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ESSAYS  
ON  
THE PENTATEUCH.

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ESSAYS

ON

THE PENTATEUCH.

BY

HARVEY GOODWIN, D.D.,

*DEAN OF ELY.*

Vidimus quia bona sunt singula, et omnia valde, in Verbo  
tuo, in Unico tuo,

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## PREFACE.

HESE Essays were commenced at the request of a friend, who was at the time the Editor of a Periodical, in which the first four of them appeared. They were then discontinued, as not being well adapted to the class of readers for whom the Periodical in question was designed. It seemed to me however that readers might be found for them, and I determined therefore to form them into a volume.

Those who read what I have written will probably be struck by the omission of all definite reference to the writings, which have chiefly stirred up in England the controversy

concerning the Pentateuch in the last few years. I have desired to keep myself and my readers as much as possible clear of the details of that controversy. Abundance has been written by others, and I have no right to imagine that I could add anything of special value. But I thought it possible, that, without entangling myself in those details, I might help a few of my brethren, whose minds may have been troubled or whose vision perplexed, by putting down some simple thoughts and suggesting some general principles, from which the divine character of the Pentateuch would follow as an easy consequence: or perhaps I should rather say, that I trusted that the tone of my book and its method of dealing with the subject might help to steady some, whose minds may have been shaken and troubled with regard to the reality of that divine character.

For in truth the misfortune of the late controversy has been, not that certain books of Holy Scripture have been submitted to critical examination, which is right as well as unavoidable, but that owing to the tone of the criticism, and the quarter from which it has emanated, a widespread feeling has been produced that the claims of the Pentateuch to the possession of a divine character have been seriously shaken; or, at all events, whether shaken or not, that an effort has been made to shake them. Popularly, I conceive, Bishop Colenso's work on the Pentateuch is regarded as a direct attack upon its divine character; and whatever may be the correctness and justice of this view, there can be no question in the mind of any Christian believer as to the calamitous consequences of its prevalence.

This being so, it seemed to me possible

that some good might ensue from an attempt to exhibit in a plain and popular form a general view of the divine character of the Pentateuch, suggested by recent controversies.

I have two remarks to make concerning the view thus exhibited.

First, from the nature of the book, as being a volume of essays and not a complete treatise, there is no attempt to exhaust the subject. I have chiefly endeavoured to place the reader in what to me appears to be a good position for examining it.

Secondly, I by no means expect that what I have written will appear satisfactory to all minds. To some it may appear to be injudicious, perhaps even mischievous: but I have a strong belief that there are also some, by whom it will be regarded as wholesome and profitable.

The first seven essays are what I originally intended to produce. The eighth is of the nature of a note, illustrative of a point slightly touched upon in the earlier part of the volume. The last four were projected when I determined upon publication. They treat briefly of very great subjects, and open fields of thought upon which every one must enter who wishes to understand the Pentateuch. The last especially introduces the question of questions, to which all discussions concerning any of the Old Testament Scriptures must be directly or indirectly subservient.

H. G.

THE DEANERY, ELY.

*October, 1867.*



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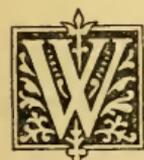
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# ESSAYS ON THE PENTATEUCH.

## *ESSAY I.*

### THE WISDOM OF THE PENTATEUCH.



WE have heard so much lately of the critical examination of the Pentateuch, that there is danger of simple folks falling into the belief that the chief use of the Pentateuch is to give ingenious people a subject for critical examination. Instead of regarding it as a revelation of the Name of God, we are likely to be tempted to the not very profitable employment of counting the number of times Almighty God is called by a certain name in a certain chapter, of setting the result against the number of times He is called by another name, and striking the balance. We are tempted to lose our hold upon the grand description of the creation of man in God's image, by following

teachers who lead us into all kinds of geological pitfalls. The solemn teaching of Noah's flood is likely to be absorbed in contemplation of the consequences of the law which tells us that water will find its own level. The beauty of the patriarchal history is in danger of being eclipsed by certain puzzles concerning the number of Jacob's grandchildren; and the exodus—that marvellous parable of human pilgrimage and of the history of Christ's church—may vanish amidst the difficulties presented by the facts and figures which the history of the exodus contains.

Hence it may be of use to recall the minds of Christian people to the truth that, after all, the Pentateuch has another use than that of serving as a subject for critical examination. Critical examination is very desirable in its way, very useful, very necessary; but by itself it will be about as unsatisfactory as if we were to regard our fathers and mothers as interesting subjects for the examination of an anatomist, instead of regarding them in their living and loving connection with ourselves as their children. I trust that nothing which this Essay contains will be regarded as in any degree hostile to the principles of candid inquiry: but I believe that there is a method of

inquiry which is needed in addition to that which is the work of ordinary criticism, even in its best and most candid mood : this method is analogous to that which teaches us to look for marks of divine wisdom in what we call the works of nature, and reveals to us the superintending mind. Hence I have given to this, and several other Essays which follow it, the title, "The Wisdom of the Pentateuch." My intention is to draw out and present prominently some of the features, which it may be presumed that the Author of the Pentateuch intended to be prominent features of the book—to show how wise it is, how it meets the wants that it was intended to meet, and how it does this independently of the arithmetical, geological, zoological, astronomical, chronological, and other puzzles, which may be raised in connection with it.

I have said, in the preceding paragraph, "the Author of the Pentateuch," and I may be asked, by the way, what my opinion on the question of the authorship is. To tell the truth, when I wrote the words I was old-fashioned enough to mean by the phrase, "Author of the Pentateuch," none other than God himself. I was thinking of that "God who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in

time past to our fathers, and who hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son;" and, I am sure, without going into any minute questions concerning the mode of authorship, that God our heavenly Father has most claim to the authorship of this wonderful book. But, if we descend from heaven to earth, as for certain purposes we very justly may, and if we speak of the author of the Pentateuch with reference to the human hand which wrote its pages, then I should say that, in the present state of our inquiry, we should do well to leave the question of authorship unsolved, or rather without attempt at solution. The remarks which will here be offered on "the wisdom of the Pentateuch" will have to do much more with the book, than with him who wrote it. For my own part, I have no objection to the discussion of every theory of authorship, which does not involve men whom we are bound to honour in a charge of knavery, and which does not cut away the divine character which belongs to the book, whoever may have been its human author. If, for instance, it be thought that Moses collected documents which were already in existence, that he put these together, and added those which were more especially connected with his own ministry, and that the work under-

went various revisions, and was brought to its present condition in the time of Ezra,—I see nothing to which I need of necessity object in such a supposition: nothing, I mean, based upon the essential character of the book. The supposition may be erroneous in part, or it may contain an incomplete account of the authorship, but there is nothing in it which should make us say at once that we cannot accept it as a reasonable account of the construction of the Pentateuch. As I have said, however, I should prefer to leave this question on one side, as not touching those points which I wish especially to bring forward. The wisdom, not the authorship, of the Pentateuch is my subject, and for my purpose it will be enough to regard the book as the Israelites, to whom primarily it belonged, certainly did regard it—namely, as containing God's message to His chosen people, God's oracles, God's law.

Now let us, for a moment, consider who and what these chosen people were. When they read the Pentateuch as a holy book in their synagogues or churches, they were a settled people in that land which we now call the Holy Land. How did they get there? whence did they come? what was their history? They had an account of

their settlement in the country, just as we English people have an account of our settlement in this country. We say that there was originally another race inhabiting England, and that that race retreated before a new and conquering race, whom, in general terms, we call Saxons; and we say that these Saxons, with an ingredient of Danes, and subsequently, with an ingredient of Normans, formed the stock of the present English nation. Almost every nation can, in like manner, give an account of itself; and in the present age the history of the natives inhabiting various portions of the globe has been made a distinct scientific subject, and it has been found possible, by reference to language, to religious customs, to written books, and by other means, to trace, in the most curious and interesting manner, the families to which different nations belong. The people, then, who inhabited the Holy Land, more than two thousand years ago, and who looked upon the Pentateuch as one of their great national treasures, had an account to give of their origin and of the way in which it came to pass that they were settled in the land in which they then lived. They said that they came into their land out of Egypt; that they had been slaves for several ge-

nerations in Egypt; and that they had come out of captivity under the leadership of a great captain and lawgiver, who might be regarded, in a certain sense, as the founder of their nation. Now, to say that there is anything violently improbable in this is manifestly absurd; this account of the Israelitish nation is not only conceivably true, but it has this to recommend it, that it is hard to say whence it could have come if it had not been true; moreover, the belief which the Israelites had concerning their origin was so bound up, not only with their religious books, but with their religious life, their national customs, their daily habits, that really any doubt upon this point out-sceptics scepticism.

And, therefore, I shall venture to assume that the belief, which the Israelites had concerning themselves, was founded in truth—that is to say, that they were originally slaves in Egypt, and had made their escape from their oppressors. This assumption, it will be observed, has nothing to do with the number of slaves who escaped, the agency by which they were delivered, or the name of the man who, in God's providence, was the means of delivering them; it simply amounts to this, that the people to whom, and for whom, the

Pentateuch was written, were men who had been in a low, depressed position, and had been raised out of their low estate ; and the reason why stress is laid upon the point here is, because it helps much to the understanding of all books to know something of their occasion and origin ; and especially with regard to the Pentateuch it is true that we shall be more likely to appreciate and understand it, if, instead of regarding it merely as the first portion of a Christian's Bible, we regard it chiefly as the book which was addressed to that nation of Israelites, who were brought out of Egypt with "a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm."

Having thus placed before our eyes the people for whom, in the first instance, the book was intended, let us take the book in hand and see what it tells us. It opens by telling us, that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now, although these words must be as familiar as household words to every one who reads this essay, I shall venture to enlarge upon the wisdom of them ; and I think it not unlikely that many persons, who have seen them over and over again, may, nevertheless, find that there is more meaning in them than they have yet supposed, and deeper wisdom

than they have been in the habit of attributing to them.

In the first place, let me refer to the condition and to the spiritual wants of the emancipated slaves of whom I have been speaking—the whole Israelitish nation, whom we have agreed to regard as a people brought out of Egypt, and redeemed from oppression. These people certainly believed that they were brought out of Egypt, and redeemed from oppression, by the special providence of the God who watched over them. They could, in fact, hardly believe anything else, for their sacred books, curiously enough, dwelt upon nothing more strongly than the dastardly character of the nation. When we, in these days, hear of the successful colonisation of a new country by English people, we are in the habit of saying, “Ah, how wonderful is the spread of our noble Anglo-Saxon race!” We talk as though it conferred credit upon ourselves, and we treat our conquests as all bought by British or rather Anglo-Saxon blood and treasure; it is very natural to do so; and I should suppose that the Israelites must have felt the same temptation to glorify the Hebrew race that we feel to glorify the Anglo-Saxon race: but, somehow or other, they were prevented from yielding to the

temptation. Instead of talking about the spread of the noble Hebrew race, they said, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name be the praise!" But then this belief in the God who, as they supposed, saved them out of Egypt, and made them into a nation, and brought them into Canaan, while it prevented them from glorying in the noble Hebrew race, was in danger of contracting an Israelite's divinity within limits too narrow and confined. "This God is our God" might be construed to mean this—"God is our God only; we have a God who looks after us, and the Canaanites had a god, or gods, who looked after them—and our God was the stronger; and therefore we have subdued them, and taken their land." A very mischievous perversion this, calculated to cramp an Israelite's feelings, and destroy the effect of his faith in God. But how could such a perversion stand in the face of the opening words of the Pentateuch? Who is this God, who has redeemed you Israelites out of Egypt? who has made you what you are? who has honoured you as His peculiar people? Surely not a God who takes His place as one out of many, and who is only stronger than others, and therefore able to subdue them; but the One God who made heaven and earth, and

all things that are in them. Was not this a magnificent revelation of God's Name? and was it not just the view which an Israelite required to raise him from his narrow, self-centering existence, to the true conception of his position as one of the creatures of the One great God?

But there is another view to be taken of this opening verse of the Pentateuch. The Israelite's mission in the world was pre-eminently that of protesting against idolatry. How he performed his mission it is not necessary for us to inquire just now; but, undoubtedly, one of the great needs of humanity in the early ages of the world was a protest against idolatry, and undoubtedly the only effectual protest—I had almost said the only protest of any kind whatsoever, that was made in any part of the earth—was that which was embodied in the law and religion of the Israelitish people. Whatever might be the superiority or inferiority of the Hebrew race in other respects, undoubtedly they enjoyed a light with regard to what we call natural theology,—with regard to the relation in which the world stands to its Maker,—which was not enjoyed by other nations, even those which were apparently better educated than themselves. Do not let us undervalue this light: do not let us

treat the tendency to fall down and worship creatures as a disease belonging to certain enfeebled and blinded races. If it be a disease, it is the universal disease of mankind; and if we be tempted to regard the disease as one from which mankind in general are in no danger, it is because we are so accustomed to the healthy atmosphere of the Christian Church, that we hardly realise the amount of miasma and malaria which the rising of the Sun of Righteousness has chased away. No; whatever it may be now, however apparently self-evident, however much we may be tempted to regard the truth of the opening verse of the Pentateuch as a truism, certainly it contains the very light which the world needed when darkness covered the earth and thick darkness the people; certainly, also, if the Hebrew nation was to be a missionary nation on behalf of God and His truth, the patent of their commission could not open with weightier and more pertinent words than these, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

The reader, who has had patience to follow me thus far, may be disposed to say, "Oh, then, you consider the first verse of the Pentateuch useful for the Hebrews in their peculiar position, but not of any great force now." Kind reader, I have a

different opinion from this concerning the wisdom of the Pentateuch. I have endeavoured to put before you the special fitness of the opening revelation of the Pentateuch for the wants of those people to whom it was originally addressed, in order that I may be able to impress more forcibly the feeling of the wonderful wisdom, which has made the opening of the Pentateuch an invaluable possession for all people in all times. Strange as it may seem, it is, nevertheless, certainly true, that the progress of science and civilisation has brought us into such a condition, that the announcement contained in the first verse of the Pentateuch has become as important and as necessary as it was in the ancient, unscientific, uncivilised days. The Hebrew people were brought into contact with nations, who worshipped the host of heaven—as indeed it was likely they would. Who that has watched the glories of the rising sun, or has seen the moon in her brightness, and the countless multitude of stars, especially in the cloudless setting of a clear southern sky, can wonder that men, whose only knowledge of God was what their senses taught them, and who knew how the heavenly bodies were connected with the seasons and with the earth's fruitfulness, should satisfy their instinct

of devotion by offering worship to those glorious lights? This worship would be in the true sense of the word *superstition*<sup>1</sup>, and superstition would become idolatry, and would gradually degrade itself more and more, until it became the abominable system of false religion which the Israelites found in the depraved nations of Canaan. And we may persuade ourselves that superstition of this kind has been for ever banished from civilised Europe. Whether it really has been so banished is another question. I confess that, some little time ago,

<sup>1</sup> I say "in the true sense of the word *superstition*," though in reality it is somewhat difficult to determine what the true sense of the word is; Cicero must have been much at a loss for the etymology when he wrote, (*De Nat. Deorum*, II. 28) "qui totos dies precabantur et immolabant, ut sui sibi liberi superstites essent, *superstitiosi* sunt appellati; quod nomen postea latius patuit;" but the distinction made by the same writer is very important; "non philosophi solum, verum etiam majores nostri, superstitionem a religione separaverunt." Some persons speak as though superstition was a question of degree, and as merely implying a greater amount of belief on the part of the man stigmatized as superstitious than is possessed by the man who so stigmatizes him; thus they reduce the question to one of quantity, rather than quality: but this seems to be a mistake. Belief is one thing; superstition is another. Belief has to do with substance, with reality; superstition with *superstance*, if such a word may be coined, with the outside, not the inner reality of things.

when I saw that a distinguished scientific lecturer was stated to have spoken of the sun as really creating animals, I felt some doubt whether the worship of the host of heaven was so completely exploded as people fancy; but the point which I wish to put before the reader is this, that the tendency of the progress of science, the increase of our knowledge of the laws of Nature, our greater power of tracing effects to causes, and those causes to other causes still further remote—the tendency, in fact, of that physical knowledge, which constitutes, to a great extent, the power and the glory of our age, is to take away our eyes from the Maker, and fix them upon His works, to the exclusion of Him. In olden times, for example, the thunderclap would be the voice of God, by us it may be regarded only as an electric explosion; the rainbow which Noah and his family regarded as God's bow in the cloud, and the sign of His covenant, may be to us only a phenomenon of light and raindrops; the motions of the heavenly bodies, in which the Hebrew was taught to see God's handiwork, may to us be merely the results of the laws of motion and universal gravitation. Of course, I have no intention of depreciating the results of science, or of saying that we ought not to be infinitely thankful

for our modern knowledge of the laws of the universe: of course, also, I do not mean to insinuate that the profoundest knowledge of these laws is inconsistent with, or inimical to, the most entire and childlike acceptance of revealed truth; but certainly, if there be a practical tendency—as undoubtedly there is a practical tendency—in the progress of knowledge to produce a confusion in the minds of many people between God and His works, to substitute *Nature* in the place of a *personal God*, or (to speak more technically) to put a cold, miserable *Pantheism* in the place of that genuine *Theism*, upon which alone the Gospel of Christ can be built, then, it is not for the people of a scientific age like our own to deny the wisdom which caused the Pentateuch to open with the magnificent announcement, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

## ESSAY II.

### THE WISDOM OF THE PENTATEUCH.

**I**F any one should be asked to describe the contents of the first chapter of the Pentateuch, he might say, if he was fond of hard words, that it contained the Mosaic Cosmogony; or, if he wished to speak more simply, he might say that it contained the Bible account of Creation. A great deal has been said of late concerning this cosmogony or creation, and there has been (as every one knows) much argument as to whether the history, which the first chapter of Genesis gives us, is consistent or not with what science teaches. Some controversialists say that it is not; others as confidently say that it is; the former regard the latter as stupid or ignorant, and the latter return the compliment by stigmatising the former as infidels. The writer of this essay thinks that some views may be put forward, upon

which both sides may look with advantage, and which usually are not made so prominent as perhaps they ought to be.

Let us observe in the first place, that the opening chapter of the Pentateuch, or of Genesis, contains an account of *creation*—not of changes in an existing order of things due to causes which we call *natural*, but of the first making, construction, fabrication of that glorious universe, of which we men form an important part. Now no memoir which any scientific man writes, or can write, ever deals with this subject. Look into a volume of the *Transactions* of the Royal Society, or of the Geological Society, or into any other scientific work, and you will see at once what I mean. The geologist, for example, takes the earth in a certain condition, and traces its changes into other conditions; it is the revolutions and alterations which the globe has undergone, not the origin of the globe, with which the geologist has to employ himself. In like manner the historian takes the nation, whose history he is to write, as the raw material upon which he is to work: he does not trouble himself to explain how men came upon the earth; but, knowing their existence, he deals with their actions, and records their achievements. Creation, therefore, lies alto-

gether beyond the domain of science ; science has no tools with which to work upon it, and no terms with which to express it. If all the scientific men that exist were to be brought together into one grand conclave, astronomers, geologists, chemists, botanists, zoologists—the most notable representatives of every actual or conceivable *ology*—they would be utterly incompetent to give any account whatever of creation properly so called.

The reader will see the reason of this more clearly, if he remembers that all natural science is what we call *experimental* science ; that is to say, it all rests upon experience or experiment. Mathematics come in to our help in enabling us to trace out results, to connect cause with consequence, to generalise, to verify ; but after all, the natural sciences rest fundamentally upon experience or experiment. Now, it is clear that in the case of creation we have no experience to guide us ; we know nothing of it ; all our experience is connected with changes in the existing universe ; we know of *transformations* of matter, but nothing of the *formation* of matter ; and, therefore, if we attempt for a moment to throw our minds into a condition of things antecedent to the existence of “the heaven and the earth,” we simply find ourselves in that dark-

ness which "was upon the face of the deep" before "God said, Let there be light."

Hence there would seem to be an underlying and original mistake of no small magnitude in the views of those, who treat the first chapter of Genesis as if it could be brought alongside of a memoir in the *Philosophical Transactions*, and criticised in the same way. It is *not* a scientific treatise, and ought not so to be regarded; its sphere is divinity, not physics, and it is only physical in the same way as man is physical, and as you must first regard man in his bodily earthly personality, before you can regard him as a spiritual being having a living soul and heavenly destinies.

Let us observe further, that not only is science incompetent to describe creation, but human language is unable to supply the terms in which the description can be attempted. As it is no disrespect to say what I have already said of science, so it is no disrespect to say what I now say of language. The words which constitute language are all of necessity borrowed from experience; and as soon as ever we travel beyond experience, we travel beyond language. Of course we may use, and do use, language to describe things which exist in this unknown region; but we can only do this by

figures, by means of pictures drawn from what we see. Take St John's vision in the Apocalypse as an example: a *door* was opened in heaven, and a *voice* like a *trumpet* talked with the favoured apostle, and said, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter;" and immediately he saw a *throne*, and one sitting on the throne who was like a *jasper* and *sardine stone*, and a *rainbow* round the throne like an *emerald*. Then there were *seats* round the throne, and *elders* sitting upon them clothed in *white raiment*, and having on their heads *crowns* of gold—and so on throughout the whole vision<sup>1</sup>. It is a vision of heaven, but all the objects seen are of necessity described as things of earth; human language can describe nothing else, and when applied to things of heaven, or to things in any way transcending experience, it can only describe by way of parable, or comparison, or figure.

This is, I think, sufficiently clear; and it requires no deep study of the science of language to make intelligible what I have now been writing. What I wish, however, particularly to press upon the reader's attention is, that creation is one of those transcendent subjects, which, in the nature of things,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iv. 1—4.

human language cannot describe: creation is not an operation of Nature, it is something which precedes the operations of Nature; creation is presupposed by science, and science has nothing more to do with it; if it be necessary to have some account of creation as the foundation of morals and divinity, then the account must be in some sense a figurative account; it must be couched in language, which is accommodated to this special purpose, and which cannot be examined and dissected like that in which a scientific man gives an account of a volcano, or a storm, or a series of rocks, or an eclipse of the sun.

With this preface, as to the conditions under which the opening of the Pentateuch, if it is to deal with the subject of creation, must, in the nature of things, be written, let us see what is the actual comment upon, or development of, the first sentence, which tells us that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

The most prominent point is, perhaps, this, that the whole work of creation is attributed at once and immediately to the operation of God. Science, in general, says nothing about God, and, in general, does so with propriety. God is assumed, so to speak. He has given laws, and man has to

investigate those laws ; and to attribute anything in a scientific discussion to God would be simply to confess ignorance of the physical cause to which the phenomenon or result in question was due. So far as the Divine hand is introduced as an agent, so far science has failed to do its own peculiar work. But it is different with divinity. There God is everything ; secondary causes are nothing. “It is the Lord, that commandeth the waters ; it is the glorious God, that maketh the thunder ; it is the Lord, that ruleth the sea ; the voice of the Lord is mighty in operation ; the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice<sup>1</sup>.” One of the grandest revelations that our Lord Jesus Christ ever gave us of His Father—one of the truths upon which we can repose most securely and peacefully, when doubts and fears darken our hearts—is that simple declaration, that God numbers the hairs of our heads, and that no sparrow can fall to the ground without His will. Pray observe, therefore, the manner in which, in the opening of the Pentateuch, the Divine creating Person comes before us in His Divine creating personality ; and to impress upon the mind more clearly the feature of the first chapter of Genesis which I wish you to observe, please to

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxix. 3, 4.

count for yourself, reader, the number of times the Name of God is introduced into the chapter as the name of the active Creator of the world and the things which are in it. I have made the reckoning; and my result is, that in this first chapter of Genesis, containing thirty-one verses, God appears more than thirty times, or, on an average, once in every verse. Fancy a scientific memoir with the name of God in every short paragraph, and then you will see the absurdity of treating the Scripture account of creation as a scientific treatise; and you will, moreover, be likely to perceive what kind of a treatise it really is.

The wisdom of the Pentateuch, or, rather, the wisdom of God its author, seems to me conspicuous in this characteristic of its opening. *God said*, is the key-note of it. If you ask, How came all these things that we see into being? the wisest and only answer is, *God said, Let them be.* Verse after verse brings before us, again and again, the same wonderworking fiat; and upon this account of creation the wisest and simplest meet, as on common ground, and science and divinity shake hands. It is no trifling compliment to a book (to speak after the manner of this world) that it should open with language, which is as appropriate as can

possibly be to the condition of those half-civilised, half-slavish people to whom it was addressed, and which yet seems, in its simple grandeur, to be as suitable for conveying all that can be known of the Divine mystery of creation to those who are conversant with the science of Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century; and it must be positively startling to any reader of Holy Scripture, who takes a low view of its character and authorship, to compare the first chapter of Genesis with the first chapter of St John's Gospel, and there find Him who is the centre and subject of the New Testament connected with the creative Word of which we read in the opening of the Old, by the oracular sentence, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God<sup>1</sup>."

Yes, a person may say, this is very well, but you are trying to throw dust in our eyes, and to prevent us from examining whether the cosmogony of the Pentateuch does really agree with what science teaches us. I am sorry if any reader should take this view, and I can assure him that I am not intending to throw dust in his eyes, but rather to clear away dust, which, it seems to

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 1.

me, often interferes with the vision of very clever people who read the Pentateuch. Please, dear reader, to remember the critic, who, in Garrick's soliloquy, kept his eye upon the stop-watch; there was a pause where the critic ruled that there ought to be none; perhaps there was something to fill the gap, some gesture, some movement, some play of countenance, which made the breach of the critic's rules into a beauty beyond the reach of those to whom critics' rules are everything; was there nothing of this kind, O critic? Critic cannot say; he "looked only at the stop-watch!" And really one cannot but feel that not unfrequently stop-watch criticism is applied to Holy Scripture, and that the grand purposes of God are forgotten in the calculation of the amount of probable defects supposed to exist in details. However, in the present case, it is not denied that there is, in the history of the six days' creation, so much of an apparently scientific character, as to invite a comparison between that which the first chapter of Genesis tells us and that which we know from scientific investigation; and it is sufficiently remarkable, to say no more, that a document of such antiquity as the commencement of the Pentateuch, written apparently in such a

corner of the world, and addressed to people in so imperfect a condition of education, should bear upon it certain great marks corresponding to the leading truths which geology teaches us. It may be doubtful what is meant by *a day*; and the notion of a day in the creation-history corresponding to two revolutions of the hour-hand of a good clock (as is maintained by some) is manifestly and transparently absurd; and there may be difficulties connected with the primeval creation of light, and the creation of the sun on the fourth day; and so on; but still there is in the creation-history what I may call a grand progression from chaos to man—a progression which seems to agree with all that science teaches us, and to be certainly true, whatever hypotheses, advanced by scientific inquirers, may be false—a progression which is important, not merely because it is physically true, but because it gives us our bearings in the moral world, and because it shows us that sun, and moon, and stars, and all the animals upon the earth, or above the earth, or under the earth, are inferior in value, and in cosmical order, to him who is created in God's "own image," and into whose nostrils God's Spirit has "breathed the breath of life."

It seems to me to be a minor question how far this correspondence between the creation-history and the conclusions of science can be carried,—a minor question, because, as I have endeavoured to explain already, the story of creation must, after all, be to a great extent a parable and a similitude. More than enough, probably, has already been written on the subject; and there are, amongst the writers, some who would find, in the opening of Genesis, the anticipation of modern discoveries, some who (like Hugh Miller) would interpret the chapter as a kind of vision of phenomena seen by the inspired writer, permitted, as it were, to “fall into a trance, having his eyes open,” and to contemplate in an ecstasy the past revolutions of the globe. But whatever be the true opinion on the matter, I would have the reader to observe that the creation-history is manifestly a *sketch*, and a sketch having a certain great moral and spiritual purpose. Now, every sketch is imperfect, but not necessarily, because imperfect, untrue. Every picture even is imperfect; a portrait elaborated ever so faithfully, and by the most skilful artist, is still, by the necessities of the case, an imperfect representation of the original; in many things it is conventional, in many things it

has to appeal to the imagination of the spectator. Nay, a skilful artist does not generally endeavour to accomplish that absolute rendering of minute details which belongs rather to the photographer, and which sometimes makes the photographer's work ridiculous; the skilful artist will not elaborate the hat and walking-stick of his subject as he will his eyes and his hands, and will keep his adjunctive circumstances in subordination, so that the prime conception of the picture may be brought out into fullest prominence. Still more is all this the case with a sketch. Who has not been struck with the power which certain clever artists have of producing an effect with a pencil, or pen and ink? A few lines, scribbled on a piece of paper in a moment, almost without effort, give you the likeness of an absent friend, or a mountain view, or a pungent caricature. Is the sketch incorrect, or in any proper sense of the term imperfect, still more is it false, because it merely does that which it was intended to do, and conveys to your mind vividly a certain impression which it was intended to convey? And if we can conscientiously say of a mere sketch in pen and ink, "Oh, that sketch is *perfect!*" why may we not with reverence, but in a much deeper sense, say the same thing of

an historical sketch, which compresses into a few verses the divine operations of ages, and which, keeping out of sight all that does not concern us, and much which it was intended that man should discover for himself, leads up rapidly from that chaos, which was "in the beginning," to that creation of men in God's image, which is the great master-fact upon which all religion turns?

There can, I think, be no doubt in the mind of any honest inquirer that the relation of man to God is the real subject of the opening of the Pentateuch. The chapter is moral and religious, not physical and scientific: it is not the speculation of an early inquirer into the mysteries of Nature, but the utterance of one commissioned to teach men to love their Maker, and to walk in the ways of holiness. Hence it is that the chapter has not fallen out of date, but is as valuable now, when science is rushing on almost out of breath, as it was when it was first heard by the semi-barbarous tribes of the Hebrews: men whose great temptation consisted in the idolatrous bent of the human mind, men brought into contact with nations who worshipped the host of heaven and whose worship degenerated into much lower forms, men who had seen in Egypt animal-worship in all

its strange power and elaborate development, could hardly be told anything more to the purpose than that the sun and the moon were marks of seasons and lights to give the earth light, and that animals and plants stood nearly upon a footing of creative equality, whilst *they*—they, men, with their perfect forms and upward-looking countenances—stood upon a pinnacle of creative dignity, from which it would be a sin and a shame if they degraded themselves to worship their inferior fellow-creatures. The opening of the Pentateuch is absolutely incompatible with idolatry, and its doctrines are the only antidote to idolatry. Surely then there is wisdom unspeakable in the adaptation of the message, which this opening of the Pentateuch contains, to the wants of men, who, being beset by idolatry on all sides, were not only to keep free from idolatry themselves, but to be “a light to lighten the Gentiles.” And surely this wisdom is made all the more conspicuous by the fact, that the religious conclusion from the history of creation is not actually drawn, but left to be inferred: the premisses are stated in such a manner as to make the conclusion apparently inevitable, even to half-civilised, half-educated, newly-emancipated Hebrew slaves; but the conclusion is not drawn, and

for this reason, if for no other, that the true conclusion is much broader than any which those Hebrews could draw, and requires for its elaboration all the subsequent history, and all the varied experience of the various branches of the human race.

The explanation of what I mean by the preceding sentence shall bring this essay to a conclusion. I see the wisdom of the opening chapter of the Pentateuch in this, that, while it cuts at the root of idolatry in those grosser forms which were the capital temptation of those to whom the Pentateuch was originally given, it does not bound its teaching by drawing the obvious conclusion against idolatry, but allows each successive age, and each thoughtful mind, to draw its own conclusions from the weighty and comprehensive assertion, that He, who in the beginning created the heaven and the earth, created first those things which man sees above him and about him, and then "created man in His own image and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." No one can say that the first chapter of the Pentateuch is merely this or merely that; it is the one great foundation-stone upon which the whole fabric of morals and religion must be built. It speaks a universal lan-

guage ; ancients and moderns, Jews and Christians, children and men of science, may all find in it the assertion of that great truth which lifts them from earth to heaven, and exalts them from brotherhood to the beasts to an absolutely divine nature. Put away your stop-watch, good critic, and look at the chapter; and especially note how, in this almost morbidly anthropological age—when the problem of man's relation to other animals is being prosecuted with a zeal which makes the blood of all but professed anthropologists run cold—note, I say, how the opening of the Pentateuch supplies the very Divine truth which is necessary to balance human investigations. Let the problem of which I speak be prosecuted by all means ; the truth, whatever it may be, will come out at last. Meanwhile, let us note that the present fearless discussion of man's origin, and of his place in creation, render more conspicuous than ever the wisdom of the opening chapter of the Bible, and teach us to thank God for His mercy in enabling us to anticipate the result of any physical inquiries by that grand moral and religious conclusion, which is contained in the simple assertion that "God created man in His own image."

### ESSAY III.

#### THE WISDOM OF THE PENTATEUCH.

**I**N the preceding essay I spoke of the first chapter of the Pentateuch as containing a cosmogony—that is to say, the history of the construction of the *cosmos*, of that order or arrangement of material things which we call “the heaven and the earth,” or, in dry scientific language, “the material universe.” It may seem unreasonable to object to a description of the contents of the chapter, which probably agrees exactly with the impression produced upon the minds of the great majority of readers; but, in truth, if I might coin a still harder word than cosmogony, I should be disposed to describe the contents of the chapter in question rather as an *anthropogony*—that is to say, the history of the construction of *man*. I hold this to be the more correct description, because it is manifest that *man* is the point in which the whole chapter culminates: the heaven and the earth, and all that is in them, look forward

to the last created being, man, as the completion and crown of the work, and as the creature in whose existence that of all other creatures finds its meaning and explanation.

I should have had more hesitation in introducing such a word as "anthropogony" into a discussion of the wisdom of the Pentateuch, if it had not been so like a term now in common use, and to which already passing reference has been made, namely, "anthropology." Recent scientific investigations and discoveries have caused, of late, an extraordinary amount of curiosity as to the past history of man: this past history, and, as connected with it, the relation in which man stands to other animals, has been deemed of sufficient importance to constitute a science, or an *ology*, by itself: and, doubtless, there is a wide and very interesting field of investigation open; and the field, if worked in a true scientific spirit, cannot fail to yield valuable fruit. But it ought to be borne in mind that the very name, "anthropology," seems to imply the science of *man* in a higher sense than any that can be realised by the processes of physical science. Whatever may be the derivation of that remarkable Greek word, *anthropos*, or "man," there seems to be no doubt that it has

for its root some word which signifies "upward," and which, at least, suggests the higher faculties and destinies of the creature who bears the name. And certainly man in his high pre-eminence above the rest of creation, man as we contemplate him in the noblest specimens of manhood that we have seen or heard about—not to speak of that One pattern of manhood in whom the whole race is exalted and glorified—man in that highest character in which alone he deserves to be classed as altogether a creation *per se*, can never be understood and appreciated by the anatomical comparison of his skeleton and skull with those of gorillas and chimpanzees, or by any other analogous process. The true secret of anthropology must, after all, be sought in the truth which is revealed by the opening chapter of the Pentateuch. They who have spent most time in demonstrating the analogies which exist between men and apes, ought beyond others to be thankful that the book which we commonly call "the Word of God" opens with the most pointed and eloquent assertion of that most comfortable truth, that, whatever may be the physical relation between men and other animals, still man alone has the patent of nobility, which is implied in being formed in the image of God.

I hope it will not be supposed that the writer of this essay has any narrow jealousies concerning science, whether anthropological or of any other kind. That peculiar branch of investigation which the anthropologists have chosen for themselves, no doubt, is one upon which people in general may be pardoned for looking with something of a shy feeling; it is not altogether pleasant to have one's connection with such very discreditable parties as apes and monkeys made a subject of learned discussion. Many people in good circumstances have a weakness concerning poor relations; and the apes and monkeys are, perhaps, the poor relations of the human race: we are willing to be kind to them; and when we go to visit them we take some provisions with us, and give them good cheer; but in general society we are mum about the cousinship. The anthropologists, it may be said, are more honest, more brave and noble-hearted, and are determined to acknowledge all kindred that can be fairly claimed. Be it so; but, after all, let us bear in mind that we men have a blood and a genealogy which anthropological investigations cannot touch; and the wisdom of the Pentateuch, regarded as the foundation-stone of religion and morals, may be seen in the manner in which

this blood and this genealogy are put forward upon its earliest page. Every man may claim for himself the closing links in that genealogy which we find in the Gospel of St Luke, and may bring the list of his fathers to that sublime termination—"which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God<sup>1</sup>."

I have sometimes thought that the double view of man's place in creation—what we may call the religious view and the scientific view—may be paralleled by a case familiar to the experience of us all. When a child learns its first catechism, the opening question is probably, "Who made you?" and the answer is, "God;" or when the child in its curiosity asks whence it has come, it is probably told that God made it. After a time the child knows more of the relation in which it stands to its parents, and becomes aware of the nature of its physical origin; but, if it is a wise child, it does not repudiate its earlier teaching as one of the "childish things" which are to be "put away"; it does not say that the theory of its Divine origin was a pious fraud, or in any way fabulous or untrue; rather the child must still acknowledge its real origin, and find the truest account of its destiny,

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke iii. 38.

in the light of that sentence of the Church Catechism, "God the Father made me, and all the world."

But to return to the Pentateuch. The Divine poem, if I may venture to call it so, which culminates in the creation of man, has this remarkable feature, that it gives us an account of the feeling of satisfaction with which the great Creator of all surveyed the things which He had created. In examining with reverence the wisdom of the Pentateuch, in looking for those features which seem chiefly to mark it as a book well fitted for the moral and religious education first of the Hebrews, and then of the whole human race, it seems to me that the last verse of the first chapter must be regarded as very emphatic; indeed, it would seem as if the great weight and emphasis of this verse had determined those who divided the Scriptures into chapters to make the break here, instead of making it three verses further on, which for certain reasons would have appeared to be a better arrangement. "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." The picture here raised before our eyes is surely very beautiful: a perfect creation, and the Creator pronouncing it perfect. How those persons, who desire to measure and criticise the first chapter of Genesis as a

rude attempt at a scientific theory, would interpret this passage, is more than I know ; but certainly no language could well be stronger as a protest against such measurement and such criticism, or could point more clearly to the great moral aim and purpose, which underlies and vivifies the whole of the opening of the Bible.

Perhaps the effect of the passage, to which reference has just now been made, is heightened by that which follows. I have spoken of the first three verses of the second chapter being so connected with the first, that they might well have been included in that chapter ; and certainly they must be considered in immediate connection with it. They contain the remarkable account of *God resting* on the seventh day ; and the phrase at once shows us how inadequate any theory of successive ages of geological change is to interpret completely the six days of creation, and also proves (if any additional proof be wanted) that the language in which the creation is described transcends ordinary language, and is to be regarded as giving us a peep—and only a peep—into a mysterious region of Divine operation, which neither can human mind comprehend, nor can human language fully describe. *God rested*; and when the Jews desired to press upon our Lord

unreasonable views of that sabbath, whose character depended upon this Divine rest, He replied boldly, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work<sup>1</sup>." It is, in fact, clear that there can be no rest, in the sense of cessation of action, on the part of Him "in whom we live and move and have our being<sup>2</sup>," all power comes from Him as the source of power, all motion from Him as the origin of motion, all sustentation of life from Him, the first Author and Fountain of life. Hence *rest*, when the word is applied to the Creator, is something different and distinct from *idleness*; and perhaps the full meaning of the term it may be impossible to express; but there is one view of the phrase, "God rested on the seventh day," which it may be well to note, because it seems to indicate the far-stretching wisdom of the earliest book of revelation. The whole spirit of the passage, in which the phrase occurs, seems to point out the finality (so to speak) of the creation as completed in man: according to scientific theories of development (I say nothing of the truth or falsehood of such theories), there seems to be no reason why man should not develop into something else—why he should not, if a sufficient time be given, change in the future as he

<sup>1</sup> S. John v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

is believed to have done in the past. Now God's *rest* seems to cut away this notion : it seems to say that, so far as this world is concerned, when the divine creative power had added one work to another, until man appeared upon the globe, then God rested from that effort of creation : the birth was complete, and the offspring was "very good"; henceforth there was abundance of work to be done, but it was of a different kind. It was not the adding of any new members to the mundane family, it was the support and government of that family as already established in the world ; and we seem to find in the assurance that God saw that his six days' work was *very good*, and then *rested*, an assurance of the finality of the creation as culminating in the human race, such as the heart of man, wearied by curious speculations as to the earth and as to ourselves, most earnestly and even sadly longs to find.

I have now said all that I wish to say at present concerning the opening of the Pentateuch—from the commencement to chap. ii., ver. 3 ; and as at this point there is a decided break in the narrative, I will bring this essay to a close. Of course the reader will regard what has been offered to him rather as suggestive of a mode of looking upon the

passage, than as attempting to exhaust all that might be said. I cannot but believe that any one who studies the passage fairly, and regards it as the preface to God's spiritual dealings with us His creatures, which it manifestly is intended to be, and not as an anticipation of scientific discoveries, which it is as manifestly not intended to be, will come to the conclusion that there never was any age of the world in which the teaching contained in the opening of the Book of Genesis was more necessary and more valuable than it is now. It is not a substitute for science, much less is it antagonistic to science; it belongs to a sphere of thought which is outside the sphere of science; and they have the same centre, even God himself; but one sphere is greater than the other, and therefore they can never intersect or clash. Moreover, it is only the few favoured minds to whom the discoveries of science are accessible, and many of the most remarkable discoveries are absolutely unintelligible to ordinary minds; but the wisdom of God speaks to the simple, and every one can understand that account of the creation of his race in the image of God, upon which his dignity as a man rests, and upon which his hopes of a glorious future ultimately depend. The discoveries of science are wonder-

ful, beautiful, profitable ; but the revelation of the opening of the Pentateuch is not only wonderful, beautiful, profitable, it is absolutely indispensable. God speaks in the language of science to the few ; by His Word He speaks to the whole family of man. “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear<sup>1</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> S. Matthew xiii. 9.

## ESSAY IV.

### THE WISDOM OF THE PENTATEUCH.



WE now come to a new section of the book of Genesis, beginning with chap. ii., ver. 4; and here there is a question of criticism brought before us, concerning which so much has been said lately that it seems impossible to pass over it without a remark. My subject is the *wisdom* of the Pentateuch, not its human authorship, nor its criticism, and therefore I would gladly have left this question altogether untouched, and am only prevented from doing so by the desire of not shirking any difficulty that may seem to come naturally in our way.

The difficulty in the present case is, that whereas the Almighty Creator has been called hitherto by the name which we translate in our English Bibles by the word "God," He is now called by

the name which we translate "the Lord God," or "Jehovah God." Any one who looks at the point, even as it exists in our English Bibles, not to speak of the Hebrew, will see that there certainly is a change of some kind between chap. ii., ver. 3, and chap. ii., ver. 4; and the question is, what does the change indicate? what is the meaning of it? It has been argued that the passage extending from Gen. i. 1, to Gen. ii. 3, has clearly been written by one person, and the passage following by another; and some critics have found indications of more than two writers in the Pentateuch; but it has been held that at all events there are as many as two, who may be distinguished by the name which they use when they speak of Almighty God. Now, concerning the critical conclusions here hinted at, I have two remarks to make. First, it is obviously necessary to be cautious in drawing minute conclusions from such very slight grounds as the Pentateuch presents; and as a matter of fact, critics do not all come to exactly the same conclusion, so that they cannot all be right. But, secondly, it certainly does, to me, seem highly probable that the two passages under consideration have in a certain sense different authors; and, still further, that a number of documents have been

brought together for the formation of the Pentateuch. Why not? why should we suppose that Moses retired, as it were, into his study, and there, under the influence of the Spirit, wrote, without external human aids, the book of which we believe him to be the author? What improbability is there in the supposition that Moses made use of materials written by other hands? Why should we make a difficulty where it would seem that there need in reality be no difficulty at all?

I do not mean to assert that there is no difficulty in determining the precise manner in which the Pentateuch, or (to confine ourselves to the point with which we are now more immediately concerned) the early portion of the Book of Genesis came into the form in which we now possess it; this must always be a matter of difficulty; perhaps it may be even a matter of practical impossibility, and it may have been intended that it should be so: but I mean to suggest that investigations concerning this question and the varying results arrived at by various investigations need not give rise to any difficulties as to the main point, namely, that the Pentateuch has been given by inspiration of God, and is full of divine wisdom. In fact the diversity of materials of which the Pentateuch is

composed appears to be generally conceded, or at least the question is allowed to be open to fair critical examination. "There is good ground," says the writer of the article on the Pentateuch in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, "for concluding that, besides some smaller independent documents, traces may be discovered of two original historical works, which form the basis of the present book of Genesis and of the earlier chapters of Exodus." So also Professor Rawlinson writes in his essay on the Pentateuch, in the volume entitled *Aids to Faith*: "The Book of Genesis bears marks of being to some extent a compilation. Moses probably possessed a number of records, some of greater, some of less antiquity, whereof, under Divine guidance, he made use in writing the history of mankind up to his own time. It is possible that the Book of Genesis may have been, even mainly, composed in this way from ancient narratives, registers, and biographies, in part the property of the Hebrew race, in part a possession common to that race with others. Moses, guided by God's Spirit, would choose among such documents those which were historically true, and which bore on the religious history of the human race. He would not be bound slavishly to follow, much less to

transcribe them, but would curtail, expand, adorn, complete them, and so make them thoroughly his own, infusing into them the religious tone of his own mind, and at the same time re-writing them in his own language. Thus it would seem that Genesis was produced. With regard to the remainder of his history, he would have no occasion to use the labours of others, but would write from his own knowledge<sup>1</sup>." And Archdeacon Wordsworth says in his introduction to the Book of Genesis, "Whether Moses used historical documents already existing, and whether he incorporated them in the Pentateuch, or no, is a question of little importance<sup>2</sup>."

With this slight passing notice of a subject which has of late been brought into unwonted prominence, I proceed to call attention to the wisdom with which the history of man is carried on. And I must observe that whatever may be truth concerning the original sources from which the materials of the history have been collected, there is certainly a unity of purpose and aim, manifestly visible throughout the whole of the

<sup>1</sup> Page 251.

<sup>2</sup> I ought to add, that I have not produced the above quotations as necessarily exhibiting my own views, but only as indicating that the origin of the materials of the Pentateuch may be safely regarded as an open question.

opening of the Pentateuch; there may be breaches of unity which the critic can discover with his microscope, but there is a grand moral continuity with no breach whatever, which all plain simple people can see with their naked eyes.

Hitherto we have seen man in his purity. All God's works are "very good," but man is good in a higher sense than God's other works; the breath of life which God breathed into his nostrils, after He had created man in His own image, gives him a patent of precedence, which, if it confers upon him higher privileges, entails upon him also greater responsibilities. The trial of man, therefore, becomes a consequence of his moral elevation, and now we are to see in what manner Adam is to be tried. Adam is placed in a garden to dress it and keep it; and when he is thus placed, his moral probation is all bound up in these words: "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die<sup>1</sup>." Now there is doubtless a class of minds, to which this command, because it is simple, will seem commonplace. It

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 16, 17.

is easy for mockers to amuse themselves with the notion of man's life or death depending upon not eating or eating an apple, or some such fruit; but let the thoughtful and reverent reader consider how much of wisdom there is bound up in this covenant of life. If he does so consider he will easily perceive, as good men in all ages of the Church have perceived, that it is not the eating or the not eating an apple, but that in reality it is obedience or disobedience; and the gulph between these two is infinite, because, if man is to retain the high position which belongs to him by creation, it can only be effected by union with God and by obedience to His laws. Adam, dressing and keeping the garden, and abstaining from the one forbidden thing, represents to us man in a condition of loyalty; and Adam, taking the one fruit which he might not take, represents to us man in rebellion, and therefore man in sin.

And here let me apply to the history of man in Paradise, the same kind of remark which I ventured in a former essay to apply to the history of the creation. Both the one and the other are things incapable of being literally described. When we contemplate man in his primeval relation to God, in his primeval innocence, and put upon his

primeval trial, we get beyond the sphere of experience; we have no words to describe the thing with that kind of precision, which belongs (for instance) to physical science; but, as we have a poem of creation, which is the truest history, so we have a poem of man in Paradise, which is also the truest history. The inspired language of Scripture tells us, not perhaps what we should have expected, but precisely what it was necessary for us to know; it speaks with the emphasis of wisdom, but not with the precision of science; it is the vehicle of truth of universal concernment, and therefore it speaks in language which is equally understood by the half-wild Hebrew and the polite European, by the man full of all human knowledge and by the simple and the ignorant. In fact, it is difficult to perceive how the lessons which it was the design of Scripture to teach could have been taught in any other way, than that in which it has pleased God to teach them. Man created in the image of God and put upon his trial,—this is the truth which is to be put before our minds; and this truth is expressed in what may be called a universal language, which can be understood by the universal Church.

I pass over much that is told us in this second

chapter of Genesis, because I am not writing a commentary upon Scripture, but only endeavouring to make prominent certain great features, which indicate the leading design of the history, demonstrate the Divine wisdom which gave that history as the universal heritage of mankind, and perhaps help us to see the shallowness and unreasonableness of some of the objections which are made to this portion of the holy book. Hence I have said nothing, (though I shall have something to say in a subsequent essay,) of that "tree of life" which grew in the midst of the garden, and which doubtless occupied an important place in the economy of Paradise, regarded as the primeval state of trial of pure and new-created man; yet I may perhaps note by the way, that when St John in his vision saw the restoration of all things, and the new Jerusalem, he saw also "the *tree of life*, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations<sup>1</sup>." Neither have I said anything concerning the river which "went out of Eden to water the garden;" though here also we may perhaps see a prophecy of that "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxii. 2.

the throne of God and of the Lamb<sup>1</sup>," which St John saw at the same time that he saw the tree of life. I suppose that persons, who find in the first chapter of Genesis an astronomical and geological speculation, will find in this account of the river of Paradise merely a rude piece of geography. This is not the way, however, in which many of the wisest and most thoughtful have regarded it; and it may be that there is a wisdom lying beneath the surface, which those who take superficial views of Scripture will be quite sure to miss<sup>2</sup>.

However, as I have said, I pass over many things which might perhaps with advantage be discussed, and I proceed to call attention to the subject which is introduced in so remarkable, and I think unexpected, a manner in the last eight verses of the second chapter of Genesis. In order to appreciate the wisdom of these verses, let the

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The question of the river or rivers of Eden naturally connects itself with that of the geographical position of the garden itself. It would seem, if one may judge from the result, that there was no intention of revealing to human curiosity the place in which man first found his home: at all events speculations have hitherto been exceedingly fruitless, and it is probable that we shall never be able to make the slight hints given in the book of Genesis serviceable for the determination of this difficult question.

reader remember how much of the misery and barbarism of the world has been connected with a want of a proper estimate of the place of *woman* in creation; a low estimate of woman, and licentious views concerning marriage, are always bound up with the degradation of heathen nations; and perhaps it may be said of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, regarded as a civilizing influence in the world, that in nothing are its wisdom and power more manifested than in its great practical assertion of the dignity of woman. Bearing this in mind, let the reader carefully study Gen. ii. 18—25.

In the first place, observe the connection in which this passage stands; that is, observe that it immediately follows the account of the placing of man upon his trial in Paradise; a collocation this, from which it is fair to assume that the creation of woman and her relation to man were regarded by the Divine author of the book as subjects of something like the same order of magnitude, subjects having something like the same degree of importance in the spiritual history of the human race, as the placing of man in the garden of Eden. Probably we, with our knowledge and experience of human history, shall feel

that this is a true view of the state of things: but it is not the less remarkable that we should find the results of our knowledge and experience thus anticipated thousands of years ago, and it is almost incredible that any thing short of Divine wisdom should have dictated such a passage in the early history of man as the means of purifying and civilizing the half-savage Hebrew tribes.

Next observe how the place assigned to woman is precisely that which the most refined thought and judgment, under the light of Christianity, assign to her. She is inferior to man, and yet his companion; not his slave, nor the minister of his carnal pleasures; not, in fact, that which men in their condition of heathen blindness always compel women to be. She is the necessary complement of man: his life is theoretically perfect as soon as God has breathed into his nostrils, but it is practically insupportable. And it is very striking to observe how man's solitary condition before the creation of Eve is described. The world teems with creatures, with which Adam is represented as being familiarly acquainted; but he has no companion, no friend, no "help meet for him;" and it is because of this solitary condition, which is so emphatically declared not to

be "good for man," that God Himself undertakes to find a worthy mate for Adam. What better patent of peerage could woman in any age of the world desire?

Still further, notice the way in which polygamy—the temptation and the curse of the natural man—is condemned by anticipation in this wonderful narrative. Concerning this, I need only remind the reader that when the Pharisees brought before our Lord what they considered to be a knotty question concerning divorce, He referred them to the history of the creation of woman, and of the primeval marriage, as containing all that need be said; and after quoting from Genesis the declaration of man's duty to "cleave to his wife," He closed the discussion with the oracular sentence: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder<sup>1</sup>." It would seem, therefore, that the opening of Genesis contains all that Jesus Christ Himself deemed it necessary to teach on this grave and important question. Nay more than this, for our Lord expressly marks the later legislation of Moses on the subject of divorce as a concession to "hardness of heart," and refers to the stricter rule laid down

<sup>1</sup> S. Matthew xix. 6.

at the time of the primeval marriage as being that which is most in accordance with the wisdom and will of God. "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

The critic, with his microscope and his stopwatch, may perhaps inquire how Adam's rib was taken from him as he slept, and may shake his wise head, and express his doubt whether this account of woman's origin is consistent with physical science. Well, he may shake his head if he will; meanwhile, thoughtful readers may thankfully acknowledge that in the history of woman's creation and marriage they have a true account of that, which God designed to be the basis of human society and the source of all that in this world is highest, and noblest, and most admirable.

## ESSAY V.

### THE WISDOM OF THE PENTATEUCH.

**I**HAVE never seen the remark made, but I think it is a useful remark and a true, that the first three chapters of Genesis contain respectively the birth, the marriage, and the death of man. The hero of a human story generally exhibits to the reader a number of adventures, trials, fits of passion, fits of despondency, and the like, and these lead up to his marriage and there leave him. The divine history of Adam takes us rapidly through his birth and marriage; and it is when the sentence has been executed, "In the day that thou eatest of the forbidden fruit, thou shalt surely die," that the chief interest and the most touching part of the story begin.

The death of Adam and Eve, for they both died together, is in fact the real starting-point of sacred

history. "In Adam all die," is the theme of the Old Testament; "in Christ all shall be made alive," is the theme of the New.

In calling attention therefore, as I am endeavouring to do, to the wisdom of the Pentateuch, I must assign an important place to the history which is contained in the third chapter of Genesis. I have called it the history of man's death; and the description is all the more appropriate, because the chapter does not contain the history of Adam's actual physical death. He did die when his time came; but his time was long after the period with which we are now concerned. He begat sons and daughters, and had all the labours and anxieties of a long life, before the spirit which God had breathed into his nostrils returned to the giver of it: and a very interesting biography Adam's would be, speaking according to common phraseology, if we could only have obtained it: as it is, we have little knowledge of his life, though the little which we have is very instructive. However, Adam begat sons and daughters, as other men have done, and lived a life essentially the same as that lived by other men; but the crisis of his life, the turning point of his history, the thing which marks his life out as typical of all human lives which should follow it, is

that spiritual trial which he underwent, and the spiritual death which he died, as described in the third chapter of Genesis. Let us examine the description a little more closely.

In doing so let me make this general remark, that the question of the origin of evil, or (to put the difficulty within narrower limits) the question of the introduction of evil into this world, has always been a puzzle and always must continue in some degree a puzzle. If I were to attempt to discuss it, I should soon get out of my depth and carry my readers out of their depth also; and, taught by the wisdom of Holy Scripture, either directly or indirectly, men in general abstain from a discussion, which can lead to no practical result and may probably waste a great deal of valuable time. But men required in the first instance to be taught this lesson: they did not know it by instinct: they did not naturally say to themselves, "Here is evil in us and about us: never mind whence it came: here it is and we must fight against it:" no, their natural tendency, when they troubled themselves about the existence of evil at all, was to speculate and guess and philosophize about it: and men *have* speculated and guessed and philosophized; and not much good has resulted, except so far as

their failure has proved that the world cannot by its own wisdom know God. Now the divine wisdom of the chapter of Holy Scripture which deals with this subject seems to be apparent in the fact, that it contains no speculation, but the record of a plain hard fact: it leaves the theory of evil just where it was, it does not remove a single speculative difficulty, but it asserts the introduction of an evil which we all see and acknowledge, and it declares that that evil did not come from God and that it cannot be cured by man.

The third chapter of Genesis produces upon my mind in reading it something of the effect which is produced by looking at a portrait of some unknown worthy by an old master of painting; the person represented is an old Dutch Burgomaster, or a Spanish Prince, or a Monk, or a Pope, or what not; we say it must be like, the painter could not have given such life to his picture if he had not transferred it from the living subject to his canvass. And so the picture drawn in Genesis is so true, so living, so speaking, that it *must* have been in some way or another taken from the life. Let us look at its details for a moment.

Observe how disobedience creeps in through woman's weakness. The weight of the command is

so slight that to man it will be scarcely perceptible; an appeal to woman's vanity may make it insupportable. The rebellion is no deep scheme hatched in the dissatisfied brain of a man long groaning under a sense of supposed oppression, but the ready answer of female curiosity and female pride to the suggestion of the serpent, which has wriggled its slimy course into the garden of Eden.

But what do you make of this serpent? was it ——— Dear reader, I make nothing of the serpent except what I find. It was something in the garden, and something which "God had made<sup>1</sup>," something very crafty and subtle, and strange to say something in rebellion against God. I find just a gleam of light thrown upon the question by two passages in the Book of Revelation which speak of the "old serpent, the Devil<sup>2</sup>," and with that gleam of light I leave the question, only remarking that it is in this very obscurity that I seem to see the wisdom of God. The third chapter of Genesis tells us not what the author of sin is, nor whence he comes; but it tells us rather that he can creep into Paradise, and that he can use the choicest gifts of God for the purpose of working the ruin of man. The serpent is very subtle, and he has got himself into Paradise, and he

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2.

has introduced evil—these are the truths which it is necessary for men to know in order that they may avoid the serpent's fascinations: all other questions concerning the reptile are unnecessary, if not out of place and unprofitable.

Next look at Adam and Eve after they have become disobedient. I find that they are at once ashamed of their nakedness, and endeavour to clothe themselves; and what makes this effort to clothe themselves the more emphatic, is that God Himself is afterwards represented as clothing them; God clothes them with skins, and if the skins used should be, as some have thought, those animals slain in sacrifice, the sheltering of our nakedness under this sacrificial protection would be a point worthy of notice. But after Adam and Eve are ashamed of their nakedness, and while trembling at the thought of their condition they hear the voice of God. The minute critic may say, What did they hear? how did God speak? did He present Himself in bodily shape, as a man, or in what manner did He make Himself known? Concerning all which questions I have no direct answer to give, because Scripture has given none; but I have this indirect remark to add, namely, that the simple manner in which

Scripture cuts through all such questions may possibly be perceived to be a notable sign of its divine wisdom. The essential truth and value of the narrative with which I am now dealing is not to be found in the possibility of bringing it to the test of scientific exactness or historical accuracy; we have no means of testing it; and by its very nature it seems intended to belong to a region in which science and history have no place; the narrative proposes to tell us what was the relation of man to God and what the message of God to man, when the original moral tie of obedience between the two was ruthlessly broken; and it does so in a way which I am bound to reverence as believing to be God's way, but also in a way of which I can see the wisdom and the fitness to the end proposed. I cannot test the narrative's historical accuracy, but I can in a measure test its moral fitness to convey to men like myself the chief truths which it concerns them and me to know.

Man's attempt to hide himself from God does not succeed: such attempts never do: the whole history of guilty consciences from the beginning till now is written in the attempt made by Adam and his wife to "hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."

No, they must shew themselves to the searcher of all hearts: they stand at the judgment bar, and the trial begins. Wonderful trial! it is, if one may venture so to speak of so solemn a transaction so solemnly recorded, like a satirical sketch: human nature in all its weakness is exposed with a severe delicacy of delineation, which except upon the hypothesis of a divine superintendence of the delineating pen seems absolutely incredible. The man laying the fault on the woman, and the woman laying it on the serpent, and the serpent very wisely saying nothing! The picture of the earliest court of justice is marvellous; and all the more so, because there is a tendency in our minds, when we reflect upon the fall, to run into a sort of Miltonic glorification of man in his primitive condition, and to attribute to his fall a loss of intellectual and other greatness, concerning which Scripture says actually nothing: it is scarcely possible in fact for a poet to allow his fancy to expatiate in this field of primeval humanity, without the introduction of speculation concerning the glorious being and high attributes of a creature coming straight from the creative hand of God. I have continually heard religious difficulties, supposed to arise out of the scientific

speculations of anthropologists, which in fact depend entirely upon poetical conceptions of the condition in which man originally was. Now what is the proof of the fall of man, which is offered by Holy Scripture? It is simply and nakedly nothing but this—that when Adam was asked whether he had done a thing which he was told not to do, he confessed that he had, and then laid the blame on his wife!

Of Adam's intellectual qualifications I know nothing: there is no hint in the Pentateuch of anything remarkable in this way; so far as any hint is given, it goes directly in the opposite direction. There is no intellectual barometer wherewith to measure the result of disobedience upon the powers of the human understanding; but who can doubt that a man who does what is wrong and then lays the blame of his own fault upon his wife *is* fallen? and what has intellect to do with the matter?

So the sentence comes. Man is to possess a land full of thorns and thistles; and surely the whole world has been full enough, or rather has been too full, of thorns and thistles down to this present time. His body is to return to earth, and the Tree of life is to be guarded by

a flaming sword; and the one bright gleam of hope is to be found in those words which speak of the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. I have spoken of the third chapter of Genesis as containing the history of the death of man; and carrying on this notion we may say that the fifteenth verse contains the inscription of hope upon his grave, the *Resurgam*, the pledge and promise of a joyful Resurrection.

This inscription of hope upon man's grave is also the foundation of all that follows in the sacred history of man. The hope is long deferred, and many generations must pass away before all things are fulfilled and the promised seed given. But without going into this fulfilment, which would take me beyond my present purpose, let me notice how gentle and kindly and fatherly is the conduct of God towards His rebellious children. How dignified is the character which the human writer of the Pentateuch has been able to attribute to God! How free from all those unworthy principles of action that attach to the conceptions, which other writers have formed of God! There is no anger, no resentment; the conduct of our Father is represented as that of one, whose children have gone wrong and who is Himself

very sorry,—more sorry than the children, for they shewed no sign whatever of penitence<sup>1</sup>,—that sin has been committed. The sentence of necessary punishment is accompanied by the language of hope; and then the Father clothes His children, far better than they had been able to clothe themselves.

Is there any human science of anthropology, which will tell us a hundredth part as much truth concerning man and his place in the world as this chapter of the Pentateuch? Observe, reader, I am saying nothing against anthropology: the study of of man's nature and structure and history in all ways is most necessary: by all means let us examine and compare ancient and modern crania, let us ascertain whether man was contemporary with *elephas primigenius*, let us make out as much of his past history as we can: but after all let us remember, that which every child must be able to see is true, namely, that all the physical investigations conceivable or possible can never tell us what man is in the sight of God, what is his condition by nature, what is his condition by sin. To gain light upon these questions we must go back

<sup>1</sup> This point will be discussed more fully in a subsequent essay.

to Scripture, and seek our answers at the oracle of God.

He who seeks an answer at this oracle will perceive, from the whole tone and current of the narrative, that he has in his hands something supernatural, something which is not capable of being brought to the critical standards of ordinary human history. And the stamp of supernaturalism is put upon the whole by the concluding reference to the Tree of life, and the Cherubims which guarded the road to that tree by "a flaming sword turning every-way<sup>1</sup>." By his disobedience man lost his right to that tree; and the right was only regained by the great head of the race, who was born in the fulness of time. The truth is great and fundamental, nay, it is the very basis and substructure of the Gospel; and the manner in which it is taught in this early portion of the Pentateuch is as forcible as it is surprising. But the truth is spiritual, and it must be apprehended in a spiritual manner, and the discoveries of science will not serve as good guides in a region like this, in which well instructed science knows very well that it has no place.

The history of Adam and Eve leaves the department of the spiritual before it comes to a

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 24.

close. I have spoken of the third chapter of Genesis as containing the history of man's death; but, so far as this world is concerned, it contains rather the commencement of his active life. He is commissioned to till the ground in the sweat of his brow; he has to labour to maintain his wife; and soon he has a family to maintain besides. The picture of domestic life is simple, and as fresh as if painted yesterday. Eve is rejoiced in heart when she finds that she has a son; and the son whom God has given her (as happens continually) disappoints her hopes, and quarrels with his brother and slays him in anger. I am not going to enter into the whole of the history of Cain and Abel; but I wish the reader to remark the wonderfully pregnant character of the only incident in the life of Adam and Eve, which has been recorded for us after the great incident of the expulsion from Paradise. Of course there was no intention of giving a complete or connected history of Adam and Eve: this is manifest: there is no hint as to the manner in which they lived, or where they lived, or what they said to each other, or what they thought of their altered condition: but there is just one story told us, and that story is clearly meant to be representative; it is a type from which

we are to imagine others; it is a sample from which we are to guess the rest. The story is that of the murder of one brother by another, its causes, and its consequences. The story is so familiar that I think we are tempted to pass over it too carelessly: but in reality it is a very remarkable story, and the wisdom which has recorded it is conspicuous. If the intention of the opening chapters of the Pentateuch be to explain the spiritual whereabouts of man, and to mark emphatically the entrance of sin into the world, can anything be more to the point than the record of a foul murder as one of the earliest incidents after the first fatal transgression? The sin of Adam and Eve was apparently trifling: there was none of the coarseness and offensiveness of ordinary wickedness obvious upon the face of that sin: but the line of history, which the sacred writer has adopted, proves that the germ of all wickedness, even the most flagrant and most horrible, is contained in simple disobedience to God, and that an apparently small and trifling sin has its natural developement in the most enormous and revolting of crimes.

Yes, reader, geology and astronomy will not clear up the difficulties of the opening chapter of Genesis; and geography will not help us much

with regard to the garden which the Lord planted eastward in Eden, and the river or rather the four rivers that watered it; and botany will not tell us anything of those two trees of the garden, which were so important to those who inhabited it; and history cannot help us to fill up the blanks and verify the details, which the sacred writer has left for our study; but if, putting aside these and such like implements of human study and investigation, we examine the early portion of Scripture as a spiritual lesson, and a divine declaration of what man is, what is his position in the world, and what are his prospects, then we shall have no difficulty in recognizing the wisdom of Scripture, and thanking God for this as for all other parts of that volume, which is emphatically His.

## ESSAY VI.

### THE WISDOM OF THE PENTATEUCH.

F the whole of the five books of Moses were treated upon the principle which has been applied in the preceding essays to the opening chapters of the book of Genesis, it might be feared that this series of essays would extend to a very inconvenient length. Such an extension however will be by no means necessary for my purpose. I do not wish even to appear to exhaust the subject, but rather to give, as it were, a sample of the method of treatment, which, as I humbly conceive, a pious and intelligent mind may apply to the study of the most ancient portions of Holy Scripture, and by the application of which may be exhibited the wisdom of the Divine author, while sundry dangers and pitfalls of ingenious construction will be avoided.

The portion of the Pentateuch which remains for our consideration divides itself into two great sections. These sections may of course be subdivided, and for completeness of treatment they must be; but for a general view they may be discussed each in one essay, and I shall accordingly devote to them this essay and that which follows it. The division to which I refer is that of the Patriarchal and the Mosaic age. The Patriarchal extends to the conclusion of the book of Genesis; the Mosaic occupies the remainder of the Pentateuch. This essay will be devoted to a brief consideration of the Patriarchal age.

It will be seen on the most cursory glance at the Book of Genesis that the history is constructed upon a principle different from that of ordinary history. After the curse of Cain has been announced, we have a short account of his posterity. The account is not only short, but apparently intended to strike every reader as imperfect and fragmentary. It stands out in remarkable contrast with the history of the posterity of Seth, which is given in the next chapter. The most notable personage is Lamech, who is held up apparently as the introducer of polygamy, and who also an-

nounces himself (if the authorised version of the first Hebrew poem be correct,) to have been a murderer like his ancestor Cain. "Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold<sup>1</sup>." It is difficult to assign the precise reason for this early history having been preserved in its actual form; but it seems clear that we are intended to learn this lesson, that there proceeded from Adam through Cain the murderer a bad sinful progeny; this progeny however apparently prosperous so far as the affairs of this world are concerned, building cities, inventing musical instruments, discovering the use of metals, but still in ignorance of God. Taking an ordinary worldly view of the matter, there is nothing to make the progeny of Cain appear strikingly inferior to the progeny of Seth; and yet Cain's family is allowed (as it were) to lose itself in the sand, while that of Seth flows on eventually like a majestic river, the whole course of which we cannot follow at present and we only know from the New Testament, where

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 23, 24.

Evangelists take it up and trace it on to Jesus Christ. We find no strong or even depreciating language used concerning the family of Cain; but we are made to understand by the manner in which the story is told that the principal interest is intended to be found, not in the family of Cain, but in that of Seth. Accordingly in the fifth chapter of Genesis we begin as it were over again, and we have before us "the book of the generations of Adam." Observe, reader, that in this book of Adam's generations we read of Seth as his son, and of no other: "This is the book of the generations of Adam.....Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth<sup>1</sup>." Cain and Abel we have read about already, and have disposed of them: and we know that there were other sons and daughters, begotten by Adam; "he begat sons and daughters<sup>2</sup>;" but for some good reason, to be unfolded in due time, the history is bound up with Seth, and with Seth alone. Notice in this selection the marks of a purpose, sure from the beginning, mysterious in its developement, only to be understood completely in the light of the Christian covenant.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. v. 1, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. v. 4.

The fifth chapter of Genesis carries us from Adam to Noah: and the point which must chiefly strike every one in reading it is the longevity attributed to the patriarchs. I think it right to allude to this point, because undoubtedly it is a difficulty, and a difficulty which is not cleared away by saying that it is so written in Scripture and that we ought to receive the announcement without questioning. If any reasonable solution could be proposed, which would bring the lives of the Patriarchs into accordance with our own experience, it should be examined respectfully and perhaps even thankfully accepted. At present however it is right to admit that no satisfactory solution has been offered: it has been frequently suggested that the years may have corresponded to months; but it will be easily seen that the age thus assigned to some of the patriarchs, when they become fathers, introduces as great a difficulty as that which we are endeavouring to avoid. In fact there *is* a difficulty, and we must be content to leave it; but taking a higher view of the history of the patriarchs, than that which depends merely upon the length of their lives, let me call the reader's attention to one interesting fact, which seems to shine forth as a point of bright light in the midst of the darkness

of the patriarchal age. Length of years seems to be marked as a characteristic of the family of Seth: to beget sons and daughters, and to live many years, and then die, seems to be given as the type of human perfection; and yet the only man, who is pointed out as being specially pleasing to God, is one who was taken away in the midst of his age. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him<sup>1</sup>." Mark, reader, the emphatic and eloquent phrase, *walked with God*; and then observe that he who was permitted to have this divine companionship is distinguished by an early departure from that scene of occupation and pleasure, which it might have been fancied would be given to be enjoyed most by the most worthy. Surely there is a depth of wisdom in this notice of Enoch, which no difficulties concerning the longevity of the patriarchs can hide from thoughtful minds. It is like the Gospel of "the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come," preached to the men of olden times.

The chapter of patriarchs seems to be intended as a bridge to span a vast chasm between Adam and Noah; and it is remarkable that not a single deed is recorded of any one of the chosen family,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. v, 24.

nor is anything good or bad attributed to any one of them, with the exception of the bright notice of Enoch. Outside the family of Seth there were cities being built, and arts cultivated; as to what was being done within its circle the Scripture history presents an absolute blank. I do not know that the reason of this distinction is obvious; but at all events the distinction is so striking as to make us perceive that we are not reading a common history, and to make us ready to believe that there may be more in it, than flippant philosophers and critics may dream.

However, as I have said, the genealogy of the patriarchs is a bridge over the vast chasm between Adam and Noah. And what is there in Noah to make him conspicuous in the history? Two things: his personal character, and his connection with the Deluge. For his character, we find the description of Enoch repeated: he *walked with God*. No great influence or wealth or power of invention are ascribed to him; he was simply godly and good; anything but one of this world's heroes, and therefore notable as one most highly honoured by the wisdom of Him who recorded his life. But his connection with the Deluge—what of that? We are told that the story of the Deluge cannot be received as true; and so, according to

some modern teachers, the account of the Bible is reversed, and Noah and all his history are swept away by the Flood. Now it seems to me that no one in his senses, who observes the plan upon which the rest of the early history is written, will think of criticizing the account of the Deluge precisely as he would criticize the account of an inundation recorded in the *Times* Newspaper: the principle of reporting is manifestly different: and if a modern historian would not have reduced the whole history of the family of Seth, the family to which the chief interest of his tale attached, to a bare genealogy, neither would a modern historian have given a narrative of the Deluge such as that which the Pentateuch contains. The parade of scientific talk, the reference to the volcanoes of Auvergne, and all the rest of it, seems very unnecessary: the science involved in the question does not go beyond the principle that water will find its own level: and the only excuse for those, who have introduced science where science is so very much out of place, is to be found in the folly of others, who have persisted in regarding the account of the Deluge as an account which might have been given of a similar catastrophe by a savant of the nineteenth century.

That there *was* a great catastrophe, which has been recorded for the instruction of all to whom the Holy Scriptures have come, and which has even found its place in the legends of many heathen people, cannot be doubted. The point to be noted concerning the history of it given in Scripture is, that like the history of creation it is emphatically a moral not a physical history. The great central figure of the picture is Noah walking with God, while the surrounding people are walking in the lusts of their own evil hearts; the size and shape of the ark, the number of creatures that went into it, the extent of the flood, and a variety of other circumstances, which are sometimes perversely pressed forwards as if they were the main elements of the history, are in reality details, and ought to be so regarded.

But it may be said, are the details correct? Yes, reader, quite correct, from the point of view from which the picture is taken. Look at one single incident of the story. We are told that when Noah and his family had gone into the ark, *the Lord shut him in*. Now if you are going to measure the narrative of Noah's Flood by the micrometer of modern science, what will you make of this statement? You can make nothing

of it; it is simply an unmeaning statement. But surely if the narrative be regarded as its place in Holy Scripture shews that it was intended to be regarded, we have here one of the most sublime statements of divine conduct that can anywhere be found. It is in these features of the Pentateuch, so abhorrent from all that is merely material and physical, so suggestive of spiritual thoughts and divine truths, that I see the clearest indications of that *wisdom*, which it is the humble intention of these essays to illustrate and exhibit.

Hence, with all the blaze of the light of modern science shining upon the pages of the Pentateuch, I can still thank God for the teaching which He has given us in the history of the Flood; and I can cordially join in prayers, which, like that in the Baptismal Service, instruct Christians to say, *Almighty and everlasting God, who of Thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family in the ark from perishing by water.*

The remarks which I have made on the subject of the Flood may help us to take a right view of the next great landmark in Scripture history, namely, the Tower of Babel. The reader will perceive, if he examines the eleventh chapter of the book of Genesis, that the history of Babel and the confu-

sion of tongues is at once parenthetical and obscure. The date of the event appears to be absolutely uncertain; for though a certain year, viz. B. C. 2247, is printed in the margin of some of our English Bibles, there appear to be no sure marks to settle this as the true date. The whole story is inserted in the middle of the generations of Shem. There is a shadowy indication of some great migration from the East: *it came to pass, as they journeyed from the East, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there:* there is nothing to determine who these travellers were, nor why they travelled, nor how many of them there were, though the situation of the narrative would seem to indicate that they were of the family of Shem. The narrative is sketchy and shadowy, doubtless intentionally so; and the philologist would shew no more wisdom in endeavouring to bring the narrative into conformity with modern views of the growth and distribution of languages, than the physicist in endeavouring to conform the story of the Flood with modern views of science. Here, as in the case of the Flood, the spiritual, not the material, is the right point of view: the readiness of mankind, after the Flood as before it, to join in rebellion against God, their

willingness to believe that by numbers they can resist the One supreme Will, their pride and vanity, and on the other hand the power of God to confound their devices and His determination to assert His supremacy, these seem to be the salient points of the picture. Regarded thus the picture of Babel embodies one of the most tremendous truths, that the recorded history of the world has brought to light.

I have spoken of the history of Babel as a parenthesis, with reference to the manner in which it is inserted in the midst of the generations of Shem; but it is also a parenthesis in another sense, which is important as bearing upon the general construction of the sacred history. The history of Babel is the one piece of history inserted between the Flood and Abraham. Now the Flood and the call of Abraham are two of the great beacons of man's spiritual history: the Flood is described for the purpose of demonstrating clearly the sinful and depraved condition of mankind; the remedy for the sin and depravity commences with the call of him, in whose seed the world is to be blessed. Between these two beacons, as I have called them, one piece of history alone occurs. We may suppose then that it has some

important bearing and significance; and so it has. The story of Babel represents a great combined effort to resist the will of God; it is a sample of the condition of men after the Flood; it shews that the judgement of the Flood had not permanently influenced for good the descendants of him, who *walked with God*, and who built his ark *by faith*<sup>1</sup>; and hence for the purposes of Scripture the story of Babel is as good as a volume, or rather it is much better; for it seems to concentrate our attention, and to say to us with very emphatic accents, “all these generations of men and women, of whom a mere memorandum is preserved in this record, were like their fathers godless and stubborn, and they needed some better light to guide them than any which God had yet given.”

So that after all, looking to its spiritual import and not to the mere amount of secular history which it contains, the history of Babel does very well carry us from Noah to Abraham, and suggests to us that for the purposes of Holy Scripture there was nothing else between these two patriarchs which it was worth while to record. Let us go on then to Abraham, and notice at once the remarkable change which takes place in the con-

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xi. 7.

struction of the Pentateuch as soon as we enter upon his history. Hitherto the principle of the history may possibly be matter for question and discussion: at least it is proved by experience, that men do not all see without difficulty what the principle is; hence we have speculations about the meaning of the first chapter of Genesis, the nature of the Flood, and so forth: but from the beginning of the twelfth chapter, there can be no doubt as to what the principle of the history is. It is the history of Abraham's family, and nothing else. Whether the history of one man's family be a probable basis *à priori* for a sacred book intended for the whole world, is a question upon which people can speculate if they will; but that this is the basis of the Pentateuch—indeed of the whole of the Old Testament, but I confine my remarks to the Pentateuch—there can be no manner of doubt. Let us then quietly take our stand at the beginning of the twelfth chapter of Genesis, and look round us a little.

We find the world godless as ever: and we may assume that the Father who made mankind did not intend that men should remain godless, or rather that they should sink into a lower and ever lower condition of depravity. Accordingly we find

God represented as calling Abraham: not Abraham, be it observed, making some discovery concerning God, but God revealing Himself to the mind of Abraham. This call, this revelation, is set forth from the first as being something of much wider interest than could attach to Abraham's own family: the whole world is to be blessed in him, or rather in *his seed*<sup>1</sup>. The promise might seem obscure as the Jews used to read it on the page of Genesis in olden time, but it ought not to seem obscure to us who have seen how the promise found its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, and in the blessings which even the coldest and most unbelieving will grant that He has bestowed upon mankind. But the point for the reader chiefly to observe is this, that the regeneration of the world is connected with one man and with one family. I do not think that we should easily have discovered for ourselves how the regeneration of the world could spring out of one man; though even here perhaps ordinary experience might come to our aid, and might remind us how frequently the destinies of nations, the destinies of the world, the increase and consolidation of human happiness and improvement, have in fact rested with one man;

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxii. 18.

innumerable examples might be given: but what I wish the reader to observe is this, that whatever may be the difficulty involved in such a course of action, the Pentateuch manifestly stakes its reputation (so to speak) upon the fortunes of a certain family; it leaves all the rest of mankind to follow Abraham; the magnificent fields of conquest and progress and civilization throughout the wide world are left to those whom we call secular historians, and the author of the Pentateuch confines himself to the family of a certain *sheik* (as we should call him) who came out of Mesopotamia at the call of God and dwelt in the land called Haran. Now the venture (to speak after the manner of men) in doing this was very great; and after some four thousand years we are in a position, in which the human author of the Pentateuch was not, to judge whether the venture was wise or no. What is the result? just this; that somehow or another, all that is good and civilized and hopeful in the prospects of the world does find itself connected with Abraham and his seed. Other families may have been more showy, may have caught for a time more of the world's gaze; but the permanent hopes of the world are bound up with Abraham and his "seed, which is Christ." If the

Jews of our own day be right in rejecting Jesus Christ as the end of their Law, then something may be said for those who think lightly of the Pentateuch: but if the general conscience of Christendom be guided by a true instinct, and Jesus Christ be indeed the *light to lighten the Gentiles*, then it is impossible not to admire the wisdom which so long ago singled out Abraham from all the rest of the world, and said "This is the man in whose seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

Abraham may be said then to be the beginning of the Gospel. I do not intend in this place to enter upon the details of his history, nor to comment upon its leading features; though there is great temptation to linger in the contemplation of his life, and in the study of the whole Patriarchal dispensation. I could wish much to pass gently and thoughtfully through this deeply interesting part of the Scripture record: I think it would be easy to point out marks of divine wisdom in the general course and current of the history, and to demonstrate by many examples the necessity of looking to great leading principles and not allowing the mind to be puzzled by microscopic details: and even in the details we should frequently find

the most marvellous lessons of godly living and warnings applicable to our own times. But the great and only point upon which I will lay stress is this, that the scripture history holds us close to that line of events which is connected with the coming of Christ. Esau is the elder and Jacob the younger; but Jacob monopolizes the history, because of him, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came<sup>1</sup>." The family of Jacob is but a speck upon the earth's surface; but when it goes down to Egypt all sacred history goes down with it, because it carries with it the seed of the promised Messiah. Christ illuminates the page of the Pentateuch; Christ demonstrates its wisdom; Christ proves the prophetic character of the spirit which indited it. The Jews loved the Pentateuch because it told them the history of their family, and the small beginnings of their greatness; and now in the wreck and ruin of Jewish hopes and Jewish pride we Christians can see in the Pentateuch cause for deeper love and more unlimited admiration, because we can find in it the history of the family of Him, upon whom our hopes depend, and who is to us the incarnate revelation of the power and wisdom of God.

<sup>1</sup> Romans ix. 5.

## ESSAY VII.

### THE WISDOM OF THE PENTATEUCH.

**I**N this essay I propose to examine the manner in which the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is dealt with in the Pentateuch. It may be said to be in one sense the principal subject of the books of Moses, for it occupies no less than four books out of the five: it is by no means confined to that one book which bears its name: that book contains an account of the actual departure from Egypt, but Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy contain portions of the same story; and the Pentateuch closes with the death of the great lawgiver and leader, whose birth forms the first conspicuous fact in the book to which the Exodus gives its name.

Hence for the purposes of this essay the four books, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy may be regarded as one; and the point for

our consideration will be the manner in which they tell their tale and the principles upon which they are constructed.

One remark ought however to be made upon the connection between these books and that which precedes them. A great importance is stamped upon the Exodus, and generally upon the future of the Israelites, by the manner in which they are associated with the facts of early history. A book which opens with the creation of the universe, and then gradually, or rather almost at once, contracts itself into the narrow channel of a record of one family and of a nation sprung from that family, seems by the nature of the case to assume that the family and nation in question have a very remarkable place assigned to them by the Providence of God in the world's history. But this view is made much more striking by the manner in which the first book, namely that of Genesis, leads up to the subsequent events. The book of Genesis, it will be remembered, terminates with the death of Joseph. The whole family of Israel were settled, apparently happily, in Egypt, under Joseph's patronage; and we might have expected that he would have gone to his rest, thanking God for the peace and plenty which he and his had

found in a strange land. But instead of this we find a solemn foreshadowing of the Exodus, and a testimony, as strong as could have been borne centuries later, that Egypt was not their continuing city, and that they must seek one elsewhere. Read these two verses: Genesis l. 24, 25. "Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the Children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." Now, supposing the Israelites to have been at this time oppressed, it would be easy to understand their looking forward to deliverance; but there was no such thing as oppression; all was sunshine, the land was plentiful, God had prospered the people in their sojourn there; and yet the old promise to Abraham is not forgotten, and the blessing of Joseph is not this, "God will keep you in this fertile land," but, "God will take you out of it, as He has engaged to do."

Regarding Joseph's parting words in what may be called a poetical light, they form a very striking introduction to the drama which follows; looking upon them in a light more solemn and religious,

we cannot fail to perceive the manner in which they difference the Pentateuchal from ordinary history. As in the opening of Genesis we find the creation of the material world described from a supernatural or spiritual point of view, so here it is manifest that the facts of the Exodus are not regarded in what may be called a matter of fact manner; it is the spiritual character and bearing of the facts, which is uppermost in the mind of the historian, and which therefore ought to be uppermost in the mind of the reader. The minute critic with his measuring line or his stop-watch ought to be convinced that his methods are out of place, if only by considering the parting words of Joseph.

However let us leave Joseph *embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt*<sup>1</sup>; and let us go on to the history, which gives us an account of the fulfilment of his parting words, *God will surely visit you.*

Now in proceeding to the consideration of this history, which has been so roughly handled of late, though not for the first time, it is necessary to bear in mind certain considerations concerning the manner of writing history: these considerations are important in the case of all historical books,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1. 26.

but they are especially important in the case of very ancient books, and still more especially in the case of books which have the peculiar spiritual character which belongs to those of Holy Scripture. Every book which contains history ought to be true; but a book, which is true in the sense in which it was intended to be so, may possibly be looked upon as untrue by men who do not consider the principles of its construction and the intentions of its author.

History or the committing of events to writing is a representative art, to be compared with sculpture and painting: it will of necessity be, like sculpture and painting, in a certain degree conventional: you cannot say that an event *must* be chronicled in one way and in one way only; and of two modes of chronicling an event one may differ much from the other, and yet it may be difficult to say which is the more truthful.

Let us go into a few particulars.

1. History may be written with what may be called a *statuesque* effect. The principle of sculpture, when it is applied, as in a marble monument, to record any event, is to single out some two or three principal actors and concentrate the whole story in them. You may have a memorial of a

battle for example; but there will be no attempt to present to the eye the figure of every soldier or every horse engaged in it; the chief hero of the day, with those immediately surrounding him, will be exhibited prominently, and everything else either faintly indicated or omitted altogether. A sculptured representation of this kind will of course be conventional; but it may be in a very proper sense truthful, and for some purposes may even be the truest representation possible: to judge fairly of it, and determine whether it is truthful or not, you must remember the artist's principle of telling his story, and not judge it by some other principle which the artist never adopted.

This kind of statuesque effect sometimes belongs, as I have said, to written history. An example occurs in the first chapter of Exodus. We read in that chapter of the method used by Pharaoh to check the dangerous rapidity of the growth of the Israelites. He commanded that all male children should be destroyed, and for that purpose he sent his orders to the women who acted as midwives amongst the Israelites. There can, I should suppose, be no question that the command was a general one; I mean, that it extended to all women who acted in the above-

mentioned capacity; and there must have been many of them amongst so large a population as that of Israel; but how does Holy Scripture record the transaction? Here is the passage: "And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: and he said.....<sup>1</sup>". Now here we have, instead of the general assertion that Pharaoh gave certain orders, the image of Pharaoh himself giving commands to two women whose names are given. The whole story is concentrated in three figures: one can almost fancy that one sees them in a marble group. And surely the effect is very striking; and surely also it would be rather foolish to dwell upon the impossibility of these two women, Shiphrah and Puah, nursing all the mothers in a nation, which, whatever might be its actual number, was certainly of considerable magnitude.

Look at a sculptured representation of the crucifixion. It gives you no account of the darkness which was over the land, no hint of the mocking crowd, no figures beyond that of the Saviour and perhaps the Virgin Mother and St John; and yet this representation shall be felt to

<sup>1</sup> Exod. i. 15, 16.

be so true, that you can scarcely look upon it without tears.

2. As historical representation may be *statuesque* or like sculpture, so also it may be *picturesque* or like a picture. A picture intends to do to a certain extent what sculpture does, or rather it does more, but it does it in a different way: the picture is not so conventional as the marble group, but still it is conventional; and the painter's effort is strictly speaking not to put down upon the canvass the scene before him, but to reproduce the scene depicted upon the retina of his own eye and so conveyed to his individual mind. This is important, because it is by no means clear that all persons see the same thing when the same object is placed before them: indeed it is certain that they sometimes do not: some persons are colour-blind for example, and the contrast of red and blue to a colour-blind person is not the same thing as it is to a person who is free from the defect of colour-blindness. The truth probably is, that almost any two persons see somewhat differently, as will appear from the following consideration. When a person enters an observatory as an observer, one of the first things to be done is to ascertain what is called his *personal equation*.

Suppose A and B look through the telescope of a transit instrument. The intention of the transit instrument is (as I must explain for the benefit of non-scientific readers) to ascertain the precise moment, when a star seen in the telescope passes certain wires which are visible to the observer. Now A and B have the same instrument, the same stars, and the same clock by which to reckon; and yet experience shews that A and B in general will not come to the same result. This is not because A is a better or worse observer than B; they may be supposed to be one precisely as good as the other; but this notwithstanding, the time given by A as that of the transit of a star will not be exactly that given by B; probably both will vary from the truth, and the correction which must be applied to A's observed time of transit, in order to give the true time, is called A's *personal equation*.

This difference between one man's senses and those of another, which is susceptible of being put in actual evidence, is worthy of notice with reference to the light which it throws upon the discrepancies that may exist between the representation of an event given by one man and that given by another: there may be a personal equation in matters of history as well as in astronomy, and

one man may really have in his mind a different impression from that which exists in the mind of another. When a person says very confidently, "I only tell you the actual fact," he probably forgets that what he tells is not the fact itself, but his impression of it.

The point, however, upon which I am now insisting, is the picturesque character of historical representations ; and as a picture, though it professes to do more than sculpture, does not profess to do all, is in fact imperfect in the nature of things, so written history must be imperfect. It has of course the advantage over painting that it is not tied down to one moment of time, but still in every historical representation there must be something of picture incompleteness : even a photograph throws some parts of the picture out of focus, and gives an imperfect result.

3. And as pictures may be mere sketches, which examined minutely become a hopeless confusion of daubs and scratches, so it may sometimes be with history. Nor should it be forgotten that effective sketches are just what a master of the art can do, and what a bungler cannot do. A few strokes, and a few scratches with a knife, will in skilful hands produce to an eye placed at a proper dis-

tance a very charming effect; and yet a critic, who should examine the work with his critical glass, would declare that there was no single object truthfully represented. Why may not historical sketches stand in the same position? and may it not be true that a piece of written history may produce upon the mind, which contemplates it from the proper distance, precisely the effect intended, and yet may seem to the mind, which does not so contemplate it, to be nothing better than a truthless scrawl?

4. So much for the analogies between written history and history sculptured or painted: let it be further noted that written history will almost always have in it more or less of a poetical element, and that in order to judge fairly of any given history it ought to be carefully considered whether it has more or less. A history is not necessarily less true because it has a strong poetical colouring: supposing Homer to be the chronicler of real events, we cannot say that his account of the siege of Troy is less true because he gives us so many speeches of heroes, the substance and form of which his own imagination unquestionably supplied: contrariwise, it is very possible that such speeches may be the truest part of the history; they may be more

effective than any other part in conveying to our minds the picture of the passions and parties, which were the spiritual and really moving causes of the great events connected with the fall of Troy.

The amount of this poetical element will depend upon the mental constitution of the writer; and taking a broad view we may say, that it will depend to a great extent upon the race to which the writer belongs. Races differ from one another most strikingly with respect to the possession of the poetical temperament; and in no race has it been more abundant and energetic than in that of Israel. This fact is so patent to every one who reads the Holy Scriptures that there is no need of any attempt to prove it; but it may be well to remark, that the existence of the poetical element ought to be carefully borne in mind in reading other parts of Scripture besides those which are professedly or obviously poetical, such as the Psalms and the prophetic books. For example, the poetical element would seem to be strong in the composition of that part of the book of Exodus which contains the history of Moses at the court of Pharaoh. The recurrence of the striking formula, *The Lord said unto Moses*, the interviews of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh, the

orderly succession of plagues under the influence of Moses' rod, and the culmination of the deliverance of Israel in the majestic song of *the horse and his rider*,—these and other features appear to indicate a highly poetical element, and to make it impossible to criticise the narrative as if it were a mere newspaper chronicle.

There is, if I remember right, in that very interesting collection of essays entitled *Guesses at Truth*, an attempt made to prove that poetry is more true than history. Put thus the thesis is somewhat paradoxical; but it represents nevertheless a substantial and important truth, namely, that history may very possibly be most faithfully recorded when the record is most poetical, and that to regard the admission of a poetical element as the admission of something contrary to the truth is only to betray narrowness of mind and an ignorance of what truth really means.

5. Another point to be borne in mind in estimating history, especially ancient history, is this; namely, that the standard or mode of judging of accuracy has varied much both with time and place. Let me explain what I mean by reference to an example. In the first chapter of his Gospel (v. 17) St Matthew writes thus: "So all the generations

from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations." Now no modern English historian could have written this passage; and for this simple reason, that according to modern English notions he could not have proved it to be true; he could not have made out the three precisely equal divisions of generations, and so he would have said nothing about them. The minute critic may say therefore that St Matthew's account is not a true one; but before he commits himself to this accusation, let him read what has been written upon the subject by the learned Lightfoot, than whom no one ever studied more deeply or appreciated more thoroughly the spirit of the Hebrew writers. Discussing the verse in question, in his *Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon the Evangelist St Matthew*, he writes thus: "Although all things do not square exactly in this threefold number of *fourteen generations*, yet there is no reason why this should be charged as a fault upon Matthew, when in the Jewish schools themselves it obtained for a custom, yea almost for an axiom, to reduce things and numbers to the very same,

when they were near alike. The thing will be plain by an example or two, when an hundred almost might be produced." He then gives several examples, of which I will quote one. "Five calamitous things are ascribed to the same day, that is, to the ninth day of the month *Ab*. *For that day, say they, it was decreed that the people should not go into the promised land; the same day the first temple was laid waste, and the second also: the city Bitter was destroyed, and the city Jerusalem plowed up.* Not that they believed all these things fell out precisely the same day of the month, but as the *Babylonian Gemara* notes upon it: *that they might reduce a fortunate thing to a holy day, and an unfortunate to an unlucky day.*" And after citing other examples Lightfoot concludes thus: "They do so very much delight in such kind of conceits, that they oftentimes screw up the strings beyond the due measure, and stretch them till they crack. So that if a Jew carps at thee, O Divine Matthew, for the unevenness of thy fourteens, out of their own schools and writings thou hast that, not only whereby thou mayest defend thyself, but retort upon them."

The example which I have given will, as I have said, explain what I mean by saying that the stand-

ard or mode of judging of accuracy in writing history has varied both with time and place. English standards cannot be safely applied to Hebrew writings, nor standards of the nineteenth century A. D. to writings of the nineteenth century B. C. What is necessary above all things in order to judge fairly of a writer is to understand (so to speak) the genius of the school to which he belongs, and a rough and ready critic, who does not attempt to do this, may easily be plunging about in darkness, while he fancies that he is in a blaze of sunlight.

6. One more remark must be added. It is so simple that it might seem to be unnecessary, but so often neglected that it may not be passed by. It is this; namely, that in estimating any history it is of the first importance to bear in mind the general gist and intention of the history. And this is specially true in the case of Holy Scripture. History in Holy Scripture is emphatically *sacred* history; it has a spiritual end, a religious purpose: it may not be treated therefore as if it were purely and simply secular, even when it is presented in the most secular form. The first chapter of Genesis does not merely contain a cosmogony, and cannot be understood if so regarded: and the book of Exodus does not merely contain an account of the

escape of certain illused Hebrews from the thralldom of an Egyptian oppressor: but both the one and the other are portions of the great history of redemption; and in order to estimate them aright and understand them and criticize them, we must look forward to Him with whose coming both are vitally connected, even Jesus Christ.

These remarks by no means exhaust the subject out of which they arise; but they will be, as I trust, sufficient to put our minds in the right attitude, when we examine the account which has been given us of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt.

For if, omitting the consideration of details, the treatment of which may have been decided by circumstances of which we know very little, we look to the main features of the sacred story, we observe many indications of divine wisdom and purpose.

In the first place, we see that it was God's purpose above all things to teach the children of Israel His own supremacy, and His fatherly care over them. God is the great actor in the drama. From the beginning to the end, *The Lord said*, is the formula under which the history ranges itself. The critic may say, How did God speak? I cannot tell him: it suffices to know that He spake

in some manner which Moses could understand. And so Moses appears throughout, not as a great captain glorifying himself, but as an instrument for performing the commands of a higher captain still. The history was recorded, no doubt, for the benefit of subsequent generations: those who had actually witnessed the scenes recorded, would not be very much in need of reading the record: but they who followed, and who had not witnessed the scenes, would read or hear rehearsed the history of them; and what would be the lesson which they would learn? Just this, that their fathers had been brought out of Egypt, not by their own might, nor by the strength of their own right arms, but by the unseen power of Him who ruled their hosts, and who had overthrown and destroyed Pharaoh. Does, or does not the Pentateuch teach this lesson forcibly? This is really the question for any person to ask, who wishes to estimate the wisdom of the Pentateuch; it is not whether the lesson is taught in the way which we should have expected *à priori*, nor whether it is taught as it would have been if committed to paper in modern times, but whether it is taught forcibly, in fact in the most forcible manner possible, to those whom God intended to teach. Certainly no

other nation was ever taught in such fashion; and in the good providence of God, the national teaching of the Israelites has become the primer for the education of the world.

The fact is, that it is impossible to understand the Pentateuchal history, unless we regard it as written with a distinct didactic purpose. I suppose that the motives which lead men to write history are various: some have been attracted by the taste of antiquarian investigation so strong in certain minds, some have wished to illustrate particular political theories, some have set to work in the spirit in which a man writes a poem, and some have earnestly desired to teach their fellows by exhibiting to them the experience of the past. This last tone of feeling most nearly agrees with that which pervades the books of Moses; only in this case, the feeling goes beyond that which moves the mind of the ordinary historian, and monopolizes the whole heart of the writer. The writer is teacher rather than historian, severe moralist and rigid censor rather than chronicler of events: he does not speak as one of the people to whom he belongs, nor even as *primus inter pares*; but he occupies a place confessedly above them all, from which he deals out rebuke, and endea-

vours to convince of sin. Hence it is, that the obstinacy and rebellious character of the people of Israel occupy so prominent a place in the history : no one can deny that the tendency of the whole Pentateuch is entirely opposed to any self-glorification on the part of the Israelites : they kept the book, and keep it still, as their most precious possession, the fundamental charter of their national liberties ; but so far as it describes their character, it describes it in a manner by no means gratifying to human pride : they are cowardly, unspiritual, stiffnecked, ungrateful ; their greatness depends not upon any personal qualities of their own ; Moses leads them, not because they have won his affection, but because the leadership has been imposed upon him by God. The general view of the people, as being taken out of bondage, and made a great and free nation by the sovereign love of God, and as being chastised and punished in order to fit them for the high place intended for them, is as unlike anything that an Israelite would have invented for himself, as it is possible to imagine. Yet the conception is a grand one, and one which may be contemplated with as much awe and admiration now as in earlier times ; nay with more, for the history in early times was imperfect,

and only became complete, when the nation brought its history to a terrible termination by the black deed of Calvary. And the question is this, Is this lesson concerning the character of the Israelites taught clearly or not? Could it conceivably be more solemnly or infallibly impressed? Do not all minute questions concerning numbers of men, and accommodation for cattle, vanish beside a grand moral feature of the history, such as that of which I am now speaking?

Moreover, this feature of the history proves clearly that the Pentateuch was of the nature of a revelation *to* the people, not something coming from them; a light shining in upon them from without, not a mere reflexion from their minds. It has often been observed, but it cannot be observed too frequently, that nothing can account for the tenacity with which the Israelites have maintained their sacred books, which expose so unsparingly their faults and weaknesses, except the existence of an unswerving belief that the books are divine: and as it is difficult to understand why the Israelites should have prized them so highly, except upon this supposition, so it is difficult to understand how they should have come into existence, except from the authorship of one who

stood, like Moses, outside the circle of national feeling, yet with a divine commission to lead and instruct the people, knowing the faults of his brethren but not sharing them, *in* the nation and yet in a certain sense not *of it*.

From the preceding sentence, I pass very naturally to a remark upon the manner in which the character of Moses is brought out in the Pentateuch. The last four books may be almost said to be a life of Moses, beginning as they do with his birth, and concluding with his death. They are, however, evidently not written for the sake of glorifying him : he does not appear like King William the Third in the hands of Lord Macaulay, or like Henry the Eighth in those of Mr Froude : but still his character comes out in very grand and noble lines, and we are as familiar with it as we are with that of St Paul, or even of much later heroes. Now nations are very much affected as to their character by the characters of a few leading men : the many are influenced by the few : and as the light which came emphatically to lighten *the world* shone from the one person of Jesus Christ, so the smaller lights, which have in their degree lightened communities or nations, have been identified with individual men. Hence it seems to me, that one of the most striking

marks of the wisdom of the Pentateuch is to be found in its portraiture of the character of Moses. Joshua might be said to have done his work, when he had led the armies of Israel into Canaan ; he was a great captain, but apparently only, or at all events chiefly, that : even Aaron does not stand out with any special individuality of character ; but Moses the meek, the courageous, the unselfish, the fatherly, the wise and just lawgiver, stands out with a clearness which seems to prove that his life is intended to be an undying example, and his character a perpetual message from God to the people of Israel. One almost feels tempted to think that a man so infinitely above his contemporaries might have turned and swayed them by his own inherent energy and consciousness of superiority : indeed, if any person wished to impugn the divine character of the Exodus, he would perhaps be able to make his best argument out of the greatness of Moses : he would be able to say, "This is all natural enough, Moses was a leader and prince by nature ; and you want nothing more than his natural character to account for all the doings of the Israelites under his direction." But if any one should be tempted to take this view, he should look at the history, and see how the theory will square with

it: he will find this great natural leader and prince ever disclaiming such precedence, unwilling in the first instance even to speak to Pharaoh, and, as he was then compelled to go by divine power, so conscious ever afterwards of a divine mission, and never attempting to act upon his own authority, but upon divine commands. *The Lord said unto Moses*—that is the key to his actions.

From the character of Moses himself we naturally pass to that of his teaching. This would require, for its proper discussion, an essay, or perhaps a volume, to itself. But I wish to observe, that the imperfect morality of the Pentateuch may very well be regarded as indicative of the wisdom of its author: "*for the hardness of your heart,*" said our Lord Jesus Christ, "Moses wrote you this precept<sup>1</sup>." The system of legislation and discipline was fitted not to an ideal state of human society, but to society such as it found itself in newly-emancipated tribes of Egyptian bondsmen: the wisdom of the lawgiver was to be seen in the keenness of perception with which he knew the spirit of those to whom his laws were given; and it is no paradox to say that the admitted imperfection of Old Testament morality argues the wisdom of the system of discipline under which Israel was placed.

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark x. 5.

No doubt the assertion sounds paradoxical, and may remind us of the famous paradox of Warburton, which forms the thesis of the *Divine legation of Moses*. It will be entirely germane to my present subject to observe that, in my opinion, the view taken by Warburton has of late been less highly estimated than it deserves to be. Warburton's argument, as stated by himself, runs thus :

1. To inculcate the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is necessary to the well-being of civil society.

2. All mankind, especially the most wise and learned nations of antiquity, have concurred in believing and teaching that this doctrine was of such use to civil society.

3. The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is not to be found in, nor did make part of, the Mosaic dispensation.

From these "propositions so clear and evident," Warburton thinks "we might directly proceed to the conclusion," "that therefore the Law of Moses is of divine original."

The obvious deduction from the above three propositions would seem to be this, namely, that Moses was *not* one of the wisest and most learned of mankind. Still there is a true side of Warburton's view: and putting his argument in

a less paradoxical form it comes to this: it must be granted that Moses was a *successful* lawgiver, that he succeeded in laying the foundations of civilization and religion for a great and remarkable people: yet in doing this he did not avail himself of the most obvious method of getting command of the people's minds, the appeal to the terrors of an unseen world, of which unseen world he must have heard abundantly in Egypt: hence his method of dealing with the people, being by hypothesis successful, must have owed its success to some wisdom superior to that of the wisest and most learned of mankind. Taking Warburton's argument in its general spirit and not tying ourselves to its very letter, we may maintain that it will bear a good deal of pressure without breaking down; and it is in accordance with this view that I have ventured above to argue the wisdom of the Pentateuch from its imperfect morality: its wisdom is seen, not in its absolute conformity to the standard of the Gospel, but in its adaptation to the spiritual condition of those for whose guidance and education it was intended.

I have spoken in the preceding paragraph, as in some others, of the education of the Israelitish people; and it seems to me to be very

necessary to bear in mind that the Pentateuch was intended as an educational book. Look at the book of Deuteronomy especially: it is a collection of the parting exhortations of Moses, emphasised by the fact that they *are* parting exhortations and are followed up by the history of his death. It is clear that the intention is that the experience of Israel in the wilderness should be the lesson-book of Israel in Canaan: the future progress of the nation is kept in view: the principles upon which national prosperity will depend, and the course of action which will bring ruin and misery, are drawn with a pen of unquenchable fire. Meanwhile there is seen occasionally through the didactic discourses the lurid light of dismal prophecy and sad foreboding of evil: look, for example, at the 28th chapter, and think of it as illustrated by subsequent history and as almost suggesting the most terrible fulfilment of its maledictions: I say almost suggesting, because scarcely anything short of a prophetic vision of evil to come and an agonized hope that it might somehow still be averted seems sufficient to account for the terrible eloquence of the law-giver's warnings, and his fearfully emphatic descriptions of the bitter fruits of disobedience.

But it is not Deuteronomy only which has this character: it is seen from the beginning to the end of the Pentateuch: the Law was recorded in order that the Israelites might have it constantly by them, that they might "bind it as frontlets between their eyes and might talk of it when they lay down and when they rose up." And not only so: the record of their own peculiar Law was prefaced by the moral history of mankind: the creation of man in God's image, the Fall, the Flood, the call of Abraham, all were lessons,—not merely amusing and interesting records, but lessons,—by examining which the Israelites were to understand their own relation to God and their own duty.

And observe, reader, that the education of the people was successful. Where is the proof? In this, that it prepared the way for the coming and the reception of the Law of Christ. The Jews rejected Him, you will say: so they did, but still the spiritual condition of the Jewish nation, the point of education at which they had arrived, was that which (humanly speaking) rendered possible the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Moreover, let it be remembered that the Apostles were Jews; St Paul was a Jew; and we may see in the spiritual condition of St Paul a first-rate

specimen of that good ground, in which, according to our Lord's parable, the seed could take root and bear a hundredfold. It is impossible to say what might have been the course of events, or what mode of action God might have chosen to adopt; but it should never be forgotten, that, as a matter of fact, the seed Judaism bore the plant Christianity; the Israelites, notwithstanding their bad qualities and their stiff-neckedness, were forced into the position of the spiritual progenitors of the Christian Church; and, however strange it may seem, it is demonstrably true, that all that is best in modern culture and civilization is lineally traceable to those wild lawless people who came out of Egyptian slavery. What has made this result possible? It is, above all things, the wisdom of the Pentateuch, which formed their educational primer, which told them what they were and what they ought to be, which traced up their lineage to God Himself and taught them as the ground of their divine origin to worship the one unseen God, which told them how God had chosen their father Abraham and revealed Himself to him, which assured them that God had never forgotten them and never would forget them, that they were a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar

people, and that there was no nation upon earth which had seen the things that they had seen and known what they had known and which had God so nigh to them. The wisdom of the Pentateuch was the life of the Israelites; and it preserved a testimony for the true God, which grew brighter and brighter until it was lost, or almost lost, in the intensity of that light which came to lighten the whole race of man, shining first from the Cradle of Bethlehem and afterwards with more awful brightness from the Cross of Calvary.

One other feature of the history of the Exodus deserves to be noticed with reference to the view which is taken of the Pentateuch in this essay. Every one must have observed how admirable the history is when regarded as a parable of human life. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is evidently based upon the Exodus. The people of Israel retained as slaves in Egypt is the soul in bondage to sin; the soul is redeemed by the grace and power of God, and specially through "Christ our Passover;" the passage through the water of the Red Sea is baptism; and the wanderings in the wilderness are the temptations and discipline of this mortal life; Jordan is the stream of death; and Canaan is "the rest which remains

for the people of God." Now it is certainly very remarkable that the life and experience of the Israelites in their journey from Egypt to Canaan should adapt themselves to the life and experience of people in England, for example, in our own days. There is nothing else like it in history. If you take away the story of the Exodus, there is nothing that you can substitute for it: indeed you scarcely can take it away, without endangering the foundations of the Catholic Church which has been built over it. You may have difficulties about some matters of detail, the numbers of the men who went with Moses, or the number of the cattle, or what not; but the general story stands out in all its clearness and completeness, as a perfect picture and specimen of the method by which God deals at all times with human souls. And it will be observed, that if we once lay hold upon this thought, that the Exodus is the history of God's dealings with human souls, and if we remember that on the one hand God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and that on the other mankind in different ages and countries are also the same in reality though different in many accidental circumstances, then all wonder vanishes from the discovery that the Exodus of the Israelites may

be turned into a *Pilgrim's Progress*: for the agent is the same, and the subject is the same, and the purpose is the same: in both cases human souls are to be trained, and it is God Himself who trains them.

It is when we look at it thus, that we see the deep spiritual character of the Pentateuchal history: and the chief misfortune, which attends the criticism of the mere details of it, is that such criticism tends to keep out of sight the really important features and to waste our attention upon comparative trifles. It is like an examination of Raffaele's *Transfiguration* by a man whose nose is within an inch or two of the canvass: the picture becomes unintelligible: all is contradiction and confusion: poetry sinks into paint. I lay the more stress upon this view of the Pentateuch, because in the discussion which has of late darkened the atmosphere of the English Church I find much which appears to me most unsatisfactory written on either side. On the one side I see, or fancy that I see, the essential character of the Pentateuch sacrificed in consequence of certain alleged difficulties of detail; on the other I see the character of the book sometimes defended upon principles, concerning the

soundness of which I have the gravest doubts. The notion that Moses wrote the books of the Pentateuch precisely as we have them now, and then when he had written them he at once laid them up in the ark or elsewhere and guarded them as a precious possession from all possibility of interpolation, and that consequently they have never suffered any interpolation but may be relied upon for every name and every number they contain,—this notion seems to me most gratuitous and most difficult of acceptation. I have never been able to understand why divine books should not be liable to one kind of human infirmity as much as another: we know by most certain evidence that they have suffered by transcription, and no one now ventures to deny it: and this being so, I think it is according to all analogy and probability to suppose that they may be faulty in other respects, if faulty it is to be called, after the manner of human books. Suppose that the numbers, some of them or many of them, are erroneous, suppose that the original documents have undergone changes at the hands of editors subsequent to the time of Moses, suppose that the hand which added the death of Moses to the end of the book of Deuteronomy made other

additions which may or may not be capable of detection—suppose all this or much more—does it touch the central point of the whole matter? does it detract one iota from the wisdom of the Pentateuch, or impair its divinity, or lessen its value, or shake the foundation of God's revelation? To my mind, No. These things are but the accidents: the substance is untouched. Men may dispute about the accidents: the substance ought to be beyond dispute, because it is the revelation of the wisdom of God.

## ESSAY VIII.

### THE DISCONTINUITY OF EARLY SCRIPTURE HISTORY.

**I**N former essays I have referred incidentally to the differences between the history which is contained in Holy Scripture and that which we have received at the hands of various secular writers. Those differences are manifold, and each difference is worthy of respectful consideration; there is one however which is striking perhaps beyond the rest, and which nevertheless, as I imagine, has not received so much attention as it deserves; I refer to what I have called in the title of this essay the discontinuity of early Scripture history.

Let me explain what I mean. We speak of the *history* of Greece, or Rome, and we speak of the *history* contained in the opening chapters of Genesis; and the phraseology cannot be said to be incorrect. But the two things which are thus

described by the same name are very different in kind, and the description of the two by one common name is liable, unless care be taken, to give rise to much misunderstanding. Continuity is the soul of history; each event or series of events springs from those which go before, and it is the very business of the historian to connect one event with another, and to exhibit the series which he has undertaken to describe in an unbroken chain. A collector of anecdotes is not a historian: a file of newspapers is not a history.

Now in the later portions of the Old Testament we find the historical books of such a kind as to be comparable with the works of secular historians. There are still differences between the two; but the resemblances are greater than the differences, and there can be no confusion in classing the two sets of writers together. This is not so in the case of the opening portion of the Pentateuch; and it appears to me to be so necessary for the right conception of the character of this portion of God's Word that the fact should be recognized and appreciated, that I propose in this little essay to call in the aid of illustration and to exhibit to the eye by graphic representation the point which I wish to put in evidence.

Ordinary history, as recorded by the ordinary historian, may be compared to a river. The river may be traced to its source, or the writer may set his readers down at some arbitrary point upon its stream, and may describe to them where they are, before he makes his start and carries them with him. As the party go down the stream they will pass various affluents, and it will be in the discretion of the guide to what extent these affluents shall be explored; it may be sufficient to say two or three words about them, or it may be necessary to leave the main current for a time and actually follow the course of some of these smaller rivers, perhaps even to go up to their sources, and then follow them down again and so once more take to the chief stream. This, I say, will be a matter upon which the guide must exercise his discretion; he may weary his party by unnecessary divergent excursions, or he may in his fear of doing this misrepresent the river by neglecting to point out its principal springs. Then, again, as the great river follows its course, it branches out into other rivers, and it will be the business of the guide to keep his boat in the main stream and to indicate the nature of the smaller rivers which separate from it, and explain what becomes of them. In this case, as in

the former, much of the success of the trip depends upon the discretion of the guide.

Now when we look to early Scripture history, the first few chapters of the book of Genesis, we perceive that this figure of the river is by no means applicable. It applies pretty well to the later portions of Genesis and the subsequent books, though even in these the history differs from the ordinary type in the unusually exclusive manner in which it confines itself to one stream, and that apparently not a very wide one: but the opening of the Old Testament is so different from any ordinary historical work, that the figure of the river altogether fails and ceases to be applicable. The continuity is wanting. Every feature, upon which the fitness of the simile in the case of ordinary history depended, seems to be lacking: and the difference between the two may, I think, be well illustrated by drawing a diagram which shall represent each.

This I propose to do; but, in order to explain my diagrams, let me remind the reader of the materials which constitute the opening of the book of Genesis. I will set them down in order.

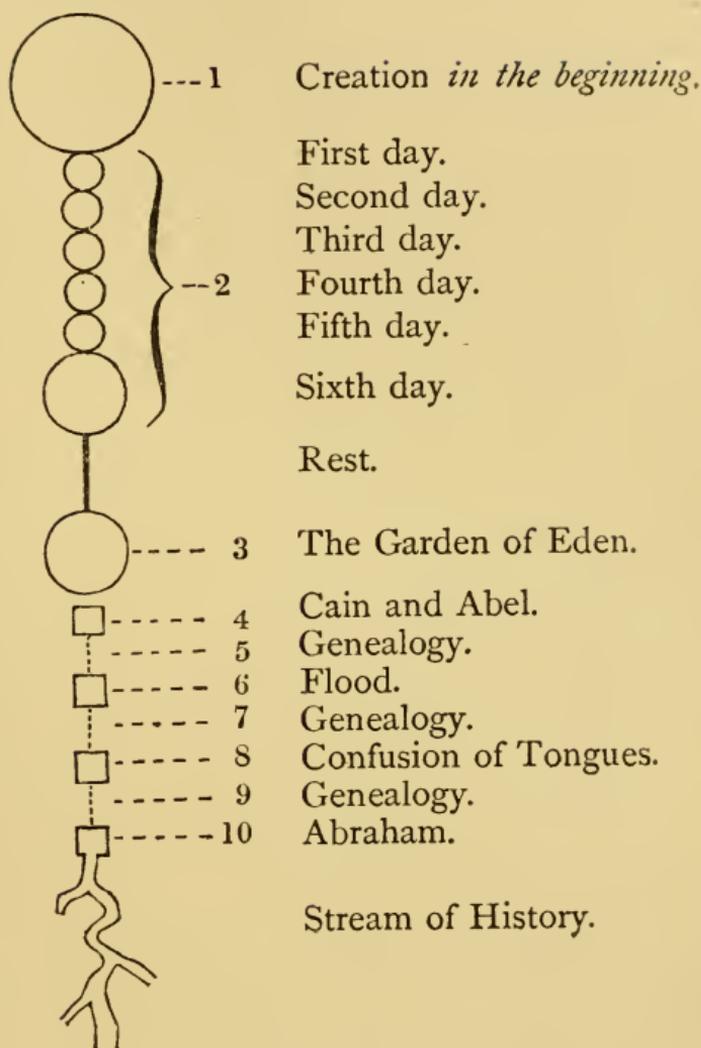
1. The creation of "Heaven and earth" *in the beginning.*
2. The six days' work, culminating in the

- creation of man in "God's own image," and the seventh day's rest.
3. The life of Adam and Eve in Eden, terminating in their expulsion.
  4. The story of Cain and Abel.
  5. Genealogy, with a very slight notice of the descendants of Cain.
  6. The Flood.
  7. Genealogy.
  8. The story of Babel and the Confusion of tongues.
  9. Genealogy.
  10. The story of Abraham; from which point the history becomes continuous, and confines itself to the events and fortunes of Abraham's family.

This constitution of the earlier portion of the Book of Genesis I represent by the figure upon the opposite page.

It will be observed that the figure begins with a circle, which at the upper part touches nothing and springs from nothing: this exhibits the first leading peculiarity of the history in Genesis, namely, that it begins with the actual beginning, and has nothing preceding it. I then represent the six creative days by six circles in contact, the last

Fig. I.



greater than the rest because representing the sovereign work of the six days, the creation of man. These circles being in contact do not intersect, and each is distinct from the rest; by which is symbolized the nature of the divine work and of the divine word by which it was done: no portion of the creative process flows from that which precedes it by necessary consequence: each portion is complete in itself, and becomes cognizable by man simply under the formula, *And God said.*

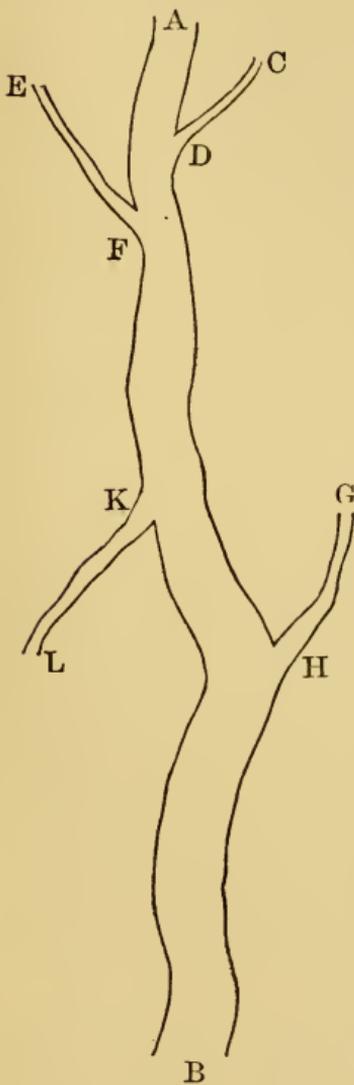
The seventh day's rest I denote by a mere line of connection with the last circle; and this final circle represents the history which has for its scene the garden of Eden.

After this comes an absolute break, because there is in reality a break in the history. The garden of Eden is closed: the Tree of Life is guarded by cherubim, with a flaming sword turning every way. Henceforth we see Adam and Eve in the ordinary working-day world.

To make more clear the change which takes place between the third and fourth chapters of the book of Genesis, I have adopted a different form of figure to denote the events which happen subsequently. I have denoted them by squares instead of circles; and it will be observed that there are

only three of these squares, connected by dots which represent genealogies, before we arrive at the

Fig. II.



story of Abraham, from whose call the history becomes a continuous stream, much after the manner of other histories.

In order to make clear the contrast between the diagram which I have been describing and a diagram representing ordinary history, it will be necessary to draw one of the latter kind. This I have done, and the result is given in Fig. II.

*AB* is the main stream of the history; *CD*, *EF*, *GH* are small affluents, which have an effect upon the main stream: *KL* is a branch of the historical river which our historian does not choose to follow, his attention being taken up by the main stream.

The reader will, I trust, easily catch the idea which this method of representation is intended to convey; and he will see in what respects a diagram such as Fig. II. may be taken to represent the course of ordinary history. When he has done this let him recur to the former figure, and he will perceive how thoroughly different and even incommensurable the two are. Fig. I. may represent history, but it must be a history different in kind from that represented by Fig. II.: it lacks the essential feature of history, so well represented by a stream, continuity: it does this partly in the nature of things, partly by divine intention. In the nature of things, because the creative and transcendent matter with which the Book of Genesis opens cannot be reduced to the ordinary formula of cause and effect, or of historical sequence: by divine intention, because there is clearly no desire on the part of the Divine Author to make us acquainted with all that happened in primeval days, but only to record so much as shall be necessary as a substructure for the developement of the main purposes of the book.

I need hardly say that I do not dwell upon this discontinuity as being a fault. On the other hand I see in it a mark of divine wisdom; I find in

it a warning, and a guide to the right understanding of the history; and I doubt not but that they who study it most will see in it most evidence of the truth, that Scripture, given by inspiration of God, though it may not be such as might perhaps have been expected, is nevertheless such as it ought to be, such as man's spiritual necessities require, and better adapted than any other instrument which could have been devised for accomplishing God's great purposes.

## ESSAY IX.

### THE ASPECT OF SIN IN THE PENTATEUCH.

 HOLY Scripture may in a certain sense be said to be a history of human sin. Taken in its completeness it may be regarded as commencing with the entrance of sin into the world, then carrying us on to the great work of redemption performed by the Incarnate Son of God, and lastly, stretching forward upon the wings of prophecy to the restitution of all things and to the new Heaven and new Earth, wherein nothing but righteousness can dwell. Milton's two titles cover the whole space occupied. *Paradise lost: Paradise regained.* Sin triumphant in the weakness of the first Adam: sin conquered and banished by the strength of the second. This is an epitome of divine revelation.

But although the fact of human sin is the great

underlying fact of the whole of Scripture, the aspects presented by it in different parts are very different. Sin in itself, in its essence, is ever the same: it is, as the Apostle St John says, *the transgression of the law*<sup>1</sup>: though volumes should be written about it, as indeed volumes have been written, it is impossible, at all events for all practical purposes, to come to any other or better definition than this, namely, that sin is the doing of that which God has forbidden, the outcoming of the will of man in opposition to the perfect and holy will of God. And therefore, whether we see sin in the garden of Eden in man's infancy, or whether we hear St Paul describing the soul's experience of sin<sup>2</sup> in the manhood of human history and with that intense feeling which his own ardent nature ever threw into his words, the essence of the thing seen or described is the same. The point however which it is my intention to bring under consideration in this essay is, that, while the nature of sin is ever the same, and while it is undoubtedly ever seen in the same light by the eye of Him who changeth not, the light in which it has been regarded by man, by the doer of the sin, has changed with time, and was different to an immeasurable

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. John iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Romans vii. 7—25.

extent in primeval, and even in very ancient days, not only from what it is now, but from what it became even during the later period of the old dispensation.

Let me introduce the subject by observing, that, so far as the Pentateuch is concerned, the idea of sin enters, not only implicitly, but explicitly and professedly in the light in which I have already described it, namely, as the transgression of law. If we divide the Pentateuchal history, as we fairly may, into the introductory portion which contains the early history of mankind, and that second portion which contains the history of the formation of the Israelitish nation, then we find each of these portions prefaced by the giving of a law. When Adam and Eve are placed in Eden, their life is made to depend upon the keeping of a positive precept: and when the Israelites are delivered from bondage and made into a nation, they are bidden to keep certain commandments. It is unnecessary to remark that the laws in the two cases are different, and that each is suited to the purpose for which it was intended; what I do wish to remark, and to lay stress upon, is the fact that a law to be kept was in each case professedly and undeniably the foundation of the

history. We commonly think of Moses as the great lawgiver, and when we consider how large a portion of the last four of his books is given to the subject of law, beginning with the twentieth chapter of Exodus, which contains the ten commandments, and terminating with the Book of Deuteronomy, that is, the Book of the repetition of the Law, we feel that the great *lawgiver* is his most appropriate title; but it should be observed that the treatment to which Moses submitted his people was not new, it was only the reproduction under new conditions of the process to which Adam and Eve are represented as having been submitted. So that the beginning and end of the Pentateuch are thus in deep and perfect harmony: the divine education in all instances is the same: God's law must be kept, and the breaking of that law is sin.

Sin being thus the transgression of God's law, let us now proceed to examine the way in which such transgression was regarded in olden times. And the chief thing which I have to say upon the subject, and which I will at once put down plainly in order that the reader may have it clearly before him, is this, that in the Pentateuch there is, so far as I have been able to discover, no such thing as *repentance*, no real sorrow for sin.

It will be observed that I am now stating what appears to be a fact, without attempting to account for it: whether it be a fact or not must be determined by examination of the record, which the books of the Pentateuch contain. Let us endeavour to make such an examination.

1. Take first the sin of Adam and Eve. Let the reader recall to his mind the whole of the history, or if he is at all at a loss let him look at Genesis iii. 1—21. He will perceive that when Adam and Eve were charged with sin, they did not deny it: they made excuses, the man laying the blame on the woman, and she laying it on the serpent; then the judge passed sentence, and lastly the sentence was executed, and Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden. But throughout the whole of the story there is no hint that either the man or his wife was sorry for what had been done; they listen to the sentence pronounced upon them, ending with the solemn words, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," and then, as if to make the absence of repentance more conspicuous than it otherwise would have been, the narrative runs on thus, "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living."

Milton represents Adam as bewailing his fall in very touching and eloquent language :

All my evasions vain,  
And reasonings, though through mazes, lead me still  
But to my own conviction : first and last  
On me, me only, as the source and spring  
Of all corruption, all the blame lights due ;

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*

O Conscience ! Into what abyss of fears  
And horrors hast thou driven me ! out of which  
I find no way, from deep to deeper plung'd !<sup>1</sup>

Nothing corresponding to this will be found in the book of Genesis: the sense of sin, which Milton represents as so deep and so acute, is supplied by the poet's own mind: it is as imaginary as when in an old picture the Blessed Virgin Mary is represented at her devotions, with a Christian church of Gothic architecture in the background: it is not too much to say, that in the sacred record the serpent does not appear more cold and untouched than do Adam and Eve.

I do not say that there was no sense of having done wrong. Adam and Eve hid themselves, when "they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day:"

<sup>1</sup> *Par. Lost*, Bk. X.

they knew also that they were naked and attempted to clothe themselves: they had doubtless some fear of punishment following, as had been threatened, upon the breach of the divine law: but of sorrow that they had done wrong, I can see no trace whatever. Milton's Adam is the philosopher, but the Adam of Genesis is the child-man: and the deep view of sin which Milton represents Adam as taking, and which perhaps we are inclined thoughtlessly to attribute to him, belongs to man in a different condition from that, in which the first of the race was placed, or in which he could have been placed in the very nature of things.

2. Perhaps some persons may be disposed to say, that it was not likely that the sin of our first parents should produce genuine sorrow: it may be argued that the fault which they committed was not a fault in itself, but only made to assume that character because it was connected with a breach of a positive command. I do not think that this argument is sound, but I am not going to endeavour to demonstrate its unsoundness; I merely make the remark for the purpose of observing, that whatever people may think of the first sin which came into the world, there can be no difference of opinion as to the character of the second which

is put upon record in the Book of Genesis. That second sin was murder.

A great deal might be said concerning this second sin. It seems to be recorded as a sad and solemn commentary on the first; and for the purpose of shewing that sin is sin whatever man may think about it, that if Satan once finds his way into the human heart his power will grow with the strength of a giant, and that disobedience to God soon becomes the murder of a brother. It may be added that the account of this murder is as simple and natural as that of one reported in a modern newspaper: jealousy begetting hatred, and hatred leading to violence. There is however that great difference between the sin of Cain and the sin of his parents, to which reference has been already made: it was not the breach of any positive law, it was the breach of the unwritten law of the heart; and if there be any ground for excusing Adam and Eve with regard to their want of penitence, there can be no such ground in the case of Cain: surely the murder of a brother, when brought home to the first murderer, must have caused him to weep bitter tears of sorrow and contrition.

If it were so, Scripture contains no record of the fact. Let any one read the fourth chapter of

Genesis, and say where he finds any evidence that Cain was sorry for what he had done. When charged implicitly with the crime, he merely asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?" and tells a lie into the bargain. He dislikes, as might have been expected, the punishment which his crime brings upon him; but as for any sorrow for the crime as such, there is no evidence that anything of the kind was felt. "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord;" and he married a wife, and begat a son, and built a city, and called it after his son's name; and after that we hear of him no more.

3. Let us look at sin upon a larger scale. The crime of Cain was a choice specimen of the results of human disobedience; but after a while all individual specimens are merged in the universal corruption, which is represented as having spread over the world before the flood. The general account of the moral condition of mankind is contained in such words as these: "The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth<sup>1</sup>." From the hint given in

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 11, 12.

the second Epistle of S. Peter<sup>1</sup>, in which Noah is spoken of as *a preacher of righteousness*, it might seem that the wickedness of the world was not without rebuke and remonstrance on the part of Noah; but anyhow his life and his conduct protested against the sinfulness which surrounded him. Nevertheless wickedness prevailed; the judgment came; and the Flood swept away the ungodly. Now it is very true that in this case the history deals with sinners in the mass, and that we have therefore no picture of the individual life and feelings of an antediluvian sinner: all individual description is confined to Noah, the one emphatically righteous man: still it is very remarkable that no hint is given of any sense of sin on the part of the multitude of the ungodly: there is no touch of repentance: the sinners are swept away, like a flock of sheep, without a cry of contrition.

4. Perhaps it may with propriety be added, that in the case of the sin of Ham, although the sinner came under the direct and most bitter curse of his father<sup>2</sup>, still there is nothing said concerning any sorrow which he felt on account of his evil conduct.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. ix. 25.

5. The men also who attempted to build the tower of Babel are represented as sinning in that attempt. Whatever was the precise nature of the sinfulness of their conduct, there is no doubt of the fact of its sinfulness, and of the anger of God being caused by it; and so we read that "the Lord did scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth<sup>1</sup>." Nothing is said as to any sorrow felt by any one on account of God's anger.

6. Even in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, monstrous as was the condition of sin and terrible the judgment, there was apparently no repentance. Lot the righteous man was saved; but he did not succeed, although his soul was vexed day by day by the unlawful deeds of those amongst whom he lived, in converting one of them: even his own sons-in-law ridiculed his advice. The judgment came; and the wicked were destroyed, apparently in full enjoyment of their wickedness.

7. The sin of Esau may be thought an exception. Taking the English Version, we may quote the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews<sup>2</sup>, "he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." But it is manifest, both from this passage, and from the history in the book of

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 17.

Genesis, that the repentance spoken of was no repentance of his own, but a change of purpose on the part of Isaac his father. Indeed the conduct of Esau most admirably illustrates the point in hand, because he *did* give vent to his feelings and uttered some most piercing cries of sorrow. But what was the purpose of the cries? To get back his father's blessing, which he had lost. He had a keen sense of having made a mistake in the matter of selling his birthright, of having made a bad bargain; but it was the selfish feeling of loss, not the spiritual sense of having done wrong, which made him so earnest in his appeal. If we want any further proof of this, it is to be found in the fact, that his next step was revenge: "the days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob<sup>1</sup>." There is no penitence here.

8. The nearest approach to the feeling of penitence that I have been able to discover in the book of Genesis, is to be found in the conduct of Joseph's brethren, when they were in Egypt. It will be remembered, that although these brethren had been guilty of a most foul deed, equivalent to murder, yet they were never troubled at all about

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxvii. 41.

the matter until they found themselves in difficulties. When Joseph accused them of being spies, and put them in prison, and then told them that they must return home and bring their youngest brother as a pledge of their honesty, we read that "they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold also his blood is required<sup>1</sup>." I admit that this is something like repentance; but I am sure at the same time that it is only like it, and is not the thing itself. For there is no appearance of any feeling beyond that which every one experiences, when he has made a mistake and is suffering for it: Joseph's brethren attributed their trouble to the vengeance due for their brother's blood; but their sorrow for their misdeed began and ended with their own misfortune; there was no permanent sense of shame in having broken a command of God.

9. Once more: the same kind of remark applies to Joseph's brethren in a larger sense of the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xlii. 21, 22.

words, I mean to the descendants of those brethren when they became a nation. The reader can examine for himself and test the truth of my observation, but I confess that I cannot call to mind any instance in which the disobedience or sinfulness of the Israelites was accompanied by contrite confession of guilt and true marks of penitence: when Moses interceded with God on behalf of the people, the ground which he took was not the repentance of the offenders, but the greatness of Him against whom they had sinned<sup>1</sup>.

Thus I come to the conclusion, strange as it may seem at first sight to be, that repentance and conviction of sin are unknown, or almost unknown, in the Pentateuch. In order to make this point still more distinct, let us contrast the feelings of men of whom we read in the Pentateuch with those which we find later on in the history. To go to one of the principal instances at once, contrast them with the feelings of David. Think of the language of the 51st Psalm: "Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight ..... Turn Thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds." It is manifest that we have here a new language. The feeling caused by the

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xxxii. 11, 12.

thought of sin is not a feeling which existed in olden time and which has become intensified; it is something different in kind, different at least from anything of which we can find evidence in the words and deeds of the men of the Pentateuch. And the feelings evinced by such language as that which I have just quoted from the 51st Psalm is all the more remarkable because it does not stand alone: that language was not forced out of the human heart by extraordinary circumstances; it was no doubt made more intense by them, but it agreed in tone and principle with much that may be found scattered abundantly through the Psalter: in fact, it would not be going too far to say, that a delicate sense of sin, arising from an intense conviction of the holiness and the power of God, is one of the mainsprings of the spiritual power of the Psalms. Let the reader examine almost any one of them, and try to fancy them as being spoken by any Pentateuchal saint, Moses perhaps alone excepted, and he will then see what I mean.

Let me stop short of David, and take a very different person for the illustration of my subject. That person shall be Saul. Not a very promising example of penitence, it may be said; but let us look at what we read about him in 1 Sam. xv.

There we find Samuel taking Saul to task for his disobedience: "rebellion," he tells him, "is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king." Now mark the answer of Saul: "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." Here is a candid confession of guilt, and an explanation of the cause of its commission. There is nothing, I believe, of a similar kind to be found in the Pentateuch.

The nearest approach to it is one of those exceptions, if it be an exception, which are said to prove the rule. To whom does the reader suppose that I refer? To no other than king Pharaoh? Yes: the chief of rebels, the man whose heart God is said to have hardened, that He might shew forth His power in him<sup>1</sup>, exhibits a conduct more like that of a penitent than any other man in Pentateuchal times. Pharaoh cringed under punishment, and under the pressure of calamity promised to give way to the demands of Moses and Aaron; and as soon as the trouble was past he returned to his old attitude of defiance. I

<sup>1</sup> Exod. ix. 16.

need hardly say that this involved no genuine repentance. Still Pharaoh did use such language as this, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked<sup>1</sup>;" and certainly this language has a penitent air. The absence of really penitent feeling is proved, not only by the immediate revocation of the promise of submission, but by this, namely, that Moses appears to have detected the hypocrisy, saying, "As for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God<sup>2</sup>." The fact seems to have been, that the feeling of Pharaoh was merely one of fright; and that when the cause of fright was gone, the semblance of repentance went with it.

The conclusion which I draw from all this is, that mankind were gradually and painfully educated by God's providential dealings to a susceptibility for the feeling of repentance and for deep consciousness of sin. If we consider the matter, we shall inevitably come to the conclusion, that Adam and Eve could scarcely have been in any other mental condition than that of children: Adam, the philosopher, is the creation of the poets, especially of Milton: the Adam of divine

<sup>1</sup> Exod. ix. 27.

<sup>2</sup> ver. 30.

revelation is a man in stature and in physical developement, but mentally and spiritually he is a child. And God treated him as a child. What is the first thing that a child has to learn? Simply to do as it is bidden. No wise father argues with a child: the language of the Divine Father, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat<sup>1</sup>?" is precisely the language which any human father might use in the training of his son. And a child must be taught what is right and what is wrong by the rough principle of consequences: it is only by growth and training that the child rises to the condition, in which it can regard a fault as supremely bitter just because it is wrong: *against Thee, Thee only have I sinned*, was natural language for David; it would have been simply impossible for Adam.

Hence I have spoken of the aspect of sin in the Pentateuch as a subject worthy of examination and consideration; and the sum and substance of my conclusions on the subject amount to this, that the men of the Pentateuch give us abundant examples of sin, but absolutely none of real penitence. The view which I desire to suggest to the reader would however be defective in one

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 11.

main particular, if I did not call his attention to the fact, that in very early times that feeling of repentance, which was not exhibited by man, is attributed to God Himself. If we look to the result produced by the intense sinfulness of mankind before the Flood, we find it recorded that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart<sup>1</sup>." Now here we find two things asserted: first that God saw the intensity of human sinfulness, which men themselves did not see; secondly, that the feeling of repentance, of grief, on account of His own acts, caused sorrow to the heart of God Himself. Taking a divine view (so to speak) of the record, that is, regarding it as a communication from God Himself respecting the spiritual history of those early days, this is all intelligible enough. God tells us, if one may venture so to speak, in language adapted to our capacity, what His own feelings were, when His creatures fell into a wide and deep rebellion; and He intimates to us that He experienced these feelings just because men

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 5, 6.

did not experience them. Had men been ashamed of themselves, God would not have endured such sorrow: it was their obdurate condition of mind which caused Him to be "acquainted with grief." All this is, I say, intelligible enough, if we think of Almighty God making a revelation to us through the book of Genesis; but what shall we say of it on the supposition of the book of Genesis being a simply human affair? How strange that the very feeling which we desiderate in man should have been attributed to God! If the feeling were wanting altogether, we might account for its absence; but to find God grieving and man not grieving at all, is too strange a phenomenon to be accounted for on any supposition except this, that God was gradually educating His creatures to a spiritual condition, which did not belong to them by nature, but which would gradually be produced by His grace.

In speaking of the gradual education to which reference has just been made, I must not omit to refer to the place which was occupied by this education and by sin itself in the system of the Levitical law. Here we find a definite ritual intended to impress upon the minds of the Hebrews the real nature of sin and the solemnity of their

relation to God, whose law they were bound to keep. The ideas of propitiation and atonement, which were probably latent in earlier sacrifices, were now brought out with greater distinctness; and it would seem impossible for men, who reflected concerning the ceremonial which was enjoined upon them, to avoid the conclusion, that the outward sacrifice typified a sacrifice within, and that repentance and amendment were necessary conditions of the offerings made for sin being acceptable to God. In the fourth and following chapters of Leviticus we have the ritual of the sin-offering: it is not necessary to examine it throughout, but I will quote as a specimen one passage. "If the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty; when the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord: and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord.

And the priest that is anointed shall bring of the bullock's blood to the tabernacle of the congregation: and the priest shall dip his finger in some of the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the Lord, even before the vail.....And he shall carry forth the bullock without the camp, and burn him as he burned the first bullock: it is a sin-offering for the congregation<sup>1</sup>."

Then again we have the ordinance of the great day of atonement, with the very remarkable ritual of the scapegoat<sup>2</sup>; concerning all which it is not necessary for me to say more than this, namely, that like the sin-offering to which reference was made before, the moral purpose of the great day of atonement, with all its remarkable ritualistic circumstances, was clearly the impression upon the minds of the people of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It all worked together in the religious education of the people. Moreover the minute and laborious and (as we should think) repulsive character of the Hebrew ceremonial may not only be appealed to as indicating the difficulty of the task which had to be performed, but may also be held up as proved to be successful by the results which it produced. If we find that David and the men of

<sup>1</sup> Lev. iv. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xvi.

his time regarded sin in a manner much more spiritual and more, like that in which Christians regard it, than did the men of earlier times, to what are we to attribute the change? Surely to the discipline through which God's Church had been brought: the sin-offerings and the atonements and the elaborate Levitical ritual had done their work; and men had acquired through them at least a part of the lesson concerning sin, which God wished His creatures to learn.

Indeed the success of this method of divine education may be argued, perhaps most conclusively, from language which might seem at first hearing to disparage it. When David was in the agony of repentance under the influence of which he composed that Psalm, to which reference has been already made, he said "Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee; but Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings. The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise<sup>1</sup>." What is the true conclusion from such language? Not, I think, that David underrated the discipline of sacrifice; but that he had learnt the lesson which sacrifice was intended to teach, and had arrived

<sup>1</sup> Psalm li. 16, 17.

at its moral. The earlier teaching said nothing about sorrow and contrition; it was what we should call formal and outward and cold; but it contained the root of the matter notwithstanding; it produced eventually the tree of genuine repentance; and when the shadows of the Old Testament vanished before the light of the New, men understood how the old sacrifices of the Law typified and prepared the way for the one new sacrifice of the Gospel.

The fact seems to be that the full sense of the character and guilt of sin was impossible before the consummation of the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. It would take me beyond the scope of the present essay to enter into the question of the manner in which the death of Christ completed that lesson upon the character of sin, which God had been teaching more and more clearly since the creation of man: it will be quite enough for me to refer to this as the crowning point of human education, and to say that it is only when standing upon Calvary that men can thoroughly appreciate, and adequately grieve over, the sinfulness which pollutes their race. But with reference to the special subject of this essay I would ask the reader to observe, how the aspect of sin gradually

changed and intensified from its introduction by the first Adam to its destruction by the second. At first it caused no grief at all; and for centuries the view of it was very imperfect, very different in fact from that which God Himself took. But the sense of sin gradually deepened; God spake on the subject *at sundry times and in divers manners*; and at length God and man came to see the thing with the same eyes, God and man having been united in Christ: and so now we have put away childish things, and we "acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins."

The reader who examines carefully what I have written in the preceding pages will, if I am not mistaken, find in it the suggestion of some curious and useful thoughts with reference to the divine character of the book to which these essays refer. Before putting down my pen I wish to suggest further, whether the point which I have been discussing does not bear in an important manner upon the question of the antiquity of the book of Genesis? Is not the aspect of sin which pervades the book thoroughly archaic, and altogether different from that which would have been taken in the time (for instance) of the prophet Samuel? We have seen that in the time of David sin was

regarded, not indeed precisely as a Christian would regard it, but still with a great deal of the true sense of its character: even Saul had much right feeling upon the point: and Samuel not only possessed the right feeling himself, but did his best to impress it upon others. Suppose then that Samuel, or any prophet of his time, had written the Book of Genesis as a human author would write; would he have been likely, or indeed would it have been possible for him, to give such a representation of sin as that which the book contains? Would he have so divested himself of the notions belonging to himself and his age, as to represent men thinking about sin, and dealing with it, in a manner which to him would appear so strange and horrible and unnatural? Why should not he have fallen into the same mistake, if mistake we may venture to call it, as that into which Milton fell, namely, that of bringing up the views and feelings of Adam to those of his own age? Can we conceive that this error would have been avoided?

It is sufficient to have suggested this line of thought. To my own mind it appears full of valuable consequences. A moral deep-lying characteristic, such as that which is to be found in the Pentateuchal aspect of sin, seems to me to

teach much more, and more surely, than indications which lie more upon the surface. Outward circumstances and details of the history are but as the surface-drift, which tells little concerning the age of the geological formation upon which it is found; moral characteristics such as that which we have been discussing are of far greater value, and are like the fossils in the rock.

## ESSAY X.

### THE GREAT MEN OF THE PENTATEUCH.

HE character of a history is very much made up of the characters of the most remarkable men who appear upon the scene. The mass of mankind are influenced by a few leaders: the current of history, so far as it depends upon human agency and as it can be considered apart from the superintending hand of God, is determined by a small number of illustrious persons, who stand out here and there like tall hills from the general level, and compel the stream of events to take this course or that.

Hence there is an interest and utility in bringing together the remarkable characters of any historical period, and putting them in a literary portrait-gallery. And I see no reason why the Pentateuch should in this respect be an exception

to the general rule of historical records : in it, as in merely human history, there are men by whom the course of the stream is determined; and although the hand of God is made more conspicuous than in ordinary annals, still there is no difference between Divine and human histories in the importance assigned to individual men or women as the visible agents of God's purposes.

If I were asked to supply a catalogue of persons who stand out as the most remarkable in Pentateuchal history, I think I should set down the following names:

Adam :	Abraham :	Moses :
Abel :	Isaac :	Aaron :
Enoch :	Jacob :	Pharaoh :
Noah :	Joseph :	Joshua.

Of these twelve it may be a matter of taste and opinion which are the most remarkable. In one sense, the first man Adam is doubtless entitled to that pre-eminence, just because he was the first. But then if we examine into the Scripture record, and determine what we know concerning Adam, we find that it is wonderfully little. We have no biography, properly so called : his acts are all concentrated in his one sad deed of rebellion : and if we divest ourselves of all Miltonic imaginations,

we find the character of the protoplast, as perhaps we ought to have expected that it would be, very childish, and simple, and elementary.

In thus referring to Adam I may remark that I have omitted Eve from my list, not because I thought it necessary to restrict it to men, but because we may for all purposes contemplated by this essay identify her with her husband, and consider her as "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh."

In another sense, it may be said that Enoch is the most remarkable, introducing as he does the thought of a life with God in Heaven as the sequel to walking with God upon earth. But of Enoch, as of Adam, what do we really know? His whole life is concentrated in a sentence; and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to feel that lively interest in him, which we feel in the case of a man with whose trials and difficulties we are familiar, whose motives we can appreciate, and who stands out before us now in these latter days, not as the mere outline or shadow of a saint, but as a man of flesh and blood like ourselves.

Taking this kind of view of the subject, it seems to me that two names stand out conspicuously from the list which has been given above, as those of

the men whose lives and characters are most striking and most prominent in the history. The names are those of Abraham and Moses. Noah might in some respects be put in competition, but we know so much less about him. The great names of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, certainly sink into the shade by the side of that of their greater father; and Aaron and Joshua in like manner fade by the side of Moses. Pharaoh perhaps ought not to have been put into the list at all, inasmuch as anything which might be said about him would form part of the life of Moses, and he might seem to be strangely out of his place between two such men as Aaron and Joshua; but considering how much the whole history of the Hebrew nation turned upon his conduct towards them, and the declaration of the Lord, "For this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee My power; and that My Name may be declared throughout all the earth," I thought the name of the great rebel king could scarcely be omitted. Hence, as I have said, Abraham and Moses stand out conspicuously from the list; and the Pentateuchal history so turns upon these two men, and the resemblances and contrasts of their lives and characters are so striking, that I think it will be worth while to give them a little

time and attention, as a contribution to the right understanding of the Pentateuch itself.

The history of the Pentateuch is, in fact, so far as quantity of matter is concerned, little more than the history of Abraham and Moses: for the life of Abraham begins in the eleventh chapter of Genesis, and with that of his children occupies the remainder of the book, that is, nearly forty chapters out of fifty; and then Moses is born in the second chapter of Exodus, and is buried in the last chapter of Deuteronomy. But the importance of Abraham and Moses in the history is even greater than that which would appear from the space actually occupied by them, and their true position may be best described by saying, that the one was the father and the other the tutor or teacher of the chosen people. The book of Genesis contains the birth and childhood of the people, to whom the whole of the Old Testament belongs. They were born in Canaan; but Egypt became by the providence of God their nursery, and then their education was committed to the care of Moses. Abraham is, as his name imports, emphatically a *father*, "the father of many nations<sup>1</sup>;" Moses, so far from occupying the same position, repudiates it in the most striking manner

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xvii. 5.

when offered to him<sup>1</sup>; he knows that the promise is to Abraham and his seed, and therefore no thought of personal aggrandisement can tempt him even for a moment to shrink from the hard and thankless task committed to him of educating Abraham's family in the fear of God.

But as amongst ourselves, and in the nature of things, the father and tutor have to a certain extent the same office, the father being in reality the earliest tutor and only handing over the children to the tutelage of another when increasing years render the change advisable, so it was in the case of Abraham and Moses. The first lessons of holiness and the fear of God came from Abraham; and it is recorded as one of the features in his character which commended him to the praise of God, that he was one who would "command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment<sup>2</sup>." Thus Abraham and Moses were both of them teachers; both had much to do with the formation of the character of the chosen people, though one of them more explicitly than the other: and therefore it is a matter of interest to observe the manner in which their own character was formed, and in

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxii. 7—14.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xviii. 19

which they were fitted for the work assigned to them.

Now in a certain sense it may be asserted most truly that nothing can be more complete than the contrast between Abraham and Moses. Abraham's education was amongst flocks and herds, and in all the simplicity of nomad life: that of Moses was in the midst of what may be pretty certainly regarded as the highest civilization of the then inhabited world; "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds<sup>1</sup>." But with this absolute diversity of external circumstances there was a point of union and similarity, which it is of the utmost importance that every one should bear in mind who would understand the Pentateuch. The sacred writer makes the active life of each to begin with a call from God<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Amidst much fanciful matter, *Philo* has this important sentence with reference to Abraham's call, or rather to the appearance of God to Abraham: "It is said not that the wise man *saw God*, but that *God appeared* to the wise man: for it was impossible that any one should by his own power comprehend that which really is, unless that which really is had manifested and revealed itself to him." (*De Abrahamo.*) I quote this as shewing how inevitably the relative positions of God and His servant, as caller and called, must strike the mind of a philosophical examiner of the Pentateuch.

Let us observe this point with some care.

If the reader will turn to the book of Genesis, he will perceive that the history of Abraham, (or rather of Abram, as he then was,) commences towards the close of the eleventh chapter. Some hundreds of years have passed since the last great event recorded, namely, the building of Babel, and the gap is only bridged over by the rope of a genealogy thrown across it, which ends in the family of Terah, Abraham's father: and of Terah we read that he "took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there<sup>1</sup>." Here we see nothing more than an ordinary migration of a family from one part of the country to another; but at this point begins the real history of Abraham, and it opens with the remarkable words, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram<sup>2</sup>." It is impossible to over-estimate the value of this formula: it is not the first time it has occurred: it was the basis of the life of Adam, and again it was the basis of the life of Noah; and its repetition renders it, not less remarkable, but much more so. It is the very distinction between

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xi. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xii. 1.

sacred and secular history: it is the formula which indicates the breathing of the breath of life into each chosen minister of God's great purposes. The message to Abram, as to Adam and to Noah, comes direct from heaven.

Next observe the nature of the message. It is one of discipline and trial. The first step to be taken in obedience to it is to leave country and kindred and father's house, and to go into another land. The command is accompanied by a promise of blessing; but the trouble involved in obedience is at hand, and the promised blessing is a long way off.

Still further, observe Abram's perfect obedience. "Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him<sup>1</sup>."

Thus it will be seen that Abram's real life begins with a call from God, and with entire obedience to that call though it was a painful one. If any person should ask the question, How was the call given? I find it impossible to answer. I simply do not know. But I admire the clear strength of the Divine revelation, which omits altogether the manner and concerns itself with the fact. God *said*, and all things were created: and

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xii. 4.

the same God can speak as He pleases to the soul of man. "God *said* unto Abram," and Abram understood what God said.

Now turn to Moses. In the second chapter of Exodus we read of his birth and the perils of his babyhood; of his childhood a few words; likewise of his being compelled to flee from Egypt on account of his having taken part with his oppressed countrymen against the Egyptians; there is also a brief account of his sojourn in the land of Midian, and of his marriage with the daughter of Reuel the priest. All this however is but the preface to his real life, which commences in the third chapter; and I wish the reader to observe how that the sacred writer, passing without notice over the Egyptian education of Moses, which was no doubt of a very elaborate kind, carries us on to the real spring of all his subsequent greatness, which is to be found in the call of God from the burning bush<sup>1</sup>.

The circumstances of the call run parallel with

<sup>1</sup> "The following is a brief summary of the Jewish and Egyptian traditions which fill up the silence of the sacred writer. He was educated at Heliopolis, and grew up there as a priest, under his Egyptian name of Osarsiph.....He was taught the whole range of Greek, Chaldee, and Assyrian literature. From the Egyptians especially he learned mathe-

those of the call of Abraham, excepting one observable diversity.

First, note the call itself. "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." I said in the case of Abraham that I could not answer the question how the call was given: in that of Moses there is made visible a little more of that which may be described as the outward machinery of the call: there is the bush which burnt with fire and was not consumed, typifying apparently the condition of the Israelites, submitted to the fire of affliction and yet preserved in life by Divine support: but the existence of this outward machinery,

to train his mind for the unprejudiced reception of truth. He invented boats and engines for building, instruments of war and of hydraulics, hieroglyphics, division of lands. He taught Orpheus, and was hence called by the Greeks Musæus, and by the Egyptians Hermes. He taught grammar to the Jews, whence it spread to Phœnicia and Greece. He was sent on an expedition against the Ethiopians. He got rid of the serpents of the country to be traversed by turning baskets full of ibises upon them, and founded the city of Hermopolis to commemorate his victory. He advanced to Saba, the capital of Ethiopia, and gave it the name of Meroë, from his adopted mother Merrhis, whom he buried there. Tharbis, the daughter of the king of Ethiopia, fell in love with him, and he returned in triumph to Egypt with her as his wife." (Dean Stanley, Art. 'Moses,' Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.)

as I have designated it, does not in reality bring us much nearer to the Divine presence to which the burning bush bore witness: and therefore in the case of Moses, as in that of Abraham, I am disposed to say, that, if the question be asked, How was the call given? the answer must be, I cannot tell. Why should I be able to tell? If God condescends to make Himself known to His creatures, why should I expect or wish to be permitted to measure by human rule and measuring line the steps of the Almighty One?

Next, observe that in its nature the message to Moses was much like that to Abraham; that is to say, it was one which involved self-sacrificing obedience. Nay it was one the compliance with which cost Moses much effort: he was "not eloquent," but "slow of speech and of a slow tongue," and he felt himself unfit to "go unto Pharaoh," and unable to "bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt." The controversy between Moses and his Divine master occupies part of two chapters in the history of the Exodus, namely, from Exod. iii. 11 to Exod. iv. 17. So little was it the desire of Moses to put himself forward as a chief, and so different is his case from that of the ordinary ambitious leader of armies.

The manner in which Moses in the first instance fought against the Divine will, and shrank from the heavy duty which God's call would place upon him, is the point to which reference was made above, when I spoke of one observable diversity between the circumstances attending the calls of Abraham and Moses. In the case of the former the obedience was simple and unhesitating and complete; in that of the latter it was ultimately complete, but it was not simple and unhesitating. Moses offered resistance; but when that resistance was once overcome,—a resistance be it observed arising from self-distrust and not from selfishness, Abraham himself could not be more thorough and self-denying in his obedience than was Moses.

I have no desire of suggesting fanciful parallels between Abraham and Moses which the history will not support; but the fact of the life of each being based upon a call from God is an absolutely cardinal truth, which it is necessary to recognize in order to understand their characters, and to perceive the real distinction between sacred and ordinary histories. Passing on from this call, I wish so far to compare the two men as to make it apparent that they were educated in the same school.

It is well known that particular schools or colleges or universities impress upon those who have been educated in them particular habits of thought: speaking generally, men brought up in the English universities are influenced in their views upon the most important subjects by the atmosphere of the university, in which some of the most important years of their youth were spent; and in one way or another the school in which a man has been educated will leave a permanent mark upon him. Now I think it may be said of Abraham and Moses that they bear marks of having been in the same school, and under the same master; having their own natural characters quite distinct, they yet shew signs of those characters having been moulded and modified by the same lessons and the same system of discipline; and so they illustrate the principles of the school and of the great Head Master of it, and they do this far more emphatically by their united and concurrent testimony than either of them could do it by himself.

Let me set down a few points of comparison.

1. Moses is spoken of as “very meek above all men upon the face of the earth<sup>1</sup>,” and it has been observed that probably the real meaning of

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xii. 3.

this description of his character would be given most truly by our word, *disinterested*<sup>1</sup>: he was a man who did not look to his own honour or profit or advancement, but rather to the performance of duty and the advantage of the people entrusted to him. Now so far as Moses had learnt to put duty and charity before self, he had undoubtedly learnt one of the prime lessons of the Gospel, and had caught one of the chief beauties of the character

<sup>1</sup> “It represents what we should designate now by the word *disinterested*. All that is told of him indicates a withdrawal of himself, a preference of the cause of his nation to his own interests, which makes him the most complete example of Jewish patriotism. He joins his countrymen in their degrading servitude (Exod. ii. 11). He forgets himself to avenge their wrongs (ii. 14). He desires that his brother may take the lead instead of himself (iv. 13). He wishes that not only he, but all the nation were gifted alike: “Enviest thou for my sake?” (Numb. xi. 29). When the offer is made that the people should be destroyed, and that he should be made “a great nation” (Exod. xxxii. 10), he prays that they may be forgiven, “if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written” (xxxii. 32). His sons were not raised to honour. The leadership of the people passed after his death to another tribe. In the books which bear his name, Abraham, and not himself, appears as the real father of the nation. In spite of his great pre-eminence, they are never the *children of Moses*.” (Dean Stanley, Art. ‘Moses,’ *Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible*. See also *Lectures on the Jewish Church*, First Series, p. 199.)

of the Lord Jesus Himself; but the point with which I am concerned is to observe, that the same characteristic shewed itself in a very clear manner in the case of Abraham. The chief act to be quoted in illustration of this assertion is that which is connected with the peaceable separation between himself and Lot, as recorded in Gen. xiii. "Is not the whole land before thee?" said Abram to Lot, when there was a strife betwixt their herdmen; "separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Nothing could be more thoroughly in keeping with the highest standard of Gospel charity. It is hard to say which of our two heroes had more completely laid hold of such lessons as these: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another<sup>1</sup>:" "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted<sup>2</sup>." And this identity of character, in a department which the maxims of the world and the impulses of human nature do not advantageously influence, is a good indication that both Abraham and Moses were really taught by the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke xiv. 11.

same Divine master, and had graduated in the same school.

2. Again, Moses was in a certain sense a warrior. It is true that during his lifetime the "wars of the Lord" were not so thoroughly entered upon as they were afterwards under the leadership of Joshua; still Moses was the captain of the people, and if we do not chiefly so regard him, it is because that character is overshadowed by his higher office of lawgiver<sup>1</sup>. Regarding him thus we cannot fail to be struck by the consideration, how little he seems to have loved war for its own sake: there is in him nothing of the Alexander or the Napoleon: his chief work is to bring the people to the knowledge of God, and of their duties to Him and to their neighbour: with regard to their enemies, the lesson to be learnt is that God will strengthen them against all foes, if only they be obedient and keep the covenant. Their time is to be given therefore not so much to military discipline as to the study of the law; "these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently

<sup>1</sup> I refer of course to his history as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and put on one side the legends of his military exploits while yet in the service of Pharaoh.

unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up<sup>1</sup>." Of course the mission of Moses involved the invasion of Canaan, and so far forth it was a warlike mission ; but the warlike character of it was kept out of sight as much as possible ; the land was represented as given to the children of Israel by God Himself, and success in gaining it was made to depend not upon any inherent power or military preparation of the Israelites, but upon simple confidence in God and obedience to His precepts. In fact the war which was evidently imminent, and which Joshua commenced as soon as Moses was gone to his rest, makes the peaceful demeanour of Moses and the peaceful character of his administration all the more conspicuous. He knew that war was inevitably coming ; and yet his great lesson was, not about spears and swords and shields and military discipline, but about the love of God. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might<sup>2</sup>." Taking a broad view of the subject, and making allowance for the great dissimi-

<sup>1</sup> Deut. vi. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. vi. 4, 5.

larity of the positions in which the two parties are placed, we may say that the tone of the administration of Moses on this subject is very much like that at which we in England have arrived after centuries of Christian teaching and much bitter experience.

And in the matter which I am now discussing I find Abraham to be a man much like Moses. Abraham was pre-eminently a man of peace, and one who had thoroughly grasped the importance of educating his family, not in arms, but in the fear of God. "I know him," said the Lord, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment<sup>1</sup>." On one occasion, however, we read of Abraham engaging in battle, and that successfully: there was a war of which we read in Gen. xiv., and which seems to have been of some magnitude, four kings engaging against five: the chief importance of the war as regards the sacred narrative is, that the successful party took Lot a prisoner and carried him away. Some one came and told Abram: "and when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xviii. 19.

house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan<sup>1</sup>;" and he gained a complete victory, and set Lot free, and recovered all his goods and his people. The expedition is rendered still more notable by the account which follows it of Abraham's interview with Melchizedek, the "king of Salem" and "priest of the most high God," to whom he "gave tithes of all." Abraham is thus very distinctly marked as the man of peace, who can, if necessary, become the man of war, but who will not fight except for a good and just cause, and will then sanctify his warlike conduct by acting throughout in the fear of God.

Is there not, in this matter of behaviour with respect to war, something of that identity of character which has been spoken of as marking men who belong to the same school?

3. One of the most remarkable situations occupied by Abraham was that which he was permitted to assume when the "three men" visited him in the plains of Mamre, before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Probably the favourite title of Abraham, "the friend of God," is justified more completely by his attitude upon the occasion in question than by any other event of his life.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xiv. 14.

The great fact upon which the history turns is the pleading of Abraham with God on behalf of the guilty cities: the circumstances are well known, and every reader may be presumed to be familiar with them: the "men" rise up and look towards Sodom, and Abraham goes with them to bring them on the way, and then suddenly we hear no more of the "men," but we find the LORD in conversation with Abraham; and Abraham appears as the mediator between God and man; he is the advocate of mercy, and God condescends to permit His compassion to be strained to the full stretch that justice will allow by the intercession of a mortal voice.

The whole story is full of mystery, though the teaching of it is plain enough to simple souls; but my reason for adducing it in this place is, that I may point out how that Moses also in his turn was permitted to plead with God. The story will be found in *Exod.* xxxii. 7—14. It has already been referred to for another purpose<sup>1</sup>. What I wish to say about it here is this, that as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah the Lord suffered an advocate of mercy, so also in the case of the rebellion and idolatry of the Israelites, when God

<sup>1</sup> See page 168.

said "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them," Moses was permitted to plead the cause of the offenders, so that "the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people."

4. I have spoken of Abraham and Moses as of men brought up in the same school; and, taking that view of them, I may remark that it is hard to say which of the two was tried by the sorer trial of faith. The trials of Abraham came to their culminating point in the sacrifice of Isaac, and in his case that one mysterious and most difficult "temptation," as it is called, seems almost to eclipse all others, though the others were neither few nor small. In the case of Moses it was more of a life-long and day-long trial; the people ever with him, always receiving his anxious care, frequently requiring his more active interference, and vexing his spirit by their stiff-necked conduct. The exterior difference between the two great heroes is very marked; but there is this interior harmony between them, namely, that the life of each was a God-educated and God-disciplined life. Great as they both were, it was not that vulgar greatness which vulgar people envy; any one who would wish to be such as Abraham and Moses were

would have to "count the cost;" it was a greatness like in its measure to the greatness of Him, who, when He was asked to grant the two places of honour in His kingdom to James and John, answered, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with<sup>1</sup>?"

And because the two men of whom I am speaking resembled each other, and resembled Jesus Christ, in that greatness which belonged to them both, being a greatness built upon discipline and trial, therefore they also resembled each other, and resembled Jesus Christ, in the dignity of character which also belonged to them both. Dignity of character seems to be theirs in a degree in which it can be predicated of none other of the men of old time: essentially kingly men, to whom, whenever you come into their presence, you feel instinctively that you ought to do reverence: not delighting in the outward trappings of greatness, but making their light to shine before men so that men could see their good works.

5. Lastly, we have Abraham and Moses brought together in striking connection by our Lord in His parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. "Abra-

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark x. 38.

ham's bosom" became, ages after the patriarch's departure from this world, the symbol and description of the place of rest for the spirits of the just: and so, when Lazarus died, angels carried him to "Abraham's bosom," and as he lay there in peace the rich man made his petition first for himself, and then for his brethren. "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham, "let them hear them;" and again, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Thus Moses is made the symbol of teaching and discipline on earth, and Abraham that of rest and peace in heaven; and perhaps nothing can shew more clearly and strikingly the essential unity that exists between them, than the testimony of the Lord's parable to the great truth, that he who would join Abraham in his heavenly rest must follow Moses on earth while the day of work continues.

Let it be observed, in taking leave of the two great men whose lives and characters have formed the substance of this essay, that those lives and characters have been discussed, not for their own sakes, but for the light which they throw upon the volume in which the record of them is contained. It has not been my intention to bring together all

that we know about these men; it would be easy to refer to books in which this has been already done; my intention has been rather to argue the character of the book from that of the men whose lives supply its material: and as we see in Abraham and Moses marks of the same Divine teaching, and something more than the rudiments of that character which was exhibited in perfection by the Lord Jesus Christ, so it may be argued that the spirit of the Pentateuch is identical with that of the New Testament, weaker indeed and less effectual, but essentially the same. The beginning and the end of God's revelation are bound together by eternal bands. The Pentateuch foreshadows the Gospel. Abraham and Moses look on to Christ.

## ESSAY XI.

### LIFE AND DEATH, IN THE PENTATEUCH.



PROPOSE in this Essay to examine briefly what are the indications given by the Pentateuch concerning the great subjects of human life and human death. It would be manifestly untrue to affirm, that the clear bright light which shines upon these subjects in the New Testament shines upon them in the earliest books of the Old; while it would be equally untrue to affirm, that there is no ray of light shining upon them at all. St Paul, writing to Timothy, speaks of “the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel<sup>1</sup>.” This life and this immortality, though they were thus “brought to light,” were not in absolute and hopeless darkness before: but it was only in virtue

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.

of the revelation enunciated in the verse just quoted, that St Paul was able to say immediately afterwards, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day<sup>1</sup>." The very form of these words shews that they could not have been uttered until God had spoken to mankind by His Son. What words could have been uttered in the early days of human history?

Now it seems to me that the most interesting indications with regard to this great subject are those, which we find in what may be conveniently called the Paradise period of human history. I think that, taking the view which Scripture gives us of man's spiritual condition, and regarding that spiritual condition as having undergone a rude shock and change by the introduction of sin, we should expect that the question of human life and death would wear distinctly different aspects before and after the great spiritual catastrophe. If we find that subsequently to the fall there is a gloom hanging over human life, which is not thoroughly cleared away until the coming of Jesus Christ, this is just what the nature of the case would lead us to expect upon Scripture premisses: and if we find

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 12.

that before the Fall there is an appearance of greater light, if man seemed then to be admitted (so to speak) more into his heavenly Father's confidence, this also is precisely what we might have expected. And therefore I feel disposed to catch eagerly at any hint concerning human life and death, dropped by Divine wisdom before the Fall of man; such hints are precious as the bright sunlight of early morning, when there is every indication that the weather is going to break and that the sun will soon be lost in clouds and rain.

There are two hints with regard to human life in this period, to which attention should be especially directed.

The first is the manner in which human life is represented as commencing: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul<sup>1</sup>." This statement has come under our notice on former occasions, but it is necessary to notice it again with reference to the point at present before us. Now I do not say that the words just quoted can be taken to assert what is called the doctrine of the *immortality of the soul*; I mean, the possession by man of a principle of life, which

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 7.

is in its nature indestructible, and which is therefore untouched by the decay and destruction of the material body. The words are not in opposition to such a doctrine, while they cannot be said to affirm it; but they seem to me to do what is much better, namely, to assert that the life of man, as originally given by God, was a divine thing essentially different from that other divine thing (for of course it also was divine) which was imparted as the living principle to other creatures. This is not the place for any abstruse discussion of the question which has been so often discussed, namely, the possibility of proving by abstract reasoning the doctrine of the soul's immortality: but I think it appropriate to the subject of this Essay to observe, that I have never been able to regard the doctrine, viewed as the result of human reasoning, in the light of a conclusion upon which the mind can rest with any considerable degree of assurance. The materialistic view, namely, that which asserts that existence *must* terminate with corporeal life, may no doubt be battered down with the artillery of human intellect: but the positive faith in a life to come, which can be built upon merely intellectual processes, would seem to be at best very feeble; and with this conclusion I think that ex-

perience agrees. But we are dealing now, not with a dogma resulting from the reasonings of the human intellect, but with the view which is set before us by the words of Holy Scripture; and I assert that the view so set before us is something much better than a mere dogma concerning the immortality of the soul, at which the intellect might guess and which it might try to prove. The words of Genesis draw a broad line of demarcation between the life which God gave, when He said "Let the earth bring forth grass," or when He "created great whales and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly," and that higher life which He gave when He "created man in His own image" and then "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;" but having drawn this broad line, it leaves the subject unexplained, except by the history which follows. It seems that in virtue of this divine life man was capable of high converse with God, and capable of a terrible fall. That terrible fall took place; and it has left us only the power of guessing what the life of man might have been, if it had not been rudely interrupted thus.

The other hint to which I desire to refer as occurring in the Paradise period of human his-

tory is that which is contained in the reference made to the Tree of Life which was in the midst of the garden<sup>1</sup>. It is to be observed that there is no prohibition concerning the tree of life, as there is concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: they are mentioned together, as apparently the most notable trees of the garden: "the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:" but there is no trial of obedience connected with one as with the other; and it would seem that the tree of life was included amongst those trees of the garden, of whose fruits Adam and Eve might freely eat. Moreover, if they might eat of it, probably they were induced by some feeling of necessity to eat of it; and it may be well supposed that the eating was (as it were) a sacramental act, supporting their spiritual lives.

Next let it be observed, that when Adam and Eve had sinned the access to the tree of life was stopped. The words in which this is recorded are very striking: "The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 9.

therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden<sup>1</sup>." Of course it may be said that all this is figurative: no doubt it is, but it is the figure of some reality, and the question is, what is the reality which is shadowed forth by the figure? I cannot pretend to answer the question with accuracy, but at all events we have here the indication of something higher than mere animal life: the living for ever seems to be spoken of as being possible, even after the Fall, provided man should be permitted to continue in the garden of Eden: and, when man was driven out, Cherubim were placed at the east of the garden, and "a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life<sup>2</sup>." Thus the forbidding of access to this life-giving tree is the last thing that we hear of Eden. Could any one reading this record fail to perceive that man was made for life, and not for death? and could he fail to indulge a hope that somehow the primeval blessedness might return, and man be restored to the condition for which he was created?

There is one other notice in Scripture of the tree of life which ought to receive attention. I have referred to it in a former essay. It was not

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 22, 23.

Gen. iii. 24.

accessible to the Hebrews of old time; and to us it is comparatively of small value as bearing on the question of a life to come, but it is most interesting as a commentary upon the second and third chapters of Genesis, and all the more interesting because occurring at the very end of the Canon of Scripture. In the last chapter of the Bible we find St John recording thus his vision of the new heaven and new earth: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there *the tree of life*, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse<sup>1</sup>." And again, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life<sup>2</sup>." I know of nothing more striking than the union which is effected by this passage between Moses and St John, between Genesis and Revelation, between the beginning and the end of the Book of God: and certainly the light reflected from the remarkable words just quoted helps us to perceive how high and trans-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxii. 1, 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxii. 14.

cident was that life, which man had in Eden, and which he lost by sin.

I speak of a transcendent *life*, and I may also speak of a transcendent *death*: the two things are balanced one against the other; and as the story of Genesis gives us a hint that the life of man was not like the life of beasts, but was truly divine, so also the story gives us a hint that the death of man was something different in kind from the mere extinction of animal life. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die"—this is the first intimation of human death, and the language connects that death distinctly with an offence against God: it is no mere decay of a material frame, but it is of the nature of a disease introduced by sin. The question naturally arises, what would have taken place if man had not sinned? Such questions are very tempting, and they have been often asked: especially they were asked, and in a fashion answered, by the famous School Doctors of the middle ages. But in truth we have no data for answering them: the Fall is like a thick mist, which has hidden from our eyes the primeval condition of our race, saving only some few hints which it has pleased God to give us: but amongst those hints the words which connect death with trans-

gression are conspicuous, and there would seem to be in the words a standing protest against the notion of the death of men and the death of animals being phenomena of the same class, each being simply a result of material decay.

There can be no doubt that it was the intention of Almighty God, in His earlier revelations to mankind, to make an exception concerning that point which to our notions eclipses all others in importance, namely, the life to come after the life present: and it may be a question whether any, or at all events any distinct, notions on the subject were prevalent amongst the Jews before the date of the Babylonish Captivity; while it is as unquestionable that in the later period of their history, at the time of our Lord's advent for instance, the life to come was as much a part of orthodox faith as it is amongst Christians. But I think it may be doubted whether the belief in a life to come could have been long in abeyance, if the opening of Genesis had been well known and studied: it was apparently not much studied; it was not until the period of synagogue worship that Moses had those who regularly preached him, "being read every Sabbath-day:" but when this portion of God's Word *was* studied, and when men thought

seriously upon it, they could hardly fail to see that the germ of the subsequent and higher belief was to be found in the record of God's earliest intercourse with man, and His communion with him in the days of his innocence. It is not a little remarkable that the first human death recorded in Scripture should have been one of violence. There is no absolute evidence to shew that Abel was the first of Adam's children who passed out of this world; but the death of Abel is set down as the first great event after the expulsion from Eden, and it is rendered notable not merely by the circumstances which gave rise to it, but by the sentence passed upon the murderer on account of it. The stamp of infamy was put upon murder in the very infancy of human history; and the principle was established, that each man is responsible for his brother, and that violence will bring down vengeance. There is nothing extraordinary in the tale of Cain and Abel, so far as the murder was concerned: the same thing has happened thousands of times; it is simply jealousy developing into hatred, and hatred into bloodshed: but when Cain parries the question, "Where is Abel thy brother?" by the lying and saucy answer, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?"

he brings down upon himself the tremendous declaration, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth from the ground." Now it may be a question how much can be legitimately concluded from this sentence, and from the whole treatment of Cain's crime: certainly something more than the mere dry fact that fratricide is contrary to the law of God; probably something less than the doctrine of a life to come. The legitimate conclusion would I think be this, that for some reason, and the previous chapters of Genesis seem to tell us what the reason is, human life is unspeakably precious, and that in this preciousness of human life is to be found the germ of that doctrine, which would at length assert a "resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust<sup>1</sup>."

It is also rather remarkable, and I do not perceive that any satisfactory explanation can be given of the fact, that there is no record of the death of Cain and his posterity, while the history of each descendant of Seth in the fifth chapter of Genesis terminates with the announcement "and he died." There is of course the one well-known exception of Enoch, of whom we read that "he was not, for God took him," instead of the ordi-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv. 15.

nary formula recording his death. I can hardly guess what would be the impression produced upon the mind of a person unacquainted with the New Testament by reading the catalogue of the descendants of Seth, with the solemnly reiterated formula, "and he died;" but certainly the case of Enoch must have set such a man thinking, and might have made him hope that death was not a sentence against which there was no appeal, and that it might be possible by "walking with God" to gain the privilege of being "taken" by Him.

I presume that carelessness concerning human life was one of the great sins of the antediluvian world: according to the English version "the earth was filled with violence<sup>1</sup>;" perhaps the word translated *violence* will hardly carry the conclusion, nor would I rest too much upon it; I would rather observe that one of the charges to Noah, when God blessed him and his family after the Flood, related to the sanctity of human life, as though bloodshed had been one of the chief crimes which the Flood was sent to wash away: "surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 11.

require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man<sup>1</sup>." In this statement I conceive that there is much which shadows forth man's highest destiny: no distinct revelation, but a pregnant hint; a value stamped upon human life; man being put in direct contrast with the beasts which may be slain and eaten, and the contrast justified by reference to the original charter of man's superiority as having been made in the image of God.

Still there can be no question as to the fact that the general tendency of the earlier books of Holy Scripture is to bring this life, with its duties and its rewards and its punishments, into prominence, and to keep out of sight that other life, compared with which the present is of the smallest conceivable value. We can easily believe that this was the wisest, perhaps if we knew all we might perceive that it was the only possible, way of educating mankind. With notions impressed upon our minds and matured under the influence of the perfect revelation of the Gospel, there is a temptation to imagine that the knowledge of a life to come must have formed a prominent portion of

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ix. 5, 6.

any communication from God adequate to the wants of man: but as God sent His Son into the world, not as soon as sin had made a breach between Himself and His creatures, but in “the fulness of time,” so it may very well be that there was a fulness of time in which also the knowledge of his real destiny should be communicated to man. What we ought reasonably to look for in the early pages of Holy Scripture is I think this,—not a clear exhibition of truths which have become the property of God’s Church in the later ages of the world, but the rudiments or foundations of those truths: the rule of revelation appears to be that of progression; and the opening portions of God’s Holy Word contain the first terms of the series, which stretches on to its completion in the Gospel.

It may serve to illustrate the subject of this essay, if we examine the history of those two men, whom I have already described as the most remarkable in the Pentateuchal period, with reference to this question of life and death.

The death of Abraham is recorded thus: “Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field

of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre ; the field which Abraham bought of the sons of Heth : there was Abraham buried and Sarah his wife<sup>1</sup>." When we think of "Abraham's bosom" becoming afterwards the familiar expression for Paradise or the place of the blest, and when we read such an expression as that of our Lord's, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven<sup>2</sup>," it is hardly possible to avoid asking the question, What did Abraham know himself of the bliss which was prepared for him? So far as any distinct declaration of faith is concerned, apparently nothing : there is no record of any aspirations for a better country, that is, a spiritual ; and when his death approached, his preparations were all in matters belonging to this world ; there was apparently nothing at all parallel with the latter days of a Christian believer. And yet it seems hard to suppose that Abraham's vision was absolutely limited by the horizon of this world : a human soul to which God had spoken as He had to that of Abraham, and which had had such access to the spiritual world, must surely have sometimes guessed, to say no more, that after the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxv. 8, 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matt. viii. 11.

dissolution of the body there was a life yet to come: this is not much to say of one concerning whom our blessed Lord bore the testimony, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad<sup>1</sup>:" if we chose to give the rein to our fancy and to neglect the evidence which we find on the page of Scripture, we might easily bring ourselves to believe that very clear visions of Heaven were granted to one situated spiritually as was Abraham. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that there is a remarkable reticence on the subject, and that the least in the kingdom of Christ, that is, the simplest and plainest believer in the Gospel, is greater in this respect than the Father of the Faithful himself.

It is impossible to leave the death of Abraham without saying one word concerning his tomb. It was in the cave which he bought for the burial of Sarah. Few passages are more touching, or exhibit the character of Abraham in a more dignified point of view, than that which contains the account of the purchase of the cave of Machpelah; and it is a striking feature in the transaction, which has been often noticed, that Abraham never really possessed any portion of that land which was promised to

<sup>1</sup> S. John viii. 56.

him, and which his children obtained for an inheritance, except the burial-place which he bought. "Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah<sup>1</sup>." How strange to us, who know the mystery of the life to come, that there should be no light shining out of this cave!

The death of Moses differed from that of Abraham, as in other respects, so in this, that much more preparation was made for it. The whole of the Book of Deuteronomy may be described as the prelude to the death of Moses, being composed of discourses which were to serve as guides and warnings when the living voice of Moses was gone. It is almost unnecessary to say that these discourses are entirely taken up with the promise of temporal blessings, and the threat of temporal curses; perhaps as being addressed to a nation, and not to an individual, we might have expected that this would be so; but anyhow so it is; there is no hint, so far as I know, of blessedness in a world to come, and of curses which this life cannot exhaust. But what of Moses' own

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxv. 8, 9.

departure? He ascends Nebo, he looks over the promised land, and is reminded that he will not enter it; and "so Moses the servant of the Lord died in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day<sup>1</sup>." It is impossible to conclude from anything that we read here, that Moses could see beyond the promised land of Canaan into the spiritual Canaan of which the earthly was the type; yet it is difficult to persuade ourselves that the prospect was an utter blank, and that one brought up in the wisdom of those Egyptians, whose imagination dwelt so much upon the shadowy country on the other side of the grave, should have receded from the point which they had gained, and should not have substituted some better knowledge for that which they had puzzled out by human ingenuity. It seems more reasonable to suppose, that all guesses concerning the future were allowed to lie idle by the side of the practical question, What is the duty and the value of the present? For it is never to be forgotten, that clear knowledge of the future is not absolutely necessary for a proper preparation for

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6.

the future: the future is bound up in the present: and he who has learnt to love God with all his heart may be content with the knowledge which God affords him, and not complain even if the future be concealed. God deals with His creatures as He sees best, and very frequently not as they would have anticipated; and it may be that, in certain conditions of human progress, a veil over the future and an intensely bright light thrown upon the present may be the conditions most favourable for guiding men in such wise through things temporal as that finally they may not lose the things eternal.

In speaking of the doctrine concerning life and death in the Pentateuch, there is a view which must not be omitted and which might perhaps have properly occupied an earlier place in this essay, but which may not unsuitably be introduced at this point. When our blessed Lord was questioned by the Sadducees concerning the resurrection, He reproved their scepticism by telling them that they erred, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God," and then proceeded to say, "As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the

God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living<sup>1</sup>." I should suppose that this application of the words spoken by God to Moses from the burning bush was a novel one, especially as we read that "when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine:" the passage itself must have been familiar enough, being part of those books which were read in the synagogue every Sabbath-day: but the meaning which our Lord found in the passage could not have been quite patent or generally recognized by the doctors of the Law, otherwise there would have been no room for the astonishment of the multitude. Our Lord's brief commentary was like the cracking of an earthen vessel which had been long in use, and the exhibition of a light contained within: those who heard Him might have gone on, perhaps for ever, without perceiving that the words spoken to Moses contained the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; but when they heard the commentary of Him who "taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes," they perceived that the language in which God had of old time spoken of the patriarchs implied, though it did not formally express, the doc-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xxii. 31, 32.

trine of the resurrection of the dead; and it did so, as it appears to me, in this way,—it declared in the most emphatic and striking manner the dignity of human life, and it suggested the impossibility of believing that men with whom God had held converse in the days of their flesh would perish like the beasts, when the days of their pilgrimage were ended.

Making use of the principle supplied to us by our Lord's application of the words spoken to Moses, we may probably find other instances in which life and immortality receive a ray of light through the comparative darkness of the earlier dispensation. But there is one instance which seems so to stand out before others, and to be so exceptionally luminous, that I will introduce it in this place. The instance is that of Jacob's dream, in which he saw "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven<sup>1</sup>." I am justified in connecting the words spoken to Jacob on this occasion with those spoken to Moses from the burning bush, because they are substantially the same, and the commentary of our Lord upon the one set of words would seem to apply equally to the other. "The Lord stood above" the ladder,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxviii. 12.

“and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac<sup>1</sup>.” Isaac was still living, but Abraham was dead and buried; here therefore we find the doctrine of our Lord, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,” asserted centuries before the time of Moses, and perhaps made even more emphatic by the comingling in one sentence of the name of a patriarch who was still alive with that of another who was departed: God was the God of one as much as of the other; they were both alive to Him. But the feature in Jacob’s dream, which makes this intimation of the union of the living and the dead most striking, is the nature of the vision which constituted the dream. There was not merely a ladder set up on earth and reaching to heaven, but there was active and constant commerce between heaven and earth carried on by means of the ladder. “Behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.” The vision was completed by the Lord standing above the ladder, and revealing Himself in the words which have been quoted already. Now we do not know the full effect produced upon Jacob’s mind by this vision; that it impressed him deeply is clear from his own words,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxviii. 13.

“How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven;” probably the full significance of what he had heard and seen, the significance which it would have had if he could have heard our Lord’s commentary upon a similar revelation, was not made known to him; but when we examine his vision under the light of such a commentary, the ladder joining heaven and earth, and the ascending and descending of the angels, and the Lord standing in heaven and addressing His creatures on earth, all help to shew that, although in early days there was no distinct revelation of life and immortality, still there were dim shadowings forth of the truth, and hints, which, if not understood at the time, would nevertheless be understood and appreciated in the light of a brighter dispensation.

The truth appears to be, that what we ought to seek and what we find in the Pentateuch is not the full exposition of the doctrine of life and death, but the foundation upon which such full exposition could be built when God should see fit to build it. We are very apt in modern times to fall into the erroneous notion, that because a thing is true therefore it is necessary that all men should know it to be true; we are apt to underrate and

disparage the principle of reserve and the accompanying principle of the gradual communication of religious truth, which nevertheless are obviously the principles upon which God has ever dealt with mankind. If it was necessary or desirable that all men should know all the truth, then Jesus Christ our Lord ought to have been the earliest birth of Eve; and the whole race of fallen men ought to have known their Saviour, instead of waiting for thousands of years until the fullness of time was come. So also, to take another example, St Paul ought to have preached the full doctrine of redemption to Felix; whereas the trembling, of which we read as the result of the Apostle's preaching, was produced by sermons concerning "righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come." The mere knowledge of truth will not bring forth the fruits of holiness; there must be also a fitness for the reception of truth, and preliminary preparation of the heart in which the truth is to be sown. And so it has been suggested, and probably not without reason, that heathen missions have sometimes failed (humanly speaking) from a want of wisdom and tact in adapting the lessons of religion to the spiritual condition of the hearers, and from the accompanying erroneous persuasion that the

whole truth of God presented in its fullness to heathen minds must, by its inherent might, beat down all opposition and lead captive the heathen souls.

God appears in His wisdom to have taught us otherwise, and to have kept back much of that truth which men were ultimately to know, until they had gone through a long and painful education, and were fit for the reception of the truth.

It may be said, that if a thing be true it cannot be known too widely. But here would seem to be a confusion. If the practical result of the truth cannot be attained in any other way than by making the truth known, then doubtless it should be made known: but it is quite possible, that the knowledge of the truth may just frustrate the result which that knowledge is intended to produce. For example, when the painter on the scaffolding in the dome of St Paul's Cathedral stepped back to look at his work, and his friend, seeing his imminent danger, made a daub of paint upon his canvass which caused him to start forward and saved his life, the knowledge of the truth, namely, the knowledge that he was in imminent danger of falling from the scaffold, would almost certainly have destroyed all hope of saving him.

So also in case of illness, it is frequently necessary to conceal the danger in order to give the patient a chance of recovery. And it is highly necessary that each man should prepare for his death, which may take place to-morrow; but God's wise providence has hid the morrow by the most impenetrable of veils. Hence I think it may fairly be argued, independently of any prejudication on the ground of the infallible character of Scripture, that the amount of knowledge on the great subjects of life and death, conveyed in the earlier portion of God's revelation, is precisely that amount which the men to whom the revelation was made were able to bear, without risking the attainment of the great ends for which the revelation was made.

At all events let no one venture to say anything in depreciation of the Pentateuch, on the ground of the views which it contains of human life and human death. The views are not false, they are simply imperfect. The Law was imperfect, and led on to the Gospel; the sacrifices of bulls and goats could never take away sin, but they pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Christ; precepts were given by Moses not always according to the standard of the sanctuary, but for the hardness of men's hearts.

And so the views of life and death in the Pentateuch were imperfect; but they prepared the way for that more perfect doctrine, which was inculcated by the lips of Jesus Christ our Lord, and which was illustrated not merely by His life and death, but by His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven.

## ESSAY XII.

### CHRIST IN THE PENTATEUCH.

**I**N this concluding essay I propose to deal with that which is after all the great question concerning the Pentateuch, namely, whether or not Christ is to be found in it. Negative apologies for the Pentateuch, that is to say, arguments intended to shew that it is not open to certain charges which may have been brought against it, that it does not contain certain faults which may have been alleged, that it is not something which it may have been asserted to be, cannot suffice to place the opening books of Holy Scripture in that place of honour, which the Church would assign to them, and which the reason of the thing demands. I do not deny the value of such apologies: if rash or false statements have been made, as has frequently been the case, concerning the literary contents of the Bible or of any portion of it, it is very desirable that those rash or false

statements should be exposed ; and generally it is wholesome and conducive to truth, that all criticisms, in whatever sense they are made, should be examined and probed and reduced to their right proportions. Friendly criticisms, which can be proved to be erroneous, are probably in the end more injurious than hostile remarks however virulent and cutting. But then the Christian man, and I may add the Christian philosopher, cannot be satisfied with merely possessing a good defensible position: it is not sufficient to say, *A* has made a terrible onslaught upon the Pentateuch, but *B* has answered him ; the status of the opening chapters and of the early books of that volume, which Christians commonly call the Word of God, ought not to depend upon the result of a duel between *A* and *B*; it would be intolerable that this should practically be the case. What the Christian heart desiderates is not the assurance that this difficulty or that difficulty can be removed, but the persuasion that in the language of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, it can hear more or less distinctly the same Divine voice speaking, and that in the mirror of Holy Scripture, regarded as a whole, is to be seen reflected one image only, and that the image of the Son of God.

Hence I have entituled this essay *Christ in the Pentateuch*; and what I wish to suggest, and as far as I may to prove, is this: that a substantial unity may be discovered between the earlier revelations of God and that confessedly more perfect and final revelation which was made in Jesus Christ. I wish to shew that in the Pentateuch, as St Augustine has said of the Psalms of David<sup>1</sup>, you may hear “the voices of Christ and His Church:” and I shall attempt this by going in the first place over ground somewhat familiar, but which ought to be well occupied and examined by every thoughtful Christian, and then by passing on to ground somewhat less familiar, but which may perhaps prove to be not unworthy of our attention.

1. Perhaps the most obvious consideration with regard to the presence of Christ in the Pentateuch, is that which arises from the prophetic character of the sacred books; that character to which St Peter refers, when he speaks of the “more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a

<sup>1</sup> Vix est ut in Psalmis invenias voces, nisi Christi et Ecclesiæ, aut Christi tantum, aut Ecclesiæ tantum, quod utique ex parte et nos sumus. (*In Psalmum*, LIX.)

dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts<sup>1</sup>." It is not so much that there are definite undeniable predictions of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, though I do not say that these are wanting, but it is rather the general aspect of the events recorded and the uniformity of the direction in which they seem to point. Suppose an ancient forest to be discovered underground, and suppose that we find the trees lying in a horizontal position and all turning to one point of the compass; then we may conclude pretty certainly that there was in olden days, when those trees were prostrated, a flood or some such destroying cause setting in that particular direction which the prostrate trees indicate. So it is with the sacred records of early times: they point in one way, and they indicate a Divine purpose tending in that one way from the beginning; and if we follow the path in which these concurrent indications guide us, we are led like the wise men under the leading of the star to the dwelling of the Child Jesus, or even to the foot of His Cross.

Hence I speak of the prophetic character of the Pentateuch, rather than of the predictions which it contains; and the most obvious illustration

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 19.

of this prophetic character is the reference to the "seed of the woman" in the third chapter of Genesis. In the light of the New Testament we can hardly fail to identify this *seed* with Jesus Christ our Lord, just as we identify the Blessed Virgin Mary with that Virgin of whom it was prophesied that she should "conceive and bear a son, and call His name Immanuel;" but of course it may be open to question how much insight into the future was really given by such prophecies; it may be argued that there is nothing in the promise made to Adam and Eve so definite as to connect its language with the coming of Jesus Christ, and with no other event. Let it be granted that this is so: still it will be perceived that the essential character of the promise is not destroyed; it still undeniably looks forward to some event, by which the descendants of Eve should be righted with regard to the mischief done through the serpent's instrumentality; it is still a *protevangelium*, (as it has been called,) that is, an original Gospel to mankind, and it is the shadow of that Gospel which is revealed and preached by Jesus Christ in the New Testament. It is no question how much or how little Adam and Eve understood of the promise; there is but little to guide us to an opinion upon

this point; neither is it even a question how much their children understood before the coming of Christ; but the question is, in what light the Church of Christ is compelled to view the promise, now that it has been illustrated by the life and death of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom. And looking upon the words spoken by the Almighty to Adam and Eve thus, we can hardly refuse to allow that they are prophetic of Jesus Christ and the triumph of Him and His people over the evil one.

The next conspicuous outpouring of the prophetic spirit is in the case of Abraham. The promise which is contained in Genesis xxii. 18, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and similar promises, are made peculiarly emphatic by the commentary of St Paul: "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ<sup>1</sup>." The meaning of the Apostle is, I suppose, not that the language used in the promise to Abraham was such as to tie it down of necessity to one person, but rather that a form of speech was adopted, the special and curious propriety of which became

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 16.

apparent, when it was seen by the result that the seed to which reference was made was, in fact, not Abraham's posterity in general, but that one member of his family, in whom the whole race of mankind should be concentrated and represented. The design of such promises seems to have been, so far as the ancient recipients were concerned, not to give them an infallible insight into futurity, but to give them light enough to comfort, encourage and guide them; and so far as we are concerned, upon whom the ends of the world are come, the design seems to have been, that we should perceive the mutual adjustment of prophecy and fulfilment as of lock and key, and so should recognize the one Divine hand which has ordered events from the beginning till now.

I pass over without comment the language of Jacob in his blessing to his son Judah, which nevertheless is very striking when taken in connection with the advent of our Lord: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be<sup>1</sup>." I pass over in like manner the remarkable prophecy of Balaam: "There shall come a Star

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xlix. 10.

out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel<sup>1</sup>." Indeed there is only one other prophetic utterance in the Pentateuch which I think it necessary to quote; and I give the utterance in question the precedence of others, because it is quoted more than once in the New Testament and applied to Christ. "The Lord thy God," said Moses to the children of Israel before he left them, "will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken<sup>2</sup>:" which language is emphatically claimed for their Master by the early preachers of Christ: once by St Peter after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple<sup>3</sup>, and again by St Stephen in his speech before his martyrdom<sup>4</sup>.

In this last, as in all other instances, it cannot be too carefully borne in mind, that the question is not whether the Israelites of the time of Moses, who heard of *the prophet like unto him*, received from the promise an intelligent expectation of Messiah, so that they could rejoice in seeing his day and be glad: it is sufficient that we see in such prophetic utterances a general forward-look-

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxiv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xviii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Acts iii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Acts vii. 37.

ing tendency, which would carry on the minds of the ancient Church of God, which might even receive some partial realization in olden days, but which was not really *fulfilled* until the coming of the Son of God in the flesh. Nor are the prophetic utterances of the Pentateuch estimated at their right value, unless they be taken as the first terms of a series: later on in the history of the ancient Church we have clearer language still, but those later prophecies would lose much of their force, and would not have been so effectual as they proved to be in educating the Jewish mind to the hope of a Messiah, in leading men to wait for the consolation of Israel, if they had not been prefaced by the prophetic language of the Pentateuch, and so made links in a continuous chain stretching from the first Adam to the second, and binding together the earliest hint of Redemption with the great Redeemer Himself.

2. But prophecy is not the only link between the Old Testament and the New. The Church of Christ has ever seen and loved to see in the historical events and the ordinances of the ancient dispensation, types and shadows of those greater blessings and clearer revelations which were reserved for the days of the Gospel; and

though the general current of taste and tone of thought in the present day may dispose a large number even of good and thoughtful men to regard as unreal and fanciful many of the types which the early fathers recognized, there can be no doubt in the mind of a devout and careful student of Holy Scripture that types and shadows have a real existence; and indeed such a student will probably find upon closer observation, that many more rays of light from the Sun of Righteousness penetrated the darkness which covered the earth, before the dawn of the Gospel day, than he would originally have been disposed to suspect. Thus, to take a notable example, Joseph sold by his brethren, slain by them so far as intention was concerned, but nevertheless rising again to honour and power, and becoming the instrument for the preservation of the lives of those very brethren, has ever been regarded by Christian thinkers, both ancient and modern, as a type of the great Redeemer of mankind.

But I pass on from this class of type to notice that more special and formal kind, which was contained in the sacrifices of the old dispensation. The prevalence of sacrifice from the beginning to the end of the sacred history is certainly very

astonishing, whatever interpretation we may be disposed to put upon it. Some have thought<sup>1</sup> that traces are to be found even in the Paradise condition of man; anyhow the very first notice that we have of human worship not only introduces sacrifice, but declares that the offering of a living creature was acceptable and that the offering of fruits was not. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect<sup>2</sup>." It is hardly necessary to say that after this first example animal sacrifice meets us continually, until we find it settled and systematized in the Levitical code of laws.

And it is also hardly necessary to say that the sacrifices of the old dispensation, whether before the Flood or after it, whether in patriarchal or in Mosaic times, found their explanation and fulfilment in the sacrifice of the death of Christ. The subject is discussed and settled once for all in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It may be well however to remind the reader that there is in the

<sup>1</sup> See page 64.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iv. 3, 4, 5.

institution of sacrifice, whatever may be the difficulties (and they are not slight) which accompany it, a remarkable looking forward to some reality of which sacrifice is the shadow, and a remarkable pointing to the sacrifice of Christ as the great spiritual event of the world's history. So that sacrifice, more perhaps than almost anything else, may be spoken of as a preaching of Christ in the Pentateuch: men offered in faith as they were bidden; Abraham offered up Isaac, and the Israelites slew the Passover Lamb and sprinkled the blood upon their doorposts, and the priests offered their burnt offerings and year by year made a solemn atonement for sins; but the significance of all these acts of faith was not thoroughly manifest at the time, and did not become so until they had all vanished in the presence of the great sacrifice of Calvary, and Christians were able to sing the Easter anthem, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast."

3. In addition to prophetic utterances and typical and sacrificial foreshadowings, there is one other declaration of Christ in the Pentateuch which ought to be noticed. The phrase *preludings of the Incarnation* has been happily used, as descriptive of those manifestations of God to men of old

time to which I am now about to refer. I will adduce two instances.

The first shall be that of the three men who visited Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. I have already cited this piece of history for another purpose<sup>1</sup>; with regard to that which I have now in hand it will be sufficient to remark that one of the *men* who appeared to Abraham seems to be made by the story identical with the LORD, and that it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that one of the three men was a divine person; and this being so, it is hard to resist the further conclusion, that the person in question was no other than the Second Person in the blessed Trinity. Here therefore we have, as it were, an appearance of Christ, a manifestation in the flesh, before the Incarnation; and perhaps it may be said also that we have a piece of history, the full scope of which could not be understood until Christ had been born of a woman.

For the second instance I refer to the history of Jacob and the man with whom he wrestled. "Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day<sup>2</sup>." The point to be noticed is that although the wrestler

<sup>1</sup> Page 182.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxxii. 24.

is spoken of as a man, still when he gives the name of Israel to Jacob the reason assigned is this, "as a prince hast thou *power with God* and with men, and hast prevailed." Moreover the mysterious wrestler refuses to give his name; and "Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." All tends to attach a divine character to this nameless person, and it is difficult not to regard this as an anticipation, slight it may be, but still important and valuable, of that more complete presence of God amongst men which was to be manifested in Gospel times.

Of the three kinds of testimony which have now been adduced in support and explanation of the assertion that Christ is to be found in the Pentateuch, I will not undertake to decide which is the most instructive; but I remark that the third and last is that which conducts me most naturally and easily to another kind of testimony, which I am now about to bring forward and explain. I have already remarked that my purpose in this essay was in the first place to go over familiar ground, and then to pass on to some which is less familiar; it is this latter kind of ground, upon which I now invite the reader to enter. The ap-

pearance of Christ in the Pentateuch by means of prophecy, of type, and of remarkable preludings of the Incarnation, is sufficiently striking, and becomes more striking the more it is considered; but it seems to me that there are to be found in the Pentateuch, especially in the Book of Genesis, indications of Christ still more remarkable, because more subtle and lying deeper below the surface.

Now when we speak of Christ, we speak in one word of the mystery of the Incarnation. A person not believing in Christ, and knowing Jesus of Nazareth merely as a historical character, merely as a man who taught in Palestine in the time of Pontius Pilate and who was crucified under his government,—a person in this condition, when speaking of Christ, implies no doctrine, but only cites a fact of history. A Christian is in very different circumstances; if he speaks of Christ, he always implies the language of the Creed, “I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who was born and crucified, who rose again and ascended into Heaven:” he implies in fact the mystery of the Incarnation, *Immanuel*, God in human flesh. So that as far as doctrine is concerned, *Christ* and *the Incarnation* mean the same thing; the doctrine of the Incarnation is the doctrine of Christ; and when we speak of *Christ in*

*the Pentateuch*, we mean in reality that the Pentateuch contains, and rightly understood asserts, the doctrine of the Incarnation.

With this explanation let us examine the Pentateuch, or turn over its contents in our minds.

The most striking feature of the Pentateuch, or at all events one of its most striking features, to a mind considering its contents philosophically, is its *anthropomorphic* character. I use this phrase, though a somewhat crabbed one, because it is very expressive and convenient; it concentrates in one word a great deal of meaning; but any one who dislikes it can pass it over, and understand what I intend to convey from what follows. Did the reader ever consider in what way or ways it is possible for God to reveal Himself to His intelligent creatures? Suppose that there is a God, who, for certain good reasons, has created a material universe, and in one portion of that universe has placed amongst other living creatures one family who are capable of rising above the material circumstances which surround them to a contemplation of Himself, then in what way or ways can God make Himself known to those creatures? The case supposed is manifestly our own; we men are certainly capable of rising beyond the consi-

deration of mere bodily wants; however possible it may be to sink to the level of the beasts, it is certainly possible to rise infinitely above them, and the whole history of the world demonstrates that we were intended to rise above them; we were, in fact, intended to know God. The question is, How can we know Him? Of course we can know something of Him by regarding Him as the author of the universe; we can see Him in His works, and regard Him as manifested and declared<sup>e</sup> by them; but this is not exactly the kind of knowledge which I have in mind; and the knowledge so obtained is demonstrably incapable of satisfying man's mind, and giving him that knowledge of God which his moral nature desiderates. Supposing then that God condescends to make a revelation of Himself to mankind, in what manner can that revelation be made?

I do not suppose that it is possible for us to lay down all the conditions of a revelation; of course it is not; but we may with tolerable certainty lay down two at least, in which we can hardly be deceived.

The first condition is this, that God must in some way or other speak to us, reveal Himself to us, as *man*. The necessity of this condition appears

from the consideration, that man is the highest form of intelligence of which we have any cognizance, and that it is absolutely and essentially impossible for us to conceive of high intelligence or high moral qualities except as human attributes, or to conceive of any communication of knowledge except through human media. No doubt we can speak of acts which are superhuman, and of qualities of which we have no experience in the material world. Thus we may describe creation as the making of things which exist out of nothing, but we can attach no definite conception to this description; it is merely negative; it is merely asserting that creation is something different in kind from anything of which we have any knowledge in this world. So we may speak of God being invisible; but this again is merely negative, and although the phrase contains an undoubted truth, it is a truth which is simply the expression of human weakness and of the manner in which man is limited by his senses and his experience. We may make what efforts we please, and flap with the wings of our intellect never so hard against the wires of our cage, but it will all be fruitless; we cannot divest ourselves of those conditions which God has imposed upon us; we can no more lift ourselves from the earth upon

which God has placed us, than water can rise above its own level. Hence the highest conception of what is excellent or powerful, in fact the highest conception of any attribute of God, must be conveyed to us and be made intelligible to us through the medium of that which is human: God must reveal Himself to us by becoming, in some way or other, man like ourselves.

Let me guard myself against being supposed in the preceding sentence to imply, that the great truth of the Incarnation could have been anticipated by human ingenuity: that God should have taken manhood into Himself, so that of God and man there should be one Jesus Christ, who should be truly and without confusion both the one and the other, this no doubt is a mystery of godliness, which neither man nor angel could have guessed, and which nothing but the reality of the Lord's advent could have made credible. But, guarded as the expression is in the sentence referred to, it is perfectly true; and it may be safely asserted, upon grounds of general reasoning, that God can only reveal Himself to us by becoming, *in some way or other*, man like ourselves. This stooping of God to man is a necessity of our relative position; and the kind and degree of stooping, stoop-

ing just down to man's nature and not lower, adopting the highest intellectual and moral standard of which man has any knowledge and no other,—this kind and this degree of stooping are dictated by the necessity of the case; but it is only in the light of the New Testament that we can understand how the necessity has been met, and how completely and lovingly the act of stooping to our infirmities has in reality taken place.

Let the reader to whom this line of thought is not familiar bear in mind what takes place whenever a poet, or a painter, or a sculptor, endeavours to go beyond the limits of this world and to represent higher intelligences. Think of an angel, for example. You may talk in the abstract of high intelligences, and ministering spirits, and unseen guardians, and the like; but the moment you leave the abstract, and try to represent to another human mind the concrete being concerning which you are talking, that moment your angel will assume human form: you may add wings, but they are mere symbols, and if not very carefully and artistically managed they will be deformities; they will not be of the essence of the representation; that essence will consist in humanity; and the representative angel will be merely a figure like that of a human

being, exhibiting indications of those qualities of gentleness, submission, love, and the rest, which we attribute to the angelic nature.

In a less sacred department the same thing holds. Ingenious persons have often endeavoured to represent beings of other worlds, to people the moon, for example, with inhabitants; and what is the result? Simply this, that the imagined beings are caricatures of men. This addition or that is made, but the substructure is a human body and a human mind; and even when a writer has given his imagination the most extravagant amount of rein, and has exalted inferior creatures, as in fables or in *Gulliver's Travels*, to the highest place in the scale of being, the result has still been produced by humanizing those inferior creatures and making them, in fact, men in the disguise of animals.

Thus it appears that the conception of high powers and attributes can only be brought home to the mind through the medium of a human subject, to whom those powers and attributes belong. Anything below man is unworthy of the purpose; anything above man is incapable of being comprehended. And therefore we may safely conclude, that one condition of a revelation is this, that God should reveal Himself to man as man.

The second condition to which I have referred is the following, namely, that the revelation of God as man must involve nothing unworthy of the dignity of the Almighty.

This is a condition the necessity of which seems scarcely to require proof; but it nevertheless needs to be asserted, because it is the breach of it that has made so much of popular heathen belief concerning the gods degrading and mischievous. Take the popular Greek mythology as an instance with which we are familiar. Here we find gods in the form of men and women; and this anthropomorphic character of the mythology would seem to bear witness to the general principle already discussed, namely, that men are compelled by the structure of their minds to conceive the divine in the form of the human; the more so because many of the deities, even the very principal, who appear in human form, are manifestly not originally men who have been deified, but powers of nature or the like which have been personified, and finally have been identified with deities having a personal mythological history. But in this method of humanizing the divine there is no enlightening and exalting of man; there is simply a darkening and degradation of God. God is represented in this

case as man: but it is not that God has taken human form and so revealed Himself, it is that man has clothed his own imperfect conceptions of God in human form; it is not God stooping to man, but man drawing down God to his own level. Consequently there is no principle of spiritual life in a religion based upon such anthropomorphism as this: it is rather the source of all immorality and corruption: and heathen religions of this type always have been immoral, and in some extreme cases have been connected with the filthiest degradations of human nature that have stained the surface of the earth or defiled the page of history.

The mere conception of God in human form, therefore, is not enough. The humanity must be a condescension of God to man's infirmities, and must not involve any unworthy conception of the divine Majesty. It is hardly necessary to say that mere weakness, the mere putting aside of the robes of glory, the mere throwing of a veil over the extreme brightness of heavenly radiance, involve nothing unworthy: lowness is not baseness, and stooping is not degradation.

Let it be granted then that a revelation of God to man must involve the assumption on the part

of God in some way or other of humanity, but such an assumption as shall imply no degradation of the divine nature; and with this postulate let us look at the Pentateuch, especially the book of Genesis.

Now it is very observable that anthropomorphic as the whole of the book of Genesis is, that is to say, uniformly as God is brought before us in human character, there is no attempt to set before our minds any visible similitude of a divine person. The principle which is enunciated more clearly afterwards, and pressed in a variety of ways upon the Israelites, is assumed and acted upon in Genesis. "Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude," says Moses to the people; "only ye heard a voice<sup>1</sup>." And still further, the stringent commandment against graven images is clearly directed against the danger of representing the unseen God in any bodily form. This principle, which was clearly enunciated afterwards and was so terribly and forcibly impressed upon the minds of the chosen people, was, I say, anticipated in the book of Genesis; and so, with rare exceptions, which seem to prove the rule, the words above quoted from Deuteronomy describe

<sup>1</sup> Deut. iv. 12.

as well as possible the rule of the manifestation of the divine presence in Genesis: "Ye saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice<sup>1</sup>."

Let me say a word upon the exceptions to which I refer. They are those apparent assumptions of human form which have been already noticed as *preludings of the Incarnation*<sup>2</sup>. It will be observed, however, that in the case of the three men who had an interview with Abraham, and also in that of the man who wrestled with Jacob, there is no distinct intimation of the quality of the persons whom the history describes; they are shadows of deity, rather than deity itself; they come in by the way, so to speak; there is no attempt to represent them as being expressly and professedly revelations of God. They are valuable and instructive as being consistent parts of a whole, but it would be impossible to take them by themselves and found any great doctrine of theology

<sup>1</sup> It is only right to quote the language used with regard to Moses in Numbers xii. 8: "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." But this is to be qualified by observing what took place, when Moses actually made petition that he might see the Lord's glory, Exod. xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> See page 227.

upon them. Hence, if they are to be regarded as exceptions, they are something like exceptions which prove the rule; the general rule being this, that the revelation of God takes place under human conditions, but with a mysterious veil covering and effectually hiding the person of God.

Examine, for instance, the first chapter of Genesis. There is no similitude, but we hear a voice; *God said*. It is the word of God which is throughout the creative instrument, and a word is a human thing; in fact word, speech, language is the most distinctive mark of humanity. Then, again, God saw the things which He had made, and not only saw them but appreciated their quality, pronouncing them to be *very good*. And still further, God is represented as taking counsel concerning the creation of man, and finally creating him in His own image: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness<sup>1</sup>:" words which may no doubt be regarded in general as having a spiritual meaning, and of which it may also be affirmed, that it is difficult to say what their complete meaning is; but the more simply and literally we can take them the better, and even if we apply them to man's bodily structure and ap-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. i. 26.

pearance, we shall perhaps not go entirely wrong. For I suppose there must be some reason why man is as he is, and not otherwise; his noble form and curious anatomy, and the conjunction in his person of such marvellous intellectual power and high spiritual capacity with a physical organization worthy and capable of being the substructure and machinery of these heavenly endowments, can scarcely be the result of chance, if indeed there be any meaning at all in the phrase. It seems difficult to resist the notion, that there was an original archetypal idea of man in the divine mind, and that the creation of man in his actual form was the reducing to material conditions of that archetypal idea. So that the making of man in God's image may perhaps be described, in a certain modified sense, as an incarnation of the divine.

Taking then all this together, we find in the first chapter of Genesis a very emphatic instance of the voice without the similitude; or rather the reference to the similitude is such as to forbid in the most striking manner any degrading conceptions of God; for if there is to be any similitude of God upon earth, it must be man in his original purity of creation, as he came fresh from the hands of his Maker.

The whole of the Paradise history is consistent with this beginning. We hear of God "walking in the garden," but we do not see His footsteps; we hear Him speaking to Adam and Eve, passing sentence upon them, expelling them from the garden of Eden; but all the while there is no similitude, no description of the divine person. It is simply the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God<sup>1</sup>."

The subsequent Pentateuchal history is also thoroughly consistent. "Noah walked with God," and God gave him commands both before the Flood and after it, and God shut him up in the Ark which he had made; but there is no similitude, only a voice; and that voice so entirely human, that it speaks to us of this present day as clearly and emphatically as it did to Noah himself.

Abraham also communed with God, and God talked with him in most familiar wise. In general the communication is only that of God speaking; as, for example, the record of the first solemn call to the patriarch runs thus, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram." But there is a peculiarity in Abraham's experience: not only is there on record the interview with the divine person before the

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 1.

destruction of Sodom, to which reference has been already made, but also on other occasions there are mysterious indications of a divine presence. Thus we read in Genesis xvii. 22, of the Lord "going up from Abraham," as though in His interview He had not only spoken, but declared His presence in some special way. Even if it be so, there is no explanation of the mode of manifestation: there is no similitude mentioned in the record.

In like manner in the vision of Jacob, (to say nothing of the man with whom he wrestled,) we read of "the Lord standing above the ladder;" and we have thus the hint of a human presence, for I suppose that in no other form could Jacob have realized his vision; but the indication is very faint, and forms a portion of a dream.

If we pass on to the divine revelations to Moses, we note the same leading characteristics of the divine manifestations. In the bush God speaks to him as a man; and throughout the whole of Exodus the constant formula is, "The Lord said unto Moses;" but there is no similitude of the divine presence. There is one passage however, which throws so much light upon the manner of communication between God and Moses, that it

is desirable to refer to it particularly. After the rebellion in the matter of the golden calf we read that the Lord declared, "I will not go up in the midst of thee<sup>1</sup>," but He promised to send an angel before the people; and upon this occasion we read also that "it came to pass, as Moses entered into the Tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the Tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses.....and the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend<sup>2</sup>." Then Moses pleaded for the people and received the answer, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest:" and after some further intercourse Moses makes the memorable prayer, "I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory." It would seem as if Moses had been so encouraged by the abundance of revelations made to him, that he fancied nothing could be refused. Now mark the answer. "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And He said, Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 9—11.

live<sup>1</sup>." It would be absurd to pretend that this was anything but a most mysterious passage; how could it be otherwise? but the general principle of it is clear; it exhibits Almighty God revealing Himself to man as man, and yet hiding Himself in the impenetrable darkness of the invisible and unknown; it is anthropomorphic, and yet it is divine.

The consideration of the intercourse which Moses was permitted to have with God, an intercourse closer and more intimate than that granted to any other of the men of old time, completes the examination of the Pentateuch with reference to the point now under discussion.

The examination has been perhaps more rapid than the importance and extent of the subject might seem to require; but I have been very anxious not to weary the reader, and not to make him forget in the details of investigation the great principle which I wish to impress upon his mind. I wish him to perceive, and I am sure that the more he examines the more clearly he will perceive, a consistent method of revelation pervading the Pentateuch. The revelation is intensely human, and yet there is no sinking of the Majesty of God.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 19, 20.

I do not mean to say that it might not be possible for an ingenious person to find here and there passages of Holy Scripture, which seem to militate against this view, passages of which, if they stood alone, an enemy might make some advantage; but taking a broad view (which is the only wise and righteous way) we may I think assert, without fear of contradiction, that the principle of the Pentateuch is that of revealing God to man through humanity, and that God may be said to be stooping to man in order to lift up man to Himself; the different notices of God are deeply consistent; the theology is uniform; and throughout we hear God speaking in human fashion, bringing Himself into contact with the moral nature of His creatures through the medium of that nature which He has given them, and yet never lowering the dignity and majesty of the unseen Father of all.

Let me now pass from the Old Testament to the New; and let the transition be made upon the principle enunciated in the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." I have called this Essay, "Christ in the Pentateuch;" but I might

almost as suitably have given it the title, "The Pentateuch in Christ;" for what I wish to shew is, that as the Incarnation may be found in the Pentateuch, so the full meaning of the Pentateuch can be found only in the Incarnation. The Pentateuch is anthropomorphic, because it is the preface to the record in which we read that God became man; there is a deep underlying unity between the shadowy record of God's early communion with His creatures and the clearer record of His perfect communion with them in the person of His Son. Nay, some of the expressions which we read in the Pentateuch, and which cannot fail to strike us as hard and strange, seem as if they were put there for the very purpose of receiving their solution from the history of our Lord. Take as an instance the remarkable words already quoted, "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." What does this mean? That it implies very close communion, there can be no doubt: but what degree and kind of closeness? The context proves that it does not mean, that Moses was permitted in any sense to see the face of God. What shall we say then in explanation? It seems to me that the best thing to be said is, that language is used by anticipation, which

was clear and intelligible enough when Christ had come in the flesh. It is in the perfect communion of the Lord Jesus with His disciples, those men to whom He said, "Ye are My *friends*, if ye do whatsoever I command you<sup>1</sup>," that we perceive the full meaning of the language which tells us of God speaking to a man, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

The fact is, that in this as in so many instances, the shadows of the Old Testament are those which have been cast before by the coming events of the New. The anthropomorphism of the Pentateuch is the anticipation of Christ's real humanity. And taking the Pentateuch and the Gospel together, and looking upon discussions concerning them as bearing upon the general question of evidence, we may say that they fit into each other as lock and key, and so, without any vicious circular argument, each verifies the divine character of the other. The harmony which I thus describe, it will be observed, is no superficial or fanciful resemblance; it is something that involves the very bone and marrow of the principle, upon which each revelation professes to be made: on the one hand we have an early revelation, which is in its construction anthropo-

<sup>1</sup> S. John xv. 14.

morphic, sometimes strangely so; in the other, we have a late revelation, which nearly sums itself up in one sentence, *God became man*. Do not these two, when put together and compared, each support the other? and is it not something to be able to say, as the result of reading the Scriptures, that we have thus found Christ in the Pentateuch, and the Pentateuch in Christ?

If the principle which I have thus endeavoured to establish and illustrate be a true one, it will follow almost as a necessary consequence that the examples of its application will be abundant; in other words, if Christ be really and truly in the Pentateuch, we may expect to find frequent indications of His presence. Several very obvious indications have been omitted in this Essay, because my intention has been rather to suggest a train of thought than to attempt to exhaust the subject. But there is one connecting link between the Pentateuch and the history of our Lord upon earth, which is so fundamental, that the omission of it might be regarded as a serious defect. I refer to the temptation of Adam as taken in connection with the temptation of our Lord. The analogies and the contrasts between the two temptations are sufficiently obvious, and need not detain us; but

there are two observations which I think it necessary to make, as illustrative of the subject of this Essay.

The first observation is this, that in the case both of the first Adam and of the second, temptation by the Evil one was the real test of humanity. In the case of Adam, that which proved that he verily had been created in the divine image, and endowed with a nature, not merely superior in some respects to that which had been imparted to other animals, but different altogether in kind, was the possibility of being tempted to evil: strange as it may seem when so enunciated, still it is true, that the potentiality of breaking God's law and so committing sin, was the essential mark of man's spiritual constitution: beasts cannot sin. That man fell under temptation was of course a mark of weakness; theoretically speaking, he need not have done so; and the proof given by his temptation of his high spiritual nature was altogether independent of the result of that temptation, whether bad or good. Adam was a free agent and was not compelled to yield to the Tempter, but his humanity was proved by the fact that temptation was possible; and when we look from the first Adam to the second, we see that the same thing

is true, though the method of demonstration is somewhat different. For Christ had not to prove that God had endowed Him with a high spiritual being, but rather that being Divine He had condescended to assume human nature in all its reality; and the crucial test of this assumption was, Could He be "tempted like as we are"? The human form was not sufficient; the mere semblance of humanity would not be a genuine incarnation; the ultimate proof must rest upon the deepest foundation of human nature, and the second Adam must be tried like the first; and so "Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil<sup>1</sup>."

The other observation that I have to make is, that the Old Testament and the New start in ways remarkably parallel, when we regard them in connection with the two temptations. Each is founded upon a temptation; the Old Testament could not have been written, if the first Adam had not succumbed to the Tempter; the New Testament could not have been written, if the second Adam had not conquered him. Milton has seized upon this parallelism, and made it the connecting link of his two great poems; and the connection is as strong in theology as it is in poetry. In fact

<sup>1</sup> S. Matthew iv. 1.

the parallelism, of which I speak, is the basis of all theology; and the analogies and contrasts of the two temptations touch upon almost all the points which it concerns men to know, whether we regard them as fallen in Adam or as redeemed in Christ.

There is much inducement to follow still further a subject, possessing so much intrinsic interest and susceptible of so much expansion; but this Essay has already run to a considerable length, and I must hasten to bring both it, and the volume of which it is a constituent part, to a close.

It is impossible to lay down rules of taste for different minds: for my own the view taken in this Essay of the truths of Scripture has very great attraction: but beyond this I venture to suggest that the view is especially valuable, as appealing on behalf both of the Pentateuch and of the Gospel to the calm consideration of philosophical minds. The great spiritual danger of the present age is that habit of thought, which we commonly denote by the name of *rationalism*: it is a danger which has at all times threatened Christian faith, but for various reasons (which it is no part of my present purpose to discuss) it is now exceedingly threaten-

ing; nay, more than threatening, for we find some schools of philosophy treating the Gospel as an exploded fable, and representing it as the great problem of the age to determine what shall be put in its place. Now if *rationalism* meant, as the word would seem to imply, an appeal to man's highest *reason*, no one would have any right to quarrel with it: doubtless an appeal must ever lie to man's highest reason, and that which is contrary to reason can be no Gospel for rational man. But because the lawfulness of this appeal is readily granted, it does not follow that the logical processes of the human understanding are always safe guides to the knowledge of divine truth: there may be truths of the deepest moment which cannot be reached by human logic; and besides, the data even for those conclusions which seem to be most secure and certain may not be wisely chosen, and we may be engaged on the merely superficial phenomena of Holy Scripture, when we ought to be studying its deeper principles and its more subtle harmonies. Nothing is so easy as rationalism: for many minds nothing is more enticing. I do not speak of it as one who has no sense of its power, but rather as one whose temperament and education have tended to press him in the rationalistic

direction. Nevertheless, rejoicing in reason, I reject rationalism. And one feature of it which holds me back, and I trust may hold others back, is the very facility of adopting its principles, to which I have just referred. I always suspect, in difficult matters, what people call an appeal to common sense; and rationalism is like common sense gone mad. It seems so completely to keep the mind paddling about in the shallows of the human understanding, and to avoid the depths of that reason from which it purports to draw its name. And then when I think of it as a broad way upon which many go, I remember the words of Him who said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction," and "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life;" and I cannot but perceive that there may be a road intellectual, as well as a road spiritual and moral, which ought to be suspected as dangerous, just because it is so broad and smooth, and so crowded with company. Therefore I say deliberately, that I suspect rationalism all the more because it is so facile, because so many fall into it, and because I find so much within me tempting me towards it; and having persuaded myself of falseness, I feel bound to exert all the powers of my intellect and

of my heart to keep myself and others from the dangers which it involves.

The special design of this Essay has been to shew that He, who is undoubtedly the theme of the New Testament, is also to be found in the Pentateuch; to be found, not only in hints lying upon the surface, but in deep indications going to the very root and principle of the book. I will bring it to a close by calling the reader's attention to the manner, in which the very opening of the Pentateuch is connected with the termination of the Bible. In both Christ appears; in the one as the creative Word, "by whom all things were made;" in the other by His angel, addressing the beloved disciple. Moreover, as has been noticed before, the River of water of life and the Tree of life which occur in the final chapter of the book of Revelation connect it in a striking and most instructive manner with the story of Eden. But the point to which I wish here to call attention is this, the analogy between the revelation of God in the beginning of Genesis and the revelation of Christ in the end of Revelation with regard to the element of *time*. With God all is one eternal *now*; but men must conceive things under the conditions

of time ; and so man's life is a small island, as it were, with an infinite ocean of eternity before him and behind him. Now in describing the past in the first chapter of Genesis, the infinite ages are foreshortened, in order to make a human picture. God is represented as operating by His Word for six days, and then creation is complete. One result of this has been to make a conflict, which has sometimes been very warm, between those who profess to be scientific readers of Holy Scripture and those who interpret it as they think more literally; the latter asserting for the earth a brief duration of existence, which the former feel quite sure is utterly inconsistent with observed phenomena. Happily this conflict seems to have passed its warmest phase, and probably in the course of years will cease to exist altogether. Taking however the description, which has been above given, of the manner in which the picture of creation is put before us, let us look to the other extremity of the volume of Holy Scripture, and observe the manner, in which is brought before us the picture of the close of the dispensation. Here I notice the same foreshortening, which is observable in the opening of Genesis ; only it is a foreshortening of the future instead of the past. The last words of Holy

Scripture are the assurance, "I come quickly," with the responsive acknowledgment of the message, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It is obvious that any one discussing these words in the literal spirit, in which the opening of Genesis has been sometimes discussed, might assert that the promise and the performance have not been in accord; indeed in this case we have the warning of St Peter, that scoffers would come in the last days, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" and we have also the explanatory admonition, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day<sup>1</sup>." The fact seems to be, that we have a peep into the future from the Book of Revelation, but that there is nothing to guide the eye as to distances: it is like looking at the sun and the stars; sometimes they seem as if the earth touched them, sometimes they seem at an immeasurable distance; the truth being this, that when the eye looks from earth to Heaven it loses itself, and has no standard by which to measure.

Thus the beginning and end of Scripture harmonise and agree: in both the one and the other time is annulled: the infinite past and the infinite future of eternity are alike reduced to finite

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. iii. 4, 8.

proportions ; and we have no more sense of the infinite, than when we look up into the blue vault of Heaven. I will not ask how this harmony and agreement could have come about, if the beginning and the end of the Bible had not had the same Author: but I will suggest, that if that divine person, who said by His Angel, "Behold I come quickly," be indeed the WORD OF GOD, "by whom all things were made," then the consistency of the beginning and the end is precisely what we might have expected, and precisely what we find.

THE END.





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