7.

“If I be not mistaken, there is in the agitation of the Pagan intellect throughout the century before, and the century and a half after, Christ, amid much that seems accidental, a certain regularity discernible, an entering of that spirit into forms of ever-progressing precision. The genius of antiquity essayed, exhausted, and used up, so to speak, every combination possible of the principles once entrusted and handed down to her—the entire of the plastic power that dwelt within her. It was only after she had become completely incorporated, after each one of her doctrines, forms, and institutions, her sum of vital power, had been sifted and consumed, that with the period of the Antonines a mighty revolution commenced—not visible, indeed, to those who were contemporary with it, suspected by but a few, and a leaf in the history of the human mind was turned over.”—*The Gentile and the Jew*, by John J. S. Dollinger (Preface).

* The history of ancient nations presents a series of successive experiments in civilisation, coming to a close and beginning again under slightly modified conditions, and not

outlines of human history are not that of a race created in barbarism, and gradually rising from its creation continuously upward towards universal righteousness and peace, but of a race created perfect, then falling into sin, and, under its influence, sinking by a moral gravitation further and further from its original perfection; then

a continuous and progressive advancement. It is needless to refer to Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia. Whatever antiquity had gained descended to Greece and Rome. Yet both fell by their own inherent corruptions. Of Greece, history records, "After the subjugation of Greece, when national honour, love of country, and patriotism had ceased to be powerful motives, we find Greece in the condition of the deepest moral degradation." (Gieseler's *Eccl. Hist.* vol. i. p. 23.) Even of Greek philosophy it is true. "This last period of Greek philosophy bore the marks of intellectual exhaustion and impoverishment, and of despair in the solution of the high problem." (Dollinger's *The Gentile and the Jew*, vol. i. p. 370.) Of Rome the same writer says: "The men in Rome who were above their age—men like Tacitus, for instance—were oppressed with a profound sentiment of disheartenment and sorrow. Recognising the futility of resistance to the tide of corruption, and the impotence of law, they were unable to discern any where the germ of a new life of a great moral and political regeneration. Tacitus was fully persuaded that Rome and the state lay under the lash of Divine displeasure, and thus they were driven to the conclusion that everything of this world was void and empty, and human life a huge imposture. Cicero, in his time, had characterised a contempt for all human things as a sign of greatness of mind." (vol. ii. p. 288.) The mode in which, under the Christian era, the Christianity of the West itself conquered the barbarian face which had overturned the civilisation of the West, presents a fact new to the world's history.

brought under a process of remedial probation through the revelation of the Divine will and the action of the Divine Spirit, and through their discipline slowly rising again to a higher condition of intellectual light, and moral and spiritual progress. Apart from the sphere of revealed truth, all human advancement has been no more than the revolution of a very narrow circle of growth, prosperity, decay, and ruin.

Whatever progress, therefore, mankind has made, and is making, is attributable to that new principle of life which revelation has planted among decaying and perishing humanity. But this new principle, though it is bestowed by a power without—the power of the Holy Ghost—is yet planted within, and grows, and blossoms, and bears its fruit according to the natural order of the human constitution. Its effects are consequently slow, and at any given moment almost imperceptible. For it consists of no increase in the powers of the human reason, no alteration in the tendencies of corrupt human nature, but in the progressive influence of a Divinely revealed system of truth, stamping its own characteristics on individuals, from individuals influencing masses, through masses constituting the character of generations, and then conveyed, still growing in the process of conveyance, from one generation to another. The mode in which this progress of thought and feeling may thus become hereditary is partly natural, partly supernatural. It is partly

natural, through the transmission of thought from age to age ; through the early lessons which form the first mental development of childhood, certain principles and modes of thinking wholly strange to one generation being assumed as indisputable in another ; through the connexion of thought with thought, so that one asserted truth not only frames a habit of thinking and feeling in a given direction, but actively suggests other thoughts ; through the fixed embodiment of principles in the habits of social life, and the institutions of political existence ; and, lastly, through literature, and social intercourse, and personal example. Partly it is supernatural, through the constant operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart and conscience, and those providential agencies by which it acts. Every moral progress gained gives the capacity for further progress ; every step taken is the preparation for a further step ; and every result of Divine teaching, whether in the individual soul, or in the generation at large, but opens the way for the gift of further light and further advancement.

In these truths we find the reason for that long lapse of ages which intervened between the fall and the salvation wrought in the actual life, sufferings, and death of the incarnate God. The prepared seed was to be sown in prepared ground. We have seen that God was to work through the natural constitution of His creatures, and, according to this constitution, no teaching could be

effectual which was wholly before and above the age, and did not find a certain congruity to itself in the hearts and consciences of men. The revelation of the full Gospel of Christ and of His completed work would have been unintelligible in the absence of certain preliminary convictions touching the nature and guilt of sin, the holiness, justice, and truth of God, the necessity of propitiation, and a future state of rewards and punishments. These truths had been taught, we must believe, by God Himself to the first generations of mankind. Thus the need of an atoning sacrifice was known to Abel; the nature of sin, the moral government of God, and the final coming of the Lord, to Enoch; and the righteousness of faith to Noah. But these truths, originally possessed, had either been wholly lost, or so perverted by corrupt superstition as to become more effective to darken conscience than to enlighten it. It was necessary, therefore, that they should be renewed upon the human conscience, and incorporated into the familiar processes of human thought; so that when Christ came, He might preach to a generation in whose hearts these grand preliminary truths were already present.

But this could not be done all at once; not from unwillingness of God to reveal them, but from the incapacity of man, without some previous training, to understand them. The deep corruptions of human idolatry needed to be chased away, and some definite conceptions of God and His

will substituted in their place. But ideas grow so slowly in the human mind that all this was the work of ages. Repeated revelations, more and more precise, as the acquisition of one lesson prepared the way for the reception of another, followed each other; while, on every side of the chosen line of revelation stood a watchful Providence, ready to deepen the lesson, either by extraordinary blessings or by extraordinary chastisements, till it should grow into the actual heart and conscience of mankind, and become a second nature. The two thousand years which separated the deluge from the days of the Messiah were not too much for this. But, under God's special teaching, they were enough; and the age to which our Lord preached was one already disciplined and prepared, among all the monstrous sins which marked the calamitous times of later Jewish history, for that world-wide development which the Church was to receive after His death.* Nor was the preparation confined to the Jew, but extended, very mainly through His agency, far

* "The precise time when He (Christ) appeared had some particular relation to His appearance; the preparations made by the previous development of the history of nations had been leading precisely to this point, and were destined to proceed just so far, in order to admit of this appearance,—the goal and central point of all. It is true, this appearance stands in a highly peculiar relation to the religion of the Hebrews, which was designed to prepare the way for it in an eminently peculiar sense."—NEANDER'S *Church History*, vol. i. p. 4.

and wide throughout heathendom. It was not that this state of moral preparation was adequate to produce the Gospel out of the religious consciousness it had cultivated; for the preparation was itself Divine, not human; wrought not by man of his own will, but by God, against man's will, and without man's conscious knowledge. But it was that God had brought His own design thus far towards its glorious accomplishment without violating the nature He had Himself given, or contradicting the probationary purposes of His own dealings. The efficient power of the God is not less conspicuous than the wisdom which combined the ordained will of the Creator with the moral freedom of the creature.

From this necessity of adapting truth to the spiritual capacity of the age, we gather the explanation of what may be called the highly pictorial character of the earlier dispensation. Modern experience has learned the educational value of visible representation, as the only mode of conveying truth to minds in an early stage of development. Abstract or continuous thought is to them impossible, and it is needful to engage the senses to assist the slower processes of the intellect. No man would think of instructing the mind of a child by the same modes as he would adopt towards a man in the maturity of his reason. The condition of an undisciplined mind corresponds exactly to the immaturity of youth; and this boyhood of the reason is scarcely

less clearly distinguishable in the history of nations than in the history of individuals. To fix the precise intellectual stand-point of the Hebrew race at the period of the Exodus, when God, visibly manifested among them, began His great work of spiritual education, is necessarily very difficult, from the tendency to generalise too sweepingly from very scanty information. A man who should take the leaders of the nation, or even the natural aristocracy of the pure-blooded descendants of Abraham, around whom, as around a centre, the mixed multitude of strangers hardened into a national type, would probably fix his standard somewhat too high. The man who should regard simply the mass of dependent people of various nationalities who were bound into one nation by the rite of circumcision, would probably fix it somewhat too low. Both sides must be taken into consideration, as I hope to show in a subsequent lecture, when this question comes for fuller discussion. As regards the mass, however, considering their occupations in Egypt, some as herdsmen, as workers in the field, as makers of brick and builders of cities for the Egyptians, it is impossible that they should have been more than a very partially instructed race, and one already deeply demoralised by slavery, with its menial occupations, its degrading sense of inferiority, and the absorbing interest in mere bodily comforts which it tends to produce, and

did actually produce, in the Hebrews, as shown by repeated circumstances of their history.

To such a race, a free verbal revelation of truth would have been more or less unintelligible. What Moses, and Aaron, and the educated leaders of the people would understand, would be beyond the comprehension of the mass. Yet it was necessary, for the Divine purposes, that the nation at large should become a peculiar nation, impregnated with peculiar religious principles and feelings, so that, wherever a Jew went, there should go with him the influences of the lofty monotheism of which his race was to be the visible embodiment. I do not mean to infer that the higher ranks of the Hebrew race were willing disciples, and that the difficulty of this spiritual education lay solely with the lowest classes of the community, because we know that it was not so. The names of Nadab and Abihu, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Zimri, and even Miriam and Aaron, with the historic circumstances associated with them, show that the disaffection of the people never wanted leaders among the more favoured families. But with them the difficulty was not so much intellectual as moral. The waywardness and strong passions of a depraved nature, confirmed by the influences of an idolatry hemming them in upon every side, and with which, naturally, they would come more freely into contact than their dependents, as in the case of Zimri and the

allurements of Midian, were here the moving causes. So that there was a double childhood to be dealt with — an intellectual childhood, existing especially in the greatest numerical proportion of them, and a moral and religious childhood in them all. Was there not, in the mode by which God communicated truth during the early Mosaic dispensation, a Divine suitability to the moral and spiritual condition of those who received it? In its broad characteristics, it was eminently representative and pictorial.

Of this character were the miraculous events of their history, coming home as they did to themselves, and to the passing circumstances of their own experience, with a significance which they cannot possess to us. In what broad, strong characters did not their wonderful deliverance from the iron furnace of Egyptian bondage blazon forth the faithfulness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; His character as a prayer-hearing God, and the omnipotent strength which was equally adequate to save or to destroy! What a symbol of the presence of the Invisible was there in the guardian pillar which marshalled their journeys! what an illustration of the twofold character of His judgments in the mystic emblem which at once threw light into the camp of the ransomed, and cast a darkness doubly dark within the host of Egypt! Where could be seen more signally the infinite resources of the Divine power, and the severity of the Divine retribution, than in

the miracle which made the waters of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over, and brought them back in their strength upon the host of the pursuers? In what striking colours were God's awfulness, His inapproachable glory, His holiness, His unalterable will portrayed, when upon the craggy platform of Sinai the Lord descended amid blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words! Were not all these outward events representations of Divine truths, so embodied in visible acts as to appeal even to the senses of the spectators? That awful sense of the Divine greatness which led the people to request that the words might not be spoken unto them any more, lest they should die, must have deeply touched the conscience and fastened on the memory. So it was with all their early history. The smiting of the rock in Horeb, the miraculous supply of manna, the dividing of the Jordan before the ark of God, the falling of the walls of Jericho, the first defeat and subsequent victory at Ai, were all events which did not end with the acts that were done, but presented in a series of acted pictures the living and abiding truths of the faithfulness and sufficiency, the holiness and the justice, of God.

Of this character were also the types and shadows of the law. Here we enter upon the profounder mysteries of redemption. Without for one moment trenching upon that minute interpretation of the ancient symbols given us by the

Spirit of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we can scarcely think that the great outlines of Divine things must not have been seen by the eyes of the Hebrews, even through the outward veil. Certainly there were certain truths so strikingly represented in that old ritual, that the dullest soul must have caught some glimpse of them. What could those constant purifications and often-recurring sacrifices mean, but the existence of some defilement needing to be cleansed away? The blood of bulls and goats, and the sacrifices which smoked continually upon the altar, did they not witness, silently but eloquently, of the offended justice of God, and that without blood there could be no remission of sin? The priesthood appointed to minister continually between them and the Holy One; the high-priest standing in his gorgeous robes of office, or, more significantly still, entering in vestments of pure linen, once a-year only, into the holy of holies, must they not unconsciously have awakened in the soul of the Jew a sense of personal unworthiness, and of his need of a Mediator? Or, must not the recognition of created dependence, and of the duty of grateful service, have been awakened by the thank-offerings and first-fruits, by the feast of tabernacles, and the annual solemnities of the Passover? All these are broad, general lessons, coming home to the inalienable instincts of the human soul, and which men might, therefore, have recognised without understanding the detailed mysteries of the Messiah's

sufferings and death, or even comprehending the spiritual nature and meaning of His atonement.

Of this character were the dealings of God towards the chosen race in general, for these embodied in action the very doctrines verbally and dogmatically taught under the New Testament. So fully was this done, that there is not, perhaps, a single doctrine in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, of which an illustrative example is not to be found, either in God's dealings with His saints of old time, or in their relation towards Him or towards each other. The fact arises simply from the identity of the Divine nature on the one side, and of human nature on the other, and from the eternal and unalterable relation of dependence which must ever subsist between the two, from first to last. Thus we see the doctrine of intercession illustrated in Moses, when he made atonement for the sin of the people at Sinai; and in Aaron, when he stood between the living and the dead in the wilderness of Paran. Thus the electing sovereignty of God was illustrated in the choice of Jacob, and the perpetuity of the Divine promises in the seven thousand worshippers who constituted, in the time of Ahab, the remnant according to the election of grace. Thus the sacraments were prefigured at the Red Sea, in the spiritual meat of the wilderness, and the waters of the rock that followed them. Prayer is taught by all the company of the saints, and even the very order of the creation

of Adam and Eve had a meaning. Thus the principles dogmatically taught in the New Testament were pictorially represented and practically enacted under the Old.

But did the ancient Hebrews understand the meaning of this pictorial and representative teaching? That they fully comprehended it is not to be supposed; and had it stood alone, they would probably not have comprehended it at all. But this teaching was grouped round a few primary truths so simple, that no minds could fail to understand them, and which were therefore taught in words. The truths, for instance, contained in the ten commandments were so plain in themselves, and touched so directly upon the practical temptations of life, that they could not fail to be intelligible to all. These teachings in word would reflect their light on the teachings in act which were grouped around them. With this assistance these graphic representations of great truths must have impressed the mind, and formed the tone of feeling, even where their full depth of meaning was not understood. Just as a child may gather from a picture its general sentiment and impression, though he may not be able to explain all its details, so in the spiritual education of mankind, the pictorial teaching which entered so largely into the old covenant must have moulded and adapted insensibly the hearts and consciences of the Hebrew race for the higher and clearer revelations that should follow. To the world's

intellectual and moral manhood they would have been unsuitable ; but to the childhood of its religious life they were full of force and significance.

III. But, lastly, these conditions, which I have shown to follow from God's revealed plan, point our minds on to some further conclusions of great practical importance. We have seen that revelation involves the use of human language and of human instruments ; that probation involves such a provision of evidence as would admit the possibility of disbelief, and such an adaptation of the moral discipline to the actual constitution of man's nature as would admit the possibility of disobedience. All these conditions hang on the supposition that God deals with human nature as it actually is, not according to some altered shape into which it might conceivably have been thrown. Without the first condition, man could never have received the communication of God's will at all ; without the second, there could have been no probation ; without the third, no moral freedom, and, consequently, no reward or punishment. But when God saw thus fit to work through human instruments, with all their sinful infirmities and passions, and by means adapted to man's nature, and limited by his capabilities, He admitted into His plan an element of contingency, and, humanly speaking, of uncertainty. He admits the occasion for disbelief ; what, then, if His creatures should reject His truth ? He admits the

possibility of disobedience ; what, then, if they should refuse to do His bidding, and disavow the work which He has given them to accomplish ?

It would be absurd to suppose that God has acted towards human nature on one supposition, and has described it in another, or that His dealings as recorded in the Old Testament were not adapted to the spiritual condition of man as described in the New ; in other words, that He should describe him as corrupt, and act towards him as if he were holy. Indeed, both in the Old and the New, the description of human nature is consistently the same, as radically depraved, justly condemned, and spiritually impotent. It cannot be otherwise, therefore, but that God framed His plan of revelation from the beginning with constant reference to the disordered moral condition of the creatures to whose necessities He was about to adapt His dealings. In short, God so designed His plan as to include with it all the disturbances caused by the irregular passions and wayward disobedience of His creatures. Every act of human sin, which has apparently interrupted the destined course of the Divine goodness, from the fall of man to the present moment, has really been foreseen and provided for.* The admission of this disturbing

* "But even at the instant when I assume this power to myself, all the moral and physical consequences of my act are already known, controlled, ordained ; and, more than this, they were so from all eternity, for nothing is unforeseen and unpro-

element we have seen to be inseparable from the purpose of probation itself.

Here, therefore, God admitted a further condition, since He condescended to work both for and through creatures imperfect and depraved. But it would be wholly wrong to say that these acts of disobedience, which broke the even course of God's merciful dealings, thwarted God's plans, because they were foreknown, and therefore comprehended in His plans from the beginning. It would be equally wrong to speak of the modifications thus introduced into God's mode of accomplishing His purpose as a necessity imposed upon God, since they sprang solely from the depth of His sovereign will, in voluntarily entering into relations with man after the fall. Still the fact remains true. The design of God has never undergone the shadow of a change, but in the stately calmness of Almighty strength has marched ever onwards towards its consummation, and no-
 vided for in the mind of God."—*Natural Religion*, by M. Jules Simon, part ii. c. iv.

"This is especially made prominent when the opposite appearance presents itself, as if the plans of God would be suppressed by human wickedness. The holy writers of Scripture declare, in opposition to this appearance, that what arises from such human opposition has its appointed place in the plan of God. The very perversion of the human will, although known by God from eternity, does not in any way, nevertheless, originate with Him; but God impels the will which has perverted itself by circumstances conducted by Him, in given places, to determined manifestations and activities."—*The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, by Dr. Julius Müller, vol. i. p. 253.

opposition of earth or hell has caused it to swerve one hair's breadth from its predestined course. Nevertheless, we see in the history of revelation God's plan, adapted to His own perfect nature on the one side, but equally adapted on the other to all the foreseen contingencies and irregularities of human action.

We see this conspicuously illustrated in the history of the Jewish nation, and its distinct recognition is essential to a comprehension of God's plan as accomplished in them and through them. It was the fixed purpose of God, as we have seen, that the Jews should supply the stock of which the Son of God should take flesh ; that they should be the channel for the preservation and conveyance to the Gospel time of revealed truth ; that they should be not only its trustees, but its living witnesses, and the abiding illustration of God's moral government over man. This, I say, was God's fixed purpose, and every part of it has actually been accomplished to the utmost. The plan was one, eternal, unalterable. But the mode in which it was to be carried out was not thus inexorably determined. Two alternative methods were presented, of which the human will was to take its choice, and find its probation. These two methods were stated for the first with the utmost possible force and precision ; they were reiterated with great variety of form ; they were expanded, and enlarged, and amplified, as if the Spirit of God would allow on this point no mistake, and

would force home on the conscience, beyond the possibility of eluding it, the great question of life or death, good or evil, a blessing or a curse. On the one side lay obedience ; on the other disobedience. For either alternative the Divine wisdom was equally prepared. In the one case, they should be the witnesses for God in the grandeur of an unexampled national prosperity, and in blessings conspicuous to the world ; in the other, they should be witnesses in the extremity of their national calamities, and in curses which should render them an astonishment unto all nations.

Doubtless God knew which alternative would be selected, but He stated both for man's sake, to show that it was no default of His will, but the perverseness of man's sin alone, which chose the sword and not the olive-branch—the red right hand of punishment, and not the extended arm laden with blessings. There is something most exquisitely touching, a tenderness sublime in its very excess, in the complaints which the Spirit of God puts into the mouth of the prophets on this subject. Thus Moses, with a heart already touched with a prescience of the melancholy future, records the words of God Himself: "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever !" (Deut. v. 29.) The Spirit, by the lips of Isaiah, caught up the lament: "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments ! then

had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Isa. xlvi. 18.) And with what a profound depth of emotion did our blessed Master Himself express the same sentiment, weeping over Jerusalem: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" (Luke, xix. 42.)

But, nevertheless, the great design went on; if it might not be in mercy, then in judgment; if not with the unveiled smile of a protecting God, then amid the frowning clouds of His retributive anger. But still the plan went on, and so far as concerned the office of the Jew in preparing the way for the Messiah, has been accomplished to the last jot and tittle of it. As it was accomplished in the Jew, so it will be accomplished in the Christian times. There is still the same alternative of belief or unbelief, obedience and disobedience; nay, in the fuller Gospel light, it is an alternative as wide apart as heaven and hell; but with us, as with the Jew, it is all comprehended in the grasp of one foreknowledge, and the unity of one plan. In acceptance or rejection, in life or death, God's work still moves on to the time of the consummation, when the perfected kingdom of His dear Son, established in righteousness and peace, shall fulfill the predicted design, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace."

But, lastly, we find in these principles the explanation of those diverse aspects of God's

dealings which bear to a superficial examination the appearance of discrepancies between different portions of the one revelation, and of the spirit expressed in them. Scepticism has dwelt much and most unfairly upon these variations, for it has, intentionally or not, exaggerated and distorted the facts to a monstrous extent. It selects, on the one side, the loving spirit of the letters of St. Paul or St. John, and, on the other, the sterner enactments of the Mosaic law, and the narrative of the destruction of the Canaanitish nations. It places them side by side, and asks, with assumed triumph, whether the spirit of the two is identical, and whether portions which it considers so contradictory to each other can be parts of the same revelation, and that the revelation of a God of love. The contrast is most unjust, for all its force rests in the assumption that the Mosaic law was a stern and bloody code, tending to foster in the Hebrew people a spirit of fierce revenge and reckless cruelty, and that the destruction of the Canaanitish nations was but a consistent instance of its general tendency. I trust to show, in a subsequent lecture, that this representation is radically untrue; that the Mosaic law was characterised by a gentle beneficence and regard to human life which advanced beyond modern legislation in its most favoured instances, and that the extermination of the idolatrous nations of Canaan was an exceptional and judicial sentence.

But, meanwhile, it is important to observe that

a most wide distinction exists between variations in the mode of acting, and diversities in the principle on which we act. The discrepancies alleged to exist between Leviticus and the Pauline Epistles can only carry the slightest weight on the supposition that the principles, motives, and character denoted in the one, are so vitally different to those denoted in the other, that the two cannot be conceived to have emanated from the same Author. But identity of principles and character is consistent with great diversities of action, because the actions depend not only on the character of the actor, but likewise on the position, character, and conduct of the persons towards whom he acts. Take, for instance, the conduct of a father towards his children, or of a monarch towards his subjects. The father may threaten, warn, encourage, comfort, expostulate, or explain, as circumstances may require; he may punish or he may reward, and yet in all these variations may be guided by the same consistent principle, and may even show his unselfish love more in the act of punishing than in the act of rewarding. For, in punishing, he suffers pain himself, alike from the cause demanding punishment and exciting indignation, and from the pain which he himself communicates. Could the relations of a father towards his children be exactly recorded day by day, and each day by itself; could these separate daily records be examined by a person who had no further and independent knowledge of the

circumstances than this record, we can easily conceive that the two might appear very inconsistent, and apparently irreconcilable, with the notion that the agent was the same in both, and acting on the same principles. Yet we know that this may be so. The father's conduct must vary with the varying conduct of his children. So it must necessarily be with God and man. The Divine love, and wisdom, and purpose, are the same all through, but the moral necessities of the man may need a different treatment.

The variations of conduct on God's part towards His ancient people are precisely of this kind. The character of God, as presented in positive precepts, and illustrated in act, is the same under the Mosaic and Christian covenants. It is admitted, that in the character of God, as depicted in the Old Testament Scriptures, the attributes of punitive justice and inflexible truth are conspicuous; and it is equally admitted that, in the New Testament Scriptures, the qualities of beneficence and love are exhibited with the same distinctness. To adduce proofs of either of these is therefore unnecessary; and in order to prove the identity of the Divine character under both dispensations, we only need proofs of beneficence and love under the Old Testament, and of punitive justice and inflexible truth under the New. I shall not pause here to accumulate evidences of the first alternative, since they will come into view in a subsequent lecture, but shall only supply instances sufficient to establish the

fact. Thus, what can be more specific than the description of His own character which God gave to Moses: "The Eternal God, merciful and gracious, slow to wrath, and abundant in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, bearing with iniquity, transgression, and sin, and holding guiltless by no means the wicked?" (Exod. xxxiv. 6.)* Of the spirit of the entire dispensation the words of Moses are a conclusive illustration: "Thou shalt love the Eternal, thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy intensity." (Deut. vi. 5.) That this disposition of mind was intended to reach to man as well as God, we have further evidence. "Thou shalt not avenge, nor retain any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy fellow-man as thyself: I am the Eternal." (Lev. xix. 18.) The two precepts which distinctively separate the genius of New Testament Christianity from the morals of heathenism are thus seen to be but the reiteration and re-enactment of the positive terms of the Old Testament dispensation. Of the Divine goodness and mercy, the entire history of the ancient Hebrew people is one continuous and emphatic declaration.

But if we now turn to the New Testament Scriptures, we find God's punitive justice as clearly declared as His beneficence and love are declared in the Old. In the teaching of our Lord, it stands conspicuous in His parables of the tares,

* From the translation of Dr. Benisch.

the draw-net, the unmerciful servant, the wicked husbandman, the marriage of the king's son, the ten virgins, the talents, the rich fool, the great supper, the rich man and Lazarus, and the pounds. His descriptions of the great judgment-day, and the severity of His language towards the Scribes and Pharisees, strikingly contrasted with the gentleness of His ordinary teaching, are corroborative evidences of the same fact. In the Pauline Epistles the proofs are so redundant, that two quotations must suffice. No language can be more positive than the Apostle's description of the great principles of God's moral government: "Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) With what an intense force is not the same great truth expressed in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, closed as it is with a quotation from the book of Deuteronomy, as if it were a prescient warning against the attempt to separate the character of God under the two dispensations: "Our God is a consuming fire!"

It is scarcely possible to dwell on this aspect of the Divine character, without recalling the fact that it stands as prominent in nature and providence as it does in revelation. That man must, indeed, be a very blind student of the world around him, who does not recognise in the order of the outward creation, and in the moral

government of the universe, the attributes of severity and truth as deeply stamped upon it as the attributes of beneficence and love. This is not my present subject, and I must not, therefore, permit myself to dwell upon it. But in every sphere of the Divine dealings, without an exception, the manifested character of God is one and identical.

The assertion of this by no means involves any denial of the fact, that a perceptible difference, in the proportion in which the two classes of attributes are exercised, may be traced in the Old and New Testament dispensations respectively. But the explanation of the fact is to be found readily in the diversity of circumstances, and the specific object allotted to the ancient covenant in the economy of the Divine dealings. The facts present a variation in dealing, but not a discrepancy in character. It must be constantly remembered that, in the Mosaic dispensation, God was dealing with the Jewish nation in its collective capacity, not as a mere aggregate of individuals, but as itself an entity, and that this mode of dealing sprang necessarily, as I have already shown, from the position allotted to the chosen race in the Divine plan. If a similar work were to be accomplished towards a modern and highly civilised people, we cannot conceive it accomplished by any other means than by severe outward chastisements making the action of an overruling Deity almost visible to the senses? Let us

suppose a nation, such as we know nations are now, and as we know that they ever have been, comprising every diversity of human character, and swayed by every diversity of motive; let us suppose it to be God's will that this nation should enter upon a definite series of outward acts, and for this purpose should be isolated by a peculiar code of laws from communion with all other nations, is it conceivable that all parts of the nation would willingly acquiesce in this mission; or, refusing to acquiesce in it, that their obedience could be secured by anything short of a continued series of miraculous acts, sharp and decisive, and following every case of disobedience with inexorable chastisement? It seems evident that as nations have only an outward existence, by outward means only can they be ruled. So far from thinking the severe chastisements which fell upon the ancient Church inconsistent with the Divine character, it is not conceivable, even to us, with all our knowledge, that such a result could have been accomplished by any other means. It was His good pleasure on the part of God to select a separate people as trustees of revealed truth for all mankind; for I have shown that it was a necessary condition of the great saving purpose out of which all revelation immediately grew. If the purpose of saving man was good, every means required for its attainment must have been good likewise. The chastisements which became necessary to compel the fulfilment of a trust which the cor-

ruption of human nature made men unwilling to execute, themselves partake of the infinite beneficence in which the whole redeeming plan had its origin.

It is unnecessary to pursue the argument further in detail in this place. When we take into account the mental and moral condition of the Hebrew people, bearing the same relation towards the civilisation of modern times as childhood bears towards manhood, and add, further, the resolute spirit of disobedience, characteristic even in evil, which was displayed by the Jewish nation, it not only becomes consistent that the earlier dispensation should bear a somewhat sterner and harsher aspect than the later, but we can see it, humanly speaking, to have been inseparable from the conditions of the case. We must not, indeed, limit, even in thought, the resources of Infinite wisdom and power, but, so far as we can see, every separate act of chastisement recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures was as appropriate to the particular exigency of the moment as the whole system of the Divine government was fitted to the end for which it was adapted.

The variations which, on a superficial view, have been magnified into discrepancies, and urged as objections, are found, under a more accurate examination, to be new illustrations of the inward coherence and perfection of the Divine plan. The discovery of real harmonies, instead of supposed discords, becomes an eloquent teacher of humility.

For it shows that it is wholly within the human sphere that our difficulties take their origin, and from human ignorance they derive their apparent strength. They are like earth-born clouds which narrow the sphere of human sight, but do not touch the sun himself, as he goes forth in his strength. Could we rise above them, as we shall do hereafter, we should see God's dealings stretching like a spotless firmament, radiant with grace and truth.

It should be, therefore, with the deepest reverence that, having considered the general conditions of the plan of revelation on its human side, we now venture to draw nearer still to the Divine presence, and trace the marvellous details of its accomplishment.

LECTURE IV.

The Pre-Mosaic Period.

“KNOW THEREFORE THIS DAY, AND CONSIDER IT IN THINE HEART, THAT THE LORD HE IS GOD IN HEAVEN ABOVE, AND UPON THE EARTH BENEATH: THERE IS NONE ELSE.”—DEUT. iv. 39.

THE argument of these lectures is now sufficiently advanced to enable me to reverse the order of the subject, and to pass from the Divine plan to a consideration of its accomplishment. Thus far I have endeavoured to put together in one concrete whole the various purposes of God's mind, as He has Himself revealed them, and as they meet in the unity of the one revelation; I must now pass from the plan as it existed in the Divine mind to the plan as it was carried into effect, unfolded little by little in the course of its execution, till it culminated in the Christian Church, with its established ministry and visible polity, its means, ordinances, and sacraments. To each stage we must apply our knowledge of the revealed plan as a key to its interpretation. Our course of thought will be analogous to the act of the natural eye, as

it traces the gradual expansion of the light, first appearing as a speck amid the distant darkness, and shining more and more unto the perfect day.

The necessity of retaining the plan itself clearly in mind all through, renders it desirable briefly to recapitulate its outlines, and recall the successive steps by which we have arrived at it. These steps have been three :—I. By the first we were brought to recognise the existence of a definite design in revelation. The exact adaptation of the means employed to the production of certain specific results requires us to draw, in regard to God's Word, the conclusion which we adopt in regard to His works, and, resting on the mind's intuitive belief in final causes, to recognise in this adaptation the proof of design, and in the fact of design the existence of an intelligent designer. This conclusion is further confirmed by the dogmatic teaching of the Scriptures relative to a personal God, His moral government over the world, the action of His exact and infinitely minute providence, and the attributes of perfect wisdom and power by which He operates. Lastly, it is established by the positive statements of the Scriptures, none the less authoritative because, in strict analogy with the whole character of the inspired teaching, they are fragmentary, and need to be put together into one connected view. Whatever may be the opinions entertained relative to the authority of the Scriptures, these statements must at all events be accepted as con-

taining the Bible's own theory in regard to itself, and as, therefore, constituting the standard by which, in common logical justice, it must be measured.

II. Having proved the existence of a plan, our next step was to determine its character. For this purpose we needed to look, in the first place, at the object to be attained by it. We found that the revealed purpose of God was His own glory in the salvation of man, and that this salvation was to be wrought meritoriously by the incarnation, sufferings, and death of His own Son, and efficiently by the power of the Holy Ghost. The plan for carrying this purpose into effect consisted in making known God's will towards mankind, by a revelation so ordered and graduated, that, in its separate books, it should meet the moral and religious wants of successive generations, and yet in its completed form should be one book—a Bible adapted for the whole world, at all times and under all circumstances. This revelation was to answer two purposes. It was to become an instrument of moral probation to all brought within the circle of its influence; and it was to operate in preparing mankind for the coming of the Messiah and the universal preaching of the Gospel, upon the completion of His personal work. For these purposes a nation was to be elected, to act as the trustees, conservators, and witnesses of this revealed truth, giving it publicity by the events of a great national his-

tory, and protecting its purity by a peculiar national polity. Out of this nation was to descend, by a line predetermined and foretold, the human nature which the Son of God was to take into union with His Deity, and in which He was to complete His expiation for the sin of mankind. Lastly, this elected nation was to be a living illustration before the world of the providential government of God, in His dealings alike with nations and individuals. These particulars constituted one plan, and throughout the whole we saw the golden thread of prophecy linking all the successive stages together in one indissoluble unity of object and operation.

III. From this plan followed certain conditions which belonged necessarily to its execution ; because, when God, of His sole and sovereign will, entered into relations with man, His dealings were regulated, not alone by His own power, and wisdom, and holiness, but likewise, on the other side, by the weakness, ignorance, and sins of those He willed to save. The gift of a revelation consequently involved the employment of human language and human instruments, with all the familiar usages of thought, construction, imagery, and human relation which enter into earthly language. Probation and preparation, by a consequence equally inevitable, involved that the action of the Divine Spirit upon the human should be that of conviction, persuasion, renewal, not that of force and irresistible change. Hence arose the per-

mission of a choice to the darkened human conscience and perverted human will, with all the consequences, wide and terrible as they are, incident to such a permission. This being accepted as inevitable, it further followed that God, in electing a chosen nation to be the instruments of His will, must have taken into account the contingencies of human action, with all its sinful and passionate irregularities ; and while, on the Divine side, He compelled the accomplishment of His will, yet on the human side should permit a latitude either of willing obedience and a blessing, or of unwilling obedience and a curse, in the mode of its fulfilment. Hence all the speculative objections which, from time to time, in the course of human controversy, have been urged against the authority of revelation from the human characteristics perceptible in the books of Scripture, from the latitude allowed to human unbelief and disobedience, and from the severer elements of justice, which exist alike in the revelation itself and in the dealings recorded by it, seem to be utterly groundless, because these peculiarities flow from the inseparable conditions of a revelation adapted to the wants and capacities of a fallen and corrupted nature.

Doubtless, in stating these conditions, we stand on the very verge of mysteries wholly insoluble to the human intellect. Up to this point, indeed, we tread on the firm ground of revealed truth ; for there is no point in the whole revelation more

positively stated, and reiterated with greater emphasis, than this alternative choice of good or evil, which it pleased God to give to His ancient people. Directly we step over these revealed limits, and endeavour to understand and define the point of contact between the determinate counsel of God and the moral responsibility of His human instruments, we step into the thick darkness which God has not seen fit to remove. But the depth which we cannot fathom is but part of the same mystery which meets us everywhere. We find it in nature, in the concurrence of the creating will, and the secondary causes through which He acts. We find it in providence, in the influence of outward circumstances upon the conduct. We find it in grace, in the operation of the Divine Spirit upon the human spirit. In all these cases we must ever maintain the distinction, as carefully as we avoid the separation between them. But, without overstepping these limits of revelation, or endeavouring to measure the immeasurable, two things stand out prominently from this point of view. We see that God's foreknowledge must have included every possible contingency ; and that, in relation to human action, with which alone we have to deal, foreknowledge and foreordination must have had constant relation to each other ; the former including what God Himself willed to do, as well as what He would permit His creatures to do, and the latter acting in accordance with it. In truth, in the eternal and absolute mind of God, they

must be one and the same. But the union of the two lies so wholly outside the human sphere, and so exclusively within the Divine, that it would be the height of presumption to endeavour to trace it.

But, further, from this human point of view we can clearly see that there is no logical connexion between the most perfect foreknowledge and any interference with the moral responsibility of the agents, whose actions are foreknown. For the essence of the act of knowing must be the same, whether it is done finitely or infinitely; the degree not changing the nature of the act. Now, it is easy to recall instances where we have had foreknowledge of events, and yet no interference with the doing of them. For instance, we may possess so accurate a knowledge of the character and principles of certain persons as to be sure beforehand, even to a moral certainty, of the choice they would make under certain strongly defined circumstances. In proportion as we attempt to apply such a conviction to the minor details of action we go wrong; but, in regard to the great outlines of conduct, we may be right. For instance, I am perfectly certain that, if a supposed temptation were presented to such or such a person, it would be indignantly rejected,—with what words, or looks, or attitudes, I could not anticipate; but, of the act itself, I might feel so certain as cheerfully to stake my life upon the issue. But my knowledge of the event would have no conceivable influence in producing the

act which I know. Our knowledge is very different to God's — different in degree, as finite differs from infinite, perfect from imperfect; different in kind, for ours is a knowledge of the future; but with God there is no future. Yet the relation between the act of knowing in one person, and doing in another, would seem to be equally absent in either case. If, in the finite foreknowledge, there is no possible approach to interference with moral agency, we must conclude that it is absent equally in the infinite. Beyond this we are not able to go. We must be thankful to see thus far; that up to the widest limit to which the analogy of human things with Divine extends, there is no conceivable inconsistency between the assertion of a preordained plan and the permitted action of human motives and interests in the agents chosen for its accomplishment.

It is necessary for us clearly to apprehend these principles from the relation in which they stand towards the whole course of the Divine dealings; for every successive step in revelation presents to our view the prescience and sovereignty of the Creator, and the moral action of the creature. The consistency between the two, as concurring in the same series of events, must, therefore, be asserted with the utmost precision. During the whole course of God's revealed dealings with mankind, each successive transaction has been adapted to the circumstances of human

conduct as they arose. There is no exception to this beyond the first sovereign act of the Divine will, which freely elected to enter into relations with man at all. All the subsequent actions were conditioned by the circumstances to which they were adapted. Thus, in regard to the whole design, the character of revelation, as a scheme of saving mercy, arose out of the fall of man. The special atonement accomplished by the death of the Son of God arose from the position of condemnation in which sin placed man towards the Divine justice. Thus, in particular instances, the sentence which condemned the Hebrews to wander for forty years in the wilderness, arose from their disobedience in refusing to enter upon the possession of Canaan. The seventy years' captivity in Babylon arose from the idolatry of Judah, and its special duration from their neglect of their Sabbaths. The same adaptation of God's dealings to the circumstances of man's action is to be traced everywhere. And yet, side by side with this pliancy and adaptation, there stands the absolute foreknowledge which comprehended each and all of these contingent variations within the limits of the same consistent plan.

Now, on tracing the first outgoings of the Divine plan into act, we must take our point of view, not from the period of the creation, but from the date of Moses. Our standpoint must be at the beginning of the written revelation, and in the position of those to whom it was given. Of

the Scriptural books in general, it is true that their composition belongs to the same date as the transactions they record, and they stand in the highest class of historical books, because they were written at the time and by the witnesses of the events.* Thus, the four last books of Moses narrate transactions in which Moses himself partook. Thus internal evidence proves that the books of Joshua and Judges were written by an eye-witness of the events; and that the books of Samuel are either to be attributed to Samuel himself or to a contemporary. And the same thing may be said more or less exactly of the other historical books. Thus the books of the prophets hold up a mirror to the events and characteristics of their times. The Gospels similarly contain the life of our Lord by those who were witnesses of the events, and lived at the period of their occurrence. It may be generally said, therefore, that the Scriptural books synchronised in their composition with the events which they record. The objective course of God's purposes, and the revelation which made them known, ran side by side, and grew towards completion together. At no point of this common development can they be separated, so that the truth of the one should fail to involve the genuineness and authority of the other. But there are two exceptions to this rule, as I have already noted, and they consist of

* Rawlinson's *Bampton Lectures*, lect. i. p. 21.

the first book and the last book of the inspired Canon. The book of Genesis records events, many of which were so long prior to the times of its author, that they span the whole period back to the first creation of the human race: the Apocalypse similarly records events, many of which were so long posterior to the times of its author, that they span the whole period of human history, till the times of the consummation. These two books are, therefore, exceptional in their character to the other books of the sacred Canon. Would we judge of the whole structure of the Apocalyptic vision, we must take our standpoint at the date of St. John, and look forward; so, to judge of the structure of the book of Genesis, we must take our standpoint at the date of Moses, and look backward. It is beneath the shadows of Sinai, and the still reverberating echoes of the voice of the Almighty, that we must sit to listen to the revelation of the ancient past. But we must do so, not stripping ourselves of all our further and higher knowledge, and so placing ourselves at the intellectual and moral position of the ancient Hebrew, but taking back with us the fuller revelations of the completed Word, that God may thus be His own interpreter, and point with His own Divine hand to the traces of His wisdom throughout the whole.

When we do this, we shall see at once how completely the object for which the book of Genesis was given to them was moral and religious;

that it contains nothing which had not an immediate reference to some part of the Divine plan which was to be accomplished through their instrumentality. Recall their position ; they had just been delivered from the furnace of Egyptian bondage by the immediate interposition of God. Of the nature of this God, and the covenanted relation in which He stood to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they had doubtless some traditional knowledge ; at least a part of the people must have had it in an unwritten form. It is probable, if not certain, that, amid the grinding tyranny of their bondage, this knowledge was but partially possessed and imperfectly understood. Among a large portion of the people, and especially among those who had joined themselves to them from the Gentiles by the rite of circumcision, this acquaintance with the past was naturally vague and elementary. They were now to be set apart as the channel of promises to the whole world, in the fulfilment of the Divine covenant with Abraham ; nay, further back, through Abraham, with the first father of the human race himself. They were to be the witnesses of these promises amid a world steeped in idolatry to its very heart, and would be constantly exposed to its dangerous allurements. For this purpose they were to be separated from all other nations by a peculiar polity, containing many minute enactments directed to this especial purpose. Was it not vitally important that they

should receive a clear knowledge of what God had done and had promised in the past, and had pledged Himself to accomplish in the future, and should be made acquainted, so far as possible, with those dealings out of which their own calling and election had grown? Was it not needed, if God would deal with them as moral and responsible creatures, that the first principles of all religion—the sole existence of the Creator, the dependent state of the creature, and the broad facts of their own fallen condition, and possible recovery, should be proclaimed to them in such a way as they might best be able to understand? In no way could this teaching be communicated so well as by narrative and example—the modes of instruction best adapted to the earlier stages of human development. No imaginary narrative, no fictitious examples, were needed. The lessons they were as yet capable of receiving were few and simple. In what narrative could God convey them so fitly as in the tale of their own race? by what examples could they be so signally illustrated as by the examples of their forefathers? on what platform be so conspicuously exhibited as this, where the world was the sphere, and God Himself the agent?

Did they not need to learn that they were not their own, but belonged to the God who made them; and this in a sense incomparably more absolute than the assertion of any human proprietorship? The skill of the human workman only combines into fresh forms existing materials, with the ultimate

production of which he has had no part ; but God not only framed out of the dust the marvellous mechanism of man's body, but He called into existence the earthly elements themselves of which it is composed.* Human ingenuity, in its highest flight, can only form the dead outside of things, copying the form and colour of the Creator's work, but is wholly unable to infuse into them the mysterious principle of life. It can paint the appearance of the tree, model the form of the flower, sculpture the lineaments of the man ; but the vivifying power within them, by which they live, and grow, and move, in all the processes of marvellous life, is as far above our imitation as it is above our comprehension.† But the Creator gave

* "There are three words employed in the Old Testament in reference to the production of the world. *Bára*, He created ; *Yatzár*, He formed ; *Asáh*, He made ; between which there is this difference, that the two last may be, and are, used of men. The first word, *Bára*, is never predicated of any created being, angel or man, but exclusively appropriated to God ; and God alone is called *Boré*, אֱלֹהֵי הַבְּרָאָה Creator. Creation is, therefore, according to the Hebrew, a Divine act—something that can be performed by God alone. In the next place, though, according to its etymology, it does not necessarily imply a creation out of nothing, it does signify the Divine production of something new—something that did not exist before."—Dr. M'CAUL, *On the Mosaic Record of Creation; Aids to Faith*, Lect. v. p. 203.

† "'Tis a great mortification to the vanity of man, that his utmost art and industry can never equal the meanest of Nature's productions, either for beauty or value. Art is only the under-workman, and is employed to give a few strokes of embellishment to those pieces which come from the hand of the

not only form but life, breathing into the outward mechanism of the human body the principle of life, and endowing this noblest earthly work of His creating hand with intellect, conscience, affection, will.

Hence we belong to God by a right which has neither limit nor qualification. And this is the first primal truth of all religion, on which every subsequent lesson must be based. For the whole relation in which man stands towards revelation must depend upon the relation in which he stands towards the Author of it. If he is an independent being, under no prior obligation to any beyond himself, and enjoying the right to be his own "measure of all things," he must clearly be at liberty to accept or to reject the offers of revelation just as he likes, and by the rejection can incur no guilt and deserve no punishment, since he will only be exercising his own natural and inalienable privilege of an intelligent will. In such a case he would deprive himself of the advantages rejected; but there the result would end. But, if he is a dependent creature, the case is wholly different. The rejection of the will of a Being whom he is bound to obey is an act of disobedience; nor does the rejection separate him from the moral government, or escape the justice of a Being to whom he is

Master. Some of the drapery may be of his drawing, but he is not allowed to touch the principal figure. Art may make a suit of clothes, but Nature must produce a man."—HUME'S *Essays*, Essay vi. p. 101. London, 1742.

under the obligations of created dependence prior to the revelation, and by the very fact of his existence. In the first case, the doctrine that every man is under a natural condemnation, from which the redeeming work of Christ can alone save him, must be a fiction; for where there is no dependence there can be no obligation, and where there is no obligation there can be no sin. In the other case, the notion that, by rejecting revelation, a man renders himself independent of the God who gives it, must be a delusion; for the danger which existed prior to revelation not only remains what it was when the remedy is refused, but is deepened by the guilt of refusing it. Thus the relation of every religious truth is affected by the acceptance or denial of this one. That man is a created and dependent being, is a doctrine which lies at the bottom of all others. It is first in order of importance, as it was first in order of time.

Nor was the necessity of laying deeply and firmly this first foundation-truth less imperatively urged by the circumstances of the Hebrews than by the importance of the doctrine itself. Doubtless the instinctive recognition of a Divine power which is found in every nation under heaven, and which bows every now and then the heart of Unbelief itself before the majesty of the Unseen, worked in the Hebrew of ancient times, was cultivated by the traditions of his race, and quickened into life by the miraculous events of the Exodus, the giving of the law, and the visible symbol of

the Divine presence that rested above the tabernacle. But, on the other hand, the grand monotheism of revelation was, in their case, surrounded by peculiar difficulties. The growth of the family into the nation had been accomplished in the land in which the highest civilisation was united to the deepest superstition. To the Egyptians every form of life was divine, and every living thing a god. With them pantheism had run into the direction, not of diffusing the divine into the human, but of incarnating the human into the divine.* The personal God was equally veiled to the conscience in one case as in the other. For Egyptian idolatry, as presented to the popular mind, degraded Deity below the level of a true reverence, and destroyed all the moral sanctions of a Divine justice. The true belief in the "one living and true God," was not a dry speculative

* "The people had always gone greater lengths than others in the exaltation and worship of sovereign authority. In the most ancient times it had deified its native rulers; then the Lagidæ; and so it was an easy matter to submit to the Roman Emperors as new divinities. Within ten years after the death of Cleopatra, Augustus figured in hieroglyphic inscriptions on the Temple of Isis, at Phyle, as 'Son of the Sun, and King of Upper and Lower Egypt.' On the whole, the people had withstood Greek influences more than other nations of the East; yet, of all the more considerable nations of antiquity, the Egyptian was the one which was held in the greatest contempt, partly because of their worship of animals, despicable even in heathen eyes, as well as of the whole system of their wild and extravagant cruelties."—DOLLINGER'S *Gentile and Jew*, vol. i. p. 18. HEROD. ii. 65.

fact, a matter of abstract opinion, but it involved the right of this God over the hearts and consciences, the lives and characters, of His creatures. Against the claim the corrupt instincts of an alienated nature all rebelled. And hence arose the temptation to satisfy these natural instincts of the soul, in a superstition which took away the awfulness of the Deity, and rendered it possible to reconcile religious worship with licentiousness of manners, rather than in a lofty, but stern monotheism, too pure and awful to co-exist with an unrestrained self-will.* From this came their special need of a revelation which should trace the claims of the God of their forefathers back, step by step, to that external relation of dependent subjection between the creature and the Creator out of which they sprang.

Nor is it possible to find a solitary generation all down the long line of human history to which the reiteration of this great truth has not been necessary. The forms of disbelief have changed from time to time, but amid them this doctrine has ever stood, in all its grand simplicity, equally needed in every age, itself unchanged as the

* "We shall not be surprised to hear that a religion which first taught morals to its votaries, and then enjoined immorality, produced a nation which, when it came into contact with other men, in the times of the Greeks and Romans, became a proverb and a bye-word throughout the world for lying, theft, uncleanness, and every other sin that debases and pollutes mankind."—OSBURN'S *Religions of the World*, p. 57.

eternal word, unchangeable as the eternal God. Certainly, in our own day, the boasted advance of human inventions has not removed the necessity for the lesson. What is the original of man, is still the mooted question with a scepticism which assumes to be peculiarly scientific. When we regard the enormous difficulties which this system of thought can only fill up with speculative guesses, and the great demands it makes on human credulity, and contrast this mode of argument with the processes of rigid proof by which true science accomplishes her work,* it is impossible not to suspect that here, as with the ancient Hebrews, impatience of the moral obligation lies at the bottom of the unbelief. It is wholly out of the question to ascribe to the real progress of scientific thought a system in which mere supposition fills so large a place. Certainly it is not the dignity with which it invests man; for, when we place side by side the Scriptural account of the creation, and the hypothesis of the sceptic, there can be no comparison relative to the honour

* For example, the chemist admits of no mere assertion of a fact, but proves all his complex operations of separation and reconstruction of matter by strict appeal to the balance. Or, reversing the mode of reasoning, we may adduce the work of the astronomer, who, by calculations the most rigid and exact, will predict with certainty the very minute of the occurrence of the eclipse; or, from similar calculations (based on Nature's apparent deviation from her absolute laws), will assign a definite position in the universe to worlds unknown before, and actually brought to light by rigid scientific inquiry.

which the two systems comparatively put upon man. The Scriptural account invests him with a Divine origin and a Divine likeness, gives him his special place in creation, as ordained lord of all the lower creatures, from whom he is broadly distinguished by his moral characteristics, the endowments of an intelligent being, and by the immortality of his soul. The system of modern scepticism destroys all this dignity of man, and places him on the natural level of irrational, and even of vegetable, life—more highly organised, indeed, than all other forms of it, but owing this higher life to a self-evolved power, which is neither law nor order, neither will nor intelligence.

It might have been supposed that those who think so highly of man's intellectual power would have been shocked at such a system, and have shrunk from the degradation it inflicts upon him. But the constant effort of the human mind to fling off what it considers to be the trammels of created dependence, irresistibly suggests another explanation. The Scriptural account, while it dignifies man's nature, alike by the statement of its primeval glory, and the promise of its future restoration, yet involves the moral obligation of the creature to the Creator, and the right of the Creator to the service, obedience, and trust, of the creatures He has made. Hence in part, at all events, arises the resistance to its teaching. Human pride had rather reign supreme, though it be over a cheerless desert, than live happy, but

dependent, within the paradise of God. From very different points of the view, the spiritual tendencies of the ancient Hebrew, and of the modern man of science, meet in the same danger, and are confronted by the same grand lesson at the very entrance of the sacred record : “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

But the need of an authoritative teaching extends from this first lesson to other great truths which are immediately grouped around it. If God made man, did He make him the sinful and sorrowful being which we experience ourselves to be? The dissolution, weakness, and decay which we find in the body; the moral confusion and strife which exists in the soul; the change and suffering which fill the world around us; the cruel strife which sets man against his fellow-man; the tears and cries of a suffering humanity, its bloody wars and cruel oppressions—did God make all these? If not, whence did they spring, and will they ever cease to be? What is sin, that it should need these blazing sacrifices, these constant purifications? How did it enter into the world, and why should we hate it? Is there any better state in reserve for man, any restoration from the fall, if a fall there has been, and how will it be accomplished, and what is the obligation which the hope of it lays upon us? These questions have exercised the human heart and conscience to their lowest depths, and will never cease to exercise them while sin and suffering

last; and the ancient Hebrews needed information regarding them as well as ourselves, since they suffered under the same common wants of human nature, and the same incapacity to meet them? Such questions come home so closely to familiar experience, that the child may sympathise with them, and yet are so deep and infinite, that the profoundest mind is lost in searching out all their revealed mysteries. How wonderfully are they answered in the grand narrative which occupies the early chapters of Genesis!—chapters as conspicuous for majestic simplicity on the one side, as they are for immeasurable mysteries on the other. The creation—paradise—the fall and its effects—here is the whole answer; simple enough for the comprehension of a child, profound enough for the intellect of an angel.

Some will feel the difficulties more anxiously than others, and desire to search more deeply into their causes. Some will look only to the surface of the facts, others to the spiritual lessons enshrined in them; some will care only for the bodily and temporal effects, either of the fall or the recovery, others be touched by the moral disorder of the one, and fascinated by the regeneration to be accomplished by the other; but all these differences have their seat in the mind, not in the truth at which it looks. Thus it is with the most familiar subjects of our knowledge. The skies over our heads are the same, whether they are scanned by the eyes of a child, who admires

no more than the brilliancy of the lights set like jewels in the deep firmament, or by the eyes of a man to whom each distant star represents the centre of a system of worlds related to still further worlds. The earth beneath our feet is the same earth, whether it be viewed only in its natural beauty to the eye, or in the marvellous harmony of its powers and forces, and the providential wonders of each portion of the cosmos. The events of human history are the same to the reader who cares for it only as presenting a series of moving pictures and pathetic tales, or to the student who examines into the moral causes of events, and delights to trace throughout the whole the manifest footsteps of the God. The variation is subjective in the mind, not objective in the things which are known. So it is with revelation. It may be viewed from very different standpoints, and with very different degrees of enlightenment and intelligence; but the truth is one with shallows for the simple learner, and depths for the profound. The events continue once for all, and, once enacted, are in the nature of things unalterable. The narrative in itself is the same, whatever may be the moral and intellectual condition of the learner. Whether he stands at the childhood of the world's education with the ancient Hebrew, or amid the full manhood of modern civilisation, the lessons are one and indivisible.

The exclusive prominence thus given to the religious aspect of the book of Genesis from the

consideration of the persons, and period, and circumstances of those to whom the books were primarily given, follows equally from the purposes contemplated in the whole written revelation. We have already seen that the ultimate object was the glory of God in the salvation of man, and that it was constructed on a definite plan directed, in all its several parts, to this one end. In the contents of the inspired Word, and in the mode of its communication; in the selection of the instruments through whom it was given—their race, character, position; in the fortunes of the chosen people themselves, and all the providential circumstances connected with them and their calling, we see one and the same purpose. In short, our common distinction between religious and secular no longer holds good here, where all is found to be religious alike. Local habitation, social civilisation, political institutions, relations towards the world outside, personal prospects, wars, pestilences, battles, revolutions—whether in the chosen race themselves or in the surrounding heathen—all catch the same character, and are seen to be inseparable parts of one and the same Divine plan, with one wisdom scheming all—one power accomplishing all—one object, and that essentially and exclusively religious, pervading all from end to end.

Every consideration, therefore, concurs to fix the point of view from which the revelation must be regarded, because it fixes the object for which

it was intended. We are not only able to say that the contents of revelation are, as a matter of fact, directed to the conveyance of religious truth, but that it must necessarily have been so; necessarily, not by virtue of any compulsion imposed from without upon the sovereign will of the Absolute, but by virtue of God's own pleasure, and of the relation into which, in His infinite goodness, He saw fit to enter towards creatures not only weak, but wicked, not only limited, but corrupt. The purpose of redemption and moral regeneration involved, as we have already seen, the adaptation of the means employed to the capacities and wants of the creatures to be redeemed and regenerated. Who shall question but that God, had it so pleased Him, could have given a perfect revelation, from which not one fact of His dealings towards our globe and its inhabitants was absent, and in which the ingenuity neither of human nor Satanic intelligence could have found a solitary occasion for unbelief or objection? The whole process of creation, for instance, might have been laid open in all its details, the immensity of its periods, and the exact method of its operations. But, had this been done, the asserted objects of revelation would have been frustrated, if they were such as, from the positive declarations of Scripture, I have already proved them to have been. Instead of the spectacle now presented, of a Wisdom so absolute, that the more we search into it, the more cause we find for praise and adoration,

the Bible would have presented the spectacle of an intelligence overreaching itself, and, in its anxiety to avoid one danger, destroying the very objects which it had in view. In short, it would have borne the mark of man's short-sighted ignorance, and been stamped as human, not Divine.

It is so important to settle this question once for all, at the outset of watching the execution of the Divine plan, that I venture somewhat more to expand the proof of the assertion. I take the Mosaic cosmogony simply as the crucial question, and as the illustration of many others. Let it be supposed that the Scriptural account had been couched in such terms, and amplified into such exact detail, as to satisfy all the demands of modern science, and leave no room open for the various objections which have been urged against it from the side of geology and its kindred sciences; a very little reflection will suffice to mark out the results which must have inevitably followed, and to show their utter inconsistency, alike with the revealed plan of revelation, and the revealed purpose to which it was directed.

I. Such a revelation would have been utterly unintelligible to the Hebrew people to whom it was immediately given, and to all the early generations of mankind altogether. All the ideas required to enable them to understand it would have been absent, and in the absence of the ideas the terms employed would have been an unknown tongue. Either God, by a supernatural inter-

ference with the ordinary and progressive operations of human discovery, must have brought up the existing state of knowledge outside the circle of revelation to the same point which was assumed within it, or He must have permitted an enormous gulf of discrepancy to exist between the revelation itself and the moral and intellectual condition of those to whose wants it was professedly adapted. In the first case, this supernatural interference would have destroyed that orderly development of man's natural powers which we have seen to be indispensable to probation; would have placed human information far beyond the point of advancement attained by the human intellect; and, by supplying knowledge of physical things by an external revelation, without any corresponding discipline of the intellectual faculties, would have withdrawn the stimulus of all human progress, and reduced man into a passive recipient of knowledge, instead of an active discoverer of it. Such results would have been so palpably contradictory to the whole order of God's moral government of the world, that we may dismiss the supposition of this supernatural interference with the ordinary course of human thought as out of the question, and may turn to the other alternative.

Upon this hypothesis, a great gulf must have been permitted to remain between the level of the revelation and the level of human knowledge

outside it. A crowd of equal difficulties start up on this side as on the other. In how strange a position would not the human instruments of the revelation (for we have seen before that human speakers and human language are indispensable to the idea of a revelation altogether) have stood towards the inspiring God on the one side, and the fellow-creatures to whom they spoke, upon the other! They would have become the channels of knowledge, not which simply exceeded their full power to measure all its meaning, but which must have baffled their comprehension altogether. They would have been called to convey information without possessing words in which to express it; or, if the words were supernaturally supplied, in words which would have been an enigma to themselves and those they addressed. Not less strange and anomalous would have been the position of their hearers. What would they have thought of a God who gave them a revelation they could not understand, discoursing on subjects with which they could have felt no sympathy? Would it not have been a positive stumbling-block in the way of their belief, and would not the moral and religious portions of the revelation have been necessarily involved in the dislike, and suspicion, and incredulity which its unintelligible scientific portions would inevitably have awakened? The very supposition creates a whole maze of perplexing paradoxes and anachronisms, through which, I

believe, no mortal ingenuity can trace a consistent path.*

II. Difficulties of the same kind, and not less

* “Science is constantly teaching us to describe known facts in new language; but the language of Scripture is always the same;—and not only so, but the language of Scripture is necessarily adapted to the common state of man’s intellectual development, in which he is supposed not to be possessed of science. Hence the phrases used by Scripture are precisely those which science soon teaches men to consider as inaccurate; but they are not on that account the less fitted for their proper purpose. For, if any terms had been used adapted to a more advanced state of knowledge, they must have been unintelligible among those to whom the Scripture was first addressed. If the Jews had been told that water existed in the clouds in small drops, they would have marvelled that they did not constantly descend; and to have explained the reason of this would have been to teach atmology in the sacred writings. If they had read in their Scriptures that the earth was a sphere, when it appeared to be a plain, they would only have been disturbed in their thoughts, or driven to some wild and baseless imaginations by a declaration to them so strange. If the Divine speaker, instead of saying that He would set His bow in the clouds, had been made to declare that He would give to water the property of refracting different colours at different angles, how utterly unmeaning to the hearers would the words have been; and, in these cases, the expressions being unintelligible, startling, and bewildering, would have been such as tended to unfit the sacred narrative for its place in the providential dispensation of the world.”—WHEWELL’S *Indications of the Creator*, p. 175.

Even, beyond this, the very language and nomenclature itself of science are daily being modified and changed as discovery progresses; so that its own description at one period will be comparatively unintelligible to the student of later date.

in degree, would have extended all down the line of human history throughout the successive generations of mankind. The idea of a supernatural interference with the orderly and progressive development of human thought, and the complicated activities of art and industry, of daily life, and national existence, has already been discarded, as too monstrous to be entertained. It would, indeed, have amounted to the formation of a new world, and of a new race of beings altogether. Supposing, therefore, this course of human discovery to be what we know it has been, what would have been the aspect borne towards these successive generations by a revelation which attached itself to one system of astronomy, or geology, or geography, and identified that one system with necessary and fundamental religious belief?

As the fact was, the glorious monotheism of the ancient Church, and the blessed doctrines which clustered round it, were never preached at any period, or among any people, without evoking some response in the human heart and conscience, or without acting on heathenism—directly, by saving some souls, and, indirectly, by keeping awake in the heart of humankind the grand truths of the primitive tradition. The vast number of proselytes out of all nations to Judaism, and its credit among the philosophers of the world, and even the very bitterness and activity of the antagonism into which Judaism and Heathenism constantly came, even to blood, all corroborate this fact.

But how could this have taken place if, instead of a grand and purely religious creed, revelation had taken the garb of a philosophy, and sunk into the position of one of the ancient schools, with their subtle disputations and emptiness of all food for the living heart and conscience? The witness for God held forth before the world had been obscured; and when Christianity entered, after the day of Pentecost, on its course of active aggression upon the heathen world, instead of finding everywhere, as it did, a certain preparation already widely wrought in men's hearts, it would have been burdened by a weight of prejudice and embarrassed with party conflicts. Then would Christ, indeed, have stood before the world on a level with Socrates and Plato, and the grand elevation which distinguished Christianity in its revelation of God and the soul and another life, had been merged in debates on points of human science. The profound earnestness of the early Christians, and their noble contempt of death, and their elevation above the world, which they adorned in life, and taught in death, would all have become inconceivable.

III. It may be thought that, at all events, such a revelation would have suited the wants of our own age, placed as it is far down the world's history, and in close proximity to the last days of the Son of man. But the very reverse is the case. The supposition, on its side towards ourselves, bristles with yet greater anomalies than it does on

its side towards the generations past. In the first place, to what an enormous bulk must not such a Bible have extended, which explained all the scientific details of God's dealings, from the first creation of man downwards! In the most condensed form conceivable, it would have been a vast compendium, through which no human intellect could have adequately toiled, while to the mass of mankind it must have proved to the very last a sealed book and a dead letter. Nor is it less certain that it would have fallen at once beneath the verdict of criticism. Could the science of the present day have been found embodied in detail in the writings of Moses, with what a shout of scorn would the whole have been rejected, as one vast and incredible anachronism!*

Nor is this all; the purely spiritual object of revelation—that great end of human salvation towards which the whole Divine plan was directed—would have been fatally clouded to the soul's view. As the Bible now stands, what is it, and what has it been at every age, but a Divinely inspired protest against the deep-seated secularism of the world—a witness for the supremacy of

* But the thought is inconceivable, for all sciences must be regarded as one whole system. And this is abundantly proved by the daily modifications which not only the theories, but even the facts, of science undergo; just in proportion as the observations made by inquirers in one branch are brought to bear (necessarily) upon the truths stored up by others.

the things unseen over the things seen, of the soul over the body, of eternity over time, of God over man, of heaven over earth? Spanning all time with its existence, it is God's testimony to the one undying declaration, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding."

No man can open the Bible, be he believer or unbeliever, without a consciousness of passing into a new sphere of thought altogether—from the sphere of sight into the sphere of faith; of listening to another voice; of breathing another atmosphere, and feeling the associations of another life. Had the Bible contained what we call secular instruction in any prominent form, all this would have been different. The student had used it for instruction in science, this or that, according to his several tastes, not for instruction in godliness. The deep alienation of the human soul from God, and the corrupt bias of its affections, tend at the best to dwell on the temporal to the neglect of the eternal, and to centre anxiety upon the pressing wants of the body and the engrossing interests of time, to the neglect or utter forgetfulness of the soul, and of eternity, and of God. The Bible, as it exists, is the great instrument of the Spirit for the correction of this tendency. Here we stand face to face with God; whatever may be the pleasant and plausible falsehoods with which we deceive ourselves in the world, or the world deceives us, here, at all events, the monarch and the beggar,

the peer and the peasant, the learned and the ignorant, alike come into a Presence where there is no respect of persons, and listen to the utterances of impartial and universal truth. Amid the fretting anxieties of the world that is, here we meet the warnings of the world that is to come; and, ceasing to listen to the conflicting clamour of human opinion, we hear the awful and authoritative accents of God. The living ministry catches and re-echoes—or at least should ever catch and re-echo—the same accents. From every pulpit should issue the same message; and through all the circles of our multitudinous literature, so far as it is faithful to the great work of the Church of Christ, should be heard the same voice. Had the Bible been a book of secular science, or philosophy, or literature, all this witness would have been lost. It is all these, but subordinately; it contains them all, but so consistently with God's one grand design of saving souls, that in them, and through them, and above them, thrills ever upon the soul the voice of God Himself, tender and blessed as the accents of the dying Jesus upon Calvary, solemn and awful as the eternal realities of which it speaks.

Thus we see the point of view from which revelation must ever be regarded. 1. Its objects and its truths are directly religious and spiritual, and only indirectly can assume the language of human science or of secular history. 2. It is all directed, not to satisfy curiosity, nor to supersede

the processes of ordinary human knowledge, but to convey the information imperatively needed for the purposes of probation, and the restoration of man to the knowledge and love of God. 3. Every part of it, without exception, must be viewed in this relation, not simply its didactic portions, but its historical statements, and even its genealogical and ethnological lists. These are as strictly directed to religious objects as its most solemn declarations; since they were all included in the same plan, which involved a revelation on the one hand, and the election of a national life upon the other. 4. Being given for the purposes of necessary information, revelation has reference in all its objects to man, and to man only; that is, to the one specific race which fell and was to be redeemed, the lineal descendants of Adam, and no others, and only touches incidentally on other worlds, or other races of beings, whatever they may be, so far, and so far alone, as the information is needed by man in his process of moral probation and discipline. These conditions follow, as I have shown, by inevitable inference, from the very plan of revelation as God has revealed it; they are simple matters of fact, to which we must yield whether we will or not; but we can see them to be conditions of God's plan which could not conceivably have been otherwise.

Hence, to judge the Bible by any other rules than these, is equally inconsistent and unreasonable. In this direction, and in this only, are we

to seek its Divine perfection, both of scheme and of execution. As a book of natural science it is incomplete, because it was not intended to be, and could not, consistently with its own statements, have been intended to be a book of science. As a book of history it is incomplete, and does not contain statements which in that case might properly have been expected, because it was never intended to take the place of human history. As a work of philosophy, or even of literature, grand and exquisite as it is in these respects, it may yet be confessed to be incomplete, for it was never intended for these objects. Its one purpose is the revelation of God, and of His dealings, so far, and so far only, as the knowledge is necessary for human salvation, and compatible with human capacities and the purposes of a moral probation. This is what it declares itself to be, and in this aspect we claim that it is perfect—so exactly fitted to the objects contemplated by it, that it neither falls short of them nor exceeds them. It bears throughout the stamp of its Omniscient Author, so adapted for each age and for all ages, that in every period and under every circumstance, it is able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.

Another step in advance must, however, be taken before we shall be in a position to regard the book of Genesis on its positive side, and trace in its contents the first harmonious developments

of the Divine plan. The relation in which it stands towards human science must be more particularly considered; for, although imperfection as a scientific record is not only consistent with the Divine plan, but necessary to it, this could not be said of positive contradictions. If direct statements in the Scriptural books are found to be irreconcilable with the ascertained conclusions of natural science, the authoritative inspiration of the whole Bible can no longer be maintained. The substance of Christianity might possibly survive the disproof of the inspired authority of Genesis, but it would only survive in ruins. Such a discrepancy would, at all events, be fatal to the argument of these Lectures, and it is therefore necessary to show that it does not exist. No intrusion of theology into the proper sphere of science will be necessary for this object, for the conclusions of men of science will themselves suffice for the purpose. There has been some mutual misapprehension on both sides, which is earnestly to be deprecated. On the part of geology many speculations have been hazarded, and many hasty generalisations turned into weapons against the Bible, which no men more earnestly, and, we are bound to believe, more sincerely, repudiate than the higher masters of geological science themselves.* These speculations have

* It cannot be denied, and the student cannot be too deeply impressed with the fact, that the great tendency of many investigators is to rush at once into generalisation and

been eagerly seized by minds already unsettled on the foundations of Christian belief, and have been ostentatiously paraded in justification of a scepticism admitted to have been previously at work.* It is not surprising that Christian thinkers should have been alarmed, nor is it unnatural that in this alarm they should have had recourse to elaborate schemes of reconciliation between Scripture and science. Mutual distrust has acted and reacted; the theologian somewhat too hastily supposing truth to be endangered, and the man of science somewhat too warmly resenting what he considers an intrusion into his own proper province, by passing in his turn into the sphere of theology, and using language relative to Christian doctrine of which, it may be hoped, he only imperfectly apprehends the result. A tendency which threatens to exasperate scepticism, and to unhinge

law without the necessary data. . . . What we would guard the student against is the proneness to rush into extremes. The tendency which has recently been exhibited in quarters from which better things might have been expected, to dignify mere observation with the name of geological science, and the craving for notoriety that impels to "theories of the universe, which do violence to fact, and retard the progress of right investigation. . . . We again repeat it, the student will be better employed in dealing with fact and description, and avoiding hypotheses and speculation, for which the state of the science is as yet but very slenderly furnished."—PAGE'S *Advanced Text Book of Geology*, pp. 350, 351.

* Bishop Colenso's *Critical Examination of the Pentateuch*, part i. p. 6.

the calm moderation with which scientific investigation can alone be safely conducted, is much to be deplored.

With any questions of geological inquiry I shall not presume to meddle. I only propose to take the conclusions of science, as they are stated by men of science, and, placing them side by side with the statement of Scripture, to examine their relation to each other. I believe it will be found that they exhibit much less variance than may appear at first sight to be the case,* and that no one single conclusion has yet been established in

* "Without stopping to inquire whether, although the science of geology had been revolutionised, those fears were not altogether exaggerated, it is enough at present to know that as geology has NOT been revolutionised, there is no need to entertain the question. . . . If I have learned anything in the course of the investigations which I have been endeavouring to make, it is to take nothing upon credence, but to wait patiently for all the evidence which can be brought to bear upon the subject before me ; and this I believe is the only way to make any approximation to a correct opinion. In truth, the science of geology is itself in that condition, that no fact can be accepted as a basis for reasoning of a solid kind, until it has run the round of investigation by the most competent authorities, and has stood the test of time. It is peculiarly subject to the cry of 'Lo here ! and lo there !' from false and imperfectly informed teachers ; and I believe the most thoroughly to be relied on are those who are the slowest to theorise, the last to form a judgment, and who require the largest amount of evidence before that judgment is finally pronounced."—HUGH MILLER'S *Sketch Book of Popular Geology*, p. xxxiii.

which they stand in distinct opposition to each other. It will be sufficient to draw this comparison in regard to the four points constituting the most prominent subjects of debate:—1. the creation; 2. the antiquity of man; 3. the descent of the human race from a single pair; 4. the deluge.

I. *The Creation.*—The predominant religious lessons conveyed by the Scriptural narrative, and resulting from the revealed design of God in revelation, and the revealed plan on which He has moulded it, have already been pointed out. The right of God over His creatures, by virtue of His creative act, is the lesson inculcated in the first chapter of Genesis. Now, in regard to the creation of the world in this sense, and the first origination of all things, geological science is absolutely silent.* It has not only discovered nothing, but it loudly proclaims its inability to discover any-

* “The most common and serious source of confusion arose from the notion that it was the business of geology to discover the mode in which the earth originated, or, as some imagined, to study the effects of those cosmological causes which were employed by the Author of nature to bring this planet out of a nascent and chaotic state into a more perfect and habitable condition. Hutton was the first who endeavoured to draw a strong line of demarcation between his favourite science and cosmogony, for he declared that geology was in nowise concerned with questions as to the origin of things.”—Sir C. LYELL’s *Principles of Geology*, Lond. 1853, p. 3.

“Starting from this point, we may fairly inquire, How and by what means this earth became the ‘procreant cradle’ of organised existence? Was it by some process of secondary causation; or, at once, by the fiat of the Creator? Alas, for

thing, and emphatically reiterates the belief that in no conceivable condition of the science will it be able to do so. It avows that the sphere lies altogether beyond and above its reach.*

The care with which geological science, in its latest phase, and by the pens of its greatest masters, asserts this belief, is the more remarkable from the contrast in which it stands with the speculative stage which preceded. To peruse the history of theoretical geology is to peruse a list of successive guesses, none of which have received proof, or are accepted as the accredited conclusions of the science. The mention of the Neptunian, Vulcanian, and nebular hypotheses, suffices to prove that this

the impotence of science, and the scope of our finite intelligence! Science cannot even indicate the line of inquiry—our highest philosophy is the humble recognition of the fact.”—PAGE’S *Past and Present of the Globe*, p. 180.

* “We aspire in vain to assign limits to the works of creation in space, whether we examine the starry heavens, or that world of minute animalcules which is revealed to us by the microscope. We are prepared therefore to find that in time also the confines of the universe lie beyond the reach of mortal ken. But in whatever direction we pursue our researches, whether in time or space, we discover everywhere the clear proofs of a creative intelligence, and of His foresight, wisdom, and power. . . . To assume that the evidence of the beginning or end of so vast a scheme lies within the reach of our philosophical inquiries, or even of our speculations, appears to be inconsistent with a just estimate of the relations which subsist between the finite powers of man and the attributes of an infinite and eternal Being.”—SIR C. LYELL’S *Principles of Geology*, p. 799.

taste for speculation has not been confined to Christian apologists,* but has been shared as largely and more recently by their opponents.† The present rejection of all such theories of creation is the result of the experience of the past; and it can be neither necessary nor wise to appeal, even in defence of the Bible, to schemes of cosmogony which Science herself has learned to repudiate.‡

The unsettled question at issue between uniformitarians and catastrophists §—between those who believe that the present cosmical condition of

* Burnett and Woodward referred all the changes of the earth's surface, without exception, to the deluge. Whiston referred both the creation and the deluge to cometary action.

† The nebular hypothesis has been advocated by Herschel, La Place, Mädler, Pfaff, and Humboldt.

‡ “This, indeed, is the sentiment of most of the good geologists of the present day. The time for such general systems, and for the fierce wars to which the opposition of such generalities gives rise, is probably now past for ever, and geology will not again witness such a controversy as that of the Wernerian and Huttonian schools.”—WHEWELL'S *History of the Inductive Sciences*, vol. iii. p. 483.

§ “It will be seen from this brief indication that there are two great schools of geological causation, the one ascribing every result to the ordinary operations of nature, combined with the element of unlimited time; the other appealing to agents that operated during the earlier epochs of the world with greater intensity, and also for the most part over wider areas; the former belief is certainly more in accordance with the spirit of right philosophy, though it must be confessed that many problems in geology seem to find their solution only through the admission of the latter hypothesis.”—PAGE'S *Advanced Text Book of Geology*, p. 338.

the globe is due to the action of uniform laws, and those who believe in the action of convulsions of various kinds—seems to involve matters with which, rightly understood, the Christian advocate has little comparative concern. The uniformity of physical law is asserted to be the grand lesson of modern science, and we have no interest whatever in denying it.* The anxious reiteration with which the conclusion is pressed, as if antagonistic to some mistaken popular impression, is really out of place, so far as the question of Christian evidence is concerned. For when the first creative origination of all things is conceded to be a matter in which geology has nothing whatever to say, the inspiration of the Bible is not in the slightest degree affected by the assertion of uniform laws. The very term “law” itself implies, in the lips of a believer in revelation almost more strongly than in the lips of another man, that God’s modes of action are constant and equable. A conflict of opinion only arises when the uniformitarian so pushes his principle as to exclude the possibility

* “So far as the present state of our knowledge enables us to decide (and by this alone should the student ever seek to be guided), the operations of nature appear to be fixed and uniform, within certain ascertainable limits; and beyond these there seems to be some great law of cosmical progression clearly indicated in the geological history of the past, and ever rising up before us as a matter of faith, but standing as yet beyond the grasp of exact scientific demonstration.”—PAGE’S *Advanced Text-book of Geology*, p. 339.

of any exceptional action on God's part at all; and when this is the case we enter upon a wider sphere of discussion even than the creation or the deluge, for it reaches to the question of miracles altogether. It has been repeatedly shown that even the miraculous acts by which the divine mission of our blessed Lord was authenticated, may themselves be included in some higher law outreaching the grasp of mortal intellect.* The remark is still more peculiarly applicable to the Mosaic accounts of the creation and the deluge. It is not probable on the one side that any advocate of the catastrophist theory would deny the action of uniform law, even in the catastrophe; and on the other side, the theory of the uniformitarian admits of agencies on the most stupendous scale, and cosmical changes which appal the mind by their magnitude.†

* Birks' *Bible on Modern Thought*, p. 70. Professor Mansell on *Miracles, Aids to Faith*, Essay i. p. 16.

† "In one sense such occurrences as the submergence of the Ullah Bund, in India, the Lisbon earthquake, the discharges of Hecla and the like, are, in their local results, cataclysmal and revolutionary; but, after all, they are merely exponents of established forces in nature, which have operated less or more through all time, and seem as necessary for the conservation of an habitable terraqueous globe, as the heat of the sun or the daily rotation of the earth on its axis. . . . If the operations of the past seem in some cases to have been conducted on a more gigantic scale, or with greater rapidity than those of the present day, this too may be readily accounted for by different arrangements of sea and land, and by concentrating,

Lastly, when the miracle of an original creation is untouched, it is not easy to see in what way the details of the Mosaic cosmogony can be contradicted by geology. It is very uncertain whether we have yet reached the position which can enable us to interpret the record itself with any certainty.* So far as the positive and accredited conclusions of science go, they confirm the narrative, not invalidate it ; as, for instance, in regard to the relation of light and the light-bearers,†—the successive gradations of life,‡—the climacteric changes through which the globe has passed,§—and the classification of species, both of plants and animals. || Beyond this the attempt to harmonise Genesis with geology is useless, because geology has no scheme of its own to place in contrast with the scriptural narrative, and because

as it were, the power of any set of forces, for a continuous period in one direction and within the limits of one locality.”—PAGE’S *Advanced Text-book of Geology*, p. 337.

* “The interpretation of Gen. i. v. 1, by which Dr. Chalmers reconciled the antiquity of the globe with the Mosaic narrative, is now rejected by some geologists, and another interpretation suggested for the words ‘in the beginning,’ on the theory of successive creations, and the supposition that the words belong to the Adamic creation.”—*Biblical Natural Science*, by Rev. J. Duns, D.D. p. 42.

† *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xiii. p. 450.

‡ Page’s *Past and Present of the Globe*, p. 57. *Biblical Natural Science*, p. 78.

§ Page’s *Advanced Text-book of Geology*, p. 337.

|| *Biblical Natural Science*, p. 60.

all reconciliation is therefore premature. At present the two circles do not come into contact, and should not the progress of knowledge ever render it possible to identify the epochs of the two, there would be as little occasion for the geologist to boast, as for the Christian to doubt.

II. *The Antiquity of Man.*—Here the question falls within much narrower limits. How hesitating, imperfect, and even contradictory, the statements of science are on this subject, will appear shortly. But meanwhile it is well to ascertain the logical value even of the unproved supposition which extends the period of human existence upon the globe to twenty thousand, forty thousand, or even sixty thousand years. I have pointed out that revelation is directed to a definite object and addressed to a definite race, even the posterity of Adam,—the race which sinned and fell, and for which the redeeming work of Christ has been accomplished. Within this circle alone revelation moves and is strictly limited by it. It is addressed to the race of Adam, and communicates such information, and such only, as is necessary for his well-being. To practical action the whole is directed, and to curiosity nothing. Now let it be supposed for a moment that the most extravagant assertions of the antiquity of man could be proved, what would follow? No doubt in such a case old notions and prepossessions would receive a considerable shock, but there is not a passage in the word which would be affected, unless it could be proved

that the ancient man, whose fossil remains have been found in the earth's crust, were genealogically the same as the present inhabitants of the globe. The theory of successive creations now coming into vogue* would meet any *à priori* objections; for if there have existed in successive creations even a partial identity in the fauna and flora, such an identity may equally be supposed to exist in regard to man. The similarity of physical construction would not therefore prove any genealogical connection between man as he existed forty thousand years ago and man as he exists now. Yet unless this difficulty could be bridged over, and such a thing is inconceivable, the logical force of the asserted antiquity of the human race, as an argument against revelation, is absolutely nothing. The difficulties in the supposition itself still remain for consideration.

III. *The Descent of Mankind from one Pair.*— In this subject it is sufficient simply to say, that science has yet adopted no accredited conclusion. So long as we can quote the name of Prichard on the one side we need not fear any weight of authority upon the other.†

But the divergency and contrariety of the principles adopted by some portion of scientific

* *Biblical Natural Science*, p. 38.

† No writers have expressed greater admiration for Dr. Prichard than Baron Bunsen.—*Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History*, v. iii. p. 48; and Sir C. LYELL, *Principles of Geology*.

men, is illustrated with peculiar clearness, by placing into close apposition the theories of the antiquity of man and the parentage of the human race. For it will thus appear that the two theories cover much common ground, and yet are so directly contradictory to each other that both cannot possibly be true. The Christian apologist may be content to leave the two classes of theorists to settle their differences between them, and may postpone his own reply till he can definitely learn which of the two contradictory principles is to be adopted. For, in arguing for the antiquity of man, one school of thought at least, that of Mr. Darwin, traces all existing forms of life back to a common origin; and it is to be observed, that those men of science who do not agree with all Mr. Darwin's views, yet speak in terms of great respect of his scientific attainments.* His view is not therefore the speculation of an unknown man, but the characteristic view of a definite school. Yet he is so far from conceiving it to be impossible that varieties of the human race could have sprung from a common parentage, that he denies specific differences in nature altogether,† and refers all living things, men and brutes, animal and vegetable, back to an original and unorganised monad.‡ On this system, therefore, there is no

* Sir W. ARMSTRONG'S Address at the Meeting of the British Association, at Newcastle, 1863.

† DARWIN'S *Origin of Species*, c. i. and ii.

‡ *Ibid.* c. xiv. p. 384.

variation of individuals so broad as to disprove a common stock. At the other extreme stands the view which refers the characteristics of different races of mankind not to varieties, but to specific differences, and exaggerates them into permanent and unalterable distinctions. Both opinions cannot be true; and till the balance between them is finally adjusted, neither the one nor the other can be allowed to weigh in the balance against the positive testimony of revelation.

IV. *The Deluge*.—The question whether the deluge was partial or universal may be decided in either way, consistently with the inspired authority of the record, and as a matter of fact is decided in different ways by men equally firm in the maintenance of its authority. Both alternatives are open so long as it is held that the deluge, whether partial or universal, resulted in the destruction of all mankind. Nor can it be a matter of vital importance to identify the flood with any known effects still stamped on the silent handwriting of the globe. It is enough for the Christian argument that such a miracle as the deluge should be admitted to be possible. For it will be observed, that if the argument of these lectures be correct, the line which separates the purely miraculous actings of God from His ordinary operations, becomes comparatively faint. For if by “religious” we mean that which springs out of the relation of God and man, the whole history of the world is religious and the entire

scheme of revelation and its execution are religious throughout. Objections which derive their force from leaving the action of God out of sight altogether, can have no weight against a system, the essential character of which is found to consist in the action of God from end to end. While the Christian advocate will never needlessly multiply miracles, neither will he care to draw too strongly the line between the ordinary and the miraculous actions of the one indivisible God. That the deluge was due to God's immediate will is a fact engrained into the very structure of the scriptural narrative; and if we call the event miraculous, we by no means deny by our use of the word God's employment of natural agencies and uniform laws in bringing it into effect.

Having cleared these various objections out of our way, let us return to our standpoint at the beginning of the revelation, and, sitting with the Hebrew beneath the shadows of Sinai, listen while the voice of inspiration unfolds to us the mighty, the mysterious past.

With what stateliness of infallible truth is the first beginning of all things unfolded; with what a sure footstep does the inspired narrative tread the distant abysses of time, when in the far-off beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It is with a feeling of awe, that thus, divinely led, we gaze upon the dim chaos when not a ray of light broke the universal darkness or a solitary sound of life disturbed the brooding silence; and

it is with a sense of relief from the oppression of that first scene, that we watch the orderly outgoings of the Creator's strength and wisdom. The impression of sublimity produced upon the mind is very great, and is referable to various elements.

The tone of full, certain, absolute knowledge, which distinguishes the narrative from the stammering hesitancy of science's most certain utterances, has probably something to do with the impression. For, however, confidently science may speak in points of detail, directly it is brought face to face with the great problem of creation, it begins to talk of guesses, and suppositions, and probabilities, as if abashed by the magnitude of the questions with which it is called to deal, and conscious against its will that its narrow generalisation can furnish in such a sphere as this no sure foothold. Creation is in its own nature so miraculous, that ordinary conditions of thought are no longer appropriate to it. It is remarkable that so far as the conclusions of science run side by side with the statements of revelation, they are clear and positive, and only become hesitating and uncertain when they assume a portion of antagonism to them. Thus, for instance, it pronounces unhesitatingly as to the existence of a period when the lower animals were on the earth, but man was absent; as to a period where no climacteric variations existed, and as to the occurrence of definite successive periods of creation. But when it comes to assert

existence without creation, it can no longer affirm one solitary principle as positive and fixed, but can only hang surmise upon surmise, like the members of a chain, which hang firmly enough to each other, but the last links of which have no hold whatever on certain truth. The language of revelation is wholly different. Dating back confessedly to a remote antiquity far beyond the time of the most ancient heathen cosmogonies, it is stamped with the consciousness of assumed truth throughout. We pass from the world of shadows into that of realities; we are not told "it may have been," but "it was." The order is precise and connected in all its parts, and the narrative, though exceedingly condensed, exhibits no gaps and leaps, but the condensation of an intelligent mind with a definite object in view steadily and consistently pursued throughout. Moreover, this condensation has not the remotest affinity to that loose indefiniteness, which hides ignorance under vague generalities, but is characterised by the utmost distinctness, every statement being made in the clearest and tersest of language. There hangs consequently over the whole that calm, quiet consciousness of knowledge and authority, which our Lord signally exhibited during his earthly ministry, and which admitted of no resistance even from Jewish obstinacy and arrogance.

Combined with this is an impression of irresistible power, derived not only from the grandeur

of the creative operations themselves, but from the exhibition of Almighty will in action without the intervention of secondary instruments of any kind between itself and its effects. "Let there be light, and there was light." "Let there be a firmament;" and the atmospheric heavens were stretched in glorious beauty to canopy our world. "Let the waters be gathered together;" and it was so, and the dry land appeared, and the sea recognised its bounds. "Let there be lights;" and sun, and moon, and stars, appeared in their courses. "Let the waters bring forth;" and the deep sea was peopled with its multitudinous life—here, vast as leviathan; there, minute as the tiny animalculæ whose jewelled shells excite our astonishment, the very marvels of creating skill. "Let the earth bring forth;" and the hum of insect life filled the air, and over the smiling land roamed in comely grace and beauty the living creatures after their kind. "Let us make man;" and forth in the divine image he moved amid the happy creatures that peopled the new-made world, himself the happiest and most glorious of them all. In each case the Almighty will and the created effect are brought into immediate apposition.

Whether we conceive the act to have been immediate, and at each successive command the result to have followed instantaneously; or whether we conceive that countless centuries, as men count time, were occupied in the process, the case would be the same. It is not easy to say

which of the two suppositions conveys to the mind the grandest conception of Almighty strength; but in either case it is the omnipotence of mere will which produces so great an impression upon the mind. Surely here is the Divine philosophy of all things; for what are creative instruments but themselves created, the intermediate links of a process of which the first and the last is God? This sublime element in the narrative is thrown into prominence in the inspired references of the later Scriptures to the creation. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

Here the revelation pauses as if it would renew the stillness of the first Sabbath, when the unwearied and Omnipotent Creator in typical action rested from all His work; then it is resumed, but now with a limitation of the sphere. It was important to assert beyond the possibility of question that there was but one God and one Creator; and that this globe of ours is but a portion of the indivisible universe of God. Hence, revelation opens with the creation of the heavens and the earth. But with so vast a sphere as this man is not immediately concerned. Doubtless, other worlds than ours have had their history, other orders of intelligent beings their eventful experiences; but man did not need to know them. Even under the world-wide Gospel which proclaims the redeeming work of God's only Son, the relation of these other worlds and other races to

man, and their interest in the mighty work accomplished on this earth of ours, is only intimated indirectly and partially, as if to point human thought onwards to the time when the occasional dispensation shall end, and God shall be all in all. During the early period, when the personality of the future Messiah was but dimly recognised, and the mystery of His two natures unknown, even these partial intimations would have been unintelligible. Hence the wider interests are now dropped out of view, and attention is fixed upon man himself, the narrative being resumed with greater particularity suitably to the narrower limits of the scene. The very locality of man's primeval abode is defined by geographical limits as if to teach that it is no loose myth, but an actual history enacted on this very earth, in a mode analogous to the insertion in the Apostles' creed of the name of Pontius Pilate, in order to particularise the events by those historical circumstances by which alone they can be substantiated.

But it is on the future of man himself that the interest is concentrated. The outward circumstances are but the accessories to the central figure which fills the view. There we see human nature, such as God made it, and such as our blessed Master took into union with His deity, only placed within a world, where the loveliness of outward nature was in perfect harmony with the purity of His own condition. In every part of

His being was the same unfallen perfection ; and if even amid His ruin our nature is wonderful, whether when we look at the complexity and delicacy of the fleshly framework, or at the far-reaching powers of reason with which we are endowed, or at the soul with the world of joy and sorrow which it carries within itself, how far more admirable must we conceive man to have been before he fell, and when no taint of sin had marred the Creator's handywork ! The outward body we must conceive to have reached the loftiest ideal of grace and beauty, created at once in all its maturity of strength without any elements of decay or suffering. His constitution was endowed with such a plenitude of vital energy, that after the fall had introduced into it the element of death, it still survived for a duration of life exceeding our ordinary conception, like some monarch of the forest outliving even in decay the generations around it. The full, perfect manhood of our first father, as free from immaturity on the one side as from decay upon the other, must be borne distinctly in mind, for it supplies the standard by which the whole of his nature must equally be measured.

Not less mature and perfect was the intellectual than the physical being. All the notions with which modern science delights to picture the primeval condition of man as that of a grand savage, are wholly contrary to the description of the Bible, as they are contrary to the universal

tradition of all known peoples. It is no wonder that, starting from this wrong conception, the whole conclusion reached should be wrong equally; if indeed the truth be not that the conclusion has itself suggested the first conception from which it professes to have arisen.* On the same base-

* This opinion was elaborately supported by Lord Kaimes in his well-known work, *Sketches in the History of Man*. It was so ably controverted in letters by Dr. Doeg, of Stirling, that Lord Kaimes himself is understood to have been convinced of the fallacy of his own theory. I have not been able to meet with Dr. Doeg's letters on *The Savage State*, no copy existing in the library of the British Museum. But the following propositions are stated by Mr. Haldane, in the *Evidence and Authority of the Divine Revelation*, to have constituted the argument of the letters, and to "have been illustrated by a great number of particulars collected from ancient and modern history.

"1. The more popular and extensive kingdoms and societies were civilised at a period prior to the records of history.

"2. No people who were once in a cultivated state, and in process of time degenerated into the savage or barbarous state, have ever recovered their pristine condition without foreign aid.

"3. None of the nations which were savages or barbarians at the period of their first appearance in history, have ever been known to move one step forward towards a civilised state, till impelled by some external circumstance.

"4. There appears in savages a natural and rooted aversion to the civilised state.

"5. The most judicious and enlightened sages of antiquity entertained the most exalted notions of the piety, virtue, wisdom, and justice, of the primitive men.

"6. The idea of a state of universal savagism seems to have sprung from the chimerical cosmogonies of Moehus,

less foundation rest all the calculations which claim an enormous antiquity for man, in order to leave room for the creation of language. The various modifications human speech has undergone are found to occupy such considerable periods, that the creation of language itself, from its rudest into its more perfect forms, would require epochs of time proportionably vaster. This is the one conclusion which linguistic science is competent to assert, and we may fearlessly assent to its truth, and yet deny altogether the practical conclusion founded on it. For if the Bible be true, human language was not formed by a human process at all; and the subsequent modi-

Democritus, Epicurus, and these cosmogonies, nor the consequences of them, were never admitted by the wise and sober sects of philosophy.

“7. The notion of the golden age, which at one time universally prevailed, is inconsistent with the universal extent of the empire of savagism.

“8. There seems to be in human nature an innate propensity towards degeneracy, even in the state of the highest improvement.

“9. The period immediately succeeding the deluge, if such an event actually took place, must have been remarkable for piety, and must have prevented the patriarchs from falling into a savage state.

“10. Civilisation and improvement of every kind have always been carried to the highest pitch of perfection in large and populous societies If mankind had been once in the savage state, they could never have arrived at any considerable degree of civilisation.”—*Evidence and Authority of the Divine Revelation*, vol. ii. pp. 129–131.

fications it has undergone, had therefore no corresponding original. Language was a gift direct from Deity, an endowment of the perfect manhood which He bestowed upon His human creatures.* We find, accordingly, Adam conversing with God, and giving to all living things the names which they should bear. Thus the picture presented is that of a perfect man with a perfect intellect, brought into contact with a sorrowless world outside him; not a savage with an uncivilised reason working on an uncivilised state. Our embarrassment in conceiving this condition arises from our own ignorance, and from the difficulty we experience in throwing off the associations of our own particular type of civilisation and stage of progress. Hence we find it difficult to realise a full intellectual maturity in man with a primitive condition of the world around him; yet after the fall, such must have been the starting-point of human civilisation, not a rude savage dealing with a rude world, but man highly civilised, and the world outside alone rude. We can easily conceive with what rapidity under

* Professor Max Muller's *Lectures on Language*, Lecture ix. pp. 392, 398. "The science of language thus leads us up to that highest summit from whence we see into the very dawn of man's life on earth, and where the words which we have heard so often from the days of our childhood, 'and the whole earth was of one language and one speech,' assume a meaning more natural, more intelligible, more convincing, than they ever had before."

such circumstances arts and invention must have advanced, and with what strides progressed towards perfection. For something of the same kind has taken place in modern history, where European civilisation has been brought into contact with the boundless natural resources of the West, and nations have consequently sprang into maturity with a rapidity of growth impossible in other times. We see from this consideration how important it is, in judging of the antediluvian world, to remember that man was made a perfect intellectual being, and that the fall, which destroyed his moral glory, must still have left the maturity of his intellect, not untouched, indeed, by the depravity of the moral nature, but surviving it, like a column defaced, but still erect, where all else was in ruins.

But the moral nature of unfallen man was as perfect as his physical and intellectual; perfect, not in the sense of extent, but in the sense of purity. It was as yet the finite, but true reflection of the character of the Infinite. Man not only had no other will but God's, but was even unconscious of the possibility of having any other, so perfectly was his nature in harmony with the Divine—two spheres filled with the same life. In this state all moral apprehension of God, all doubts and fears, all awful and alarming thoughts of anything possibly to be dreaded in the Creator, were necessarily absent, even to the faintest shadow of an alarm. It was the moral state promised to the child of

God as his object of hope in the higher world beyond the grave, where perfect love shall cast out fear, because fear hath torment. Accordingly the first result of guilty consciousness in man was fear, as he vainly attempted to hide himself from God, in an effort not less significant of the cloud which had passed over his intellect, than of the corruption which had tainted his heart.

It is impossible for us with our own guilty consciousness, familiar to us as life, to realise the perfect happiness of that state where the knowledge of evil was absent; but we can understand that in proportion as we enlarge that knowledge of evil, we enlarge equally our experience of inward agony. Who would wish, for instance, for a murderer's experience,—to feel the blood we have shed entering into the very soul, and torturing it with such a sting of remorse that life has become intolerable, and death has seemed to be a relief? Such a man has gained a knowledge of evil from which other men are exempt. Would any sane man envy the murderer; or dream that because he has enlarged his moral knowledge, he has enlarged his happiness; or think the experience innocent of blood a thing to be pitied, in contrast with the dreadful secrets lurking unspoken in the depths of the murderer's heart? In this case we are able to understand the change implied in a knowledge of evil, and it must be essentially the same in all evil, whatever may be its nature. Conceive all this absent, not a shadow of the accursed thing

present to darken the pure surface of the human soul as it reflected the Deity, or to mar the full joy of the human heart as it basked in the rapture of His presence.

But now, having conceived, however faintly, of the perfection of human nature unfallen, let us imagine our first parents happy in their own mutual society, and placed in the midst of a world exquisite beyond imagination in every sight and sound of beauty ; without a trace of discord without them or within them ; in a climate so genially tempered as neither to exhaust nor injure ; a more perfect type of that which still exists in some portions of the globe, and which makes life a pleasure and even savage existence beautiful. Then imagine these perfect beings, thus capable of the highest thought and sensitive of the noblest affection, brought into immediate intercourse with God Himself, and receiving in this intercourse such revelations of the Divine glory as will constitute the bliss of heaven. The earth was thus the threshold of the Divine presence ; man the reflection of God ; every thought an act of happy worship ; every feeling a rapture, and life one perpetual song of praise.

What mind is there so dull that it cannot perceive the contrast between man as he was and man as he is ; between that picture and this experience ? What heart so dead that it does not mourn over the change and shudder at the wide abyss produced by human sin between that

magnificent past of man, and this thrice melancholy present ?

Let us not idly mourn over the retrospect ; but let the thought only nerve the heart, through the power of the Holy Ghost and the blood of the covenant, to recover the inheritance we have lost. Nor out of a refined cruelty to tantalise us with the prospect of a blessedness forfeited irrevocably and for ever, has the Spirit recorded this primeval dignity of man, but to awaken in the soul some estimate of the sin which has wrought the ruin, and point its believing eyes to the Saviour and to that bright inheritance which in and through Him may yet be ours. No effeminate lamentation over the past will brighten the darkness. Look on and up, Christian. Brace thy strength for a new conflict in which, if thou believest, thou shalt be more than a conqueror through Him that loved thee. The Captain of thy salvation has gone before, and from the throne on which He sits in heaven, beckons thee onward,—His righteousness thy plea ; His Spirit thy strength ; His word thy guide ; His cross thy motto ; His life thine example ; His kingdom thine home.

How swiftly did that first never-to-be-forgotten glory sink in darkness ! The stern facts of fallen man and the glorious purpose of God to restore him again to the inheritance he has lost, forbid us to linger too fondly over that first scene ; but teach us, strong in hope, to gaze without shrinking at the length and depth of the fall, and the full suffer-

ing of a sin-stricken creation that "groaneth and travaileth together, even until now." Must there not have been wondering suspense in heaven among those glorious beings who sang together at the creation, as they watched the entrance of sin into the world and were lost at the mysterious wisdom which permitted it, and the depth of purposes which reached beyond created knowledge? Here, indeed, is the link connecting the history of man and his redemption with the government of God at large, and the history of other and prior orders of beings. The narrative of Genesis states the fact, and the doctrines of the New Testament point towards the explanation.

Sin entered this earth of ours from without, and thus we became connected with that great mystery of evil which stretches so much further and deeper than the utmost scope of human experience, that we can only catch the deep shadows of a gulph lying far beyond our fathoming. But, on looking at God's plan, it is impossible to separate the recognition of the Satanic agency permitted by God to bring sin into our world, from the recollection of the promises which identify the final triumph of the Gospel with the final treading down of the principalities and powers of darkness. Connected, as the history of our world is, with the existence of fallen angels at the first entrance of that sin which made the Gospel necessary, and connected with it likewise in the final completion of the Gospel triumph, we can scarcely doubt that

the whole intermediate course of events have a bearing likewise on the same universal interests, although God has seen fit not to distract our attention from our own immediate concerns to the fortunes of other beings indirectly associated with us. By the effect of the fall we became implicated in Satanic rebellion and Satanic punishment. Satan "is the God of this world;" and the final punishment of sin will be accomplished in the fire "prepared for the devil and his angels." Yet, inasmuch as sin did not spring self-evolved from the human heart, but was introduced by Satan from without, a difference has been drawn between the two cases. For man there is redemption through the blood of the covenant. For devils there is no hope, but only the blackness of darkness for ever.

The fall of man was the turning-point of his history. All the dark deeds done in the world, its sins and sorrows, have sprung from this fountain. From this arose the necessity for a redemption and all the various mysteries entering into the mighty plan. From this came those sterner accents of warning, those notes of judgment which blend everywhere throughout the word with the promises of redemption. The fall and ruin of man was the great primal fact which coloured all the rest of the revelation, and without it God's dealings would be but a causeless display of His attributes.* What wonder

* "The history of the fall is the basis of the whole religion

that it should be so vividly depicted and so largely illustrated throughout the word, or that the doctrinal truth should be reiterated over and over again as if to guard against the possibility of a misconception.* What wonder that at the very beginning of the inspired history it should be blazoned in letters of judgment and stamped in the history of the world in characters so deep that they remain ineffaceable to our own day! What wonder that the warning voice should be repeated again and again, like tones of thunder reverberating among the hills of the distant past!

The inspired narrative from the temptation to the call of Abraham is but an amplification of this

of the fallen creature, and it is the principle of unity which makes one consistent whole of the various revelations and religious institutions of different ages. The patriarchal revelations; the call of Abraham; the mark set upon his family; the promises to him, his son and grandson; the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian servitude; the Mosaic dispensation; the lessons of the Hebrew prophets, are all only different parts of one grand scheme for the restoration of man by the gradual discipline of revealed religion, and by the merits of the Redeemer from the ruin of the fall. The fall is the fact, which is the basis of the whole superstructure and unites its various parts."—Bishop HORSLEY'S *Biblical Criticism*, v. i. p. 9.

* It is worthy of notice that the emphatic declarations of the corruption of human nature, are repeated at different epochs, extending the one identical truth formally through every period of the Revelation. The language of Moses (Gen. vi. 5) is repeated by David (Psalm xiv.), by Jeremiah (xvii. 9), and by St. Paul (Rom. viii. 7).

one lesson. Just enough is recorded to illustrate the great religious truth, but not enough to allow attention to be distracted from it for a moment. The very brevity of the narrative brings the great events into the closer apposition with each other, and deepens the impression of the whole. All particulars, which would simply satisfy curiosity, and could have no bearing on the great moral object of the revelation, are omitted, and there is a lesson in the very omission. A few graphic touches indicate here and there the circumstances and outward character of the long ages, whose history is condensed into a few brief chapters; but the religious lesson and its bearings stand out in their solitary prominence the more conspicuously,—the blazing beacons of ancient human history. The records are drawn, not as man would have drawn them, or in accordance with his own mistaken estimate of the relative value and importance of things; but in accordance with the value of things as they stand in God's sight and in their bearing on the work of salvation, and the events subordinate to its accomplishment. It is not, perhaps, possible for us to trace the reason in every detail of the record without exception, or at least there would be danger, lest such explanations should be thought chimerical; but we may well believe that the narrative neither omits a necessary fact nor contains an unnecessary one. This, at all events, is certain, that the narrative is so constructed as

to throw the religious lesson into prominence throughout.

Thus it is with the record of the temptation and the fall. We not only have the fact, but the mode of its occurrence; all that is needed to quicken human vigilance being clearly there, and yet nothing more. The agency through which the temptation was brought to our unfallen parents; the motives to which the temptation appealed; the mode in which it was suggested; the disobedience which it involved; the sin which was committed and its disastrous effects on man's nature; the omniscience which searched out the hidden guilt, and the inexorable justice which punished it; yet, at the same time, the Divine mercy which in that moment of chastisement would not leave His fallen creatures without hope, but blended with the sentence of His truth the promises of His love,—all are there written as with a sunbeam on the record. But if we try to step beyond this circle of moral and religious truth, we are baffled directly. What were those two mystic trees, the types of knowledge and of life? What was the nature of the change wrought at the moment of transgression, upon the flesh and spirit of man? In what mode did the tempter use the serpent's form? How were our first parents driven from that happy home, and where? These and many other questions which a natural curiosity would like to solve may be asked, as they have been asked a thousand times,

but asked in vain. God has hidden these facts, and that should be enough for us. But why has He thrown the veil over so much that we should like to know? Is it not because He knows the waywardness of the human heart, and would not reveal a solitary needless fact which might only distract the attention from the great religious truths of Satanic temptation and human sin, depravity, and guilt?

Thus it is with the records of the antediluvian world. On every step of the history is stamped the effect of sin and the downward career of a corrupted nature, further and further from God. From the first cruel act, when Abel's blood called from the ground for vengeance, to the growth of that gigantic aggregate of guilt which swept away even the sons of God within its vortex of crime, the whole progress was that of the headlong torrent flinging itself into the abyss. A ray of light here and there lifts for a moment the veil of the past, and gives us a glimpse of the social life and manners of the antediluvians; but it is not for a moment positive and prominent enough to cloud the moral truths. It is a history of men's spiritual life, not of their outward existence, social or political. Thus we see the growth of population aggregating itself into cities; the rise of mechanical industry and art, with the material prosperity, the opulence and luxury, the trades and division of labour, involved in them. We see the growth of nations and kingdoms, the rise

of mighty potentates and warriors, the existence of communication between man and man, and those glittering rewards of power and military glory and great reputation, which still dazzle the eyes of men. Enough of all this is indicated to show that the world of that day was just such as the world of our own day would have been had not Christianity given it new principles; just such as the world was before Christianity did infuse into its corrupting members a new and diviner life. But here the record stops—we see the fact, but little more.

How wisely and graciously has God kept all these things out of sight! For, had the inspired writings recorded the exciting scenes of that period, its wars and revolutions, its conquests and calamities, would not the story have fed the pampered appetite of human pride, and seemed to justify its arrogance? It would have been as if God cared for these things, and thought them to be important; as if He was like man, and like the gods of man's making, human as themselves, and concerned with no sublimer purposes. But what was all this to God but the extravagant growth of a created guilt; a bubble in the stream; a fleeting shadow; a dream of the night, which, in the balances of the Divine mind, was not worth mentioning; things beneath a thought compared to the great realities of the soul and of eternity? In contrast with this striking reticence, how boldly here again do the spiritual lessons stand out into

view. Would we know that the condemnation of sin is no caprice of the Holy One — sin itself, no idle fancy, no result of an arbitrary command — would we see whether sin-stricken human nature might not yet redeem itself, and climb by its own strength back again into the Paradise it had lost — would we test by actual experiment whether the course of man, left to himself, is not upwards, ever towards perfectibility, as modern pride fondly dreams,—here we find the reply. The answers are written in the records of the world before the flood, — a world filled with violence from end to end, and if with universal violence, then also with universal suffering; a world which it is terrible even to conceive, with every bad passion bloated into giant strength, and, but for one chosen seed witnessing amid the darkness, without a ray of light to break the universal gloom.

Thus it is with the deluge. What graphic pictures of that vast catastrophe does not the human imagination delight to paint, feeding itself with filling up the inspired outlines with all the details of their horror, and dwelling on the awfulness of the spectacle when over the wide-spreading waters rode in safety the solitary ark. It would have been, perhaps, impossible for human pen to have recorded such an event without some such colouring. With stately calmness and grand consistency, the inspired history moves on. The punitive justice of God is all there, and the

march of His irresistible judgment, but with such majestic simplicity recorded, as if God would not harrow up human feelings, nor permit any mere outburst of natural emotion to stand between the conscience and its lesson. To Him, indeed, whose thought compasses at once the whole enormous aggregate of death and suffering produced by sin, and who concentrates His displeasure against the cause of it, the mere accidents of human death and that accumulation of it at one time and one occasion, which so impresses the human heart, must have a secondary importance compared to the great saving results for which He operates. Here, therefore, they are all omitted. As before, so in this case, the questions of a needless curiosity are left unsolved—questions interesting in themselves, but having no direct relation to the human soul. How was the catastrophe wrought? by what secondary causes? by what means were the animals brought to Noah? and what was the comparative extent and distribution of the existing species? what was the condition of Noah in the ark? are not answered, nor is it even stated beyond dispute what were the limits of the deluge itself.

But who can fail to read the lessons conveyed by the narrative. The lessons of a justice which no growth of human wickedness, though it be wide as the world itself, can ever defy, and of a faithful love towards His believing people, that never leaves them without His guardian care, stand side by side like twin angels, to point the soul God-

ward. How does that sheltering ark typify the one refuge for the soul amid the storms of judgments? With what a voice does the past ever repeat the twofold lesson, "If God spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;" surely, "He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

The same characteristics mark the narrative of the dispersion of Babel. It might be thought that fear has a regenerating power on the corrupt human will, as some have dreamed, as if suffering could purge out sin. If so, surely the generation after the flood, among whom survived the very men who had been saved, with all the traces of the great catastrophe still fresh on human memory, and written, as with a pen of adamant, upon the surface of the earth itself; surely they would fear and obey this great and terrible God. Let Babel give the answer, with its confusion of tongues and compulsory migrations.

Here, again, the same reticence and the same utterance are to be traced. The moral truth is prominent. The satisfaction of curiosity, however natural and legitimate, is omitted. The precise genealogical lists which now began to appear in the history constitute no exception to the rule, but rather afford a new illustration of it. They were necessary to that portion of the Divine plan which consisted in electing a chosen race, and marking

out that race distinctly beforehand as the line of which the Messiah should take flesh. All the tribal divisions which we shall find, as we advance, to have been incorporated into the very growth of the Hebrew people were instrumental to the same purpose. These lists fall, consequently, within the strict limits of the revealed plan, and form a very remarkable feature in the mode of its execution; for this precise and detailed information in one given direction stands in strong contrast to the reticence displayed in other directions. It is still true, therefore, that here, as elsewhere, the secular is put out of view, and the religious lesson alone thrown into prominence.

We see, therefore, that the sacred narrative from the temptation to the dispersion is an inspired amplification of the great truth of the fall of man, his state of guilty condemnation, and a corruption of his nature, so deep that every imagination of the thought of his heart had become only evil continually. What a contrast between Paradise and Babel; between man before the fall and man after it; between man as he came fresh from his Creator's hand, and man when sin had defaced the image in which he was made, and shattered into ruins the glory of the goodly structure. Then all was light—physically, intellectually, spiritually, light and life and love everywhere—now all is dark, and over the whole face of the world every ray of earthly hope was

extinguished by the spiritual blindness of a race lying in the valley of the shadow of death.

We must not forget, indeed, that even during this period of the history there are bright spots of light scattered amid the darkness, intimations here and there, clear and positive, of God's great saving plan, and of its distinctive characteristics. Thus we meet with the institution of sacrifice immediately after the expulsion from Eden, with its abiding lessons of human sin and divine holiness. The promise of the redemption by the seed of the woman was given amid the first agony of guilty conviction and punishment. The death of Abel pointed not obscurely to another state of recompense for the righteous after death. But still these were but occasional gleams amid a deep and wide-spread darkness.

But, here in this last extremity of man, the first dawn of the yet distant day shone in the horizon. Forth from the general gloom issues into the light the called and chosen race. Its limitation for three generations to one single representative, served to identify the line itself beyond dispute, and show that the growth of the mighty nation, which should witness for revealed truth before the world, was all of God from first to last. Here, therefore, a further contraction of the scene takes place. The whole mass of the unbelieving world, which, from the deluge till now, has occupied the view, is dropped partially out of sight, and only now and then, and here and there, as God saw fit to use it, is brought

into notice again, while the elected seed steps grandly into the foreground. Hitherto, there were chosen saints of God in every generation, of whose existence we are reminded; such as Enoch the prophet, who walked with God; and Noah, the preacher of righteousness. But they appeared occasionally, as it were, in the history, scattered and isolated amid surrounding ungodliness; but now the work which nature had proved itself incompetent to do, grace was about to accomplish. Here began that Church of God, the line of which was never to be broken again, but was to stretch continuously on, alike through Jewish and through Christian times, till the ingathering of all the elect should be accomplished, and the kingdom of heaven should come. It was small, in its beginning, like the gushing of a solitary spring, but to spread into a river, wide as the world, and long as eternity. With what a feeling of adoring praise do we watch this first commencement of the saving work; majestic Abraham; contemplative Isaac; gentle and loving Jacob; then the race as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Here more than ever the spiritual element, as was natural, absorbs all others. The true men are there, presented to us amid the full setting of local circumstances, and the living features of their time. The details of country, climate, local peculiarities, oriental manners, habits, modes of life,—all surround the picture with such an

admirable harmony that nothing is wanting to it ; the true men are there, but it is, above all, not the men we see, but the saints. Imperfect creatures indeed, with human passions and weaknesses, with all their true humanity knit to our own daily experience by such a community of sentiment, sympathies, and trials, as to witness to the inalienable brotherhood of hope and grace which unites us to them ; but still, with the Divine life strong within them, and growing, as it may grow in us, amid struggles and weaknesses, into the perfect, spiritual man. The constant intercourse with God ; the simple faith that grasped the promises ; the deep submission of will to the purposes of God ; the inward experience of guilt, and the reliant expectation of the Messiah who should come of their seed, and in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed ; the profound experience of themselves and of God ; the inward conflicts through which the Divine Spirit perfected His work ; the spirit of intense prayer and the vivid sense of the Divine presence ; these are the characteristics on which the inspired history dwells—the unchanging lineaments of the people of God in every age and every time.

The entire portraiture of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is subordinate to this element. There is not a circumstance supplied, or an event narrated, but has its harmonious place in this relation towards the whole inspired history. Materials are there no doubt for the construction of a secu-

lar story. Abundant opportunity is afforded for an ingenious and vivid imagination to fill up the outlines with the colouring of human feeling and adventure; and when the adventitious circumstances of manners, and habits, and locality, are skilfully interwoven, the result is the production of a very exquisite and impressive picture. But this would not be the portraiture which God Himself has given us. To dwell on such details would be altogether foreign to the argument of this Lecture. My object is with the description, not as human fancy may paint it, but as it is drawn by the hand of God Himself; and in this, the spiritual, not the secular, everywhere meets the view. The two modes of description must not therefore be confounded. The merely human narrative on its merely human side may form a very interesting work of human skill, for the work and the result are, in such a case, human altogether; but it is not the narrative of the Bible. It is not only diverse from God's work, but inconsistent with it; for it disjoints the whole sequence of the revelation; it loses sight of its essential characteristics, and changes the entire relation in which it has pleased God to present the portraits. It gives the whole prominence to those secular elements which God has kept out of sight, and keeps out of sight what God has made predominant everywhere.

We must, therefore, look at the history of the patriarchs not in regard to the materials it may afford for a work of the human imagination, but

as it actually exists in the Bible, neither taking from it, nor adding to it. When this is done the relation borne by the narrative to the whole plan of revelation assumes a prominence that cannot be mistaken. The covenant made by God with Abraham, and specifically repeated to Isaac and Jacob, is the thread pervading the whole, of which the Providence conspicuous in the events of their lives is at once the illustration and the result. The sharply-drawn diversity of character between the three only makes the common characteristic of their history the more remarkable.

The sphere of the entire narrative lies in the immediate presence of Jehovah. The awe of the Unseen is upon the soul of the reader. The Divine hand that guided the patriarch from his distant home is not indeed depicted to the senses, but the heroic faith in which Abraham went out "into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, not knowing whither he went," almost seems to lift the veil, and certainly brings the Invisible very close to us. We picture the father of the faithful seeing what is hidden to the outward sight, and with his eye fixed upwards and onwards moving grandly upon his mysterious way. The spectacle is not that of a disappointed fanatic seeking a new settlement which he never lived to attain; for in regard to the outward Canaan and his personal possession of it, God "gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on" (Acts, vii. 5); but of a

saint, confessing himself a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, and desiring "a better country, that is, a heavenly" (Heb. xi. 13, 16). With what solemnity of feeling do we not witness, spectators of what no human eye saw, the solemn covenant between God and the patriarch, when "the horror of great darkness fell" upon Abraham, and the smoking furnace and the burning lamp passing between the pieces of the slain heifer, ratified the mysterious covenant (Gen. xvi. 12). The formal renewal of the promise four times over in the interval intervening between the patriarch's settlement in Canaan and the mystic visit on the plain of Mamre keeps the Divine agent constantly before the mind, and places the perpetuity of his fixed purpose into the stronger contrast with the futility of plans made after the flesh. We seem to watch, with almost breathless wonder, the three strangers entertained in the heat of the day, while little by little, as the narrative progresses, we become conscious of the presence of the angel of the covenant in his human shape—the recognition of the Son of God breaking upon the mind gradually, as it must have broken upon the soul of Abraham himself. Awe-stricken with the consciousness of the Deity, we stand listening and wondering, as the father of the faithful intercedes with the Lord on behalf of the righteous in Sodom. There is wonderful beauty in the gradual hints by which the inspired narrative opens the true spiritual nature of these transactions.

Lastly, we are taken by the hand of God Himself, and admitted, so to speak, into the Divine secret of the typical scene upon the top of Mount Moriah: "God did tempt Abraham." Conscious of God's intention, not revealed to Abraham himself, we follow the footsteps of the father and the son, touched with the deep pathos of the scene, listen to their brief conversation full of an unutterable tenderness—the father too absorbed in the struggles of his great act, the son too influenced by an unconscious awe and reverence for many words. We watch the triumph of faith, which never for a moment doubted the perfect truth of the promise in Isaac—"accounting that God was able to raise him even from the dead" (Heb. xii. 19). In the dramatic vividness of the scene, we hang in suspense upon the issue, and are conscious of a positive relief when, at the critical moment, the Divine voice interrupts the act, and calls attention to his own Divinely provided sacrifice: "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

The life of Isaac, suitably to the calm and contemplative character of the man, is passed over in comparative silence. The portions which have been specifically recorded are just those, and those only, which exhibited the unbroken se-

quence of the Divine plan and the perpetuity of the covenant. Thus we are reminded of the sovereign purpose of God in selecting, according to His own will, the line of descent of the younger brother from the very birthday of Esau and Jacob. The characteristics of the two men serve the more vividly to illustrate the electing purpose of God. Had it been left to human judgment to decide to which of the two brothers the task of founding a great nation could most suitably be intrusted, there are few who would not select Esau, one of those eager, impulsive, and demonstrative men, whose qualities, showy, but superficial and unreal, readily catch attention, rather than Jacob, whose character, full of a quiet depth and earnestness, and characteristic in its very faults, needs to be studied before it can be understood. Here, as before, the purpose of God stands out prominently, and the mere human elements of the picture are subordinate. For that scene of Isaac's blessing, when human sin profanely took God's work out of His hand, and wrought, in its own meddling and distorted way, what God Himself would doubtless have done well and perfectly, is but another link in the same series. Below the impassioned human feeling pervading it, the narrative catches a deeper character from the Divine will which was working all the while. It was no human disappointment of a cherished hope, but a startled consciousness of having stood on the very verge of oppos-

ing God, which shook Isaac's soul when, in the moment of discovering his unconscious mistake, he "trembled very exceedingly."

In the history of Jacob the human events are supplied in much greater detail, and the reason of the change is evident. The point of descent is now reached when the chosen line branches out into those wider ramifications from which the tribal organisation of the future nation took its origin; and it became necessary to take up one by one the connected threads which linked the events of the past to the living experience of the people to whom the revelation by Moses was in the first place addressed. But all the deeper and more solemn passages of Jacob's life are identified with God's immediate action and the accomplishment of the covenant. Thus we pass with comparative indifference over the details of Jacob's suffering with Laban, not sympathising very keenly even with Jacob himself, because we trace in the whole transaction a retributive wisdom directed to chasten and break down the besetting sin of Jacob's character. But with what an intense emotion do we not watch the sleeper's dream as on the road to Haran he saw the mystic ladder reaching up to heaven, and received in that moment of apparently utter loneliness the comforting vision of the Almighty. With a yet more solemn reverence we become spectators of the mysterious transaction of Mahanaim, so far as the darkness, not only physical but moral, which the Divine

wisdom has thrown over the scene, permits us to understand its details. It is but a half revelation which is afforded us. We perceive the agony of some great spiritual struggle, of which the bodily wrestling was a dim but significant type, but our natural conjectures as to its precise nature and elements are baffled by the twilight hanging over the events. We perceive the more than human dignity of the man who wrestled with the patriarch, when the shrivelling of Jacob's thigh under his mere touch indicated that not Jacob's strength but Jacob's faith prevailed over one who only wrestled to draw out the patriarch's faith into the greater activity (Hos. xii. 3). Here was the turning-point of Jacob's spiritual life; the climax of the work of grace when the stubborn will was at last brought into submission, and the spirit of God triumphed in the tears and supplications of the man, who "had power with God," and prevailed.

The prominence of the spiritual element which thus exists throughout the narrative is confirmed by the distinctness with which the sins of the three patriarchs are recorded. Had the object of the revelation been merely secular, and ended in tracing the genealogical identity of the Israel of the Exodus with their forefathers of the past, there would not have been any conceivable reason why these portions of their inner lives should have been revealed to us. Had the purpose of the author of the books only been to give orna-

ment to his narrative by inserting the particulars of a pathetic or interesting story, there must have been many passages in the lives of these men at least as suitable for the purpose, if not far more suitable than events which derive their importance from their moral and religious lessons only. Thus, in regard to Abraham, the traditions of the Jews indicate how interesting would have been some information relative to his early life in Ur of the Chaldees before he received his call.* What a stirring tale might have been framed out of the events of his military expedition against Chedor-laomer! In the case of Isaac, the brief intimation supplied of his relations towards Egypt must have been capable of furnishing materials of the highest secular interest, and the same may be said of the particulars of Jacob's life in Padan-aram. It was no literary necessity which has incorporated the recorded sins of the patriarchs in the sacred narrative, but it was the deliberate intention of the Holy Ghost who moved the writer.

There are at least three points of view in which these portions of the narrative are related to the harmony of the Divine plan. The vast variety of topic into which these questions would lead, if discussed in detail, would only distract attention from the concise view of the whole

* *The Palestinian Targum on Genesis*, Dr. Etheridge's translation, p. 191.

case, which it is the object of these Lectures to present. It must be sufficient, therefore, to indicate these aspects without discussing them. In the first place, the religious value of these lessons is very great to us, since they prove that the saints of old times were men of like passions with ourselves, and by linking them to us by an identity of human infirmity serve to link us to them by an identity of spiritual hope. Secondly, their doctrinal value is great; because they constitute the links of that line of Adamic descent which carries to our own day the inheritance of our first fathers' sin, and God's unchanging purpose of redemption which grew out of it. It is essential to bear constantly in mind that the Bible is a revelation of mercy to the fallen race of Adam, and it is as necessary to trace the unbroken links of succession in early as in later times. Here, in the recorded sins of the patriarchs, we see God's own witness of the same unchanging need of redemption, and the same unchanging purpose of redeeming from the very first till now. Thirdly, their evidential value is very great; for they point the mind irresistibly beyond the men to the God whose laws they transgressed. His Holiness, Truth, and punitive Justice, are seen everywhere. On any supposition of a merely human authorship the existence of these details is absolutely inexplicable. On the supposition of a Divine author, using men only as His instruments,

and directing the whole of His revelation from end to end, to the one grand purpose of re-instating fallen man in his original condition of holiness and happiness, they are equally natural and necessary.

Lastly, we can see that the secular details which fill the subordinate place in the narrative, are themselves selected with a definite object, and fill a definite place in the harmony of the whole revelation. Thus, the genealogical lists, in the tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis, have a reference backward to the descent of all mankind from one common parentage,* and forward to the distinctive marks of descent which were to meet in the person of the Messiah. The events connected with the wars of the kings, in the fourteenth chapter, not only give us a valuable intimation of the power and political position of Abraham and of the character of the times, but they also introduce the mystical Melchisedech, and thus become the basis of doctrinal exposition relative to the priesthood of Christ (Heb. v. and vii.). The whole narrative of Ishmael is replete with religious meaning (Gal. iv. 22). The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah supplies an instance of human sin and Divine justice, to which frequent reference is made in the later Scriptures, no less than fourteen

* RAWLINSON'S *Bampton Lectures*, l. ii. p. 68. *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. i. c. iii. p. 63.

times in the Old Testament and nine times in the New. The story of Abraham's servant and Rebekah is like the two preceding instances, directly religious. The brief reference to Isaac and his intercourse with Abimelech throws important light on the subsequent history of the settlement in Egypt, and will be used for this purpose in the course of my argument. The same remark applies to the connexions formed by Jacob in Padan-aram, and towards the close of Jacob's life we pass into the more detailed circumstances, each one of which holds an essential place in the connexion between the Pre-Mosaic and the Mosaic periods. Thus every detail, when placed side by side with the great central purpose of God in revelation, falls into its appropriate place and adds its own significance to the harmonious teaching of the whole.

Thus the design of God entered definitely upon its accomplishment. Thus far it is like the dawning of a day, flinging the first clear rays of hope upon the darkness of our human ruin; or, like the little spots of light on the moon's darkened hemisphere, which show to a spectator on our globe the first rays of light touching the mountain-tops before they fling their flood of radiance into the depths beneath. But the accomplishment of the work begun was secured by the infallible wisdom and Almighty strength of Him whose mind conceived and whose hand has executed the plan.

That little spot of light will expand more and more, till it grows into the full glory of the Sun of Righteousness, rising with healing in His wings and in the full zenith of His completed work filling earth with peace and eternity with praise.

LECTURE V.

The Period of the Law.

“THOU CAMEST DOWN ALSO UPON MOUNT SINAI, AND SPAKEST WITH THEM FROM HEAVEN, AND GAVEST THEM RIGHT JUDGMENTS, AND TRUE LAWS, GOOD STATUTES AND COMMANDMENTS.”—NEH. ix. 13.

THE constitution of the Hebrew nation and the processes through which the family grew into a people, form an historical period of their own, and the revelation containing the record of it is marked by corresponding characteristics. The epoch begins with the return of Jacob to Canaan, after his long and protracted residence in Padan-aran, and extends to the close of the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness. Before its commencement the chosen race had been confined to one individual in each descent; but, in the family of Jacob, it entered upon the fulfilment of the promise that God would multiply them exceedingly: “Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them, so shall thy seed be.” After its conclusion, the strictly educational discipline, by which the national character was to

be formed into that lofty and vigorous mould which characterised it in later times, had been brought to a close, and in the maturity of strength the race entered upon its national life. Between the two points lay the growth of the nation ; its consolidation ; its political constitution ; and the establishment of those characteristics which have made the Jew a peculiar as well as a separate people to our own day. During this period the history naturally divides itself into three stages,—the first containing the providential circumstances which led to the settlement in Egypt ; the second, the sojourn in Egypt down to the period of the Exodus ; the third, the Exodus itself, the events which accompanied their journeyings between Egypt and Canaan, and, above all, that law in which God's mind and purposes towards them received its visible embodiment.

It is to the last of these periods that it is most necessary to fix attention, because we find in it, more than in any other, the whole spring of Jewish national life, intellectual, moral, and political. For to the law itself no further additions were made, and obedience to it or disobedience constituted the pivot on which turned all the subsequent fortunes of the race, and the method of the Divine dealings towards them. This fact has been recognised by the variety and inveteracy of the attacks, made by scepticism from age to age alike against its character and enactments. But the study of the two preceding periods forms

a necessary preparation for the study of the Mosaic law, because they make us acquainted with the condition of the people, and enable us to see in comparison with the Divine plan itself, what it was necessary to do, and what it was necessary to prevent, to fit the people for their great commission.

The principle enunciated in a former Lecture must here be kept prominently in mind, that the perfection of God's dealings is relative to the object He purposes to accomplish by them, and not to any other objects by which human caprice may choose to measure them.* Thus we should be pressing truth out of its proper relation, if we supposed that the whole Mosaic law was intended to furnish the world with an universal type for all human government, and that human constitutions were absolutely perfect or imperfect in proportion

* "These two views, then, to preserve in the Hebrew nation the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and to preserve it from the spreading evils of idolatry by separating it from the society of idolaters, and by forbidding all use of idolatrous rites and customs, may be looked upon as considerable intentions in the constitution, according to which we are to estimate and judge of the equity and wisdom of the constitution itself, neither of which can be well judged of, unless we take these intentions into consideration. If we regard the Hebrew constitution only as an institution of religion and religious worship, or only as a civil polity and a form of civil government, we shall widely mistake the true nature of it."—LOWMAN, *on the Civil Government of the Hebrews*, p. 20.

as they resemble it or differ from it. Just so far as the law dealt with the universal relations which man under every conceivable circumstance must hold towards his fellow-man, we may expect to find in the Mosaic code principles of the highest wisdom, and admitting of the widest application. Just so far as it was adapted to a special occasion, and for special purposes, we may expect to find provisions inapplicable to other people under widely different circumstances. Both sides of the question need to be kept in mind; for if we follow the common tendency to look only at one side of the question, and push it to its extreme, we must go wrong in one way or another. They are quite right who see the stamp of the Supreme Lawgiver in the ancient law, and believe that many a great lesson, not only religious, but civil and political, may be derived from it for the guidance of modern legislation. But they are also right who deprecate the attempt to apply the whole law to modern times, and to justify anomalies in our own day by their permitted existence in ancient times; as, for instance, has been done in regard to the lawfulness of polygamy among Christian converts, and the justification of slavery. There are certain wants and relations, which are common to all alike, under every diversity of age and position; and there are circumstances peculiar to separate ages, and which it is no more possible to transfer from one to the other, than it is possible to recall out of their

graves the dead heroes of other generations. The two must be carefully discriminated, and both must be kept in view if we would judge rightly either of the present or of the past.

The existence of peculiar objects specially contemplated in the ancient Jewish polity is no mere conclusion of the reason, but the positive teaching of the Scripture itself. For instance, the Hebrew race was intended to furnish the stock of which the Son of God should take flesh; and for this reason there are certain peculiarities recognisable both in God's mode of constructing the nation and in His revelation of the method He adopted, to which I must shortly call attention. But this object never can be true of any other people, or of the same people at any other time; for Christ has once appeared to take away sin. He was the Messiah who should come, and we are forbidden to look for any other. Thus it was God's purpose to keep the people isolated from the surrounding nations among whom they dwelt; but it is no longer God's will to isolate any other nation by external and ceremonial observances. The abiding peculiarities of the Church of Christ now are no longer ritual but spiritual. The inheritance of God's truth under the Gospel is as world-wide as it was rigidly exclusive under the law. This is enough to show, without tracing it further, that the Mosaic law was intended for a given purpose, and that its perfection must, therefore, be estimated, not by any

absolute standard of the best form of government for any people, and for any time, but by its adaptation to the definite purposes for which it was given. It was schemed not only for a specific object, but to accomplish this object through a given people under given circumstances, and in a given stage of moral and national development. The motives which are effectual to guide conduct vary very widely both among different persons and in different stages of life in the same person. They vary in different persons. Who would dream of appealing by the same arguments to the conscience of some enlightened Christian man and to the conscience of a man hardened in crime, till he has become reckless of others and desperate of himself; or expect to persuade or govern a tribe of untutored savages by the same arguments and regulations which would be effectual and prudent in a highly civilised and educated community? Instances are to be found in our own day where principles of constitutional government, most wise and admirable in themselves, have yet signally failed from the incompetence of the people receiving them to understand and act upon them.

They vary likewise in the same person at different periods of life. The man is swayed, or at least should be swayed, by purer and higher motives than the boy; at all events, the boy is not capable of being influenced by arguments and motives perfectly suitable to the mature

man. Who would think of admitting into the government of educated men that appeal to fear and corporal punishment which it is not possible altogether to omit in the government of children, and which we do not scruple to use in the government of the ignorant and the vicious, simply because the lower nature can only be influenced by lower appeals? In a less developed state of moral and intellectual progress the mode of discipline must, so to speak, be of a lower and a coarser kind, and in a higher state of a higher and more refined kind. Now the Mosaic law and the providential dealings of God centering round it, were not only directed towards a certain defined object, but were adapted to a people under certain defined circumstances and in a defined state of human development. In order to judge of the law, it is consequently essential to understand both the purposes intended and the circumstances and condition to which it was adapted.

Now it is evident that the sacred narrative becomes more detailed and circumstantial as it deals with events nearer to the time of Moses, because its object was to explain the past providential dealings whereby they had been brought into the position in which they found themselves to stand. This existing position, in all its various details, was a matter of familiar experience, and the history which explained it necessarily expanded itself in a corresponding degree into details, till the threads of the past were traced down into the

actual texture of the present. These details enter minutely into family particulars; but these particulars differ as widely as possible from those secular stories with which a superficial criticism might be disposed to confuse them, because they explain those national peculiarities which fitted the Hebrew history for the fulfilment of the Divine plan. A part of this plan we have seen to be the provision of certain predicted marks of identity which, centering upon the person of the Messiah, should mark him out to be the Christ who should come. These signs were alike moral, personal, and genealogical. Moral in the holiness of His character; personal in the miraculous powers possessed by him, and which were, so to speak, flashes of the Divine nature dwelling within Him bodily; genealogical in His descent from a certain race, a certain tribe of that race, a certain family of that tribe. This could not have been accomplished without that tribal arrangement which was guarded and perpetuated by the Mosaic law, which existed among them from the first, growing with their growth and incorporated into the very structure of their national existence. At the same time, in that wonderful harmony of all God's dealings in which His perfect wisdom works many objects by the same means, other results followed from this provision; and it throws light on many circumstances in their history not otherwise admitting of easy or definite explanation.

The notion we have been accustomed to entertain that the Hebrew nation was a perfectly pure-blooded race, sprang from one single stock without any foreign intermixture, is very largely modified by a closer examination of the history. The idea is strictly applicable to later times, when the Jews had already become the isolated nation that dwelt alone and were especially contrasted with the Gentile races, which occupied Samaria after the Assyrian conquest, and the mongrel race, half Jewish half heathen, which was found in parts of Judea. Thus St. Paul himself, showing how futile it was to boast before God of any outward privileges, instead of looking for salvation through grace, enumerates among his own personal advantages on which he might justly have prided himself under other circumstances, that he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," sprang on the side of both parents from a pure Hebrew stock. But the idea is not applicable in the same way to early Hebrew history. The very lines of distinction between race and race had scarcely acquired at this period their sharpness and depth. Not much more than two hundred years separated the time of Abraham from the period of the dispersion, and those climatic and occasional influences from which the varieties of the human race have sprung could scarcely have produced during this interval those definite types by which, in the process of their migrations, the various races of mankind have come to be distinguished.

In fact, a very great admixture of races went from the very first to make up the Hebrew. Had it not been so, the growth of the family into the nation must have been much less rapid than it was, and the whole course of God's providential dealings would have been proportionably delayed. Moreover, all experience teaches us that this admixture of blood constitutes the vigour and energy of any composite race. Take the Anglo-Saxon race for instance, with that characteristic hardihood and resolute energy which have made it the pioneer of civilisation all over the world. Celts and Teutons, Romans, themselves a mixed race, Saxons, Danes, Normans, themselves another mixed race, have all contributed their elements to the national character. So it was with the ancient Hebrews. Not only many influences, both from without and from within, but many races likewise, were all combined in the formation of the one chosen people, before it assumed its final definite type. Vastly complicated was the process, of which the effect was seen in the Jew of the time of the Maccabees, as with all the memory of his grand history upon him he walked upon his native hills the most heroic type of man which the world has ever seen.

The proof of this fact can be traced from the call of Abraham downwards. On the male side the line of descent appears to have been strictly maintained, but that male side was itself the offspring of mixed marriages. The area of the

original family and the subsequent nation was identical with the area of circumcision. All circumcised members, whatever their origin, became parts of the chosen race. "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised," was the Divine command to Abraham; and the obedience to it is thus stated, "All the men of his house, born in the house, and bought of money of the stranger, were circumcised" (Gen. xvii. 13, 27). At an earlier date we are told that the servants of Abraham born in his own house, all adults and fit for war, were three hundred and eighteen in number. There is neither any intimation in the word, nor any circumstance in the history, which justifies the supposition that this increase did not go on in the same proportion in the households of Isaac and Jacob, who were not the heads of a single family according to our modern notions, but the chieftains of great tribes. The household of Abraham himself received a large extension in Egypt, and subsequently at Gerar, for we are told that Abimelech "took sloop, and oxen, and men-servants, and women-servants, and gave them unto Abraham" (Gen. xii. 16; xx. 14). Isaac is recorded to have had such great store of servants that the Philistines envied him, and that Abimelech declared "Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we" (Gen. xxvi. 16). The language of Jacob to his sons, after their cruel destruction of the Shechemites, implies the same thing, for he

states himself to be few in number in comparison with a confederacy of the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and had his tribe been only a single family, such a comparison would have been absurd altogether.* The company which went down with Jacob into Egypt gathered round the seventy males of direct Abrahamic descent was so considerable that the province of Goshen was assigned to them for their residence. The same accretion of members round the centre went on in Egypt (Ex. iii. 22). The rapid multiplication of their number in Egypt first alarmed the jealous fears of the Egyptians. Nor does the bondage they endured appear to have stopped the process, for the institution of the passover contains a special provision for the stranger, and this under two classes. There was the uncircumcised stranger who was a mere sojourner among them and was not permitted to eat the passover, and there was the circumcised stranger put on the same footing as one born in the land: "When a stranger shall

* "These patriarchs were powerful princes, as the emirs of the nomads are at the present day. They were completely independent and owed allegiance to no sovereign. They formed alliances with other princes, and even with kings. They maintained a body of armed servants, and repelled force by force. For their vassals they were the priests who appointed the festivals and presented offerings; the guardians who protected them from injustice; the chiefs who led them to war; the judges who banished the turbulent, and when necessary inflicted even capital punishment upon transgressors." —JAHN'S *Hebrew Commonwealth*, b. ii. p. 88.

sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land" (Ex. xii. 48). Thus we see that a great admixture of foreign blood was constantly added to the purely descended Hebrew race, and became inseparably incorporated in the nation of the subsequent history.

But the same thing is true even of the patriarchal families themselves in their more exclusive circles. The descent was strictly maintained on the male side, but not on the female. The family of Abraham himself included six sons by Keturah. The children of Jacob by Bildah and Zilpah, maidens in the household of Laban, were reckoned among the heads of tribes, on the same footing as the sons of Leah and Rachel, the descendants of Terah. Manasseh and Ephraim, the sons of Joseph, were born of Asenath, an Egyptian mother. The wife of Moses was a Midianite. The same kind of connexion might be traced among the subordinate members of the patriarchs as among their most noted leaders. An admixture of blood, therefore, entered very largely into the composition of the one permanent race. At the same time, in strongly drawn contrast to the multitude of dependants gathered around them, stood the central Hebrew families, descended lineally on the male side from Abraham, and carrying with them the Divine promise. "All

the land which thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever, and I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth."

It follows from these facts, that there must have grown up and been intertwined with the very progress of the race from the first, a natural aristocracy, and a natural government through its means.* The Hebrew nation must not be conceived as a confused mass of people, needing at the time of the Exodus to be organised throughout from the beginning, for their organisation existed with their existence, and grew with their growth. The heads of the tribes exercised a natural control over the subordinate families in their order and gradation, and inherited in their several spheres

* "Before the departure from Egypt the Hebrews were under the immediate government of the rulers of these clans, who were denominated heads of houses of fathers, heads of thousands, and were in rank subordinate to the princes. As the members of each tribe increased, the less powerful families united themselves with their stranger relatives and acknowledged them as their superiors; thence there arose a sub-division of the tribes into collections of families."—JAHN'S *Hebrew Commonwealth*, b. ii. p. 88. See Lowman *on the Civil Government of the Hebrews*, pp. 77, 79.

"The government in the several tribes of Israel was not monarchical, but aristocratical."—BR. SHERLOCK, dis. iii. "It is very plain, from the Hebrew history, that the provincial government of the tribes of Israel was not monarchical. It rather seems by their history a kind of mixed government, partly aristocratical and partly popular."—LOWMAN, *on the Civil Government of the Hebrews*, 79.

the patriarchal authority which descended through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At no time could the people have been without a government. It needed no arbitrary arrangement to call it into existence, for it was already there by the action of the Providence which constructed the race. Thus the organisation requisite for the transmission of intelligence through the whole land of Goshen, for the communication of plans, and the issue of orders, was present throughout their bondage, so incorporated with the very circumstances of the race, that no policy or force from without could possibly destroy it. Thus, at the commencement of their commission of deliverance, Moses and Aaron gathered together all "the elders of the people of Israel." (Ex. iv. 29.) Through this channel God's promises of deliverance, the provision for slaying and eating the Passover, and instructions as to preparations for their departure, were easily circulated through the whole mass of the people. Thus, when at the Exodus they made their last pause at Succoth, before finally entering on their journey through the wilderness, dwelling in booths till the final preparations were completed by the abundance of skilled artisans whom the work of their slavery in Egypt must have produced among them, it was not the construction of a national organisation among a people with no natural divisions and common ties, which needed to be accomplished, but a much slighter work and

requiring much less time; for it was only the wider extension and completion of an organisation already known and recognised.

The conception of these facts prepares us to form a better estimate of the moral and religious condition of the people. We have already seen, in the preceding Lecture, that in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the spiritual element was prominent. The intensely vivid consciousness of a Divine presence and of acceptance with God through the righteousness of faith, trust in salvation to be wrought by a future Messiah, the submission of the human will to the Divine, the duty of an active service, and a hope of a heavenly inheritance with God, were the truths on which they lived. God's dealings, likewise, with them, were precisely of the same general character as those by which He deals with men's souls now, and were directed to the same end. It is impossible for any divine of the Church of England to question this in the face of her Seventh Article, in which she declares, "that both in the Old and New Testaments, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore, they are not to be heard which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises." It appears to me equally impossible for any person to deny that this is the light by which the Bible itself interprets its own history, in the teeth of St. Paul's striking language, "These all died in faith, not having

received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims, for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And . . . now they desire a better country, even a heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God : for He hath prepared for them a city." (Heb. xi. 13.)

These early patriarchs were, therefore, in the true sense of the word "Christians," even before the coming of Christ. The mere amount and definiteness of the knowledge supplied to faith, can make no difference in the essential quality of faith, or of any other spiritual grace. Their religion was essentially the same as ours ; and if it be asked why in that case the history of their lives contains no dogmatic statement of their doctrines, the answer is that the absence of it necessarily arose from the progressive order of God's plan, and the mode in which alone we are able to conceive its accomplishment. Had the doctrinal statements of the New Testament been found equally in the Old, they would have been out of place. The book has two relations, one to those to whom it was immediately given, one to our own day. In regard to its immediate purpose, it was written not for the few spiritually enlightened men who knew and loved the will of God, but for the mass of the nation who were to be the visible witnesses of the Unseen, and to

them, in their state of religious development, the full Christian doctrines would have been unintelligible for want of preparatory training. As regards ourselves, such a statement is unnecessary, for we have them in the New Testament, and why should we expect God to give them twice over? But, meanwhile, in the examples of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we see them embodied in their strength of faith, in the glory of their sonship, in their spiritual devotedness of heart and soul, and in the holy conformity of their will. These graces are the more conspicuous from those human weaknesses and sins with which they were blended, and which serve equally to identify our human infirmities with theirs, and their spiritual victory with ours. This field of inquiry suggests a tempting line of thought; but I am compelled to turn away from it, lest the multiplicity of detail should confuse that general view of the whole connected scheme of revelation which it is my object to present.

But while we recognise in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the saints of God among their descendants, the true Christian ideal of the New Testament, we must not extend the same standard to all the race. The true mode of judging is to transfer the human nature of our own days into the circumstances of the days of the patriarchs. If, with our full light and knowledge, we still find so much unbelief and disobedience among the majority of mankind, as to make the heart sick,

why should we suppose it can have been different in ancient days? Then, as now, the true, invisible Church of God was the small light in a dark place. The whole course of the sacred history presents the same spectacle in every age, and the positive statements of our Lord and of His Apostles extend it to the time of His own coming again—a holy seed, the remnant according to the election of grace, amidst a mass of surrounding unbelief. Thus Cain the murderer stands in contrast with righteous Abel. In Abraham's household, Ishmael was a mocker at the promises. In Isaac's family, believing Jacob inherits profane Esau's blessing; and Rebecca herself became the tempter of her son into sin. In the household of Jacob, there was a call for a solemn revival of religion, and the putting away of idols: and what wonder, when even beloved Rachel could steal her father's teraphim? It was Joseph's report of their ill-conduct that exasperated his brethren against him, and the whole tale of Joseph's sufferings implies the same truth. When the people had multiplied in Egypt, the same distinction of individuals into two classes continued to exist. There are, as it were, two moral sides to the picture. On the one side, we see a devout seed crying from the iron furnace of Egyptian bondage in their deep distress, to the God of their forefathers; not only mourning under their degradation, but recognising God as the alone source of help and strength. (Exod. ii. 23.) On the other side, we see a strong party,

we may believe numerically much the largest, who wished for no deliverance, satisfied with the flesh-pots of their bondage, and enamoured with the profligate pleasures of her sensual idolatry. By what means even these dissentients were forced against their will to take part in the Exodus, we shall see very soon; but for the present I would fix attention on the fact that, all down the line of descent, the human nature of the Hebrew race was just the same fallen human nature we find among ourselves, and neither better nor worse. Consequently we must neither measure the whole by the saintly righteousness of the few, nor by the gross vice of the many, but must unite both together in the estimate we form of the religious condition of the Hebrews at the time of the descent into Egypt, and during their sojourn in that land. The religious aspect of the Old Testament history is the same as that of the New, being a record of Divine grace struggling against human obstinacy and unbelief.

Such is the aspect in which the narrative of Joseph's settlement in Egypt, and his conduct towards his brethren, should be considered. The whole story exhibits the mode in which God prepared them for the position they were to hold in the land of their sojourning. Had they gone into their new home in Goshen with their feelings of hatred towards their younger brother unchanged, and their own strong passions untamed, an un-

seemly jealousy towards Joseph, an impatience of all restraint, and an eager participation in the pleasures of sin for a season, would have been very injurious alike to the position of honour held at that time by the Hebrews in the estimation of their hosts, and to the cause of religion among the fast accumulating numbers of their descendants. Amid the marvellous chain of events by which God prepared the way for the descent of Jacob into Egypt, the story of Joseph holds a very prominent place, and is full of significance. The chastening hand which returned Jacob's own sin towards his aged father tenfold into his bosom, the simple piety and heroic constancy under temptation exhibited by Joseph himself, the mysterious chord struck by the Spirit of God in the consciences of his brethren, leading them to see, in the apparently unjust treatment they themselves received, the memorial of their own injustice towards their brother,—the deep Providence which all the while was working amid these dark dispensations its own purposes of mercy, both towards Israel and Egypt, are conspicuous lessons in the story; and there is not one of them which does not admit of close application to the Hebrew people themselves, and to their temptations during the sojourn and at the Exodus. God was about to deal with them as He had dealt with Joseph, and they needed both Joseph's courage to resist temptation, and Joseph's constancy to endure suffering, and Joseph's faith to rely upon the

promises. Lastly, they needed to know the character of their own relation towards the land of their bondage, that they might the better understand the justice as well as the power exhibited in their deliverance. Thus, while the events themselves fitted the patriarchs for their mission as the heads of the nation now about to be called into life, the record of them was both replete with religious teaching, and made them acquainted with those facts of their immediate history which it was essential for them to know.

But to this sketch of the peculiarities arising from the mixed races which entered into the composition of the one Hebrew nation, and of their moral and religious condition, as affected by the common depravity of human nature on the one side, and by the polytheistic idolatry which surrounded them on the other, we must add the circumstances of their bondage in Egypt. God's admirable wisdom in choosing this land as the cradle of the future people, and through the exaltation of Joseph preparing the way for their reception, may be traced in many particulars.

The principle already stated in this Lecture, that God ever reduces His supernatural interferences with the ordinary course of human things to a minimum, and that He never employs a miracle to effect what may be wrought by natural means, should constantly be borne in mind. The necessity for some settlement, where the people might increase in peace, and at the same time

acquire those industrial arts which a nomad life was not calculated to teach, but which were needed for their material prosperity in the land of promise, is apparent on a little consideration. Had the patriarchs remained in Canaan, and there received the fulfilment of the prophecy, that they should multiply exceedingly, the rising people must either have become mingled with the idolatrous Canaanites, and so have learned their abominations; or they must have been brought into hostile collision with them in the very infancy of their existence, when they were little qualified to contend with such formidable foes as the inhabitants of the walled cities of Canaan, or the giant sons of Anak. In either alternative, God's great purpose towards them could only have received its accomplishment through very special and miraculous interpositions. But the necessity for them was avoided by the settlement in Goshen. Here they were brought into contact with the most ancient civilisation of the old world. To Egyptian art and science Greece herself was in no little degree indebted for her subsequent advancement. Philosophy, mathematical and natural science, architecture, painting, and the industrial arts, all found an early home here.* The grand buildings of ancient

* The Egyptians were famous among the ancients for their proficiency in arithmetic, geometry, music, geography, physic, and politics. — STILLINGFLEET'S *Origines Sacrae*, b. ii. c. 2. WILKINSON'S *Manners of the Ancient Egyptians*, vol. ii. c. 8, 9; vol. iv. c. 11.

Thebes have left ruins which, even in decay, strike the spectator with astonishment. The enormous scale and imposing forms characteristic of Egyptian genius have become familiar to us. They built and sculptured like giants, clothing their figures with a dignity of simple repose with which no merely colossal size could invest them. In this school it was that the infancy of Hebrew national life was passed. Here were acquired the germs of their outward civilisation.* Here was educated their great prophet, endowed with every acquirement of Egyptian learning which could aid in qualifying him for his great work, as governor and lawgiver.

But Egypt was likewise the home of a degrading superstition, which deified animal life, and believed that the brute beasts were the chosen vehicles of the Divine will to man. In religious doctrine she was pantheistic; in practice the slave of a degrading superstition; in morals profligate, even to the level of ancient Greece; and more than this it is impossible to say. In Egyptian idolatry, as in all others, the most shameless indecency and the most degrading vices were parts of their reli-

* "There the Hebrews were made acquainted with the advantages of a well-regulated government, the utility of agriculture, and the value of the arts, to the cultivation of which some of their own nation applied themselves, though most of them continued their nomadic life."—JAHN'S *Hebrew Commonwealth*, b. i. c. 6. WILKINSON'S *Ancien Egyptians* vol. i. p. 13.

gious worship.* In this profligacy of manners, more, perhaps, than in her pantheistic theology,† or in her bestial superstition, lay the great temptation besetting the religious life of the Hebrew people during their sojourn and captivity. But against this danger it pleased God to adopt very special precautions.

First among these in order stood the great position occupied by Joseph, himself a devout worshipper of the Jehovah of his forefathers. His reputation and authority are seen in the substantial changes he wrought in the political and civil institutions of the land he governed. It is not more true that Egypt gave ideas to the Hebrews, than it is that the Hebrews, through Joseph, gave ideas and institutions to Egypt. Joseph's life was prolonged for eighty of the two hundred and fifteen years of the sojourn, and during his days both the persons and the religion of his kindred would naturally be treated with deference and respect. Yet this respect was prevented from running into a dangerous familiarity by another circumstance, namely, the abhorrence entertained by the Egyptians towards the profession of a shepherd people,—a feeling antecedent to the time of Joseph, and therefore to be ascribed to causes still further antecedent. Accordingly, we find that Joseph was anxious to put the occupation of his brethren prominently into view, as if he desired

* Dollinger's *Jew and Gentile*, vol. i. p. 173.

† Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters*, part iv. p. 30.

to find for his kindred at once welcome and isolation. In the land of Goshen they found a province suited to their wants, lying on the frontier towards Canaan, in the most favourable position possible for their Exodus, in contact with the civilisation of Egypt on the one hand, and yet excluded by its position, and still more by the social status of the Hebrew shepherds,* from too close and dangerous a familiarity with Egyptian superstition and profligacy upon the other. We can easily imagine that the high-spirited and haughty descendants of Abraham, accustomed to their free and independent life, and in that life opulent and powerful, would readily repay scorn with scorn, and, finding themselves an abomination to the people near them, would themselves stand proudly aloof from those who would only treat them as inferiors.* Thus, during the early part of the sojourn, God provided for His chosen race a peaceful home, a contact with the most advanced civilisation of the time, and yet a position fenced with peculiar precautions from the contaminations of idolatry.

But we can easily see that in course of time these conditions must have become greatly modified in both parties. On the death of Joseph, the personal influence of his authority would not only cease, but a reaction take place in an opposite direction. It would be contrary to human nature to suppose that his elevation had produced no jealousy on the part of the native Egyptians, or

* Jahn *on the Hebrew Commonwealth*, part i. c. 6.

that no party had been formed in opposition to him. At his decease this party would, perhaps, come into power. Meanwhile, the residence of the Hebrews at Goshen would tend to break down the prejudice of the Egyptians against a shepherd race. Many of the natives would settle among them (Exod. xii. 38), and enter into family relationships with them; for as yet the prohibition of mixed marriages, which belonged to a later stage of the history, did not exist. Gradually the barriers which parted the two people would be broken down or wear away, and the danger of Hebrew monotheism and morals being swamped little by little in conformity with the alluring idolatry around them, would proportionably increase.

It must be remembered that the charm of idolatry and the seductive influence it ever tended to exercise over the heathen themselves, and over the Hebrews, arose, not on the side of its religious worship, but on the side of its morals. It was not absent, perhaps, on the former side altogether; for, though in itself there would apparently be no fascination in the worship of many gods, rather than in the worship of one, yet the use of images, and the mode in which the visible idol appealed to the carnal and sensuous tastes of a fallen nature, would act in this direction. Such an idol-worship, likewise, reduced Deity nearer to the level of humanity, and thus tended to destroy the awful reverence and fear which the worship of a God unseen, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipre-

sent, was calculated to awaken. But undoubtedly the great temptation was in its morals. The influences which seduced the ancient Hebrews were exactly the same in kind as seduce men of our own day, out of the straight paths of a religious rectitude, into vice and its varied shapes of bodily gratification. The story of the device by which the Midianites through the counsel of Balaam succeeded in leading the Hebrews astray from God is full of significance. The charm of idol-worship was in the feasts and orgies accompanying its celebration ; when not only was all restraint removed from the indulgence of the passions, but the indulgence was even made a part of the religious duty and obligation. And even beyond this sphere of religious rites, so called, it needs no explanation to show how widely the same influences were extended, till the state of society was corrupt beyond imagination, and even the most sacred bonds of relationship were utterly swept away, and the first instincts of modesty forgotten in the universal demoralisation. Here was the danger of idolatry throughout, and we can easily see that the removal of Joseph's personal influence, and the wearing out in lapse of time of the mutual prejudice existing at first between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, must have opened a wide door of dangerous temptation to the chosen people.

But here God raised up a fence of another kind. He who uses the wicked as "a sword of His" is pleased to place them in positions where

the natural action of their own passions leads them to accomplish the very purpose He has in view. God was in no sense whatever the author of the cruel injustice that treated the honoured guests of other days as degraded slaves; nor was He responsible for the fact that the strong-willed obstinacy of the later Pharaoh should be arrayed in opposition to His own will. But the natural force of character is His gift, and His likewise is the position men hold, and the surrounding circumstances amid which they act. Thus it was His will that the throne of Egypt should be occupied by one who knew not Joseph, and who threw himself into the anti-Hebrew party, which experience of human nature shows to have existed, in all probability, even during Joseph's life.

Alarmed at the rapid increase of the Hebrew population, the king and his counsellors adopted a policy of suppression, and assumed towards their guests the attitude of masters, not entertainers. It became their object to wear them out by forced labour of the most degrading and painful description; and if the compulsory labour of the time of the Pharaohs resembled at all the compulsory labour of later times in the same land, it must have involved, not only vast hardships, but likewise an enormous loss of life. They became the labourers of Egypt, employed both in the actual making of the sun-burnt bricks used in their buildings, and likewise the artisans engaged in their erection; and when even thus sufficient

burden of toil was not laid upon them to crush their strength, they employed them in the labour by which alone the artificial irrigation of Egypt was maintained, and also in other branches of industrial occupation. It is evident that the hardships thus imposed upon them were so exceedingly great as to make their lives bitter; but were, at the same time, so prudently and skilfully graduated, and accompanied by such military precautions, as allowed no opportunity for forcible resistance, but broke down the Hebrew spirit and courage by the keen vigilance of the taskmasters under whom they were compelled to labour. And when, even thus, the people still grew and multiplied the more under the blessing of their God, a murderous infanticide was schemed to cut off the male children; a scheme apparently as diabolical in its intentions towards the female children whom it sought to save, as towards the male children whom it sought to destroy. That such a plan must have been partially successful is probable, and it must have reduced the proportion of the first-born of that generation below its natural average, when we remember that a period of eighty years still elapsed before the Exodus; for so great a risk of destruction to their offspring must manifestly have discouraged marriages during this period. Severe must have been such a bondage, and well may the land which inflicted it have been called an "iron furnace."

But, after all, the public and official acts of op-

pression must have constituted only a portion of the sufferings which the Hebrews were called to endure. During such a period private passion, malicious cruelty, and fierce oppression must have run wild in many a bloody, many a monstrous, crime, not only committed with impunity, but actually encouraged. Of such acts no adequate record would be possible. We know that such must have been the case, and the single instance recorded, when Moses interfered and slew the Egyptian, confirms the presumption into positive fact. The common experience of modern times indicates what must have been the unbridled license and cruelty of a bondage which had for its avowed and ostensible object—from the king upon his throne down to the meanest inhabitant of the land—to wear out and destroy the race whom they equally feared and hated.

But now what must have been the effect of all this on the Hebrews themselves? It must have acted in several directions. There must have been good in the affliction itself; for it is true of nations as of individuals, that the discipline of trial can alone confer robust vigour and energy of character. Never has true greatness been attained where this element has been absent. Unmingled ease and prosperity have a tendency to relax all the manly qualities in effeminacy and luxury. Constancy of purpose, and strength of will, and fortitude to act, and force of energy to prevail, only grow by exercise, and can only be exercised in times of struggle and difficulty. These

virtues can only grow amid the tempest, and wither and die amid the unclouded sunshine. Suffering is the discipline of manhood, both in those who endure and in those who succeed to the inheritance of their glory. This suffering in Egypt was but the first of that long series of national discipline to which the Jew of later days has been greatly indebted for the tenacity and fortitude of will singularly exemplified in his history. Weaker natures have perished where he has survived, and afflictions fatal to other races have but hardened and strengthened the native vigour of the Jew.

But the further effect of this cruel bondage must have been to make Egypt loathsome in the eyes of the Hebrews, and to throw them back upon themselves and the consolatory faith of their forefathers.* The idolatry which might have seduced them by its pleasures can only have disgusted them by its cruelties. The grand buildings of Egypt, its treasure cities and gigantic temples,

* "Surely all this naturally tended to inspire the Jews with aversion to the manners, the idolatry, and the vices of their oppressors, and led them to accept with joy the promised settlement in the land of Canaan, combined with submission to that system of religion and government which God meant to establish. If they still retained some veneration for Egyptian manners and idolatry, because they were the manners and idolatry of a great and ancient nation, the mode in which God delivered them from this land of bondage was calculated to counteract this effect."—GRAVES *on the Pentateuch*, part iii. l. ii.

with the colossal shapes guarding, as it were, their entrance, or looking in solitary repose over the scorched plains, must have become hateful to men who saw in them the monuments of their own degradation and the wasted life-blood of their kindred. The religion of Egypt must naturally have been identified with its oppression, and been regarded with the same hatred. A more effectual instrument to neutralise the seductions of the idolatry around them, and drive them back in supplication to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, cannot be conceived. Nor was the lesson in vain. For "their cry came up to God by reason of their bondage, and God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."

But a still further effect followed from the same cause. The community of suffering tended to knit together into a closer sympathy those fragments of races which, as yet, hung but loosely round the true Hebrew centre, and were rather so many disjointed members accidentally thrown together, than an united people with a common tie running throughout the whole. During the early part of the sojourn all the dependants of the patriarchs were regarded with the same feeling by their entertainers, inasmuch as they all shared the nomad occupations of their chiefs. During the latter part of it they were all involved in the same calamities, and groaned under the same bondage. The process of national fusion,

thus begun and carried on, was intensified by the miraculous events preceding the Exodus; for the sharply-defined line separating the smitten Egyptians from the secure and protected Hebrews, included the whole of the tribes together. In the narrative of the third plague we are expressly told that God severed the entire land of Goshen in which His people dwelt, that no swarms of flies were there. And, as if to prevent this circumstance from being forgotten by students of the history in after ages, the distinction indirectly involved in the narrative all through is carefully reiterated on three subsequent occasions.

We may conceive somewhat of the awe which must have fallen upon the inhabitants, as they watched the plagues one by one coming so near and yet never touching them, and felt that round themselves was stretched the shield of the Invisible, keeping them in peace from the fiery indignation which was blighting and scathing the strength and power of Egypt. The feeling must necessarily have extended beyond the nobler spirits among them, who loved God for His own sake, and craved for freedom for freedom's sake, into the mass of the people, till the sense of the tremendous God who was working round about them touched their very heart. They must have felt themselves in the hands of a higher power; and even those who in their hearts would have preferred the carnal abundance of their slavery to the sterner portion of free men, must yet have

been conscious of the agency of an irresistible strength carrying them on in a general march of events from which they had no power to extricate themselves. Whether they would or not they shared the mysterious safety of the chosen race, and were to share its fortunes in the future.

As the conflict between Divine chastisement and human pride advanced towards its close, and the prospect of deliverance drew nearer, the feeling must have been still deepened. At last they received the definite statement that on a given night, two weeks after the announcement, they should formally go forth, accompanied by a solemn warning, that if any soul in Israel should fail to keep the appointed passover and its preparation, he "should be cut off." We are not told, indeed, that the threat was executed in any instance; but we may be sure that if the sin was committed, the punishment surely followed it. Either the awe of God had by this time so deeply sunk into their hearts that, amid all the mixed multitude of Israel, none dared to disobey; or else they disobeyed and died, their death standing in sharp contrast to that careful Providence which so watched over them at this time, that there "was not one feeble person among their tribes." In either case, the impression would be the same, and when the appointed time came, and at midnight the wailing cry of the mourner swelled from one side of the stricken land even to the other,—not a heart that did not

bleed,—not a home where death was absent,—that cry must have been to Israel as the audible voice of judgment. And, lastly, if any man's heart still clung to the land of their bondage, the eager anxiety of their terrified masters to hurry them out of the land, regarding them all with the same fear, must have left them no choice. At that moment, when they had but to ask in order to receive from their former masters whatever they needed, even gold or silver in such abundance that they spoiled the Egyptians—the immediate triumph must have swept away in the excitement of the time every lingering reluctance. On the more ignoble spirits of Israel motives such as these may have powerfully acted; as we see, indeed, in the fact of the mixed multitude which accompanied them, as, amid the universal joy, they went out “with a high hand.”

Thus we see that the affliction in Egypt, and the miraculous events of the Exodus, tended to consolidate the yet loose materials of the nation. The notion sometimes entertained of the condition of the Hebrews at this time, as being animated by one eager desire for freedom, and going forth willingly on their journey towards the promised land, must be very considerably modified. This description is applicable to many among them, but inapplicable to all. Some had complained of the bitterness of their bondage, but it was no higher sentiment than mere weariness of suffering and toil; not a noble desire for liberty, nor a

religious faith in the promises of God. Their language was throughout, as they did not scruple to remind their leader on the first appearance of danger, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." Had Pharaoh yielded without a struggle to the demand of God through Moses, and had the people peacefully gone forth, like friendly guests parting from friendly hosts, a considerable proportion would have voluntarily stayed behind. As it was, God allowed them no choice. The terrible signs and wonders witnessed by them on every side, the awe produced by the power of this avenging God, and the fear entertained by the Egyptians towards them in common, without distinguishing one part of the people from another, forced them, as it were, into unity, involved them in a common cause, compelled them to community of action, and, separating them as the sharp tool of the human workman may separate a block of stone from the solid rock, thrust them out, so to speak, and compelled them to enter upon that mysterious future of mingled blessings and responsibilities in which it has pleased God to maintain them inviolate even to the present day.

In forming a general estimate of the condition of the people brought out of Egypt, the foregoing considerations must be combined into one view. It thus appears that the people were not homogeneous, nor sprung from one common race, but comprised many national stocks, gradually aggre-

gated round a few families of pure Abrahamic descent. The position in which these families stood towards the ever-accumulating mass of dependants who, partly by natural increase, partly by additions from without, gathered around them, was that of a natural aristocracy, holding in their hands the hereditary government of the tribes, and united within themselves by gradations of rank and authority in proportion to the number of descents separating them from the parent stock. This was the ethnological aspect of the nation.

In its religious aspect it presented similar varieties, correspondent to the diversities of religious conduct and character existing at the present day. In the holiest saints among them the existence of a corrupt nature, gradually sanctified by the Spirit of God through a course of providential discipline, is ever prominently marked in the narrative; so prominently, that the story, consistent and admirably instructive in this aspect, admits of no possible solution in any other—no explanation why many of the events should have been recorded at all. Their knowledge of the Divine will embraced the great essential doctrines of Christianity itself, though the precise degree in which the details of each doctrine were understood admits of no certain determination. For instance, we know that their faith rested on a future Messiah; but we do not know how far they were acquainted with the precise character of His

work and offices. We know that they looked for a heavenly city ; but we do not know how far the spiritual character of the dispensation they expected was fully understood by them. Yet it was the same religion as that of the Church of Christ now, founded on the same Saviour, taught by the same Spirit, looking to the same promises. But their knowledge, being unwritten and traditional, was much less widely disseminated than our own, and they witnessed for God among children and dependants less enlightened than themselves, and deeply tinctured by the influences of the profligate heathenism surrounding them on every side.

Lastly, we have seen that, in their contact with the Egyptian civilisation, they must have acquired many elements of future progress, from the lawgiver who was learned in all their wisdom, through the gradations of rank and occupation and skill, down to the labourers who spent their life in making bricks. While it is evident, from their subsequent history, and especially from their adoption of the most popular form of Egyptian animal worship, in the golden calf at Sinai, that they did not escape contamination from the licentious idolatry amid which they sojourned, yet this contamination was checked by providential precautions, whereby God preserved their own pure worship from any general extinction. We have seen, likewise, that the nation, rapidly multiplying in the land of their bondage, was

consolidated into one identity of interest and hope by the force of their outward circumstances, and the miraculous judgments by which their isolation was secured, and their deliverance from Egypt finally accomplished.

The result of the whole presents to us rather the materials of a nation than the nation itself. To an unusual degree, compared with the extent of the population, the common ties of national sympathy were absent, because they were a people without a land; without an independent government; without a past history; without the sympathy of a common kindred; and, consequently, devoid of all the mass of unconscious associations entering into national identity. They were a nation sharply defined on the outside by the providential circumstances which forced them together almost against their will, but devoid as yet of fixed characteristics, with little mutual dependence, with no settled polity, and very few common bonds to hold the whole together, and prevent the separate members from passing away into the surrounding heathenism. These defects arose necessarily from the extreme rapidity with which in two hundred and fifteen years their numbers had increased, combined with their residence in another land and under another government than their own. We recognise in these circumstances the design of God, keeping them in an unformed state in order that they might the more readily acquire the characteristics

it was His purpose to fix upon them,—like wax retained in its soft and plastic condition, that it might the better receive, and the more permanently retain, the impression of the Divine signet.

If we compare this condition of the Hebrews at the Exodus with the corresponding features of the Divine plan, we see at once how much was needed to be done to fit them for their commission. Such a people could never have survived in their distinct nationality the first wave of conquest that washed over them, still less have survived that unparalleled series of calamities and revolutions through which the Jew has actually passed, and yet survived them all. The inner principle of cohesion, the intense national life which no sufferings have been able to extinguish, still needed to be infused into the loose and unorganised mass of Hebrew existence. The Mosaic law was the appointed instrument for this purpose; so manifestly adapted to it, that when we add to the giving of the law the further exercise of a constant Providence over them in accordance with the purposes of the Divine plan, the result exactly corresponds to the cause. Take the Mosaic law out of history; say that no such group of laws was ever given; or, even allowing an historical truth to some parts, destroy the totality and mutual connexion of the whole, and the history of the Jewish nation, with the still-existing peculiarities exhibited before our eyes, becomes the most inexplicable paradox

ever presented to mankind. We may as well believe in the order of the world, and yet deny the principle of gravitation; believe in the fact of the lightning, and deny the existence of electricity; admit the existence of the tides, and yet deny the physical causes producing them, as admit the existence of the Jew and deny the historical reality of the law out of which it grew. The man who can believe that the peculiarities distinguishing the Jew from all other races of the present or the past, arose out of no positive producing cause, must be the most credulous of his race. The effect produced is the most conclusive of all testimonies to the Divine wisdom and truth exhibited in the enactments of the law. By no narrower test than this must we judge the Mosaic code, and estimate the perfect wisdom of its provisions.

Hence we perceive that the law was not a mere arrangement for the moment. Its first immediate object had relation to the people as established in the promised land, as settled in their cities, and yet bound by the ritual of their religion to the one central spot which God should "choose, to place His name there." The period of forty years intervening before the new generation reared in the wilderness crossed over Jordan, under Joshua, to take possession of their inheritance, was not contemplated in the law. Not that God was ignorant of what would take place, or did not include every detail in the

perfection of His own plan, but that this was the first of the alternative methods of God's dealings in which He saw fit to adapt His own fixed counsels to the contingencies of human action. Had the people been willing to advance in faith into the promised land, when God led them to its borders, we cannot doubt that they might at once have entered into its possession. The fault was in themselves only; not a defect of willingness in God, nor an arbitrary act of His choice, retaining them so long from the inheritance of the promises, but was wholly and solely the effect of their own sin. We can further see that, without interference with free moral action, it is not conceivable that God should have done more, or have placed them in circumstances more favourable to obedience than actually existed.

I do not mean that the condition of the succeeding generation was not still more favourable, since they were disciplined even from their youth amid the miraculous events of the wilderness, and by the enactments of the law, but that the generation which came out of Egypt could not have been dealt with in a manner better fitted to strengthen faith and to encourage obedience. For them, in their position, more could not conceivably have been done. They had witnessed the wonders of the Exodus; had quailed at the sight of pursuing Egypt; had passed over the deep sea-bed as on the dry land; had seen their enemies dead upon the sea-shore; had

watched the visible symbol of the Divine presence in the pillar of cloud and of fire ; had stood beneath Sinai when God descended on the top of it, and the mountain shook exceedingly beneath the burden of the Deity ; had heard the voice of words, which they that heard entreated that it should not be spoken to them any more ; had tried their youthful strength in the victory over Amalek ; had experienced the chastising hand of Jehovah beneath Sinai ; and had tasted His goodness in the bread from heaven, and the quails, and the water brought from Horeb's rock, to supply their thirst in the wilderness. What could be done more to teach them the faithfulness of God's promises, the sufficiency of His strength, the fulness of His blessing, and the severity of His chastisements ? Had there been any nobility of heart in them, surely they had anticipated at that time the triumphant march of forty years later. But the admixture of heathen elements among them, and the degrading effect of their Egyptian bondage, acting on the corruption of human nature, and not corrected by a prayerful faith in God, made them unworthy of the inheritance. The intervening forty years in the wilderness did not arise from God's plan on that side of it which looked towards His own will, but on that side of it which looked towards the sinful disobedience of His creatures. As soon as the nation had received its constitution at Sinai, and was finally organised, God led them at once to the promised land, and bade them go in

and possess it. On them, not on God, lay the responsibility of the delay.

The forty years' wanderings was, therefore, an exceptional period altogether, and simply delayed, not changed, the order of the Divine plan. It was exceptional in its occasion ; for it arose solely from Hebrew disobedience. It was exceptional in its object ; for this was to train up a new generation and remove the old, and this by a process so gradual and gentle, that, so far as this sentence was concerned, the youngest adult of that disobedient generation might yet have enjoyed sixty years of life. It was exceptional in the mode of God's dealings with them ; for they were rich in goodness on the one side, but, on the other, were sharp and decisive, as the inveterate obstinacy of the nation required. It was exceptional in the supernatural circumstances rendering so long a sojourn in such a land possible ; the bread and water miraculously supplied—their clothes waxing not old—their feet swelling not—the pillar of God's presence marshalling their journeys. It was exceptional, consequently, in the condition of the people themselves, in relation to God and to His law, since we know that the appointed rite of admission into covenant with God, and on which the other ritual observances of the law mainly turned, namely, circumcision, was not administered in the wilderness. (Josh. v. 5.) Their condition was a transition state, and during it God, to use the language of the New Testament,

“winked” at many things which were inexorably demanded, after their settlement in Canaan. The distinction was sharply drawn by the lawgiver himself. Speaking of the place which God should choose among their tribes, he added, “Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you.” (Deut. xii. 8.)

This transition state occupied, consequently, no place in the Mosaic law, and was not recognised by it. The law was directed to the final settlement in Canaan, as truly and exclusively when first given on Sinai, as when it was a second time renewed before the entrance into Canaan. It could not, indeed, be otherwise; for, could we suppose that this Divine law had contained any special and specific recognition of a sin not then committed, would it not have appeared that God had prejudged them beforehand, and in His own law suggested the sin which He condemned? The law had reference throughout, not to the occasional period of the wanderings, but to the inheritance of the promised land, and the national life of which it was to be the appointed scene.

In glancing at the characteristics of the law, the ordinary division into moral and ceremonial is inapplicable to my purpose, because, so far as concerns the Divine plan, the ceremonial was itself moral; that is, it subserved a moral purpose,

and was a subsidiary vehicle for the conveyance of moral truth. I propose rather to distinguish rapidly the different spheres of human action into which it entered, and then to point out certain general characteristics belonging to the whole system.

I. The first aspect of the law, in relation to the revealed plan of God, is religious, denoting by this word the relation between man and his Creator. This is the prominent feature which colours and pervades all the rest; both inasmuch as it was a Divinely-given law, with God's authority about it, and therefore appealing to the obedience due from man to God; and likewise inasmuch as the development of the religious life of the Hebrew was the great central purpose contemplated in all the rest, alike for the sake of the Jew himself and of the world before whom he was called to witness. It is important to call attention to this, because the secular aspect of the law has sometimes been pressed into such prominence as to obscure the religious. Much stress has been laid upon the fact that the sanctions of reward and punishment accompanying the law were mainly temporal, as, indeed, they must have been; for nations, as nations, can only have a temporal life, and, therefore, only temporal chastisements and recompences. But it is a manifest fallacy so to mistake this fact as to conceive the law to have been secular, not religious; for if that is religious which concerns the relation between man and God, this

religious aspect is not in the least affected, whether the promises were temporal or eternal. Whichever they were, God was equally revealed as the sole Dispenser of them, and with reference to His commands alone was reward and punishment regulated. We distinguish, indeed, between duty to God and duty to man, and yet the latter springs out of, and is a part of, the former; commanded by the same will, sanctioned by the same authority, accompanied by the same promises. It is possible that, taking a low and earthly standard of the mutual obligation of man to man, a person may do his duty to his neighbour and yet totally omit his duty to God, because the religious motive may be absent; but it is not possible to reverse the case, and to do our duty to God while we omit our duty to our neighbour, because the one specifically includes the other. Thus, not only first in order of subject, but first in prominence and importance; nay, not only first, but first, middle, and last, stood the religious aspect of the law, God being the centre of it all, and the religious and spiritual life its grand object.

The religious teaching of the Mosaic law was conveyed in several modes. It was incorporated in positive verbal instruction. God is everywhere presented as not only the object of fear and awful reverence, but as emphatically the object of love. Our Lord's own summary of the first table of the law was but an authoritative re-enactment of the words of Moses, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut. vi. 5.) What is this love of God, when rightly understood, but the end of the entire Gospel? for He whom the Hebrews were thus commanded to love was revealed as conspicuously in His punitive justice as in His boundless mercy. Hence love was impossible without a means of propitiation for sin. This greatest of all graces is inculcated in a variety of forms. Simplicity of faith, submission of will, fervency of zeal, devotedness of obedience, steadfastness of affection, and grateful remembrance of His marvellous gifts, are inculcated over and over again. The loftiest saint under the New Testament dispensation could not soar into a more perfect standard of holiness than is taught in the law. How pathetically are the Hebrews warned against the dangers of prosperity (Deut. vi. 12), against the natural deceitfulness of the heart (Deut. v. 29), against the beginnings of sin! (Deut. iv. 9.) How tenderly are they exhorted to keep close to God (Deut. vi. 3); how graciously encouraged to repentance in the midst of their sins, by the repeated assurance of God's willingness to forgive! (Deut. iv. 29.) Had the dogmatic teaching of the law stood alone, the substance of the Gospel would still have been found in it.

But there was in reality much more; for these general lessons were supported by the typical representation of those distinctive religious truths

which constitute the special characteristics of Christianity. This teaching underlies the whole aggregate of the ceremonial law, and possesses a twofold aspect ; one in relation to the Hebrews of that generation ; one in relation to the ages subsequent to the day of Pentecost, and the full Evangelical revelation of the whole offices and work of Christ. At this latter a brief glance will suffice at the present moment. The astonishing minuteness with which the typical nature of the ceremonial law has been unfolded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, constitutes a cogent evidence of design. For the emphatic charge that everything should be made and done in accordance with a revealed pattern and a most precise rubric, could only have been directed to the future, and to an accomplishment thrown far into the distance beyond the possible anticipation of the wisest of mankind. We who look back can see the glorious shadows of the law all meeting in Christ, His holy person, His perfect work, His triple offices, and especially His great High Priesthood. But we could scarcely have ventured, with all our advantages, to assert this minute fulfilment of all the types and shadows of the law, unless we had been guided by the pen of inspiration to see our Master amid that flood of typical illustration thrown around His work by the ritual of the ancient covenant. Certainly the doctrinal lessons richly supplied from this source could not have been understood, and could not have been intended to

be understood, by the early Hebrew Church. The fulfilment of our Master's objective work alone rendered the full explanation possible.

But, at the same time, there were certain doctrinal truths so vividly represented in the ancient law, that no devout Hebrew, who lived in prayer, as the saints in every age have done, can be conceived to have been ignorant of them. The defilement of sin and its inveteracy in attaching itself to every action of a fallen creature, was vividly presented, and must have been constantly thrown into view, by the oft-recurring purifications. The unfitness of a guilty creature to approach a holy God and the absolute need of a mediator, through whom alone to draw near to Him, was taught in the very institution of the priesthood, and the rigid exclusiveness with which every unhallowed attempt to intrude into this sacred office was sternly repressed. That the holiness of this priesthood was but official, and not personal, was shown by the entrance of the high-priest only once in every year, and then divested of his gorgeous robes of office, into the holy of holies, where the God of Israel visibly dwelt in the glory above the mercy-seat, and this with offerings, first for his own sin and then for the sins of the people. That the guilt requiring expiation was but the result of a sin-corrupted nature, was taught in the varieties of offering, sin-offering, trespass-offering, peace-offering,—the occasion varying, but the sacrifice

needed in each. That these ceremonial offerings were incomplete, and pointed forward to some one act, naturally associated by a devout mind with the expected Messiah, was indicated in the great day of atonement. That this atonement could not be made without blood was the utterance of every sacrifice that smoked upon the altar. Was it not a stern and startling truth that the sin of the world could only be expiated by the blood of God's incarnate Son? And certainly it was sternly represented in the animals that bled upon the altar, and the sprinkling of their blood both upon the worshippers themselves and the instruments of their worship. That there must have been something fearful in these bloody sacrifices and the blood-stained altar on which they were presented, may be most readily and fully admitted. It was intended to be so. Sin itself was a fearful thing, and fearful was the wrath it deserved, and fearful the sacrifice which alone could expiate it. Witness the wonders of the Cross, and the shaken earth, and darkened sky, and opened graves, accompanying the event. Even to the minds of that generation, less sensitive, perhaps less effeminate, than our own, these sacrifices must have been replete with awful lessons of sin and judgment, and a sin-hating God. The heart of heathenism itself had caught some glimpse of these truths; and feeling that some great sacrifice of his best and dearest could alone remove this gulf of separation between man and God, had given expression to the feeling

in human sacrifices ; offering even their sons and their daughters unto their gods,—the shocking character of the sacrifice being thrown into contrast with the profligate depravity of the offerers. An awful sense of sin could alone be competent to crush all human love. These sacrifices were abominations before God, the things He hated. (Deut. xii. 31.) But the truth they dimly shadowed forth He distinctly taught in sacrifices devoid of the inhuman horror surrounding the offerings of Moloch, but still startling to the senses and full of awakening meaning to the conscience. Can any devout Jew, stricken with a sense of sin and looking to find peace with God, have failed to feel these lessons, or to apprehend, even if it was vaguely and dimly, the great truths they embodied at the time, and foreshadowed in the fuller revelation of the future ?

We are not left to conjecture alone upon this subject. God has presented to us in the Psalms of David the inward workings of a Jewish conscience, and has illustrated by them to what a reach of spiritual experience the teaching of the law in all its parts combined was competent to lead the soul. What tender grief over sin ; what an acute apprehension of the holiness and truth of God ; what craving for forgiveness and justification ; what an adoring acknowledgment of His love ; what pathetic desires for more grace ; what profound humility ; what intense supplication for a new heart and a right spirit ; what simpli-

city of faith and depth of reverent love, pervade the whole! Here we see what the law was capable of doing. In what more exquisite language could the sanctifying effects of God's truth be described than in the language of David, as comparing the light of God's word with the light which pervades His works, he exclaimed, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

II. Another aspect of the law is moral, using the word in the sense of the relative duties of man towards man. These spring necessarily out of the religious, and constitute a part of the same obligation. Here, again, we find a considerable mass of positive precept. It would be wholly a mistake, which any close examination of the contents of the Pentateuch should suffice to correct, to regard the moral law as simply prohibitory, and no more. The Decalogue takes, indeed, this form all through, because it is the foundation on which the fuller commandments rest. But we know that it was the will of God that the Decalogue should be interpreted, not in its letter only, but in its spirit. Taking into account the emphatic stress everywhere laid in the law upon the

sincere service of the heart, it is inconceivable that any devout Jew, whose mind was open to instruction, should have otherwise understood it. It would be contrary to plain reason to suppose that God should forbid an outward crime, and not forbid likewise the inward state of the heart, in which it has its origin. But, indeed, the direct teaching of the Pentateuch asserts the positive moral obligation everywhere. Not the avoidance of offence alone, but the discharge of active duties, is inculcated; not only in regard to the outward act of the hand, but in regard to the state of the heart and affections likewise. Active benevolence, hospitality, courtesy, gentleness, liberality, considerateness for others, integrity of dealing, scrupulous fidelity in discharge of trusts, lively sympathy with every form of distress, are impressed upon the Hebrews in the most solemn way and under the most alarming penalties.* It

* Dean Graves, in his work on the Pentateuch, illustrates the moral force of the Mosaic law by quotations from Josephus (cap. vi. s. xvi.) and Philo, and thus concludes:—"I have made these quotations to prove that the Mosaic law effected the purposes which I have contended it was calculated to promote, by rectifying and enlarging the moral views of the reflecting and moral part of the Jewish nation to a degree far superior to that which Pagan morality had attained; a circumstance particularly remarkable to the extent which Philo (p. 592, letter F) gives to the command, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' as prohibiting any irregular desire and licentious indulgence. A strictness utterly unknown to the heathen world."—Part ii. l. 2.

is difficult to specify any of the moral virtues without its place in this code.

We have the advantage of seeing the scope and spirit of the law embodied in practical action, and the lessons of daily life in the Proverbs of Solomon. They are one constant commentary on the law, a living illustration of the abiding principles enshrined in it. What the Psalms are to the religious side of the code, the Proverbs are to its moral side. Attention has been most inadequately given to the storehouse of practical wisdom to be found in these inspired compositions. The most consummate courtesy, the most delicate tact, the finest appreciation of mutual rights, the most devout recognition of revealed truth, and the most constant reference to the moral government of God over His creatures, are everywhere to be found, mingled here and there with lessons of a loftier character, and instructions of the most exquisite beauty. So rich and full are these Proverbs, that there is scarcely a branch of human conduct affecting the relations of man to man, which is not treated in them. The fear of God pervades all, in the first place, as the great spring of all morality; and coloured by this principle we find regulations affecting the temper, conduct, pleasures, tastes, manners, reaching, in short, from the loftiest hopes of man, down to his minutest duties, an unction of the Spirit sanctifying and sweetening all life, like the sacred oil poured

upon the head of Aaron and descending even to the skirts of his clothing.

III. A third aspect of the law was social, and had relation to the home-life of the Hebrew, and the ties of family membership. The sanctities of domestic life were guarded in their purity, and the mutual rights of man and wife adjusted with a care very remarkable in contrast with the unlimited licentiousness of heathenism,* and the incestuous connexions, shocking to every natural feeling, not only openly permitted, but in some cases encouraged and honoured among them.†

* "I think I have fairly made it appear that an Athenian man of merit might be such a one as with us would pass for incestuous, a parricide, an assassin, an ungrateful, perjured traitor, and something else too abominable to be named; not to mention his rusticity and ill-manners. And having lived in this manner his death might be entirely suitable. He might conclude the scene by a desperate act of self-murder, and die with the most absurd blasphemies in his mouth; and, notwithstanding all this, he shall have statues, if not altars, erected to his memory; poems and orations shall be composed in his praise; great sects shall be proud of calling themselves by his name, and the most distant posterity shall blindly continue their admiration. Though, were such a one to arise among ourselves, they would justly regard him with horror and execration."—HUME'S *Essays*, quoted by Haldane in *Authority of Divine Revelation*, vol. ii. p. 22.

† Dollinger's *The Gentile and the Jew*, vol. i. p. 406. The sacred order among the Persians consisted of the children of marriages between brothers and sisters. Philo on *The Special Laws*, s. iii. 4.

Any general recognition of the virtue of chastity was unknown, as was, indeed, the idea of purity at all, except in the sense of what was exclusively outward and physical.* Crimes the most detestable in our eyes, and almost inconceivable by our minds, prevailed, not by virtue of a popular license outgrowing the restraints of law, but by the permission of a recognised public sentiment which did not consider them to be crimes, and which found expression in the formal production of philosophers and legislators.† The total absence of moral sentiment is illustrated by the popular mythologies of pagan nations, and, especially of the nations latest in time, and, therefore, justly entitled to be considered foremost in the progress of ancient civilisation, Greece and Rome. These mythologies imputed the most abominable crimes to their deities, who were depicted indeed as mere exaggerations of corrupt human nature in its worst forms, and gave occasion to many an eloquent denunciation on the part of early Christian writers.‡ These portraitures

* Ryan's *Effects of Religion on Mankind*, vol. i. p. 53. Dollinger's *The Jew and the Gentile*, vol. i. pp. 191, 219–232; vol. ii. p. 82.

† Aristot. *Polit.* l. ii. c. 10; l. vii. c. 16. Plato *De Repub.* l. v. c. 7–9. Tertull. *Apol.* c. 39.

‡ “Nec est difficile docere cur Deorum cultores boni et justi esse non possint. Quomodo enim sanguine abstinebunt, qui colent cruentos Deos, Martem atque Bellonam? Quomodo autem parentibus parcent, qui expulsorem patris sui Jovem? Aut natis ex se infantibus, qui colunt Saturnum? Quomodo

were impersonations of the popular sentiment, but themselves confessedly reacted on the sentiment out of which they grew.* The acts of worship to the ancient gods included excesses which were part of the positive religious obligations, and yet were such, that even under "the obscurity of a learned language," it is not possible to enumerate them.† The further modern investigation has been able to examine into the inner secrets of ancient heathendom, the more startling have been the disclosures. The fond notion that these profligate excesses were but the popular excrescences of an esoteric philosophy, propounding to more advanced minds high moral truth, must be given up as untenable.‡ The ancient mysteries were

puđicitiam tuebantur qui colunt Deam nudam et adulteram et quasi apud Deos prostitutam? Quomodo se a rapinis et fraudibus abstinebunt, qui Mercurii furta noverunt doctis non fraudis esse decipere, sed astutię. Quomodo libidines exercebunt qui Jovem, Herculem, Liberum, Apollinem cęterosque venerantur, quorum adulteria et stupra in mares et fęminas non tantum doctis notę sunt, sed exprimuntur etiam in theatris atque cantantur, ut sint omnibus notoria."—LACTANTIUS *Divinarum Institutionum*, lib. v. 165.

* Terence puts the sentiment into the mouth of Cherea in the *Eunuchus*, a. iii. s. v. 35–42.

† The very terms "Paiđerastia," "Hermę," and "Phallus," will indicate to the scholar the habits and rites which are referred to.

‡ "People, indeed, have represented the case as if it were a matter of secret doctrine, hereditary in, and propagated by particular families of priests and theologians, and which had to be resorted to as an explanatory commentary upon symbolical actions and exhibitions, a kind of monotheistic teaching, by

the thrice corrupt secrets of a corrupt system.* It is true that only during the later days of its formal development in Grecian and Roman license, has it been laid open to our knowledge. But we know that the evil existed from the first, and in those nations with which the Hebrews were brought into intimate relation, Egypt † and Phœnicia, ‡ existed in its worst forms.

The contrast presented by the Mosaic law is truly wonderful. We step at once into the atmosphere of Christian ethics, and find in the social life of the ancient Hebrew the germs of the Christian home. Chastity was fenced with the most rigid regulations, involving in specified cases the punishment of death. The vices springing directly § and indirectly || from its absence, were treated

which the prevalent errors of the popular polytheism were to corrected. This, however, is not to be thought of . . . There was no exposition of doctrine in the mysteries, and no course of dogmatical instruction; the address was not made to the understanding, but to the sense, the imagination, and the divining instincts of the initiated."—DOLLINGER'S *Jew and Gentile*, vol. i. 126.

* Ibid. vol. i. pp. 138, 185, 186.

† Herodotus, ii. 47. Strabo, p. 816. Jamb. i. ii. pp. 21, 22. Lewis' *Antiquities of the Hebrew Republic*, b. v. c. 1.

‡ Euseb. *Vita Const.* iii. 56. Selden, *de Diis Syriis*. Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters*, part i. pp. 93, 34.

§ Deut. xxii.

|| Joseph. *cont. Apion.* ii. 25. Lev. xxii. 24; Deut. xxiii. 1. For the prevalence of infanticide in ancient Rome, see Dollinger's *Jew and Gentile*, vol. ii. p. 271; Merivale's *History of the Romans*, vol. iv. c. 40, p. 503. "Qui natos ex se pueros

with great severity, and involved a permanent hereditary stigma.* Infanticide was a crime of the deepest dye. The natural result of this system was seen in the higher status given to female life among the Hebrews, and the recognition of the woman as a moral and intellectual being.† Hence she held an honourable and avowed place in Hebrew society, and contributed her softening influence to the manners and customs of the race, and the lofty courtesy by which they were characterised.‡

The apparent exceptions to this rule only served to illustrate the grand principle pervading the whole law. It has already been pointed out that probation involves an adaptation of the disciplinary provisions to the moral and intellectual condition of the recipient.§ In respect to morals, no such pliancy could be admitted into the great and eternal principles of right and wrong. But on secondary questions a certain allowance to the weakness of human nature was possible, and we accordingly find it to have been given. The points where it existed were two, divorce and polygamy; and in regard to the first we have an inspired

aut strangulent, aut si nimium pii fuerint, exponant; qui libidines incestas, nec a filia, nec a sorore, nec a matre, nec a sacerdote contineant.”—LACTANT. *Divinarum Institutionum*, l. v. 163.

* Deut. xxiii. 2.

† Dollinger's *Jew and Gentile*, vol. ii. 341.

‡ Winc's *Commentaries*, pp. 446, 455.

§ Lecture iii.

explanation of the reason. The state of heathen society, and its habitual modes of thought and action, must be strongly borne in mind before the temptations incident to ancient Hebrew life can be duly estimated. It was not with any peculiar proclivity to one class of crimes inherent in the chosen race that God had to deal, but the universal passions of human nature irritated into peculiar strength and activity by the recognised licentiousness pervading heathenism from one end of it to another. Divorce was permitted among the ancient Hebrews on account of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. xix. 8), lest the restraint being drawn more tightly than human nature could bear in that stage of civilisation, the bow should snap altogether. But the permission was rigidly limited, and was very different to what the habit subsequently became in the Jews of a later date.* The occasion was specified, although in language of which our knowledge does not permit us to fix the exact interpretation,† and the relation in which the parties were subsequently to stand towards each other, was carefully regulated.‡ In regard to polygamy the permission was equally

* Whiston's *Josephus*, vol. iii. pp. 170–172. *Vita*, 75, 76. Dollinger's *Jew and Gentile*, vol. ii. p. 334.

† Deut. i. 24. Dr. Benisch translates the passage, "When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some scandalous thing in her."

‡ Deut. xxiv. 1–4.

significant, for it seems to be mentioned only for the sake of the limitations.* In the case of kings a plurality of wives was directly forbidden.† The precautions taken against the dissensions and partialities polygamy has a tendency to produce are strikingly significant of the considerate benevolence breathed in every portion of the law.‡

The essential principles which have made home what it is in a Christian land, are to be found under the law, in regard to the parental as well as the conjugal relation. The mutual respect and self-control lying at the basis of all true freedom, was inculcated and exercised from the early youth of the Hebrew, in the profound deference required from children towards their parents. This duty was required with peculiar solemnity. The commandment expressing it was the first command with promise. Its violation was forbidden under the severest penalties, and death itself was to be pronounced on the child whose guilt was brought by the parent before the judges, the severity of the punishment and the absence of all power to remit it acting in two ways, both to check the guilt of the child and to repress fretful and capricious complaints on the part of the parent. (Deut. xxi. 18.) We shall not wonder at the dark aspect in which the law regarded this sin, if we remember two things; first, that the relationship of parent and child was the earthly type of the heavenly relationship

* Deut. xxi. 15. † Deut. xvii. 17. ‡ Deut. xxi. 15.

between the creature and the Creator; and if despised in one case would probably be treated with equal contempt in the other; secondly, that this principle of filial obedience lies at the centre of all family relationships, and involves all those ideas and habits of order and subordination on which domestic peace and social proprieties must rest.

Within this sphere of the family circle, fall, likewise, the enactments relative to slavery, for the slave under the Hebrew law was in every respect a member of the family, and his condition essentially differed from that of modern slavery.* It approached much more nearly the type of voluntary servitude, adapted to the ruder social conditions of early times.† Slave-trade was positively forbidden on pain of death; and this, not only in the case of the Hebrew, but without any such limitation. "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." (Exod. xxi. 16.) And that this unlimited prohibition is the true meaning of the language used we find from the New Testament. There, as under the old covenant, the right of a master in his slave is recognised, as the case of Onesimus and Philemon. But a list of criminals is given, for whom the law is

* The essential distinction between the two systems is ably stated in the work of Dr. Cheever, on *The Guilt of Slavery and the Crime of Slaveholding, demonstrated from the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures*. London and New York, 1860.

† See Deut. xii. 12, 18, where the slave is included in the circle of family rejoicing.

declared to have been made, and among them are "men-stealers." (1 Tim. i. 10.)

Two classes of slaves are recognised in the Pentateuch, the Hebrew and the stranger. There were mitigating enactments in the case of the one not extended equally to the other, as, for instance, that every Hebrew slave should be absolutely set at liberty in the seventh year, and should not be sent away empty, and a power of redemption was likewise vested in the relatives, where the Hebrew had been sold to the stranger. But there is nothing to mark any essential variation in the nature of the servitude itself. It differed from the modern relation between the master and his servant, rather in its permanence than in any other circumstances. There is no hint of any civil disability attaching to the slave, still less of any supposed natural inferiority. A slave, who was discontented, might escape if he chose to another master, and this chosen master was not allowed to give him up; while bodily injuries inflicted by the master on his slave were to be recompensed with freedom.*

* Among the Greeks, slaves were wholly at the command of their masters, "to be employed as they saw convenient, in the worst and most wretched drudgeries, and to be used at their discretion, pinched, starved, beaten, tormented, and that in most cases without any appeal to superior power, and punished even with death itself. And, which yet further enhanced the misery of their condition, they had no hopes of recovering their freedom themselves, or procuring it for their posterity, but were to continue in the same condition as long as they lived, and all the inheritance they could leave their

Thus rigidly was the permitted relationship guarded from abuse, and thus widely did it differ from modern slavery. Could the enactments of the Mosaic law be applied to the system as it now exists, the enormous and ineradicable evils now attached to it would cease at once, and the position of the slave, retaining every conceivable advantage of his present condition without its drawbacks, would become at least equal to that of the hired servant.*

IV. Another sphere occupied by the Mosaic law was the civil — that which dealt with men

children was the possession of their parents' miseries, and a condition scarce any better than that of the beasts."—PORTER'S *Antiquities of Greece*, p. 66.

"Among the Romans, masters had an absolute power over their slaves. They might scourge or put them to death at pleasure. (Juvenal, *Sat.* vi. 219.) This right was exercised with so great cruelty, especially in the corrupt ages of the republic, that laws were made at different times to restrain it. . . . Slaves, when punished capitally, were commonly crucified. (Juv. vi. 219; Cic. *in Verr.* v. 3, 64.) But this punishment was prohibited under Constantine. If a master of a family was slain at his own house, and the murder not discovered, all his domestic slaves were liable to be put to death. Hence we find no less than 400 in one family punished on this account. (Tacit. *Am.* xiv. 43.) Slaves were not esteemed as persons, but as things, and might be transferred from one owner to another, like any other effects."—ADAMS' *Roman Ant.* p. 35. MASSY'S *History of the Romans*, p. 59.

* It has been argued with much force that slavery was indispensable to the ancient Hebrew, since, from the subdivision of land, and the laws of property, every man was a landowner, and free labour could not be procurable.

as the members of a community, guarded their mutual rights, and regulated their obligations. For this purpose an elaborate system was organised for the administration of the law, consisting of a succession of courts, with a power of appeal to the higher tribunal, according to the difficulty or magnitude of the cause. These judges were appointed by election, within all their gates, so that the administration of justice was brought to every man's door, and made as facile and inexpensive as possible. Their judgments were directed by the law, and to them belonged the decision of all causes, the determination of disputes, and the infliction of punishment. It is essential to bear this in mind, on account of the sceptical objections sometimes urged against the retaliatory provisions of the law, as if they fostered a spirit of revenge—as, for instance, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But it is forgotten that the Hebrews were not left to take the law into their own hands, but that these legal penalties could only be claimed before a legal court, and executed by a legal authority. The protection of life and property, and the rigid suppression of lawless violence, are the first conditions of all good government, and the history of nations has been read in vain, if it does not teach that the most rigid justice against such crimes is the truest wisdom and the most enlightened philanthropy. In those ancient days, when throughout the mass of the heathen world might was right, and when a

profligate idolatry had loosened the first springs of order and authority, it was no weak, timid, feeble hand that could check the inveterate evil, and curb into a just respect for man's mutual rights, the wild licentiousness of human passion.

V. From the civil we advance to the political provisions of the law—the form of government by which the general affairs of the whole commonwealth were administered. The place of supreme authority, filled in human constitutions by the earthly monarch, was in this case filled by God, the lawgiver being his executive, as the premier of an earthly sovereign might be. The immediate conduct of all national concerns, as regarded peace or war, removal or permanent habitation, or any other occasional matter, was dependent on the sole will of God Himself. Immediately under God, as the executor of His will, was the lawgiver, in later times the judge, in whom for the time the earthly sovereignty of the nation was lodged.* Below him came a general representative assembly, in which the appointed judges had their seat, constituting, in a human and subordinate point of view, the earthly and national legislature. Beyond this there is supposed to have been a subordinate government for each tribe, possessed of very large power of separate jurisdiction. Each tribe appears to have constituted a state in itself, governed by its own princes and judges, and to have exercised

* Wine's *Commentaries*, b. ii. c. 3, 5, 6.

the right of carrying on war without the action of the general government.

It thus appears that the Hebrew nation had a compact and exactly defined form of government, adjusted in its several parts, and cemented into a national whole. In all matters affecting the commonwealth, Moses appears to have acted in concurrence with the Divine King on the one side, and the general assembly of the people on the other. Thus, when the people first approached the confines of Canaan, the mission of the spies to examine the promised land first originated with the people, but was subsequently carried into effect under the Divine authority. "The Lord said unto Moses, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan." On the other side, the positive commands of God appear to have been communicated to the assembly before they were carried into effect. When no positive command of God was given, but there was only a human advice under consideration, Moses did not act upon it till it had been first approved by the national assembly. Thus the appointment of judges, to divide with Moses the burden of administering the law, arose from a suggestion of Jethro, yet it received the sanction of the people before it was adopted. "Ye answered me, and said the thing that thou hast spoken is good for us to do." It thus appears that, so far from their being a co-ordinate authority, as some have represented, there was a careful gradation of power, and God alone, in His

single sovereignty, was its great fountain and centre. The whole fabric of government was conceived by His wisdom, guided by His word, and supported by His power. It was not a republic, but a monarchy, and the monarch was God.

It must now be remembered that these various aspects of the law—religious, moral, social, civil, and political—were not so many different codes, but one code—so many distinct parts of one harmonious whole. There was no separate system for each sphere of human action—one for the worship of God, another for moral duties, another for the regulation of domestic life, and so on—but it was one indivisible law, of which all the separate parts strictly cohered together—as it were one visible pillar of cloud and fire, out of which the mind of God looked in every direction, and provided in one perfect code for all the relations and obligations of human life. Of this one code there are certain conspicuous characteristics standing prominently forth, as the links connecting it with the Divine plan it was intended to accomplish.

I. First of these may be noticed its singular beneficence and humanity. It was, indeed, no theoretical constitution drawn out upon some transcendental scheme, in which logical completeness was the only thing considered, and not the practical objects to be gained. The law was eminently adapted both to the purpose contemplated in it, and to the actual condition—national, intellectual, and religious—of the people to whom

it was given.* Their capacities and wants were graciously considered all through. Had it not been so, its character of beneficence could not have been maintained, for a cold theoretical system above those to whom it was given could have done no practical good, and therefore could not have been beneficent. In human weakness and ignorance benevolent but ill-judged attempts are excusable, but we cannot, without blasphemy, conceive their possibility in a perfect and all-wise Being. To adapt His dealings to the human wants of His people is the first element of goodness and wisdom. Yet this adaptation was so wonderfully wrought, that the same system which exactly met the wants of that age has equally adapted itself to subsequent generations, and the circumstances of their higher civilisation. The substance of the law has ever remained the same, while later revelations by the prophets gave increasing prominence to the spiritual element, and brought to view latent stores of wisdom undiscovered by the earlier generations. Thus we recognise in the provisions

* "In this we have a glimpse of the innumerable stages through which the Roman constitution passed in its development, and it was this very gradual development which secured so long a duration to Roman liberty. The secret of great statesmen, who are met with as rarely as any other kind of great men, is the gradual development and improvement of the several parts of an actual constitution. They never attempt to raise an institution at once to perfection."—NIEBUHR'S *Lectures on the History of Rome*, lect. v. p. 73. Lond. 1853.

of the law an enlightened benevolence leaving modern legislation itself far behind. When it is compared with the codes of antiquity, and the system of government at that time existing in the world, it is simply wonderful, and worthy of our highest admiration.* In truth it has been the study of the wisest of mankind,† and has left its influence indelibly stamped upon the subsequent legislation of the world. A knowledge of the Hebrew law has been especially affirmed of Pythagoras,‡ Plato,§ and Aristotle.|| The laws of Assyria and Babylon, of Persia, Greece, and Rome, all bear the impress of its distinctive principles.¶

Of this beneficent character many examples may be adduced. Such were its sanitary arrangements, embodying provisions which the science of our own day has only just begun to recognise. Some of them, apparently arbitrary, are now proved by experience to have a deep

* Wine's *Commentaries*, c. viii.

† The Christian Fathers constantly assert this. "I am fully persuaded that Holy Writ is the fountain of all following wisdom."—TERT. *Apol.* c. 47. "The Greeks stole their chief opinions out of the books of Moses and the prophets."—CLEMENS ALEX. *Strom.* i.

‡ Josephus *cont. Ap.* lib. i. Grotius *Votum*, p. 124.

§ Gale's *Court of the Gentiles*, b. i. c. ii.

|| Prideaux' *Connection, &c.*, vol. i. p. 409. Edin. 1858.

¶ Marsden's *Influence of the Mosaic Code on Subsequent Legislation*, c. iii. Mr. Marsden enumerates twenty-seven points of resemblance between the Mosaic and heathen codes.

reason in the constitution of the human body.* Such was its careful provision for the poor, the stranger, and the fatherless. The gleaning of the vineyard and of the field,† the tithe of the produce of every third year, and the spontaneous growth of the seventh,‡ constituted the legal provision; while, over and over again, the exercise of a willing and generous charity is inculcated under the most solemn sanction.§ Such were the laws which rendered the possession of land inalienable, providing that all property sold should revert to its original possessor in the year of Jubilee—a law which both perpetuated the distinct existence of the separate tribes, and at the same time checked, within definite limits, the possible extremes of poverty.|| Such, above all,

* Lev. xi. 7. The prohibition of swine's flesh as an article of food was proved, by the experience of the British troops in Turkey during the Crimean campaign, to be founded on sanitary considerations.

† Lev. xix. 10.

‡ Lev. xxv. 5, 6. Deut. xiv. 28; xxiv. 19; xxvi. 12.

§ Exod. xxii. 25. Lev. xxv. 36. Deut. xv. 10, 11; xxiii. 19; xxiv. 19; xxvi. 12.

|| Lev. xxv. 10. "We have seen that it (the law) provided for the settlement of 600,000 freeholders, with independent properties, derived not from any human superior, but held in fee from the Sovereign of the Jewish state, even God Himself. This distribution of property was guarded by preventing the accumulation of debt, and, if alienated for a time, securing its reversion in the family of the original proprietor at regular periods."—GRAVES *On the Pentateuch*, b. ii. l. iv. p. 300.

was its remarkable tenderness for human life—a subject worthy of attention, both on account of the attacks made on this very point, and also because the regard paid to human life and suffering is the truest test of all civilisation. Where life is held cheap, an essential barbarism must still linger, for the destruction of life is the instinct of selfish passion triumphing over the rights of other men, and the security of life is the first condition of order and industry. Now the provisions of the law were very precise on this subject. No death passed unnoticed in Israel. In the case of violent death by an unknown hand, a solemn inquest, as in the very presence of God Himself, was held over the body, and the nearest inhabitants required to free themselves by an oath before God.* A warning was emphatically given against murder, that blood defiled the land,† a formal curse pronounced upon the sin,‡ and the murderer was to be put to death—torn, if necessary, from the very altar of God Himself. The distinction between murder, manslaughter, and homicide, was carefully drawn; and so much sacredness expressed for human life that the man who had taken it away, even inadvertently, became outcast for a time, and needed to hide himself in one of the cities of refuge till the death of the existing high-

* Deut. xxi. 1.

† Num. xxxv. 33, 34.

‡ Deut. xxvii. 24.

priest.* It may be thought that so rigid a jealousy over life ran into the extreme, though few will hold this opinion who realise the rude and disordered condition of society under the influence of ancient heathenism; but, certainly, such a system cannot be accused of encouraging a cruel recklessness as to the sufferings and safety of others. The same sensitive care for the sanctity of human life is seen in the regulations relating to accidental death, by the goring of an ox, or by a fall from a house.† Nor do the punishments inflicted under the Mosaic code constitute any exception. Their undoubted severity was adapted to the character of the times, and, in some cases, must have acted as discouragements to needless appeals to the law.‡ Viewing the

* Num. xxxv. 12. Josh. xx. 4.

† Exod. xxi. 28. Deut. xxii. 8.

‡ “It will be found on examination that there were but four classes of capital offences—treason, murder, deliberate and gross abuse of parents, and the more unnatural and horrid crimes arising out of the sexual relation. And all the specifications under these classes amounted to only seventeen; whereas, it is not two hundred years since the criminal code of Great Britain numbered one hundred and forty-eight crimes punishable with death,—many of them of a trivial nature, as petty thefts and trespasses upon property. But no injury simply affecting property could draw down upon an Israelite an ignominious death. The Mosaic law respected moral depravity more than gold. Moral turpitude, and the most atrocious expressions of moral turpitude, these were the objects of its unsleeping severity. . . . The principal punish-

whole code altogether, we see that not cruelty or ferocity, but a tenderness over life, which some may think even excessive, was its predominant characteristic.

II. A second striking peculiarity was the mode in which the law took up into itself its whole life and existence of the Hebrew ; not one part of it, or one time of it, but all throughout every sphere, and from the cradle even to the grave. Such a claim could only be made by a Creator. No human legislation can advance so far ; it may regulate the outward life as it affects others, but there are deeper portions of our existence it cannot

ments known to the Mosaic law were the sword, stoning, stripes, compensations, restitutions, reparation of losses, and fines. Our inspired jurist appointed no ignominious punishments for the living. Blows were not regarded in that light by the Asiatics ; and burning, hanging, and burying beneath a pile of stones, which were of this nature, were, it is probable, according to the laws of Moses, inflicted after death, and are therefore to be looked upon as posthumous disgraces. To his everlasting honour be it said, that Moses stained not his penal code with any of those tortuous and lingering punishments which have disgraced the jurisprudence of so many polished nations since his day,—as breaking on the wheel, impaling, flaying alive, roasting over a slow fire, drowning, exposure to wild beasts, and, above all, crucifixion, that horrid offspring of ancient barbarity, in which life, and consciousness, and intolerable agony were prolonged, not unfrequently to the third day, and sometimes even to the seventh. If, then, his penal inflictions must sometimes be admitted to be severe, at least human nature is never compelled to shudder at their cruelty.”—WINE’S *Commentaries*, p. 263.

reach. God embraced them all, asserting His right over the whole, and claiming to direct and govern it. The Hebrew worshipped in a prescribed form, and used prescribed words. The nature of his offering was exactly specified in all the variations, adapting it to the contingencies of human life, and the moral gradations of human conduct. His family relationships, and even the familiar acts springing out of them, were regulated by precise rules. Within his own home every article of domestic comfort needed to be sanctified to his use by ceremonial purifications. The food he ate, the raiment he wore, the industry he practised, his methods of agriculture, his treatment of the dumb creatures around him, his modes of warfare, and his conduct towards his fellow-men, were directed by provisions so minute as scarcely to leave a contingency of common life without its appropriate enactment. Some of these provisions we are able to refer to their immediate object, in the avoidance of peculiarities belonging to idolatrous worship,—such as those relating to garments of mixed materials, to mixing the seed sown in the field, cutting the hair and beard in a particular manner, against the interchange of male and female attire, boiling a kid in the dam's milk, and some others of a similar character.* Our acquaintance with the particular habits of idolatrous worship contemplated in these provisions justifies the extension of the same principle to all the

* Wine's *Commentaries*, pp. 257-460, 467.

other enactments of the law without exception. We may not, in every instance, be able to give the reason of the enactment, but the defect of our knowledge does not weaken the conclusion which analogy enables us to draw. Minute and detailed as the Mosaic law was, we are led to believe that every regulation was directed to a definite purpose, and filled its appropriate place in the perfection of the whole.

All these regulations must have tended, in the highest degree, to separate the Hebrew from the surrounding nations, and make it impossible for him, consistently with his faith, to enter into that social intercourse with idolaters which was pregnant with the most alluring temptations.* Regulations of food and dress rank among the most powerful instruments for this purpose, as we see in the influence of caste among the Hindoos. Moreover, the isolation thus produced was wholly religious—the separation of a race chosen and elected unto God. For the Hebrew was taught to recognise God everywhere. God's law blended

* Josephus imputes to the Midianitish women the acknowledgment of these Jewish peculiarities, and the social isolation resulting from them. He describes them as saying to the Hebrew men, "If this be your resolution, since you make use of such customs and conduct of life as are entirely different from all other men, insomuch that your kinds of food are peculiar to yourselves, and your kinds of drink not common to others, it will be absolutely necessary, if you would have us for your wives, that you do withal worship our gods."—JOSEPH. *Antiq.* b. iv. c. viii.

itself with every act; God's presence consecrated every spot; God's blessing sweetened every hope. His worship, his home, his daily walks, his most familiar acts, were, so to speak, done in God's immediate presence. His whole entire life was thus religious, and the stamp of the Deity was on every part of it. "In all, through all, over all," reigned One God; choosing to Himself one people, and, therefore, claiming the right to stamp on every member of the chosen race the one indelible impression of His own purity, holiness, and power.

III. The theocratic element which pervaded the whole deserves to be recognised with the utmost prominence.* It was not only that God was the giver of the law, and identified every part of it, without exception—even its civil and political arrangements—with His own authority and the obedience due to it, but that God, in many instances, was the actual executor of the law. Neglect in keeping the Passover (Num. ix. 13), or the eating of unleavened bread during its observance (Exod. xii. 19), the profanation of the sacred

* "The punishment of being 'cut off from His people,' which God threatens on neglect of circumcision, occurs very frequently afterwards, under the law, as the penalty for very grievous crimes; more particularly those against the theocracy, *i.e.* sins against God's majesty as King of His people, which involved an entire breach of the covenant (*cf. e. g.* Exod. xxxi. 14; Lev. xvii. 4; xx. 17). This punishment is a threatening on God's part that all the evil should overtake the transgressor from which, through God's covenant, he was de-

oil (Exod. xxx. 33), presumptuous sins against God (Num. xv. 30), the neglect of purification before coming to the sanctuary (Num. xix. 13), the eating of sacrifices without prior ceremonial cleansing (Lev. vii. 21), neglect of the great day of atonement (Lev. xxiii. 29), and one or two other similar acts (Lev. xvii. 4 ; xix. 8, &c.),—all fell under one common punishment: the soul guilty of them should be “cut off.” In interpreting this phrase we must remember that for the expression of capital punishment in general another class of expression is used—“he shall be put to death”—a form of expression used in the Pentateuch thirteen times. In other instances the mode of death is specified, as in the case of the man who cursed God. (Lev. xxiv. 14.) In regard to the violation of the Sabbath, both phrases are employed—“shall be cut off” and “shall be put to death.” (Exod. xxxi. 14.) A comparison of this offence with those specified above appears to explain this double form of denunciation. Since the crimes for which the guilty were to be cut off lie without

fended. It was open to every one to become his accuser, and procure his death; and even if he escaped this, he lived in continual fear that God might, in some immediate manner, bring the punishment upon him (as Exod. iv. 24). Therefore we find that on some the threatening of being cut off from the people was followed by death (Num. xv. 30, 31); while the omission of circumcision in the wilderness was visited with the general Divine chastisement which is announced in Num. xiv. 22-24.”—VON GERLACH *On the Pentateuch*, p. 109.

exception beyond the clear knowledge of man, and are such that the all-seeing God alone could certainly detect them ; whereas a violation of the Sabbath might be either secret or overt, and might, accordingly, fall either under the punishment of man or under the special punishment of God. By the phrase "cut off," I, therefore, understand a sentence of which God was Himself the executioner. Accordingly, in regard to neglect of the great day of atonement, we find the explanation of the previous phrase in the words, "him will I destroy." In regard to the eating of the blood, God's personal action is specifically asserted, "I will cut him off." (Lev. xvii. 20.) The same expression is applied to the family of those who shall give their seed to Moloch ; inasmuch as the act would be an overt one, the public punishment of stoning was to be inflicted ; but as to the family of the offender, God would "cut them off." (Lev. xx. 5.) The same expression is applied to the Canaanites. (Exod. xxxiii. 23.) That the phrase has a special and exceptional force in relation to the action of God Himself appears to be beyond dispute.*

* "Our legislator had no regard to any of these forms ; but he ordained our government to be what, by a strained expression, may be called a Theocracy, by ascribing the authority and power to God ; and by persuading all the people to have regard to Him, as the Author of all the good things that were enjoyed, either in common by all mankind or by each one in particular ; and of all that they themselves obtained by pray-

If this interpretation be accepted, then was God not only the ultimate source of the Mosaic law, but He was Himself, in many instances, the mysterious and unerring executor of its penalties. But even beyond these instances there are other proofs that the Divine Being dwelt among His people as the active vindicator of His own will by special and peculiar acts of His Providence. Thus the ordeal through which the woman accused of adultery was to pass was made efficient by a miraculous judgment upon the guilty, an institution of which heathen ordeals were but the human corruption (Num. v. 12). The exercise of justice and generosity on points lying beyond the cogni-

ing to Him in their greatest difficulties. He informed them that it was impossible to escape God's observation, even in any of our outward actions, or in any of our inward thoughts. Moreover, he represented God as unbegotten and immutable through all eternity, superior to all mortal conceptions in pulchritude, and though known by His power, yet unknown to us as to His essence. . . . The reason why the constitution of this legislation was ever better directed to the utility of all than other legislations were is this—that Moses did not make religion a part of virtue, but he saw and ordained other virtues to be part of religion. . . . There are two ways of coming at any sort of learning and a moral conduct of life. The one is by instruction in words, the other by practical exercises. Other lawgivers have separated these two ways in their opinion, and choosing one of those ways of instruction, or that which best pleased every one of them, neglected the other. But for our legislator he very carefully joined these two methods of instruction together.”—JOSEPHUS, *cont. Ap.* b. ii. c. 17-18.

sance of the written law, was enforced by the rewards or the special punishments of a watchful Providence (Deut. xiv. 29; xxiv. 19). In short, in many instances that might be specified, God was an active agent, even in the execution of the law, and His power, so to speak, constantly flashed forth from the glory of His presence in visible reward or punishment.

Strictly accordant with this was the manifest glory of God dwelling above the mercy-seat, and the peculiar sacredness attached to the Holy of Holies where it tabernacled. Nor was He a dumb God, but one who made His immediate will known, and to whom, at all times of perplexity, the high-priest might go, inquiring of the Lord, and receiving, in the mystic Urim and Thummim, the immediate revelation of His will. The place in ordinary monarchies, occupied by the person of the monarch, was here filled all by God. His will, His authority, His sanctions, His justice, held towards the whole polity the same relative position which the Holy of Holies held towards the other courts of the holy place. It was the grand centre of it all. No passive God was this, merely to be called forth now and then out of the recesses of His magnificence, but so constantly and actively ruling and directing all, that not a tribe mixed in Israel without His will. There, over the tabernacle, rests the cloudy pillar, the symbol of God. "Remain thou in thy tents, O Israel." It mattered not how long; it mattered not what

might be the impatience of the people; what their weariness of this place or of that; what their wishes, hopes, fears, policies;—the mystic pillar stands unmoved, and Israel must sit still. But look again, behold, it moves! be it morning, mid-day, midnight, let the trumpets sound, and Israel march upon their way. Hark, how amid the wilderness swells the chorus, “Arise, O God, Thou and the ark of Thy strength.” Let us conceive this to have been the case continuously for forty years, and it is impossible to imagine a discipline more fitted to sink deep into the very heart of the Jews and ever to keep alive the awfulness of the living God who dwelt in the midst of them.

But we must add further to our conception the solemnities of the lawgiving on Sinai; the miraculous acts which entered into their familiar life—the bread from heaven, and the water out of the stony rock, and the clothes which waxed not old, and the feet which trod that parched waste for forty years, and yet swelled not; and, lastly, the watchful Providence which never permitted them to break through this mysterious circle of Divine government, but hemmed them in on every side, and drove them back again with sharp chastisements of His hand. When we have done this, we shall see that never in the history of whole world has there been such a law, such a people, such a national life, or such a visible and manifested God; reigning like a king amid the people of his choice. The intensity with

which His power was felt and almost seen everywhere must have been as if they saw the Invisible.

Do not these considerations show how wonderfully the Mosaic law was fitted for the work it was intended to accomplish? That it did not make the Hebrew people all that God commanded it arose from no defect in the law, but from the human corruptions of those who lived under it. It was so perfect that had it been possible that a law should give life to the dead soul of a fallen humanity, verily righteousness had been by the law. It was weak, but only "through the flesh." And though it did not bring the Hebrew race up to the standard of their grand vocation, or work all that elevation of character which it would have accomplished among an obedient people, it has yet actually stamped upon them the indelible national characteristics which identify the Jew of our own day with the lofty type of the Maccabees, and the Jew of the time of the Maccabees with the ancient Hebrew of the wilderness.

Its minute regulations entering into all the life, and each one, however minute, clothed with a Divine authority, drew into a common sympathy the heterogeneous materials composing the people who came out of Egypt. The peculiar polity and ritual by which it isolated the Hebrew from all other peoples quickened in them a sense of a Divine election, and the consciousness of the loftiest calling ever given to man. "The people

of the Lord, the people of the Lord, are we." The sacrifices and purifications of the law educated the conscience, and spreading from them among other nations tended more than all other influences to keep alive in the conscience of mankind the great doctrines of a God, and sin and the soul, of the need of an atonement and of a moral government dispensing rewards and punishment. The peculiar mercies bestowed upon the nation, their exclusive inheritance of revealed truth, and all the wonders of their history, gave them a force of character, a strength of will, a vigour of national life, and a constancy of mind, which no other influence could have produced. These qualities ran indeed, as we shall see, into false extremes, and were deeply and widely perverted, but there is a moral grandeur about them that even their perversion could not destroy, and the exile and dispersion of two thousand years of shame and suffering have never sufficed to eradicate. The guilty excess into which the moral type ran was of human guilt; but the type itself was of God; and the Mosaic law was the great instrument to produce it.

But the sufficiency of the law to accomplish its great work involves likewise the sufficiency of the revelation. It was adequate to the wants of the generations to whom it was first addressed, for the law was only known so far as it was contained in the revelation, nor could it have survived apart from its Divinely-inspired vehicle.

It is adequate to the wants of the Church now, for it interprets the facts of the Jewish history otherwise inexplicable, and lays bare to our admiration the secret springs of the perpetual life of the undying race. It is the very hand of God, outstretched from the thick darkness round about the throne, tracing along the history of the past the march of His irresistible purposes, and pointing out in every fact of the marvellous scheme the inscription of His one great name as "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."

LECTURE VI.

The Period of the Kingdom.

“BUT HE, BEING FULL OF COMPASSION, FORGAVE THEIR INIQUITY, AND DESTROYED THEM NOT: YEA, MANY A TIME TURNED HE HIS ANGER AWAY, AND DID NOT STIR UP ALL HIS WRATH.”—PSALM lxxviii. 38.

THE national life of the Hebrew people had its origin in the Mosaic law. Its unity, the form of its outward organisation, its distinctive type, its religious and theocratic character, were all derived from this source and indelibly stamped upon it by this instrument. The disorganised and heterogeneous elements gathered together during the sojourn in Egypt, hardened in this mould, till they became a more strongly defined people, and possessed of the elements of a more prominent corporate life than any other nation known in the history of the world. It was natural, therefore, that the law should occupy as prominent a place in the revelation as it occupied in the dealings that were revealed, and should be presented to the Church of the future in the same proportions

as to the church of the immediate present. Accordingly, we find that the provisions of the law itself, and the national circumstances attending its promulgation, are recorded with a fulness of detail strikingly contrasted with the condensation of the narrative, both before and afterwards. The preparatory history, ranging over a period of nearly three thousand years, is contained in the one book of Genesis, while the four subsequent books of the Pentateuch contain the records of no more than forty years. Nor is the detail, into which the history suddenly breaks at this point, continued in the same proportion afterwards; for the book of Joshua contains the history of five-and-twenty years, and the book of Judges about two hundred and fifty years. Moses was the mediator of a covenant second only to the perfect dispensation of which the mediator was the Son of God. The Mosaic law was the appointed educator of mankind and filled a position of prominent importance towards every part of the Divine plan. It has, therefore, been recorded so fully as to afford to succeeding generations an explanation of its grand principles, and a conception of its peculiar and typical provisions.

The knowledge of these details enables us to realise its enactments in their bearing on familiar life and the varied motives of human conduct. We can place ourselves in the position of the Jew, follow him into all his relations towards God and man, see how the law fenced him round with the

consciousness of a higher power, and putting ourselves into his place, can conceive the effect the law must necessarily have exercised on his habitual character and conduct. It was not only calculated to draw together into one common bond of singular strength the framework of a national society, but to impress upon it distinctive characteristics of its own. So completely is this the case that, without further information, we might either have argued from the law for the necessary existence of the Jew, or from the Jew for the necessary existence of the law. When we observe how the codes of antiquity moulded the peoples under them into general characteristics, how the laws of Solon were naturally reflected in the polished, but turbulent Athenians, and the laws of Lycurgus in the proud and austere Spartan, we must have concluded that a code so enlightened and beneficent as the Mosaic could not have failed to produce a people correspondent to its own type. On the other hand, had all our information been confined to the facts of Jewish national life as they exist in our own day, we should not only have concluded that some such laws must have existed in the past, but, in the same way as science has reproduced from the silent hand-writing of the globe the characters of past geological epochs, we could have put together the outlines of the Hebrew code by a mere argument from analogy, and these outlines would have

followed the sketch actually presented to us in the inspired books of the Pentateuch.

But no code, whatever its provisions, could produce its effects upon national character all at once. No moral virtue can be acquired save by the performance of its appropriate acts. Verbal teaching may convey instruction to the head; but prolonged discipline can only develop graces in the heart. The mere possession of the law could not of itself have produced any corresponding character in its subjects. Practical obedience was needed for this purpose, and this obedience maintained for sufficient time to form the habits, constitute the principles, and enter into the associations of familiar life. For instance, the worship of "the one loving and true God," in that willing affection which constitutes its essence, could only be learned by a total separation from idolatrous belief and practice on the one side, and an active consciousness of His constant presence and ever-ruling power on the other. The sense of a national election could only be cultivated by long familiarity with national privileges and mercies. A firm trust in the God of their forefathers could only be acquired by repeated experiences of His strength, wisdom, and goodness. The same thing is true of social virtues. Chastity could only be learned by habits of domestic purity and love; benevolence by repeated deeds of generous good will; justice by conquer-

ing the selfish tendencies of human nature. Hence, in order that the law should fix its own characteristics upon the people under its power, it was needed that its unimpaired influence and control should be maintained for a period sufficiently long to form national character, and harden it beyond the power of inward inclination to reject or outward temptation to efface it.

In what mode this could be done, constituted the difficult problem Divine wisdom was called upon to solve, and of which all the subsequent books of the Old Testament Scriptures may be considered to be an illustration. I have already shown, in a previous Lecture, that the choice of obedience or disobedience is inseparable from the moral freedom of the creature, and that God could not compel human conduct into any one direction by a force acting above and beyond men's intellectual and moral constitution, without contradicting the purposes He declares himself to have had in view, in the regeneration of mankind.* It follows hence, that two alternative methods existed, in which the permanent influence of the law over the Hebrew people could be secured, and that God's eternal plan comprehended both. I have shown, also, that in the law itself these alternatives of obedience or disobedience were set before the people with the utmost possible emphasis; but, that in either case, the accomplish-

* Lect. iii. p. 150.

ment of God's purpose towards the Jew would be carried into effect.* Either the Jew must willingly submit himself to the influence of the Divinely-given law, or he must be compelled to submit to it.

It has been already pointed out that, in several particulars the enactments of the law were suited not only to the intellectual, but even to the moral condition of the Hebrew of the Exodus. The provisions relative to marriage were especially of this character. No needless strain was therefore laid upon human nature, but its weaknesses were considered, and even its carnal tendencies met, to the utmost limits of consistency. The unwillingness of the Jew voluntarily to submit himself to the Mosaic code, could find no excuse therefore in any charge of unnecessary harshness. Nor were there wanting in it many grand and signal advantages, appealing to all the higher and nobler instincts of man. Socially it proffered the benefits of happy and honoured homes ; civilly, of security and justice ; politically, of personal liberty and equal privileges ; nationally, of a grand election and a prosperity unparalleled in the world ; religiously, of a Divine blessing for time and an everlasting recompense for eternity. But it needed a lofty type of man to appreciate this lofty vocation. To natures of a lower order the strict moral restraints of the law, and its very purity,

* Lect. iii. p. 171.

would be eminently distasteful. The natural repugnance of a fallen nature would rebel against its spirituality, and its fretful weakness grow weary under the rigour of its multiplied and minute ceremonial enactments. Thus the balance fatally preponderated against that side of the alternative which involved the willing submission of man and the full blessing of God.

The law was good in itself and adapted, with absolute perfection, for its appointed work. It conveyed a knowledge of God and of His will, sufficient for all the soul's wants of present peace and final glory. It thus satisfied the purposes of a revelation, having the glory of God and the salvation of man for its great end and object. Revealing sufficient of the Holy One for faith, and hope, and love, and yet throwing the full accomplishment of the promises into the future; inviting obedience by the most tender motives, and yet clearly declaring the wrath of an avenging God upon disobedience, it was singularly adapted to the purposes of probation, "to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or no." Its clear proclamation of the one God amid the monstrous polytheism of the time, and its suitability to keep alive in the human conscience the sense of sin and the Divine purity, and the providential distribution of reward and punishment, made it an efficient instrument in preparing mankind for the full revelation of life and immortality in the perfect Gospel of

Jesus Christ. Its peculiar polity, and minute distinctions of food, and clothing, and social habits, were calculated to preserve the integrity of the elected nation, in whose hands the truth of God was placed in trust; while the immediate action of the Most High in all matters of national government, and His special interpositions, either to deliver in mercy or to chastise in wrath, were fitted to render the history of the Jew a conspicuous illustration of the moral government of the Creator over the world he had made.

Thus the law was good in itself. It was only weak "through the flesh;" should it fail to accomplish its appointed work, that failure would arise not from any imperfection in the law, but from the corrupt depravity of its subjects. The progress of the human head and heart is slow and gradual; will the chosen race endure a discipline so elevating in its character, so prolonged in its duration? This is the great question which, after the giving of the law, remains in the order of the Divine plan, yet to be answered. If obedient, Israel will walk in the fear of His mighty God, then all will be well; but, if not, what then? Shall God's design fail of its accomplishment, and His great purposes of mercy towards mankind be rendered abortive by the disobedience of the chosen instruments? Either this must be, or the one other only alternative must be adopted. The office which Israel will not fulfil willingly, he must be compelled to fulfil unwillingly. The

subsequent books of the Old Testament Canon are the consistent assertion of this unalterable purpose. Every event, every warning, every promise, every prediction, is but another utterance of God's reply in the language of a later prophet: "As I live, saith the Lord God, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you; . . . and I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." (Ezek. xx. 33, 37.)

Here, therefore, we find the key to the interpretation alike of the dealings of God towards the Hebrew race, after the promulgation of the law, and alike of the revelation which records them. It will now be my object to prove that the revelation so exactly reflects the dealings, that we are enabled to follow the gradual development of the Divine plan, step and step, and that there is not a single book in the Old Testament canon without its harmonious place in the order of the whole. In glancing over so great a field of thought the minor details must necessarily be dropped, in order to throw into prominence the unbroken connexion of the general plan. But I trust to follow the details sufficiently to prove that the post-Mosaic books, from Joshua to Malachi, constitute a history of God's dealings with mankind, so closely connected and consecutive, that no one book could be omitted without destroying the sequence and significance of the whole.

There are two questions which, looking from the time of the law forwards to the coming of Christ, required to be answered. The first was, by what means would God maintain and perpetuate His revelation in the elected line. The second, by what means would God extend the influence of the revelation so maintained and perpetuated through the other nations of the world. In the present Lecture I propose to state the answer made to the first of these questions, and in my next Lecture the answer made to the second.

On the preliminary history of the generation of Hebrews who came out of Egypt it will not be necessary to dwell at any length. I have already pointed out that, consistently with the limits it pleased God to place upon His own actings, when He submitted them to the conditions of human weakness and ignorance, every possible advantage was supplied them, and everything done that could be done to lead them to obedience. But it is evident that the brand of Egyptian slavery had entered into their very heart, and had stifled every nobler aspiration even for earthly liberty and honour. Of all tests of a mean nature the combination of weakness and presumption is, perhaps, the most significant, and both of them are singularly conspicuous in the people of the Exodus. From beneath the quivering sides of Sinai, when the glory of the Lord descended upon it in clouds and darkness, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, they were led, with all

the great impressions of the law-giving fresh upon them, to the borders of the promised land. Who would not have thought that, under such circumstances, the fear of their great and awful God would have swallowed up the fear of the giant races of Canaan, so that, if faith were absent, a reverent sense of His majesty might still have led them on? But, alike cowardly for good and bold for evil, they entered not in because of unbelief. How melancholy a picture of weakness is presented! What a portentous admixture of base cowardliness and wild presumption was exhibited when the very men who turned their backs upon the armed inhabitants of Canaan did not fear to turn their faces against their avenging God, and, in avowed opposition to His will, to depose the great lawgiver and elect a new captain in his place, who should lead them back into Egypt! And when the terrible sentence followed, pronouncing their death in the wilderness, and bidding them turn back again upon their wanderings, was it not the same disbelief, equally cowardly and equally presumptuous, which led them to make that march upon Canaan against God's will, which they had refused to make in obedience to His will, as if they could compel God to contradict His own word? Smitten by the sword of Canaan behind, and with the punishment of the Divine hand before, they turn suddenly back into the desert. Was it not needed that God should rule over such a race with a mighty hand, and was

there not alike justice and mercy in the decree which sentenced them to perish in the wilderness?

Surely there was justice in it. But let neither its character be mistaken nor its extent be exaggerated. They lost Canaan, for they counted themselves unworthy of it, and grievous was the loss. But the positive infliction they endured was, after all, no more than this, that none of them should enjoy more than sixty years of life. For the rejected generation is expressly stated to have consisted of those who "were twenty years old and upwards." (Num. xiv. 29.) All below this age were spared to enter Canaan. Those who had reached it were to leave their carcasses in the wilderness; but this not suddenly, by some terrific stroke of vengeance, but by a process so gradual that it extended over forty years. It is natural to suppose that the elder men of the generation died first and the younger survived longest. So that the terms of the punishment were consistent with a total period of sixty years' life to the youngest of their number. Forty of these were spent, indeed, in the wilderness, but during this period they were miraculously fed, and clothed, and protected; they dwelt beneath the shadow of the tabernacle, and amid the significant sacrifices of a law pregnant with hope and peace. There was justice in the sentence; and yet it was justice graciously tempered with goodness and mercy.

But was there not mercy in it likewise—mercy to the nation at large, since the new generation

would come to the inheritance of the promises, already trained and educated for their glorious future? A period of nearly forty years had been allotted for this preparatory discipline. This period synchronised with the infancy and youth of the new generation, and it was, therefore, literally and strictly a time of education, alike to the individuals growing into the maturity of their manhood and to the nation prepared for its promised inheritance. The men upon whose conduct should now hang the destinies of the race, and into whose hands its great mission was intrusted, had been brought up from their childhood under the provisions of the Mosaic law. Many would retain a child's recollection of the wonders of Sinai, and the accompanying terrors of a manifested Deity; to others it would be altogether a thing of the past—a transaction dropped into the wondering ears of childhood by parents who were eye-witnesses of it, and who would depict its events with that graphic vividness of description which grows spontaneously out of the sight of actual occurrences. To them all the associations of their earliest years would have been blended with their national election and deliverances. The grand teachings of the law would have formed their first principles of religious belief. The solemn sacrifices of its ritual, wonderfully fitted to fill the imagination and engage all the senses, would have educated their consciences. Its strict regulations would have framed

all the habits of their familiar life, and its lofty doctrines have conveyed to them clear conceptions of the unity, power, and majesty of God. These influences would have begun to act with the dawnings of feeling and intelligence, and existing continuously during the plastic period of infancy and youth, might be supposed to have left their distinct impression indelible during life.

Nor was this all the advantage they enjoyed. Their eyes saw the pillar of cloud and of fire dwelling visibly over the tabernacle, and marshalled all their journeys. The food of the mighty, miraculously supplied from heaven, and the water following them through the wilderness, and making its dreary solitudes musical with life, would remind them ever of the power, and wisdom, and unwearied mercies of their God. The mysterious will which forbade them as yet to enter into settled habitations, and fenced them round about with judgment; the swift hand which punished rebellion among themselves, and crushed opposition among their enemies without, witnessed to the truth of His word, and the inexorable severity of His justice. And if they needed yet further proof, was it not at hand in the silent process carried on before their very eyes, and wearing away the generation who preceded them? We cannot conceive that, even prior to the formal statement of the fact during the renewal of the covenant in the Arboth Moab, they could have been ignorant of the Divine sentence upon their

fathers, or of the cause for its infliction. And as from day to day, and especially towards the close of their wanderings, they saw the passing away of the race who should not enter into Canaan because of their unbelief, was it possible that there should not rest upon their minds a solemn sense of the awfulness of their God, and of the great national responsibilities He had laid upon them?

Every circumstance was arranged to deepen more and more this impression. The solemn pause on the other side Jordan, with the promised land actually in sight, and the towers of distant Jericho gleaming in the distance—with what anxious eyes watched we may well conceive—was directed to this object. And as if nothing was to be omitted here, the law itself was solemnly re-enacted. The exceptional period of their national wanderings and preparatory education having elapsed, the full-grown nation was now admitted by circumcision into the solemn covenant with God. The aged lawgiver, himself conscious of his own decease, was a living witness of the truths he declared. With what anxiety did he not recall, and did not the Spirit of God who spoke in and through him recall, the experiences of their own adventurous history, and press home upon their consciences its awakening lessons, alike of promise and of warning! With what reiterated earnestness did he not point their minds to the future, and set before them with prophetic vividness the

encouragement to obedience, and the warnings on disobedience, the startling alternatives of life or death; and depict that mysterious course of Providence which would keep them alone among the nations, and make them a sign before mankind, either in the conspicuous grandeur of His blessings, or the conspicuous severity of His curse! Seldom, in the history of the world, can a more imposing scene have been enacted than was witnessed on Ebal and Gerizim—a scene second in solemnity only to the lawgiving upon Sinai. From either side of the rocky pass resounded the blessing or the curse; and the amen, swelled by ten thousand voices, was echoed back alternately, like the voice of many waters, or the voice of mighty thunders. By what mind could such a scene, so grand in itself, and so striking in all its local circumstances, ever be forgotten, or what influences ever wholly wash away its ineffaceable impression?

Nor should the personal position and circumstances of the lawgiver who had guided them out of Egypt be forgotten. We may conclude, from the absence during the later years of their sojourning in the wilderness of any overt acts of rebellion, that his authority had been unquestionably established, and that jealousies and hostilities had died away in acquiescence in his office, and in that reverence towards his person which a younger generation would naturally feel in a more than ordinary degree. The whole weight, alike of official and personal authority, would be given to

his repetition of the law, and his solemn exhortations clothed with the tenderness belonging to the last dying words of a revered saint. The striking simplicity with which he recorded his own sin, when, provoked by their perverseness, he had spoken unadvisedly with his lips, and the punishment it had evoked in the prohibition to cross Jordan, or do more than see from the distant mountain-top the fertile plains of the promised land; the mysterious death, alone from human sympathy and sight on the summit of Mount Hor, and the parting farewell, when at the foot of the height he spoke his last words, ere, with all his natural force unabated, he ascended to his solemn grave, never to be seen again, were all circumstances so full of touching pathos, and so rich in warning, that the dullest heart could not be insensible to their significance.

And now that Aaron and Moses are gone to their rest, how naturally had God provided a successor. Of the six hundred thousand adults who had come out of Egypt, two alone survived, the relics of an age deceased, the living monuments of the miraculous past. Of these two, one was the man beneath whose leadership their armies had gone forth to battle, even during the lifetime of the lawgiver, and whose past history, therefore, gave him an acknowledged pre-eminence over his sole living contemporary. Moses is gone, and like him arose no other prophet "whom the Lord knew face to face." But Joshua remains,

the experienced soldier, fitted to be the instrument in the Lord's hand for the work of conquest, and filled with His special spirit for the work—a man of war for a period of war. There was to be no more delay; no time for vain regrets; no idle pause, in which possible dissension might rear his fatal head among them. Was not Canaan before them, and was not the set time come? Prompt was the obedience of the veteran soldier, as decided was the command. "Prepare you victuals, for in three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it."

The events accompanying the entrance into Canaan were all wonderfully calculated to deepen the impression of a miraculous guidance. Before them lay the Jordan, now spread far and wide over its banks during its annual inundation. With what an intense vividness must all the succeeding miracles have recalled to the memories of the people the crossing of the Red Sea and its miraculous events—associations which the circumstances were doubtless intended to awaken! We find a parallel lesson in the personal history of our Master. The first calling of His disciples at the sea of Galilee, when their net brake beneath the multitude of the fishes it contained, was brought back to their recollection by the corresponding circumstance after the resurrection, when their net brake not; and they were taught to recognise in this typical event the difference

between the inadequacy of nature and the adequacy of grace. So, likewise, the deliverance from Pharaoh, at the Red Sea could scarcely be absent from the minds of the people, as through the overflowing waters of Jordan, as over dry land, they marched to conquest, God Himself their guide. They were not left to guess the lesson of Divine faithfulness and power thus vividly taught them, —“thereby ye shall know that the living God is among you.” The lesson was repeated before Jericho, when without the blow of a human weapon, or the shock of a military engine, the walls fell flat at the summons of Jehovah. We can conceive that the procession round the city, with the blast of the trumpets for six days successively, may have been, at first, an object of derision within the city, and of scornful unbelief among some of the people themselves; but, if so, the climax of the seventh day must have changed their feelings, and taught them to regard no command of their mysterious God as vain or superfluous. Here was the lesson of mercy; the lesson of judgment was near at hand likewise, when discomfited Israël fled before the mighty men of Ai, and, amid the solemn assembly of the tribes, the secret sin of Achan was miraculously revealed and signally punished. God would make them recognise His faithfulness to bless obedience on the one side, and to punish disobedience on the other—the holiness which would save His people

on the one side, but would not tolerate participation in the sinful idolatry He hated on the other.

Then did Israel enter upon their career of predicted conquest. The book of Joshua is a record of their triumphs, a song of praise to their faithful and mighty God. For, were not these the cities fenced up to heaven, and the warlike inhabitants, and the giant sons of Anak, before whom their fathers had trembled? and did not God give them as dust to their sword, and as driven stubble to their bow? Of what avail were military confederacies and the gathering of nations against the lion of Judah, when the Lord God fought for Israel, and the Divine Angel of the Covenant Himself went before them? Onward, from city to city, and people to people, over the petty kingdoms whose mutual strifes had aforesaid filled Canaan with violence—on swept the tide of victory, till the conquest being for a time complete, “the land rested from war.” Then followed the organisation of the nation in accordance with law. The tabernacle of the Lord was set up in Shiloh, where was established, for the time, the central seat of worship and of government. The eight and forty cities required by the law were apportioned to the tribe of Levi, and that sacred class entered upon their duties as the religious teachers and instructors of their people throughout the length and breadth of Israel. The cities of

refuge were appointed, and the two and a half tribes dismissed to their settlements on the other side of Jordan. In short, the full enactments of the law, allowed to remain in abeyance during the exceptional period of the wanderings, now came into force, and the nation was formally organised in all its social and political and religious relations, in accordance with its provisions.

It is important that this perfect settlement of the people should be clearly understood. It is true that the sacred narrative does not enter into details, for it had already supplied the materials for filling up its own outlines; and it is in strict accordance with the economy pervading it that nothing unnecessary should be stated, and all needless reiteration and amplification should be rigidly cut off. But it records the fact in language as positive as it is condensed, that there followed, after the wars of Joshua, a period of singular peace and prosperity, during which the energies of the government were devoted to the consolidation of the commonwealth. This period was of considerable duration, for it was "a long time after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel + all their enemies round about," that Joshua waxed old. (Josh. xxiii. 1.) The prosperity of the period was so great, that Joshua could appeal to the experience of the people, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord

your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.”

It grew out of the very conditions of God's covenant with them, that this period of national prosperity coincided with a period of national piety and obedience. Here again, in the marvelous completeness of the revelation, we are not left to conjecture ; but a single pregnant instance has been left us to indicate the jealous fear and love of God, constituting the brightest characteristic of this bright time. The whole narrative of the excitement produced throughout Israel by the report that the two tribes and a half settled on the other side of Jordan had erected an idolatrous altar, the solemn embassy sent to expostulate against the supposed sin, and the admirable temper displayed on both sides (Josh. xxii. 11), stands in most striking contrast to the transactions of a later and calamitous period, when sensitiveness of conscience had been lost, and the seriousness of a holy jealousy for God exchanged for the cruel excess of human passion. (Judg. xix. xx. xxi.) This lofty state of religious feeling continued during the life of Joshua, and was not wholly lost during “the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He did for Israel,” although symptoms of a very different sentiment became apparent at an earlier date. But this period was the golden

age of Hebrew history. There is a strong analogy between it and the paradisiacal condition of our first parents. It stands in precisely the same relation to the later history of the Jew as the fall of man holds to the whole subsequent history of mankind. Like the first condition of mankind, it was very blessed, but likewise very brief. It came to its conclusion from the same cause—disobedience to the Divine commands, and all the corruptions entailed by it; and, like it, it was the first fatal step of a vast series of transactions, extending in their melancholy results to the experience of our own day.

I dwell, therefore, on this period, because it was the pivot of all the rest, and the clear comprehension of this portion of the history renders the remainder luminous with meaning.

At this point, therefore, another distinction must be noted. The rest which God gave to Israel during the later parts of Solomon's life did not include the final subjugation of the whole land included in the original promise, nor the settlement of all the tribes in their permanent inheritance; neither were the full promises completed on the part of God, nor the full conditions rendered on the part of man. (Josh. xiii. 1; xviii. 2.) God had declared His purpose from the first, that the nations of Canaan should not be destroyed all at once. (Deut. vii. 22.) Had it been otherwise, and the existing inhabitants been wholly driven out at a time when the tribes of

Israel were neither numerous enough, nor strong enough, to possess the whole land from Euphrates to the great sea, the land must have gone out of cultivation, and the beasts of the field have increased upon them. The first conquest of Canaan was confined, therefore, within definite limits. It was extended far enough to meet the immediate exigencies, and develop all the immediate capabilities, of the Hebrews, but there it stopped. Up to this point God had given to His people a career of triumphant success, and one probably involving a much smaller loss of human life than is sometimes assumed to have been the case. For the action of God Himself, in sending a plague of hornets into Canaan, and driving out the nations before them, "not with thy sword, nor with thy bow," stands prominently in the sacred narrative. (Exod. xxiii. 28 ; Josh. xxiv. 12.) But when this point was reached, God arrested the process for a period, and caused an interval to elapse, alike valuable for the consolidation of the victories of the past, and for preparation for the victories of the future.

This pause of victory occupied the remainder of the life of Joshua. During the last years of the aged soldier God gave them rest ; but his departure was the destined time for them to rise again and finish their work. The apportionment of the land was already made, but its conquest, and the utter driving out of the nations, remained to be accomplished. The last dying addresses of

the venerable ruler warned the people of this; and as if the voice of dead Moses were re-echoed by the tongue of dying Joshua, the old solemn exhortations, with the same dread alternative, were again pressed upon them. At less length, and with less detail, indeed, but not with less earnestness and solemnity, did the aged saint lay before them their solemn duty, and press it as with the tongue of God Himself upon their consciences. "It shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you, so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until He have destroyed you from off this good land, which the Lord your God hath given you."

Here I would pause again, before passing on to the next disastrous step of Hebrew history. For the fortunes of the race, from that time till the present moment, have taken their whole character and colouring from the events immediately succeeding upon the death of Joshua. The book of Judges, which records this fatal period and its immediate results, is, perhaps, to a superficial eye, the most fragmentary and least consecutive of all the Scriptural books. Yet, viewed with reference to the whole plan of revelation, it becomes luminous with meaning, and in its very peculiarities emphatically calls attention to these lessons of Divine providence illustrated by the events. Here, as elsewhere, the record, viewed simply from the stand-point of an ordinary

secular history, is very imperfect; but, viewed in relation to its religious meaning, and its bearing on the history preceding and succeeding it, it presents to view the Divine perfection of the record in more than ordinary clearness and precision.

Up to this point of the history the prominent characteristic is supplied by the elaborate precautions employed by the God of Abraham to prepare the people for the great commission to which He had called them. If ever, in the history of man, human nature entered upon a course of trial, under circumstances of peculiar advantage, it was the Hebrew people at this stage of their history. Trained from their youth under the provisions of the law, and amid the miraculous events of their sojourn in the wilderness—fenced around, as it were, on every side by God's hand, as by a wall of fire—supplied miraculously with everything needed for their temporal wants, they were indeed a peculiar and chosen people—peculiar in their calling, their circumstances, their privileges, their religious light and knowledge, and their national promises, above all other people. Providence and grace alike concurred to lift them upon a conspicuous platform before mankind. Even at this period the awe of them, and the fear of them, were on the nations. Not only in Canaan itself, throughout all its peoples, did the inhabitants of the land faint because of them, but we know, from the history of Balaam, that, as far as the Euphra-

tes, the tale of their wondrous deliverance, and the fame of the God who dwelt in the midst of them, were circulated among the nations. Mankind looked on at them, recognised their mysterious isolation, and wondered and feared. What a great mission it was, surrounded with what grand opportunities, and in what an illustrious future might it not have been accomplished, in the chosen land which God had promised to their forefathers! The land itself, in its amazing fertility and abundance, flowed with milk and honey, and actually became, in spite of all the disasters of their history, the granary of the Roman world. This land was placed in the full highway of the nations. The communications of the civilised world of that time passed through it; and the immense commerce and almost incalculable wealth flowing into it, during the days of Solomon, witnessed to its singular adaptability to be the home of an imperial race.* It was, moreover, of ample extent, for it extended from the great sea to the Euphrates; and if all this broad territory was never actually possessed, it was no failure of the Divine promise, but their own sin alone that confined their national boundaries within narrower limits than God had promised. In short, the mind scarcely knows which more to admire, as we watch the chosen race brought into the chosen land—the grand associations of their past history, or the

* Kurtz's *History of the Old Covenant*, vol. i. p. 147.

glorious future lying open before them. Illustrious the Jew is now, and his race stands among all others remarkable alike for the force of their genius, the heroic type of their character, and the unparalleled influence they have exercised upon the world. But what might it have been, had their subsequent history been directed into the same path of obedience as it occupied under Joshua! It had then become not only the grandest race the world has ever seen—the Jew is this as it is—but a grander race, with a more magnificent history, than we are able to conceive.

But their records are written in other characters. They were like a river with two channels; the one amid smiling sunshine and fertile plains, the other amid gloomy wilds and trackless wildernesses. The charge should not be laid specially upon them, as if Hebrew nature were more wilfully and perversely blind than other nature. It was the common depravity of our race, not overcome, even by their conspicuous advantages, which gravitated towards the darkness, not towards the sunshine. The death of Joshua was the turning-point of their history, and it is not amid the glories of the promises, but amid the terrors of the Divine chastisements, that we must trace their future history.

But when we thus stand at the date of Joshua, and read the book called by his name by this light of the Divine plan, the strictly religious character maintained throughout in the dealings

of God with man, and in the revelation recording them, is thrown strongly into view. Religion, as I have before stated, deals with the relation between God and man. All God's dealings with the Hebrews were religious, not simply because He was the doer of them, but because they were directed throughout to a religious purpose, both as regards the Hebrews themselves, and the world for which they were made trustees. The religious aspect was first and last. In all the various parts of the one plan this was true. As regarded the souls of the existing generation, as regarded the perpetuity of the stock of which the Son of God should take flesh, as regarded the revealed truth entrusted to the stewardship of the chosen race as regards the public witness they were to bear to God before the world, the religious object was prominent everywhere, and therefore was equally prominent in all the details whereby the harmonious plan was accomplished. The one purpose of the Divine glory in the salvation of man was the ultimate object of all, and ran through all. All the journeyings of the people in the wilderness, and the miraculous circumstances accompanying them, the entrance into Canaan, the subsequent victories, the relations existing between the conquering people and the nations of the land, were but the details of God's dealing with their souls in the revelation of His being and attributes, His moral government, His holiness, justice, and truth. What is all this but religious

in its strictest sense? To take away this element, and regard the Scriptural narrative—the book of Joshua, for instance—as a secular detail of secular events, is to take the very life and soul out of it. Take each book by itself, and we may conceivably regard them as fragmentary sketches of a national history—sketches interrupted and incomplete. But regard them together; let the separate portions of the one revelation fit into each other, as they do with a wonderful completeness and consistency, and the spiritual element of the whole becomes immediately apparent. Take away any one part, and some great religious truth becomes defaced and hidden. The merest details of place and person have an object. The book of Joshua has its consistent place and its religious purpose, as clearly as the predictions of the prophets, or the narratives of the evangelists.

In this light we shall see the true meaning of the book of Judges, interpreted, indeed, as all the early historical books are by the later revelation; as, for instance, by the Psalms, and with singular fulness and detail by the book of Nehemiah. The allotted period for the final extirpation of the nations of Canaan came at the death of Joshua, and the command was pronounced with his dying breath. It was laid upon their consciences as a great religious duty, and no human feelings were to be allowed to interfere with it. The charge was too clear and explicit to admit of any mistake. The thing commanded was their extermination

and nothing less, for it is by facing the whole truth that we can alone remove the supposed difficulties of the case. "Thou shalt smite them, and shalt utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them. . . . Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity on them. . . . Thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven." (Deut. vii. 2, 16, 24.) It was God's purpose to clear them out of the land altogether, and to preserve His people from the very sight and contact of their idolatrous abominations. Their very presence in the land they polluted was to be removed. The hopes of the world at large were bound up in the fortunes of the chosen race, and for the sake of the world at large God would take out of their path the very occasion of temptation. The elected people were to inherit at once all the material advantages of a settled civilisation,—houses, and wells, and vineyards, and oliveyards, prepared for their possession, and yet were to be preserved from the very presence of the profligate idolatry corrupting and debasing it.

Like all God's dealings, the command had many sides, and needs to be viewed in such varied relations, that it is difficult to state them in any very precise order. It was an act of precaution, incapable of being pushed into any further extreme. But was not the act necessary?—at all events, would not the execution of the command

have placed the Hebrew nation into a position of greater religious security and advantage than could be attained in any other way? for this is the point of view from which it is to be regarded. What was possible with God it is not for man to say; the question is, What was possible with man? What other course of conduct is it possible for us to conceive which could have secured the same result? for if reason must accept the act as necessary for God's beneficent purposes, it would be the wantonness of unbelief any further to object to it. Supposing the condition of the chosen race to be what we know it to have been, and the purposes of God towards them to be such as have been revealed, by what other means, short of extermination, was it possible to preserve the elected race from the contamination of the licentious and profligate idolatry of Canaan?

Shall we say that the opportunity of repentance, and of admission into the covenant of God, might have been given to these nations, so as to leave them without excuse? This is what God did; for by the terms of the law it remained open for every converted heathen to attach himself to the Jewish Church by the rite of circumcision, and to inherit its blessings and its privileges. Shall it be said that time should have been allowed for this purpose? This is what God did; when He allowed forty years to intervene between the first approach of the armies of Israel to the promised land, and their final entrance into it. It is remark-

able that no command for the extermination of the Canaanites was given to the generation of the Exodus—at least none is expressed. At all events, even the Canaanites of that day were not ignorant of Jewish history, as I have shown already. And as regards specifically the command given to the Israelites at the death of Joshua, it was not issued till abundant time had been given to the Canaanitish idolaters, both to make themselves acquainted with the God of the Hebrews, and to seek admission into His covenant, had they been disposed to accept it. The case is not, that peaceful races willing to learn and ready to believe, were exterminated without the opportunity of hearing and believing, but that races were exterminated who had quenched even the light of nature in crimes horrible and unnatural; who wilfully rejected both conscience and revelation, and whose continued existence was rendered, by their own enormous sins, incompatible alike with the glory of God and with the good of man. Strangely, indeed, has sceptical sympathy been divorced from the cause of human purity and happiness, and enlisted on behalf of peoples whose crimes, great almost beyond conception, and wholly gross beyond description, were a disgrace to humanity, and a curse to the world contaminated by their pollutions.

But if the extreme remedy of the sword were to be used at all, where should it stop, short of extermination? Should we suppose the adult

males, already corrupted beyond cure, to have been destroyed, and the rest permitted to live, the words of Moses respecting the Midianites immediately recur to us, showing that the worst sources of temptation would have been untouched by such a remedy. "Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord." (Num. xxxi. 15.) Or should all the adults perish and the children alone be preserved? Should the sword have left a nation of infants, while all who were of age enough to perpetuate the common corruption were cut off? Such a measure would have been cruel indeed. Is there not far more comfort in recalling the fact, that the Holy God does not visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, so far as concerns the soul and the other world; that the infants who perished in these wars stood before God in such a comparative innocence as any born of Adam's seed can possess; and that to them, through the merits of the atoning Messiah, the stroke of the devouring sword was but a brief entrance into that better world, where all the apparent contradictions of this disordered state will be set right, and all its dark secrets cleared for ever?

Yet extermination was a dreadful necessity. It is ever presented in this light in the Bible itself, for it is over and over again used as a solemn warning against sin. It is by the light of those great truths proclaimed in the Bible,

relative to the soul and sin, a Saviour and a world to come, that we see it to have been a dreadful remedy for a dreadful evil. It arose from no outburst of human passion, overleaping in the hot excitement of war the ordinary feelings of human nature, but from the deliberate sentence of Divine justice. It was a judicial act, done on the authority of God, as Judge of all the earth, and the Hebrew people were called to be its appointed executioners. In this light it was ever presented to them. Its exceptional character was shown by the sharp contrast presented by it to the benevolent character of the law, its solemn inculcation of kindness and love to all men, and the sensitive care over human life peculiarly characteristic of its provisions. The reason and grounds of the sentence were affirmed over and over again on both sides of its relations. It was repeatedly declared to be a punishment on the wickedness of those nations, inasmuch as "every abomination to the Lord which He hateth have they done unto their gods." (Deut. xii. 31.) Among these abominations were specified the atrocities of an idolatry which uprooted natural affection, and burned even their sons and their daughters to their gods, and the incestuous connexions which confounded all the ties of nature, and turned the instinctive purities of domestic life into the instruments of a deeper licentiousness. Had it pleased God to execute this sentence Himself by famine and pestilence, the loud accusations arrogantly

brought against Him from this portion of the inspired history would probably never have been uttered; for nations have perished by these means over and over again, and the fact has been accepted as a consistent part of God's moral government over the world. And yet we can see that, by making the Hebrews themselves the executioners of the sentence, and pressing the duty on their consciences against their natural inclination, an intensity was given to the warning lesson which it would not otherwise have possessed.

The nature of the act was explained with equal explicitness on its other side, as a precautionary measure taken for the sake of the Hebrews themselves. The motive is explained with the utmost emphasis, not simply as a probable suggestion, but as a consequence known to the Divine prescience. "For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." (Deut. vii. 4.) There was no question that alliance with the nations would be fatal to the purity of their faith. This was only too certain; the only alternatives were obedience or disobedience to the command. This was stated with solemn earnestness by Joshua. On the one side stood the obedient execution of the Divine sentence on the nations, the maintenance of their covenant with the God of their fathers, and the enjoyment of His blessing; on the other side, alliance with the nations, apostasy

from the covenant, and the consuming wrath of God. It will be well to look together at the events and at the revelation recording them.

The book of Judges consists of three parts. The first part consists of the two first chapters, and contains a general sketch of the fortunes of Israel under the Judges, of the modes of the Divine action towards them, and of the reasons modifying its character. Most prominent of all stands the fatal fact of their disobedience. The tribes, eight of whom are specified by name and circumstance, did not drive out the heathen, but entered upon a fatal course of direct rebellion.* The relation between their sins and the sufferings it entailed is drawn with great vividness in the second chapter, which contains the logical supplement and explanation of the first, and finds its parallel in the graphic comments of the seventy-eighth Psalm. The successive acts of repentance under the pressure of immediate chastisement, and

* "Here, now, the fountain of all the ensuing evils which befell the Israelites begins to be opened—in that, either through sloth or covetousness, or distrust of God's power, or more lenity than the law of Moses allowed, they did not attempt those people that were stronger than ordinary; or, being unfaithful to God, failed in their attempt; or, having some success, only brought them under tribute. And it is most likely they were so affrighted at the iron chariots, which were in use in the plain country, though not in the mountains, that they were quite disheartened, and did not remember what God had promised them."—Bishop PATRICK's *Comment. on Judges.*

the renewal of the sin when the chastisement was over, and the cause of the evil in their rebellious and insincere hearts, are described in these parallel passages, when they are read together, in a tone of profound and tender grief. The first chapter of Judges contains the dry facts; the second supplies the Divine interpretation of them. The inability to drive out the nations, asserted in the first chapter (Judg. i. 19, 35), and standing in apparent contradiction to the positive promise of God by Joshua (Josh. xvii. 18), is referred to its proper place and order in the statement of the second chapter. It was not the inability which produced the disobedience, but the disobedience which produced the inability.* The guilty taint of apostasy was already at work, and, though checked for the moment, asserted its fatal power. The people of Israel did but anticipate the experience of every age when they found that the first false step of evil placed them on a slippery precipice, down whose dangerous side every subsequent step hurried them on with ever-increasing rapidity. They broke the positive command of

* "After this the Israelites grew effeminate, and, forgetting war, applied themselves to the cultivation of the land; which, producing them great plenty and riches, they neglected the regular disposition of their settlement, and indulged themselves in luxury and pleasures. . . . Since they got large tributes from the Canaanites, and were indisposed for taking pains by their luxury, they suffered their aristocracy to be corrupted also."—JOSEPH. *Antiq.* b. v. s. 7.

God and the condition of His blessing, and who could say where the fatal course would end?

The policy on which the people acted is intelligible enough. Unhappily, the want of circumspection on the part of Joshua himself, in the case of the Gideonites, had supplied a precedent. It seemed to the people more profitable to retain the Canaanites as tributaries, and employ them as hewers of wood and drawers of water, than to destroy them utterly from the land. The inclination of a carnal will towards the pleasures of their abominable idolatry, and a decay of piety and faith towards the mighty God of their forefathers, lay at the root of their disobedience.

The fatal act did not long stand alone. All the results foreseen by the Divine wisdom, and set before them with such pathetic expostulation, soon came to pass. The inspired pen records the issue: "They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them; but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols, which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions." (Ps. cvi. 34-39.) How great and calamitous a fall, from Israel couching like a lion

beneath the protecting shield of God — so calmly peaceable that, even Balaam exclaimed, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel,” and the same people, fusing themselves amid the masses of a corrupting idolatry, in a community of guilt, misery, and chastisement!

We must observe that this sin reached beyond the interests of individual souls to the whole purposes of God, and would have frustrated, had the evil been permitted to go on unchecked, the entire purpose of God in the selection of the chosen race. The existence of a heathen population with all its abominations in the holy land, the free intermarriages of the two races, and the growing assimilation of the chosen nation to the habits and manners of the idolatry around them, was not only a violation of the law in its most essential particulars, but tended to disintegrate the nation itself, and to break up again the very national life that God had constituted. The whole mass of distinctive peculiarities on which their isolation depended, was destroyed by it. Had it gone on, the set purposes coveted by Hebrew waywardness, but forbidden of God, would have been accomplished. “They would have been as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.” God willed that their life should flow alone like the course of a river, rigidly confined within its own separate bed; but the barriers confining it once broken down, the river would have lost its identity in the mass of

water mingling with it on all sides. The Jew, as the Jew, would have ceased to exist. There would have been no longer a separate race, of whom Messiah should come ; no longer a peculiar people to preserve the precious deposit of revealed truth, or witness before the world, in their conspicuous national fortunes, for the God who chose them. The Gospel itself, such as it is, could have had no existence, and the wisdom of the Allwise, and the strength of the Almighty, would have been proved to be inadequate to war against human disobedience and the temptations of those accursed spirits who profit by it.

It was not, therefore, "without a cause" that God interfered to prevent these results, and interfered in accordance with the ordinary method of His providence, through human instruments. His first interpositions were those of gentleness and love. We do not know the precise order of the events, but the facts themselves are positive. He sent His servants, the prophets, to expostulate, and in those blessed terms of solemn warning and tender entreaty, by which the extant books of the prophets are so wonderfully characterised, pleaded with them as a father with his children—a monarch with his subjects. The exact order in which Nehemiah has sketched the events of Jewish history leaves no possible doubt that it is to this precise period that his words refer, marked as the date is by the inheritance of the land immediately before, and the raising up of saviours

immediately afterwards: "Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them unto Thee, and they wrought great provocation." (Neh. ix. 26.) Was it the climax of these expostulations, or was it an earlier act of mercy, when the Divine Angel of the Covenant, who had appeared to strengthen the heart of Joshua before Jericho, appeared again to the people of Bochim (Judg. ii. 1), and pleaded with them against their sins? But their repentance was but short-lived as their tears—a temporary gleam of light shining amid an ever-gathering darkness.

Then God outstretched His mighty arm in punishment, and proceeded to accomplish in wrath the plan rejected in mercy. The purpose of retaining a portion of the Canaanitish nations, as a means of proving Israel and correcting their growing voluptuousness and effeminacy, began to take effect even in Joshua's days (Judg. ii. 23), but now became the prominent characteristic of the Divine dealing. Under His providence the Canaanitish tribes began to assume towards their Hebrew conquerors the position of hostility, and instead of tributaries became, first, open foes, and then tyrannical masters. The relations of friendship into which they had seduced the chosen people were rapidly exchanged for the relation of oppressors. Thus the children of Israel were taught to regard them no longer as friends, but

enemies ; no longer with sympathy and admiration, but with fear and detestation. The same process was renewed which had already taken place in Egypt, and the men of Canaan and the idolatry of Canaan became involved, to Hebrew eyes, in the common character of the tyrant.

To accomplish this purpose it was only needed that God should remove the special protection previously exercised over His people. The conquest of Canaan was effected not by any superiority of military strength on the part of the Hebrews, but through the special interposition of God. "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us," was the language of the spies when they returned from Jericho (Josh. ii. 24). "The Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan before you," was the lesson to be taught by the fathers of Israel to their children (Josh. iv. 23). "I have given into thy hand the king of Ai," was the promise of God after the sin of Achan had been avenged (Josh. viii. 1). In the account of the confederate kings, "the Lord discomfited them before Israel," for "the Lord fought for Israel" (Josh. x. 10, 14). In regard to the capture of their cities, "the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel" (Josh. xi. 8). Such is the language everywhere employed; and we must bear in mind, moreover, the plague of hornets, miraculously sent from God whereby he weakened their strength. The fact

was recognised by the conquerors themselves, "the Lord drove out from before us all the people" (Josh. xxiv. 18). Hence it only needed that God should withdraw from them this special protection, when they themselves denied Him, and all the rest followed. The subjugated tribes recovered their strength, till they became the tyrannous and hated masters of the chosen race. In this exact aspect the inspired Scriptures themselves record the order of the events: "After they had rest, they did evil again before Thee, therefore leftest thou them in the hands of their enemies" (Neh. ix. 28). Again, to the same effect, "When God heard this, He was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that He forsook the tabernacle in Shiloh, the tent which He had placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand" (Ps. lxxviii. 59).

The order, however, in which these events were recorded, and the results they produced, bear marks of providential design throughout the whole period, from the death of Joshua to the days of Samuel. It is evident that no single act could change the inveterate inclination of the people to alliance with the idolatrous nations around them. The remedy adequate to restore their national unity and force them together again, by a community of suffering and deliverance, could only operate by degrees and over a considerable lapse of time. The public feeling of a

nation is necessarily a thing of slow growth ; and, moreover, it holds good, in every sphere of human experience, that evil may be sudden and quick, but good is gradual and slow. Restoration to health occupies a longer period than the fatal progress of disease. The narration of these events occupies the second division of the book of Judges, from the third chapter to the seventeenth inclusive. The history presents a series of oppressions and of providential deliverances mainly confined, at first, to particular tribes; and when these had done their work of restoring Israel into their proper relation towards the heathenism which oppressed them on the one side, and God who delivered them on the other, then it was so ordered that one common tyranny extended over the whole nation, and one common interference on God's part delivered them, as recorded in the first book of Samuel. The retributive discipline fell upon every tribe in turn without exception.* But none of these tyrannies appear to have affected

* The oppression of Chushan-rishathaim fell chiefly upon Judah (Jud. iii. and Numb. xiii. 6) ; the tyranny of Moab on Benjamin and Ephraim. What tribes were mainly affected by the Philistines in the days of Shamgar is uncertain. The oppression of the Canaanites under Jabin was chiefly suffered by Zebulon and Naphtali; that of the Midianites fell on Manasseh and partly on Asher, Zebulon, and Naphtali; that of the Ammonites, on Jephthah's days, on Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim ; of the Philistines in the times of Samson on Dan, and of the Ammonites, in the days of Saul, on the tribes settled on the other side of the Jordan.

the whole people. In later days it was different. The contest with the Philistines in the days of Eli must have been recognised to affect the entire nation, or else the ark of God had never been taken into the midst of the host. When Nahash, the Ammonite, came up against Jabesh, and the Spirit of God came upon Saul, he sent his summons through all the coasts of Israel, and it was with an army of 330,000 men that he fell upon the invaders. Two years later, so completely had the Philistines succeeded in establishing their power far and wide, that they were able to effect a total disarmament, "there was not a smith found throughout all the land of Israel." And a little later, when Goliath defied the men of Israel, the language implies a national war. We hear of "Saul and all Israel;" and it was in the name of the God of the armies of Israel, that gallant David defied and slew the giant. Thus we see that God employed a series of partial invasions to separate His people from the surrounding heathen, and one common national suffering to draw together the ties of common interests and sympathy, and restore the national unity, grievously impaired by their previous assimilation to the idolatry around them.

Now, if we turn to the inspired narrative, we find it to be in precise accordance with this course of God's providence, and framed so as to throw the Divine dealings into the utmost possible prominence. The book of Judges first states gene-

rally the sin of the people and its results. It then proceeds to illustrate the general statements by particular instances, recording just those successive events, and those only, which entered into the Divine plan ; the footsteps, as it were, of God, on the history of the time. So that these records, instead of being disconnected fragments of a secular history, are the consistent and closely connected events of a Divine plan, where not a single link, necessary to bring the revelation into accordance with the dealings recorded by it, is dropped out of the chain.

These events occupy the whole book, except the last five chapters, which constitute the third distinct division of the book of Judges. These chapters lift up, as it were, the veil from the more private transactions of the times, and afford a closer glimpse of its characteristics. What an insight into the widely spread corruption of the period is afforded by the story of Micah and the Levite hired by him—the man consecrated to Jehovah, yet content to be the hireling priest of a domestic idol ; by the open apostasy of the Danites, and by the story of the Levite at Beth-lehem. In the war fiercely waged between Benjamin on the one side and assembled Israel upon the other, we read another lesson ; for we see that the power of national action still survived among all the tribes, and that no defect, therefore, of national strength or of the power of combined action produced either their sin of idolatrous con-

formity on the one side, or their punishment by idolatrous tyranny upon the other.

Nor should we fail to notice that there is a brighter side presented to this picture. The disasters brought upon Israel during this calamitous period are indicated by a few graphic passages in the narrative suggestive of much more than they particularise. To outward oppression was added cruel strife, and all the furious and cruel passions engendered by it; as, for instance, when, upon the death of Gideon, Abimelech slew threescore and ten persons of his father's house upon one stone. It is no wonder that, amid such events, security of property and life should have been unknown. "The highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways, and the inhabitants of the villages ceased in Israel." (Judg. v. 6.) But, on the other side, we are reminded that the nation was not given up to a total anarchy. In addition to the great men recorded to have been the instruments in the Lord's hand to deliver Israel, we find an enumeration of six other persons who were judges during this period. The position of the judge appears to have been analogous to that of Moses and Joshua during earlier times, and the authority attached to the office was sufficiently great to maintain the supremacy of the law and suppress the outward acts of idolatry. Thus the effects of Gideon's administration are suggestively included in the statement that, after

his death, "the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim." (Judg. ix. 33.) The same authority must be attributed to the administrations of the other men who judged Israel. It must be remembered that the maintenance of the worship of the God of the Hebrews would have been perfectly consistent with the principles of idolatry, since they recognised each special land and special nation as having its own particular divinities; and it does not, therefore, follow that in the darkest times of their apostasy the Mosaic law must have been forgotten, or its authority altogether rejected. But while it was consistent with the principles of idolatry to pay to the God of the Hebrews a joint worship with the Deities of Canaan, it was not consistent with the Divine will or the glory of the Divine character to permit such a coalition. The one only true and living God claims to rule alone, and to be worshipped alone as the sole object of created trust, reverence, and service.

During this period two pictures of personal and private life are presented to us with great vividness. The one is the portrait of Samson, just such a character as a period of religious declension and corrupt acquiescence with the abominations of idolatry would tend to produce.* The other is the touching and beautiful picture of

* An admirable sketch of the history of Samson and of its lessons will be found in Fairbairn, *On Prophecy*, p. 37.

Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. There we see the true line of the saints of God, the remnant according to the election of grace, shining amid the general darkness. The tender and touching pathos of this episode is thrown into the stronger prominence by its contrast with the other features of that rude and turbulent period. How suitable a spring for the first origin of the family of sainted David, and the descent of his Divine and glorious Antitype!

The full analysis already given of the book of Judges and the wonderful way in which its apparently fragmentary revelations, when viewed in the light of the Divine plan, link themselves on inseparably to the history both before and afterwards and become an integral part of the whole, will render less detail necessary in tracing the links of the subsequent history. I shall, therefore, confine myself to the proof that the same characteristics distinguish it throughout. We recognise everywhere the same unalterable purpose of God, marching on towards its completion, more and more fully developed, throwing the spiritual element increasingly into prominence, and dropping, as the times of the Messiah drew near, the exclusive predominance of the selected instruments in the world-wide interests of the universal salvation. This fixity of God's eternal counsel pervades the long series of events connecting the period of the Judges with the period of the captivity by a melancholy and almost

unbroken continuity of human sin and disobedience. The revelation ever follows the plan. Those transactions, and those only, are recorded which are necessary for its elucidation, and without which we should be unable either to trace the consecutive outgoings of the Divine wisdom or to understand the human circumstances associated with them. Viewed simply and solely in themselves, the events are mainly secular, for they affect a nation, and a nation can have no other than a secular existence; but they were the consistent parts of a plan religious in its Author, its object and its instruments, and are therefore themselves as religious as the plan, within the grasp of which they are comprehended.

The narrative, consistently told in Judges, is continued with equal distinctness in the books of Samuel. We are reminded by the story of Hannah that, amid the general depravity, God still had His own people. The true type of the saint, conspicuous in the patriarchs, in Moses and Joshua, is still continued in devout Hannah and holy Samuel—the same faith, the same depth of devotion, the same profound humility, the same simple trust in the promises. But it stands in strong contrast with the general profligacy permitted by the timidity of Eli to rear its audacious front even before God, when the gross vices of heathen worship were repeated at the door of the tabernacle, and men abhorred the offering of the Lord. What did it matter that the outward reve-

rence was maintained when the true spirit of holy obedience was gone. Was not the lesson of God's justice and His abhorrent rejection of an outward homage signally illustrated to the dullest conscience, when, by His mysterious providence, the very ark of His presence fell into the hands of the Philistines, the same ark before which the floods of Jordan had stood still and the strong walls of embattled Jericho had fallen to the ground? When the leaders of Israel superstitiously clung to the outward symbol of the God they had despised, doubtless they thought that the Jehovah of their forefathers would for His own sake defend His dwelling-place, and thus, as it were against His own will, be compelled to fight again for Israel. But God had His own way of defending His honour, and could overrule what seemed the very disaster of defeat into the wider recognition of His majesty even among the heathen. Jew and Gentile alike should know why God had not fought for His people. It was not that His power had failed. Dagon, smitten in his own temple into the attitude of worship, and the trembling people of Ashdod and the terrified men of Ekron, on whom "the hand of God was very heavy," so that "the cry of the city went up toward heaven," witnessed that "He was still the mighty God who smote Egypt." Nor was it that He had become indifferent to His honour. The swift hand that smote Uzzah when in the careless irreverence engendered by the times, he ventured

to touch the ark, as if forgetting the very presence of Jehovah in it, witnessed to the contrary. But it was that Israel had forgotten God, giving Him the form of an empty worship, while the true service of the heart and the life were absent, and the Holy One disdained the offering. Was there not in the captured ark a prophetic indication of God's final dealing with His temple at Jerusalem in later days? In no words can the great lesson be more clearly expressed as in our Lord's own language, witnessing to the unity of revealed truth in every age. "God is a spirit, and he that would worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The more detailed form now assumed by the history enables us the better to understand the circumstances connected with the next great sin of Israel, in desiring a king, and placing the earthly monarch on the seat hitherto filled among them by God Himself. The stand-point of the history still remains the same. A great revival of religion had taken place through Samuel's means, and the spiritual life of the nation had been again awakened into activity. During his long life the administration of justice was carefully maintained, and a state of prosperity, when every man sat under his vine, and none made them afraid in Israel, renewed the blessing of Joshua's days and witnessed anew to the sufficiency of God's strength and the faithfulness of His promises. What other king did they need?

Had He not thundered out of heaven against their ancient enemies the Philistines, and smitten them before Israel, so that they came no more into their coasts all the days of Samuel? The man of peace, with the blessing of God, was mightier than all the men of war without it. What other king did they need? Their motives in demanding an earthly monarch had a deeper seat than any national necessity, and sprang from the old evil, the perverseness of a fallen nature. They would be "also like the heathen." (1 Sam. viii. 29.) Yet this act, deeply criminal as it was, did not amount to a national apostasy. They did not assume to choose their king themselves, but they left the sovereign power with God. "Give us a king to judge us," was their cry. "Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king," was God's answer. The demand itself was a contingency foreseen, and provided for in the giving of the law. God, in His infinite gentleness, would not tie the national religion of the people tightly to any one form of political government, nor would He withdraw His blessing because one kind of constitution was preferred over another. Not on such an issue as this would God rest His great controversy with Israel, of which Isaiah summoned heaven and earth to be the witnesses. The political constitution was wholly subservient to the religious. These dealings were subordinated to a spiritual end in the salvation of a ruined world; the end was fixed beyond the slightest

variation; but the methods of accomplishing it admitted by God's own sovereign will of alternatives. Not on a question of politics, but on a question of religious obligation, of faith, and hope, and love, and obedience, would their jealous God plead with Israel. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken," "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

The patience exercised by God, and His willingness still to protect and bless the people in spite of their waywardness, stand out very prominently in the history. Not less illustrious is the wisdom exhibited in the selection of the monarchs who should reign over them. The old still recurring lessons of mingled promise and warning, are stamped on every event of the record.

First came Saul, the impersonation of all those qualities which are most admired by the world. Rare personal beauty and strength; military qualities of a high order; resolute will; impulsive warmth of temperament; an impetuous, eager disposition; liveliness of emotion, quick either to reciprocate affection or to take offence; with a sensitive generosity, not really deep or noble, but showy and demonstrative, made him the very ideal of an earthly hero. God selected the man who possessed all the qualities desired by human policy, more perfectly than any other in Israel whom the human eye could have discovered. Yet what a period of disaster was his reign; what

a picture of disappointed ambition his personal history! We read in it how little the outward, showy qualities of human nature can do to supply the want of a Divine blessing. Internally the period was one of disunion; externally, one of disastrous war. His early victories, such as his conquest over Ammon and the victory over the Philistines, when the stripling David slew Goliath, are but gleams of sunshine amid the general darkness of a reign, clouded at its beginning by the prostration of a disarmed and depressed people, and darkened at its close by the fatal defeat upon the mountains of Gilboa. Did not Saul's reign stand in strong contrast with the prosperous times of Samuel, and was it not meant to teach them that the true spring of their national strength lay neither in human policy nor human wisdom, but in the protecting providence of the God whose immediate government they had rejected?

The character of David was formed after a far loftier type. The wearing of Saul's armour would seem to imply that the stripling was cast in no feeble physical mould. All the natural qualities of body and mind, qualifying man for great enterprises, were there. The military events of his reign prove David to have been a skilful and daring soldier, and an able general. Extraordinary powers of conciliating confidence and affection, dauntless courage and consummate prudence, great administrative ability and knowledge of mankind, lofty generosity and singular tender-

ness of feeling and affection, constituted him one of those rare instruments whom God raises up now and then to fulfil His purposes. All these qualities had their spring in still higher gifts of the spirit, the fervent religious faith, the deep love of God, the pathetic spirit of prayer, the intense spiritual desire, and the burning zeal for the Divine honour, which invest human nature with its loftiest nobility, and gave to the son of Jesse that most glorious and honourable of epithets, "the man after God's own heart."

The history of David must be regarded in two distinct aspects, the one national and the other personal. As a monarch his reign was a period of singular glory and success. The full purpose framed in the mind of God towards the Hebrew people, in making them conspicuous as a nation, and thus constituting in them a grand platform for the proclamation and illustration of His truth, had never up to this time even approached towards its full accomplishment. The fatal sin of Israel, in assimilating themselves to the idolatrous Canaanites, had prevented the realisation of the Divine promises. This sin was, indeed, divinely foreseen, and constituted the one side of the alternative methods provided for the completion of God's irresistible purposes. He had left it to them whether they would witness for Him in the blessing or in the curse, and they had chosen the curse. Moral appeals to the conscience, and providential warnings against this

fatal progress were freely used, as I have pointed out. But beyond this it was not consistent with God's purposes to interfere with that freedom of moral action, which I have proved in another Lecture to have been inseparable from God's own plan of human salvation and regeneration. Consequently God did not interpose by force to prevent the catastrophe, but permitted it to run to its fatal climax in the Babylonish captivity, and the final overthrow and dispersion of the Jew after the time of our Lord. But before this took place God's plan required that He should make the Jew the most remarkable and conspicuous nation of the earth, and that He should bring it into contact with every imperial people, who, in the history of the entire world, should successively sway the destinies of mankind. It was consequently needed before the final catastrophe took place, that a period of national glory should intervene, and yet a glory not secular alone, but intimately identified with the Divine plans, and the divinely revealed truth of which the Hebrews were trustees. David and Solomon were the appointed instruments for this purpose, especially the former, and under them the kingdom suddenly blazed into a pitch of national glory which filled the world.

During this period the Hebrew race no longer presented the spectacle of a number of separate tribes struggling for existence amid the surrounding people, but one compact nation, with an acknowledged imperial supremacy stretching far

on every side. The boundaries of the empire extended beyond Palestine proper over to the Euphrates, while northward it comprised all Syria within its limits. Not a nation dared any longer to lift a hand against Israel. The Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, the Edomites, the Ammonites, were one by one subdued. The ruins of Tadmor still remain to attest the magnificence and opulent enterprise of these two great kings. The reduction of Edom gave Israel access to the Red Sea and all the traffic of the East. The trade of Africa, Arabia, Persia, and India, flowed into this channel, carrying with it an enormous profit, calculated, even on the great scale of modern enterprise, to excite our astonishment.* In short, the kingdom became the greatest in the world, and its celebrity was the theme of the world's wonder. In the inspired language, "King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and honour." "And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and the cedar-trees made he to be as the sycamore-trees that are in the vale, for abundance."

If we would understand the relation held by this blaze of national glory towards the Divine plan, we must take into account the growth of true religion intimately associated with it. The elaborate care with which King David provided for the services of the sanctuary, and the

* Prideaux' *Connection of the Old and New Testaments*, vol. i. pp. 5-10.

sacred songs composed by the sweet Psalmist of Israel for that purpose, are but indications of the revival of religion carried on under his influence, and of the enlightened knowledge of the Divine will promoted among the people. The whole body of distinctive Christian truth was taught to them, and the great events of their own marvellous history were made the vehicles of appeal to the heart and conscience. David's rejoicings at bringing back the ark, his anxiety to erect a permanent house for God, and the vast preparations of money and of costly materials made ready by him for his successor, must all have acted on the national conscience. Under Solomon the grandeur of the Temple itself, its splendid services, and the grand inauguration with which the king, in the sight of all Israel, dedicated it to Jehovah, both consolidated the empire round its true national centre, and extended the knowledge of God among the tribes.

To this result the personal character of these two great monarchs, and the religious lessons of their history, must have contributed. David was himself the very embodiment of Christian experience, with all its deeper lessons and tenderest emotions. We see everywhere the true man, with his human sins and infirmities; not too spotlessly holy to be identified with the spiritual conflicts of the Church of God throughout all ages; but so closely united to it that his words have supplied utterance to all the people of God in their joys and sorrows, their

abasing convictions of sin, and their lofty aspirations after God, from that day till now. Yet, at the same time, his prophetic words ever pointed forward to the Messiah and the glories of His promised kingdom. Their predictive nature must have been, at least, as apparent to the men of his own day as to ourselves. David was himself, in his own experience, and in his typical relation to the Christ who should come, a revelation acted, a living book, of which every line was rich in spiritual meaning.

Less varied and less profound is the insight afforded us into the private experience of the wise king. The insufficiency of the most perfect human wisdom to guard the heart, and of the loftiest eminence of power and earthly magnificence to satisfy its cravings, are almost painfully prominent. From amid the lustre of his throne, and the depth of an experience that had fathomed every created element of happiness, issues the plaintive voice still repeating its witness of the vanity of all human things. It is a happiness to turn from Ecclesiastes to the Song of Solomon, and, in its rich and gorgeous allegory, to read that not in vain had he searched for the secret of human happiness, but had found it in the heavenly Bridegroom, and the unutterable joys of His espoused Church.

There is, however, another point of view in which this period of imperial splendour stood in a very close relation to the Divine plan. For it

constituted a new appeal to the consciences, and even to the interests, of Israel, such as they had not previously experienced. It was indeed the fault of their own sin, and of that alone, that they had hitherto, with the brief exception of the latter days of Joshua, tasted the bitterness of the warning, and not the glory of the promise. The alternatives presented by Moses, and again reiterated by Joshua, were two: an extraordinary blessing upon obedience, and an extraordinary curse upon disobedience. They had perversely chosen the second course, and had already experienced the first blows of the scourge, to culminate hereafter in their dispersion among all nations. But thus it happened, that of the other alternative they had enjoyed no experience up to the time of David. It might, therefore, have been open to object against God's final dealings with his chosen race, on the ground that reward had not been adequately tried. The opposition hardened by the storm would have melted, it might have been thought, amid the sunshine. Had they actually known by experience what the blessing was, who can tell what effect it may have had upon Israel? This possible objection has been foreclosed by the glory of the times of David and Solomon. During this period God, by His own gracious acts—not by virtue of any meritorious obedience of theirs—gave them the enjoyment of the blessing; not wholly, for the sinful luxury and profusion of Solomon rapidly introduced the elements of evil, but sufficiently to

indicate the nature of what God had in store for them. Both alternatives were tried, and both the frown and the smile equally failed to conquer the stubbornness of their disobedience.

Hence, over this brief period of national magnificence and religious progress the clouds soon gathered again. Here the fortunes of the Hebrew race culminated at their highest point, and then hastened to their decline. Not that God wearied in blessing, but that Israel wearied in obeying. Thenceforward, with some bright periods of religious revival here and there interrupting the fatal tendency, the fortunes of the chosen race flowed downward, but not till the national impress had been so deeply stamped as to survive all changes. In the darker characteristics of the later history, God has presented to mankind another illustration of the deep depravity of human nature and its invariable tendencies, not heavenward and upward, but earthward and downward; not to a transcendental perfection, but further and further still from God, and hope, and peace. For we see that human corruption made even permanent national prosperity impossible. Human nature is too weak to stand unmoved on such a giddy height. If neither the wise king himself, nor the people he ruled, could bear that time of glory without introducing the elements of decay amid such a full flush of life, what wonder that others have proved unable to do so; and that the history of every nation under heaven has

hitherto been one invariable story of growth, prosperity, corruption, decline, and ruin!

Christianity has, indeed, introduced into nations a new principle of life, and extended the duration of their strength far beyond all the limits of the ancient world; but whether, even among them, the purifying salt will permanently correct the festering elements of moral corruption, is a lesson still to be learned. But till Christianity came the corruption of human nature made permanent national prosperity impossible. Empires rotted from within before they were stricken by the fatal blow from without. The solemn sentence, "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, till he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek. xxi. 27), is no capricious and arbitrary sentence, but has its deeper seat in the truth that the corruption of nature has undermined the foundations of all earthly stability. A perfect kingdom cannot come till there is a perfect nature; and a perfect nature can only be a thing of the future, when the crowned and conquering Messiah shall establish over this scene of strife and confusion His universal kingdom of righteousness and peace.

This descent of the national fortunes is the general characteristic of all the history of the kings. The rending asunder of the kingdom on account of the sin of Solomon, and the further limitation of the chosen race from whom the

Messiah should take flesh, checked and retarded the fatal process of decay, but did not remove it. The excessive luxury of Solomon, and the sins of his last days, produced the political causes of the separation: so intimate is the moral connexion ever existing in the providence of God between a sin and its punishment. Here, as before, we see that God, consistently with His declared purposes from the first, did all that was possible without violating moral freedom, to keep His chosen people in the path marked out for them, and to surround them with every possible advantage. While the disruption of the Hebrew people into two nations was, in one point of view, a chastisement upon sin, we can see from another point of view, that God made this very calamity instrumental to the maintenance of Jewish isolation and the preservation of His revealed truth. The national life was concentrated into an intenser form among the two chosen tribes than when diffused among the ten. Their circumstances, as brought into closer local proximity with the temple of Jerusalem, and with all its services and associations, were favourable in the highest degree to the maintenance of true religion among them and the deepening of all the ties of Jewish life. Within the narrower area the circle of idolatrous temptation was correspondingly narrowed. The very rivalry between the two kindred nations and their common possession of the same Scriptures, drove the Jew back more intensely on his peculiar

privileges, and guarded him thus far from the contamination of the idolatrous apostasy established by Jeroboam. As regards the sacred writings themselves, it quickened the jealousy with which they were preserved and has provided two independent lines of evidence instead of one; and lastly, in conjunction with these varied results, it narrowed the line of Messiah's descent, and drew into definite shape the proofs of His personal identity. The separation, I repeat, retarded, not averted, the final catastrophe. Israel, far the most guilty, first passed away—passed away, alike from the sacred history, and from the knowledge of mankind; for from that time to this no research has ever recovered the clue to their recognition. No rival line of descent was permitted to distract the eyes of the world, or contend with the Jew for the possible inheritance of the promises. For a time Judah survived, with gleams of light now and then in her history; and yet the whole course was that of a day sinking more and more towards the approaching night.

The greater detail belonging to the narrative down both lines, if detail it can be called that just touches the individual links of the history and no more, bears exactly the same peculiarities which we find to distinguish the books of Judges and of Samuel. It is presented from the Divine point of view and with exclusive relation to the religious position of the two peoples towards God. The details still are secular, but their connexion and

results are purely religious and spiritual. It is one long record of Divine forbearance and truth struggling against human perverseness. The position and character of each successive monarch is marked, not on its side towards profane history, but on its side towards God. Their religious character, their sins or their obedience, their deliverances or their chastisements, make up the history. Yet with such marvellous wisdom have all these details been recorded, that they present all down the course of the events constant points of contact with the heathen nations around them, with Syria, with Assyria, with Babylon, with Persia, Greece, Rome.* These points indicate the mode in which God used the Jew to influence the Gentile, and to witness in the very midst of them to the mighty and unchangeable God of their forefathers. At the same time these points of contact have supplied, through the discoveries of modern days, a long series of collateral testimonies to the historical credibility of the Scriptures themselves. Had these details been omitted in the inspired record, the testimonies which recent antiquarian research among the mouldering remains of ancient Nineveh and mighty Babylon, has supplied to the sacred history, would have been

* Rawlinson's *Bampton Lectures and Ancient Monarchies*; Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*; Prideaux' *Connection of the Old and New Testaments*.

absent, and these discoveries themselves had been deprived of their religious significance.

But while the fortunes of the Jewish kingdom during this period are like the course of a day declining towards its night, another kingdom is now more and more prominently presented, and the course of this kingdom is the progress of a glorious day rising more and more toward its zenith. As the strength of the human empire declined, and the hope of its permanent and glorious establishment fades away in the history amid the gathering storms of approaching judgment, the spiritual empire of the Messiah and His everlasting dominion come more and more prominently into view, till they absorb well-nigh the whole picture in their grandeur and blessedness. Mysterious intimations of a suffering Messiah are indeed afforded everywhere; but they only serve to give deeper solemnity and meaning to the triumphant predictions with which they are invariably associated. More and more as the time drew on, the language of the prophets became definite and particular, and so full of details as to the redeeming work over sin and death, to be accomplished by the coming Saviour, that the narratives of the Evangelists and the Apostolic Epistles are but the inspired echo of their inspired declarations. Not one characteristic circumstance in the life and death, the offices and work, of Christ, has failed to be contained in the prophetic writings so clearly that their

general bearing must have been, to a devout Jew, clear beyond mistake, whatever difficulty may have hung over the details, or the order of the predicted events. The songs of Simeon and Anna show that this is no conjecture.

Thus it was during the troubled later life of Uzziah, afflicted by the chastisement his own sacrilege had provoked, amid the open apostasy of Ahaz, and the anxieties even of Hezekiah's reign, that Isaiah predicted the deep mysteries of the Messiah's sufferings and the glories of His kingdom. During the same period, or amid the dark times of Manasseh's reign, Joel foretold the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh; and Micah specified the place of his birth. The clouds of judgment were fast settling over Jerusalem, when Jeremiah renewed God's sure promises of the greater David who should come. The captivity had actually begun, and the chosen race were already gone into captivity, when Ezekiel prophesied by the river of Chebar of the new heart and the new spirit which should be given to God's people in the latter days. During the captivity itself, princely Daniel had his vision of the Son of Man, and predicted the date of the Messiah's work and kingdom. During the feeble times of the return, Zachariah's voice declared the death of Christ, the final conversion of the Jewish people, the convulsions of the last days, and Christ's second coming, and the final establishment of His kingdom. Latest of all, the tongue of Malachi, like

the last dying accents of the prophetic line, declared His solemn advent, and the ministry of the Baptist by whom it should be heralded. Then the voice ceased, and only broke forth anew when Messiah had actually come to identify His person and proclaim His welcome. But all down this prolonged period of prophecy, the vision of the earthly kingdom became fainter and fainter still ; while the spiritual empire of the Redeemer stands forth to view in all its grandeur, the centre of the world's hope, and the glorious inheritance of regenerated man. The failure of the one hope and the ever-increasing prominence of the other, alike threw the anticipations of mankind forward into the future, and more or less, throughout the whole compass of the civilised world, awakened in the human heart and conscience, an expectation of the approaching Messiah.

But while this was accomplished, the two conditions of a revelation, which I have proved in a previous Lecture to arise from God's revealed plan, were both kept in sight all through, and harmonised in a wonderful consistency. That the prophetic writings constitute to our own day a complete representation of the Divine dealings, in all the details whereby the way was prepared for the times of Christ and of Christianity, is proved even by a cursory review of them. That they prepared the world of our Lord's day for His personal ministry, and the subsequent preaching of His gospel, is an historical fact, the full bearing

of which still remains to be considered in another Lecture. That, meanwhile, each successive revelation thus harmonised into one whole, was, in every case, adapted to the special circumstances and wants of the generation to whom it was given, is stamped upon the very face of the record. The religious object of the prophetic books, in their bearing alike on the Church of that day and the condition of its individual members, must never be forgotten. Its purely predictive elements were subsidiary and subordinate to this. The ministry of the prophets was as truly a preaching of God, and had as truly in view the religious instruction and salvation of mankind, as the ministry of our own day. The extant prophecies of each member of the glorious company, present a vivid picture of his time in its religious aspects and aspirations. Warnings of sin, exhortations to repentance, declarations of God's will, vindications of His justice and goodness, are the prominent topics everywhere; and the predictive element is added because the Messiah was still future, and the hopes of the Church universal needed to be fixed upon Him. Faith required to be rightly directed, and the hearts of God's people to be cheered under the calamities of their day by the prospect of the completed kingdom, where the saints gone to their rest, as well as the saints still struggling in this militant world, should have their final consummation.

And here, indeed, we see another illustration

of the indivisible unity of all God's dealings and the identity of His Church in all ages. In no political aspect could mankind be drawn together in a brotherhood, universal both in extent of time and variety of circumstances, as they are drawn together in the common sympathies and interests of the Church. The relation held by ourselves both towards God and towards the preaching of His Word now is identically the same as that of the Church during the period of the prophets. We live during the later stages of the one common dispensation, and enjoy a more perfect light ; but our wants are the same, our strength the same, our temptations the same, our hopes the same. Our wants are the same, for we have the same immortal souls, and the same corrupt nature ; the same aspirations, convictions of sin, glimpses of judgment, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows ; the same, not by lowering our own experience, but by raising our estimate of theirs. Our strength is the same, for it is centred in the same God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ; and no increase of exact knowledge as to their relative offices can change their essential nature and attributes, for the difference is only in ourselves who believe, not in the God on whom we believe. Our temptations are the same, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, a corrupt nature within and the force and fraud of spiritual enemies without. Our hope is the same, fixed on the same promises, and centred in the same final

triumph of the kingdom which shall be for ever and ever. In short, it is with us and with them as with voyagers across the sea towards a distant land. Some may sink to their rest while the land is still far off, while others may survive to reach it. Some may live nearer to the times of the consummation than others, and may be privileged to catch a clearer view of it before they likewise pass to their rest; but it is same land to all. The eyes of the saints from the beginning have been fixed on one completed kingdom, one Saviour, one triumph, one ingathering of the saints, one victory, one heaven.

The sovereign will of God, fixing the end and selecting the means for its accomplishment, gives consistency and unerring certainty to this hope of the universal Church. What Divine goodness ordains, Divine wisdom arranges and Divine power executes. The possibility of failure must be as absolutely absent from the future as the possibility of mistake is from the past. On this assurance faith devoutly rests. Through the entangled and complicated difficulties besetting the prospects of the Church of Christ, reason is wholly unable to trace beforehand the consistent path; but to the mind of God all things are ordered and sure from the beginning to the end. The clouds may gather blackly across the heavens, but the sun shines beyond and above them. The apparent motion and disturbance are only in ourselves. The Jews at the period of the Captivity

were probably exercised by anxious doubts relative to the accomplishment of the Divine promises. Yet, at that very time, in a way they thought not, God's purposes were fast ripening to their completion, and the time was already at hand when the covenant with their fathers should be fulfilled, and the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.

LECTURE VII.

The Times of the Gospel.

“AS CONCERNING THE GOSPEL THEY ARE ENEMIES FOR YOUR SAKES: BUT AS TOUCHING THE ELECTION THEY ARE BELOVED FOR THE FATHERS’ SAKES, FOR THE GIFTS AND CALLING OF GOD ARE WITHOUT REPENTANCE.”—ROMANS, xi. 28, 29.

It has been stated in the preceding Lecture that after the promulgation of the Mosaic law at Sinai, two great problems in the Divine government remained to be answered. By what means would God secure for the law such an abiding control over the Jewish mind as would enable it to stamp its own characteristics indelibly on the national character? This was the first question; for the preservation of the chosen line of descent intact till the coming of the Messiah entered into the very essence of the Divine plan, while the positive declarations by Moses stretched the perpetuity of their life still further into the future, and crowned it with promises yet remaining to be accomplished. The second problem was, By what means, when the distinctive type had been formed,

would God provide for the extension of its influence throughout the world at large? The question for us is not, by what means could these objects be accomplished, but by what means were they accomplished. The first question would lie far beyond the reach of the highest human wisdom, so long was the reach of time, so varied the circumstances, so intricately complicated the considerations involved in it. The history of all human legislation proves the inability of the human mind to deal satisfactorily with the evils incident to corrupt human nature as they arise. To frame elaborate provisions for the distant future, adapted to circumstances yet unknown, lies beyond the province of the human lawgiver altogether. It is not to be supposed, therefore, that if these two questions had been propounded for human solution, the highest wisdom could have given even a conjectural reply. The mind of the Eternal is alone adequate for such questions, and to look reverently into the mysteries of His dealings is the highest exercise of our human faculties.

I have now traced the harmonious lines of the Divine dealings and of the Divine revelation of them to the point at which both these questions receive their answer. The Divine plan stands forth conspicuously to our admiration, like a sun breaking through clouds. The period of the Babylonian captivity constituted the point of transition from the accomplishment of the one purpose to

the accomplishment of the other. No abrupt line can indeed be drawn between them, but, speaking generally, the one problem received its distinctive solution before and during the captivity, and the other problem after it. Subsequently to this date the national character of the Jew is found to have received that indelible stamp which it retains unchanged to our own day. The difference between the Jew before the Captivity and the Jew after it is so great, that if we leave out of view the immediate action of God, and endeavour to account for it on ordinary and human principles, it becomes inexplicable. The surviving points of resemblance, knitting in indissoluble identity the natural and moral continuity of the race, only serve to throw the change into the stronger contrast.

If the result had gone farther than it did, it would have been less wonderful. We can easily understand that the fulfilment of the predicted calamity, and all the sufferings individual and national involved in it; their exile from their native land, and compulsory residence among strangers; the downfall of their commonwealth and the destruction of the gorgeous temple of the God of their forefathers; the spoiling of their treasures and the utter desolation of their land, must all have sunk deeply into their hearts, and have awakened many a solemn thought among the mourning exiles, as they hung their harps

upon the willows along the banks of the Euphrates, and vainly pleaded with the contemptuous conquerors, who required of them a song and a melody in their heaviness. But the effect of the lesson would have lain in certain definite directions. We can understand, for instance, that in the temper exhibited by the Jews towards God and His prophets, as illustrated in the person of Jeremiah, the disastrous and apparently irretrievable ruin of their state might have led them to reject the religion of their forefathers altogether. But this was not the case, for after the captivity they clung to their law with astonishing tenacity and attachment. Or we can understand that the completion of the threatened punishment might have wrought a permanent religious repentance and reformation. But neither was this the case, for no portion of their history presents a more enormous wickedness than was exhibited at the time of our Lord. Or we can understand that exile might have endeared to them their native land with an affection unutterable, such as is breathed in the language of the 137th Psalm. But neither was this the case, for the great mass of the people preferred Babylonia to Palestine. The first suggestion of a return to their desolate land originated, not with themselves, but with their Gentile master; and when the opportunity was afforded them of resettling in the land of their forefathers, the great majority beyond all

comparison rejected it, and voluntarily stayed in the land of their captivity.* Or, again, we can understand that thus dwelling among the heathen, and deprived of the national centre at Jerusalem and the instituted priesthood, and the august rites of their faith, they might have become assimilated with the heathen, and the policy of their conquerors have thus succeeded in its object. But this was not the case; the contact of heathenism did but drive them back into the more jealous maintenance of their national peculiarities. Not one of these alternatives followed. They neither rejected their law, nor permanently repented of their sins, nor longed for restoration to their native land, nor lost their national identity. Out of those very contradictions, as they seem to be, was constituted the Jew of later times, as changeless in his character, as he has been mysterious in his fortunes.

Up to the moment of captivity the Jews had turned the whole force of their energetic will to-

* The facts of Jewish history adduced in this Lecture are generally founded in the following authorities:—Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, Prideaux' *Connection of the Old and New Testaments*, Milman's *History of the Jews, Israel and the Gentiles* by Isaac Da Costa, Adams' *History of the Jews*, Edersheim's *History of the Jewish Nation*, Jahn's *Hebrew Commonwealth*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Merivale's *History of the Romans*. "Jewish tradition informs us that it was, with few exceptions, the less noble families who took advantage of the edict of Cyrus, and listened to the voice of Zerubabel."—*Israel and the Gentiles* by Isaac Da Costa, p. 40.

wards escape from what they considered to be the thralldom of the Mosaic law, and assimilation with the surrounding heathen. The design is denounced with great emphasis by Ezekiel. For seventy years the Jew passes, comparatively speaking, out of sight, and, when he reappears, it is pressing this Mosaic law to his very heart, with a concentrated force of affection without a parallel in the history of the world. The consciousness of his election as the people of God, dormant during the period of his imperial prosperity, was awakened during his captivity into such intensity, that it became an over-mastering passion, a part of his mental and moral self, incorporated into his very being. His lofty consciousness of a Divine adoption was never subsequently broken, and became the spring of all that was heroic in his character and history. The confidence engendered by it sustained him under all trials ; he might lose all else, but this he never lost. It gave him fortitude to bear, courage to do, and strength to suffer. He might be a stranger of the dispersion meted out by the hand of the persecutor, and trodden down beneath the foot of cruel oppression ; but his sufferings did but teach him to cling with the fonder hope to the promise given to his forefathers, when the chosen seed should dwell in peace within the chosen land. His flesh might be torn by the scourge, or smitten by the sword, or racked with strange tortures ; his property might be the prey of the spoiler, his wife and children might go into

captivity, and the streets of great cities be red-dened with the blood of his slaughtered kinsmen ; and yet, for all this, he could press the closer to his heart the mysterious portion of his race, and, supported alike by the traditions of the past and by the hopes of the future, could stand at bay against the world, in the proud consciousness of his national superiority. The holy city might be beleaguered of the Gentiles, and the iron Roman be thundering against the walls ; ominous signs of evil might be thickening on every side ; the foe might be even within Jerusalem, and the very temple, the sacred centre of all his reverence, might be in flames ; and yet, amid the ruin, he could stand undaunted in this hope, and in the fond expectation of a miraculous deliverer, still set his face like a rock against the enemy of his faith ; counting, in such a cause, life to be worthless, and death to be a joy.* His beautiful city might be in ashes, and the Roman ploughshare be driven over its foundations ; his hope of deliverance flaming, for the moment, like a meteor, might be quenched again in blood ; yet could he stand amid the desolation, and smile ; for the very accomplishment of the Divine warnings was to him the proof irrefragable of the Divine promises.† His undying

* “Obstinatio viris feminisque par ; ac si transferre sedes cogentur, major vitæ metus quam mortis.”—TACIT. *Hist.* l. v. c. xiii.

† A striking story is told of Akiba. His great maxim

trust in the fortunes of his God-elected people no time could weaken, no change of circumstances obliterate, no depth of suffering destroy. From the date of the captivity, onwards, to the present moment, this has been his proud and imperishable boast: "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we."

The action of the Divine Spirit upon the Jewish mind, presenting the lessons of their disastrous experience in this special aspect, and disposing the Jewish heart to accept them, can alone account for an effect* so deeply stamped, so widely spread,

was "that everything is ordained of heaven for the best." With this axiom on his lips he was riding, with some of his followers, near the ruins of Jerusalem. They burst into tears at the melancholy sight; for to heighten their grief they beheld a jackal prowling upon the hill of the temple. Akiba only observed that, "The very successes of the idolatrous Romans, as they fulfilled the words of the prophets, were grounds of loftier hopes for the people of God." Milman's *Hist.* vol. iii. p. 117.

* "Thus, though the alteration of the Jewish state be such as all the world might wonder and stand amazed at—such as would make the wisest heathen giddy that should seek to compass the true causes thereof by politic search—yet, unto us Christians, that have the oracles of our God, their estate cannot seem strange, seeing nothing good or bad that hath befallen this people, from their first beginning to the present day, but is foretold in the sacred story, which has continually proved itself as infallible a prognosticator for what is to come, as it is an authentic register of all things past."—DEAN JACKSON on *The Eternal Truth of Scripture*, b. i. c. xxii., also c. xxi. Roseneranz, the biographer of Hegel, says, that this philosopher was much interested in the history of the Jewish

and so marvellously permanent. We are the more compelled to recognise this superhuman agency by the strange and paradoxical inconsistencies mixed up with this undying confidence in their national election ; for it would be very wrong to suppose that the Jewish type was altogether such as God willed, or as it was the tendency of God's revealed word to produce. The elements of its strength and perpetuity were of God ; but the elements of weakness, combined with them, were of man. Hence we see that the result, so far as it bore God's stamp, was not produced by the obedience of a willing people, voluntarily casting themselves into the ordained mould of the Mosaic law ; but, by the action of God's power, impressing it upon them almost against their will. The Divine will is consequently thrown into prominence, not the human. The alternative of judgment continues to be as conspicuous in the later as it was in the earlier history of the race. It is necessary, therefore, carefully to distinguish what part of the type belonged to God, and what part to man, in order to disentangle the Divine purpose from its human perversions, and recognise the sovereign Wisdom and Power which have made even the wrath of man to praise Him.

There is no difficulty in drawing the distinction ; for the hand of God Himself guides us

nation. His opinion underwent frequent changes, so that "all his life long it tormented him as a dark enigma."—EDERSHEIM'S *History of the Jewish Nation*, p. 27.

throughout. So far as the peculiarities of the Jewish character were in accordance with their divinely-given law, they were of God ; so far as they departed from this standard, and even contradicted it, they were of man. Thus their unconquerable reliance in their national election, and their heroic assurance that God would fulfil His promises to their forefathers, to the utmost jot and tittle of the whole glorious covenant, were the work of the Spirit of God upon them. Such a confidence could not run into extreme, or exceed, by any imaginable intensity, the immutability of the promise. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself." (Heb. vi. 13.) Not less indisputably divine was the glorious monotheism of which the Jew, since the time of the captivity, has been the living representative ; for this truth of one living and true God blazes in every line of the ancient law. It was as if the voice of God Himself still sounded in the ears of the Jew as once it sounded from amid the darkness and tempest on Sinai, repeating ever the fundamental truth, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord." The unutterable hatred of idolatry which, in every age and every land, has been the universal characteristic of the Jew for more than two thousand years, was not only a corollary of his monotheism, but constituted one of the most reiterated provisions of the ancient covenant. The sensitive jealousy expressed against the use of images in worship, in

any form or under any pretext, is very remarkable; for it illustrates the jealous care of the Divine Wisdom, closing up every avenue of temptation against this besetting sin. How cautiously does Moses call their attention to the acted as well as the spoken will of God! "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice." (Deut. iv. 12.)

This feature of the later Jewish character is so very remarkable, that I cannot pass it over without some further elucidation. It seems as if the memory of every disaster experienced in the chequered fortunes of their race, had all turned into a concentrated hatred of idolatry, marked by a depth of abhorrence baffling all expression. Yet it was wrought in them in the course of seventy years. In the previous history, the love of idolatry, and of its fascinating licentiousness, constituted the predominant feature. It existed in its full force when the storm of judgment was already gathering darkly over Judah. The captivity had partially begun, when Ezekiel, carried in vision to Jerusalem, saw within the temple itself, "every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel pourtrayed upon the walls round about" (Ezek. viii. 10). Yet in seventy years from that time this love of idolatry had changed into an undying hatred; not in some members of Israel, or at some periods of their subsequent history, but in the whole seed of

Abraham, and during the whole period of their existence. The representations given us of the condition of the Jews after the restoration in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, indicate the existence of great evils, but of idolatry there is not a trace. From the ancient Jews standing before the Acropolis of Athens, where on every side of them stood the forms of deified heroes, or walking in the midst of Rome's debasing superstitions, to the scattered settlements of the dispersion found in the heart of China or the depth of Abyssinia, it is the same ; an idol is an abomination to the Jew. Not even the almost incredible wickedness of the latter days of Jerusalem could efface the sentiment ; and men lost to every other lofty feeling, could willingly offer themselves to the Roman sword rather than see the hated presence of the idol within the precincts of the sacred city.

But with this confidence in their election, this firm adherence to monotheistic doctrine, this unalterable abhorrence of idolatry, there were united some other qualities not less accordant with the declared purpose of God. The maintenance of their national isolation, and of the ritual and ceremonial peculiarities enacted by the law as precautions against social intercourse with the Gentiles was of this character. Pregnant, as every part of the law was with typical meaning, it was not to pass away till the antitype had come, and the full rays of the Sun of Righteous-

ness dispelled the shadows of the earlier dispensation; and, at the time of the captivity, six centuries still remained before the fulness of the time arrived. Their jealous guardianship of the Scriptures committed to their charge, and the supreme authority allotted to them in all matters social, civil, and political, were equally worthy of commendation. It ran, indeed, in course of time into the mistaken channel of an outward reverence to the letter rather than an obedient deference to the spirit, and the scrupulosity which led them to count the very letters of the sacred writings was perhaps of this character; but the feeling itself was good, and grew out of their sensitive jealousy over even the verbal integrity of the revelation committed to their care. Nor could this deference to their law and this solemn regard to the sacred books exist in the mind of the Jew without preserving alive the expectation of the Messiah, and keeping the national heart on the stretch with the hope of His speedy advent. It would have been as impossible to peruse the ancient Scriptures, and especially the writings of the later prophets, without perceiving in them the promised deliverer of the world, as it would be impossible to look up to the natural heavens on some cloudless summer day without perceiving the sun filling the firmament with light and warmth.

In all these particulars the character of the Jew

was framed after the Divine mould of the revealed law. It bore the stamp and signature of God, manifestly as a coin bears the image and superscription of the earthly monarch. Emphatic attention must be given to the truth that none of these qualities could possibly be pushed into an excess. Had no carnal human elements been superadded to the Divine, darkening them with their corrupt perversions, the strength and force of these qualities could never have become a fault, since in the highest intensity of their exercise they never could have reached the absolute certainty of the Divine truth, or have exhausted the claims of the Divine authority.

But unhappily this quality was thrown out of its proper equilibrium by the action of human passion and pride, and the human elements became so closely interwoven with the Divine as to have been frequently confounded with them. Thus it was with their confidence in their national election. The purity of their worship of the one true God, and the force of their hatred to idolatry could not indeed run into excess; but the sense of a special calling did, and became the first of the great sins which darkened the Divine purposes. For the revelation of God's will was not given to the Jew that it might end with him, but that from his trusteeship it might extend its sanctifying influences throughout the length and breadth of the world. This purpose lay so patent on the very

face of the revelation, that no mind, unperverted by a sullen pride, could have failed to recognise it. The very first recorded promise to Abraham stretched through him to "all families of the earth." In the solemn renewal of their law in Arboth Moab before the death of Moses, it was explained to them over and over again that God bestowed upon them their peculiar national privileges in order to make them a beacon of hope to other nations. "This is your wisdom, and your understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." As the details of prophecy became more copious in regard to the person, character, and work of the Messiah, the statement of the world-wide object of the work was correspondingly amplified. The predictions of the later prophets are crowded with references to the gathering in of the Gentiles, the more formal enlargement of a work of proselytism for which definite provision was made in the law. It seems impossible that any honest mind could have mistaken the significance of these reiterated declarations. Yet Jewish pride took to itself one side of the truth and ignored the other. It accepted the privileges, but rejected the responsibilities. It refused the position of stewardship and asserted the right of proprietorship. It claimed the inheritance as their own sole and exclusive right, and in sullen arrogance repudiated the claim of the Gentiles to any participation in it. They

thus perverted God's purpose so grossly as to repeat within the circle of the election one of the worst errors of heathenism. For they made God to be a national God, the God of the Jew alone and not the God of universal man, their own special Deity and no more. The possession of His truth was considered the unalienable right and sole prerogative of the seed of Abraham, so that any extension of God's saving mercy to other nations appeared to the mind of the Jew a kind of injury and robbery towards himself. They thus degraded their very calling, and took from the head of their own God the crown of His universal sovereignty.

The same fatal error was adopted in regard to the Mosaic law, and the whole body of the Sacred Scriptures committed to their charge; they accepted one part of the truth, and rejected the other. They jealously guarded the deposit placed in their hands, but, as regards their own use of it, they rested on the outward letter, and denied its spirit. Hence originated the rigid formalism of the Jew, and the combination of the excessive reverence for the law, with the most reckless disregard of its spiritual precepts. The error was not in what they kept, but in what they failed to keep. The characteristic sin of Judaism, as the system now became, was denounced in the solemn words of our blessed Master, "Ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ought ye to have

done, and not to leave the other undone." (Luke, xi. 42.) From this exclusive adherence to the letter, and rejection of the spirit, Talmudism naturally and consistently took its rise; for the moral and spiritual lessons being forgotten, the ritual observance became all in all; and as the altered circumstances of the nation, during its dispersion, required that general principles should be modified into accordance with existing circumstances, room was left for the introduction of an oral tradition, and the indefinite accumulation of rule upon rule, comment upon comment. A new order of teachers sprang up to meet the supposed necessity. During the captivity the Mosaic provision for the maintenance of the Levitical priesthood became inapplicable; the offices of priest and instructor came to be separated, and the authority of the sons of Levi passed into the hands of the Rabbi. The outward formalism of the Jew was the evil root from which the whole system logically sprang.

It has been supposed by some persons that the hatred of idolatry characterising the Jew and the system of Rabbinism sprang together out of the institution of the synagogue. The result of such an explanation would be to palliate the idolatrous tendencies of the period of the kingdom by the supposed absence of the corrective influences exercised by the synagogue of later days; for it would imply that insufficient provision was made in the Mosaic law for the religious wants of men. But whatever may be the case as regards the word

“synagogue,” and the exact order of the synagogic services of later times, it is certain that some institution of the kind, and corresponding to its religious objects, existed among the ancient Hebrews from the first. It is notorious that Jewish writers themselves assert the existence of the synagogue from the remotest periods of national existence;* and if we mean by the word some form and place of public worship, the truth of their assertions cannot well be doubted. It is not conceivable that common worship did not exist, even in the households of the patriarchs, and if it did, some arrangement of place and manner were necessary. The idea that there were no acts of religious worship to be done in their cities, throughout the length and breadth of Palestine, is absurdly irreconcilable, both with the spirit and with the actual provisions of the law; for the members of the priestly tribe were settled in forty-eight cities, and thus divided among the tribes of Israel, and it was a part of their specified duty to read the law and instruct the people. That no acts of religious worship were conducted by them in their cities, and especially on the Sabbath-days, would be an incredible supposition. The limitation of religious service to the place which the Lord their God should choose to place His name there, had

* Targum of Onkelos on Genesis, xxv. 27, paraphrases the expression, “dwelling in tents,” by “a minister of the house of instruction.” See also the Targum of Jonathan on Judges, v. 9, and Isaiah, i. 13.

reference to the formal sacrifices and the great feasts alone, and is perfectly consistent with an established system of public worship throughout the length and breadth of Israel. But where public worship existed, there, in all its moral purposes, the synagogue existed. Whether, therefore, the Jewish Targums are right or not in their interpretation of the specific passages quoted by them in confirmation of their statement, the statement itself,—that a system of religious worship, analogous to the synagogue of later times, existed from the earliest epoch among their tribes,—deserves the most implicit acceptance.

Hence it follows that the idolatrous tendencies of early Jewish history cannot be palliated by any supposed absence of religious ordinances and instruction, for they were enjoyed by them from the first; and if they fell too frequently into neglect, as the Divine records intimate to have been the case (2 Chron. xvii. 8, 9), the fault was in the people, and not in their institutions. The greater care and regularity exhibited in maintaining the worship of the synagogue during and after the captivity, is itself worthy of all praise, for it would be difficult to over-estimate the capabilities for good possessed by such an institution; but there is no ground whatever for supposing any legitimate connexion to exist between it and the complicated Rabbinical system of which it became the centre. For the idolatry of ancient times, and the godless formalism of later days, the corrupt

tendencies of human nature are equally and solely responsible.

But the error committed by the Jew, in regard to his national election and the Scriptures constituting its title-deeds, was extended likewise to the promises conferred by it. Each stage of error grew naturally out of the preceding. The supposition that their national election was rigidly exclusive and personal to themselves, and involved no further obligations, led consistently to an exaggerated estimate of the advantage of being the mere possessors of God's truth, independently of the question whether they kept it or not; and thus prepared the way for the prominence given to the outward letter over the inward spirit and meaning of it. The system of ritualistic formalism thus produced, sufficed to give the same carnal and superficial interpretation to the promises as it gave to the enactments of the law. The Jew was right in considering the Divine promises to be as immutable as the God who gave them; and it was not possible that confidence in the certainty of the Divine word should, in itself, be pushed into excess. Such a confidence was exhibited by the father of the faithful in regard to his son Isaac, and is recorded by the Spirit of God with the highest approbation. But the evil was that this confidence was directed to one aspect of the promises alone, namely, to their temporal side, to the exclusion of their inward and spiritual meaning. It was impossible to read their law without

noticing the grand condition of national power and prosperity depicted in it; but they failed to perceive that the promise was conditional on obedience, that is, on spiritual graces—faith, hope, and love—exercised towards God. The order of the promise, under the Old Covenant, was identically the same as it is under the New: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Equally impossible was it for them to peruse the predictions of the later prophets without perceiving the glorious pictures presented in them of Messiah’s kingdom, and of the universal empire He is to exercise over a redeemed and believing world.

But they failed to perceive two things. They did not notice, in the first place, the purely spiritual work on men’s souls ever associated with the kingdom of the Messiah in the books of the prophets—the free forgiveness of sins, the work of regenerating grace upon the heart and conscience, and the reconciliation of a fallen world to the God from whom it has wandered. Secondly, they failed to perceive that the descriptions of the Messiah’s kingdom did not stand alone, but were intermingled with touching pictures of the Messiah’s humiliation and sufferings, drawn with such graphic intensity as to place the very portraiture of the stricken Lamb of God before the soul. These two fatal omissions coloured their whole conceptions of the promises. Hope was fixed in the external side of them alone, and was fed on

the expectation of an imperial glory, such as had marked the reigns of David and Solomon. The national imagination was fired with this idea, but with this only. The promises were brought down to the same level as their carnal conceptions of their national election and their peculiar law. They looked for nothing further or loftier. Their minds caught the character of their hope, and became incapable of any purer ambition. When the Gospel came in the person of a poor and suffering Messiah, and its glorious promises were presented to them in all their spiritual grandeur, they turned away from it offended. It contradicted all their proud notions of external empire and exclusive supremacy. The Son of God came taking the manhood into union with his Deity, and presenting in His indivisible person the sinless sympathies of the man blended with all the perfect attributes of the God; but to their eyes "He had no form nor comeliness," and when "they saw Him there was no beauty that they should desire Him."

Thus we see that two distinct series of characteristics entered into the Jew of later times, and that the one series was of God, the other of man. The two lay indeed in very close apposition with each other, but they are not only such that we can distinguish between them, but that we can conceive the first to have existed separately from the second. There is no reason either in the order of God's revealed counsels or the

mode of His dealing with human nature why they should have been combined. The firm confidence in his national election was of God, but the narrow and bigoted exclusiveness which appropriated the whole circle of Divine mercy to himself alone was of man. The distinguishing peculiarities the Mosaic law was calculated to stamp on the national character were of God; but the rigid formalism which kept only the outward letter of the law and neglected its spiritual lessons, was of man. The inheritance of the Divine promises, centering upon the Jew more conspicuously than on any beside, was of God; but the carnal tendency to concentrate hope solely on what was bodily, outward, and temporal, to the neglect of what was spiritual, inward, and heavenly, was of man. The first series of qualities entered into the Divine plan and was stamped upon the Jew by a heavenly wisdom ruling over him even against his will; the second series were earthly and earth-born, human corruptions clinging, like fatal parasites, to the immutable pillars of Divine truth.

Now, placing the two series of qualities in contrast to each other, it is important to note that the latter added nothing whatever towards the accomplishment of God's purposes, nor contributed a single element of strength or stability to the national character. The human only detracted from the effect of the Divine, and produced in the contact of the Jew with the Gentile world occasions of jealousy and strife, of suffering and

disaster, which would otherwise have been absent. Had the former stood alone, blended as God intended them to be with a sense of responsibility, a spiritual perception of the law, and a heavenly affection towards its promises, not only would the work actually accomplished by the Jew in the order of the Divine plan have been equally done, but it would have been done far more perfectly. Then might the ages which are past have already realised the glory still remaining to be revealed in the future. The chosen race gathered in faith and love round the chosen Messiah, rich with His blessing and crowned with His presence, had been a seed of life to the whole world. The glowing predictions of the prophets had received an earlier accomplishment, and believing Israel had already been "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand" of her God.

But the event has been far otherwise, and we are taught to look into the future for the time when the reconciling of the ancient people of God shall be as life from the dead. But meanwhile the Divine plan has had its fulfilment. The human corruptions, however much they might darken, could not deface the stamp of God upon His chosen people, nor destroy its effect. With all its perversions the type of the Jew has been still great and noble. Its very intensity has been singularly heroic. The language of the Pentateuch implies a more than ordinary amount of

vigour and tenacity in the constitutional character of the Hebrew. It was, therefore, the better calculated to retain an impression once firmly made. The consciousness of a special relation towards God and a peculiar call above all other peoples in the whole world, deepened as it has been by all the events of their grand but chequered history, was adapted in the highest degree to produce an abiding impress even upon a less resolute nature than that of the ancient Jew. The stern discipline of affliction, that necessary school of the higher and nobler qualities, exercised its influence in the same direction. Thus, the Jew hardened into the Mosaic mould, an instrument so justly and finely tempered that it was never brought into contact with the more pliable material of the Gentile world, without leaving behind, more or less permanently, the impression of its own characteristics.

Here, therefore, we find the answer to the question, By what means would God secure over the Hebrew race so permanent an influence for the Mosaic law, as to frame the nation into an abiding witness for Himself? In the Jew of the period after the captivity we see the work already done. But then comes the second question, How shall this typical nation be now brought into contact with the world at large, so generally as to extend among the Gentiles those grand truths of God which had been the formative principles of its own national life? how secure for them

such a wide-spread publicity as should prepare the heart, and intellect, and conscience of human kind for the completed Gospel of the Redeemer? The answer is not less clear to this question than to the former. The facts supplying it are, for the most part, very familiar, but their significance can only be recognised when they are viewed as a whole and put together as the parts of one plan. I shall recapitulate them as briefly as possible and point out their meaning.

It must be remembered that the isolation by which it was God's will to separate the Jewish nation from all other peoples was, in every point of view, essentially religious. The knowledge and worship of the one true God, with the spiritual lessons and the lofty morality incorporated with it, constituted its central and most prominent element. The visible presence of God among them, and the miraculous interpositions, marking both their internal government and their external relations to other peoples, threw this element into peculiar prominence. It was not, therefore, a latent creed, the private opinion of individuals as it has become the habit of modern thought to consider religion to be, but it was the active, all-pervading principle of national life, and the whole Hebrew system was the public embodiment and the perpetual witness of it. Israel and the God of Israel were everywhere identified. The detailed enactments of the law bearing on the private life of the individual were but instruments of protect-

ing and conserving this grand truth. These entered into such minute particulars, and were at the same time so closely united to the graver matters of the law by the Divine authority which was the common sanction of them all, that they rendered close social intercourse between a devout Jew and a heathen idolater impossible. The distinction between the circumcision and the uncircumcision extended into every relation. Intermarriages were strictly forbidden, and social intercourse could only be maintained by violating conscience. Thus the Jew necessarily carried his national peculiarities everywhere, and never could divest himself of them. Wherever he might be, he was recognised by others, and in his proud sense of national election was ever consciously to himself—the Jew, a member of the nation that dwelt alone.

Yet this isolation must not for a moment be confounded with a sullen separation, as if the Hebrew race rejected all contact with the other nations of the world. There was in it nothing approaching even distantly to the exclusiveness which shuts itself out from the rest of mankind; such, for instance, as was, till the last few years, the case in China, and such as is still the case in Japan. In these cases it is a barbarian instinct of self-preservation, unwillingly conscious of its own inferiority, and maintaining its own self-respect by refusing all intercourse with people more enterprising and civilised than itself. The sentiment of the Jew arose on the contrary from a conscious-

ness of superiority, driven inward upon itself, and growing more intense as amid the outward calamities of his race, it fed upon its own thoughts. It rather found expression in a resolute and self-contained confidence than in a shy reserve. To say that the Jew was brought into contact with foreign peoples as freely as other nations would be a very inadequate statement of the case. He was brought into contact with them to a degree unparalleled in any other nation under heaven. His perpetuity of life tended to produce this effect, as he stood among the other nations who successively have lived, flourished, and decayed, himself changeless as a rock amid the ever-flowing waves. But still further, if we compare any period of later Jewish history with a corresponding period of any contemporary nation we shall find his cosmopolite character to have been greater beyond comparison. The nation that dwelt alone was at the same time the nation scattered throughout all lands. In short, down the whole history the Providential circumstances which brought them into connexion with all the centres of human civilisation, and all the imperial peoples of the world, are very remarkable.

The process began in ancient Egypt. It is true that the Hebrew nation at large was not constituted into its distinctive form at that period, and that the people, sharply defined from without, were not yet stamped within themselves by the characteristics of their later history; but, nevertheless, the worship of the true God was among them,

and was maintained throughout, spite of the fall of some of them into the practices of the Egyptian idolatry. The official position of Joseph must have given prominence to this creed in the first place, and have afforded the opportunity of stamping the impression of his own mind on the institutions of the people he governed.* At a subsequent period the interference of the God of Abraham on behalf of His oppressed people, and the mighty signs and wonders with which He brought them out with a high hand, resolved itself to the dwellers on the Nile into a conflict between their own indigenous gods and the one mighty God of the Hebrews. "This is the finger of God" was the confession of the magicians suffering under the plague of lice. The whole series of those transactions was like the lifting up of Jehovah's voice in the proclamation of His glory.

The intercourse subsisting at that time between Egypt and other nations must have extended this witness far and wide. "There is a people come out of Egypt" was the message of Balak (Num. xxii. 5). "God brought them out of Egypt," the words of Balaam (Num. xxiii. 22). "We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when ye came out of Egypt" (Josh. ii. 10) was the statement of Rahab to the spies. "These are the gods that smote the Egyptians" (1 Sam. iv. 8), was the acknowledgment of the Philistines when

* Wine's *Commentaries*, p. 137; Marsden's *Influence of the Mosaic Code*, 59.

in the days of Eli the ark was brought into the battle-field of Aphek. The wonders of the sojourn and the conquest of Canaan must only have deepened the impression; and merchants, as they travelled far and wide, must have taken with them the outlines of the story, and in every avenue of communication between man and man have spread some knowledge of the wondrous history of this mysterious people.

When the nation was finally consolidated by the conquests of David and the imperial glory of Solomon, the actual intercourse of the living men was added to the rumour of them which had made men's ears tingle. Both of these monarchs cultivated a close alliance with the Phœnician merchants, whose ships explored every sea, and penetrated as we know, from the undeniable testimony of Phœnician remains, even to these islands of the West. Of David we are told that "the fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon the nations" (1 Chron. xiv.17). The visit of the queen of Sheba to Solomon—the queen of the South as our Lord calls her—shows how the knowledge of the Hebrew glory had penetrated all the coasts of Arabia. Her visit was but an illustration of the celebrity of this great monarch, for "all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon" (1 Kings, iv. 34, x. 24; 2 Chron. ix. 23). The commercial enterprises inaugurated during this period added a new element to this influence. Not only did the merchants of Africa,

and Arabia, and Persia, and India, carry on their trade through the ports in the Red Sea, which the conquests of David added to the Hebrew empire, but the Jews in turn penetrated into these parts. The seamen of Solomon were united with the seamen of Hiram in manning the ships sailing from Elath and Ezion Geber; and doubtless officers of higher rank were employed to overlook and manage the vast commerce gradually centred in Judea. The number of strangers settled in Israel at this period amounted to a hundred and fifty-three thousand; and of these so large a proportion consisted of skilled and intelligent persons, that Solomon made three thousand six hundred overseers of his works (2 Chron. ii. 17). The Israelite has begun at this time to assume the indelible distinctive type characteristic of him ever since, and wherever he went must have carried with him his perpetual witness of the true Jehovah.

During the epoch of the kingdom political alliances brought the empire into still greater prominence. During the wars of this dark period we hear of confederacies between Israel and Egypt, with Syria and with Assyria, during which the cosmopolite character of Jewish enterprise naturally led many to settle in these centres of wealth and civilization. The final destruction of the kingdom of Samaria, by the Assyrians under Salmaneser, must, so to speak, have sown the seed of Israel broadcast throughout the East. The people

were carried away bodily out of their land, and settled in Assyria—Halah and Habor, and the cities of the Medes. It cannot be doubted that, deeply corrupted as the ten tribes had become, they yet carried with them into their captivity the Scriptures of their forefathers, and such a measure of religious knowledge as, perverted though it was, must have been positive light compared to the deep unbroken midnight of Gentile superstition. We know, moreover, that in all periods God has preserved a faithful seed to Himself, wherever His revealed truth has been known. It was of Israel, not of Judah, that God has asserted the existence of this remnant, according to the election of grace. In the darkest times of Israelitish apostasy, when, to his own eye, the prophet Elijah appeared to stand alone in his worship—“I only am left”—God had yet reserved seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Hence the dispersion of the ten tribes must have distributed men of God everywhere, and have resulted in the extended knowledge of Jehovah throughout the East. Nor can it be supposed, if the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch possesses the antiquity claimed for it, that the ten tribes did not take it with them in their dispersion, and thus disseminate, more or less perfectly, the knowledge of the one true God.*

* The antiquity of the Samaritan Pentateuch is elaborately vindicated by Kennicott on *The Hebrew Text of the Old Testament*, v. ii. p. 70.

The case of the two tribes was much more remarkable. To the Assyrian empire they were known by the miraculous destruction inflicted on the armies of Sennacherib when he marched against Jerusalem. The facts are recorded by Herodotus, in that perverted form into which it was natural that Assyrian superstition would throw them.* About the same period the attention of the Babylonians was attracted to Judea, and the pride of Hezekiah in his riches and prosperity prepared the way for their subsequent invasion and subjugation of the land. Then the captivity was accomplished by degrees, and there are two separate dates from which it may be calculated. But on each occasion great portions of the population were carried away into Babylonia. On the first occasion seven thousand soldiers were among the captives taken in Jerusalem alone. (2 Kings, xxix. 14.) A considerable portion sought refuge in Egypt, only to suffer captivity in that land. The remainder who escaped the sword finally shared the fate of their countrymen in the seventy-years' captivity. The language of the sacred narrative implies a total removal of the population: "Judah was carried away out of their land" (2 Kings, xxv. 21); "the land lay desolate to keep her Sabbaths." (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.) Josephus gives the same account: "The king of Babylon, who brought out the two tribes, placed no other nation in their country.

* Prideaux' *Connection*, vol. i. p. 21, ed. 1858; Rawlinson's *Bampton Lectures*, l. iv. p. 143.

By which means all Judea, and Jerusalem, and the Temple, continued to be a desert for seventy years."* No estimate of the total population carried away into Babylon is given; but some notion of their numbers may be gathered from the fact, that the army of Jehoshaphat consisted of upwards of a million of men. During the three hundred and sixteen years which, according to the computation of Hales, separated the times of Jehoshaphat from the times of the captivity, a considerable diminution of the population probably took place. But, after making the largest allowances on this account, a vast number must have been carried away, to be computed, including all ages sexes and ranks, not by thousands, but by hundreds of thousands. The Scriptural account by no means involves that so vast a migration was accomplished in one single act. The deportation may have been by successive portions, and its details may have extended over years. All questions, as to the possibility of so great a movement, are set at rest by undoubted facts in history; for instance, when the Gothic tribes invaded the Roman Empire, they came in such numbers as to leave their own regions comparatively depopulated. They moved with their families and their flocks, and constituted vast moving colonies, rather than armies in the ordinary sense of the word.†

In thus removing the people of the conquered

* Joseph. *Antiquities*, b. ix. s. 7.

† Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, cap. x.

land into new settlements in the East, the kings of Assyria and Babylon adopted a familiar policy, directed to obliterate national distinctions, and fuse the captives among the general body of their conquerors. Concerning the effect produced upon the ten tribes we have no certain information; but, as regarded the two, the policy utterly failed, and in its very failure carried out the fulfilment of the Divine plan. Instead of destroying the nation the captivity only compacted it into firmer bonds; instead of neutralising Jewish influence, it only served to give it a wider extension. In the darkness of the dispersion the Jew witnessed, for God at least as prominently before the eyes of the Gentiles, as he had done in the palmiest days of his own national glory. From that day till now God's mysterious providence has ever thrown the Jew into the foreground.

The series of four great empires depicted in the vision of the prophet Daniel suggests the natural order in which the events may best be viewed. First came the Babylonian empire, itself the appointed instrument in the Lord's hand to scourge His people, and filling a place in the Divine revelation correspondent to the place it filled in the order of the Divine plan. Here, under her greatest monarch, at this heart of the whole empire, the Jew became conspicuous in the person of princely Daniel. As if his mere elevation to be "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men," and to share

his authority with his three illustrious compatriots, were not sufficient to force attention to them, the providence of God made him yet more illustrious. The deliverance wrought for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, upon the plain of Dura and at the solemn gathering of all the dignitaries of the empire, and the interpretation which Daniel was enabled to give to Nebuchadnezzar's two dreams, called the monarch's personal attention, not only to the chosen race, but to the mighty God they served. Two formal proclamations, not confined to the province, but extended throughout the whole limits of the empire, addressed to every "people, nation, and language," declared the greatness and glory of the God of Daniel. As amid the blaze of the glory of Babylon, the "lady of nations," so amid the gloomy events of her fall—as amid the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar, so amid the blasphemous revelries of Belshazzar—the same witness was heard, the last act of the drunken tyrant being the proclamation of Daniel to be the third ruler in the kingdom. The Persian was indeed already within the walls, and the effect must therefore have been much less than was produced by the decrees of Nebuchadnezzar, which circulated throughout the limits of his dominion, extending over the whole valley of the Euphrates as far as the Taurus, and including Syria, Phœnicia, Palestine, Idumea, and a portion of Egypt. The elevation of Daniel and his companions under Nebuchadnezzar must be viewed in relation to the

vast number of Jewish settlers in the province of Babylonia. At a later date, after the fall of the Babylonian monarchy, the Jews are said actually to have taken the place of the native races in the country between the two rivers.* The Babylonian Jews claimed to be of purer blood than their brethren in Palestine—established seats of learning, became illustrious for their scientific attainments, and were governed, in secular matters, by a prince of the captivity. The completeness of the deportation, which transferred the two tribes into Babylonia, can alone account for their subsequent numbers and opulence.

But the Babylonian empire was succeeded by the Persian, only that upon a new stage the undying race should again become conspicuous, and a new voice from the Gentiles proclaim the unity and power of God. The position of authority attained by Daniel under the Babylonian monarchs was maintained under their Persian conquerors. The proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar was renewed with still greater emphasis by Darius the Mede, and throughout the length and breadth of the empire, among "all peoples, nations, and languages," were again affirmed the power and majesty of the true Jehovah. To suppose that no excitement was produced by these transactions, and no attention awakened to the truth thus formally reiterated by Gentile lips, would be

* Philo-Judæus *On the Virtues and Office of Ambassadors*, s. xxxi.

contrary to the principles of human nature ; to suppose that no consciences were really enlightened by it, and no soul saved, would be contrary to the methods of grace. Then came forward the illustrious man, predicted by Isaiah a hundred and fifty years before, at a time when the empire he ruled had no existence, and the peoples composing it were weak and obscure. Is not the working of God's Spirit to be seen in the act of Cyrus, when under the suggestion of Daniel (Dan. ix. 3), he issued his decree for the rebuilding of the Temple of God at Jerusalem, circulating it "throughout his kingdom," and addressing it to all the dispersed of Israel?* The forty-two thousand who accepted it included mem-

* " It appears from several places in the New Testament that some of all the tribes were still in being among the Jews, even to the time of their last dispersion on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, though then all were comprehended under the name of Jews, which, after the Babylonian captivity, became the general name of the whole nation, as that of Israelites was before. And this being premised, it solves the difficulty which ariseth from the difference that is between the general number and the particulars of those that returned upon Cyrus's decree. For the general number, both in Ezra and Nehemiah, is said to be forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, but the particulars, as reckoned up in their several families in Ezra, amount only to twenty-nine thousand eight hundred and eighteen, and in Nehemiah to thirty-one thousand and thirty-one ; the meaning of which is, they are only the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi that are reckoned by their families in both these places, the rest being of the other tribes of Israel."—PRIDEAUX' *Connection*, vol. i. p. 115.

bers of the ten tribes as well as of the two, and bore a very insignificant proportion to the vast population remaining behind in the land of their captivity. The very difficulties which beset the work of this feeble remnant in the rebuilding of the Temple and city, only served to attract wider observation to the Jew, and to the facts of his marvellous history. The attention of Cambyses and Smerdis (the Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes of the Scripture), names which recall to the student the wonderful corroborations furnished by modern inquiry to the inspired narratives of Ezra and Nehemiah, was thus called to the Jews and to their history. Darius the Persian renewed the proclamation of Cyrus in language not less emphatic and remarkable. During the reign of Xerxes, the story of Esther and Mordecai illustrates the same truth. The two proclamations circulated throughout the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire; the conflict between the Jew and his enemies, issuing in the triumph of the Jew, and the permanent elevation of Mordecai at the court of Susa, are facts attesting at once the wide dispersion of the Jews, their numbers, strength, and opulence, and the chronic antagonism existing between them and the idolatrous peoples among whom they lived. When we are told that the fear of the Jew fell upon the people, and that the fame of Mordecai himself went throughout all the provinces, is it conceivable

that the God of the Jew should have remained unknown?

But the Persian empire, exhausted by its own internal corruption, passed away, and the Grecian took its place. The history of the Macedonian empire falls wholly within the interval between the prophecy of Malachi and the times of St. Matthew, and neither at its beginning or its end touches the line of the inspired Scriptures. We consequently possess less detailed information relative to the Jew during this period than during any other. Yet there is no abrupt interruption to our knowledge of the facts. The romantic story of Alexander's march upon Jerusalem is substantially true, whatever may be thought of some of the particulars of the narrative of Josephus. His first indignation against the Jews; his sudden change of feeling towards them; the effect produced upon his mind by the inspired predictions of Daniel, alleged to have been shown him by Jaddua the high-priest, and the subsequent favours bestowed by him upon the Jews, are all closely in harmony with what we know from other sources of the character of this great but vain-glorious conqueror.

Amid the convulsions incident on the dissolution of the Macedonian empire, after the death of Alexander, the possession of Palestine became a question of considerable strategical importance. The Syrian empire, established at the gates of

Palestine, was really Grecian in all its habits and civilisation, and familiarity with the history and peculiar character of the Jews was a lesson taught not alone by local contiguity, but by hard-bought experience. The religious persecution of the Jews in the time of Antiochus, and the heroic war of independence waged under the leadership of the Maccabees, supply one of the most stirring and touching passages of human history. But the contact of the Jewish mind with Grecian intellect and learning was wider and more abiding than the conflict of arms. It was with intellectual weapons that Greece really conquered the world, and it was not likely that the peculiarities of the Mosaic legislation would escape the notice of her restless and inquiring genius. In spite of many efforts made to throw discredit on the account given by the ancients themselves of the acquaintance of the Greek philosophers with Jewish science and learning, the general facts of their acquaintance with the Hebrew Scriptures, and of the strong influence exercised by them on their own systems of thought, still remain stubbornly incapable of disproof. In the schools of Alexandria, at all events, the Jew and the Greek met each other face to face, and acted and reacted on each other. If the Greek mysticism is to be traced in Philo,* the grand Scriptures of his forefathers, to which Philo amid all his speculations ever gave a prominent place, did

* Ritter's *History of Philosophy*, vol. iii. pp. 409, 436.

not fail in their turn to influence materially the later forms of Greek philosophy. In all parts of the world the Hebrew dispersion stood side by side with the Grecian civilisation, and the mental activity characteristic of them both made it impossible that mutual existence should continue without mutual influence. The very extent to which, in the times of the Herods, the higher classes of the Jews had become infected with Grecian profligacy of manners, indicates the amount of contact between the two systems, and their reciprocal relations towards each other. If Grecian manners gained a foothold among the Jews, Jewish proselytism could equally exhibit all the world over its triumphs among the Greeks.

But into the shattered fragments of empires, with which the world was filled after the death of Alexander, the all-conquering Roman soon introduced his own iron unity. Here we touch the New Testament times, and step again into the light. In the composition of the Roman Empire the Jew entered largely from the first; for it must be remembered, that the four great kingdoms of the ancient world consisted rather of a re-arrangement of the same existing nationalities round new centres of power than the formation of new nationalities. Thus a large number of provinces were successively comprised within the dominions of the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman empires. The mistress of the West entered upon the possession of a

world already pervaded by the Jew from one end of it to the other. The attention of Rome herself was prominently called to the race in the days of Pompey, half a century before Christ; but they had already extended themselves through Italy in such great numbers,* that their annual contributions to the Temple of Jerusalem, calculated at a single drachma a man, were yet considered to drain Italy of gold, and were accordingly forbidden.† The turbulence of the Palestinian Jews, under the thralldom of their Roman masters; the accession of Vespasian to the imperial purple from the command in the East, and the popular predictions which partly at least prepared his way to the throne;‡ the dreadful war of the first Christian century, the conquest of Jerusalem under Titus, and the contact of that general with the descendants of Abraham; the final war, when Bar Cochab unfurled once more the flag of freedom, and blazed into a brief glory, only to be extinguished in a bloody defeat under the sword of a conquering Roman; and the vast hordes of Jews sold into slavery all over the empire, must have made the tale of Jewish desperation and Jewish suffering familiar to the world. Their influence coloured the fears, reacted

* "Rome was the nursery of the Jews, and thence they spread through the rest of Italy."—JAHN'S *Hebrew Commonwealth*, vol. ii. b. xi. s. 23.

† Cicero *pro Flacco*, s. 28.

‡ Taciti *Hist.* l. v. c. xiii.

upon the superstition, and moulded the hopes of mankind. The mystic verses of the Sybil did but re-echo the sublime predictions of the Hebrew prophets, and fixed upon the glowing imagination of the Italians the grand anticipations of a time of universal happiness and peace.* The deep effect produced upon the Roman mind is evidenced in the strange mixture of fear and awe, of detestation and wonder, of curiosity and admiration, entertained by it towards the Jew. Roman emperors stretched out the hand of persecution. Roman writers heaped upon the outcast strangers vehement expressions of contemptuous hatred.† And yet, at the same time, the influence of the Jewish doctrines and habits acquired amazing force in Italy, moulded legislation, found expression in literature, became almost a passion, and claimed its circle of active votaries in the palaces and court of Rome.‡

* Virgil, *Ecl.* iv.

† Tacit. *Hist.* l. v. l. 5. ; Juvenal, s. iii. 6 ; Martial, l. i. ep. 42, lxx. ep. 46.

‡ “The mysteriousness of their belief, or rather, perhaps, the earnestness of its devotees, exercised an extraordinary influence on the Roman mind. Amidst many public expressions of hatred and disgust, knights and senators still turned towards it with curiosity, interest, and awe In Palestine, rude centurions lowered their ensigns before its symbols, or built synagogues for its worship. In Rome, the name of its first expounder was held in honour, its sacred books were not unknown. The glowing imagery of their sacred poetry was studied and reproduced. Men and women—the latter doubtless

But while the possession of imperial power was passing from hand to hand, the restless spirit of the Jew was carrying him and his religion into every land under heaven. In Egypt they became opulent and powerful in an extraordinary degree. The first severity of Ptolemy, after his capture of Jerusalem and deportation of a hundred thousand Jews, was changed for the most public marks of favour and confidence. The Jews grew so strong as to constitute one-third of the population of Alexandria, while throughout all Egypt they were calculated at a million of souls. Throughout Syria, as was natural from its contiguity to Palestine, the Jews extended so largely, that some of the rural districts, and most of the larger cities, were principally occupied by them. In Antioch, they claimed special privileges, and were the objects of special hatred. At Damascus a large number of the inhabitants, and almost all the female population, embraced Judaism. The royal family of Adiabene, a province in Assyria, were proselytes. A Jewish prince settled in Armenia, and his descendants filled an important place in its history. The line of Georgian kings, the Bagradims, sprang from a Jewish stock. The throne of Parthia was supported

the most numerously—observed its holy days, and respected its antique traditions.”—MERIVALE’S *History of the Romans*, vol. vi. c. 54, p. 258. JAHN’S *Hebrew Commonwealth*, vol. ii. p. xi. s. 8.

by Jewish hands. Judaism became dominant in Arabia, in the royal line of the Homerites. In Salamis they constituted a large proportion of the population, and finally took possession of the whole city as the centre for the organisation of a great national revolt. Throughout the whole of Asia Minor they became numerous and influential, spreading over Pamphylia, Galatia, and Mysia. They passed into Greece Proper, and extended over the whole of the Peloponnesus; in short, they spread themselves over every country "from the Tiber to the Euphrates, from the pines of Caucasus to the spice groves of Arabia." The bloody conflicts and frightful massacre which reddened with Jewish blood the streets of Antioch and Alexandria, of Cyprus and Damascus, attest in characters terribly conspicuous their numbers and their prominence, the strange tenacity of their own national life, and the inveterate hatred of their enemies.

The inspired narrative of the Acts of the Apostles places, as it were, the seal of God Himself upon these facts, and by explaining their significant bearing on the early progress of the Gospel, appropriates them as integral parts of the Divine plan. Wherever the Apostles went, they found the heart and conscience of mankind prepared for their teaching. The change did not, indeed, prevent the resolute opposition ever exhibited by fallen human nature towards the pure and lofty doctrines of Christianity, but it acted so far as to awaken in every spot of the earth some

consciences to receive the blessed tidings of a Saviour, and seek peace beneath His cross. But even here secular history still supplies its corroborative testimony. That the Gentile mind was vividly excited and interested in the phenomena of Jewish life and Jewish belief, is acknowledged alike by friend and foe.* I have already referred to the influence of the Jewish Scriptures upon Greek thought. Any disposition to treat the assertion of this influence with contempt is rebuked by the indubitable traces of Hebrew influence upon the legislation of mankind. Great efforts have been made to reverse the true order of the facts, as in the case of ancient Egypt, where the Hebrew has been described as owing everything to the Egyptian, instead of the Egyptian being indebted to the Hebrew. The Spirit of God, in the sacred narrative, places the matter in the opposite light, asserting that Joseph in Egypt "taught her senators wisdom." (Ps. cv. 22.) The facts, when stated together, shut up the inquirer into this conclusion, apart from the inspired declaration of the fact. If we confine examination solely to the contact of the Hebrew people with ancient Egypt, the question is an open one; because, during the sojourn, the Hebrew people were still unconsolidated, and had not received their permanent national constitution. But when we extend the inquiry to the laws of the Chaldeans, the Phœnicians, the Greeks,

* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, c. xv.

and the Romans, and find that in every case, without exception, Hebrew characteristics may be discovered in their legislation, the question is no longer an open one, for one conclusion only is rendered possible by the facts. The Hebrew law is the original type, and the other legislations, more or less, were moulded by its influence. The line of resemblance is manifest; the Hebrew legislation acted on that of Egypt, Chaldea, and Phœnicia; these acted upon Greece, Greece on Rome, and from Rome the type has, more or less, completely extended to the legislation of the world.* That this result was contemplated by the Divine wisdom from the first, we are positively taught in the words of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple: "Concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel." (1 Kings, viii. 41, 43.)

It was thus the astonishing destiny of the

* Ryan's *Effects of Religion on Mankind*, vol. ii. p. 40; Wine's *Commentaries*, ch. vii.; Dollinger's *The Gentile and the Jew*, vol. ii. p. 397; Marsden's *Influence of the Mosaic Code*. The influence of the Mosaic writings on the Gentile world is supported by the authority of Josephus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Augustine, and many other of the Fathers; Maimonides, Selden, Gale, Stillingfleet, Bochart, Vossius, the Scaligers, Grotius, Witsius, Sir Matthew Hale, Archbishop Potter, &c.

Jew to retain in his dispersion his sullen and almost disdainful isolation from all other peoples,* and yet to be brought into contact with all peoples to a degree totally unparalleled in history. While the remnant of the captivity were struggling for existence in Palestine, the scattered members of the race not only retained their vitality unimpaired, but almost entered upon the possession of the world.† This extraordinary fortune has extended during the whole Christian era, but it is enough for my present purpose to confine our attention to the ages preceding Constantine the Great.

If the Jew has been on one side the most separate and isolated of nations, he has been on the other the most universal and cosmopolite of them all. He has been prominent, not only during one epoch of the world's history, but during each and all of them. He has been forced into connexion, not with one governing empire, but without an exception with every one successively which has swayed the destinies of the world. His voice has been heard in every language under heaven; his feet have trodden every land; his enterprise and wealth have been felt in every mart. In every branch of human thought his genius has influenced mankind. In poetry, morals, philo-

* "Quia apud ipsos fides obstinata, misericordia in promptu sed adversus alios hostile odium, separati epulis, discreti cubilibus," &c.—TACIT. *Hist.* l. v. c. 13.

† Philo adv. Flaccum, s. vii; Merivale's *History of the Romans*, vol. iii. p. 366.

sophy, politics, and the inventive arts, he has been equally illustrious. He had established in the days of our Lord an intercommunication over the world, and a monetary system only known to the Gentiles as a growth of later times. In short, God intertwined the threads of Jewish life into the whole structure of the world's history, and has given him an influence of which no other example can be found.

When we come to compare these facts with the details of the Divine plan, stated in an early Lecture of this series, it is impossible not to recognise the definite and intelligible design conspicuously stamped upon them. The break of 400 years intervening between the close of the Old-Testament Canon, and the beginning of the New, from the times of Malachi to the times of St. Matthew, here receives its explanation. So far from interrupting the unity of design of the two dispensations, and of the inspired records which contain them, it will now be seen to suggest the necessary and essential link between them.

I. As regards the outward life of the Jew, his national fortunes and his relation to the other nations of the world, a revelation ceased to be necessary. For we have now passed from periods hidden from us by their remote antiquity, and by the fact that all the known nations of the world are recent and modern in comparison with them, into the period of exact and credible history. Not only have the fortunes of the chosen race emerged

from what secular inquiry regards as the pre-historic period, but they have emerged likewise from the comparative vagueness hanging over the earlier events, even of the historic period, into times when the records of the past became the object of human inquiry, and the work of the historian took its place among the other branches of human literature. Among these works the apocryphal books have their place ; some of them supplying from the stand-point of the later Jew events in their national history, and others furnishing an illustration of the moral and religious condition of Judaism at that date. The works of Philo and Josephus supply information relative to a still later period. But we are not dependent even upon these records. From the period of Alexander the great events of the world's history are beyond dispute, and are of universal acceptance. The line of authentic secular history begins with Herodotus, in whom it synchronises with the cessation of inspired history in Malachi, and is continued by Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Dionysius, Diodorus Siculus, Arrian, Plutarch, Sallust, Cæsar, Livy, Suetonius, and Tacitus. We are able therefore, sufficiently for all purposes, to trace the crucial events of the world and their effects upon the fortunes of the Jew, without the intervention of a revelation. Where the profane historians do not touch this special line of historical existence, they yet confirm the credibility of those who record it; as, for instance, in the collateral

evidence they supply to the credibility of Josephus. Amid this light the national existence of the Jew may be traced, not with fulness enough to satisfy curiosity, but with certainty enough to supply the links between the Old and New Testament histories. An inspired revelation became unnecessary for this purpose, and therefore ceased to be given.

II. As regards the relation of the Jew towards God, and those providential dealings which made him the outward instrument of human salvation, a continued revelation beyond the times of Malachi became equally unnecessary, though for a totally different reason. It was because those special providential interpositions, whereby God dealt with His people, ceased at this period. I do not mean that the exact providence connected with God's moral government over the world, and the regulation of all events according to the pleasure of His own will, fell into abeyance; but I mean that God's dealings relative to the preparation of the national character, and the production of the distinctive peculiarities belonging to it, came to a close. For instance, no such series of events as are recorded by the book of Judges, all directed to the correction of the Hebrew apostasy and the internal consolidation of the Hebrew people, took place during this period. The occasion of these had ceased, because the work had been accomplished. The isolation was already complete as regarded God's predetermined preservation of the

race. Had it gone further it would have exceeded God's purpose, and have pushed isolation into seclusion. That enough was done is shown by the event. There is a contrast, too striking to be overlooked by the most careless student, between the nation before the captivity, ever striving to break through the mysterious circle into affinity with the nations outside, and the people after the captivity, retiring jealously within the circle, and feeding within it their national pride, even to a fault. The preservation of the type intact through all the revolutions of their wondrous history, even to our own day, proves that sufficient was done, and it entered into the perfection of the Divine plan that no more than sufficient should be done. The special national Providence which had dealt with them differently to all other nations slumbered for a while, and with the cessation of the interpositions the inspired history, prepared for the record of them, ceased likewise. The Jews came under the general Providence that deals with all men, and to the general Providential provisions of all ordinary history was the record of their national fortunes committed.

III. As special Providential interpositions ceased during this period, so special revelations of the Divine will ceased likewise. All that the Divine Wisdom saw to be necessary had already been communicated. The Scriptures, already given, were sufficient to make the "man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

The outlines of the offices and work of the Messiah were sufficiently revealed. The marks of identity, distinguishing His person—the race, the tribe, the family, the place of birth—were completed. And now a pause intervened, like the hush of expectation preceding the actual arrival of an expected monarch. All other hopes of any other Messiah than the one of whom the prophets had witnessed were to be excluded. Time was to be allowed for the eyes and hearts of mankind to dwell on the revelation before the person revealed actually came to fulfil it. The cessation of prophecy, for so long a period beforehand, would both intensify the dim yearnings of the human conscience, and sharply separate the dignity and glory of the Son of God from all possible comparison with the prophets who foretold His advent. The interval, moreover, served to show how impossible it was for any human effort to fulfil the grand ideal of the Redeemer of mankind contained in the writings of the prophets. Here was the declaration of God's will ; here the work to be done ; here the conditions of its accomplishment. The Divine plan paused, as if the world should see whether any but God could fulfil what God had designed. There was no want of will to attempt the task : false Christs and false prophets arose, both before and after the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, claiming to fulfil the prophetic promises, and to bring in just that carnal and outward deliverance for which Jewish

hearts longed, and which they were prepared to receive. They came and they passed; as unlike the true Messiah as the delusive meteors of the night are unlike the stately march of the day. In the midst of them, and when the human inadequacy had been already proved, the true Christ came, grandly unlike the false imitators who preceded Him and followed Him; wholly different from what the carnal Jewish imagination had pictured, yet fulfilling every prophetic prediction to the very letter; taking up the dropped links of the Divine plan just where they had ceased with Malachi;—proclaimed by prophecy, attested by sign, and wonder, and miracle, centring in His single person all beauty, all perfection,—human to die, yet divine to conquer; the Son of David, yet the Son of God.

IV. But this interval, thus interposed, was itself to be occupied with a definite work of preparation. It was during this period that the Jew, now fixed in his indelible characteristics, and with the ancient Scriptures in his hands, was to go forth through all the world, preparing the way for the Messiah. The captivity and dispersion were the appointed means to produce this effect. Had the chosen race accepted the alternative of mercy which Moses, and after him Joshua, so pathetically urged upon them, then the instruments employed, and the character of the dispersion produced, had doubtless been changed. Then, perchance, an imperial pre-eminence had spread

its rays of glory throughout the world. But they sinned, and, in their sin, selected judgment instead of mercy as their lot; and thus a calamitous overthrow, and a prolonged captivity, and a dispersion which has made them an astonishment and a reproach among all nations, became the means whereby a God of truth compelled them to fulfil their mission. God drove them into all lands, and in all lands made their plagues wonderful. He thus brought the great truth of His own existence, as the one living and true God, into contact with the universal human conscience.

To judge of the effect produced on the religious sentiments of mankind, it must be remembered that this revealed system of truth, impersonated in the living Jew, fell upon consciences in which a dim, vague sense of religious want still survived. The shocking sacrifices resorted to by heathenism, in every time of peculiar difficulty, witnessed to the existence in the human soul of the consciousness of sin and of the need of an atonement. At every period of the world there have been some souls of a loftier mould than others, who have longed for communion with the Unseen, and pined for some expiation to calm the uneasy conscience, and fill the void of an unsatisfied heart. Thus it was, that wherever the Apostles preached, they found men's souls already sick of their idolatry, and longing for the knowledge of the true God. Whatever different estimates different men may form of the extent of

moral and spiritual preparation thus made for the proclamation of Christ crucified, the universal expectation of the Messiah produced by its means is undeniable. Reference has already been made to its existence among the Romans. The journey of the Magi from the distant East to Jerusalem witnesses to the same belief among the Orientals. Herod the Great lived in constant dread of its fulfilment, and his anxiety to discover the child born at Bethlehem King of the Jews, and the agitation of all Jerusalem troubled at the inquiries of the wise men, receive from this circumstance alone their full explanation. That disturbances of the popular mind of an analogous character have from time to time taken place in different parts of the world, may be most fully admitted;—for what great movement of the human mind can take place without extending its own agitation over the whole ocean of human thought?—but for width of extent, depth of conviction, and intensity of feeling, the expectation of a Messiah, existing throughout the world at the time of our Lord, has never had a parallel either before or since.*

V. Another element was yet to be added to this feeling by the experience of human inability to satisfy these newly-awakened cravings of the human soul. It needed to be seen what the human intellect at its highest pitch could do, and what it could not do. The experiment was ac-

* Merivale's *History of the Romans*, vol. i. c. 1, p. 54.

cordingly deferred till the instrumentality of the Jew had awakened the human conscience into an unwonted activity, and had scattered the pregnant seeds of truth over the entire field of the world. The Grecian philosophy took its rise in the moral wants of human nature, and was an effort of the human intellect to satisfy them. The spiritual element was largely mixed with it everywhere, and in its highest form that of the Socratic and Platonic philosophy was predominant; itself, indeed, vague, distorted, dark, yet longing pathetically to find a solution of the oft-recurring and anxious questions which vexed the natural heart and conscience. This moral activity would, however, have been insufficient, had it not pleased God to awaken at the same time the genius of the human intellect into its highest elevation. The blaze of intellectual light preceding and accompanying the times of our Lord was as exceptional as the times themselves, and as the events fast advancing to their consummation. The experiment was made under every advantage. But the deep secrets of God baffled human discovery. To remedy the wants of fallen human nature was more than human nature could itself accomplish. It advanced so far as to recognise the want, and to perceive its own inability to supply it; but here it stopped, and, as if exhausted by its own efforts, died away again. It is impossible to imagine a sadder confession of its own absolute failure, or a more bitter rebuke to that phase of modern thought

which would fain go back to the stand-point of ancient heathenism as embodying the highest aspirations of the human soul, than is contained in ancient philosophy itself, as it mourned over its own incapacity, and loudly asked for some Heaven-sent teacher who should instruct it in the way of God more perfectly.* During this travail of philosophy the voice of inspired prophecy was silent; and only when its failure had become conspicuous did God resume His own work, bringing His blessed Son into the world, and again bestowing the prophetic gift to identify His person, and bear witness to His office.

VI. Contemporaneously with these intellectual and moral elements, a preparation of another kind advanced likewise towards its completion. The outward organisation of the world was brought into the condition most appropriate for the world-wide preaching of the Gospel, and its rapid dissemination

* Boyle Lecture for 1861, L. iii. "How trenchant, lively, and brilliant, how full of profound acquaintance with the human heart, its weaknesses and malice, is Seneca; how solemn, how sorrowfully pathetic, is Marcus Aurelius; how confidently and irresistibly do Epictetus, and his interpreter Arrian, carry away the reader Yet their influence was on the whole more inconsiderable, and their schools sooner extinct, than one might have expected. Quite a different lever was requisite to lift mankind generally from their fallen state. 'No one,' says Seneca, 'is in a position to help himself; he needs another hand to raise him up' (Sen. Ep. 53), and this hand of help and rescue was never and nowhere to be seen." —DOLLINGER'S *The Gentile and the Jew*, vol. ii. p. 285.

among all tongues, and peoples, and languages. At no period before or since has there existed a condition of mankind affording facilities for this purpose such as existed during the early centuries of Christianity. This peculiar preparation consisted in the provision of an universal language for the conveyance of revealed truth, and the establishment of an universal empire, laying the world open for its proclamation. Greece supplied the one element in the most plastic and delicate of languages. The conquests of Alexander extended the Greek tongue over the East, and the colonies established by Greek enterprise spread it equally over the West ; it became the universal tongue of civilised man.* Wherever the restless activity of the race carried their arms and their trade, there they carried likewise their arts and their philosophy. Community both of ideas and language brought the common mind of mankind into a condition of activity eminently receptive of any new influence, wide and deep enough to touch the universal wants and sympathies of man. And when Greece had accomplished this predestined work, then Rome † was called into imperial strength, to give the world the external organisation that was needed. The type and direction of Roman influence was so widely different from the Greek, that the two existed side by side, and the iron

* Churton on the Septuagint, p. 16.

† Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles of St Paul*. c. i.

empire of the city of the Tiber served to spread, not to check or supersede, the influence exercised by the versatile genius of the Greek. Wherever Rome extended her conquests, there she carried the principles of settled law and government. Security for person and property, and the construction of highways of communication between man and man, were the abiding characteristics of her empire.* The elements thus respectively contributed by Greece and Rome to the providential preparation of the world for the preaching of the Gospel have been too often and too fully stated to need amplification here; the influence of both was needed for the completion of the work. The language and science of Greece would have been useless without the organisation of Rome; and the organisation of Rome insufficient without the language and science of Greece. The combined influence of the two opened the avenues of the world for the preaching of the Gospel, and enabled the wondrous news to spread throughout all mankind with a rapidity otherwise impossible.

The accomplishment of results so great and wide as these, not by violent interposition of a Divine strength, but by providential control of the ordinary processes of human things, was a work for centuries. It may well excite our

* The characteristics of Roman civilisation are well described in Vaughan's *Revolutions of English History*, vol. i. c. 3.

admiration that in the course of so short a period as four hundred years, preparations so wide, and adjustments so exact, should have had their fulfilment. That they were completed, and that effects did follow from them of the highest importance to the interests of Christianity, are simple matters of fact. The events and their influence were linked on to the past of the Old-Testament dispensation as strongly, but not more strongly, than they were linked on to the future of the New. To follow the continuous accomplishment of the Divine plan, as traced by the finger of God Himself in the Mosaic law, down to the close of the Babylonish captivity, and then to take up the threads of this identical design in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, and yet to overlook the links connecting the two periods together, would be to dislocate cause and effect so violently as to contradict all the laws of human thought. The fortunes and influence of the dispersion of Israel, such as we know them to have been by the testimony of uninspired history, could not conceivably have existed without the previous series of events recorded by inspired history. It is equally true that if the Divine dealings towards the Jew, and the purposes contemplated in them, were such as, from the express statements of the word itself I have shown them to be, the facts recorded by inspired history must have been followed by some such events as uninspired history brings to our knowledge, since without

them the Divine purposes would have been interrupted and incomplete. So, likewise, the early establishment and progress of Christianity could not have happened, as they are stated in the inspired history of the New Testament, without the preparatory processes accomplished in the interval between Malachi and Matthew. The facts therefore stand thus. We have three periods bound together by one common series of events into such a strict sequence, that no one could have happened without the other two. The first period, ending with Malachi, is covered by the revelation of the Old Testament; the last period, beginning with Matthew, is occupied by the revelation of the New Testament; the middle period, linked on to the first by the unbroken continuity of Jewish national life, and linked on to the last by the moral preparation for its events, is filled by uninspired history only. Is it conceivable that the Divine plan, pervading the first and the last, should not equally pervade the period lying between them, and without which neither the first nor the last could have existed? Must not we trace the unbroken links of the Divine plan equally in all three periods, and this so precisely, that the very absence of a revelation in the central link of the chain was itself a part of the plan accomplished in them all?

We see, therefore, if this be correct, that the four hundred years intervening between the

cessation of Old-Testament prophecy in Malachi, and the commencement of New-Testament prophecy in Matthew, constituted no real break in the unity of God's design. It was but a pause, itself full of significance, and necessary for the accomplishment of subsidiary purposes entering into the perfection of the Divine plan.

That this is the true account of the matter is singularly illustrated by the character of the opening chapter of the New-Testament revelation. It is universally admitted that the Gospel of St. Matthew is the earliest in date, as it is the first in the order, of the Scriptures of the New Covenant.* The opening verses of this first Christian book at once appropriate, in the historical continuity of God's dealings, the whole succession of ages from Abraham downwards. Its starting-point in the first verse, reiterated in the sixteenth, is in the æra of Christ. It then claims all the centuries back to the Babylonish captivity as linked indissolubly to the purposes of Divine mercy in Christ; for one of the three divisions of the genealogy is wholly occupied by the links of descent from Jechonias, "after they were brought to Babylon." And from this point again the line is traced consecutively to its first beginning in the father of the faithful. It thus asserts the continuity of God's will during all the ages from Abraham's time, and places their

* Dean Alford's *Prolegomena to St. Matthew*, s. iv.

accumulated testimony like a diadem of glory upon the head of the Messiah.

Nor is the connexion between the inspired books of the New Testament and the inspired books of the Old asserted with less emphasis than the connexion between the events of the two respective periods. The enormous mass of connected ideas, doctrines, and verbal references connecting the two Testaments, constitutes a study of itself. Some portion of the evidence has been referred to in the earlier Lectures of this series, and even a sketch of the remainder falls beyond the scope of my present object. One class of passage only shall receive a brief notice ; for it is closely analogous to the historical continuity claimed in the genealogies of St. Matthew and St. Luke. I allude to those passages where a single expression gathers up the whole united testimony of the ancient Scriptures. It must never be forgotten, that both the words of our blessed Master, and the language of the Evangelical histories, were addressed to men familiar with the law and the prophets. What books were or were not included in the ancient Scriptures is a matter of careful inquiry to ourselves, but to the Jews of our Lord's day it was a matter of familiar knowledge, incorporated with all the habits of their mental and religious life. The phrases "the Scriptures," "the prophets," and others of like kind, conveyed to them one definite idea only, and could have

conveyed no other. That the books accepted as Canonical by the Jews in our Lord's day were identically the same as the Canonical books of the Old Testament among ourselves, admits of very exact proof. The general phrases in which our Lord expressed the authority of the whole admitted, therefore, of no reservation, no exclusion, but asserted the Divine authority of each and all of the Old-Testament Scriptures without exception. Bearing this in mind, what peculiar force there is in the language and teaching of the risen Saviour to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and in St. Luke's inspired record of them: "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke, xxiv. 27.) There are, at least, nine other passages in our Lord's personal teaching to the same effect. Thus, on the side of God's dealings, and on the side of the revelation recording them, the language of the Bible itself positively claims an unbroken succession of authority and design, from the beginning of the written revelation of Moses to the commencement of the New-Testament revelation in Matthew.

The proof being brought down to this point, the evidence in support of the argument of these Lectures is substantially completed. The relation of the New Testament towards Christianity, as a system originating in the sovereign mercy of God, schemed by His wisdom and accomplished by His

power, needs no elucidation : here we walk in the full daylight. Should it conceivably be argued that the authority of the Old-Testament Scriptures being destroyed, the authority of the New might still survive, at least in that modified form to which modern rationalism would not object ; yet it cannot conceivably be argued, that the Old Testament, being admitted to be divinely inspired, the New should not be invested with the same character and authority. It would be out of place to attempt to enter into any new lines of proof, richly as they are suggested by the Evangelical histories, at the mere close of another argument, and for the present purpose it would be superfluous. I shall therefore attempt no more than to point out very briefly the existence of the same characteristics in the New as in the Old Testament ;—that the books are constructed upon a definite plan ; that this plan was directed at once to the conveyance of truth and the provision of evidence ; that the plan was so executed as at once to meet the wants of the first age of Christianity, and of every subsequent age to the end of the world ; that the various books constitute one Testament, complete in itself, and yet so indissolubly linked on to the Scriptures of the Old Testament as to constitute together one Bible, connected with an irrefragable identity of plan, object, authorship, and authority, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of the Revelation.

I. First of all we are presented in the Gospels with the proof of the completion of the Divine purpose of redemption in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of God's blessed Son. The accomplishment of the fact as an historical fulfilment, proved to men's minds, and even to their senses, by the miraculous signs accompanying the personal ministry of the Son of God, with a profusion suited at once to the dignity of His person and to the grandeur of His work, was evidently the first condition of the revelation. In this work all the converging threads of the Old Covenant prophecy are one by one taken up and intertwined into the fabric. The events themselves were likewise so incorporated with the facts of secular history, as regards persons, places, and circumstances, that the existence of an historical Christ is placed beyond denial by any who are not prepared to fling on one side the authority of history altogether. The facts of our Lord's personal life and ministry are presented by four Evangelists with such unity of scope, and yet variety of detail and diversity of stand-point, as became a dispensation intended to overleap the narrow limits of one people, and to be wide as the world—universal as man himself. Over the whole, and above the personal peculiarities of the writers apparent in the several books, there is a grand simplicity, more than human in its character ; partly as if it were the object to place the mere facts side by side with the prophetic Scriptures ; partly as if

the events and their very grandeur rose above the possibility of being adorned by human description, or amplified by the expressions of human emotion.

The peculiarity of the form adopted by the Evangelical narratives is seen in the prominent idea suggested by them. This consists, not in a set of doctrines, however great and noble, but in the presentation of a person. All doctrines are really no other than the application of the work of the personal Redeemer on its two sides ; on the one hand, in its relation to the Divine attributes, and, on the other, to the necessities of the human soul. In the consistent order, the person of the incarnate God, therefore, stands first, and is presented first. Not only so, but He stands before us for a time alone, as if to express with the utmost conceivable emphasis the undivided supremacy and the sole sufficiency of the incarnate Son of God. On the first view, the narratives themselves appear to be singularly simple and unartificial. But a closer examination brings to view a profound design, executed by an exquisite wisdom. For the four together present an august portraiture of Christ, so complete, so wonderful, so touchingly beautiful, and yet so grandly elevated as to constitute the theme of the world's admiration.* Yet this portraiture is nowhere formally drawn, but is derived from a vast num-

* See Boyle Lecture for 1861. Lecture II.

ber of fine and delicate touches scattered here and there, in so astonishing a variety and profusion, that, exquisite as the portrait of Christ already gathered out of them is, we may well believe that the devout study of the Church has not hitherto one-half exhausted the glories presented in the Divine narrative. But these touches are not gathered from any one Evangelist, but from all the four; the omission of any one Gospel would leave something incomplete, some lineament of grace and glory absent. When all the four have thus contributed their converging rays, so marvellous is the harmony of the picture, that sceptical ingenuity has never succeeded in pointing out one discordant element, one inconsistent trait, one line of human imperfection, to deform the glorious portrait. As there has never existed a man who can be compared with Christ, so the world may be ransacked in vain for a record so varied, yet so divinely consistent and harmonious.

Scarcely less blessed is the result of the special form of the Evangelical narratives in another direction. The difficulty of applying abstract principles to the varying circumstances of actual life must enter into the conscious experience of every thoughtful man. Had the character of Christ been presented to us in the shape of a formal description without the detailed narrative, it would have appeared to us as a glorious abstraction, without a foothold in life's familiar circumstances and sympathies—a great ideal, sublimely conceived,

but incapable of realisation by human thought. But, as it is, we see an actual man in an actual world. The interests, the scenes, the characters, the events, presented in the Gospels are true throughout to the experience of every time and every place. Yet among them, perfectly in harmony with all human sympathies and associations, yet complete in His own Divine glory, stands and moves the person of the Saviour, gathering equally round Himself admiration and affection, wonder and gratitude, reverence and love. Or if the narrative had been given us, and the formal description had been added, it had never entered into the heart so profoundly as does a conception of which all the materials are Divine, but of which the prayerful exercise of our own faculties is the immediate instrument. As it is, the form of the Gospels reflects to our eyes the actual facts and events of our blessed Master's life, ministry, and death, vividly and accurately as the cloudy majesty of the skies may be reflected in the bosom of some calm and unruffled ocean.

II. The redeeming work of Christ being completed in His resurrection and ascension, the triumph of the Gospel began on the day of Pentecost, when it entered upon its career of spiritual conquest. Was it not needed that we should have some certain and inspired information as to the character of the work on its Divine side, as regarded God's mode of acting, the providential

interferences by which He controlled human events and human passions into subordination to the great work, and the miraculous agencies employed by Him to strengthen the first preachers of Christianity, and witness to their commission? That we should receive detailed information of the whole work in every place, and at every time, was as manifestly unnecessary as it was necessary that we should receive some indication of it. For the uplifting of the veil from one part would enable faith to realise the action of the same wisdom and power in every part. What we needed were illustrative instances representing, under some diversity of detail, the overruling power of the glorified Head of His Church, and the profound wisdom and goodness, at once comprehensive as the world, at once minute as the minor links of human action, ever watchfully exercised over her safety and integrity. This is just what we have in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Had the description been more detailed, and any single figure more prominent than is the case, there had been danger lest it should distract attention from the central figure of Christ Himself. The regenerating Spirit who moved the mind of St. Luke has supplied the necessity, and yet preserved us from the danger. What is the whole book but a chapter from the wars of the Lord, the outgoings of His wisdom and power in the great conflict against the ruler of the darkness of this world,

the more conspicuous from the sinful weaknesses of the human instruments in whom, and by whom, He has acted.

III. Then follow the Epistles. The instrumentality employed for the conversion of the world, and some glimpses of the outward organisation of the Church, and the methods of her action, are presented in the Acts of the Apostles. But more was manifestly requisite. For, while Christ was Himself the central object of faith, and hope, and love, it was not by the mere force of an historical narrative, however sublime and pathetic, that the worship of the world was to be won, but by the relation borne by the facts of the narrative to the glory of God and the salvation of man. Had the Gospel histories stood absolutely alone, their meaning and significance could not have been properly understood. We should still have admired, wondered, praised, but not have believed unto everlasting life. The Old-Testament Scriptures would, indeed, have thrown a flood of light upon the work of our Lord, but they needed themselves to be interpreted by the same Spirit from whom they came. A doctrinal knowledge of the soul's relation towards Christ was too vitally important for the Divine benevolence to omit it. The Acts of the Apostles made us acquainted with the fact that the Apostles, and those who believed through them, went throughout the world preaching everywhere repentance and remission of sins, and that both the providential

power and the miraculous gifts of God accompanied them; but there remained the further question,—What was it that they preached? Was it a mere narration of facts? or did they apply them to the hearts and consciences of men, and how? What was the salvation proffered, and how was it to be attained? The Epistles supply the answer to this question.

Fragmentary and unconnected as they are in their form, we yet find the whole counsel of God unfolded with such a comprehensive sweep of the entire circle of the Divine dealings, that those few short letters have supplied food for all the learning and devotion of the Church for eighteen centuries, and still remain a whole storehouse of unexhausted truth. Of the plenitude of their consolations unnumbered souls have drunk, and have found peace. There, stricken with the deep sense of sin, and dejected by the consciousness of abject unworthiness, the sinner is taught to look to the triumphant work of Christ, when, on the cross, He destroyed the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, nailing it to His cross, and when, in His resurrection, He spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly. With what deep satisfaction does the conscience hang over the broad sweet promises—“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin:” “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous!” Does the soul feel its inability to believe, to shake off

the trammels of its old sins, and follow Christ in His cross, here it is told of a gracious Spirit of light and life, whose work it is to quicken the dead conscience, and to work in the soul to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Does the soul grow careless in its race, here it hears, as it were, the trumpet of the spiritual battle, is warned of the enemies against whom it has to fight, of the weapons it must use, and of the sure promise of final victory to crown its efforts. Is the soul sick with its long strife and bleeding with its inward wounds, here it is reminded of the rest prepared for the people of God, and strengthened meanwhile by the example of its Master. In the deep sense of its iniquity, does it doubt whether it may dare to approach towards God, its eyes are pointed to the all-prevailing Mediator, who at God's right hand evermore lives to make intercession for us. Not a want of the soul but here it may find its comfort. Strength for the weak, wisdom for the ignorant, hope for the mourner, guidance for the bewildered, pardon for the guilty; milk for babes, and strong meat for men,—all meet in one Person, are accomplished in one work, rest on one promise.

In strict accordance with the whole method of Scripture, these doctrines are scattered up and down the Epistles,—with a most strict order, indeed, apparent in individual Epistles, but not as a whole digested into any formal system of belief. The completeness with which they have been furnished,

the amplitude of the truth embraced, and its essential, though not digested, orderliness and method, are, however, evidenced by the results of future study. In this, as in other cases, the controversies of the Church have added another stimulant to that supplied by the yearning wants of the soul itself to a solid and methodical study of the Word. This study has resulted in the public symbols of the Church of Christ, in which the form and the language are those of a human science, but a human science so applied to a Divine revelation as its subject-matter, that the whole substance of the creeds is gathered from the Word, and is formally accepted by the Church of Christ only so far as it is accurately gathered from it, and may be proved by it. Now, it is undeniable that these various creeds present a whole body of doctrine, where every truth is connected by so close a logical sequence with other truths, that no one can be denied or diluted in its meaning without affecting in a proportionable degree all the rest. If all this be truly gathered from Scripture, it must be in Scripture, and the Bible, in its aggregated unity, must be as strictly systematic in its essence as the theology derived from it.

Nor must I omit to notice that not only a scheme of doctrine, but the outlines of a Church organisation, expressed in all the features ordained by the Divine will for the essence of a Church, and with clear intimations reaching beyond this, are supplied in the same Divine authority. The

fixed principles are there, and the pliancy of adaptation which should apply them to existing exigencies is there likewise. Rationalism has dwelt much upon the divergent views of Christians upon these subjects, and yet the points of difference are really small in comparison with the points of resemblance. The constitution of a visible Church with a visible form of government, the appointment of an ordained ministry with divers gradations of rank and function and the power to discharge distinctive offices, are principles generally accepted in the Church of Christ—with some exceptions, indeed, but too slight and ephemeral to deserve serious notice in any general survey of the Church of God. Above all stand the Christian sacraments, the highest and loftiest of the means of grace—the visible signs of our glorified Master's abiding presence with His Church. They are the very seals of His perpetual love, mysterious in their representative symbols, and gathering around themselves, as the living memorials of a glorified Saviour, the profoundest reverence, the loftiest hopes, and the most absorbing affections of the sanctified heart.

IV. Lastly comes the book of Revelation, exceptional in its character, as I have already pointed out, and filling the same relative place at the close of revelation that the book of Genesis fills at its commencement, since the events recorded in it no longer synchronise with the date of its composition. It may not be possible, save in a very imperfect

degree, to trace the object of the Divine mind in closing the Scriptural Canon with this continuous prediction of the fortunes of the Church of Christ, from the time of His ascension to the time of His coming. But we are able to appreciate the lessons it teaches, to perceive the analogy it bears to other parts of the word, and to draw personal strength and comfort from its assurances of our Master's overruling power and wisdom? The position of the Apocalypse, as the last book of the New-Testament Canon, is generally recognised as clearly as the position of St. Matthew's Gospel, as the first book of it.* As the first book threw its glance backward, and appropriated all the ages past, back to the time of Abraham, to the continuity of the Divine plan, including the ages during which the voice of inspired prophecy was silent, so in the same way the last book looks forward, and appropriates to the government of the glorified Christ all the ages future, till the number of the elect should be completed, and the kingdom of God should come. The moral lesson to be learned from such a revelation, equally to the earliest ages of Christianity and to ourselves upon whom the ends of the world are come, stand out conspicuously to view. When the vision of Patmos was given to the beloved disciple, he was probably the only surviving member of "the glorious company of the Apostles."

* Dean Alford's *Prolegomena to the Apocalypse*.

The inspired men endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit,—the powers of the world to come, under whose guidance the Church of Christ had entered upon her glorious work of suffering and of conquest, were to be seen no more. Was it not natural that at such a time many fears and doubts should agitate the minds of men relative to the future, as they looked out from their own blessed ark on the nations around them, gathering as menacingly around the Church of God as the angry waves of a tempestuous sea? In such a time the vision of St. John must have come like a message of assurance direct from the throne of Christ. For here we see that our Master knows all from the beginning to the end, and that the very trials and afflictions of His Church are but parts of the fore-ordained plan for the final triumph of His kingdom. How blessedly does this vision enable us to look over the troubled ocean immediately around us, to the smiling land of the everlasting heaven that lies beyond! Every trial within and without, every doubt and fear, does but impart new sweetness to the declaration, “Behold, I come quickly,” and give a deeper intensity to the desire with which His waiting Church answers back to her Master, “Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

Through all this wondrous revelation one characteristic is apparent, which distinguishes the New Covenant from the older dispensation, namely, its breadth and freedom. The childhood of the Church was past, and its manhood come.

Little by little the restrictions of the old system are shaken off from the limbs of Christianity, as, quickened by the living Spirit, it enters upon its course of triumph. Especially does this attract attention in regard to the Jew. He is still there, indeed; there, in the first outgoings of Christianity—for were not the Apostles all Jews?—there, in the final triumph of Christianity, for all Israel shall finally be saved, and the grafting in of the Jewish branch into its own olive-tree again shall be as life from the dead. But meanwhile he passes, comparatively speaking, out of view. The boundaries of the Church stretch till they compass the world, and the personal agency of the Jew ceases to hold the place which, from the call of Abraham downwards, he had consistently occupied. He passes out of the inspired record as the active and exclusive instrument of the truth. His national existence is guaranteed, indeed, by the predictions of the future, but to see their fulfilment we must pass from the inspired pages to the world outside, and to its notorious facts. Here we find the Jew waiting, in his unchanging isolation, till the time shall come for God to use him again. He remains the perpetual monument of the past, the living evidence to the truth of the Old-Testament Scriptures. But he fulfils this office with a cogency of proof which all the sophistry of the world can never weaken, because he, as a Jew, not a Christian, stands aloof in sullen unbelief from the Messiah who has sprung from his loins, and

the Gospel in which he himself still holds the most prominent place. Here lives the witness for the past, the more effective by his very separation from the present.

But of this present God has prepared a new line of witnesses, who have become the spiritual inheritors of the calling, and of the mission, once intrusted to the Jew. The same consciousness of election ; the same separation from the world ; the same lofty vocation ; the same mission as trustees of the truth, the same solemn responsibility, the same deep assurance of a Divine guardianship and protection, which formed the national characteristics of the literal Israel, have now descended to the spiritual Israel ; and with them the same inheritance of suffering, the same witnessing in sackcloth. For a time the Church of the Gentiles has taken up the line of descent in the deep purposes of God, and fills, to the Church of our own day, the office discharged by the Jewish Church of other days. In the full blaze of truth, with a yet loftier calling and a more glorious destiny, she has entered on her work, and has now fulfilled her commission with many a sin and grievous short-coming, till in the distant East the first gleams of the day of the Son of Man are already brightening the horizon. Oh ! for a larger measure of the Spirit ! that, with deepening zeal, and stronger faith, and more fervent prayer, and a greater measure of the patience of the saints, she may witness unto the end ; till the sign of the Son of Man shall be seen in the

heavens, and the kingdom of God shall come. Then shall the Jew, in God's own order of events, again enter into the work, and witness in belief to a Messiah come as he has witnessed in unbelief to a Messiah expected. Then will follow the last days, when, in the finished kingdom of the Redeemer, Jew and Gentile will be one, standing round the same glorified Messiah, and swelling the same song of "praise, glory, and blessing, and honour, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

LECTURE VIII.

God's Word Written.

“YE SHALL KNOW THAT I HAVE NOT DONE WITHOUT CAUSE ALL THAT I HAVE DONE IN IT, SAITH THE LORD GOD.”—EZEKIEL, xiv. 23.

IN drawing to a conclusion the course of argument pursued in these Lectures, I need to require one postulate, and one only, on the part of the sceptic. It is the admission, that the Bible was not composed at one time, by one man, or any one set of contemporary men acting in immediate and recognised combination with each other. Modern thought can have no hesitation in admitting this, for all its arguments and speculations run into this direction. Its object is directed to break the continuity of the Revelation at that remoter point of it where from the nature of the case the inspired record deals less with details, and where profane history necessarily fails to supply corroborative testimonies, because it does not extend to so distant an antiquity its own credible records. The point of attack is fixed at

the commencement of the historic period at the date of Samuel. It is argued, that the earlier books were not written by Moses, nor in any true sense are his authorship; that they are not historical, but are a rude, undigested mass of ancient mythical traditions, compiled, probably by Samuel, as a kind of religious romance, in order to make a half-serious, half-jesting experiment on the faith and credulity of his times. Whichever of the particular schemes produced out of the prolific brain of German criticism may be adopted, and whatever consequently may be the supposed number of ancient documents entering into the composition of the Pentateuch, a variety of authors and a diversity of date are the inseparable conditions of the hypothesis.

The whole course of modern rationalism runs consistently into this direction, simply because the earlier supposition of an imposture of a late date can no longer bear discussion amid the accurate habits of modern inquiry. It appears to me, that in adopting this line of argument scepticism has thoroughly over-reached itself; or, rather, I would recognise in the course adopted the wisdom of an over-ruling Providence, compelling sceptical thought into a direction where its own conclusions react for the establishment of Christianity. For it is perfectly indifferent how far conclusions may be pushed in this distributive process, or what description may be applied to the Scriptural books, whether they are called unhistorical, mythical,

traditional, or anything else. The further men carry the process, the more wonderful and manifestly Divine they make the facts as they are. Let it be said that the Bible is a mere collection of fragments, the internal coherence and unity distinguishing the fragments will remain all the same as a matter of fact, and become incomparably more astonishing as a matter of opinion. The course of argument, directed to destroy, establishes in the very act; and the hand of the infidel, as it tears into fragments the one inspired volume, only throws the miraculous character of every fragment more conspicuously into view. The greater the diversity of date and authorship established, the more impossible it becomes that the Bible can be an imposture of one period; yet, grant this one condition, and the argument from design becomes, I conceive, unanswerable.

For it appears that in books belonging to very different periods of the world's history, and written by authors of different characters and position, there is yet found to be the consistent assertion of a definite plan, and, side by side with the assertion of the plan, the proof of its execution. This plan is not found in all its points in any single portion of the record, the proofs of it being gathered from the Old Testament as well as from the New, from Moses, and David, and the prophets, as well as from our Lord, the apostles, and the evangelists, a long line of wit-

nesses scattered along the course of fifteen hundred years. The supposition of a single human mind suggesting a theory in order to give apparent unity to a number of fragmentary writings, might have had force if we had drawn the assertion of a Divine plan from any one book ; but it becomes inconceivable when we gather it out of many. That an intelligent mind must have been at work to frame an intelligent plan is what we assert ; but the mind must be co-extensive with the plan. If the purpose extended over fifteen hundred years, the mind which purposed it must have worked during that period likewise. If it was revealed through a variety of agents between whom there could exist no possible earthly communication, there must have been a common intelligence influencing each and all of them separately. If any person should even be credulous enough to believe that down so vast a lapse of ages, and among so large a diversity of authors, a fortuitous concurrence of thought or an hereditary inheritance of opinion may have produced this indissoluble unity, at all events the execution of the design cannot admit of such an explanation. For the accomplishment of the Divine plan involved not only the writers who asserted it, nor only the nation primarily concerned in it, but the instrumentality of heathen nations likewise, and a range of historical events wide as the civilised world ; as for instance, in the transactions narrated in the

book of Judges, and the events occupying the four hundred years between the Old and New Testaments. No explanation depending upon the conscious agency of Jewish pride, or religious fanaticism, can find room here. If an intelligent plan and its execution are traceable alike in such books and such events, the mind which schemed and wrought it can be the mind of God alone.

That the plan is an intelligent plan, is shown by the internal and logical connexion of its parts with each other, when we frame them together into one consistent whole. A glance down the line of argument pursued in these Lectures will show that the mind can adopt no other alternative. In the first place, we are made acquainted with the definite design contemplated in the whole plan, namely, the glory of God in the salvation of man through means of an atonement and by a moral regeneration through the Holy Ghost. Who will say that the object or the mode of accomplishing it are so unworthy of God as to be impossible, or incredible, or inconsistent? When our minds endeavour to conceive by what plan such a design could possibly be accomplished, we arrive, step by step, at the very particulars revealed in the word. We see that the salvation could not be accomplished without being known to the moral but corrupted creatures, who were to be saved, and that such a knowledge could not be conveyed to them without a revelation. Accordingly we find in the Christian Bible ex-

actly such a revelation as the conditions of the case might lead us to expect. Given through the instrumentality of man, and the vehicle of human language, it bears throughout the characteristic individualities of the human writers as clearly as it bears the assertion of a Divine authority. Conveyed at different periods, each successive book fits in with the historical circumstances of the times, and reflects with wonderful accuracy the peculiarities of country, person, time, and place, as made known to us by other and wholly independent sources of information. At each successive stage the religious doctrines conveyed are carefully adapted, both in the amount of detail and in the method of the revelation to the spiritual wants of that age; and yet throughout the whole, from first to last, the doctrines themselves are identically the same. That the instruction conveyed is sufficient for life and godliness, cannot be called into question by those who hold the limits of truth to be narrower than the limits of the word. When we cast one continuous view down all the books, and regard them as parts of one revelation, we find them to be united by a strict sequence of plan, an exact identity of object, by an enormous mass of mutual references and allusions, and a wonderful harmony of character and tone.

But we can see further, that a revelation could not be bestowed by a righteous governor upon his creatures, without involving a moral probation

arising from the right or the wrong use of it, and that this probation is further necessary to the work of the Spirit and the regeneration of mankind, because spiritual graces can only be developed through discipline and exercise. We turn to the Bible, and there, accordingly, we find all the dealings of God consistently founded on this principle from the very first, if possible still more vividly in those ancient epochs of the world when the philosophy of the human mind was unknown, than during the later periods when mental and moral philosophy had assumed a prominent place in the studies of mankind. Moral responsibility, probation and Divine retribution, are the first grand lessons of the Bible. Rewards and punishments, partially executed even in this world, and to receive their final accomplishment in a future judgment and an everlasting life beyond it, blaze conspicuously upon its pages as the warning meteors of Divine justice. To remove all possible difficulty in applying the grand principle to the details of human life and conduct, the inspired record is rich in individual instances from the father of the faithful to the Christians of Apostolic days tried in the fiery furnace of pagan persecution.

But tracing the same line of thought step by step, we can see that probation implied spiritual preparation alike to the world at large, and the individuals of successive generations. For probation itself involved the adaptation of the knowledge possessed to the capacity of the recipients,

and as the capacity grew the knowledge grew likewise. Each stage necessarily became the preparation for the succeeding stage, and as the moral influences widened in their extent as well as increased in their intensity, the individual preparation could not fail to involve at last the circle of the entire world. Accordingly the Bible presents us with the actual facts. And where the sphere of action fell beyond the limits of inspiration, secular history fills up the gap and presents the picture of a world as providentially prepared for the gospel, as the gospel was graciously prepared for the world.

But further yet; we can see that these purposes of revelation, probation, and preparation, could not be adequately accomplished without the election of a specific nation, in whose trust the revelation should be laid up for the world, when the world in the fulness of the time should become competent to receive it, and through whom it might act upon the world, meanwhile, to enlighten it and to prepare it for the higher enlightenment of the future. Accordingly, we find the whole Bible consistently occupied with the accomplishment of such a design. Its necessity is first presented in the fall of man and its effects. Then, from the call of Abraham downwards, the chosen seed, with its great commission and mysterious fortunes, stands prominent in the whole record, and yet not so exclusively prominent but that we are forced to look through the elected nation to all the families of

the earth to be blessed through its instrumentality. Beyond the outward kingdom the heart is pointed ever more and more conspicuously to the final dominion of the Messiah, and His universal reign of righteousness and peace.

Further, it follows naturally from the election of a chosen race intrusted with so grand a commission that its history should be, in some way, correspondent with the dignity of its calling. For the very object of the plan must be, not alone to preserve the truth, but to make it conspicuous, and thus provide a sphere for its universal influence. But under the corruption of human nature, this could only be effected by external circumstances so extraordinary, as to force themselves upon the observation and interest of mankind. We turn to the Bible, and then from the Bible we turn back again to the still living Jew as he survives among ourselves, with all his national peculiarities, linking the modern present back, step by step, to the ancient past of the Mosaic law, and there we see its accomplishment. Why the mission has been fulfilled in sore judgments without a parallel in the records of any other nation, we gather from the solemn accents of God Himself. His purpose might have been equally accomplished in the lustre of an extraordinary blessing, as in the darkness of an extraordinary curse. They, not God, chose the darker alternative. Would we see on a great scale the methods of God's providential government over

the world, and the marvellous wisdom, which now in mercy, and now in severity, but in love always, overrules even the sinful passions of men to the accomplishment of His own purposes of grace, we see it written, as with a sunbeam, on the history of the Jew.

Lastly, all these various provisions have advanced together to their completion, till they culminated in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as presented to us in the Scriptures of the New Testament, and from the times of our Lord and His Apostles extended into the living experience of our own day. The converging lines of the earlier revelation all met in Christ, and their fulfilment placed the Divine seal on every part of Old Testament prophecy, and has asserted for every single prediction its appropriate place in the Divine plan from the beginning. The prophetic canon is not, indeed, exhausted, and never will be exhausted till the struggles of the Church militant are exchanged for the glory of the Church triumphant. But their grand and central substance has been realised in the Gospel of Christ, by a fulfilment as orderly, as consecutive, as steadily progressive, as is the march of the natural day from the first dawn of morning to the full glory of the meridian.

Now all these purposes cohere together inseparably, and the omission of any one would have neutralised the objects of the others. Without a revelation there could have been no probation;

probation was necessary for moral discipline, and moral discipline for preparation; preparation could not have been carried on without a national election, and without an elected people there could have been no sphere for the special illustration of God's government. And as the parts are all necessary to each other, so they are all necessary to the common purpose for which they were adapted. Men could not believe in Christ without a revelation to make Him known; could not be sanctified without moral discipline and probation; could not be glorified without preparation; could not have received the truth without an election to preserve it; could not have fully recognised a moral government without an example to teach it. Here are, therefore, many parts; but one plan directed to one object. Could such a plan have existed without a mind to conceive it? have been maintained without a wisdom to preserve it? have been accomplished without a will to execute it? If there is design, who can be the designer but God? To suppose that a fortuitous aggregate of circumstances would exhibit all this orderly purpose and consistent accomplishment implies the utmost pitch of blind credulity.

But let us turn again to the accomplishment of the plan. The inspired books, we are told, are a mere collection of ancient fragments, especially the five books of Moses. Yet it so happens that all these fragments are connected with each other by as close and exact a sequence as the most

elaborate history can exhibit. Each fragment fits into its place, and fills it, neither more nor less. The Elohist and Jehovistic writers, to whom, according to the rationalistic hypothesis, the books of the Pentateuch are to be ascribed, are linked on to each other, and to the connected plan of the whole, by as close a relation as can well be conceived; and this is the more extraordinary, because, according to the same hypothesis, the fragments of the two respective writers are mingled together, and interchanged with such inextricable confusion, that no two critics succeed in redistributing and re-arranging them in the same way. Stress has indeed been laid upon the fact that the Elohist and Jehovistic portions contain, each of them, a connected narrative of their own; and when we take into account the unlimited and arbitrary license exercised in conjecturally redistributing the Elohist portions to the assumed Jehovistic writer, and the Jehovistic portions to the assumed Elohist writer, we cannot be surprised that so free an exercise of ingenuity should have been able to put together a connected narrative of some kind. But when the result is contrasted with the revealed plan, and its final realisation in the Gospel of Christ, the violent dislocation of the inspired history, and the disjointed imperfection of each of the substituted narratives, become at once apparent. Thus, for example, the Elohist narrative would contain the creation of man in the Divine image without the fall whereby it has been

defaced, and would consequently deprive the account of human wickedness, in the sixth chapter of Genesis, of any moral or doctrinal explanation. The Jehovistic narrative, on its part, would record the fall without any other allusion to the Divine image from which man fell; and by omitting all statement of the wickedness of man upon the earth, would render the portentous judgment of the deluge inexplicable from the absence of its cause. In both narratives the foundation facts, on which some of the primary doctrines of Christianity are based, would be omitted, and the doctrines themselves would consequently become unintelligible. A more singular instance of the ingenious dislocation of a connected story into inconsequent and unintelligible fragments cannot be conceived, so stubbornly does the inspired narrative refuse to lend itself to the imperious demands of capricious and arbitrary criticism.

How intelligible and connected the whole inspired record is seen to be when interpreted by the Divine plan of revelation, has been shown in a previous Lecture. Hence the attempt to represent the sacred narrative as a collection of fragments refutes itself; for it becomes an argument *ad absurdum*. For call it accident with the sceptic, or call it miracle with the Christian, it is undeniable that these fragments do supply, not separately, but together, a connected history, and this pervaded by a clear moral purpose and meaning throughout. The creation, the temptation, the

fall, the loss of Paradise, the account of the antediluvian world, the deluge, the dispersion, the call of Abraham, the history of the patriarchs, —all fragments, says the critic; all traditions of human hero-life, says the rationalist,— do frame a history consistent with itself and with the later history, and do present a scheme of doctrinal teaching, accordant, in every part, with the dogmatic teaching of our Lord and His Apostles thousands of years afterwards. The moral and religious truths thus taught do, as it happens, present to us just that information, and that only, without which the doctrinal teaching of the later books would be unintelligible. To say that the books are mere traditional tales does not change the fact, that, be they what they may, they are pervaded by consistent design everywhere.

But let us trace it further, ever keeping in mind the alleged mythical and fragmentary character of the books. The thread of the history is taken up in Exodus, just where the last chapter of Genesis leaves it, and is consistently carried on in the subsequent books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This general connexion of the narrative is indeed admitted by the supposition that some later hand moulded together the broken fragments of the past into the consistent history we find it to be. But it must be noticed that the last of the five books has a peculiar character of its own. It is not simply the reiteration of the events recorded beforehand, but it supplies, here

and there, facts not previously mentioned, but the mention of which would spring naturally from the position occupied by Moses at the time. It bears, therefore, within itself the proof of its historic credibility in hidden and inner correspondences, lying wholly beyond the range of a fictitious history. The book is, moreover, in the highest degree prophetic, depicting the fortunes of the Jew on the supposition of an alternative not then existing. The fulfilment of these predictions, to the very letter, is a fact of our own day, and is of such a character that it would be absurd to suppose a conscious self-accomplishment on the part of the suffering race concerned in them. The suggestion, that the Jews rejected the commands of God in order to fulfil a prediction in the Pentateuch, or that the Gentile nations, reaching consecutively down to the middle ages of their own era, directed their conduct towards the dispersed of Israel by the prophecies of Moses, is too extravagant for refutation. Yet it is suggested that Samuel compiled these books as a kind of religious romance. If so, the predictions and their accomplishment remain all the same. Which dilemma shall we choose? Did Samuel write them by chance, or were they fulfilled by chance? or were both the prophecy and the fulfilment all of chance; and thus, amid all these chances, no place be left for God at all? or, if they were fulfilled by a Divine Providence, shall we say that God fulfilled predictions never meant to be predicted, and set his seal to what was known to

be untrue, and threatenings and promises He never uttered? Or did Samuel write them in solemn earnest, and under a Divine inspiration, while he was writing a lie after all, and imposing on the credulity of his age a fictitious composition of his own as the record of God's ancient dealings with His race?

But the same close connexion of book with book obtains throughout. I have already shown that the book of Judges itself occupies its exact place in the Divine plan, and contains a consistent description of God's providential dealing with His own people. The remainder of the historical books are written from the same standpoint of God's judgments, and are directed throughout to that side of history where it comes into contact with the Divine will. Each takes up the tale where the preceding book left it, or else, as in the case of the two books of Kings and the two books of Chronicles, fills up the same outlines with a different colouring and relative proportion. But from the first to the last the history is continuously maintained; the early portion not being more dependent upon the later, than the later upon the earlier; the whole presenting a connected religious history from the creation to the partial restoration of the Jews to their own land after the Babylonish captivity. The latest historical book brings the record down to the times of profane history, and into contact with facts notorious at our own day.

The line of Jewish history runs consecutively back from the present nineteenth century after Christ to the fourth century before Christ, and equally from that date back to the creation.

But further; taking the facts as they lie upon the surface of the record, we find the book of Deuteronomy to supply the keynote of the whole subsequent history. It is not only that the later books of the Old Testament canon involve constant allusions to the facts of the early Hebrew history, and specifically refer the Divine dealings they record back to the starting-point of the Mosaic law, but that the books of Samuel's time do so likewise. As to the more remote books, it might be said that time had been allowed for ancient floating tradition to be hardened into definite historical belief; but this cannot be said of the later, for the book of Joshua takes up the history from the death of Moses, and the book of Judges from the death of Joshua, and the subsequent historical books follow in the same exact order. They are united not only by a mere descent of time, but by a sequence of plan and a connexion of cause and effect. Deuteronomy presents us with the constitution of the complete nation, and the formal commission intrusted to them with its prophetic alternative of blessing or cursing. Joshua narrates a period of obedient fulfilment. The book of Judges records a period of disobedience, its effect in breaking up the unity of the chosen race, and the providential dealings where-

by God interposed to prevent this catastrophe. The other historical books continue the consistent history of human perversity on the one side, and Divine forbearance and Divine chastisement on the other. The Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, supply a picture of what God intended the religious and moral condition of His people to be, and what actually it was in that elected remnant who preserved in every time of national apostasy the witness for God. The prophetic books make us acquainted with the actual communications between God and His people during this period, and of the earnest expostulations, warnings, and entreaties He addressed to them. When placed in their proper chronological order, they fit in exactly with the historical narrative in every particular of circumstances, place, person, and character. Now all these books hang on the book of Deuteronomy. Destroy this, and they all become unintelligible. Without the light it gives, we should know neither who the Jews were, nor what they were, nor what they were meant to do, nor why God chastised them, nor indeed who the God that chastised them was. In short, the whole would become an inextricable mystery. Take Deuteronomy as itself explained by the books preceding, itself explaining the books succeeding, and it furnishes the keynote to the whole. The entire series of the Old Testament Canon becomes a revelation lucid with a moral and religious meaning; connected, consistent, without break or interruption, with neither

defect nor surplusage, and bearing an indivisible unity engrained into its very structure.

It must be borne in mind that the same perfection exists in the New Testament likewise, though a cursory glance alone can now be taken of this portion of the subject. I have shown that the interval of four hundred years separating the inspired books of the Old Testament from the inspired books of the New, not only admits of a reasonable explanation, but was necessary for certain definite purposes, and was filled throughout with the details of their accomplishment. These events are linked on by an unbroken continuity to the history of the two Testaments respectively. They involved the absence of the prophetic gift, but are themselves adequately recorded by the general providential provision of secular history. The two covenants and the inspired books which respectively record them are kept as wholly distinct by the order of outward events as they are kept indissolubly united by the order of inward sequence. The divinely given revelation of the New Testament bears about it all the religious and historical characteristics belonging to the revelation of the Old. Yet it is complete in itself. First, in order of truth, come the facts of the life and death of our Lord fulfilling the promises of God by the prophets. Then we have the construction of the Church, the commencement of its history, the general results of its labour, recorded in the light of an over-ruling

Providence, briefly indicated in the Acts of the Apostles ; statements necessary to render the general history of the Church and of the world since then intelligible. Lastly, we have an inspired exposition of all that has gone before, and of the counsels of God, as applied by the Gospel to the human soul in the Apostolic Epistles ; and the whole is, as it were, sealed up by a prophetic vision encompassing the whole history of the Church of Christ, from the ascension of her Lord till the time of His final advent in glory. Here, as in the Old Testament canon, the whole is constructed upon an exact and definite design consistently pursued throughout the whole.

Lastly, if we take the entire Bible together—this Bible which, be it remembered, is asserted to be only a collection of old fragments—we find a history compassing the whole records of the human race, from the eternity before time to the eternity after time: the creation, the fall, the redemption, the consummation. It is not, therefore, that the Bible supplies fragmentary hints and glimpses here and there of the line of human history, but that it bridges the whole over by the continuity of one unbroken dispensation. Moral sequence rules everywhere. From the very first to the very last one glorious design of salvation to a fallen race, and the grand figure of one Divine person by whom it should be accomplished, is prominent. Round this central figure is gathered an harmonious body of truth

relative to God and man, and the relations of Christ towards the two, pervading clearly and definitely, though with varying degrees of explicit explanation, every book of the series, from Genesis to Revelation. The secular history amid which the body of truth is incorporated, is framed around it as closely and harmoniously as the mechanical human body is adapted to the living and conscious spirit tabernacling within it. Take away the truth and the history falls to pieces, just as the human body corrupts in the absence of the indwelling soul. Retain the truth in its place, and then this series of books, separated in their composition by vast periods of time and by every conceivable diversity of action and circumstances, various in their character and adapted to different stages of human development, become *one* book, cemented by so mysterious an union that the very argument of the rationalists, avowedly directed to scatter it into fragments, only throws into greater prominence its wonderful and Divine unity.

Yet this is only a part of the question. We must now turn from what I may call the literary unity of the record to the objective dealings of God in working out His purpose of salvation, embodied and narrated in the record; in other words, we must pass from the record itself to the thing recorded. For the ancient Scriptures are at once a history, and something much more than a history. For they had a moral and religious

purpose to fulfil towards those to whom they were given. They were themselves part and parcel of the Divine dealings recorded in them. Thus, for instance, the revelation made to the Hebrews of the times of Moses, of the creation and the series of subsequent events down to the time of their own settlement in Egypt, was directed to enlighten and strengthen their faith in the God of their forefathers and in the dignity and certainty of their own election. Thus the recapitulation of the law, and the events of their past history by the lawgiver before his death, constituted a solemn exhortation to obedience in the critical future then opening before them in the grandeur of the Divine promises. Thus the history of their sin in mingling among the heathen and of the judgments whereby God chastised them back to Himself, was an emphatic caution preparatory to the establishment of their earthly monarchy. The writings of David, and Solomon, and the prophets, constituted an effective means of religious instruction to quicken the Divine life, and warn them constantly of righteousness, temperance, and judgment. The narrative of the kingdom and of the iniquities producing its ruin, was one long lesson to the dispersed of the captivity, and an earnest caution against repeating after their restoration the sins that had led to their captivity. The whole Old Testament Scriptures together instructed the Jews of our Lord's day relative to the Messiah, and taught holy

saints, such as Simeon and Anna, to look beyond an outward and temporal kingdom for a spiritual redemption and a heavenly inheritance. At every stage of the revelation the ordinary purposes of history went hand in hand with a religious discipline and instruction. The outer life of the nation, and the inner life of the Church, acted and reacted upon each other, and became inseparably united in their bearing on the salvation of individual souls, and that collective discipline whereby God was preparing the way for the work of the Messiah, and preparing the world for the recognition of Him.

The same continuity perceptible in the books of Scripture characterises equally the course of the Divine dealing recorded in them. In the one case, if you take any one book out of the whole series of books, you make the rest unintelligible ; in the other case, take any one fact out of the whole series of facts, and you make the whole inconsistent and impossible. We cannot break the line anywhere without confusion ; nor take away any one epoch without involving both the preceding and the succeeding ones in endless contradictions. As the entire history stands, each period, with its distinctive peculiarities, grew naturally and necessarily out of the preceding ; and the actual condition of the Jewish race, standing as it does an unparalleled anomaly in the records of mankind, is the consistent sequel of them all. But take away any portion of it,

and you not only dislocate that special part of the history, but you destroy the credibility of the whole.

It requires no argument to prove that cause and effect are constantly repeating themselves in the order of human events. Least of all, is it necessary to prove it in the controversy with infidelity. For in the effort to do away with the necessity for a Divine providence in the government of the world, infidelity has not only recognised to the full the moral sequence uniting age with age, but has exaggerated it so far as to destroy human volition as completely as Divine, and to represent the very crimes and sufferings of mankind as so many rigid and unalterable sequences from the circumstances of the past, which could not possibly have been otherwise. I may therefore assume it to be acknowledged, that the successive events of human history are links in such a continuous chain of moral causes and effects, that each event is at once produced and producing. The events of an age grow out of its moral and intellectual character, and react on the character of the age succeeding. Each step is not a sharp and abrupt precipice, but a gently inclined plane, and depends both upon a certain concurrence of pre-existing circumstances, and a pre-existing moral and intellectual condition. For instance, the circumstances recorded in the opening chapters of the book of Exodus, would be unintelligible without the circumstances narrated in Genesis.

The expostulations and warnings uttered by Moses depend upon the transactions in the wilderness, and the perverse condition of mind and feeling involved in them. As the history stands in the Bible, the moral sequence is as strongly consecutive as the literary. But if any man tampers with the history the whole becomes unintelligible.

A single instance will suffice for the illustration of this assertion. It has been suggested that the whole of the Pentateuch is composed of a mass of traditions, possessing no historical value whatever, and utterly untrustworthy as to any matters of fact. It is supposed that they were put into their existing shape by Samuel, as a kind of religious romance, but became accepted by the superstitious credulity of the age as conveying the previous history of their race, out of the same kind of feeling which has led other nations to trace their origin back to the imaginary deities of their religious beliefs. Now let us consider into what inextricable contradictions this violent interruption of the historical sequence of the history involves us. In doing this, I put no stress whatever on the inspired testimony of the later Scriptures, because the value of this testimony is involved in the inquiry. If it can be proved that the Pentateuch is unhistorical, the whole later history of the Jews, their political and religious system, and their national peculiarities, must have had their beginning, either con-

sciously or unconsciously in a lie. If consciously, the later writers are open to the charge of fraudulent imposture ; if unconsciously, they are open to a charge of bigoted ignorance, and either the one suggestion or the other is fatal to their credibility as historians, much more as inspired writers. I simply assume the great facts of the later Scriptures to be true inasmuch as they are corroborated by independent testimony, and stand as acknowledged events in history.

It is certain that the Jewish system, religious and political, must have existed in its complete form, at least from the date of Solomon, because the ancient Scriptures have come down to us in two lines, the Samaritan and the Jewish ; and these two lines must have taken their rise in the separation of Solomon's one kingdom into two separate states. The existence of the temple at Jerusalem at this date, with the peculiar institutions concentrating the religious and national life of the Jew at this centre, proves the public recognition and adoption of that Mosaic law whence the temple derived its importance. Now the times of Solomon were separated from those of Samuel by part of the reign of Saul and the forty years during which David ruled over the kingdom. In other words, a half-jesting composition of Samuel in the course of some sixty years came, it is supposed, to be regarded as the true history of the Jewish race, and initiated a system of government, reaching to the religious,

social, civil, and political life of the nation, the most unique that has ever been known. Out of this constitution grew an intense national life, extending down to our own day, and effectual consequently to maintain for three thousand years the national isolation of this one race, untouched and unimpaired through the longest and most signal series of national calamities ever recorded in the history of the world. Why, such a monstrous disproportion between an asserted cause and a notorious effect would be itself a miracle; on the one side, a jesting composition made out of myths, on the other a religious system victorious over the world, and a creed, the grandest, most elevated, and most mysterious, ever held by man !

Let us ask by what conceivable process this fictitious composition could have grown in sixty years into such a spring of national life, and such a pregnant germ of grand truth, that the events of the kingdom, the predictions of the prophets, the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, the Gospel narratives, the Apostolic Epistles, and all the marvellous life of Christianity for nineteen hundred years, can have sprung out of it. For, consider what the supposition involves. A compilation of old legends is palmed upon the belief of an entire nation so completely as to mould its whole subsequent history. It was led to believe that a long series of events took place without their having had any real existence at all ; that their fore-

fathers had suffered a national captivity of some centuries—had passed through certain adventures—had received certain wonderful deliverances—had enjoyed the visible guidance of their God during forty years—and had accepted an elaborate and comprehensive system of laws, none of which things ever took place. What is still more extraordinary, they were led to believe that writings, compiled at a certain date, had always been believed by themselves prior to the date of their compilation, and that, in testimony of this belief, they had been accustomed to maintain certain rites, and to keep certain national feasts, the whole authority of which, and their whole significance, was solely dependent on these fictitious books. For, if it be said that the Sabbath, and Circumcision, and the Passover, might have existed, although the events popularly associated with them had no historical reality, then we have institutions without a reason for their institution, and this, because the events, adequately explaining and accounting for them, are rudely dissevered from their natural results.

To make these paradoxes stranger still, we must remember that the period of history, so denied to have had any actual existence, was connected with the epoch of Samuel by the events recorded in Joshua and Judges, and by the books themselves. Yet, if the Pentateuch be destroyed, how can these events be believed, and these books maintained? The fraud, supposed to have been

palmed by Samuel, intentionally or not, upon his generation, must, therefore, have included likewise the composition of these two books, and belief in events traced consecutively down to the very date of the generation deceived by the imposture. Lastly, all this was done by a man, who was so little popular among the people, that his authority was formally repudiated for another form of government altogether. For the full argument in support of the historical credibility of the Pentateuch, from the utter impossibility of palming upon an age a general belief in fictitious events, we are indebted to a small book of the last century, never better suited to the wants of the day than now,—Leslie's *Short and Easy Method with the Deists*. But, enough has been said to show that the supposition of Samuel's compilation of the Pentateuch and of its unhistorical character involves a long series of the most monstrous and incredible suppositions ever conceived by the human brain.

I am fully aware that there remains one mode of modifying, in some degree, these absurdities; and this is, by boldly denying the change of government in Samuel's days, and by extending, at pleasure, the period elapsing between his time and the separation of the two kingdoms under Rehoboam. I should not refer to this, if it were not the fact, that modern criticism has not scrupled to allow itself even such a license as this, and may be expected to do again what it has attempted to do already. But, to argue in this way, is simply

to turn facts into fiction, and to transfer all history, from the domain of evidence to the domain of the imagination. The work of the historian would become on such a plan simply the work of the novelist. The argument requiring such treatment for its support must be desperate indeed.

On the Christian hypothesis everything is as orderly and consistent as on the hypothesis of the rationalist it is dislocated and confused. A review of the subject shows that the unity of the Divine plan of revelation may be traced in four distinct directions:—

I. It is seen in the plan itself. The statement of its different parts is gathered from various portions of the work; but when these detached statements are collated they form one consistent scheme, and every part of this scheme coheres together with such logical exactness, that to deny any one part would destroy the practicability of the whole. Each portion arises necessarily from the original design of human salvation, springing from the Sovereign will of the Triune Deity before the worlds began.

II. It is seen in the orderly construction of the various books comprised in the Canon of the Inspired Scriptures. An unbroken continuity pervades the whole with such a strict, mutual dependence, that to take away one of the series is to make the others unintelligible. Especially is this the case with the Pentateuch; and if with one of these five books, more than with the others, it

is true of Deuteronomy, which supplies the key for the explanation of all the books preceding and succeeding.

III. It is seen in the historical sequence, connecting together each portion of the objective dealings of God, recorded in the Scriptures. From the call of Abraham, downwards, the history of the chosen race is marked by the development of a definite plan, consistently pursued, and finally accomplished. Its successive stages spring so closely out of each other, that if the outward circumstances and moral peculiarities of one epoch are denied, the circumstances and peculiarities of the epoch succeeding become impossible and incredible.

IV. It is seen in the mutual dependence and reaction of the objective dealings upon the record and of the record upon the dealings. From the time of Moses to St. John they have been constantly interlaced together ; the record of one age becoming the religious instructor of another. If we destroy the authority of the record, we destroy likewise the credibility of the history. If we admit the credibility of the history we must admit the authority of the record. If the books bear the indelible stamp of a design, the counsels within which they are themselves comprised, must bear it likewise. If God did really deal with mankind in the way asserted, the very object of denying the books is taken away altogether. They are two lines of truth which mu-

tually establish each other and meet in one common centre.

Now, if we should admit the principle of modern rationalism, and suppose it to prove the fragmentary character of the Bible, multiplying indefinitely the variety of its sources, the number of its authors, the diversity of its dates, this internal structural unity still remains where and what it was before. The disintegrating process does not even touch the fact, but only succeeds in making it more wonderful, and therefore creating, if possible, a more imperative necessity for the agency of a Divine superintending mind in order to account for it. For, accepting these so-called fragments, just as they are, and calling no further witnesses than are supplied by their own contents, we find them pervaded by the traces of orderly intelligence from end to end. Hence I claim a verdict in favour of the Divine inspiration of the Bible, and therefore its absolute authority as the rule of faith and practice, on the three distinct grounds stated in the first Lecture of this series.

I. I rest the claim on the doctrine of final causes and appeal to the intuitive confession of the human intellect, that the adaptation of definite means to definite ends is a competent proof of design, and that design proves a designer. Leaving, for the present, the statements of the Bible concerning its own character wholly out of the question, we find the proofs lying on the record itself. The relation held by the

Christian Scriptures towards Christianity requires no argument. They are its formal and recognised documents. They contain the history of the dealings of God with man out of which Christianity grew, and of which it constitutes the completion. They formed in themselves the great instrument for its preparation; they contain its code of laws and the statement of its distinctive doctrines; and, lastly, they supply the proclamation of Christianity, and the appointed instrument for its promulgation. In each of these four aspects the precise adaptation of the means to the end forces itself on the attention. Christianity is itself the end; but could not have existed in its actual state without these means. Without them it would have been a dispensation disjointed from all the previous history of mankind, with no hold upon its experience, supplying no evidence of its own origin and authority — a moral instrument, without any moral end to be accomplished by it. It is utterly impossible to conceive the existence of Christianity apart from these documents. I claim to have proved that a connected and consecutive plan pervades every part of them as transparent as the plan of construction, adopted by any secular writer in any ordinary book. These proofs of intelligence must be accepted as conclusive evidence of design, unless we are prepared to contradict the deepest intuitions of the understanding, and, separating cause from effect, to deny the existence of final causes altogether.

For the acknowledgment of design must follow the acknowledgment of a designer. The further question, Who this designer is? at once receives its conclusive answer. So long as a possibility existed, however remote, that the Christian Scriptures were the result of an imposture, or that they could conceivably be referred to any one date, so long it was conceivably possible that the writer should be a man. But the arguments of rationalistic criticism have been so driven, almost unconsciously to itself, into one definite channel of thought by the results of prevenient controversy, as to scatter to the winds the very possibility of such an explanation. Let it be confessed that there is a plan, and that the books pervaded by it were written by different men and at widely different dates, and it becomes certain that the real Author must be the asserted Author, even God Himself; and the more we tear up the documents into fragments, and multiply the number of the secondary human writers and the variety of their dates, the more imperatively we confirm this irresistible conclusion. The mind must be, at least, coincident with the plan conceived and executed by it, under the circumstances already proved to exist; and as the plan can be traced from our own date backwards, for a period of between three and four thousand years, no mind could have carried it out but the mind of God.

II. The intelligent plan thus proved to exist must be the more implicitly received, because it

is found to exist exactly where *à priori* considerations would lead us to expect its existence. It has, therefore, an internal harmony and coherence about itself. If there be a God, the intellectual and moral perfections naturally associated with the very idea of Him would make it certain that if He acted, He would act upon a plan. Because we are conscious that all human intelligence acts in this consistent mode, and the more consistently in proportion to the intelligence exercised. We could not consequently conceive that the attribute invariably accompanying the action of the imperfect mind could be absent from the action of the perfect mind. The antecedent probability, that if man be a fallen creature, and incapable of himself of finding out God, which the history of all human speculation proves to be the case, God would in some mode communicate to him the information needed for the guidance of his conduct, and the attainment of his happiness, is very strong in itself. But it is amazingly strengthened, when, as a point of fact, we find a revelation claiming to have emanated from this very being for this very purpose, and discover on examining it, that the plan of it is constructed on those precise principles which we can ourselves see to be inseparable from the objects professed by such a revelation. When, further, the description of God Himself contained in these Scriptures not only meets the highest conceptions formed by the human mind itself of His character and attributes, but carries them to

a height of grandeur and sublimity beyond the reach of man, the conclusion that all His workings would be in accordance with a fore-ordained plan is correspondingly confirmed. It is impossible to trace the details of a design into particulars so minute as to place it beyond the circle of a personal moral governor of the world, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent; since the acknowledgment of His attributes involves the assertion that the revelation of them would be upon a definite plan, and that this plan would exhibit the characteristics of broad comprehension and astonishing detail which are exhibited in His works of creation and providence. All our human experience teaches us that the perfection of a whole can only arise from the perfection of each minute part comprehended in it.

III. We find a still further test provided, of a most rigid kind, for trying these conclusions. So long as the existence of a plan alone was affirmed, without any specific statement of its particulars, a wide loophole was evidently left for evasion and defence. For in this case, the nature of the plan could be only conjectural, and the conjecture formed by the critic could not bind the Divine Author of the revelation. Whenever, therefore, any objection was urged on the ground of omission in the plan itself, or of failure in the execution of its details, it remained open to charge the cause, not on the objective plan but on the subjective conjecture. The whole conception would have re-

mained too vague and uncertain for exact examination, too indefinite for positive proof or disproof. But we pass from the darkness into the full daylight, when the revelation asserting the existence of the plan explains likewise the nature of its details. I have proved this to be the case, and that the Scriptures supply the outlines of the plan on which revelation has been constructed, not as human conjectures, but as the positive statements of the Word itself. The logical connexion existing between its several parts is itself a proof of inspiration, because our knowledge of them is gathered from various books of Scripture differing widely in their secondary authorship and in the date of their composition, and that statements so gathered should admit of being harmonised into one complete and definite plan is itself an evidence of a very cogent kind.

But further; the knowledge of the plan in its details involves a still more rigid test, for it enables us to place the plan side by side with the execution, and, comparing them together, to trace the failure or the success of the accomplishment. I have shown that the plan and the execution of it do exactly coincide. I do not profess, indeed, to have traced it out in all its particulars, but I have taken those special portions of the Scriptures where, if anywhere, the execution has failed, for they are the portions pronounced by unfriendly criticism to be the most fragmentary and unhistorical. If I have succeeded in tracing the

connected plan through the Pentateuch and the books of Joshua and Judges, and proving the unbroken continuity pervading them, that proof extends its own force throughout all the rest of the revelation. If the evidence stands good at the point where it is most called into question, it may well be accepted elsewhere. The exact plan and the exact accomplishment of the plan equally demand the submission of the whole intellect and heart to the Divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.

But another conclusion of very great importance equally follows from this proof. If revelation be constructed on so strict a plan, that throughout all the books composing it there is nothing either deficient or superfluous, the authority of inspiration is given to every part of the revelation alike without distinction or difference. It can no longer be open to any man to draw a line of separation at his own pleasure between one part and another, and to accept the one part as Divine, while he rejects the other as human. I use the words "divine" and "human" solely because they are ordinarily employed in this relation; strictly understood, they are inaccurately used in relation to the Word. Because every part of Scripture without exception is equally Divine and equally human—Divine in the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, human in the distinctive peculiarities of the men who were inspired. The two elements are

conjoined everywhere, and there is no portion of the Word where either the Divine or the human can be taken away. But the words are commonly used to denote what is supposed to be inspired and what is supposed to be uninspired in the sacred Scriptures. The distinction is of long standing, but never has been so prominently urged as in our own day. It is one full of importance, and pregnant with the most fatal consequences to the practical authority of Scripture. For if some parts only of the Bible are inspired and other parts are not, it must be left to some "verifying faculty" in man to distinguish between them; and as the distinction is variable and human, so, in point of fact, the authority allowed to what is believed to be inspired would be variable and human likewise. Of these results I have treated elsewhere, and will not enlarge upon them now. Moreover, the disastrous consequences of the distinction would not prove it to be false. Its refutation must be drawn from an internal examination of Scripture itself. I believe that it will be found in the argument of these Lectures. Let it once be admitted that all the books of Scripture are pervaded by a continuous and consistent plan, and the distinction drawn between the authority of one part and the authority of another must necessarily be given up. The plan may be called into question, but if it be admitted, the other distinction must inevitably fall. Not only so, but the key thus

supplied solves at once the whole difficulty out of which the distinction itself has taken its origin.

For if the entire plan be of God, every part entering into the totality must be of God likewise. In all things affecting human action many minor influences are combined in every great effect, and the great effect could not be produced without the minor influences. Every link of the chain must be equally strong, or else the strength of the chain itself is gone. I have shown that those portions of the Bible which appear at first sight most secular are yet replete with religious meaning, and fill a necessary place in the sequence of the Divine dealings, and of the Divine revelation recording them. If they were absent, not only would the revelation become incomplete, but it would also become unintelligible from the omission of the links uniting one portion with another, and one event with another. These parts of the Scriptures, as they are contained in the same plan, are therefore invested with the same authority as the most recondite doctrines and the most solemn declarations of the Word, in the same way that all parts of some human mechanism contribute towards the perfection of the whole.

The familiar illustration of a watch will enable me to state the distinctions to be drawn in this matter with more precision, than could be done without some such guiding reference to common experience. For the argument, reiterated over

and over again, for limiting Divine inspiration to certain portions of the Scriptures only, instead of extending it to all, is based on the varying character of their subject-matter. Some portions of Scriptures speak of things wholly beyond and above human knowledge, and such as could not possibly be known except by a direct revelation from God. This distinction is true, and is sometimes applied to matters of history as well as matters of doctrine; as, for instance, to the facts of creation, which could not be known to Moses from any human resources. At other times the distinction is drawn broadly between matters of doctrine on one side and matters of historical fact on the other; the one being referred to a Divine inspiration, and being admitted to possess a Divine authority, while the other are referred to the human writer altogether, and are supposed to partake of the mistakes and misapprehensions incident to all human knowledge, and especially to the earlier times of the world. My reply is, that what are called the secular, and what are called the religious, are equally parts of one great plan directed to one great object, and therefore are invested equally with the unerring authority of its Divine Author.

But the illustration of the watch suggests the retort, and, in the suggestion, clears away its ambiguities. All the parts of the watch do not fill places equally important in the whole mechanism. The spring or the balance are not to be compared,

in the delicacy of their construction and the function they perform in the whole, to the pivot on which they turn, or the plate which merely serves to hold the several parts of the complicated mechanism together. In the same way, and to the same extent, the distinction between the doctrinal and the historical portions of Scripture may be admitted. To the individual man it cannot be a matter of the same importance to hold the true doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, and to be assured of the exact veracity of the Old-Testament narratives; and yet, nevertheless, in the scheme of theological belief, it may be as vitally necessary to hold the inspiration of the statement relative to the one as the inspiration of the statement relative to the other. For, in regard to the watch, a defect of adjustment in a pivot or in a plate would be as fatal to the accuracy of the whole machinery, as a defect of adjustment in the spring or the balance. In neither case would the works maintain their regularity of action. The defect might be more easily corrected, but its continuance would be fatal to the perfection of the watch. In the same manner a matter of historical event may lie more nearly to the circle of human knowledge than a matter of spiritual doctrine; and yet an error in the one would be as fatal to the integrity of the whole Word as an error in the other. The defect would not only invalidate its claims for authority, and destroy all moral security for its absolute truth, but it would likewise break the continuity and

consistency of the whole plan of revelation, to which the secular history and the spiritual doctrine are equally related.

But further yet, the varying degree of delicacy and perfection required in the workmanship of the different parts of the watch illustrates another truth. Some master in his art would no more think of himself executing the commoner parts of the mechanism than he would think of delegating to any inferior skill its more delicate and difficult portions. This is true; and yet it is equally true that, in such a case, the work of the inferior hand would be rigidly submitted to the skill of the superior, the higher workman, taking the rough work of the less skilful mechanic, would incorporate it into the production of his own skill; would examine it, test it, adjust it, free it from excess or defect; and thus take it up into his own work, so that the completed mechanism would be truly and entirely his, and would involve upon him alone the responsibility of its failure or its success. He could not plead, in case of failure, the defective workmanship of the inferior artisan, because it was his work to perceive defects if they existed; and either to correct them, or select some other more suitable production in place of what he found to be unsuitable. In the same manner, God, in giving a revelation, may have used existing materials, and yet, by using them, have placed His own seal on their truth, and stamped on them His own infallible authority. The Christian advo-

cate has no interest whatever in denying that the ancient Scriptures may contain documents existing before the time of Moses, or traditions either in a written or in an unwritten shape; or in depreciating the distinction, most important in regard to separate passages, between inspiration and revelation. To confound the admission of this probable fact,—for criticism cannot carry the conclusion beyond a probability—with any denial, or even any qualification, of the plenary inspiration of the whole Scriptures, without exception, would be simply to misapprehend the question at issue. The inferior materials, selected and used just so far as the inspiring mind of God knew them to be true, and saw them to be suitable, lose their own inferiority in the infallible wisdom employing them; they become incorporated with the other portions as an integral part and parcel of the whole revelation, and partake of its absolute authority. Let the preceding steps be granted, that the scriptural books are arranged upon a definite plan; that this plan involves intelligent design, and that the mind, framing and executing the design, can only be the mind of God, and the further conclusion is demanded by every law of human reasoning, that every part of the Scriptures, without exception, proceeds from the same Authorship, is invested with the same infallibility, and claims the same absolute authority.

But, lastly, it follows that revelation is supernatural altogether and must necessarily be super-

natural, because it concerns the relation of God to man. To refuse credit to any portions of the Scriptures because they involve the miraculous, is really to deny the possibility of a revelation altogether. Yet rationalism rests avowedly on dislike of the spiritual and supernatural elements prominent in the Bible, and consequently in the religion founded upon it. I mean by the spiritual its distinctive religious doctrines, such as man's created dependence, his fall and the depravity of his nature, his state of condemnation and need of an atonement, the necessity of an inward regeneration, the sovereignty of God's will, and a future state of reward and punishment. By the supernatural I mean, in the first place, the Divine origin of the Scriptures, the miraculous interference of God in the fortunes of the chosen race, the incarnation of the Deity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; and as interwoven with these and dependent upon them, the action of the Holy Ghost on the enlightenment of the understanding and the regeneration of the heart.

Here, again, we see the indivisible unity uniting all the parts and all the doctrines of revelation. For this Divine agency holds the whole together. All the books of Scripture, and all its truths are like clusters of separate jewels, combined in such glorious beauty, that we know there must be some common bond to keep each separate gem in its place and order. We look closely, and we see the golden setting behind, blending the gems

into their unity of design and of effect. This setting of gold is the immediate agency of God, pervading both the truths and the books recording them. The spiritual element is simply the result of the supernatural: get rid of the one, and you get rid of the other. Rationalism accurately perceives this, and, therefore, bends all its powers to the accomplishment of this object. Give up the supernatural, and that revelation, which on the belief of it was an orderly and consistent whole, immediately falls to pieces. This dislocation effects not simply the Scriptural books, but the fabric of human history,—not simply the history of the Hebrew race, but at every point where it has come into contact with the world outside them, the history of the Gentile races also, including the whole records of Christianity, and of the effects it has wrought upon the world down to our own times. Everything becomes confused and inexplicable. So complete is the ruin, that out of the shattered fragments into which the denial of the supernatural element would reduce all history, no human ingenuity has yet succeeded in suggesting a conjectural reconstruction not disproved by notorious facts and hemmed about with the most incredible contradictions.

Nor can it be replied that, among these fragments, precious truths still retain their certainty and their blessedness. For the supernatural element being withdrawn, everything becomes human, and is reduced to the dead level of human

possibilities, and the shifting uncertainty of human probabilities. No play of fancy, no vivacity of genius, no ornament of feeling, no graphic vividness of outward illustration, can effectually hide the dreary desolation. The ruin made of revelation itself, and of its orderly structure and glorious fabric, is not more complete than the ruin made of all human hope, and of everything great and noble in man.

It was to be expected that the operations of the Divine wisdom would result in a scheme wide as His own government, complex as the relations it involves, perpetual as the longest generations of mankind, and high as the utmost capacity of His immortal nature. The effort to break the unity of this scheme, so as to retain what the human mind approves while getting rid of what it dislikes, has ever failed and must ever fail. The very failure clearly attests the bands of Omniscience and Omnipotence that hold the whole together; for had the system been human, human hands could have broken it up and have reconstructed it again. As the case is, to deny a part is to deny the whole; to destroy a part is to destroy the whole, the whole not including any human corruptions of the text or any scheme of human interpretation, but the whole as God made it, and as it is presented in the pure text of the inspired Scriptures.

In this universal ruin every human hope is swept away. In the light of revelation man is

an immortal being, made in the Divine image, and the object of a Divine love, fallen indeed, but redeemed by the atoning blood of the Son of God, and to be regenerated into more than his original glory by the operations of the Holy Ghost. This life is but a journey, with many a rich and glorious gift to ennoble it, but still no final state but the road into a yet brighter condition. Man is but a stranger here on earth, and heaven is his home. But take this light away, and man himself becomes a bundle of miserable contradictions; the world one gigantic paradox; human history a confused and inexplicable phantasmagoria; life a dream, and the world beyond it a vague and dreadful fear. Were a new proof needed of the truth of the inspired doctrine of human depravity, it could be found nowhere more deeply stamped, or more pathetically expressed, than in the struggling efforts of human unbelief to get rid of a revelation which throws light on the dark intellect, gives life to the weary soul, and holds forth amid the feverish and ceaseless vicissitudes of human experience, a glorious immortality.

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