

THE  
BIBLE RE-EXAMINED.

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1886

Confirm the promise 139  
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What man sows he reaps 142  
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THE  
BIBLE RE-EXAMINED:

A Re-Statement of Religious Truth.

BY  
JOSEPH H. CHAMBERLIN.

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GLASGOW:

PRINTED BY HORN & CONNELL, 42 ARGYLE STREET.

1886.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE duty of examining, each man for himself, the Old and New Covenants (or Testaments, as they are otherwise called), would seem to be demanded by this, the very title or term of description by which these documents have come to be known. For, if these documents contain covenants of anything, it may be well to ask—covenants of what? If they speak to us of anything to be hoped for; of anything to be gained or won, common-sense directs that we should make enquiries into the matter, lest things that may possibly be of the highest importance to us, be missed and lost. Besides which, our experience teaches us that every good that can be named, has natural conditions connected with it—that covenants carry with them provisions—so that every man should be anxious to know what these provisions are on which the covenanted good may be enjoyed.

Our impression is, that any one of average capacity, who can read his mother-tongue, may learn and know what the covenants of God contain. The only requirement is, that we should be as earnest and attentive in this enquiry as the importance of the matter (which is soon obvious) demands; as earnest, at least, as we would be in looking into anything that reasonably promised to be of immense temporal interest to us. We think that an ordinary day-labourer or washer-

Any brief statement, or elliptical, we shall unfold by the amplification of a longer one. The elder must not serve the younger in this case.

We shall *assume* nothing, and shall respect the silence of the volume. The fault we find with many expositors is, that they are "wise" above what is written. The Scripture accurately defines this as "conceit." The only use for the reasoning faculty is in the all-important work of interpretation; *speculation* we abjure, remembering what Tennyson says—

" For every worm beneath the moon  
Draws different threads, and late and soon  
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon."

Other works bearing on the interpretation of the Scriptures can be obtained by writing to the author of these pages.

BIRKENHEAD, *March, 1886.*



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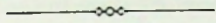
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# THE BIBLE RE-EXAMINED.



## CHAPTER I.

### CONCERNING GOD.

**I**N opening the BIBLE, and looking earnestly at its first words,  
we feel

“like some watcher of the skies,  
When a new planet swims into his ken.”

A cultivated and ripened instinct meets there with what it has long felt after, and a hopeful suspicion becomes a sweet certainty that some glorious and infinite personality is the author of the scheme of existence with which we are connected. Not that meeting with the word *God*, in Genesis i. 1 alone, fills us with this emotion, but that perceiving what the bible as a whole, together with what this first verse says of God, does so. Having read the volume through, we have been made familiar with what this first word means, and now, turning back to it, we feel its revealing power.

The “hopeful suspicion” we have mentioned arises from the constitution of the cosmos in which we are placed, particularly our own moral constitution as a part of it. Indeed, what is called “nature” gives us more than a hint of God.

That there is a partial revelation of God in nature is made quite biblically certain from a number of testimonies.

Paul, writing to the Romans (i. 19), says, “**THAT WHICH MAY BE KNOWN of God is manifest to them (the heathen), for God hath shewed it unto them. FOR the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, his eternal power and Godhead, so that**

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they are without excuse." The revelation may not be a perfect one, but it is "clear" as far as it goes, and it always has been so "from the creation of the world." So Job says, speaking of the creative acts, "Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him?" (xxvi. 14). This is what is meant in the Acts (xiv. 16, 17), where it is said God "in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, NEVERTHELESS, *he left not himself WITHOUT WITNESS, in that HE DID GOOD*, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." The testimony of nature in these facts was this, that if the Creator was thus "good" to his creatures, the creatures ought to be good to one another, which constitutes a *moral law*, good for this life, under which the unenlightened heathen have ever been placed. This law is what Paul refers to in Romans ii. 14, 15. Here the Gentiles, having not *the law*, but being a law unto themselves, are contemplated as, possibly, doing by nature the things contained in the law, *their CONSCIENCE also bearing witness*.

These testimonies of the bible are confirmed by the most obvious facts of human nature. In the rudest bosom, as in the most cultivated heart, there are certain moral instincts having the universality and force of law which are good for this life, and which, where the Spirit-revelation has not reached, are the only guides (apart from experience) of mankind. Where these instincts have been strengthened by reflection on the benevolence of creation, the result has been to produce "the noble savage;" and where the instincts have been overpowered by the selfish propensities, the product has been the degraded animalism so commonly to be found in uncivilized lands. Seldom has human nature, however, been found so retrograde and brutal as to have lost the last sense of the supernatural. Though worship may have "run down" to that of a mere fetish, yet some stock or stone has still been to the heathen the symbol of a mysterious and unseen power. Whether any tribes do really exist who have lost *all* sense of the supernatural is a disputed point. The reports of travellers who have not lived long among the inhabitants of the places they describe are little to be relied upon, especially in reporting what such people do *not* know or believe. Therefore, it is not strange that what the sceptical Lubbock affirms, the believing Luthardt and others deny—viz., that there are tribes of men who have no notion whatever of any supernatural thing. Trench tells us that the Australian aborigines had no word for "love" in their savage language, while their vocabulary was rich

and elaborate with words to describe various modes of murder; it may well be, then, that in the dark places of the earth, filled with the habitations of cruelty, man has sunk utterly into animalism, and has ceased even to wonder at the trembling stars, or to listen for the voices which cry in the rising wind.

In truth, all the faculties we possess must receive suitable and sufficient culture, or they will wither away or run wild. The faculty of worship which perceives and adores God is no exception. If the spirituality and truth of a pure worship are to be paid to Him who is SPIRIT, the mind of man must be submitted to the influence of that Truth which is Spirit-taught. Then, nature becomes much more than a hint to us, as our instinct is cultivated and ripened. To understand how significant nature is to the cultivated heart, behold how it appeared to David or to Jesus. No one had a more perfect perception of its significance than Jesus of Nazareth. His impressive parables were just the drawing out of these lines. Thus he speaks in a language suited to all ages and all hearts. He breaks the envelope of nature to us, and behold the letter of God; he plucks a lily, and in his fingers it becomes a spiritual form.

So also, in the Psalms, there is a perfect revel in the spiritual import of nature. All things become vocal for the Lord: day unto day uttereth speech; night unto night sheweth knowledge. It is only with such aids that the psalmist's devout heart can find expression for his top notes of faith and praise. There is a profound science in it all, as well as magnificent poetry—a scientific use of the imagination. He does not "kick the stars," but ascends on wings of reason to those spiritual lamps of night, and there in the empyrean he sees all material things to be the alphabet of a divine lore.

Before dealing with the subject proper of this chapter, we must say a little more about this "hopeful suspicion" we have said is either latent or living in the human bosom.

As soon as one's perception and understanding of the law of causality is pretty well developed, it becomes an intellectual necessity with us to find and rest in a conscious, personal, intelligent being who stands related as First Cause to the universe around us. Of his essence we may not profess to know anything whatever. We may not profess to comprehend his infinitude, or to fathom his eternity. To us it will sound very rational that "he dwelleth in light that no man can approach unto." That him "hath no man seen, nor can see." But faith is that which advances from the visible to the invisible. Professor Tyndall has accustomed us to

the phrase, "the scientific use of the imagination," which means, as he uses it, very much the same as the "faith" of the bible. And it is by this exercise that we come into the presence of the glorious fact of God. We believe that he is, because we must, or else suffer our highest reason to remain unsatisfied. It is an intellectual instinct in us which seeks this truth as its true rest.

If we could believe in an *eternal series*: of an infinite chain of being which is stapled on nothing, but runs on link after link without any end, then God would not be an intellectual necessity any more. But this is as surely impossible to us as the other is necessary. An eternal God may be a fact, but an eternal series of effects is not possible, even in thought. We must come to the first link by the necessities of the mental process, and where can we staple it but in God? And just as absolutely does the mind require that God himself should be no *part* of a series; that he should have "life in himself," and be constituted a perfect being in himself. As surely as the waves imply the ocean, and the undulations of light the sun, so surely do the series of phenomena called nature carry us back to the primal Being in whom all things live and move.

"But why cannot the universe of matter be the primal being?" it may be asked, "why run back into the unseen, where the mind, unconsciously to itself, creates its God and calls him maker?" A great deal could be said in answer to this question, but we must content ourselves with saying a little.

It must be admitted, equally by those who deny or are in doubt concerning God, and those who believe in him, that the cosmos is *an arrangement* PROCEEDING TO SOME END. Whether personal wisdom presides over it, or it is its own wisdom, this is so. Every existing organism in this cosmos, and the laws under which it exists, prove that some result is aimed at, and the development which things have reached in the existence of conscious, intelligent, and moral beings, shows how grand and high this result must be. And the issue between faith and no faith is just this—does this wonderful molecular power of arrangement which results, it is said, in life, in intelligence, and in the moral life of man, reside as a necessary potency in the material atom; or, is this power a communicated thing from One whose necessary being is higher than all these developments? If the former be true, then the material atom is God; only then, there will be as many gods as there are atoms; or, if this power were supposed to reside in them collectively, then all the atoms taken together would be God. Now in trying to get to

the bottom of this question, which forms the issue between faith and no faith, important facts must be borne in mind, which we will mention.

1. The material atom has only a hypothetical existence. Though Dr. Tyndall has minutely and curiously described it with all his gift of language and cunning illustration, just as though he had seen one and kept one for observation in a little glass bottle, in point of fact, neither he nor any one else has ever seen an atom, nor found it by any experiment whatever. He can only get it by what he calls "the scientific use of the imagination." Interpreting it into our own tongue, to affirm the existence of the material atom is an act of *faith*. When the scientist, reciting his creed, says, "I believe in the material atom," this is exactly the same *act of faith* (in kind) as when a Christian says, "I believe in a personal God."

2. But supposing we had got the atoms, and that these contained within themselves the power of self-arrangement, which should in time result in conscious life and intellect and moral feeling; in short, which should at last bring forth humanity *as we find it*, with its Christ, its Pauls, and its Johns; all these, by the supposition, creatures of its own development—WHERE IS THE SENSE of *evolving lives like these?* What a fool this evolution makes of nature, to bring forth men whose hearts should beat so grand and high as theirs, but beat, alas, in vain! Why did not development stop at swine, instead of going foolishly forward unto men who should begin to ask after and feel after God if haply they might find him? Or, if development must go forward, why did not this atomic nature pursue it along some other than the *moral* route, so that man might miss that region whose light should make for darkness, and where the perfecter the purity, the more the pity? And if it be said in reply to this that "religion" is a childishness which in future ages man may get beyond, needing no more the breasts of its mother-God; that the moral history of humanity is yet to enter upon another and higher phase, when the crudeness of religion and the weakness of worship will have become a curious psychological study of olden things, we answer, a limited experience of what is to be looked and hoped for in that direction does not raise expectation very high. X The few "advanced" ones, whom we can inspect, are not encouraging specimens. "Man is what he eats," writes one of them, which, at one stroke, reduces morality to a bill-of-fare. Whether is this kind of thing going to weave a moral crown for humanity, or the teaching of him who said, "my meat and my

Faith

drink is to do the will of him that sent me;" that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?" Had any crown to be woven for humanity's brow by the perfecting of its moral life, this latter teaching would make its fadeless wreath, and be the teaching which, alone, would fill the future with lustre, as it alone has been the illumination of the past.

Our argument is that the material atom, or atoms, cannot be the only God there is, because then nature would be guilty of an evolution in which it would prove itself a fool, which we know it is not. John Stuart Mill half admits this folly of nature, only he calls it "irony"—(a stronger expression.) What irony does he speak of? The irony of nature (the atomic God) forming noble human characters and beautiful lives on principles that prove delusive. Under this evolution men learn to pray, for example. What idiots the "atoms" must be to turn out men capable of prayer while there is no Personal Father to pray to. For they are not weak things only who resort to prayer. Professor Tyndall says he regards some who resort to it "as part of the very cream of the earth;" and that "prayer in its purer forms hints at disciplines which few of us can neglect without moral loss."—(*Fragments of Science*, 1876, p. 470).

This, then, is to our mind one strong reason why the material atom cannot be the primal or the highest being. For while everywhere the material universe shows marvellous wisdom and fitness, the chief creature, man, would then be the strangest of evolved blunders.

We again observe, if there were no God but the material atom, then, the bible being false, no account could be given of THE END for which the universe and man exist.

The serious charge we bring against the exponents of scientific unbelief is, that they have much to say to us about nature's *processes*, but they are absolutely dumb as to nature's *end*—END.

Pause—nature must have an end; for is nature not a succession of processes? Granting for a moment the theory of La Place, that the world we inhabit, and of which we are a part, was once a mass of nebulous matter—a gaseous globe, we remark that a good deal has taken place since then. The gas has changed a good deal, in turning into men with brains and beating hearts, with the name of God on their lips, and ideals of moral perfection before them. Though the result were only a joyous lark mounting to the sun that had to be explained, it would be difficult to say what the end was, to



which things moved; but when it is not a soaring lark, but a moral being like man, capable of discussing his immortality, taking upon his lips the names of the divine and the eternal, then we realize not only how far we have got from the "gas" period (!), but what an earnest question it becomes—what is the end of all things?

On this question, science (in the usual acceptance of the term) has not a syllable to say. And as long as she retains this modest muteness, we do not cease to respect her. But when she puts on the airs of unbelief, and tells us that final causes *cannot* be known, and tells us it is infantile to be peeping into the ends of things, then we grow angry. The whole trend and tendency of our rational development proves that it is not childishness but the height and dignity of manhood to be enquiring whither does the world move, and to ask questions about the deep things of human destiny. That it is the greatest of all enquiries is attested by the fact that it has ever engaged the greatest of all minds. An unlimited and unmitigated scorn can no more quench this enquiring spirit than it could put out fire. Even though it lost the vote of reason, it would get the verdict of the heart. The fact is, *we cannot help enquiring*. Nature has gone too far with us, has developed us too highly for this. We are in for it now; men will certainly search through heaven and earth—from the centre of their own hearts to the circumference of the skies—to learn and know what it all means.

They stumble across a book called the bible. It talks about "the fulness of times," the destruction of sin, the abolition of death, the filling of the earth with divine righteousness and glory, and this by means of a heaven-created kingdom. It speaks of sin and evil as being a necessary experiment for mortals; that it and redemption constitute a plan worked out from time's beginning; that all things exist for God's pleasure (creation being the form in which he finds activity), and that at last he will be all in all. A righteous progeny of immortalities form a family circle in which God is parent, and a delectable earth is home. In the face of each child he sees his image, the translation of his spirit. Not in hair and eyes, but in moral beauty and the affinities of eternal love, does the parent see himself reflected in these creations. He lives for them and they for him, in the love-linked circle of a divine fellowship. They have alike received their nature and gained their character from him, and are now indissolubly united with his name.

Apart from this revelation, we are absolutely at sea. Science cannot even suggest to us an end. With speechless lip, and finger

hardly steady, it can only point us to the grave, or, finding words, tell us of a possible cosmical disaster which might abruptly terminate our planet. What a triumph of nature! what a masterly result of atomic power and wisdom—a certain grave for each individual, and a contingent smash-up for the world! There is more sense in the grossest form of pagan superstition than in this nude folly of scientific unbelief. The former does try to reckon with the heart of man, and imagine an end in harmony with its own blind instinct, but the latter, in spite of its intimate acquaintance with nature's incalculable resources and means, believes that these resources and means are all employed in getting that supreme result—DEATH AND THE GRAVE. The final “promise and potency” of matter is thus, according to it, to produce sepulchres.

Now it is the inward working of thoughts like these in the deep underground of our hearts, that creates the “hopeful suspicion” that *man* is not the only conscious and personal intelligence in the universe of being, and which makes us start with a quick response to the revelation of “God” made to us in the bible.

Considering the heading of this chapter, we have delayed turning to this too long; but now, summing together what we intend pointing to as to be found concerning God in the bible, we remark that we find there—the SPIRITUALITY, UNITY, AND PERFECTION of a *divine Being*, who is the Author, Ruler, and End of all things.

In the course of its refinements, popular theology has wrought distinctions between the *essence* and the *personality* of God. We are perfectly certain that the bible knows nothing whatever of this distinction. The bible has not one word to say about God's “essence;” seldom referring, indeed, to the *mode* of the divine being, but chiefly concerning itself with his *person*, and his personal relations to his creatures.

Underneath all forms of being there is one and the same essence, the grasping of which simple fact will deliver us from a very awkward objection brought against the Theistic argument. The Scriptures say nothing to us on this subject, for the reason that it is not the object of revelation to discuss such questions. The Scripture begins by telling us that GOD is *Spirit* (John iv. 24), in saying which it simply affirms the *mode* of the divine nature.

It was the simple-hearted Jew, SPINOZA, who first taught the doctrine—“there can be *but one essence*.” The Pope of Rome pronounced him an infidel for teaching that, but to that truth our whole intellect subscribes. There can be but one essence, and of

that essence we know nothing, nor shall we ever know anything. The bible says nothing to us about "essence;" not one metaphysical word is to be found in the whole book. All we know is *MODE* with its qualities or properties, and of *mode* we have *three living forms* brought before us in the Scriptures, first, GOD, who is *Spirit*; second, ANGELS, who are *Spirit-bodies*; third, MAN, who is *animated dust*.

#### CONCERNING SPIRIT.

The word itself gives us the first clue to the nature of it. It literally means wind, or *air in motion*; both in the Hebrew *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma* this is its meaning as a *word*. We do not conclude, however, that Deity is merely "wind," for reasons we need not stay to explain. But he is said to be *pneuma* because of being that which the familiar wind best enables us to understand. In its invisible, free, active, powerful and penetrating character, *the wind* is a suitable symbol to set forth the mode of the divine nature.

We next learn that this *pneuma* emanates or "proceeds" from *the Father*. If we turn to John xv. 26 we shall find this word used to describe the spirit's motion. The word "proceed" (*ekporenetai*) does not mean, as when a *person* passes from place to place, but to *flow out of*, as light from the sun, or a stream from its source. Then, turning to Psalm civ. 30, we find that this issue, or emanation of the divine substance is not a thing of mechanical necessity, but the result of divine volition—"Thou sendest forth thy spirit," &c.

The third fact is that this issue of Deity's substance extends through universal nature, giving, like a nerve network, omnipresence and omniscience to the divine Being. It will be sufficient to cite the Psalm cxxxix. as evidence of this.

A fourth thing to note is, that the spirit of God is *the source of universal life*. The evidence is to be found in Genesis vii. 22, where the *n'shamah* (spirit) is seen to be the animating principle of *all flesh*, whether fowl, cattle, beast, or creeping thing; and in Psalm civ. 30, where *the renewal of the face of the earth* is ascribed to the "sending forth" of God's *spirit*; and in various other places in Scripture.

A fifth observation is, that this spirit of God is the potential means by which God has always been working in the earth,

whether in creation or destruction; in miracles and inspiration, and all the movements of the divine providence among men. It is seen affecting man in almost every part of his organization, producing *physical* effects of the most diverse character. It is seen acting on the brain, the muscles, the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand; on animals; on inanimate things, such as the sea, the river, the rock, clothing, chains, and the like—indeed, there is hardly anything in creation where the spirit is not seen producing phenomena not provided for in the usual operations of nature. It is a subtle, penetrating power and presence that pervades everything; the nucleus and formative force of every material atom that circulates in the whole system of the universe.

Before proceeding to say anything more about the “spirituality” of God, as the Scriptures enable us to understand it, we call attention to another fact we have found, viz., the absolute UNITY of God. When we say we believe in God, it is not the theological “Trinity” we mean. Nature affirms God to be ONE, and the Scriptures do the same, and we believe their united affirmation. Science has been busy in recent years in resolving all the forces of nature into one primary indivisible force, and that splendid synthesis called the “doctrine of the conservation of energy,” is as near to the Scripture doctrine of the one God as science can be expected to go. It is true science cannot call him by his divine name—that would be out of its province, but it can point to the signs of one mighty all-controlling force that appears in the varied phenomena of the world, and while it is silent, Faith speaks, crying Abba, Father! We have discovered God’s unity; of personality, and of everything which constitutes the divine nature. We find God is variously manifested, chiefly by a Son, and through his spirit, by which he creates and controls all things. But difference of manifestation does not mean distinction of being.

We have said that nature reveals to science one indivisible force lying behind all her phenomena. All the powers of nature are different forms of this one primal energy. This is as far as science can go in the ascertainment of God. But now revelation comes in, and calling this force by its proper name of THEOS, or GOD, explains to us that this personal power which underlies all phenomena is *One*.

The Scriptures will be searched in vain for any real proof of the orthodox “Trinity” of persons. Unity can be shown from the Scriptures as belonging to the personality of God as clearly as

reason can prove it belonging to his essence. Indeed, as to the essence of God we *know* nothing, as we know nothing concerning the essence of anything; the Scriptures not having been written to gratify metaphysical speculators. What has been revealed of God concerns his *personality*, and of this, unity is affirmed with reiterated distinctness. It is not contended, we are aware, that the evidence for the Trinity is positive, but only inferential; but it is said that it is just as important to accept inferential evidence as any other. And this is true, only it must be remembered that such evidence is more easily mistaken than any other, and therefore weighs as nothing considering the clear positive evidence on the other side. A plural pronoun or a singular verb; a threefold form of benediction, or a trinal reference to God in the prescription of baptism, is very trilling argument for an incomprehensible doctrine when set over against such declarations as these:—

“Hear, O Israel, *the Lord our God is ONE Lord.*”—Deut. vi. 4.

“I am God, and *there is none else . . . and there is none like me.*”—Isaiah xli. 9, 10.

“To us there is but *ONE GOD and FATHER of all.*”—1 Cor. viii. 6.

“There is *ONE GOD and FATHER of all.*”—Ephes. iv. 6.

“There is *ONE GOD* and one mediator between God and man: *the man, Christ Jesus.*”—1 Tim. ii. 5.

It will be said, “Oh, but these texts prove nothing in your favour, they simply affirm the unity of the divine essence, which is not denied.” We reply, they say nothing about the essence; the reason of their being written precludes the idea of any reference to essence, and some of them contain *positive proof* that it is God’s *personality* of which this unity is affirmed. Take, for instance, the text in *Corinthians*. He who is said to be the *ONE God* is called by the personal name of *Father*, thus showing that in personality God is one. The same clear argument can be drawn from the text in *Ephesians*. So when God says by the mouth of Isaiah, “I am the Lord, and there is no God besides ME,” the “I” and the “me” show concerning what the unity is predicated. It is a shift of speculation to bring in the matter of God’s essence, a thing perfectly foreign to theology, and useless as foreign. The farthest that the Scriptures go in this direction is to state the *mode* of God’s manifestation when we are told that “God is spirit,” but they never take us up into the thin air of observation on the abstract essences of things. If the “Trinity” of God were as true as his Unity, how is it that the former is not once stated explicitly while the latter is

affirmed over and over again? Surely the one truth would be as important as the other. No reason can be given why one should rest on positive, and the other on inferential, evidence. Nay, it is impossible that this should be so, for the latter kind of proof loses all its force when opposed to the former.

We have no objection to the word "Trinity" simply on the ground of its being an unscriptural expression. The necessities of nomenclature may sometimes push us into using a word for which Scripture usage cannot be pleaded. Our more serious, and indeed (if sound) fatal objection is that *the thing* denominated by this word is unscriptural. Mosheim says that the word first occurs in an apologetic work of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch in Syria, in the latter half of the second century. Accepting this, then, it follows that for more than a *hundred years* of doctrinal history there existed no word to denominate one of the most fundamental features of orthodoxy. The "Trinity" could not have found expression, for there was no word to express it. If it be said that, though the doctrine may not at that time have crystallised in a word, it may have been in a state of solution in the teachings of the age, we reply that the bible knows nothing about doctrines "in solution." Doctrines are "faithful sayings," having a distinct "form" and a decided tone.—Titus i. 9; 1 Tim. iii. 10. A doctrine *is* a crystal; an exact statement of God's truth about man in his highest moral relations, and if the things necessary to be known concerning God are the first items of that truth, then a "form of sound words" will be prepared in order to its expression. So we find the principal facts of faith have their own appropriate expressions and formulæ. God—the Spirit—the Christ—mortal man—sin and death—redemption—immortality—regeneration—restitution—all that is necessary to an embodiment and expression of the truth are given. The fact that no expression whatever, neither "the Trinity" nor its equivalent, is to be found, is presumptive proof that no such doctrine is contained in the Scriptures.

And when we ask, on what evidence does this assumed doctrine rest? we are met with a mass of *ingenuities*, rather than an array of plain statements. It seems that all the plain and explicit testimony is on one side, and the "inferential" evidence on the other. We think there ought to be as plain declarations of the Trinity as of the Unity of God, if both were equally true. But in the absence of these, we are pointed to peculiarities of grammar; the use of a three-fold expression in the prescription of baptism; as also in the apos-

tolie benediction, and to some texts in the Scriptures, in which it is supposed a plurality of persons is implied.

We think it absurd in the highest degree to put such an important article of faith on such slender and obscure ground as the use of a plural pronoun, as in Genesis i. 27, iii. 22, xi. 7, and Isaiah vi. 8. Suppose we could not say why the plural is employed, what then? would the Trinity therefore be a rational conclusion? The fact that this plural form is only *occasionally* used shows that the intention of its use could not be to set forth the nature of God, for then would it have been invariably employed. The quotation from Isaiah particularly reveals the weakness of the argument, for there the pronoun "I" is used as well as "us." If "us" proves the plural personality of God, then "I" proves the oneness of that personality, for they are both personal adjuncts, and it would be quite arbitrary to assume that one pronoun refers to the personality and the other to the essence of Deity. It is positive trifling to say that the peculiar use, two or three times in Scripture, of the pronoun "us," affords ground for believing that God is a trinity, or that the plural name of God indicates this, for the name is in the plural also when the word "God" is applied to *an angel*, where a plural personality is not contended for.

Neither can the threefold benediction of the apostles, as in 2 Cor. xiii. 14, or the threefold reference in the prescription of baptism, prove anything like a trinity. The former shews on the face of it that the apostle sees a distinction between God and the Lord Jesus Christ, else why should he say, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit?" Why should only one of these three be called God here, if each were personal Deity? We know that Christ is called God elsewhere, for the very Scriptural reason that "in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" that the FATHER *was manifested* in him, but why is Christ *distinguished* from God here? This benediction, instead of proving, disproves by its very terms a trinity of co-equal persons in the Deity. It has no connection with or reference to the nature of God, but looks in another direction altogether, to the blessing which the apostle desires may rest on the disciples at Corinth. With that blessing he enfolds them, wrapping his love around them in a threefold manner of expression, which is a kind of natural metre for all warm or solemn feeling, making a symmetry of expression very suitable as a conclusion of his salutations. It has no doctrinal significance at all; it is the last breathing of apos-

toxic regard and prayer, and as all imaginable blessing can be grouped in this way, as it may more visibly connect itself with God, with the Lord Jesus, or with the Spirit, so his benediction frames itself in this threefold form.

There is probably some contemplation of doctrine when the baptismal prescription is delivered, but no countenance whatever is given to the "Trinity" therein. Where is the notion of "trinity" in the words, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?" "The name" does not necessarily carry with it even the idea of a "person," for *things* have names as well as persons—indeed, the word "name" just means *the things of or the truth concerning* the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The name of the Spirit literally means the things of the Spirit, and so of the other two; so that baptism (which is symbolic death, burial, and resurrection) into the name of these, signifies entrance upon a new living relation to God, the Christ, and the spiritual.

The "Trinity" could not be proved from this verse, even though it were shewn that each of the three names referred to distinct persons. It would still have to be shown that each of these were co-partners in the Deity. All that this verse states or implies is that believers are to be connected by baptism with the things of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. Nothing is said about Deity here, much less of *persons* mysteriously related to each other in the Godhead.

These sentences being written, we may now say a little more about the "Spirituality" of God. We have been accustomed to hear that the Spirit is *a Person*, in the unity of God, who, having produced all things by a divine fiat, has been accomplishing all the marvels we have before referred to by the same means. This notion is not based on a careful reading of the Scriptures, but is a mere tradition which arose in days when "bishops" and "presbyters" were filled with their own wisdom, and knew no more about true exegesis than their ignorant flocks. The Spirit may be, and is, considered personal, as being the Spirit of the Father (the *one* God—1 Cor. viii. 6) who works by means of it. But God's Spirit is no more personal apart from the Father, whose Spirit it is, than our hand is personal apart from us; yet we sometimes speak even of the hand as though it were so, as when, for instance, the recanting Cranmer cried out at the stake, "This hand hath offended; this unworthy right hand." A good deal of artifice has been resorted to to make the spirit of God appear a distinct personality from the Father: for



instance, even in the revised translation of the the New Testament the nearly obsolete word *ghost* has been retained for the spirit's designation, as carrying with it a latent suggestion which "spirit" less forcibly implies, and "holy ghost" is printed with capital initial letters to assist the idea of a divine personality. All this is a proof of *bias* in the translators, and a tacit admission that there is a want of direct evidence for their doctrine.

Again, consider the expressions, "MY *spirit*," "THY *spirit*," "the *spirit* OF *God*," and we must see that God is represented as having a property in the spirit, so to speak, which does not harmonise with the idea of a co-equal personality for the latter. It suggests the thought that it is a kind of servant or agent of the Deity by which he executes his will. There is no such expression in the Scriptures as "God the Spirit"—the Father is constantly saying, "my spirit," but the spirit is never represented as speaking of, or referring to, another "person" in the Godhead. The Father refers to his Son, Jesus; Jesus refers to his Father; but the spirit never refers to either as between one individual and another, but it is generally called "the spirit of God," and "the spirit of Christ," or "the spirit in Christ." "The spirit in Christ (which was virtually the Father in him) is constantly represented as qualifying him for his Christly work; indeed he was made the Christ by being *anointed* of that spirit. Now, this destroys the Trinitarian position, which is, that it was *God* THE SON who was incarnate in Jesus, the "*second* person" of their supposed trinity. But where can we find a single testimony for that? It is the spirit that is ever spoken of as being in Christ; not a person *in* a person, but the personal power of the Father resting upon him. Hence it is as much the "spirit of Christ" as it is the "spirit of God," and in virtue of his possession of it "without measure," Christ becomes *God* to us, though he is not "God" to the Father.

If we run through the Scriptures, and notice the many references to "spirit" there, we shall find this idea underlying them all, viz., *the POWER of God*, exerted in every variety of physical form. From the first instance of its "brooding" action upon the primeval chaos, down to the last case of it giving an impulse of thought in the holy men of old who were inspired, the uniform and consistent representation is, divine power operating, sometimes with, sometimes without, human instrumentality. When, *e.g.*, it energises the nerve-centres in Samson's body, causing them to pour down a supernatural strength upon his muscles, how absurd it is to imagine a

"third person" in a "trinity" coming into him. It is intelligible when it reads, "and the spirit of the Lord came upon Samson," and he rent the lion, or bore off the gates of Gaza, or snapped his hempen bonds. It is true "the spirit" is sometimes said to do things without mention being made of the Lord, whose spirit it is, but so we sometimes speak of our "hands" being engaged in a thing without reference to ourselves, whose hands they are. For example, "whatsoever *thy hand* findeth to do, do it with thy might," but no one argues from this a distinct personality for the *hand*.

It will not be necessary to say much respecting the PERFECTION of the being denominated "God." When we have defined or explained the word, we think the teachings of the Scriptures will crystallize around it as fast as the memory can gather the elements of that teaching together.

It was John Stuart Mill, in his posthumous Essays, who said he thought that if it could be proved that God was "all good," it could not be maintained that he was "all-powerful;" or if it could be shewn that he was omnipotent, this must be at the cost of his benevolence. And poor Mill wondered (he said) how it was some one had not revived in these days, the Manichean theory of the universe (the dual principle theory), there being, in his judgment, much that might be written in its defence.

It seems to us that Mill, with many others, failed to get a true idea of the "perfect," as applied either to "power" or "goodness." And the reason was, that he had not sought to enlighten himself from the Scriptures. It would seem absurd for us to contend that man has in himself the *idea* (the true idea, we mean) of what is absolutely perfect, apart from a revelation of it. When once it is revealed, he is capable of consenting to it; but not till then can he be said to possess the idea of it. Mill's mistake—as it is the general blunder—was to look merely upon the present facts of the world, overlooking that the world is now in a state of *process*; that the gold is at present in the fire; and ignoring the *end* of things which the Scriptures alone reveal. Naturally enough, he would conclude that the Author of all things was limited somewhere, in looking at things as they are, just as he might deem an artist imperfect if his picture should be scrutinised before it was finished.

The perfection of God, as disclosed in the bible, is seen in the wondrously glorious *end* to which he is conducting our world, and the marvellous *means* by which this end is being reached. We have only as yet thrown out some hints of what this end is to be,

and have said nothing about the means which are being employed, consequently, the reader is hardly yet prepared for a full apprehension of the subject in this particular. So that at the present moment our proposition is more of a prediction than anything; a prediction that when we have shown more of God's finished plan, there will remain no shadow of doubt as to the divine perfection, the present chaotic condition of the world notwithstanding.

Passing from this to the last particulars of our "finding" concerning God, we observe that the Scriptures represent him as being CREATOR, RULER, and END of all things.

But what is creation? and what is it for God to be the Creator? Now a false and foolish philosophy usually represents the Scriptures as teaching that the earth and the universe *were created out of NOTHING*: that everything sprang into being by the simple fiat of the Creator. Mr. Bradlaugh, in his "Plea for Atheism," very justly and truly declares this to be irrational. Says he—"If you speak to the Atheist of God as Creator, he answers that the conception of creation is impossible. We are utterly unable to construe it in thought as possible, that the complement of existence has been either increased or diminished, much less can we conceive an absolute origination of substance. We cannot conceive either, on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or on the other, something becoming nothing. The Theist cannot regard the universe as created out of nothing, because Deity is, according to him, necessarily eternal and infinite. His existence being eternal and infinite, precludes the possibility of the conception of vacuum to be filled by the universe if created. No one can even think of any point of existence in extent or duration and say, here is the point of separation between the Creator and the created. Indeed, it is not possible for the Theist to imagine a beginning to the universe. It is not possible to conceive either an absolute commencement, or an absolute termination of existence; that is, it is impossible to conceive beginning before which you have a period when the universe has yet to be; or to conceive an end, after which the universe, having been, no longer exists. It is impossible in thought to originate or annihilate the universe."

Understanding Mr. Bradlaugh to mean by the word "universe" the totality of existence, we say again these remarks are just and true.

But the teaching which he assails is not the teaching of the Scriptures, but only the false theology of the philosophers.

Let us see what this Scriptural teaching is. Adopting the safe

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principle of taking the longest and most explicit statements of the book to help us in understanding the briefer ones, we read (Heb. xi. 3), "Through faith we understand that the worlds (viewed as time-worlds or ages) were framed by the word (decree) of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made of (*out of*) things which do appear" (or that which appears). Now, instead of these words conveying the idea that all things were made out of nothing, they teach just the contrary. Their evident intention is to connect the origin of all things with something that is invisible, hence "faith" is called for here, which is "the evidence (or conviction) of THINGS NOT SEEN." This verse combats the notion that the worlds were fashioned from pre-existent *matter*. What is it that "now appears?" That mode of substance which we call matter. Then, in saying that the visible worlds were not made out of anything that is seen, the verse implies that they were made out of something that is not seen. Before enquiring what is that something, let us observe that the word "*create*," neither in English nor Hebrew, means to originate *from nothing*. It does not mean, as a word, to originate *new essence* or substance; the most that can be claimed for it is, that it means the production of a new *MODE* of substance. A true philosophy knows well, as Spinoza taught, and as Mr. Bradlaugh echoes, that there can be but one essence or substance. But the *mode* may differ. As we have explained before, the bible tells us of three *modes* of substance.—1. God, who is "spirit." 2. Angels, who are "spiritual bodies." 3. Man and the lower animals, who, with varying organizations, are animated dust. In addition to these, science, chiefly, reveals to us inorganic substance. Now, the word "*create*," at the most, means to originate a *mode* or modes of substance from that one essence which is common to all existence.

We can now put the question, what is that unseen something which Hebrews xi. 3 tells us is the origin of things which are seen? Read and ponder the following sentences:—

"God that made the world, and all things therein . . . giveth to all life and breath and all things . . . For IN HIM *we live*, and move, and HAVE OUR BEING" (Acts xvii. 24, 25, 28).

"*God is SPIRIT*" (John iv. 24).

"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto, *whom no man HATH SEEN, NOR CAN SEE*" (1 Tim. vi. 16).

What is the conclusion of this teaching? If, as part of the creation,

man has his being in God; if God is spirit, and if God cannot be seen by mortal eye, then is it not probable that instead of from out of *nothing*, from out of *the substance of* THE SPIRIT OF GOD, creation came? But we need not rest in probabilities. In Psalm civ, 30, the exact process of creation is described. "Thou sendest forth thy spirit; THEY ARE CREATED; and thou renewest the face of the earth." Again, Job declares that God "by his spirit hath garnished the heavens" (xxvi. 13). Again, in Psalm xxxiii. 6, we read, "By the WORD of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth." That "the word of the Lord" is but another name for the spirit of God, can be abundantly proved, and "the breath of his mouth" is a poetic parallelism.

Against the testimony, then, that the worlds have been created from an unseen somewhat; that God is this unseen; that it is his spirit that has been both the seed and the matrix of all things; that the human creature has his being in God; that on the procession of God's spirit creation becomes a fact, what is the common philosophy worth? To listen to it is to confound ourselves and contradict the book. To understand the creation of something out of nothing is impossible; to believe it, requires reason to vacate her seat. Yet this is the philosophical shadow Atheism has been so long fighting, and which makes Mr. Bradlaugh's criticism so trenchant. He says the creation or increase of substance is inconceivable. Right, we reply; but the idea of creation is not increase of substance but the origination of a new *mode* of substance.

The testimony being that all things have been created from or by the spirit of God, is there anything in the reason of the thing which should cause us to hesitate in accepting it? The only thing that Mr. Bradlaugh can find to say against this view in his "Plea for Atheism," is that it is "*Pantheism*." But whether it is Pantheism (which means God in all things) or not, to call it by this or any other name is not to reply to it or to disprove it. In calling this view "Pantheism," the critic is simply saying nothing: the question still remains, is it true? If Mr. Bradlaugh has only undertaken to reply to the orthodox "Theism," with its foolish philosophy, he leaves his chief antagonist waiting for him in the field.

But, is this view of the creation of all things from the spirit of God, Pantheistic? Decidedly not; for Pantheism, with all its talk about "the soul" (as in Emerson and in Parker), is materialism, making no modal distinction between God and the earth we tread upon, whereas our view makes as true a *modal* distinction between

God and the universe as exists between a man and his garments. *Substantially* a man is the same as his garments; *modally* he is very different from them, but Pantheism recognises no distinction at all between God and the air, earth, and sky. Do not say that it comes to the same thing, if we admit that God is "*substantially*" one with the universe; does it come to the same thing? Is a man, then, not different from, better than, his garments?

But it will be asked, how does this view affect God's *infinitude*? for to say that God as to mode is diverse from the universe, is to represent him as less than "infinite," for we have, then, God *and* the universe.

On this point, as on all others, our absurd philosophy has to be corrected by the Scriptures. What is the popular notion of the infinite? That which is boundless, endless, absolutely without limits. What an absurd, ludicrous, unscriptural view of God we get, as we mount the back of this philosophy and look abroad. God is a formless, intangible and cold mist, which hides all our horizon, whose essence extends everywhere and evermore without end. What children we have been to accept such trash as this for theology, giving the advantage to every unlettered Atheist to knock out our brains with a few simple criticisms. What fools we have been to let the asinine teaching of the pulpit and the schools stand between us and the clear testimony of God. What is that testimony? That GOD DWELLS IN HEAVEN, and that his spirit is co-terminous WITH CREATION, while infinite space is never once hinted at in the Scriptures in any way; nothing being contemplated or referred to but the creator in heaven, and the *created* universe, which is the sphere of his power. Every objection against our view of creation, arising from the supposed limitation of God, vanishes when we put away the childish things we have read about "the infinite," and come home to our bible, which shews us that *modally*, "God is in heaven," as truly as "man is on earth," and that it is impossible to flee from God's spirit by ascending to heaven, descending to sheol, or taking wing to the uttermost parts of the sea. We cannot too often point out the folly of speculation that has filled the air with darkness; prominently, speculation about "space" and "time." Verily men delight in fancies, and prefer shadow to substance. We are taught that God being everywhere there can be no room anywhere for a creation. Our answer is, our notion of "everywhere" is one obtained from the bible, not from a child's brain; *our* "everywhere" is wherever God has "sent forth his

spirit" in the creation of various modes of being. God is not the universe, though the universe is of him, and (essentially) "IN" him.

We shall leave the subject of the RULERSHIP of God to another page, and proceed to the observation that God is the END of all things; in other words, that all things exist for his pleasure and glory.

Creation is nothing but the unfolding of the divine mind; the expatiation of the divine activity; the manifestation of the divine perfection. The infinite Artist finds delight in the created products of his power, chiefly the moral products, for "he delighteth not (comparatively) in the strength of the horse, nor taketh pleasure in the legs of a man; the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him; in those that hope in his mercy" (Psalm cxlvii. 10, 11). Nothing other than his own pleasure seems to have been the motive of creation. Even as the true artist works neither for guineas nor for fame, but because he must needs express the ideals that are before him, so the Creator is represented as working for the luxury of labour, for the pleasure and the glory that are the concomitants of effort. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, AND FOR THY PLEASURE *they are and were created*" (Rev. iv. 11).

The joy and gratification of God, if we may be allowed the latter term, at the result of his creative efforts, may be distinctly gathered by the often repeated expression in Genesis, "and God saw that it was good," with the more emphatic pronouncement at the end of the creative work.

As the succeeding pages will shew, it is very important that this fact should be well noted and remembered. Let it be well remembered that the *material* things, even, that God created, were so created with a distinct purpose of yielding the Creator pleasure. Let it be well remembered that when this world was conceived, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" that no shrub, or plant, or tree was caused to bloom without the quickening of divine delight; that the "glance and poise" of the silver fish, and the soft song of the lilting bird, and even the very wind that touched the tops of the trees, and all things in the material cosmos, were pronounced "very good" by the Creator. Instead of matter being essentially evil, it was "very good," and became the basis of higher moral things, which were more distinctly "after the image" of Him who made them.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE HOME OF THE HUMAN RACE.

THAT which, in the Scriptures, arrests and impresses the mind, after the discovery of the glory of God, is the preparation that is being made of a vast theatre, on the stage of which an æonial drama is to be played, the principal character in which is THE HUMAN BEING, in whose fortune and fate the drama finds its climax.

Before asking the reader to consider the actor, however, he is invited to contemplate *the stage*. For, in this instance, it will be of the first importance for us to shew, and for the reader to observe, that while it is a stage, it is a great deal more than this—that it is *the permanent place* where man is to realise eternal blessedness when the mortal drama is done.

Theology has taught us that man belongs as much to a *celestial* world as he does to this terrestrial one; that on earth he is proving whether he is by-and-by to occupy a position in the higher or lower regions of this world celestial, and that when he has done with his body, what theologians, with shameful ignorance, call the “soul,” will ascend or descend thereto.

In reply to all this, we make the round rejoinder, that the bible never speaks of man, or the fate of man, in connection with any other place than THE EARTH; it knows nothing whatever of a celestial world as the final home of the human being; but, from the first pages of Genesis to the last of the Apocalypse, man and his fortunes are bound up with this earth, and with no other place.

We learn from the Scriptures that all that God is going to do for man he purposes to do *in the EARTH*, having “created it,” as he says in Isaiah xlv. 18, “not in vain,” but having formed it to be inhabited, and having “established it.” It is not the earth that is the object of God’s displeasure, but SIN *in the earth*; and it is not the world, but the *fashion* of the world, that is to pass away (1 Cor. vii. 31). When God created all things, he pronounced the works of his hands “very good;” and though afterwards the earth was cursed, the curse will, at a certain time be removed, as we may read in Rev. xxii. 3, and in Rom. viii. 19-23.

Both our religious poetry and theology have sprung from an



ancient philosophy which married with "Christianity" in olden days; and tradition has made strong and venerable, and well-nigh constitutional, in our hearts, beliefs and ideas of "another world" absolutely foreign to the Scriptures. What we have to do is to get back to a plain interpretation of the book.

And one of the most visible things is this, that God is filled with delight by the cosmical work of his hands. Read what it says, Rev. iv. 11, and connect it with Gen. i. 31, and we shall see that *this EARTH* is a creation in which God finds delight. That is one point which we shall find abundantly illustrated through the book. Then we learn that God is glorified by *his manifestation in these his works*. This subject supplies the matter and the inspiration of some of the loftiest strains of Hebrew poetry. Read Psa. xix. and cxlviii., Neh. ix. 6. The highest idealizations of God's glory are obtained by references to these works; infinite power is seen to revel in them, and the grandeur of Deity is thereby expressed.

And when we look upon the work of God, what do we see and feel? Notwithstanding the curse upon the earth, traces of paradisiac beauty linger in many places therein, where the Creator's handiwork is seen. The distinction which Cowper draws when he says,

"God made the country; man made the town,"

is very visible. Who has not felt the changed sense of things when, getting away for awhile from the black disfigurements of men, whose selfishness has depicted its own hideousness in their works, we stand or wander among the glorious works of God, where the divine ideas find expression in the forms and hues of nature's varied scene? Everything around us then regales us with its fresh loveliness, or leaves us with a tender pensiveness by its fading charm. We feel how true it is that

"Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile,"

and we feel how it only needs the promised removal of the curse for earth to stand forth in the eternal splendour of heaven itself. How well we can understand the statement by the mouth of Isaiah, that "God has not created the earth in vain," but "has made it to be inhabited;" and that therein he will reveal the salvation of Israel, "*world without end.*" What better theatre than this could there be for the display of the divine benevolence toward mankind, or what brighter mirror for reflecting the divine glory?

Take away selfishness, sin, and death; the change and decay

that form the fitting conditions of a sinning race, and the incidental evils that grow out of man's wrongdoing, and we want no paradise but this. When the "creature" emerges into the glorious liberty of the children of God, being then no more subject to vanity (Rom. viii. 20), then all God's works will praise him and his saints will bless him. The "very good" of the first creation will be more than realised when he that said "Behold, I make all things new," shall have completed his work in the heavens and the earth.

Side by side with these Scriptural ideas, the speculative vagaries of those who are rejoicing in the prospect of the better land, are weaker than water and thinner than moonshine. Without any basis in Scripture, they are equally foundationless in solid reason. Shelley's "angels sitting on a cloud singing the psalms of David," is a fancy only slightly in excess of the ludicrous ideas of the future blessedness of saints common among the people. No intelligible ideas can be discerned in the misty regions where such ghostly imaginations flit and hover. When we try to grasp them they elude us and vanish. Thin air is solid and palpable compared with such disembodied things.

It is impossible to get up any interest in "the spirit world." It is less inviting than a barren heath filled with a cold mist on a November day. Even the graves of earth, which contain the dust of our loved ones, affect us more really and deeply than the "many mansions" in "glory" to which, we are told, their "spirits" have fled. The place

"Where Claribel low lieth,"

where

"The breezes pause and die,"

has often a touching power over our hearts, subduing them to thoughts that are near to tears, but this cannot be said of the

"Happy land,  
Bright, bright as day."

This is a blank—a vacuum—formless as space, and impalpable as a shadow. But how different when we turn to what the Scriptures reveal! Heaven and earth with their thousand glories swim into our enchanted vision. Every sense is fed and filled with the permanent delight of which they are the storehouse. The eye is gratified with beauty, music ravishes the ear, and a flowery perfume hangs upon the air. Immortal beings, with imperishable and

glowing forms, constitute the ruling powers of the future earth. The world becomes the sphere of their unwearied activity; their lives are full of zest and zeal; they excel in strength and do the bidding of God, hearkening diligently to the voice of his word. The populations of all countries learn righteousness and become blessed beneath their rule.

Right on, from the beginning of revelation to the end, we are always *on the earth* as far as humanity is concerned, whether living, dead, or raised from the dead. All probation and destiny; all retribution and reward; all divine government and human devotion; all creation, redemption, and restitution have this earth for their basis and sphere, and the eternal æon sets in, having seen the last cloud and shadow of evil fade away.

But it will be said, "Surely the bible has much to say to us about heaven and hell."

Yes, we reply; but nowhere does it teach us anything like what is popularly understood by these words. Heaven, in the highest reference of the word, is the home of God; but where is there a single testimony affirming that it is our home also? Heaven may, and certainly will, be brought near to men at a certain stage of this planet's history; but men will never be carried away to heaven, either at death or at any other time. Of David we have the apostle Peter's express statement in *Acts ii. 34*—"For David is NOT ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN." The argument is this: a certain prophecy cannot be referred to David, but must belong to Christ, and it is based on the fact that Christ *has* ascended into heaven, but that David *has not*. This is conclusive, at least as far as David is concerned. To some it will carry conclusiveness further.

But it will be said, "It is admitted Christ has gone to heaven; and does it not say in *John xiv. 2*, 'I go to prepare a place for you?'" Yes, but the testimony is that when the place is prepared, he "*will come again*" and receive (when he has come again to earth) the faithful unto himself. A hundred texts connect (as we shall yet see) this *coming again* and this *receiving unto himself* with the restored and renewed earth, while there is not a single verse showing that the "prepared place" is in heaven, or that Christ receives or takes his people there.

There is a verse in the epistle to the *Hebrews* (vi. 20), where Christ's entrance "within the veil" is spoken of as that of a "*forerunner*." Taking this word alone, it might seem to favour the thought of heaven-going, cherished by so many. But the sentence in which

the word occurs is compounded of several metaphors, and it would be unfair so to press one of them as to exclude the rest. The expression "within the veil" takes us to the ninth chapter and 24th verse, where Christ enters heaven "for us," as the high priest entered the most holy for the congregation. Now, if this statement holds, then we know that Christ's people do *not* invade that inner sanctuary, but wait outside till the high priest returns to bless them. And even when Christ is called a "forerunner," still he is said to have entered "for us," and though this expression does not necessarily imply our exclusion, it shows that the forerunner has a *representative* character, which is quite sufficient to make the one figure agree with the other.

It is not only true that man's destiny is bound up with the future of the earth, but it is also true that the history of the earth ever has been, and is to be, bound up with the destiny of man. While it is a fact that all things exist for the glory of God and the pleasure of the Creator, who, as a divine Artist, rejoices in the work of his hand, it is a subordinate fact that the end of all the creation is the moral service that may be rendered to man, the highest born of all things. It is no conceit, but the most harmonious reason to say this. The mineral earth exists for the vegetable world above it; the vegetable world for the animal; the animal for the moral. All creation has been considered in reference to its end. The moral history or drama that was to be produced upon the stage of earth was provided for in all the primary creature arrangements. Through the great geologic periods which science has disclosed to us, prior to all human life, the foundations were being laid, and all necessary preparations made, for the scheme of human existence with its moral history and issues.

This grows out of the Scripture teaching that the earth has been *cursed* FOR MAN'S SAKE (Genesis iii. 17; viii. 21); that the creature has been made subject to vanity, NOT WILLINGLY, but for a certain reason of him who hath subjected it in hope (Rom. viii. 20); and the further teaching, that "the creature itself" shall be redeemed from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (verse 21). Indeed, the Scriptures are abundant which shew that, ultimately, in and upon the earth "there shall be no more curse" (Rev. xxii. 3)—when death and the grave, sin, evil, and corruption, in every imaginable aspect of these things, will be no more.

We can understand all this. It is perfectly intelligible that creation should be framed and fitted to the case of probationary

and sinning and mortal man. It was no injustice to the "creature" to make it "subject to vanity." To permit the arrangement by which a tree should suddenly be blasted by a stroke of lightning was not unwise, if to the heart of man this could be made the symbol of the flashing forth of the divine anger against sin. Or when the panting animal sank down in pain to die, and its eyes glazed in their strange stony fixedness, what emphasis could be better than this to the words, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Such words as these, indeed, could have had no meaning to Adam if he had not been acquainted with the fact of death; they could not have carried any idea to his mind without him having witnessed death in some form; so we come upon the fact that the creature was made subject to vanity, but not willingly. There was a great moral purpose in the arrangement. In the "reason" of God the "vanity was connected with a 'hope,'" that hope being a redemption from the bondage of corruption, in which the "creature" itself will share with the "children" of God.

It is not strange that redemption should reach down to the very roots of things. It is not strange that where sin abounds grace should much more abound. A redeemed creation is nothing but the unfolding of the flower of divine perfectness—the manifestation of the divine glory; and we cannot believe that any part of that manifestation will remain rudimentary and incomplete. The stainless garb of God will yet appear, when it is fully adjusted, perfectly fitted to the loveliness of his form. The human beings yet to be made immortal in their righteousness will shine like diamonds in creation's crown, while the very "fields" in which their "holy feet" shall walk will become their suitable golden setting. It is not "materialism" to say that matter shall yet shew more vividly than at present the glory of God. Materialism recognises nothing in matter but mechanical force; a true interpretation recognises in redeemed "matter" that which is but the visible robe of the Spirit, whose pulses beat in its "laws," and whose moral beauty shines through its physical transparency. Judge not of the earth as it now is, but judge, from the high teachings of revelation, as to what it shall be. Judge of it when the meek shall inherit it, and the knowledge of God shall cover it; when its "ages" shall be endless, and its life perennial; when its fruit shall not wither, nor faded shall be its blooms; when no foul relic shall remain of its sin, and the night of evil has turned to

God's sabbath of peaceful light; when scented herbage, bright with studding flowers, shall cover and hide its mortal graves, and the very dust shall murmur a soft, low undertone to life's perpetual hymn; when its sorrows shall all be hushed, and its last tears wiped away, and it rests in the affection and fellowship of Him whose Tabernacle is in its midst—ah, judge of it thus and then, and no more will it be possible to mention materialism, or, if ignorance should still mention it, what does it matter? The substantial promises of God are better than any "castle in the air" built by speculating brains. The only time the preaching of the gospel had any reference to the "skies," or to "heaven above," was when Abraham was promised "a seed" as numerous as "the stars" which burned above him. What "seed" is referred to, and what it is to inherit, we are at no loss to know; among other things, *the LAND* redeemed from all "curse," and participating in the glorious liberty of God's holy family, shall form part of the unsearchable riches of the collective Christ.

We are not concerned here with drawing out the lines of harmony between Genesis (as far as it recites the poem of creation) and the findings of modern science. There is more than one absurdity in these attempts, and believers have something better to do than to attempt annual "reconciliations" immediately after each British Association has sat. There are several things which we should require to know, which we do not know, and which it is not likely we soon shall know, before we attempted any comparison, say of Genesis and geology. First, we do not know what report geology has finally to give. No one knows better than the geologist himself that the earth has hardly been "tasted" by his science yet; that no one can believe, as Mr. Darwin said, "that its record is anything like perfect." We do not accept its pronouncement with very much confidence, therefore, until it can bring us its "character" for stability, a thing which it has not done yet. Then, again, it is impossible to dogmatise whether the six days' creation recorded in Genesis, refer to the round world in its earliest birth or to an arranged section of it, where the human drama began. Much depends on this. But what we wish chiefly to say is, that, under examination, the account of creation which precedes the human history appears not to be a scientific statement at all, but a dramatic recital, in which the creating Elohim take counsel together, and utter themselves in divine fiat, and make the great clock of Time strike the diurnal periods as the grand arrangement

proceeds, in all which there is, probably, no attempt at physical exposition, but an effort to set forth, in a way that would be adapted to every stage of knowledge and all the æons of time, the divine beginnings of all things that are in air, earth, or sky. Seeing this, such a thing as the recent encounter of Mr. Gladstone and Professor Huxley, as to the order of creation, ought not to arise; for that may be dramatically perfect which is historically or scientifically inexact. We do not say that any such inexactness exists; but we do say this, and we are quite sure on the point, that Genesis opens with the language of simplest poetry, dramatically setting forth the creative scene which each day, from first to sixth, loops up, or gathers together, and presents for a whole world's wonder.

When it is all done; when the theatre is built, the stage arranged, and the hour, long prepared for, has arrived—MAN, the chief denizen of the earth, with dominion given to him over all, and whose history and final fate are ever seen connected with this same earth, stands upon the scene.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE NATURE OF MAN.

WE deny, in the name of the Scriptures, that man has or is an *immortal* soul : a doctrine which nearly every pulpit teaches, which multitudes profess to believe, and which lies at the bottom of *all* our popular religious ideas. As long as we hold to this falsehood we shall never come to understand the bible, nor apprehend the salvation of God, nor come into that perfect clearness of faith with regard to divine things which is as the light of day to those who walk therein. Start with the supposition that man is naturally immortal, that in virtue of his being of the human species, he must needs live for ever and never cease to be, and we lay the foundation of a monstrous growth of human opinion about God's purposes and actions which will utterly subvert and destroy the truth which God has revealed in the bible for our salvation.

This we must take pains to make quite clear; so very much depends, we affirm, upon it.

Notwithstanding this is a biblical enquiry, we must notice briefly the chief things which *reason* can be supposed to find in support of man's natural and inherent immortality, but these we shall defer till the biblical evidence is taken. This evidence is of very various character. We have the account of man's creation, and comparisons drawn between him and other living things. We have the constituent elements of his being spoken of in a precise and explicit manner. We have scriptural reflections upon human life, after the style of the moralist, and we have also a number of statements made concerning man in *death*. From these various sources, we think we ought to be able to learn whether man is that essentially and naturally immortal being which popular teaching and belief affirm him to be, or whether he is a mortal, death-stricken, perishing creature, destined to pass away and be no more, unless he become grafted into a certain One who has become "the Resurrection and the Life."

Let no one suppose that we are disbelievers of immortality, and of immortality for men. We believe that it is the gift of God to all those who fulfil the terms of future existence, viz., belief of, and



obedience to, the gospel—that it is a physical “change” from a “natural body” to a “spiritual body,” which takes place after resurrection and judgment—that it will only be entered upon by such as “SEEK *for it* by patient continuance in well-doing” (Rom. ii. 7).

Over against this very rational view, which we shall shew is sustained by the testimony of the book, what is the popular dogma, when closely examined? Why, that every member of the genus *homo*, whether polished and refined in the ages and areas of civilization, or brute-like and savage as pre-historic man; every Australian aborigine, or degraded Hottentot; every beastly cannibal, and naked denizen of cave and wood; every human animal ever propagated, that being born, has shivered once, and died; that all and every one of these—the vast majority of whom have lived and died in past centuries of heathen darkness, and died, too, as mere *infants*—that all these were born possessing “the image of God;” possessing a particle of the divine nature, and that they were all incorruptible, immortal beings, destined to live (somewhere) as long as God himself will live.

ON THAT ONE STONE (*that man being, as man, IMMORTAL, something must be done with him AFTER DEATH*) THE WHOLE FABRIC OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF RESTS.

Under examination, we say, we find that this notion of immortality *is necessary* to the teachings of religion, popular in our day, which will cause men to hesitate, even from the enquiry, whether this dogma is taught in the Scriptures. Of course, there is repeatedly the farce of an enquiry, in which the few usually quoted and disconnected texts are again required to serve in argument, while the mass of the adverse testimony is generally ignored.

But facts are facts, and any one can test it for himself, whether on this *fundamental* matter of human immortality there has been anything like searching analysis of the whole body of Scripture evidence, even on the part of professional interpreters. Two or three things must be borne in mind: one is, that this doctrine is a very ancient one, taking its rise when exact interpretation was hardly dreamed of; and another is, that being the foundation-stone of the popular theology, most minds shrink from calling that in question which might possibly lead to the necessity of entirely reconstructing the fabric of faith. Even in regard to physical science, nothing can get a hearing that seems to call in question what is regarded as fundamental to the received ideas of physicists;

it is not, therefore, strange that this should be true in other regions of enquiry.

Let us now deal (and let us do it candidly) with the bible evidence.

We are first confronted with the statement that GOD ONLY HATH IMMORTALITY (1 Tim. vi. 16).

The usual criticism of this quotation is, that it means immortality "underived," "who only hath immortality" *in himself*. We quietly answer, it does not say so, and there is nothing to warrant the inference. If it be pointed out that Jesus Christ and the angels are immortal, it is admitted; but it is not always necessary to distinguish between these and God (they are often spoken of as God), and the contrast in the mind of Paul in this passage is evidently between what is divine and what is human, and if every human were immortal, this 16th verse could certainly have never been written.

We are next told that immortality can only be enjoyed by those *who SEEK for it* (Romans ii. 7). It is to be *sought for* along a certain path which must be patiently followed. If we are to seek for it, we certainly do not already possess it.

Moreover, for us to "partake of the *divine NATURE*" is a thing of "promise" (2 Peter i. 4). Now, if it is a matter of "promise," it is not yet enjoyed; it is a matter of "hope," and concerning this saving "hope," let the reader turn to Paul's comment on it, as given in Romans viii. 24, 25.

Let us now glance at what is said of man in the account of his *creation*. Turning to Genesis i., in the account of man's creation, we read that "the Lord God formed man *dust of the ground*." This was the *basis* of his being, as is evident also from ch. iii. 19, where it is written, "for *dust thou art*, and unto dust shalt thou return"; as also from Job's testimony (iv. 19), that man's "*foundation is in the dust*." The Psalmist also says (ciii. 14), "he remembereth that *we are dust*"; and the book of Ecclesiastes says (iii. 19-20), concerning ALL animal existence, "all are *of the dust*, and all turn to dust again." And Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says (1 Ep. xv. 47), "the first man *is of the earth—earthly*." This shews us, we think, that the *basis* or "foundation" of man is material. But the popular teaching is that *man* is principally and fundamentally *a spirit*, which merely tabernacles in a body, of which he can be divested without damage to the *man* himself; that, indeed, the body is an encumbrance, which, especially in old

age, prevents the real man from discovering his full powers, whereas the bible speaks of man as having his *origin* and *foundation* in the dust. It is true that the "foundation" is not the house, but it is that which is *necessary* to a house, so that without such foundation the house itself could not exist; but the popular view requires that man should exist better without his foundation than with it.

The narrative goes on to say, after God had formed man "dust of the ground," that he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Let us pause again, for here is a further step taken in the process of creation. When the narrative says, God "breathed into man's nostrils the *breath of life*, and man became a living soul," we understand that a divine principle of life was imparted to him, which, as it existed before his organism was formed, so it may exist after his organism is destroyed: so much is scripturally true; but we must remember this breath of life was given to *all animals* as well as to man, as we may see by reference to Genesis (ix. 21), so that if the "divine principle" we speak of amounts to an independent spiritual *personality* in *man* it must amount to the same in the *beasts* of the earth.

It is perfectly true that the spirit which existed before man's organism was formed, exists after it is dissolved, but only *as it existed* before. It was simply an animating principle before, and it is no more afterwards. We are quite right in believing that something passes away at death, but wrong in supposing that this something is an individual and personal *man*. It is, according to the Scriptures, the spirit of God which passes away, which is "a divine principle of life," and which man possesses *in common* with every living thing. But we must say nothing without proof, so let us call attention to a text or two. Take Job xxxiv. 14— "If he set his heart upon man, and *gather unto himself* his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again to dust." It is not the *man* in his personality who has departed; he is turned again to dust, and God has "gathered to himself" the animating spirit. So again, Psalm civ. 29-30, "Thou *sendest forth* thy spirit; they are created . . . thou *takest away* their breath; they die and return unto their dust." So also, Eccles. xii. 7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." These passages describe, in the language of precision, all that is else-

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where less exactly stated, when, for instance, reference is made to man's "body, soul, and spirit."

As long as the spirit of God is connected with the human organism, it is *personal* in him whom it animates, which explains why Stephen should cry "*my spirit*"—"Lord Jesus, receive *my spirit*." While his organism possessed it, it was personal *to himself*, but these very words in which we have admitted it, themselves shew that the spirit alone did not constitute a personal Stephen; it was personal *to Stephen*. The martyr did not cry, "Lord Jesus, *receive me*," but "*receive my spirit*"; it was the acute cry of faith and pain, and harmonises exactly with what is more quietly recorded of man's decease elsewhere.

In a precise way of using the word, "spirit" means the animating principle; but we admit, the word, according to a common rule of language, is sometimes made to pass over to *the thing animated*, as in the case of Paul's remark when at Athens, and in other cases.

The narrative goes on to say that the result of this inbreathing of spirit was, that "man BECAME a *living soul*." Up to this moment he had been merely a *dead soul*, or rather a soul that had never lived. Now, he is (not an *immortal soul*, but) a *living soul*.

Many persons, in reading the word "soul," while reading a Scriptural word, have evidently no idea of its Scriptural meaning. The *term* is there; the question is, what is meant by the term? In our own English bible, as well as in the original Hebrew and Greek, the word "soul" nowhere means *independent, personal existence*—that can exist apart from the body. The primary meaning of the word "soul" is simply *breathing life*—animal life—though it is sometimes used to express certain *phases* of life, such as thought, disposition, affection, and so on.

The word "soul" is employed in very many connections. We read of the *living soul* (Genesis ii. 7), a *dead soul* (Numbers xix. 11-13, translated *dead body*), the *hungry soul* (Proverbs vi. 30), *smitten souls* (Joshua xi. 11), the *souls of beasts*, &c. (Numbers xxxi. 28), *souls redeemed from the grave* (Psalm xxx. 3), and in many other places the "soul," whether of man or beast, is considered simply as a *BREATHING thing*, which dies when it breathes no more.

It is usual to hear quoted in proof of the soul's (supposed) separate and indestructible life the words of Jesus: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Does not

this plainly teach, it is asked, that the life of the soul is a distinct thing from the life of the body?

We answer that the passage says nothing about "the life of the soul:" such a phrase is without meaning; we might as well talk about "the life of *the life!*" What Christ says is simply that we are not to fear them who are only able to kill the organised life of the body, but are not able to extirpate life itself—*i.e.*, in the root of it; but we are rather to fear him who can extirpate us root and branch, to the very base of our being. It is quite true that in this verse the soul (or life) is *considered* as apart from the body, but a thing may be true in *thought* or conception which is not precisely true in scientific *fact*. If Christ had wished to say that whatever might happen to the disciple's life in the body, nothing that man might do could harm it *ultimately* and *hopelessly*, it would have been quite proper to use the words as he did, without conveying the idea that life would *naturally* survive all it might be exposed to. The disciples' souls or lives may be *considered* as secure, because of the divine intention to bring them back from the grave. In this sense Christ said, "He that *loseth* his life (soul) for my sake and the gospel's, the same *shall save it.*" As a matter of *fact*, we cannot *lose* our lives and *save* them at the same time; but as a matter of thought, it is not impossible, for thought penetrates to the hidden mystery of the divine purpose which the fact contains.

It is sometimes said that it is not written concerning the lower animals that God "breathed into their nostrils the breath of life," which remark is quite true. Man's higher organization and greater dignity may explain the attention which is paid to the description of the creation of man. Of man alone it is said that he was made in "the image of God," which is an expression which refers to man's pre-eminent dignity, just as "the form of God" refers to Christ's dignity and glory (Phillip. ii. 6). But while it is not said that God "breathed" into the lower animals the breath of life, it *is* said (which is of more importance) that ALL FLESH *possessed* in their nostrils this breath of life (Genesis vii. 21).

There is no evidence, then, in the narrative of man's creation, to warrant the belief that he is by nature an immortal or deathless being. Made free from any *disorder* that would have caused his death, he was placed in connection with a "tree of life" which, whether by the natural virtue it possessed or not, kept him during his obedience in perennial health. Otherwise he had the same constitutional foundation and standing (though vastly superior in

organization) with the living forms around him. Then when he sinned and forfeited all, he was *excluded* from the tree of life, the reason being given in these words, which shew how false the notion of man's natural immortality is, "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat AND LIVE FOR EVER" (Genesis iii. 22). Adam came, then, under the law of death, which had hitherto been restrained by the arrangement of the tree of life, and ultimately returned to the dust.

And if we turn to consider the way man, and the life of man, is referred to in the Scripture, we shall be struck with the utter difference and contrast of its exclamations and utterances with those, say, of the modern pulpit on the subject. What is more common than to hear the pulpit expressing itself in such words as these—"Oh, the value of the human soul!" It scarcely ever speaks of the "soul" of man without describing it as "precious," "never-dying," "immortal," and destined "to live for ever;" yet where can we find in the Scriptures a single parallel to such expressions? It is true the New Testament asks, "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" but this only proves that life is very valuable to the man possessing it, and argues nothing as to its intrinsic value, or its value as estimated by God. God's estimate of human life is very different from man's own estimate of it. According to the Scriptures, "man's foundation is in the dust," and "he is crushed before the moth" (Job. iv. 19). "If God set his heart upon man; if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust" (Job xxxiv. 14, 15). The Psalmist says, "For he (God) remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away and cometh not again" (Psalm lxxviii. 39). "Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away" (Psalm cxliv. 4). Isaiah cries, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (ii. 22). He describes the Assyrians as being "consumed, both soul and body" (x. 18). He further declares that, in the estimate of God, "All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity" (xl. 17). He says again, speaking the language of God, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls that I have made" (lvii. 16). Daniel echoes Isaiah by saying, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing"

(iv. 35). And thus we might travel through the Old Testament, finding an uniformity of utterance setting forth how perishing, transitory, vain, and valueless is human existence from the divine point of view. Not a single word can be found that would be suitable for the modern pulpit, or a popular preacher, wherewith to sermonize about "precious and immortal souls." But does the New Testament speak in the same strain as the old? Is there any countenance to be derived from its pages for the "preciousness" and imperishableness of human nature? Not a particle. The New Testament agrees with the Old in describing "all flesh" to be as "grass, and the glory of man as the flower of the field." James tells us that our "life is a vapour that appeareth for a little while and vanisheth away" (iv. 14). According to the New Testament, all our hope of renewed existence and permanence of being depend on Jesus Christ, for "in Adam" all men are dead, and we must be "in Christ" in order to be made alive (1 Cor. xv. 22).

It is not strange that the Old Testament contains more abundant reflections upon the vanity and evanescence of human life; the composition of some of its books naturally affords the opportunity for such reflections; but what we call attention to is, the utter *absence* throughout the Scriptures of all and any of those forms of expression which the modern pulpit is constantly and necessarily using in teaching the dogma of natural immortality.

Let us next enquire how the Scriptures describe man in what may be called *the death-state*. We have seen that the Scriptures speak of man as a fleeting form of existence; and if we are right in our interpretation of these passages, we shall find that in death man is described as *ceasing to be*. Now, this is what we actually find to be the fact. "Death," in the Scriptures, nowhere means conscious existence, either in this world or in any other, but everywhere (even in a few instances where a secondary meaning may be found), "death" means *physical dissolution in the grave*. Even where "death" has a secondary meaning, it carries this primary meaning of *dissolution* with it. If a woman is said to be "dead while she liveth," because she lives in pleasure, it is no proof that the word "death" means anything else, really, than what it usually and literally means, for the woman is said to be dead because she is sowing to the flesh, and will ultimately reap *corruption*. So, also, if the prodigal son is described as "dead" and yet "alive again," what is it but that, previous to his coming home, he was, to his father, as one *literally* dead and buried?

Therefore we say that, without exception, in every instance where the word "death" is used, the sense of physical dissolution in the grave is, either top or bottom, the meaning intended.

The following passages clearly show how man is regarded when in the death-state.

"In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave, who shall give thee thanks?" (Psalm vi. 5).

X "The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth" (Isaiah xxxviii. 18).

"His breath goeth forth; he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm cxlvi. 4).

"The dead know not anything . . . their love, their hatred, and their envy is now perished" (Eccles. ix. 5, 6).

"There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccles. ix. 10).

Concerning the Egyptian army which perished in the waters of the Red Sea, Isaiah writes (xliii. 17):—

"The army and the power, they shall lie down together, they shall not rise; they are *extinct*."

Obadiah, speaking of the dead, says: "They shall be *as though they had not been*" (verse 16).

Very many passages of a similar import might be quoted from the Old Testament, where language is used, concerning men in death, as utterly different from the language of the pulpit as language can be. Except in the burial service, we never hear bible language used concerning man's condition in the grave, and there it is nullified by human additions which are as false as they are unscriptural.

It may be objected that most of the texts hitherto quoted by us to prove the mortality of human nature do nothing more than contemplate man as regards the present life, and have no bearing upon the question of future existence. That when, for instance, referring to man's death, the Psalmist says, "In that very day his thoughts perish," the reference is not to the thinking faculty, or the nature in which it resides, but to man's temporal concerns and schemes, which vanish as soon as death has supervened.

We wish to call attention to the fact that most of our proof-texts contemplate not man's circumstances, but man himself; they do not say that men (ignorant) will no longer tend their herds, or shepherd their sheep; but, "Like sheep **THEY** are laid in the grave;



death shall feed on them," &c. (Psalm xlix.) It would be a very small commonplace for the bible to inform us that when death takes place man's business is suspended; if mention is made of such things at all, it is only to assist us to understand the suspension of the man himself. The bible discourses to us of life and death, of existence and destiny, from the point of view afforded by eternity; man's *mere* relation to time never occupies the inspired mind. It is human *character* as righteous or wicked, as wise or foolish, that leads the bible to speak of the subject at all, and character has its issues, either of gain or loss, in eternity, and not in time. It marks the distinction between the divinely-inspired writings and the writings of ordinary men, that the former give us God's measure and estimate of men, which leads to the mention, often, of their final destiny, while the latter enter into no reckoning with them on this score. The way the bible speaks, is this: the heathen and the wicked "perish;" "vanish;" "pass away;" they "come not again;" "they shall not rise;" "they are extinct;" even their memory is "perished." But the righteous "hath *hope*" in his death; he will "awake;" he "*shall* rise;" God will "*redeem*" his "soul from the power of the grave." These expressions (and there are scores of similar ones) shew the principle on which bible reference to man is constructed, and they forbid the suggestion that man is considered and spoken of in his merely human and temporal relations.

Later on we shall learn that the Scripture puts all our hope of future existence not on the false ground of our natural immortality, but on the ground of RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD, and a physical change, in which "this mortal shall PUT ON immortality."

At present we are concerned with the description or account given of man when in the death-state. Let us now turn to the New Testament.

Turning first to the Epistle to the Thessalonians, we call attention to the statement, which is made elsewhere, that the deceased saints are ASLEEP (1 Thess. iv. 14, v. 10). This fact proves that man is unconscious in death, for death would never have been compared to sleep unless the former had resembled the latter in that complete cessation of every form of activity which characterizes them who are awake. We refuse to push the analogy any further than it obviously goes. We are aware that in sleep man's personality is not extinct; nevertheless, as far as all practical things are concerned, when a man is asleep he is non-existent.

When the saints are asleep they are not "singing glory" in the presence of God; they are not shouting "Hosannah;" they are not waving palms, nor walking golden streets, nor doing anything else which the ignorant pulpit is so eloquent about. **THEY ARE ASLEEP.** "They know not anything." It was life that was the fitful dream, but that is over. *They are asleep.* If they wake not, if they rise not from the dead, they are "*perished*" (1 Cor. xv. 18). Paul tells the Thessalonians that they need not sorrow as others that have no hope. In what did that hopelessness consist? In the fact that their friends had fallen asleep, *and would never wake again*: they were not asleep "in Jesus," and no one that is not "in Christ" will ever escape from the grave, for as we die in Adam so we are made alive only in Christ. What was the use of telling the Thessalonians not to sorrow about their sleeping friends, if their "immortal souls" had entered into the presence of God in a more active, perceptive, and sensitive form of existence than they had possessed while on earth.

This declaration that the dead saints are *asleep* is in harmony with everything we find written elsewhere in the New Testament concerning the death-state. Turning to the sixth of Revelation and ninth verse, John sees a vision. He says, "I saw under the altar the *souls* of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." And though they were *dead souls*, in this vision they are represented as crying out. "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

Here we have *dead souls*; **SLAIN souls** represented as "waiting"; as "resting" under an altar: the day of their triumph and joy has not yet come; others beside themselves have to be killed, and they are commissioned to rest for a little while. Does this picture answer to the pictures drawn by the pulpit of a heavenly blessedness, or does it not rather agree with the picture of the saints *asleep*; making an allowance for the sleeper talking, according to the parabolic style of the passage?

In harmony with this, we find Paul describing death as "being *unclothed*" (2 Corinth. v. 4); which he represents as an undesirable condition; his desires reaching toward that change to

immortality which he describes as being "clothed upon," and "mortality being swallowed up of life." He does not fancy himself immortal, but his immortality is of God, and he would wish that immortality to descend upon him before death overtakes him. It is true that lower down in this chapter he speaks of being "absent from the body and present with the Lord," but he is careful to explain in the very middle of his sentence, that this is true to *faith* but not to *sense*. His epistles abundantly prove that he does not expect the crown of life until the return of the Lord from heaven, but faith annihilates all interval of time, so that being absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Though Paul has been soundly sleeping in the grave since the age of Nero, at the resurrection morning it will be as though his life had been laid down a moment before; having died "in the Lord" he is blessed, resting from his labour; he is dead, but his life is "hid with Christ in God;" when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then he also shall appear with him in glory.

It will now be necessary to show that certain New Testament passages which are usually relied upon to prove that man exists consciously in the death-state, lend no countenance to this erroneous view.

We do not believe that the Scriptures contradict themselves on this or any other subject of revealed truth, and if the passages we have produced already, mean what they say, every other text or testimony will fall into line with them, and face the same way.

The account which is given of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Matt. xvii. ; Mark ix. and Luke ix.) is supposed by many to yield evidence of the continued existence of the deceased saints in some other world than this; for the narrative states that while Jesus stood transfigured before the eyes of the three disciples—Peter, James, and John—"there appeared unto them *Moses and Elias* talking with him" (Matt. xvii. 3). Confirmation is thought to be derived for this view, from the fact recorded in 2 Kings ii. 11, that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." But as far as this "confirmation" is concerned, what is sought for is certainly not found, for Elijah's case is not that of a *deceased saint* at all. According to the testimony, Elijah *did not die*; and it would be a curious argument that because we are told that a certain man of God, who did not die, was taken bodily into heaven, therefore all the spirits of good men, who do die, go there. The fact is, no argument of any value to the contention can be based upon the

extraordinary incident of the prophet's removal from the earth: whatever explanation may be given of the fact, it must be admitted by all, that such an exceptional case as the prophet's can afford no ground for a conclusion concerning the whole human race. The question is one concerning dead men, and it is not to be decided by reference to one, of whom there is apparent testimony that he never died at all. He was translated *in the body*, and his case, therefore, cannot be quoted as proving that the "*souls*" of the saints pass into heaven at death.

Concerning Moses, we are more definitely informed (Deut. xxxiv. 5) that he *died*, and that the Lord *buried him*. There is no haze about that. There will be no doubt that it was the dead body of Moses that was buried. So that if, at the transfiguration, Moses actually appeared in real bodily substance, he must have been raised from the dead. In which case the argument which seeks to shew that deceased saints survive in a spirit-world is not assisted in the least; for what is wanted by the narrative is not the spirit of Moses whispering with the spirit of Jesus, but three visible men, audibly talking together. The picture is not a picture of once departed, but now returned spirits, at all, but a scene in which Moses and Elias in bodily presence are as real to the eyes of the three disciples as Jesus himself. So that, just as Elias proved nothing as to deceased spirits, so Moses proves nothing either as to these. Elijah did not go away as a "departed spirit"; Moses did not come again as a "departed spirit"—therefore, the "departed spirit" theory receives no countenance from either.

The narrative containing this incident in the life of Jesus, gives us the explanation of the facts. We are told that it was, to the disciples, A VISION (Matt. xvii. 9).

The radiant forms, the glistening garment, the whole environment of glory, was a magnificent spiritual tableau to the ears and eyes of the wondering three, who, ere they tasted death, were privileged to see in this apocalyptic manner "the Son of man coming in his kingdom." One of these three, Peter, tells us plainly what this vision was, and what was meant by it. Says he (2 Peter i. 16-18)—"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you *the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, but were *eye-witnesses of his majesty*"; and then quoting, adds, "and this voice which came from heaven, we heard, *when we were with him in the HOLY MOUNT.*" By this "vision," then, was meant that the favoured three should behold, thrown for-

ward on the screen of time, the "power and coming" of Christ's "majesty," which makes Christ's words quite clear which immediately precede the three narratives of the transfiguration (though disconnected by the artificial division into chapters)—"Verily, I say unto you, there are some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28).

The "vision" in this case was in nowise different from those which John, for instance, on another occasion, received when in the island of Patmos. Throughout the Apocalypse, John tells us that he "saw" and "heard" many wonderful and significant things; but no one supposes that these things had real objective existence; they simply existed to his mind. The "candlesticks," the "one like unto the Son of man in the midst of the candlesticks," the "voice" that he heard, and all the rest of the wonders, were simply *visions* affecting his eye and ear. To another person present at the time, nothing would have been seen or heard; the thing existed alone for him.

The word "vision" (*horama*) in the narrative is used in Acts ix. 10 and 12. Noticing the latter verse, it is quite evident a subjective impression in Saul's mind that is intended by the passage. Saul of Tarsus "saw" Ananias coming to him; that is, in *vision*. In the very same sense (proved by the use of the very same word) the three disciples saw Moses and Elias with Jesus Christ. It was not an actual embodiment of Ananias that the convert of Tarsus saw; it was not an actual embodiment of Moses and Elias that the three disciples saw. In both cases it was a vision. When Peter was released from prison by an angel (Acts xii. 9), at first he could not believe his own senses, but tells us that he thought he saw a *vision* (*horama*), that is, he thought it was an *appearance* merely, and *not a reality*. The transfiguration and the converse with Moses and Elias were (v. 9) a *horama*—an appearance, spirit-wrought, to the minds of these three witnesses, which foreshewed the power and glory of the coming Kingdom.

Was it a delusion then? No; it was quite real; that is, a *REAL vision*. The disciples were wide awake, though they had been sleeping; they were *sure* of what they heard and saw; and though Peter was bewildered into saying something that reason can make nothing of, nevertheless it is clear that their senses were deeply impressed by the glorious sight before them.

This remark in Matthew relieves the narrative of all its difficulties; does away with the necessity of Moses being raised for a

few moments from the dead; explains the sudden vanishing of the two, and the remark of verse 8, "and when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only."

We deal next with Luke xxiii. 43, in which evidence is supposed to be found that the penitent thief went with Jesus to heaven on the day of the crucifixion.

But does the thief ask to be taken with Jesus to Heaven? Does he say to the Christ, "Oh, that Heaven were open to receive me, as well as thee?" He says nothing of the kind. So far as the *thief's* words go, at anyrate, there is no hint about "Heaven." He cries, "*Lord, remember me, WHEN thou comest INTO THY KINGDOM.*"

It is perfectly clear where his thought is running. He is thinking of the same things that have inspired the hearts and speech of every devout Jew who has ever confessed the hope that was in him. This was what Abraham "saw" and "rejoiced" in; this was all David's "salvation" and all his "desire" (2 Samuel xxiii. 25); this was Paul's expectation, too (2 Timothy iv. 8); and it has been the "one hope" of every true believer since the world began. The Christ is coming in the power and triumph of a Heavenly kingdom; it matters not to the poor thief that he himself will be at that time dissolved in the dust of death; he believes in the resurrection from the dead, and so he turns and prays that *WHEN* the Kingdom is "come" he may not be forgotten. With the beautiful modesty of repentant faith, the thief prays that he may not be overlooked in the glorious events of that age.

But we are now particularly to deal with the *answer* made to the thief by Christ.

We think it will be granted that *it was* an answer—a responsive and assuring reply. And yet how could Christ's words have contained any assuring answer unless they had a *direct relation* to the question or the prayer of the thief? Supposing that paradise referred to "Heaven," how could his words have been any answer at all? The thief in such case would have been looking in one direction, and Jesus in another—the answer would not have met the request, and the thief would have been started wondering what this "going to Heaven" might mean. Hanging there, in the death-agony, it was no time for theological instruction; the filming eyes of both Saviour and sinner will soon be dusk in death, but before the light is all gone out, the thief bespeaks a personal participation in the coming Hope of Israel. We do not read that Jesus corrects him for having an

ignorant faith, as he did the Samaritan at the well, telling him that he must turn his thoughts now to "Heaven above;" but, addressing himself to put the penitent heart at rest, and confirm the dying man's hope, Christ turns and says—"Verily I say unto thee, *semeron* (to-day) shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Luke (who alone reports this saying of Christ) wrote his testimony in Greek; while Jesus and the Jews *spoke* in what is sometimes called Syriac or Syro-Chaldaic.

We believe the chief point, then, is to determine what Luke meant when he wrote the word *semeron*. Now we desire honestly to admit that if we are to judge of the *meaning* of this word, from the *use* of it in the New Testament, it means *generally* the VERY DAY in which the speaker is then standing, so to say—the day that is then present, in distinction from any other day. But while honesty demands that we shall admit this, honesty also requires us to say that sometimes *semeron* looks away from and beyond the time when the utterance is made, to a certain definite point of time that is distinctly before the speaker's mind. *Seмерon* means emphatically THIS DAY, and the emphasis grows out of the *event* that is associated with the *time*. While it has a present-tense meaning, it also has a prophetic meaning—and it is well to notice that *Luke* himself uses it in this way. For instance, he reports Christ as sending word to Herod (ch. xiii. 32-33), "Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day (*semeron*) and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected; Nevertheless, I must walk to-day (*semeron*) and to-morrow, and the day following," &c. Now, no commentator will contend that when Jesus uses the word "to-day" here, he means the then current twelve hours. Christ is referring to his three *years* of public work which he *calls* "to-day, to-morrow, and the third day." So again in *Acts* (which *Luke* also wrote) ch. xiii. 33, we read that God in raising Christ from the dead had fulfilled a certain prophecy of the second Psalm—"thou art my Son; *this day* (*semeron*) have I begotten thee." But when that prophecy was written Christ had not actually been begotten from the dead. The words "this day" could only be true as they *contemplated* a definite point of time when Christ's resurrection *should be* a fact. The "this day" meant *this day* that was fixed in the divine purpose, and was definitely located in future time. This shews us how Luke (the writer in question) *uses* the word *sometimes*, and therefore we may fairly ask whether he so uses the word in the instance under discussion?

That he *does* use the word in this way here, and that Christ is saying to the thief, "this day" (*to which thou art looking and about which thou art speaking*) "thou shalt be with me in Paradise," is, we think, borne out by several facts.

1. This meaning is the only one that will make Christ's answer stand in *fair and square relation* with the thief's request. We cannot imagine the thief referring to one thing, and Christ referring to quite a different thing.

2. This meaning is the only one that makes the verse agree with Peter's testimony (Acts ii. 31) that, when Christ died, his "soul" went to "the grave." He could not have been in the grave and in "paradise" at the same time.

3. This meaning is the only one that agrees with the abundant testimony that the dead saints are ASLEEP, and that their reward is not given them till Christ comes to the earth to raise them from the dead, and give them a share in his glory.—Read carefully Matt. xix. 28, xxv. 19, xxv. 31 connected with 34; Coloss. iii. 4; 1 Thess. iv. 13-14-15; 2 Tim. i. 12, iv. 8; Titus ii. 13; Heb. x. 36-37, xi. 13, 39-40; James v. 7-8; 1 Peter i. 13, iv. 13, v. 4 2 Peter i. 11; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xi. 18, xxii. 12.

4. This meaning is the only one which will make the word *paradise* in this verse agree with the employment of it elsewhere. "Paradise" is a Persian word, signifying a *park* or garden; and when we remember how the Scriptures set forth the restoration of the earth to a state of verdant loveliness under Christ's blessed reign; when there shall be "no more curse;" when the "tree of life" shall bloom "in the midst of the *paradise* of God" (Rev. ii. 7); when "Jacob shall take root, and Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. xxvii. 6); when, concerning this kingdom it is said, "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, he fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary;" when "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Isa. xxxv. 1), surely in this paradisiacal beauty of the redeemed earth we have that which scripturally answers to what is contained in Christ's promise to the thief.

The next passage we have to notice is Luke xvi. 19-31, where we have recorded the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. We admit that the Jews in Christ's day held a notion (not the popular one though) of conscious existence after death, but it would be very foolish to set their notion against the teaching of the Old and



New Testaments. Peter, for instance, in his second epistle uses the pagan Greek conception of *Tartarus* in speaking of the darkness of the grave (ii. 4), but it would be absurd to construe the teaching of the Scriptures to suit that pagan notion. Christ has told us how these Jews had falsified the doctrines of God by their traditions (Matt. xv. 9), and we can trace instances of this not only in respect of commandments but also in their speculative beliefs. If any one say that the parable represents Christ's own teaching, and not merely Jewish opinion, we reply that Christ's teaching is mirrored in this parable, but it does not make the mirror any more Christ's own, than the use of *Tartarus* makes that pagan doctrine Peter's own. If Christ's purpose in this parable had been to delineate the truth of a future state, then the observation might have some force in it, but it is not so. Accepting for a moment his hearer's theory of the death-state, he reflects his two-fold lesson therein; shewing first that man's *position in this life* does not determine his position *hereafter* (that being abominable unto God which is highly esteemed among men), and secondly, that if a man will not listen to Moses and the prophets, he will not listen though one *rose from the dead*.

That Christ did not believe with the Jews on the subject of a future state, is evident from his speaking, not of one coming from the "other world," but of one rising from the dead (v. 31). Supposing Christ held the common Jewish ideas of "Abraham's bosom" and of "Hades," what object could he have in saying, "neither will they listen *though one rose from the dead?*" Besides, if popular belief runs to this parable for support, it must take the Jewish fancies as it finds them. Heaven and hell will be within speaking distance; a gulf dividing them. Heaven must be accepted as "Abraham's bosom," and departed spirits must have all the organs of the body, which may be affected by fire and water; while the inhabitants of hell must be exercised in great solicitude for such of their kinsfolk as are still on earth.

It seems clear to us that when Jesus makes the sending of a messenger from "Abraham's bosom" equivalent to *one rising from the dead*, he intends that we shall see, or at any rate enables us to see, what his own opinion is, as to the condition of those who have "departed this life." In Christ's judgment they are dead, and in order to return to men they must needs be *raised from the dead*. Then the Scriptures, instead of speaking of "heaven" and "sheol" as being in *near neighbourhood*, speak

of them as being a whole antipodes apart, as in Psalm cxxxix. —“If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” Then, as to men feeling any concern or knowing anything at all in Hades, or the grave, we have learned already that “*the dead KNOW NOT ANYTHING,*” and that there is *NO knowledge* in the grave.

If we accept the passage as a parable, it is perfectly allowable to introduce dead men as talking and acting, and the literal teaching is not difficult to discover.

We turn next to Philippians i. 23, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

Here Paul, oppressed with his long imprisonment at Rome, and notwithstanding what he had written to Corinth about not desiring to die, is yearning for that release from his weary life which should terminate his trials; nevertheless he would like to live for the sake of those whose faith he might help to maintain. Here, again, he is speaking *the language of FAITH*, which annihilates the interval between death and the resurrection at the return of Christ. To a powerful faith, like his, it is true that release from life is union with Christ; but we cannot believe that the man who wrote to the Thessalonians, saying that the deceased saints were asleep till Christ should come to waken them, could imagine that death would be no sleep to him. He is speaking of what is true to faith, and not discussing the subject of death with any reference to the grave or to resurrection from it. Elsewhere we find him saying, in this same epistle, that he is striving “if by any means” he “may attain unto the resurrection of the dead,” but in this passage we are now considering, he assumes the resurrection, and looks right away to his union with Christ. Into the ellipsis of his words it is fair to put all the facts of which we find him speaking elsewhere; and that interpretation is the wrong one which finds no room in his expression for the “sleep” before mentioned, and the resurrection.

Another passage which is supposed to teach that death does not destroy the living being is Matthew xxii. 32, where we read, concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that “God is not the God of the dead but of the living.” This passage, however, instead of proving that the patriarchs were not dead, was written to shew that God intended *to raise them from the dead*. In the parallel passage (Luke xx. 38), it is explained concerning those whom God

intends to raise from the dead, that "all live unto him," and Paul supplies us with the principle according to which this is to be understood when he says (Rom. iv. 17), concerning Abraham, that "*God, who quickeneth the dead, calleth those things THAT BE NOT AS THOUGH THEY WERE.*" This passage, therefore, in Matthew, instead of proving immortality to be a present enjoyment of the patriarchs, proves just the reverse, by shewing that their future life depends upon them being quickened or raised from the dead. If the expression "God is not the God of the dead" proves that the patriarchs are alive, to whom does the expression "the dead" refer to? for, according to the view we are opposing, there are no dead—all lives being immortal.

Another text which is sometimes quoted is Revelation vii. 13, where John sees a great multitude before the throne of God arrayed in white robes. It is sufficient to say that John's vision was of things future to his day, and some of them future to our own. This particular vision contemplates the time when Christ shall be upon his throne, after the resurrection, and when the number of the elect shall be completed and gathered out of all nations to inherit the kingdom of God. It proves nothing concerning the dead; it does not refer to the death-state at all; it carries us forward to the age to come, when all evil shall be abolished, and God shall wipe away tears from all eyes.

The foregoing are the principal passages where popular preaching takes refuge against the idea that in death man ceases to be. We have seen, however, that there is nothing in them to bolster up the notion that man possesses a natural immortality, which death cannot touch, and which can defy the grave. The Scriptures invariably point us to the grave, and the grave alone, when referring to the dead. Christ gets his victory over the grave, and death is vanquished, as we shall afterwards see, by means of resurrection.

It will now be seen how flimsy and worthless are those things which an uninstructed *reason* might urge for the belief we are opposing.

It is often said that the universal instincts and desires that mankind feel towards a life beyond the grave, count for something in the argument for his survival in death; that every known faith of the world embraces this doctrine, and that the common instincts of humanity may be regarded as a natural revelation.

There is a serious error here, both in regard to the facts and

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the reasonings upon them. In the first place, it cannot be proved that the masses of degraded humanity that live in the present, and have lived in past ages, have any longing for a future life, or have anything more than a mere fleshly recoil from death, while millions of pagans, such as the Buddhists, have it as their highest hope that they will hereafter lose individual existence by attaining to the *Nirvana*.

Then suppose the longing were as universal as many seem to think, what does it prove? The desire for *happiness* is surely as universal as any desire within us, but does this prove a future provision of happiness for every individual of our species? We grant that such a desire certainly proves that happiness *is a fact*, but what we are saying is, that while the desire for happiness may be universal, the attainment and possession of it are not so. These are limited by certain conditions which attach to the thing, and which prevent many from adequately getting it at all. We are not denying that immortality *is a fact* (which is all that instinct for it could be urged to prove), but the Scriptures shew that it is limited to such as fulfil the conditions of its bestowment, and that it is not the natural birthright and inheritance of human nature.

Perhaps the most plausible argument that can be urged for human immortality may be expressed in words something like the following :

The constitution and the history of man both show him to be a creature of progress—a progress that knows nothing of finality, but seems capable of going on for ever. In this respect he differs essentially from every other living thing, for all else is held within certain limits, beyond which progress is impossible. Now, it seems that an illimitable nature, such as man possesses, demands an illimitable life or sphere in which to expatiate. It is from studying the *plan* of man's being that we get to know something of its boundless prospects.

The proper answer to this seems to be to point out that it is a mixture of truth and fiction, which leads to a false conclusion. The "illimitable progress" spoken of, certainly cannot be affirmed of the *individual*, for concerning man, regarded individually, the facts point the other way; this progress only seems true of *the race*, the laws of which allow of one generation succeeding to the discoveries and attainments of the last. It is not the plan of human nature, but of human *society*, rather, that discovers the

possibility of an endless progression, but for the argument to be available for "immortality," the "plan" ought to be found in every human constitution. But we say the facts point the other way. It is only a very small fraction of the human species that reaches even its prime, and, when that point is reached, decay of the faculties sets in and the helplessness of age. The vast proportion of the race dies before the age of intellect has begun. Like the trees laden with apple-blossom, which is shed by the rude wind, so the sharp gust of death carries away the bulk of life's beautiful and promising blooms. The beauty fades away; the promise is unfulfilled.

If we say that this creates a reason for another life, where the promise shall be made good, we ask, why not apply the reason to the entire realm of life, and demand a future for the fallen fruit blossom and everything else which has not fulfilled itself in its early attempts to live?

The reason which explains the non-fulfilment of promise in one order of creation should explain it in another. If the life that stirs in the sap of the tree does not find sufficient permanence for itself that it may bring forth fruit, is it strange that the breath of man should fail before he has accomplished all for which he is structurally fitted? It is not the individual but society that is constituted for an endless progress. Man succeeds by inheritance to the good *and evil* accumulated by his progenitors, and in material directions there has generally been progress discernible, and this suggests the *permanence* of the race on the face of the earth, but no one can say that, between birth and death, the individual shews such power of illimitable growth, that what scope he fails to find in this life he must find in another.

It is sometimes said that the laws which govern the mind are not identical with those which govern the body; that the latter reaches its prime at about the age of thirty, while the development of the former may go on to the end of a long life. We reply that this making out a difference of laws for mind and body on the ground of their non-correspondence of development is foolish, for just as reasonably might we contend for different laws governing the growth of our teeth and of our hair, for these certainly do not keep even pace with other developments of the body. It is perfectly true that muscular and brain development do not run on together at the same pace, but how does this prove the survival of life when the brain itself has turned to dust?

We contend that even supposing it were competent for us to speculate about the survival of man in death, there is not the least evidence in the facts of human nature for such a supposition. The best argument that Joseph Cook, the orthodox champion, can find, is, that *character tends*, visibly, to *permanence*. We may admit it, but what does it prove? Character cannot exist apart from the man whose character it is, and we affirm that the plasticity of habit growing less and less with years, proves nothing as to the survival of life when its organization is dissolved.

But it is altogether foolish to speculate about that of which we cannot possibly know anything apart from a revelation, and revelation is uniform in describing our life to be dependent upon the animation of our dust, and our future life to depend on resurrection.

We cannot reckon among the "arguments" of *reason* for human immortality, the very numerous testimonies of those calling themselves SPIRITUALISTS, who affirm that they are in the habit of holding communion with "departed spirits." We feel bound, however, to give their testimony a certain attention. Our own opinion is that "spiritualism" is a vast system of imposture, resting upon some occult and strange facts in nature that have given it a certain appearance of scientific support. We think we are familiar with the subject, from having made observations of our own, and also having read the best literature on the subject. We have carefully examined the grounds of this theory, and found them quite insufficient to sustain the huge superstructure which the fancy and credulity of man have built upon them. Some years ago, being interested in the subject, we began to read the best books we could find upon it. First we read the "Report on Spiritual Phenomena," published by the London Dialectical Society; then Prof. Crooke's "Researches"; Alfred Russell Wallace on "Miracles and Modern Spiritualism"; Sergeant Cox's "What am I?" Robert Dale Owen's "Footfalls on the Boundaries of another World"; and other well-known works. We confess that what we read—especially what was written by scientific men, accustomed to rigorous investigation, and the application of severe tests—filled us with astonishment. We then read the adverse criticisms of others who maintain a more materialistic philosophy, particularly Dr. Carpenter's "Mental Physiology," and we are ready to admit that we have found nothing which to our mind afforded an adequate explanation.

We then sought to investigate the thing for ourself. We have travelled hundreds of miles to be present at noted "circles," where the most advanced phenomena were to be witnessed; and in our own home, and among our own friends, we have sought to produce the phenomena, and to obtain their explanation.

In the course of our investigations, we obtained many curious and remarkable results, which proved to us beyond question not only that "there is a spirit in man," but that there is *an universal spirit*, which it is in our power, under certain conditions, to use, not only in mechanical but also in intelligent ways. The theory which maintains that these and similar results are by the agency of *departed* spirits is entirely gratuitous and unproven, while it contradicts the Scriptures, which must be admitted to be a great authority on the subject. The Scriptures do certainly teach whatever truth spiritualism may contain, but they do not countenance its falsehoods. This "ism" has got hold of some occult facts of nature, which science has yet scarcely begun to examine, but of which the Scriptures have much to say, and it has manipulated these to the ends of a monstrous theory. Ignorance and imposture have both been largely concerned in this.

We have seen the Scriptures describe the spirit to be a subtle, invisible, penetrating, all-pervading presence, detected in all things by its power and effects, which latter vary almost infinitely, from the reduction to order of a material chaos to the moral illumination of the inspired seer. We must also remember that we have seen (in the Scriptures) this spirit to be the source of *life in man*, as indeed in all flesh and in all organised things. It is this universal element of spirit which ignorance and fraud have been dealing with. This spirit residing in man makes it possible for him to communicate with it, and through it, with the world in many wonderful directions.

There is much undeniable evidence of this which we cannot enter upon here. Suffice it to say that it is in this direction that we must look for an explanation for whatever there may be of fact and truth in the system of spiritualism.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

PASSING from the nature of man, the next things we behold are *the circumstances of probation* in which he is placed. He is a moral being, innocent but immature; free from sin, but knowing not yet, in any deep and sufficient sense, what good and evil may be. He is therefore placed in circumstances of trial very well adapted to his case, that he may form a character, and qualify himself for higher and more permanent life.

The Scripture teaches us that God made man "*upright*," but that man has become crooked in his ways, having "*sought out many inventions*." Touching his capacity of moral discernment, and his character of "righteousness and true holiness," we learn that he was made in "*the image of God*" (Coloss. iii. 10; Ephes. iv. 24; Genes. i. 27; Eccles. vii. 29). With perfect equipoise of being, confronted with temptation, yet in communion with God, and instructed as to the results of disobedience, man commenced his probation. In a beautiful, guileless, and happy innocence, which rendered even what is now called modesty unnecessary, he entered upon life's great trial. His maker had given him all that could satisfy his needs, gratify his taste, and allay the deepest yearnings of his breast. There was one thing, however, which the creator, though omnipotent, could not give him, and that was EXPERIENCE. It is true that innocence itself was an experience; a sweet and private sense of the blessedness of being. It was a bliss simply to be, and with every physical function there stole in a happy consciousness. But it was necessary that he should have an experience in evil, as well as a knowledge of good; indeed, to a finite creature, it seems as though there could be no morally intelligent knowledge and appreciation of the good that is not reached without passing through, what the bible very finely calls "the valley of the shadow of death." But we can only speak as to facts, for their philosophy is almost beyond our depth. And what we see is man, made "upright," related to a world where unseen authority appeals to him on the one hand, and sensible attraction draws him on the other.



The question is sometimes thoughtlessly asked, how could sin have entered into the world before man had any *tendency* to do evil? The answer is, that the first sin was not what may be called a wilful transgression. It entered at the thin edge.

“Evil is wrought for want of thought  
As well as want of heart.”

It was a case of being deceived, which is often practically, as disastrous in its consequences as the most suicidal sinning act. If it be asked, how could even an evil suggestion find access to a heart not in the least corrupt, again we say that the inexperience of man must be borne in mind. A wilful act cannot spring from anything but a disloyal heart, but an innocent inexperience may be led through the avenues of perfectly natural and lawful desire into that which, too late, reveals itself to be an unforeseen and sudden destruction. (The desire to be *made wise* was natural enough; but the willingness to partake of fruit which was prohibited, though calculated to make one wise, was wrong, however much we may plead the fact of inexperience.

The introduction of a supernatural “evil spirit” into the garden, to be the tempter of man, is a theological fiction, and is as superfluous as it is fictitious. The narrative says nothing about such “evil spirit”; there is no mention of anything but the *serpent*; and when the New Testament refers to the event, it is equally silent about either an evil spirit or the inspiration of such, but ascribes the success of the temptation (in harmony with Genesis) to the serpent’s “subtlety” (2 Cor. xi. 3; Genes. iii. 1). In Rev. xii. 9, this same “serpent” is used as a prototypical figure of the “dragon,” which, at a certain period of history, had deceived the whole world.

While the serpent is unanimously referred to as the *visible* author or agent of evil, other Scriptures assert that evil has its origin in God. That God is the author of evil, in the projection and control of it, is a bold statement. But it is Scriptural, and that is enough. If our opponents could find a passage saying, “The Lord doth NOT create evil,” how they would insist on it, and pronounce it decisive against us. Let them, then, exercise their candour upon the words to be found in Isaiah xlv.—“I form the light *and create darkness*; I make peace AND CREATE EVIL; I, the Lord, do all these things.” These words were written in explication of the high prerogative of God, who manipulates all events to his purpose; “raising up,” “girding,” and even “surnaming” kings to be instrumental in

bringing about his will. If it be said that "evil," in this verse, is to be understood in the sense of *distress* or *trouble*, we admit it; but how can God "create" *distress* and *trouble* without touching the exciting causes which lead thereto. Evil is not simply a result, though sometimes it is proper to confine our view to it as such, but traced to its roots it is found to be an abnormal activity (generally) of desire in some human mind, which has been "created" by the irritant of temptation. It is not sin (in the strict sense of that word), for the will has not yet become involved; but it is the gradual rising of desire under irritating causes. It is what the Scriptures call "*lust*," which, "when it conceives, bringeth forth *sin*." Thus, Pharaoh, under the chafing caused by Israel's demand to be allowed to depart out of Goshen, *lusted* to display a tyrannical power over them. Now we know that God's hand was not only in the "ten plagues" that came upon Pharaoh, but was also in the *circumstances* which culminated in his "hardness of heart."

But we are told that God cannot be *tempted* with evil, neither tempteth he any man (James i. 13). Yet it is testified with equal plainness that the Lord tempted Abraham, and the facts (which are as good as a testimony) shew that God *arranged* the temptation of Adam.

It is always useless to shut our eyes to facts; the facts remain after we have shut our eyes; and even though we could not reconcile them, it does not make it one whit better to ignore or deny them. There must, evidently, be a sense in which God both does and does not tempt man; in which God can be truly said to "create evil," and yet not to be evil.

Now, we think it is a scriptural view that all actions receive their character, complexion, and denomination from *the motive* which inspires them. The father of John Stuart Mill used to say, in delivering himself of his uncompromising utilitarian notions, *that many good actions proceed from bad motives, and that many bad actions spring from good motives*. We utterly disbelieve this. The *result* of an action is not the action itself, though in our ignorance of motives this is often the only test we can apply to it. To accept James Mill's doctrine, and try to work it out in the practice of life, consistently, would land us, often, in rewarding guilt and punishing innocence, and change all moral endeavour into a mere struggle for success.

Viewing temptation, then, from the point of view of *motive*, it is quite clear that though God is said both to tempt and not to tempt

man, two distinct ideas are represented under the same word. Resembling each other in outward form, but utterly differing in spirit and motive, temptation may be either right or wrong. Regarded as test or trial, it is right and fitting—who can doubt? but when it aims at deception and destruction, then its moral hue is entirely altered. Now, the teaching of the Scripture is that God rejoices not in the death of the sinner—which proves that his temptations have not for their aim man's harm; yet God is represented as never hesitating to place man in the most searching and trying circumstances, and arranging those circumstances so that man might know all the bitterness of evil, being penetrated by its pain, and pierced by its frost and fire.

There is a malignity with which men tempt their fellows for the sheer delight of witnessing their discomfiture, which delight a poetical but fictitious theology has ascribed to the "devil" in the garden of Eden. But, as we cannot find in the narrative of Genesis any wicked intelligence, saving a "subtle" serpent acting, so there is absence of proof that there was any humanly malignant motive in the temptation. But what we are concerned with is the part of God in the transaction. It is useless to say that God *permitted* the temptation, but he did not himself tempt man. When we know what the word "tempt" means here, and remember the divine motive which rescues the thing from a bad construction, it is absolutely a fact that God did tempt man, and that he ordained and arranged the circumstances of evil which made the temptation possible. It is the motive which makes all the difference in the transaction, and changes a diabolical purpose into a benevolent moral arrangement. We have read of an accomplished swimmer being thrown, when quite a child, by his father from the vessel into the sea, and encouraged to sustain himself by effort in the waves; the father only diving to his aid when he appeared to be sinking. How different the action, with the motive recorded, from what the same act would have been if the father had purposed to drown his child in the angry sea. Men have been immersed in the sea of evil, not with a fiendish intention that they should drown in its black gulf, but that by its bitter baptism, by sounding its depths of pain, by fathoming its misery, they should triumph in an everlasting superiority over it, and rise to an untemptible and divine righteousness which nothing could assail.

If this representation be correct, then it harmonizes all that is said of God, both with regard to the holiness of his character and

his action in regard to evil. Evil is not an end, it is a means to an end, as a scaffolding in the erection of a building, as fire in the working of gold, as discipline in the education of children. This is not saying that evil ceases to be evil: that evil becomes good. It is *unto* good, that is all. It is a bad necessity in the education of finite beings. The discolouration of the fire is a very different thing from the beauty of the gold, but the brilliance cannot be obtained without the carbon stains.

Neither does this limit the power of God; the limitation is in the finite man. It is the weakness and inexperience of human nature which make necessary the probation of evil. That which is perfect needs not to be trained.

It may be said that to represent God as merely trying and testing man is inconsistent with the fact that God foreknew the issue of the trial, and arranged everything, indeed, ~~with a view~~ to the fall. We reply that to foresee that the trial would culminate in failure is a very different thing from desiring that failure in the malicious sense. God did foresee the transgression, but he saw something beyond the transgression, as the goldsmith sees something beyond the discoloured gold. Evil is but a single thread in the skein, and in order to understand it, the whole purpose—of which it forms a merely provisional factor—must be kept in mind. It is the delight of a coarse and obtuse scepticism to represent God as maliciously contriving a “trap” in which to catch the human race. It is impossible to argue with stupidity. As we shall shew by and by, the whole scheme of creation from first to last was framed to the fact of Christ: that creation grew from him as fruit grows from a core, and until the Christ fact is studied, we are not in a position to exercise our judgment on the fact of evil.

We are the more confirmed in our apprehension of the origin of evil in that the popular notion of *the* DEVIL, and of evil spirits generally is without any biblical foundation. We have learned from the Scriptures to disbelieve in “evil spirits,” excepting that the spirit or animus of man is generally evil. We can find the “devil” in tradition, in poetry, in theology, *but as a supernatural and spiritual intelligence*, we know how utterly without any foundation of scriptural evidence is the popular belief in Satan, the devil, or evil spirits of any kind.

From times immemorial in the east, a mythology has existed in which the world is seen governed by a *dual* principle, and this

false notion (somewhat modified) has crept into the patristic interpretation of the Scriptures which now survives as a theological tradition. This tradition has received some apparent countenance from the fact that the Scripture, on its very first page, is supposed to announce the fact that human history will reveal a struggle between two principles, one represented by "the seed of the woman," and the other by "the seed of the serpent."

If we say no more than this—that moral history reveals two "*principles*" in conflict, we shall not err; but the popular belief is not that the "devil" is simply a principle or tendency of the flesh, but a personal fiend—a fallen angel, the chief of myriads of evil spirits, whose baneful breath poisons the moral atmosphere, and who hatch whatever is evil in the world. It is true, we cannot have an evil principle without a personal agent, but man himself is the personal agent in the case, who finds in himself the cause, the occasion, and all the material for this inward moral warfare. Man is his own "Satan" and his own "devil," and what he is always to himself, he is sometimes to his fellow, which observation contains really everything that the Scriptures tell us on the subject.

Those statements are very literal, very complete, and very explicit. They do not travel outside man and his *natural* surroundings to trace the inception of sin and the consequent origin of evil. A most exact account is given of how the struggle between good and evil begins and is kept up; from beginning to end the whole is linked together in a coherent and reasonable genesis and natural history of sin. Then, when the literary use made in the Scriptures of PERSONIFICATION is remembered; when interpretation *begins* with what is evidently literal in the testimony; when the mind excludes from its imaginations what has been drawn from poetry, and the statements of the Scripture are compared narrowly with our own consciousness of things, the popular devil will disappear, and in our own fearful and wonderful formation we shall find the explanation of our problem.

It is fatal to the popular teaching about the devil, that he is represented as having secret access to the human heart, by which is meant *the human spirit*, while the Scriptures everywhere trace sin and lust TO THE HUMAN FLESH. The broad classification of the whole chapter of sin is this—"The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). Says James—"Every man is *tempted when he is drawn away of HIS OWN LUSTS*" (James i. 14). Paul says that in *his FLESH* dwelt no good thing (Rom. vii.

18); that the "law" or tendency of his flesh was one thing, and the law or tendency of his instructed reason was another (v. 23). What those opposing tendencies are we may soon understand. The law of the flesh is a craving for PLEASANT SENSATIONS simply. With a perfectly natural but blind disregard of everything higher or other, the "flesh" cries, "give me pleasant sensations—pleasant sensations!" On the other hand, the "law" or tendency of an instructed reason is to seek first and only to *be true to moral relations*. This is the idea of RIGHTEOUSNESS. This natural hostility of the flesh to everything that does not minister to sense-gratification is styled "*sin in the flesh*" (Rom. viii. 3): it is this that has "the power of death," and in destroying this Christ destroys *the devil*, thus proving this flesh principle to be the devil (Heb. ii. 14).

But, let us take a few instances where the word "Satan" is used, and we shall soon see how ridiculously false the popular notion is. We find Paul telling Timothy (1 Ep. i. 20) that he has delivered Hymenæus and Alexander "unto Satan, *that they may learn not to blaspheme.*" Now, if "Satan" here means the popular "devil," it was a strange school to send these men to that they *might learn* not to blaspheme! Besides, it is incredible that any man should have the power of consigning his fellow to a fiend. The reason is clearly given why this deliverance to Satan was made—it was to the end of *reformation*. Imagine sending a man to the "devil" to be reformed!

We next notice a passage in 1 Cor. v. 5, where Paul advises the church, concerning an offender, "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, *that the spirit may be saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus." What can orthodox theology make of this, but that Paul advises the sending of men to the devil, *in order to save their souls!!* This passage evidently is twin to the last, and will admit of the same explanation. But the theory of a supernatural devil will not do at all. On that theory the passages are hopelessly lost to us. Whenever popular theology gets hold of a text which it thinks favours its view, let it think of these texts which it has left unsolved, and which utterly condemn it. Our view of "Satan" will cover and explain the texts it may chiefly rely upon, but *its* view will not cover or explain the texts we bring forward.

We get at the truth of the matter by comparing the texts just given with Luke xiii. 11, and then again with 2 Cor. xii. 7. In the former passage a comparison of verses 11 and 16 shews that

*bodily adversity* or affliction, or as it is called, with an approach to personification, "a spirit of infirmity" is the *adversary* or "Satan" in the case. A woman, said to have been suffering from some structural or muscular disorder, is described as being "bound for eighteen years by an adversary." Malformation, or disease more probably, was that adversary. With what reason does theology bring in a supernatural fiend when the body is bowed, or the tongue is tied, or the hand trembles, or the eye is dim? Anything that is *adverse* to us becomes Satan to us; so in 2nd Cor. xii. 7 we find Paul saying that "a thorn in the flesh" was given him, which he describes as "the messenger of Satan." Do we really mean that this something that troubled Paul in his flesh was caused by an imp of darkness commissioned to this by the archfiend? Is it not more reasonable to understand, when, accepting a figurative manner of expression, we interpret it as bodily adversity or suffering?

This throws light on the other texts before given, which in the hands of orthodoxy are so hopeless. Error makes difficulties along its path, but truth clears them up. If this interpretation solves the difficulties which remain, it is an evidence of its correctness. To deliver one to Satan for the destruction of the *flesh*, in order that the *spirit* may be saved, was just to do what the apostle himself did to Elymas, the sorcerer, *when he struck him with blindness*: it was to smite with the rod of the spirit the flesh of the offender, making an adversary to him in his own flesh, that by such a stroke of suffering he might be led to self-amendment, and so to salvation "in the day of the Lord Jesus." So Hymenæus and Alexander, feeling the consequence of their "blasphemy" in the adversity of suffering through which the apostle had caused them to pass, were being thereby taught "not to blaspheme."

It bears out what we have just said, to remember that Christ pronounced Peter on a certain occasion a "Satan." But reflection on Christ's own words of explanation makes his meaning very clear. Does he say, "for I perceive a supernatural evil spirit named Satan is in thee?" No; he identifies *Peter* as Satan, assigning this significant account of his using such a word, "FOR *thou* savourest not the things that be of God, *but those that be* OF MEN." Of men, mark, not of the supernatural devil. Why does Christ not go to the root of the matter, as theology would have done, while speaking so strongly, and say outright what Peter *really* savours of? Ay, he did do so. It was that adversary the flesh, which ever objects to crucifixion, that was emitting its offensive

funes. The antipodes of thought with Christ are the spiritual sacrificingness of God and the fleshly self-love of man, which chooses ease rather than duty.

The reference to "Satan" in the book of Job will be relied upon by many as proving a personal evil spirit or devil. Let us examine. The first thing to do is to remember the nature of the composition we are dealing with. Are we reading plain history, or a dramatic work based on history? If the latter, it would be perfectly allowable to bring into the *dramatis personæ* a supernatural enemy, though we do not admit that Job's "Satan" was anything supernatural at all. We have to read that into it before we can get it from it. In *Macbeth* the three witches round the cauldron are dramatically correct, but in plain history they would be inadmissible.

We do not mean to suggest that the book of Job is a work of fiction. We mean that no doubt there was such a man as Job in Uz; a man of great faith, and patience, and spiritual discernment; a man sorely afflicted by God, whose mind was embittered by the blind and cold comfort of his neighbours. His story is wrought up, for the sake of more vivid and powerful impression, in dramatic form, the whole illustrating that divine providence that attends the good man's steps, and extracts good for him out of evil. Our judgment is based on a careful examination of the structure of the book, which is dramatic throughout, shewing the servants, time after time, coming regularly on one another's heels; announcing each new disaster in the same words; shewing a similarity of picture in introducing "Satan;" using the language of colloquy and soliloquy, and throwing into metrical form the uttered thoughts of Jehovah, of Job, and his friends. "Satan," or an adversary, is introduced as the dramatic personification of evil, brought in for the convenience of narration; no more real than was the parley it is represented as holding with Jehovah. Both are dramatically correct, without supposing God to have held a dialogue with a foul fiend.

But, it may be said, it represents Satan as going forth from the presence of the Lord and smiting Job with sore boils; and, it may be asked, Is this the language of personification?

We answer—It is the language of dramatic description, which makes Job appear to be in the hands of a physical tormentor; but the narrative contains within itself evidence that all Job's afflictions came from the hand of God, who employed sometimes the



Sabeans, sometimes the Chaldeans, sometimes a great wind, and sometimes disease as the natural agents or adversaries by which evil was brought upon him. Job himself recognises that "evil" comes from God as well as "good." Even Satan is described as saying, "Put forth *thine hand* now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face;" and, in the last words of the book, Job is described as being delivered from all the evil that *the Lord had brought upon him*.

It cannot be said that "Satan" was the *instrument* in the hand of the Lord, for we have seen in the first three instances that the supposed Satan was *not* the instrument, but the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, and the great wind. These were the adversaries in the first three visitations, so the last instance may well be understood as produced by a natural agent also, for in each case the drama describes a permission given to the "Satan" to exert his power.

Read as a simple history, the book of Job contradicts itself. It would then represent the same act as proceeding from three different sources, God, Satan, and Job's countrymen; it would then describe God as holding a colloquy with the devil; it would then represent an evil spirit mingling with human worshippers, and make the narrative incredible. But, taken as a dramatic creation, based upon historic facts, in which evil is represented as an embodied adversary to the human being, everything in the narrative becomes consistent, and the lesson is clear.

Passing on to notice another term, DEVIL, but keeping to the same general subject, we observe, the word "devil" or "diabolos" (distinguishing it from the word "demon") is a New Testament word, and has no necessary connection with the word "Satan" whatever. A man or a thing may be a Satan without being a devil; though that which has been called "the devil" always sustains the character of an "adversary." We understand "the devil" to mean *the principle* OF SIN embodied in the flesh, and variously manifested. It is formed of *the lusts of the flesh*, and cannot be traced beyond the human being, in whom it is born and with whose flesh it is destroyed. It is the parent principle of every sinful thought and deed, and only becomes personal in man, whose bad animus it is.

Let us try our definition on a New Testament instance—say the temptation of Christ by "the devil."

We shall find that it fits exactly when we realise what the temptation was. But, first, let us consider that the epistle to the

Hebrews tells us that Jesus was tempted *in all points* as we are tempted. Now James says, "A man is tempted when he is drawn away of *his own lusts* (or desires) and enticed." If Jesus, then, was tempted in *all points* as we are, he was "enticed" by those "desires" of the flesh which were as natural to him as to us all. This will give us the clue to the temptation, as recorded by the biographers, and which even the orthodox mind has been able to see, as witness the accounts of the temptation given in Geikie's, Farrar's, and Beecher's *Lives of Christ*.

With very slight difference of view these writers interpret the temptation as the natural workings and suggestions of Christ's mind in the entirely new position which was given him to sustain. Feeling, for the first time, conscious of the might of that Spirit with which he had just been invested in his baptism, the natural suggestion of his flesh was, first, to employ it (being hungry) in making stones bread; again, to test and prove it by precipitating himself from the temple roof; still again, to exercise it according to the *worldly* principle and method of gaining dominion and a kingdom (avoiding the divine way of suffering). So temptation wrought within him, each suggestion, however, being checked and suppressed.

Immediately we begin to interrogate the popular notion of the devil, we see how incredible and impossible it is.

How is it that sin is always traced to *man*, both in the narrative of Genesis and the expository statements of the Bible generally? How is it there is no mention of the "devil" in the temptation of Eve? How is it that it says "by *man* came sin"—"by one *man* sin entered into the world?" How is it that Christ took *human nature* that *through death* he might DESTROY THE DEVIL? If the popular ideas about a "devil" are correct, these questions (and many such might be put) cannot be answered.

But it may be asked—Was there not in the age of Christ a general opinion in eastern lands that a supernatural evil spirit did exist as the author of evil in the world? We answer—Among the common people there was undoubtedly a belief in the existence of *demons*, but it was not an intelligent opinion held anywhere which was capable of a rational exposition. Among the educated the oriental philosophy had its "lord of matter;" which answers very nearly to the popular notion of "Satan."

Now, unless it is contended that the use of popular forms of speech carries with it the accuracy of the opinion or theory which

such forms embody, it cannot be said that the New Testament is written on the assumption of these views being true. True, Christ spoke of "the prince of this world" and of "demons" at the time when these were believed in, but as a matter of fact Christ *did* use the popular expressions, even when they conveyed ideas and feelings the contrary of his own. For instance—"It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto *dogs*." Did Jesus share the Jewish prejudice which regarded Gentiles as dogs?

There might be something in the argument, which is based on the use of the language of the age, if "demonism" were not identified with disease, and if sin were not traced to its lair in human nature. There are plenty of texts where there would have been fine opportunities of shewing how "Satan" operated in human nature, if such operation had been a fact, without leaving it on the basis of a heathen speculation. For example, when James was giving an exact definition and historical account of temptation (which is the earliest starting-point towards sin), why should he stay at saying, "man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed"? Why does Paul, in a most precise and analytical manner, trace the evil a man does to the working of a *law* in his members? Why did Christ say to the twelve, "one of *YOU* is a devil"?

It must be remembered that the instances where personification is resorted to are chiefly those of narrative, and where personal things are in the speaker's or the writer's mind; whereas, the more doctrinal discussion of sin, temptation, and human nature under it, generally drops personification and gives the literal state of the case. We should expect more precision in the drawing out of the natural history of sin than in concrete observations concerning certain men and what they did. However, the basis of all interpretation must be laid in the literal sayings of the book, and we must seek for the literal rather in doctrinal statements than in dialogues and personal allusions. The importance of a correct view is seen in the fact that the truth throws the gravity of sin and evil on ourselves, and awakens us to the actual facts of our condition as possessing a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and a fleshly nature in which there is no good thing.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE FLOOD.

THE history of sin and evil is in all ages the same. When man departs from God, the order and harmony of his being are broken—he is no longer ruled by the spiritual and the unseen. The centre of true reason is lost, and a low, self-seeking prudence usurps the place of a true faith and an instructed conscience. He is “drawn away of his own lusts,” which seek to find in material and temporal things their gratification.

As surely as storms will disturb the atmosphere in summer, so surely will gusts of passion rise within man when his interests come into collision with those of his fellows. The stronger he feels himself, the less restraint he will endure: the longer his apparent lease of life, the more recklessly and violently will he pursue his bent.

A number of circumstances combine to explain the rapid degeneracy of the human race during the first sixteen or seventeen hundred years of its history. We may sum up these circumstances by saying that it was an age (and necessarily so) of intense animalism, in which men rejoiced in their virility, their longevity, and their mastery over nature. By that law of variation which it is so hard to account for, from the very commencement of the multiplication of our species, a distinct divergence in human society is observable. Two types of character appear—the one represented by Cain and the other by Seth: the former achieving a worldly renown, the latter accomplishing a more difficult thing—the organization of society on a definite religious basis. It is perfectly clear, by the way the line of Cain is dropped in the historical record, that the interest of the narrative gathers round them who are the means of perpetuating the name and worship of the Lord on the earth. Neither the work of the builder, the shepherd, the artisan, nor the musician, have any special interest for the biblical historian. To build an altar is more significant than to build a city, and to create a religious *cult* is of more interest than to found a family. So the human line is simply traced through the house of Seth, and over a wide gulf of time is merely thrown a chain of genealogical particulars.

What is called the patriarchal age was evidently one in which human life excelled in animal strength—when religious ideas were simple and moral restraints were few. A trifling circumstance might be sufficient to decide whether these fathers should turn into the paths of reverence or run headlong down the declivities of sin. As a matter of fact, we find human society divided into two types of being, called respectively *the sons of GOD* and (by implication, see Gen. vi. 2) *the sons of MEN*. So remote and dim is that past age, and so brief the description of the condition of things, that it will not admit of our being positive in our statement of the facts. But neither is it necessary that we should be positive; sufficient that the fact of complete moral degeneracy through the overmastering power of the passions, is clear. But we are taught that “evil communications corrupt good manners,” and it seems probable that the intermarriage (or perhaps intermixture would be more correct) of the two distinct moral types we have noticed, led to the debasement of both. It is evident that moral corruption had become deep and universal in the age of Noah, and the destruction of “the world of the ungodly” was the natural sequel.

We believe the account of the flood to be quite historical and credible. The objections that have been brought against the truth of the narrative—from the supposed universality of the flood; the size of the ark; the number of animal species gathered into it, &c.—are the creation of utter ignorance as to what the words of the narrative mean. They will not detain us here. Dr. Geikie, in his *Hours with the Bible*, vol. i., has well gathered up what can be found among the traditions of peoples in support of the historical accuracy of Genesis, and the marked resemblance of most of these traditions with the original fact as given in the Scriptures is an evidence that cannot be over-rated. Professor Dawson, the eminent Canadian geologist, has very sensibly suggested, in his *Origin of the World*, that the area covered by the human race was submerged through the subsidence of the land, which afterwards rose again, and that the waters may have drained off into the Caspian Sea, which is more than eighty feet below the level of the ocean.

What we are concerned with, however, is to shew the bearing of the narrative on the general scheme of God which the Scriptures reveal; and although we have not yet this scheme fully before us, we have, in our last chapter, seen enough to make the destruction of society by the flood intelligible. But it only becomes intelligible by remembering the testimony and the teaching which we

have already advanced, that men are mortal, perishing forms of being; that whole nations, in the estimate of God, are nothing and less than nothing; that they are as the dregs of a bucket. Did that flood sweep into an everlasting torment a world's population of immortal beings? Why then should God say, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, *for that he also IS FLESH*"? (Gen. vi. 3). Does not the record teach us that God proceeds on a principle of selection, to gather out of the generations the few righteous ones, while the imperfect forms of life, or those of which nothing can be made by the spirit's striving, disappear from the scene? Is there not in this record a clear refutation of "universalism"? And is not this an example of what God will yet do in the earth by Christ when he comes to "destroy them who destroy the earth"? (Rev. xi. 18). Peter cites this world-destruction as a terrible example to scoffers (2 Ep. iii. 5-7), arguing that what certainly happened once may happen again, viz., the destruction (not of the world of earth and air and sea, as some foolishly imagine, but, as Peter himself says, chap. ii. 5), of "*the world of THE UNGODLY.*"



## CHAPTER VI.

THE ELECTION OF ABRAHAM AND THE DAWN OF THE  
GOSPEL.

We have noticed the fact that the history of the human family found in Genesis, dismissing or dropping the line of Cain, pursues the genealogy through the family of Seth. We have now to observe a corresponding historical leaning to the line of Shem. That God had a special interest in Shem, or in the family line which he represented, is evident from the prophecy which finds a place for the "enlarged" Japheth "in the tents of Shem" (Gen. ix. 27), and which is prefaced by the intimation that the Lord is "the God of Shem." It is important to observe this tendency of the history, because the fact that there is such a tendency, and the explanation of the fact, will have much to do, first, with bible evidence, and next with bible interpretation. The tendency and leaning spoken of will shew that the history of the Scriptures is not about mankind in general, or for general illustrative purposes, but that, much more definitely, it is for the tracing of a progressive divine movement in the earth, which has as surely to do with Abraham as it has with Jesus of Nazareth, and which movement has been pre-arranged from time's beginning, and will run on till time's end. If the line of Cain is dropped, it is perhaps because it did not supply the suitable material out of which the divine purpose could be spun; if Shem is chosen, it may be because he will, in the order of nature and of time, be succeeded by an Abraham.

Until we reach the times of Abraham, there is very little to shew us by what means the few righteous men whose names we have given to us, escaped from the condemnation of sin; by what means they were plucked as brands from the burning, and, obtaining the favour of God, secured for themselves a hope of resurrection from the dead. That, concurrently with the curse which sin brought with it, was an arrangement, a promise, a ground of hope, we can believe, but cannot prove, by any testimony which would enable us to know what that promise was. Reluctantly we have to part with Genesis iii. 15, and admit that the words are not in any intended sense words of promise. If the Scriptures anywhere warranted the idea

that these words were a veiled reference to Christ, we should be glad to admit it, but there is no evidence of this whatever. Still, there must have been some star that shone through that dark night, telling of the heaven from which mankind had fallen, and whose trembling ray would mark the path that led back to God. We read of the "faith" of Abel, and we see him engaged in the religious and perhaps typical rite of sacrifice; we read of "righteous" Noah, and of Enoch, who "walked with God," and obtained a "testimony" that he pleased God (Heb. xi. 5). These men had faith, and "faith is the substance of things hoped for," and *hope* is related to *promise*; but in what terms the promise was given, and in what form or degree the hope existed—in other words, what premonitions of God's grace there were for mankind *before* THE DAWN OF THE GOSPEL we do not know, and refuse to speculate.

But when we reach the twelfth chapter of Genesis the sun appears on the horizon, and so early in human history the firmament of hope begins to clear.

In the historical and political movement which becomes visible with the calling of Abraham, we shall discern (notwithstanding a traditional theology has hidden it for well nigh two thousand years) by what means God intends to roll back the waves of sin and evil which have desolated human life in the earth, and bring on the days when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, "*and there shall be NO MORE CURSE.*" We call for our readers' entire attention at this point. According to a theology which is as popular as it is blind, we have not reached the neighbourhood of the "glad tidings" for humanity yet. We assert that, on the contrary, we are at its very portals; next moment its sound—its true sound—will be in our ears. We know we have not reached "Christ crucified" yet, about which the pulpit is so ignorantly eloquent, but we are within earshot of the gospel notwithstanding. The truth is "Christ crucified" is not THE gospel, though it is a development of the gospel, and may therefore be so denominated. Here is the clear proof of our statement. First, Christ himself preached the gospel, but there is no evidence that he preached the fact of his death on the cross. But secondly and more surely, the twelve apostles had been preaching the gospel for three years, and at the end of that time they were not aware that Christ was to suffer. Let us read from the ninth of Luke: at verse 2, Christ "sent them to preach." What?—"The kingdom of God." And in verse 6 it says, "And they departed and went through the



towns *preaching* THE GOSPEL." These two quotations shew us (what we shall abundantly prove soon) what the gospel *was* which the twelve disciples preached, and the next quotation will shew that in preaching the gospel they did not mention the death of Christ, it being a fact they did not understand. Read, then, the testimony of Luke xviii. 34.

Now, can it be said, after this, that the disciples, in preaching "the gospel," had preached "Christ crucified"? Does it not plainly shew that however true it may be that "Christ crucified" is implicitly contained in the gospel—that is to say, when the gospel comes to be fully expounded, "Christ crucified" will form part of its exposition—that the gospel, nevertheless, was preached without any reference to the death of Christ?

We shall immediately see that the gospel consists of good news concerning a spiritual political movement among men, announced in certain promises, made sure by certain covenants, which movement, while commencing no doubt in Eden, becomes very visible in the age of Abraham.

We find the initial statement of this in Galatians iii. 16—"Now, to Abraham and his seed were THE PROMISES made." Earlier in this chapter we are told that the "gospel" was preached unto Abraham in these words, "In thee shall all nations be blessed" (verse 8).

We must now turn to the book of Genesis, to see what these "promises" are that were made to Abraham. We ask attention to the following quotations:—

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I will show thee. And I will make of thee *a great nation*, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Abram then departs into the land of Canaan, when we read, "And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give THIS LAND," Gen. xii. 1-7.

Again we read, "The Lord said unto Abram (after Lot was separated from him), Lift up thine eyes and look from the place where thou art; northward and southward, and eastward and westward, for all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed

for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee," Gen. xiii. 14-17. Again, in the fifteenth chapter, we read, "And he brought him forth abroad and said, Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them, and he said unto him, *So shall thy seed be.* And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness," Gen. xv. 5-6. Again, at verse 18, "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given *this land*, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

Again, in the seventeenth chapter, at verse 2, we read, "And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and *thou shalt be a father of many nations.* Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be called Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee, and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generation, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, *the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of CANAAN for an everlasting possession*, and I will be their God."

Again, in chapter xxii. 16-18, we read, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore, and *thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, because thou hast obeyed my voice."

From the foregoing quotations it will be evident that God intends accomplishing, by the posterity of the patriarch Abraham, a great work of blessing for humanity. Reference to Genesis xxvi. 3, 4, and xxviii. 13-15, will shew that these covenants to Abraham were confirmed both to Isaac and Jacob. These covenants, though traceable to the *Old Testament* (so called), are the basis of all that God is going to do for the human race, and these "promises made unto the fathers" constitute

the only ground of hope for our sin-and-death-stricken world. So that Paul, on his defence at Jerusalem, could say, Acts xxvi. 6, 7, "And now I stand and am judged for THE HOPE of THE PROMISE *made of God unto our fathers*: unto which Promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, *hope to come.*" And again at Rome, to his fellow-countrymen, "For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you and to speak with you, *because that for the HOPE OF ISRAEL I am bound with this chain*" (xxviii. 20).

Let no one be thoughtless enough to raise the cry of "materialism" against the views which we are just beginning to unfold. *Substantial* the promises are; materialistic (unless the word is used in a sense uncommon) they are not. The unfolding of them will shew that they lay hold of that which is spiritual, though substantial; and the faith in them, which is the "*substance* of things hoped for," will be all the stronger for them presenting unto it, not shadows and fancies which adults hardly know whether to believe or deny, but solid things, which fill heart and intellect with delight and awe.



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE COVENANTS OF PROMISE.

BEFORE calling further attention to what that "good news" was which Christ and his apostles announced, we must classify and analyse somewhat the promises that were made to the fathers of Israel.

The first promise is that God will make of Abraham a GREAT NATION (Gen. xii. 2, xiii. 16, xv. 5, and elsewhere). From this it would appear that whatever God may be going to do for humanity, he is going to do by means of a *chosen nation*; that the instrument of his power will be a prepared and an illustrious people. We shall hereafter call attention to this fact as an evidence to human reason of the truth of revelation, but at present we simply observe that, in this first promise to Abraham, God is seen making preparation for a *national effort*; to influence the world's destiny by means of a chosen and organised community.

But, turning to the Epistle to the Galatians, we learn that this "nation" which Abraham was to be made was not composed only of such as were to be naturally descended from him, but there was contemplated a spiritual seed, comprising all who should possess an Abrahamic faith. "Know ye, therefore, that they which are OF FAITH *the same are the children of Abraham*" (iii. 7). This promise, then, is like a tree which, rooted in the soil of nature, is seen flowering in the air of the spirit, and we may expect, therefore, to see a two-fold fulfilment of the promise. Indeed, the first part of it has, in a way, been fulfilled; the natural seed of Israel has been made great, though its greatness is still chiefly future. But the head and crown of the "nation" will be all who are of "*the faith of Abraham*," from him who is the Christ to all who are Christ's, "and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 7-29).

The next item in the "promises" is that of a "*glorious land*" (Daniel xi. 41). In Genesis xiii. 14-17, and elsewhere, distinct announcements are made of what land it was which was covenanted to the fathers. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read (xi. 8, 9), "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out in a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out

not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in *the Land of PROMISE* as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." This promise of a territorial location is just what might be expected if God has before promised to make Abraham a great nation, and if this nation is to become the lever by which God will lift up the world.

Further, we see *supreme DOMINION in the earth* is guaranteed to Abraham's posterity. In chapter xxii. 17 we read, "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies," which promise we shall find involves universal dominion by them who are, in the full scriptural sense, "the seed of Abraham." A peaceful, triumphant, and everlasting occupation of the land of Canaan, therefore, is one among the things promised to the fathers of Israel.

We learn, again, that in Abraham's seed *all the nations of the earth are to be blessed*. We can hardly exhaust the fulness of meaning of such a splendid promise as this. With this text for our guide, we are enabled to follow out, through the ages of time, the divine purpose of blessing and salvation until we come to the age of the spirit, in which Christ is returned to the earth, and reigns over it from sea to sea. Something of what this promise contains we may yet ascertain, but now, gathering these lines together, we see in them the outline of that "gospel" which the apostles carried as a revelation to the Gentiles, and as a fulfilment of cherished hope to the Jews. To attempt to understand the apostolic preaching or the teaching of Christ, without remembering that these promises, just considered, were the basis of it, the staple of it, the very essence of it—even its very body, soul, and spirit—is utterly futile.

We are now prepared somewhat to understand the language of the New Testament (so called) in regard to what Christ and the apostles did actually preach as "good news" to mankind. This language is just what we might expect, as embodying in one short phrase all the divine purpose foreshewn by the promises. We learn, then, that until Christ's resurrection the twelve apostles preached "the gospel of the kingdom of God," and even after the resurrection, though the doctrine of "the cross" was added as a development of the truth, still the subject-matter of the preaching is represented with almost stereotyped uniformity as *the kingdom of God*. Let us consider the following passages:—

"Repent ye, for *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. iii. 2).

"Thy *kingdom come.*" . . . "*For thine is the kingdom*" (Matt. vii. 10-13).

"And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob *in the kingdom of heaven.* But *the children of the kingdom* shall be cast out into outer darkness" (Matt. viii. 11, 12).

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching *the gospel of the kingdom*" (Matt. ix. 35).

It is impossible in our limited pages to point out the many, the almost incessant, references throughout the gospels to the kingdom of God. But we may say that almost every discourse is visibly connected with this subject; that nearly every parable is an illustration of some aspect of the kingdom; that every miracle is a sample of the work of blessing that will be done when the kingdom is an established fact. The Jews accused Jesus of making himself *a king*: Jesus acknowledged that he was a king, but that his kingdom was not of "this age" or order of things. The accusation was nailed upon his cross. He talked about *sitting on the throne of his glory*; and the twelve also sitting on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. xix. 28).

Turning to the *Acts* of the Apostles, we find Philip at Samaria "preaching *the things concerning THE KINGDOM OF GOD and the name of Jesus Christ*" (Acts viii. 12). We find Paul at Antioch and elsewhere, teaching that "we must through much tribulation enter *the kingdom of God*" (Acts xiv. 22). At Ephesus, he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading *the things concerning the kingdom of God*" (Acts xix. 8). Parting from them, Paul says—"And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone, *preaching the kingdom of God*, shall see my face no more" (Acts xx. 25). On arriving at Rome, he invited the Jews to meet him at his lodging, "to whom he expounded and testified *the kingdom of God*, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts xxviii. 23). "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, *preaching the kingdom of God*, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts xxviii. 31).

In expounding the kingdom of God to the Jews, who were familiar with the promises, at least in their *form*, it was not

necessary to inform them of the kingdom as a fact. Of that they were already aware; but they needed teaching that Jesus was the Christ elect, and that spiritual qualities, instead of blood relationship to Abraham, were necessary to positions of rulership in the coming kingdom.

The gospel, then, if it is to be according to the Scriptures, must be "good news," which can be formulated by the expression—"the things concerning the kingdom of God;" and no teaching which has not this for its pith and marrow, can be considered scriptural. For this reason, we utterly condemn the clerical teaching of the modern pulpit, with its "immortal soul" theory; its "celestial world" notions, and its "cross of Christ" fiction. "The sufferings of Christ" have a true and deep relation to "the glory that shall follow," but the gospel consists not elementally in the sufferings, but in the glory. The cross was a means to an end; the gospel is the announcement of the end itself.

We possess Christ's own testimony for the fact that Abraham "saw" in these promises that were given him, Christ's "day," and that he "rejoiced" in the prospect. He received the divine assurance that he should become the father of many nations, the progenitor of powerful kings; that these should rule in power over their enemies; that he should be the heir of the world, that Canaan should be his, that a divine prosperity should attend him, and that in his seed, humanity should be made blessed. And he staggered not through unbelief, but throwing himself on the faithfulness of God, he left home, and associations of childhood and fatherland, and became a stranger and a wanderer all his days, *waiting* for the promises to be fulfilled.

*"He believed the Lord, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."*

Now, we contend that the believer in Christ to-day, if he is really a believer, is one who is looking for the same things that Abraham and the fathers looked for; that he is inspired with exactly the same hope that they were inspired with, and is clinging to the same "exceeding great and precious promises." The true believer knows that all the saints of old who have died in the faith have "not received the promises," but have seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. But they knew that they were not always to be strangers and pilgrims here, for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country—not the country from which they

came out, but a country settled and established and ordered by heaven. Though they die, or their children die, they do not dream of a "celestial" world; they account that God is able to raise them up even from the dead: they have obtained a good report through faith, but have not received the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Heb. xi.).

But, perhaps, the reader may be under the impression that the promises made to the fathers of Israel have been already fulfilled in the occupation of Canaan by the tribes of Israel who entered the land under Joshua.

This is a great mistake, as it will not be difficult to shew.

In the first place, Paul says that the promises made to the twelve tribes were promises to which they were still "*hoping to come*" in his day, which shews, in general, that these promises had not then been fulfilled to the Jewish people. In addition to this, we find Stephen testifying concerning Abraham's inheritance of *the land*, that God "gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child" (Acts vii. 5.).

But the complete argument, shewing that the promises have not been fulfilled to Abraham, is to be obtained by a study of the testimony contained in Gal. iii. 16-29, which will shew that the inheritance under the *promises* made to Abraham, and the inheritance under *the law* of Moses, are two absolutely distinct things. Paul writes that "the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ," the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot annul, that it should "make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Paul then explains the purpose and function of the law, to which we shall draw attention in our next chapter. In harmony with the teaching of this epistle to the Galatians, Paul writes to the Romans (iv. 13-16), "*For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. . . . Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.*"



When, therefore, we read in the Old Testament of the promises being "fulfilled" in the occupation of Canaan by the twelve tribes of Israel, we can only understand, according to the clear teaching just considered, a subsidiary fulfilment under a temporary legal arrangement, leaving the more ultimate and lasting fulfilment of the promise to the age when Christ, who is Abraham's seed, and all believers in Christ, who are the true children of Abraham, shall, with Abraham himself, possess the land of promise and become instruments of blessing to all nations. When that time comes, the HOPE OF ISRAEL will be no more an expectation, but, in the language of prophecy, it shall be said unto her, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 1).

We have now seen the distinct beginnings of a divine movement amongst men, in which a man of vast faith and intrepid obedience is chosen, and made the progenitor of a people who will eventually be constituted a "Kingdom of God" or "of Heaven" in the midst of humanity, and which latter will become a power of regeneration, in the widest sense, in its midst, making all families of the earth blessed.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME.

WE are told by the Apostle Paul, that the Jews possessed *the FORM of knowledge* and of *THE TRUTH* in the law (Rom. ii. 20), and that the constitution or order of things under Moses was "a shadow of things to come" (Col. ii. 17). In the epistle to the Hebrews, the law is said to "have a *shadow of GOOD THINGS TO COME*," but not to be "the very image of the things." With these words in our mind, we may now proceed to answer the question—What were the salient features of that Mosaic constitution under which the descendants of Abraham were organised?

Under examination, which must be somewhat detailed, we shall find that the people of Israel were constituted (not *THE kingdom of God* in the earth, but) *A kingdom of God* in the midst of the nations. Accepting this constitution as giving us in *shadow*, or general outline, the conception of the "good things to come," we shall be able to understand further what is that "good news" for the world which the apostles, drawing upon Moses and the prophets, preached in olden time.

We shall find, we say, that a kingdom of God has already existed, though at present it is broken up; that under Moses it was established in a rudimentary form, having its territorial foundation in that land in which it is to be established for ever. Every constituent thought which together completes the idea of the Kingdom of God is supplied in that system of things which obtained through Moses. A divine king, a chosen people, a divine constitution, a territory provided by God, everything that completes the conception was there, except that perfect obedience, and fruitfulness of blessing which belong to its final and fulfilled state.

If we read the following passages, 1 Chron. xxviii. 5; 2 Chron. ix. 8, xiii. 8, we shall find express mention of *the kingdom of THE LORD*. Into this comprehensive phrase it is easy to fit, as into a frame, all the particulars of the kingdom of God which we find in the Mosaic constitution. In fact, the organisation of Israel, under the laws of Moses, cannot be understood except as a kingdom of God. It is true that as such it was only a *SHADOW of things to*

come, an adumbration of the perfect and permanent form of government under Christ; but this arose from the necessity which demands that every institution should be adapted to the circumstances which call for its existence. To understand the ancient kingdom of Jehovah in Israel, two things, then, must be borne in mind, viz., that it was intended as a shadow or a symbol to raise the expectation of man to the perfect kingdom of heaven, and also to shew to man how impossible it was and is to acquire a legal right to life and blessing by the keeping of a law.

What we are concerned with in this chapter is to shew that the Mosaic constitution was clearly a kingdom of God in the earth, and that it is to be taken as "a shadow of good things to come." We may well believe that it was some such line as this that Jesus followed with his disciples, when, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." How we could wish to have listened to that exposition—to have listened as he drew attention to the outlines of that "shadow," and the harmony between it and the substance of the prophets! But we have the same material for thought and observation as that on which he laboured—there is the shadow still, the prophet still, and, in that miracle of history, the Jewish constitution, there is clearest evidence that God rules and intends to rule in the kingdoms of men, and that along political lines we may look to see his developing purpose. The Jews have for ages been God's witnesses in the earth, and in their political constitution we have a most striking instance of that witness.

Before going into particulars, it may be said that the most general survey of the Jewish annals shews us a people living in such relations with God as no other people have professed to live in. The naturalistic explanation of this fact is, that the religious faculty in the Jewish people has been unusually strong; that it has so predominated in that race as to give a theocratic cast to their history; that what art was to the Greek, religion was to the Hebrew, but that in both it was merely the efflorescence of their national genius. But the sufficient answer to all this is, that Jewish history not only reveals a nation under supernatural laws and guidance, but repeated and widespread *apostasy* from those laws and dark interregna of consequent captivity. If religion was the national genius of the Hebrews, how was it that this genius so often failed them? That genius could hardly have given them the highest standing amongst mankind in regard to religious ideas, then led them into the quag-

mires of idolatry, and then, again, restored them to their former position of supremacy. The naturalistic hypothesis requires that the Jewish theology should suffer no such mutations as history reveals; Baal and Ashtaroah, Moloch and Remphan, should never have usurped the position of Jehovah; the simple and spiritual beauty of monotheism should never have given way to pagan obscenity and folly, if the religion of the Jew had been simply the flowering of natural forces. There is no doubt that the Hebrews did, originally, come of a stock which was physically prepared, by its lofty brain-power, for high conceptions of theistic truth. Almost pardonable was the boast of them who said, "we have Abraham for our father," for it was something, no doubt, to have sprung from him who was the father of the faithful. But no physiological inheritance can explain the wonderful fact this paragraph calls attention to, viz., that Israel stands leagues apart from all ancient peoples in their national relation to God, having God for their king, his word for their law, his power for their defence, and his blessing for their reward. Quite before analysis begins, and running the eye swiftly over the surface of the picture, surely there never has been such a spectacle as this Israel once made. Mormonism in the midst of the United States does not make such a contrast as the Israelite polity in the pagan life of the world. Like a gem in the sand, or a nugget of gold in the rock, this marvellous nationality challenges attention as the wonder of the ages. However did it get there? What produced it? Shall we ever see the like of it again? These are the questions with which theological science is compelled to deal. Very great issues hang in part upon our findings in these enquiries. For if it can be shewn, with every degree of probability for it, that God *has once of old* lived in close relation and transaction with a chosen race; that, in fact, a rudimentary kingdom of God has once existed, then are we prepared to believe in that "restitution of all things," when "the tabernacle of David," which is now overthrown, shall be "built again," and all the promises made to the fathers of Israel, which were not annulled by the law, shall be made good. The whole difficulty in the mind of unbelief arises from it being unable to conceive that God should be as immanent in the *political* life of nations as he is granted to be in the natural life of the universe. Politics seem at present to be such a petty game, with such miserable accompaniments of mistake, and with such abortive results, that it seems, to many, altogether beneath the divine dignity to preside in these things. Now, the study of

the Israelitish polity will be as good a cure for this false impression as anything we know. The love of facts constraineth us when nothing else can. If such a thing has been, it may be again. What objection in logic can there be to that?

The thing first to be mentioned is that the Israelitish nation was organised under no human head, but reveals, especially in its earlier history, a peculiarly theocratic constitution. Every nation has its national founders and lawgivers; but Israel, while in a sense having these, is seen as no other nation is seen, acknowledging no head but the Lord. For it is only in a sense that either Moses, or Joshua, or the Judges were the heads of the people. They simply were so, under God. The merit of these men was that they were willing to be governed of God, and then to govern in the name of God. But Israel owed nothing to Moses in the same respect as Rome owed much to Numa and Justinian; or England to Alfred and William I. Everywhere Moses appears subordinate to the Divine will, and was, in fact, the representative of Jehovah to the people. So profoundly true is this, that when, on the saddest occasion of his life, Moses was betrayed into the use of a form of speech which implied that any prerogative resided in himself, the divine anger flashed out upon him, and denied him to cross the Jordan and enter the land. The law, which we shall study hereafter, is here to be considered as the expression of God's mind for this people, sufficient for all general statutory purposes, while a special arrangement of Urim and Thummim was provided when particular enquiry of the Lord was needful. Jehovah is seen everywhere to be the great head and centre piece of the constitution, which is the root idea of a kingdom of heaven. Time came, it is true, when the people demanded a king, but we can believe it was the spirit of that demand, rather than the form of it, that was so offensive to the Lord. For did not the Lord by his own law provide for the time when a king should be chosen? (Deut. xvii. 14). If he did, then it would be unreasonable to believe that, in merely asking for a king to govern them, Israel had committed sin. We understand that there were in the law regulations which, as Christ explains, were on account of "the hardness of their hearts," and possibly this provision for the election of a king may have been for such reason; but we may prefer to think that the front of their offending was their rejection of the Lord, as the Lord told Samuel, "They have *rejected* ME, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. viii. 7). Now, to ask for a king was not in itself to reject the Lord;

Next, then, to the *choosing* of Abraham we have to consider his *probation*. He, like all God's chosen ones, was perfected by suffering. Sustained by the promises which he accepted, though seeing them afar off, he bore up under the many trials of his life-long pilgrimage. He was rightly exercised by those trials. It is not always that afflictions leave men better for the suffering. Sometimes they harden, sometimes they chasten. In Abraham's case the result was altogether beneficial. His faith grew, and patience had her perfect work, and obedience grew more prompt and cheerful as the years went by.

What is true of Abraham is more or less true of Isaac and Jacob, and the sons of Jacob who went down to Egypt. They were entered into and passed through a probation before they were established as God's chosen people in the land of promise.

It is this *fact of probation*, a fact referred to in a hundred ways throughout the testimony, that shews the divine method of getting an elect people. If the record had shewn us God taking any family in their untutored natural state, unchastened, unawed; some race of Nimrod, or descendants of Esau, we should have failed to see what now strikes us as a wonderful and divine way of securing the desired end. No man can explain why, in the face of the promises to Abraham, he and his children should have been made pilgrims in Canaan; neither can any man explain the providence which carried Jacob and his family down into Egypt, and made them sufferers there through so many bitter years. We say no one can explain these things apart from the divine intention in the case. It would never enter into the head of any one writing a historical romance to picture a heroic race passing through hundreds of years of serfdom on their way to political pre-eminence. It is beyond the most subtle natural perception to see how that perfect submission to God's hand, that sweet docility of being, can be wrought in us, in order to a kingdom-of-heaven condition. The mystery of Abraham's pilgrimage, and of Israel's bondage, only clears up when the light of the divine testimony is admitted. That testimony tells us of a threshing, winnowing, purifying, developing purpose. Read the following passages:—Amos iii. 2, Dan. ix. 12, Zech. i. 6, and the last few chapters of Deuteronomy.

It is true that, taken as a whole, the Hebrews, after all their chastening, proved a stiff-necked people, and repeatedly it was necessary to admonish and punish them for their wilfulness. But it must in no wise be inferred that there was nothing to choose

between this people and the surrounding nations. Students of history admit the political and social superiority of the Jewish race. Their disobedience must be estimated by the jealousy of Jehovah and the exactness of his law. What would have appeared strictness in others, would have been negligence in them. The flaws in their conduct are more evident, because of the brightness of the light that beats upon them.

While this must be remembered, it has to be admitted that the probation was not successful in the case of the entire nation. But this is almost, if not altogether implied in the idea of probation. For, in a general test or trial, it may be anticipated there will be failure as well as attainment. But, after all, nothing in the way of moral development can be secured without probation, and it is this fact appearing so visibly in the divine method that points to the reality of the Israelitish constitution as a kingdom of God.

If a kingdom of any kind be founded there must be a geographical area for its establishment. An invisible kingdom of Heaven is a shift of speculating religionists. Both in the future and in the past it has boundary lines and landmarks. It has a solid basis in earth, arched over by the firmament of blue. This being true, however, of any kingdom, *in itself* it cannot be pointed to as another indication of the Mosaic kingdom of God. But what can be pointed to is this, that in selecting a territory for such a kingdom, the choice was directed to a most centrally-situated and luxuriantly-fertile country, which at the same time was peopled by an utterly depraved and death-deserving race. If an institution is to be set up in the earth, which by its operations is to affect the whole of humanity, the base of those operations may certainly be looked for in *the centre* of the habitable earth. Now, the land of promise, with its metropolis, Jerusalem, answers to this requirement exactly. Two lines drawn through the habitable parts of the earth will be found to intersect each other near Jerusalem. Thus one of the necessary conditions is fulfilled. Then, again, one can scarcely imagine any region chosen for the setting up of Jehovah's kingdom except a fertile one, where nature might reveal her opulence and all her generosity might find expression. The beauty of Eden will help us in this conception and the scenic glory described by the prophets as bursting forth in the future age. All God's works praise him, and though his moral work crowns them all, that work, at least, in the fulfilment and fruition of it, will find its accompaniment in the richness and purity of all natural surround-

ings. And where, may we ask, has nature shewn herself more bountiful than in the land described as "flowing with milk and honey"? In its valleys and on the slopes of its cultivated hills the products of all climes have enriched the happy husbandman. With good reason was one of the Jewish feasts made the feast of "tabernacles," when in the autumn of the year, when the harvest was over, the people met together in gladdest open-air enjoyment of dance and song, thanking God for the precious fruits of the fields. The richness of ancient Canaan was as ample as the desolation of modern Palestine is utter, both facts having much significance to the student of the kingdom of God.

But most remarkable is the fact that a land was chosen which was *thickly peopled*, and the reason that is assigned for their *dispossession*.

We read in the book of Joshua, xii. 24, that thirty-one kings were smitten by Israel, on the west of Jordan. Allowing these kings to have been nothing more than sheiks or chieftains ruling a few people, still the conquered country must have been a very populous one, with large means of self-defence, certainly capable of resisting even a well-organised invasion. And the question immediately rises, How came it that these fugitive and ill-provided Hebrews, seeking a territory for themselves, should select a land so apparently impossible to obtain; or, at all events, fenced round with the most formidable obstacles? Revolving this question, we shall be forced to recognise *divine appointment and guidance* in the matter. To see how ridiculous the enterprise looked from a merely human point of view, we have only to remember the counsel given by ten out of the twelve spies who had gone through the land. Forgetting the fact of divine assistance and protection, they were so filled with dismay by all they saw, and convinced of the impracticability of the enterprise, that they sought to dissuade their comrades from it. In their misgivings we are led to see that these Hebrews could never have formed such a project at all, if God had not been the "divinity that shaped their ends." Were these men who had bowed tamely beneath the whips of the Egyptians and who had grown used to bondage, suddenly to rise up in the might of heroes, and, badly armed, overthrow fenced cities, and put to flight scores of kings? Were there no lands where they might have peaceably settled without their choosing a province that bristled with swords and spears? Had their pilgrimage through a desert, so accustomed them to the use of arms and given them such a thirst



for war? Was the Hebrew "genius" equally great in war as in worship?

It is idle to discuss it; the narrative shews that God was with them in getting a territory for this his kingdom; this fact it was which reduced the huge difficulties in the case to nothing, and brought the walls of Jericho down like a house of cards. Canaan was central to the whole earth; it was fertile and lovely; and though thickly populated, it was chosen to be "the glorious land" of God's elect people.

But another significant reason is given us in the Scriptures shewing us why the inhabitants of Canaan were dispossessed of their lands, and in which we also see most surely the hand of God in Israel's destiny. Turning to Levit. xviii. 24-25, Deut. ix. 1-5, xviii. 12, we find that it was because of the *utter wickedness* of these nations that they were "vomited out of their lands." Whoever heard of such a reason as this being assigned for the invasion of a country and the driving out of its inhabitants? Herein is the divine signature to the matter; in this we see something which coincides exactly with Israel being a Kingdom of God. For surely this reason assigned for the dispossession of the Canaanites is of God. Its moral loftiness and righteous reasonableness proclaim that it is God and not man who is preparing a kingdom. Just imagine the Huns and Goths explaining their descent upon fair Italy by the statement that Rome had utterly corrupted herself! Why, even chivalry itself has never risen to such a moral height as this, and never before has the *casus belli* been that a recreant nation has forsaken the living God. Not only then do we see a *people* divinely selected, but a *territory* divinely prepared—another constituent in the integer of "the Kingdom."

The monarchies and empires of Gentilism exist in a Constitution of *Church and State*, with a clear distinction between civil and ecclesiastical law. The only exception, we believe, to this, is Turkey, whose entire national life is supposed to be regulated by the Koran. But the Koran in its conception and scope is such a manifest plagiarism that it can be dismissed without further remark. What we have left to consider is that, wherever the "kingdoms of men" have extended, civil and religious matters have been regarded as quite distinct—the laws of one have not been the laws of both. Nowhere outside the kingdom of God has legislation had for its basis and beginning the doctrinal announcement—"Hear, O Israel; the Lord thy God is *One* Lord." Connected with the kingdom of

God and the promulgation of its law, such an announcement is credible, as being reasonable and fitting, but as the basis of any Gentile constitution it would look like fanaticism and folly. We consider it, therefore, a clear indication of a divine kingdom in Israel that ONE LAW, and that law having a *religious* basis, covers and governs the whole life of that people. (When the astute Mohammed conceived the plan of the Koran, he was able to discern this fact and mould his own legislation after the same pattern. But to the law of Moses there is all the credit of originality, while in the Koran the marks of imitation are quite visible.) If God reigns at all, and is the author of a constitution for any people, surely he will *reflect himself* in that law, and this we find he has done in what we may call the *unity* of that legislation which he ordains for them. The profane notion of Church *and* State is altogether absent from the law of Moses. The State *is* the Church and the Church is the State. We are aware that certain English writers on ecclesiastical law have spun a fine theory to the effect that this is so still in this kingdom, but the ridiculousness of the contention is too evident. For, after all the tricks and forms and sophistries by which it is sought to maintain religion as being a national characteristic, we know well that the life of our legislation is inspired from very different sources than from God, and that preparation for political life is never held to consist in a profound study of the mind of Jehovah. But what is ridiculous when suggested of English politics, looks reasonable, and is unquestionably a fact, in connection with Hebrew law-making. It is God who lays down for them the tenure of the soil, as well as gives them the pattern of the Tabernacle. His hand is laid upon them in all their concerns. He prescribes for them in things which affect the health of their bodies as well as their peace of mind. It is one law which touches them everywhere, and sanctifies wherever it touches them.

Another peculiarity marking this divine constitution is, that all its legislation is based on a few simple *moral rules* which grow out of and define the relation of Israel to Jehovah. We know it is usually contended that the *ceremonial* part of the Mosaic law is very far from having its roots in any moral relation, and that such parts simply express, for *typical* purposes chiefly, the perfect right of God to obedience irrespective of any reason in the matter beyond his own will. We deny all this, first on the ground that the divine will never commands anything but what coincides with an intelligible moral relation; and second, because it can be shewn that the

roots of the ceremonial laws strike down into the soil of moral consideration, and, though typical, are by no means primarily so. One can hardly study the laws of Moses without seeing that they are based on the "ten commandments," which are a few brief moral affirmations. So true is this, that these "commandments" take the name of THE LAW, as being its foundation and nucleus. Modern scholarship, indeed, contends that these few rules, or little more, were the only "torah" that God gave by Moses, and that the amplifications and refinements of this torah are of a subsequent date—all which we refuse to believe. But this much being true, that *all* the legislation by the hand of Moses gathers round the moral teaching of the "ten commandments," how different is this from anything known, visible, or heard of, in human legislation. What is *wanted* in a perfect kingdom is just this—a few simple, central, universal, moral truths, which, in the hands of a perfectly wise discernment, shall become the touchstone and test of all actions. As a cumbrous weight of fat on a human body is a sign of physical weakness rather than of strength, so the cumbrous and artificial obesity of human law proves its imperfection and infirmity. What a labyrinth and wilderness human-made law is! What startling illustrations might be given of its prolixity, its inconsistency, and its uncertainty. We must cut down a forest before we can find the cave where justice is hid. But where God reigns we have simply with our hand to put the leaves aside, and, lo! it is there.

So that the law of this kingdom of God not only covers its subjects as touching them in all their affairs, but it also reaches to the very roots of life, and affects them (where it is only of use to affect them) in their moral springs. Human law does not attempt this. The best king, perhaps, that ever sat on the English throne—Alfred—attempted a code of laws compounded largely of the Mosaic torah, but though the effort was well-meant, such legislation could not work except where God was in the throne and his spirit accessible to the rulers. But God was in Israel's midst; by his spirit he was *en rapport* with Moses and the rulers, and therefore a few simple formulæ were sufficient for national purposes and a very perfect legislative efficiency.

The chief thing to study in attempting to understand any kingdom is its LAWS, which form what is known as its *constitution*. The general remarks already made upon Israel's laws may now be followed by a more particular illustration of them. It will not be

necessary to take them all into consideration; a few examples will serve for all the rest.

In this connection it will be well to remember two statements in the New Testament concerning this law. We learn that *the law was a schoolmaster* (or an usher), *to bring Israel to Christ*; and, also, that *Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*. From these statements we gather that the object for which the law was given was the same object as that for which Christ came. Now, we learn (from the fullest text bearing on the subject, Rom. iii. 25-26) that the object for which Christ came was *to declare or manifest GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS*, so that the law must have had the same object in view. A number of passages might be quoted bearing this out, but it will hardly be necessary.

Keeping this always in mind, we shall now be able to explain this unique constitution. With good reason it is unlike any other constitution known to history, when the purpose of it is seen to be so extra-human and unworldly as this. It would be absurd to place it in comparison with any other. But, if it is a kingdom of God, and a provisional institution which shall lead up to and give place to a perfect kingdom of heaven, this will surely be its most certain and most salient feature. For what does God's kingdom mean but that God is getting *his righteousness* acknowledged and established in the earth as the only natural and permanent basis for human life and welfare? And any national and social arrangements which make for this end, prove themselves, in so far, a divine constitution.

Let us look at the laws concerning *sacrifices*. It needs no proving, but only to remark that the sacrifices of "bulls and of goats" were connected with the *transgressions* of the Israelites, and were instituted as a provisional atonement for them. In the shedding of the animal's blood there was a tacit confession by him who presented the offering that, by transgression, life was forfeited. Every time the life of a representative animal was poured forth, there was a recognition of the righteousness of God, which affirmed death to be the penalty of sin. What could be more impressive as an *educational* arrangement, preparing man to "behold the Lamb of God," if God is aiming at affirming in man's conscience the divine righteousness? Surely, to them, sin would appear "exceedingly sinful," as, year after year, they witnessed innocent victims bleeding and dying on its account. To be sure, men get used to seeing blood shed. But, in this case, children would ask their parents as

to it, and parents were instructed to teach their children all the law. It would be impossible for this red significance to fade away. The deep meanings of things were constantly being rehearsed in their ears. They were constantly being taught that temporal life and blessing in their land hung upon their obedience to Jehovah. They did not need to be taught that the flesh was weak, and so, when they sought atonement by sacrifice, it would be a plain declaration of God's righteousness to them.

Certain sacrifices were of the nature of *gifts of gratitude*, and these would be associated with God's righteousness also, but in a manner somewhat different from the sacrifices of blood. In presenting, *e.g.*, the first-fruits of the land, there was a constant recognition of God's authority and power, and that he alone was the source of all good. Not only so, but the presentation of first-fruits would bring forcibly to mind Jehovah's faithfulness. The fact is, anything which tends to bring God vividly before the mind will bring his righteousness also into remembrance. It does not necessarily need the dark back-ground of sin to make God's character discernible, else how would it shine forth to us when sin has disappeared? but in the arrangements by which human obedience and divine faithfulness are brought face to face there will be everything necessary to quicken its conception. This will explain how such offerings, as "first-fruits" for instance, realise the general end and purpose of the law. Blood is not shed, but submission and dependance are confessed; which qualities, when forthcoming, make it unnecessary for the divine law to assert itself in sterner demands.

While in this line of thought; there is another law to be referred to, which makes it very plain that Israel is established in a kingdom of God. We refer to the law in connection with their land tenure, which required them *to let their land lie fallow every seventh year*, having the promise connected with it, that each sixth year should yield so plenteously that it should tide them over until the *ninth* year. Surely such an arrangement could not exist under any merely human constitution: it involved the action of a miraculous providence, and cannot be understood apart from it. But a divinely-constituted state may make such terms with respect to the soil as it chooses; and, if the object is to make the nation feel how utterly it is dependant on God, such terms as these are not without reason. This covenant with the people supplies the opportunity of Jehovah shewing his righteousness to them in an impressive manner; of

training them in national obedience, and showing that the land is sanctified as truly as the people living upon it. If God is to have a kingdom, everything pertaining to it must bear this sanctified character, and so we find the land having its appointed "Sabbaths." And the divine righteousness appears in the miraculous providence which fills the nation's barns with plenty every sixth year, or the blasting and mildew which overtake national disobedience. We have before called attention to the principles on which God seeks a territory for his kingdom; this extraordinary tenure of the soil perfectly agrees with those principles; in every step taken and appointment made, we see God establishing his authority and manifesting his righteousness.

These illustrations of the laws by which Israel was governed, will suffice to shew that God was giving, in draft outline, an idea of the kingdom which shall be finally established in the earth, when that "seed" shall come to whom the promises most pointedly referred. We have seen that Christ, and all who are Christ's at his coming, constitute, in the highest sense, the seed of Abraham; therefore, no interpretation of "the gospel of Christ" can be the true one which does not, substantially, reproduce this "shadow," or at least embody the fundamental ideas which it shows forth. Whether the popular teaching of the day, of what is called "the gospel," does this, we leave our readers to judge.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW.

THE conventional names by which the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are now designated and known, are as misleading as the general interpretation of these Scriptures is false. The extent to which they are misleading may be gathered from the fact that what is called the "Old Testament" is generally supposed to deal with things that have been long defunct, while the "New," it is imagined, has superseded the "Old." Hence we find that "religious" people are less densely ignorant of the writings of the apostles than they are of Moses and the prophets; that extensive quotation from the latter is viewed by most people with suspicion; and, as for getting anything like an adequate conception of the "glad tidings," or the "good things to come," from the old Hebrew Scriptures, it is regarded as impossible.

Now, this is a totally false impression, and a pernicious delusion. Let us ask what Scriptures were they, about which Jesus reminded the Jews that they were in the habit of *searching*; and added, "these are they WHICH TESTIFY OF ME"? What Scriptures were they which Jesus took up, and from which he expounded unto the disciples *the things concerning himself*? (Luke xxiv. 27). What Scriptures were they which Paul told Timothy were *able to make him WISE UNTO SALVATION*? What Scriptures were they which the fearless Bereans studied, and which were everywhere expounded by the apostles? Was it the *old Covenant* that the apostles expounded and preached? We know better than that: it was the *new Covenant* which they preached, and for information about which they went to what men are foolishly in the habit of calling the "*Old Testament*" (which means "*Old Covenant*"). In reality the new covenant dates back, in respect of the promises which it formally embodies, prior to the time of the old covenant; in fact the new is more ancient than the old. It existed before the old was born, and it exists now the old has passed away.

The old covenant was established with Israel at Sinai when the law was given; but the promises, which can be visibly traced to the age of Abraham, both precede and succeed that law; and when

these promises become actually and fully fulfilled, then the new covenant may be said to be carried out.

What we have to consider is, Israel established under the old covenant—that temporary arrangement which was “added” to the promise “because of transgressions,” and designed as an introduction to the new covenant, which, consisting of “better promises,” created for the faithful “a better hope.”

The nation must have its time of probation as well as the individual; and there appears to have been as much necessity for the “fall” in a political sense as in the case of the individual man. So the earlier part of the Hebrew Scriptures is taken up with the account of the nation’s trials; their captivities and deliverances; the rise and fall of their political fortunes, as their loyalty to Yahweh waxed or waned. The history which has been left us of the nation of Israel is like no other history extant—the moral drift is perceptible throughout. God has chosen them out of all nations for himself; but, instead of this being a reason why they should be exempt from evil, it constitutes the very reason (Amos iii. 2) why Yahweh should punish them for all their iniquities. The privilege of Israel, as a nation, is that she shall be specially tried, sifted, and refined, and, by a preparation so painful as to include centuries of dispersion and downtreading, she is to be brought to acknowledge her redeemer.

In the history of the Kingdom of God under the old covenant we see the nation of Israel reduced to the lowest condition—divided, broken, shattered, well nigh extinct; then again rallied and united by some brave leader raised up of God, who has inspired the tribes both with religious faith and military courage.

It is not our purpose to dwell on the incidents of this history; sufficient is it to point out that the nation is seen to be undergoing, in many ways, an education, or it is being taught a lesson touching what God would have its political life to be, and how a sanctified people ought to conduct themselves before their God and Lord. If this “Christian country”—this “religious public” were but only half awake to the fact that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, a great many valuable lessons might be learned from the study of Israelitish history. But the study of sociology and kindred sciences is drifting the general mind from seeing how God can be practically related to human affairs, and so the Israelitish history would be a most useless study. The first duty (and difficulty) would be to get rid of every supernatural element in it;



which process would take from it everything which makes it of the greatest value to us.

At the period of the nation's greatest prosperity—when its borders had been enlarged to an extent never reached before, and it had assumed more perfectly the character of a kingdom of God in the earth; when the laws were loyally obeyed, and the rites of worship were religiously performed—God is seen unfolding, by still further and more definite promises, that new covenant which is finally to be fulfilled to his people Israel.

By turning to 2 Samuel vii. 1-6, we shall find the further text of this covenant, in which God promises to establish David's "house," in absolute perpetuity, and the people of Israel as a kingdom for ever. This is a new departure, so to speak, on the lines of the promises made to the fathers. First, the general promise as touching Abraham's seed; next, the definite announcement as to the Davidic house. What God is going to do for mankind becomes more distinct as the ages advance, and the "good news" at last become a definite promise to establish in the earth David's family, to reign for God in the midst of Israel.

To all who are familiar with what is called the New Testament, it will be evident that Jesus Christ is that seed of David to which the promise ultimately refers. David himself, speaking by the spirit, makes this evident, for, referring to the "everlasting covenant" which God had made with him, he confesses that *this is all his salvation and all his desire* (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7). Nothing could answer to these words but the coming and kingdom of him who was both David's son and David's lord. But the question is put for ever at rest by Peter, who at Pentecost, connects the resurrection of Jesus with this covenant as its fulfilment (Acts ii. 30).

What Peter affirmed at Pentecost, that Christ was the one promised unto David to sit on his throne, is in harmony with the entire representations of the prophets and apostles. Can anything be plainer than the words of the angel who foretold the birth of Jesus to Mary—"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end"? (Luke i. 31-33). Was not this the new covenant drawn out in promise, though not yet carried out in fulfilment? Was not this the "Hope of Israel"?

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Was not this "the hope of the promise made of God unto our (the Israelitish) fathers?—unto which promise the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come" (Acts xxvi. 6, 7). Was not this that which Joseph of Arimathea expected, "who also *waited* for the kingdom of God"? (Mark xv. 43). Did not Simeon "wait" for the same thing, who looked for "the consolation of Israel"? (Luke ii. 25); and also the Jews, addressed by Anna, the prophetess, "who looked for redemption in Israel"? (verse 38). Was not this the new covenant, containing "the sure mercies of David," which the twelve preached as a glorious gospel during the three years of their Master's ministry; about which also they and he had *special converse* during the forty days subsequent to the resurrection, and which led the apostles to enquire, "Lord, wilt thou *at this time* restore the kingdom to Israel"? (Acts i. 3-6). The common pulpit explanation, that this question shews the disciples still to be affected with carnal notions of Christ's kingdom, shews utter ignorance of the facts of the case. Had not this kingdom of God been the subject of their preaching for three years? It is impossible that they could have been fundamentally mistaken as to the very subject which Christ had sent them to preach. Besides which, there were Moses and the prophets for their study and guidance. The outline of things to come, which Paul affirms the constitution of things under the law to be, is well filled in, as to many of its details, by all the prophets who spake of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. With these before them, and with Christ's own conversation on the subject, during the forty days, still in their ears, how could they have fallen into radical error touching the kingdom of God?

These remarks go to shew that the ideas of those who affirm that the kingdom of God is a metaphorical expression, setting forth the invisible dominion of Christ in "the soul," or of the moral power he exerts in the world, are totally mistaken. Not that they are mistaken in supposing that Christ does exert a certain moral power in the earth, or that there are some hearts which are inspired with reverence for Christ, but in that this does not answer to the definite things both promised and expected in connection with that new covenant which is made with Israel.

The substantial, objective and visible character of the kingdom of God is not only to be gathered from the direct and explicit statements concerning it—as, *e.g.*, when we are told that the Lord God shall give unto Jesus the throne of his father David—but it is also

to be inferred from a great variety of expressions employed in connection with the kingdom, which expressions could not otherwise be understood. Orthodox people, with their fine spiritual apprehension, cannot understand how there can be such a thing as a heavenly political administration in the earth, and how this kingdom of heaven will have as real and objective an existence as, say, the empire of Great Britain; but consideration will shew how much of the language of the Scriptures requires this view, while all its language is in perfect harmony with it. For even the two passages (there are just two) which are always relied upon to shew that Christ's kingdom is a "spiritual" rule (a fact we by no means deny when rightly understood), clearly harmonise with the fact that this spiritual kingdom will have its territorial location in the earth, and that it is to be a political engine of government acting upon and amidst the mortal lives of earth's inhabitants. It is true that Christ said to the Jews, "the kingdom of God is among you," and that Paul said, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy spirit;" but neither utterances conflict with the fact that we have just referred to. The kingdom was "among" the Jews of Christ's day in virtue of the king's presence who was in their midst. He brought the kingdom near to them, and in his power and glory made it visible; nevertheless, he said to these same Jews, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation that bringeth forth the fruits thereof." To make Christ say that he would withdraw from them his *spiritual authority* and transfer it to others, is ridiculous; the passage shews that what is contemplated was a certain visible and political position of national privilege. So, when Paul uses the words quoted before, there is a plain meaning for them, which cannot be supposed to destroy what Christ said—"I will not drink of the fruit of the vine UNTIL I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." Certainly the kingdom of God will be in its genius very far removed from a formal fulfilment of rites which relate to externals rather than anything else; but this does not exclude the fact that to "eat" or "drink" will be quite compatible with the loftiest spiritual functions. When these words of Christ were spoken, the disciples were drinking wine in a very literal manner; then the kingdom he speaks of must needs be such that to speak of drinking wine "anew" in it shall not be to present incongruous ideas.

So also when, in Matthew viii. 11, we read that "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," it is evident that the "kingdom" is a thing possessing "a local habitation and a name;" that it has a relation in thought to "the east and west," and is not incongruous with what is called *sitting down* therein. The orthodox ideas of Christ's "spiritual" kingdom have no relation to east or west, or any sort of session in it. To talk of man coming out of Ethiopia into the forgiveness of sins, or to sit down with Abraham in justification by faith, would be utter nonsense.

Again—when we read in Matthew xii. 28, "But if I cast out demons (heal diseases) by the spirit of God, *then the kingdom of God is come upon you*," it is clear that this kingdom is something that can be identified, in part, with physical healing, for the restoration of sight and speech is spoken of as a sample of its power. How such a fact can be construed in harmony with popular ideas of Christ's kingdom it is hard to see. We wonder how many dumb and blind persons there are in the churches, who believe that they are already in the kingdom, having Christ reigning in their hearts. But Christ himself says that the sign of the kingdom of God having "come upon" a man, is that such things as blindness and dumbness are healed by spirit-power. According to this, these very diseases prove that the sufferer, however much he may be a believer, is not yet in the kingdom, for then its power would have "come upon" him to heal him.

Further, we find Jesus stating, in a very precise manner, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death *till they SEE* the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28); or, as Mark reports it, "Till they have *seen* the kingdom of God come with power" (ix. 1). That this "seeing" relates to the "vision" of glory which was soon after permitted to the three disciples, Peter, James, and John, as "eye-witnesses of his (Christ's) majesty" (2 Peter i. 16-18), which "vision" was to them a brief revelation of "his power and coming," seems perfectly evident. But, if so, then the kingdom is something that, at least, can be *seen*. Its glory could be *seen* in "vision;" in the symbolic splendour of the "holy mount," its greatness and power could be revealed. In the lustrous raiment, the apparition of Moses and Elias, and the testifying voice from heaven, glimpses were obtained by the astonished three of "that world" where resurrection shall lead to life, and life to authority and power. But how inconsistent

is all this vision of things if the kingdom is Christ's sway over the heart merely. Can men "see" that? What have "Moses and Elias" to do with that? What have white and glistening robes to do with it?

So, through many of the expressions used, and statements made, about the kingdom, we see—we are compelled to see—a visible institution of spirit-power in the earth; spiritual, because founded and fashioned by spirit; political, because having to deal with the organized public life of mankind; substantial and visible, as having its principal territory in Palestine, its seat at Jerusalem, its throne on Mount Zion, its rulers of cities, its possessions "under the whole heaven," its public worship, and a hundred other marks of objective reality which are furnished by prophecy, parable, and the doctrinal teaching of the word of God.

But the proof that the kingdom of God is not yet in existence consists, properly, of all the facts which shew that this kingdom is *the theocracy of Israel RESTORED*.

That the nation of Israel once constituted a kingdom of God, is proved by the fact that Christ told the *rebellious* Jews that the kingdom should be TAKEN FROM THEM, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matt. xxi. 43). It could not have been taken from them if they had never possessed or constituted it. This truth is clearly reflected in the parable of "the wicked husbandmen" of this chapter. But it must not be supposed that when Christ speaks of the kingdom being given to another "nation," he means it is to be taken from the Jews *as a race* and given to a people racially different. In the first place, Christ's words do not say this, and in the second, the whole teaching of the Scriptures is against it. It is a *rebellious* nation that forfeits its political privileges, but it is an *obedient* one to whom they will be restored. Paul's argument in Romans xi. proves that "God hath not cast away his people." He affirms that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (v. 29), which means that what God has promised to do he will perform: he does not change his mind. This chapter shews us that, as a nation, they have suffered "blindness," and, as a nation, they will have the eyes of their understanding opened; "and so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written—'There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob'" (v. 26).

The kingdom of God fell when Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Roman arms, and her children scattered: it is to be restored when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory (Matt.

xxv. 31-34), and when the twelve apostles shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel (Matt. xix. 28). Ezekiel prophesied (ch. xx. 27) that it should be "overturned" till HE *should come*, whose right it was. That this period was not at Christ's *first* coming is evident from the disciple's question, "Lord, wilt thou *at THIS time restore AGAIN* the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6). And that the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not its setting up is proved by the fact that in Paul's day this apostle speaks of it as still a thing of "promise" and of "hope" (Acts xxvi. 6-7), besides which, he testified to the Athenians that it was not a fact already realised, but existing only in the determination of God (Acts xviii. 31).

The notion that Christ is at present reigning over "the Church," absurdly overlooks the scriptural fact that Christ is not to reign *over* the saints, but *WITH* the saints; they being associated with him in the Heavenly control. The promises of heirship, power, and dominion, were made to Abraham as well as to his seed (Rom. iv. 13; 1 Cor. vi. 2; Dan. vii. 18-27; Zech. xiv. 5). The righteousness which is by faith receives its "crown" at the *appearing* of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Peter v. 4). So when the saints redeemed from the grave are made "kings and priests unto God," we find them anticipating reigning "on the earth" (Rev. v. 10). How utterly ignorant of Scripture testimony, then, it is to teach that Christ is reigning now, having the saints for his subjects, when everywhere these are described as sharing regal power with him over the nations of the earth.

The whole glad tidings are missed, when this truth is missed and mistaken, concerning the kingdom of God—the kingdom of Heaven. And, being without the truth, professing "believers" are without faith; for faith is nothing but belief and obedience of the truth. It is the conviction of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for. Abraham *believed* God—that is, he believed the promises God made to him, and believed them so absolutely, that he consented to be a wandering pilgrim all his life, leaving home and friends and fatherland, and to die a stranger in a strange land. He knew that land was to be his, for God had given it to him by promise (Gen. xvii. 8; Heb. xi. 9), and he knew that he should inherit it when it should become a *heavenly* country. Dying without receiving the promise (Acts vii. 5; Heb. xi. 13), he and his faith-born posterity believed in their resurrection from the dead (Luke xx. 37, xiii. 28), in their inheriting the kingdom of Heaven,

and becoming God's national instrument of blessing to the whole earth (Gen. xxi. 3, xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 8).

While we can find abundant testimony that the saints are to reign over the earth when Israel's kingdom is restored, where is the testimony shewing that they are reigning already? Not a single text can be produced. Indeed, the condition of the saints, until Christ appears to exalt them of low degree, is one of humiliation and trial. Making use of this fact, Paul writes to Timothy (2 Ep. ii. 12)—“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,” shewing that the suffering is a present fact, and reigning a future one; and shewing, further, that as *we* do not now reign, neither does Christ, for both reign together.

It would be quite a false impression to suppose a return in the future age to the Mosaic economy, AS IT WAS, or the restoration of a past Judaism. Not that there was anything barbarous, or mean, or paltry in the system represented by that term. We are expressly taught the system was a “glorious” one, only paling its fires by reason of “the glory which excelleth” (2 Cor. iii. 7-11). Never has any nation, whatever may have been its happiness of rule and opportunities of development, been constituted in so favourable a manner, and planted in such conditions of prosperity, as the Jews under Moses. Doubtless the fundamental principles underlying that prosperity will be found again in the restored kingdom of Israel. But when we speak of the kingdom of Israel restored, we do *not* mean that every statute will be re-enacted, and that every ceremony and ordinance will be re-enforced. We mean very much the same as when we say of a public building, say a town hall or a theatre, “It was built in 1812, burnt down in 1860, and restored in 1866.” We do not mean that the same old-fashioned and now inconvenient building has been exactly reproduced, but that *the idea* which that old building represented has been reproduced in the new. This is a sufficient reply to those who say, “When Christ told the Jews that the kingdom of God should be taken from them, he could not have meant the *millennial* kingdom, for this they never possessed.” This is just what Christ did mean, and might be said just as reasonably as saying that the Tay bridge is being restored, when actually the *identical* bridge that fell into the sea is not. The truth is suffering almost as much from pedantry as from tradition, and it is pedantry to refuse to the words of Christ that elasticity which belongs to all language, and which we illustrate for ourselves every day.

But while we are not affirming the revival of the Mosaic order except in its fundamental principles, what are they doing whose theology can dispense with Judaism altogether; who can do very well indeed without any Jews at all; who need not necessarily refer even once to Abraham, Moses, or to David, but who find in "the larger teaching of Christ" (!) all that is necessary to illustrate and enforce their brain-spun doctrines of "natural religion"? We resent, as a thing deeply offensive to us, this liberty which is taken with God's word. We deny with indignation the "larger teaching" of their contention, and we are indignant because of the cool impudence which puts upon God's Son the patronage of their pagan and naturalistic philosophy. True, in Christ there is a "larger" teaching than in Moses, and this the law of development will enable us to understand, but every bloom unfolded on that tree of "truth" shews how radically that teaching rests on Moses and the prophets, and how God's plan for the "families of the earth" has, from first to last, been to bless them "in Abraham's seed." But what we find fault with is this, that while the *New Testament* (not to name the *Old*) has very much to say about Abraham, and what he is to inherit, and whose seed it is that with him shall inherit and govern and bless the earth; though it says much about the kingdom of God, that substance of which the Mosaic economy was the "shadow;" though it tells us that the Jews had "THE FORM" of the truth in the law (Rom. ii. 10)—that the promises, the adoption, and the glory pertained to them (Rom. ix. 4); that *salvation* was by means of them (John iv. 22); that it was blasphemy for one to call himself "a Jew" if he were not (Rev. ii. 9, iii. 9); and that finally the song of the kingdom's triumph shall be "the song of *Moses* and the Lamb"—while this is so, we murmur that "theology" hangs by none of these things, and would be quite unaffected though none of them were true. The fact is, "religious" people are being drugged with a naturalistic and philosophical compound, flavoured or coloured with some slight bible essence, and labelled "Christianity" under the prescription of the "doctors" of the theological faculty. The mixture is not unpleasant; a more liberal addition of "universalist" sentiments, eloquently "ministered," has made it more palatable still; it stimulates and stirs the religious nature; but as sure as the testimonies of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are true, there are no healing or nutritive or heat-giving elements in it. Theology is a philosophical drug, with its Trinity, Atonement, and natural Immortality, and ideas of a



celestial world and of universal salvation. We challenge all the "reverend" ability and scholarship and erudition of the earth to shew these orthodox ideas to be contained in the Scriptures. To maintain such ideas, the greater part of what is found within the lids of the book would be totally useless. What analogy is there between popular sermonizing and the apostolic habit of "reasoning out of Moses and the prophets"? When Chrysostom, "the golden mouth," discourses allegorical eloquence in the church which applauds his periods and perorations as they would in a theatre; when Henry VIII. defends the faith, by prescribing for his prelates the "heads" of their sermons; when Joseph Cook seeks to meet the current scepticism by propositions based in *natural* knowledge; when Ward Beecher culls from the high moral emotions and experiences of humanity the garlands and festoons with which he hides in scenic beauty whatever philosophy he possesses; when Joseph Parker seeks to turn a plebeian orthodoxy into something more aristocratic, by the affluence of thought, which would be truly brilliant if it were but true;—what comparison, we ask, exists between this intellectualism, this "natural-mind" production, this effort to *think* a gospel out, and the apostolic habit and endeavour? This product is certainly not "divinity;" it is not "theology:" it is "the thinking of the flesh." Who shall blame us, then, when we insist upon a return to Moses and the prophets; and when studying these we seek to shew that *theology*, or the knowledge of God, consists centrally of what God has purposed to do for mankind by means of "the seed of Abraham," and that this purpose has been shadowed forth by the establishment of a theocracy in the earth? This view not only provides a veritable gospel for mankind, but finds a place for every testimony of the book; utilises every fragment of history, genealogy, and poetry it contains, and binds together in one consistent, progressive, and glorious purpose, the whole work and providence of God.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE WORLD TO COME.

As the firmament spans the earth, so does the purpose of God overarch the ages. Throughout the entire concave of that purpose, revelation travels like the refulgent sun. Its rise is in Eden; its zenith is the glorified King of kings; it sets in the earth's Sabbath eve, when its light is no more needed. With a divine gravitation that cannot falter, each atomic event finds fitting place and function in the divine Cosmos. Evil, as well as good, completes the picture, both making its light and shade. The wrath of man is made to praise the Creator. Outside the sphere wherein the human will revolves, there is the encircling law of God, which carries us and our freedom as well, along the path of its purpose. Like the earth on which we tread, where gravitation leaves us free to move and wander where we will, but, nevertheless, carries us with it as it spins along its planetary groove, so God's purpose is unchecked—though we do what we may. His plan includes our freedom. It has been adjusted to all we may calculably do. Human nature, though it has a sphere of freedom, cannot make more than a given number of moves. There are certain laws of our nature, without which it could not be a nature, and against these it is impossible to act. All action, in a sense, is according to law, and our freedom comes in where we are able to choose between one course and another. Now, God's plan is adjusted so that whatever course we may take his end is gained: move "pawn" or "queen," he wins the game. Indeed, our illustration can hardly be better than this game of chess. The laws of our nature may be compared to the rules of the play. If we play at all, or make a single move, it must be according to the law. Freedom consists in the possibility of our making this move rather than that, and God's will is accomplished, in that, play as we may, he foresees and wins the game.

Of course there is an insoluble residuum of mystery after all has been said, as to how God is getting his purpose fulfilled, notwithstanding human freedom; but it is a mystery which it partakes in common with many other subjects. The balance of nature, for example, is preserved by the opposing action of repellent forces.

They are the centripetal and the centrifugal forces, acting together, that make the earth's spherical orbit. Without the binding force of gravitation, again, our free movements would be impossible. And so with almost everything—we must recognise the two poles of truth, as do the Scriptures. We must acknowledge FACTS, whether we are able to discern their inner harmony or not. What, then, are the facts?

First.—Design and plan are stamped on everything we see. They are the divine signature to all the works of God. Not only or always in a material sense, but often in their *moral* use, things shew their maker's design. This is true in every order of creation, the lower things existing for the higher, and all things for God.

Second.—While nature, revealing design in multitudes of particular things, cannot say what is the one governing conception, or purpose, which binds all things together, revelation is majestically eloquent upon the subject. That purpose is to establish, in the ages of eternity, a redeemed, holy, and delectable earth, which shall be filled with God's glory, that shall chiefly be reflected in the fair faces of an immortal population.

Everything that is, or ever has been, is, in greater or less degree, related to this end. Ever since the first constitution of the material atom, through all phases of natural evolution, in every small or great event of history, down to our own day, crowded with incidents which wellnigh give us their meaning with articulate voice—everything, like a procession, has been marching onward to the divine end.

The world present, then, and the world to come, will have their *moral* cause as well as their physical, for they spring from reason as well as power.

Let us see if we can learn anything of this moral cause.

We learn from the testimony in the Epistle to the Colossians (i. 15-18), that the whole creation centres in Christ, and springs from him as its cause. "All things were created by him, and for him: he is before all things (in the sense of pre-eminence), and in him all things consist." We do not understand this as meaning that Christ was the physical originator of all things, but that he is their *moral cause*, so that if he had not been, nothing would have been. He is the root and reason of the whole creation; so in him all things "consist," or hang together. That Christ is not the creator of all things in the sense of physical origination, is proved by the same passage, which declares that he is "*the first-born of every*

CREATURE." If he is a "creature," he is one of the all things created; and a creature cannot create itself. But the fact of him being "the first-born of every creature" is assigned in this passage as being the reason why all things were created by him, which fixes the meaning of these words, viz., that from this pre-eminent one all lower things derive their being, having their moral cause or reason in him to whom the whole has been framed. The same meaning belongs to Hebrews i. 2, where the fact of Christ being "appointed the heir of all things," leads to the observation that by him God "made the worlds" (or ages). The worlds (ages) were born with a view to Christ inheriting them, therefore they exist in him, for him, and by him. Creation is here traced to its origin in reason; as the end of all things is moral, so the source and cause of things is moral too.

We thus learn that the Cosmos and all that pertains to it is the patrimony and inheritance of Christ. The nations are to be given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. "The kingdoms of this world" are to become his province, and his power is to overshadow everything "under the whole heaven."

The Christ being the root and reason of creation, or "the BEGINNING of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14), we shall discover that all things have been fitted or framed to the Christ-fact, and many things become thereby intelligible which without this would be obscure. It was on this ground that the gospel could of old be preached to Abraham (Gal. iii. 8), saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and was glad. So also of necessity Christ was "before" Abraham. It was also on this ground that the believing Israelites drank of that spiritual Rock, which, we are told, was Christ. It was on this ground that the law of Moses became a shadow of good things to come, and was an usher to lead Israel to Christ. It was on this ground that prophecy and psalm foretold the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, and that Christ should be the root as well as the offspring of David. The moral world has grown from Christ as from a core, and is pivoted upon him throughout its history. Evil implied redemption; the first Adam called for the last, and mortality anticipated the resurrection from the dead. The curse would never have been pronounced had it not been provided that a Christ should be made a curse for us; and paradise would never have been lost had it not been foreseen that the tree of life would be made

again accessible by him who was to be the way, the truth, and the life. The FACT of Christ has been coeval with creation; the personal existence of the anointed one dates from Bethlehem. "Who verily was *foreordained* from the foundation of the world, but was *manifest* in these last times for you" (1 Peter i. 20). The glory which he had with the Father was this foreordained glory, and which he "*gave*" to his disciples; though at that time then present, actually they possessed it not. "For the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). In that world of reason, which exists archetypally in the mind of God, before it exists in sensible created forms, there are no sequences of time; it is a world complete and perfected, with Christ as its centre, and his glory as a primal and established fact. Hence God calls those things *which be not AS THOUGH THEY WERE* (Rom. iv. 17), and does not restrict himself to the future tense of verbs. The Epistle to the Ephesians (i. 10) makes us acquainted with "his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself—That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one, *all things IN CHRIST.*" From that purpose rays of glory streamed; in that purpose all glory focalised; Christ stands revealed within it like the woman clothed with the sun. He is first and last; alpha and omega, the first-born of every creature; the beginning of the creation of God; the centre of the ancient purpose, and the end of all cosmical activity. Without him there would have been no hinge for the world to hang by; no pivot for history to turn on; no reason for the existence of the earth or the human race. Without him there would have been no glory of God in which immortal life might bask; no key of glory to which the music of a world's hosannahs might be set; no glorious reason in which angelic thought might revel evermore. Surely he had a glory with the Father. Fore-known, anointed, men heard of him in gladdest gospel; they rejoiced in him, and drank of him, and were schooled in him, and found a royal root in him. He has never been absent from the mind of God, as the key is never absent from the music, and as the sentiment is never absent from the song. He is called the "wisdom" of God (1 Cor. i. 24). And of this "wisdom" the book of Proverbs gives us a sublime picture, as ever present with the Creator—"as one brought up with him," being "daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." From him the world springs, round him the ages revolve, in him all things consist.

In this we discover the only sufficient reason for the existence of the earth and the currency of the ages. They exist for him and he for them, the whole existing for God, for "the head of Christ is God." Christ's existence implies the existence of the world, and as the "first-born" has been perfected and made incorruptible, so "every creature" has the promise of eternal redemption. We can no more understand the world being abolished than we could understand the Christ being blotted out. The inheritance is as eternal as the heir, or rather the possession is as abiding as the possessor. The Jews had heard out of their law that the Christ should abide for ever; they were not deceived in their impression; the prophets testified that he should "prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand."

And what is this "pleasure of the Lord" which is to prosper in the prolongation of Christ's days? Listen—"Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will *rejoice* in Jerusalem and joy in my people" (Isaiah lxx. 18, 19). Again—"Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee and give thee a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages" (xlix. 8). Round Zion and Jerusalem and the pleasant land; round the chosen people and restored Israel the pleasure of the Lord gathers. But this is only the beginning of a gracious work in the earth in which God's desire is seen. From this centre to the widest circumference of the earth Christ causes the obedient knee to bow and the reverent tongue to confess that he is Lord. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment on the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (xlii. 4-6). It is thus impossible to separate the earth and its interests from the Christ whose possession the earth is, and the interests of which are in his keeping. Bound up in one scheme of intended existence, humanity and the Son of man must be considered together; the genesis and the regeneration of the earth must be looked at as one whole; the drama of life and its final tableau must not be separated. The new heaven and the new earth are the renovation of the old; Christ's work is the *restitution* of all things, which forbids the thought of abolition and disappearance. How ignorant and foolish, then, in our contemporaries to imagine that Christ, having gone into

heaven, is to remain there, and that the saints, one by one, are being there gathered to him. This not only stultifies the manifold and multiform testimony that he is to return to the earth, but it breaks up and annihilates the divine arrangement, and makes unintelligible the divine procedure. It makes resurrection unnecessary, and judgment absurd. It displaces all the "promises," extinguishes the "hope," and renders impossible the "faith" of the gospel. It makes revelation valueless, and the word of God of no effect. It makes void the oath-born covenants; empties Jewish history of significance, robs prophecy of all value, and relegates Moses to the region of antiquities. Indeed, to separate Christ and his kingdom from the earth, establishing him somewhere in stellar space, is to abandon every spirit-given testimony, and to turn one's back absolutely on the truth. But this truth—though, now, to many not evident, will be evident soon. What is now clear to an instructed faith will be sensibly manifested when the Lord Jesus "shall be king over all the earth." Nothing will stand unrelated to him, or be unaffected by his presence and power. Christ will not then be outside the concerns of men, but will enter into every practical consideration. The world will begin to act from a new code of reasons; and its life will awaken to another and higher significance. Its traditions will vanish; its standards will become obsolete, and the old charts by which its life has been navigated, will be useless for the new existence which, like a changed ocean-bed, will be before it.

Nothing covers a human name with so much lustre as the discovery and solution of a great world problem. Gratitude sits at the feet of him who makes a great physical discovery. But what honour and renown would that man reap who should discover a real remedy in higher departments, say, for the single fact of pauperism? To what royal favours would he be admitted, and with what decorations covered? Christ will answer every question and solve every problem in the universal establishment of the kingdom of God, and in the light of this divine climax, the wisdom of God will be seen to have extended from the beginning. No residuum of doubt will remain that this is he whose work was contemplated when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. A world's worship will be the tribute offered to his power and grace, and in a redeemed, holy and happy humanity he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

It is true that many persons believe that Christ will, some day, be supreme in the earth; but this they vainly expect to be brought to pass by what they call "the preaching of the gospel;" but we know well it cannot be realised apart from the prevailing power and triumph of the kingdom of God. It is a masterpiece and marvel of credulity that people cling to such a forlorn hope as this, that the world is going to be won for Christ by pulpit-power. Take time to consider the single fact that the pulpits are thundering against each other. Now, even if their thunders were unanimously directed against "the world," the success expected would not be obtained. The prince of this world will never be demolished by ecclesiastical thunder. But Christendom is divided against itself to such an extent that the "hope" becomes as ridiculous as it is forlorn. Such a divided condition in an army in the field would mean certain, inevitable defeat. No general would risk a battle with the regiments of his army in the loose, broken, and disordered condition presented by the "churches" of to-day. Of old, we have been taught that "a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." If it cannot "stand," how is it likely that it can conduct a victorious campaign against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places? Besides, the "churches" not only exhibit disorganisation, but demoralisation as well. By their own confession, they are corrupt; their light is darkness, and their salt has lost its savour. The money comes in, but faith has gone out. They take to "revivals" as sick persons take to stimulants. They make a show of activity by painting and re-pewing, by a new organ and an alteration in the schoolroom, learning the trick from that Frenchman who adorned his capital to make Paris believe the empire prospered. Suppose the "church" did "convert" the world, how much better should we be?—it would be "as we were," for the church would then need converting, and nobody would have escaped alive to tell it so. But the world is converting the church faster than the church is converting the world; and so, darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.

Now, we are expressly told for what purpose has been the preaching of the gospel among the nations. Simeon's testimony was that "God at the first did visit the Gentiles *to take out of them a people for his name*" (Acts xv. 14). This statement (James declared) was in agreement with what was written in the prophets, "AFTER this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins



thereof; and I will set it up; that the RESIDUE of men might seek after the Lord," &c. (verses 16, 17). The point of "agreement" between the two testimonies is clear. The first testimony speaks of selection, the second of a residue—the selection is made for a certain end, which end being gained, makes it possible for the residue of men to worthily fulfil the objects of human existence.

God is thus seen working from a centre to the circumference, first perfecting a man (the Christ), next preparing and perfecting a people, and, by this means, perfecting a world.

It must not be imagined, as is sometimes the case, that James cites the prophecy in Amos as finding its *fulfilment* in the movement then on foot among the Gentiles. It would be a very curious and careless reading of these verses that would make the people "taken out" of the Gentiles, and the "residue" of men, one and the same; and that would make the calling of the Gentiles a fulfilment of the prediction to build again *the tabernacle of David*. James cited this prophecy to shew, not its identity but its "agreement" with what was then occurring amongst the Gentiles, thus proving the harmony and continuity of the divine purposes.

The proclamation of the truth, therefore, is to no such end as is often glowingly set forth at "missionary" meetings, and in "Exeter Hall" orations, when the orthodox banner is unfurled emblazoned with the brave but ignorant words, "The world for Christ! the world for Christ!" Nothing but the vehement breath of oratory could keep that banner spread; it flaps and falls when the gusto is over, and the speech is done. Missionary movements are the most miserable of forlorn hopes, as well as being utterly unscriptural. Not that the world-wide publication of the gospel is unscriptural, but that the expectation is so, which looks for the subjugation of the earth to Christ by means of preaching. Even if the truth were preached (which it is not) it would never accomplish this. Look at this country. With its vast and various ecclesiastical organisations; its tens of thousands of clerical teachers; its millions of religious agents; its voluminous "religious" literature—what is the position of its seething population? Listen to the roar of the mighty cities—the sound that fills and stuns the ear is that of a fierce and constant struggle of man with man. If Christ is reigning in this country, never was there a kingdom so full of rebellion; anarchy, distress, and ruin. If God is getting his will done in earth as it is in heaven, then heaven itself must be filled with riot.

## I

But the prophets, Christ, and his apostles unite in the testimony that general disorder, rebellion, and evil will continue in the earth till a certain point of time—the epoch of the kingdom of God—and that it will be the work of the potentates of this kingdom to bring these to a perpetual end. This epoch will be signalised by the building again of the fallen “tabernacle of David,” and, in preparation for this event, *a people will be taken out of the Gentiles to constitute THE NAME OF THE LORD.*

There seems to us much significance in the fact that the selected ones are said to be taken out from among the nations, that they might be for *the name* of God. Among the Hebrews, “names” were not arbitrary designations, but were generally representative of the individuals who owned them—not necessarily of character, but of something peculiarly personal to the owner. Hereafter, then, the chosen people will be for the Divine NAME in the earth—that which will stand for God and represent him, wielding his authority, and executing his will. Christ came, and will come again, in his Father’s *name*; we are baptised into *this name*; we shall hereafter have written upon us (symbolically) this new name.

Not by the preaching of the clerical gospel, then, or by any preaching efforts whatever, will the establishment of the kingdom of God in the earth become a fact, but by the great and wise means adopted by God for its realisation. One of those means is the election and preparation of a nation—the Jewish nation—to become the principal subjects of such kingdom; the nationality of which shall form the fulcrum on which the divine lever will rest, in its operation of lifting humanity out of the political and social evil in which it has been lying so long. It is impossible to over-estimate the moral power of a nation, constituted in righteousness, governed from heaven, made prosperous in the divine favour, and proving by a political demonstration to the world, the supreme happiness of that people whose God is the Lord. Under any circumstances, a *kingdom* is the mightiest engine that can be employed on earth, either for good or evil; no instrument can be made so powerful as this to accomplish large and lasting results; it is the most potent force that can be mentioned, exceeding in its influence that of all minor institutions combined. Even in its rudimentary constitution under Moses, the kingdom of God contained the promise and potency of becoming “the head and not the tail” among the nations; and we can well believe that, had those Jews remained true to their foundation, the surrounding

people might have reaped much advantage from their proximity to God's chosen race. Even as the ark carried a blessing with it to the house of Obed-edom, or as Abimelech was blessed for Abraham's sake, so the days will come when God shall make all the families of the earth blessed in Abraham's seed. For what is the promise? Read in Isaiah xxvii. 6, "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, *and fill the face of the world with fruit.*" Read in Zechariah viii. 20-23, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." This is the kingdom of heaven, which is like to a grain of mustard seed (Matt. xiii. 31), which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, *so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.* So also Rev. xxi. 24, "And the nations of them that are saved *shall walk in the light of it* (Jerusalem): and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it."

In these prophetic, parabolic, and apocalyptic testimonies, we can see what will ensue for the world when the mountain of the Lord's house is established in the top of the mountains and when all nations shall flow unto it. The chosen race will become the cynosure of all peoples; with them will be the bank and emporium of the world's intellectual and spiritual riches; from them will be chosen the emissaries of blessing to all lands; towards them will move in strong political gravitation the broken and chaotic masses of humanity; this "most favoured nation" will, like the heart in a human body, send a pulse and tide of divine health to the outmost parts of the organized race; round it will rally, as to a standard, the long hidden and captive, and misused energies which await the summons to regeneration; and in the van of the kingdom of God, the elect inhabitants of the "glorious land" will pioneer a new civilization, rich in all the elements of holiness and happiness, and stability. Else what does it mean, and what are

words worth? "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim; and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the hasty shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful." In this outpouring of the spirit from on high, "then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah xxxii.) †

The metropolis of the kingdom of God and the central and capital city of the world to come will be JERUSALEM. Christ declares (Matt. v. 35) that there is a sacredness belonging to JERUSALEM arising from the fact that "*it is the city of the GREAT KING.*" Let us consider this fact.

The Old Testament makes us familiar with the idea of sacred or holy places and things. Immediate connection with or relation to God's service, or God's presence, has given the very dust of the ground a hallowed character, and made vessels of gold and silver precious beyond their intrinsic worth. Thus the tabernacle was a holy place, in virtue of a divine service to which it was consecrated, and a divine presence which it enshrouded.

With this fact in mind, we can well understand that the city where stood the Throne of the Lord; where the temple revealed its glory; where the Lord had chosen to cause his name to dwell; that this city—Jerusalem—should have a special character of sanctity. What we can understand so well, Christ affirms to be a fact, teaching us to avoid profaning even its name by any irreverent employment of it.

But the Jerusalem which Jesus knew, and whose gates and streets he sometimes threaded, was then, in no visible sense, a city of any "great king." But Christ ever spake the truth of the spirit (literal enough here and generally), and with the prophetic eye and tongue he could speak of things that were not, as though they had been (Rom. iv. 17). True, this Jerusalem had many vicissitudes; sometimes its material splendour matched well with the world-famed wisdom of its king; and sometimes the memory of its ruins caused its exiled children, weeping, to hang their harps on the

willows. But, exalted to heaven or debased to the dust, it is Jerusalem still; indeed, it is dearer to the exile than to the peaceful inhabitant, and Jehovah nor its people have forgotten the chosen city.

Turn we then to the prophets to ascertain the reason why, and in what sense, Christ calls Jerusalem "the city of the great king." Turning to Psalm lxxviii., we find the kingdom of Heaven established in the earth, and Jehovah reigning in the mountain of his holiness. Bright in the sheen of the spirit, Mount Zion stands, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. And the place where Mount Zion stands? "On the sides of the north in *the city of the great king*" (verse 2). In the "Songs of Degrees," Jerusalem and Mount Zion established in peace and prosperity, shining in the radiance of righteousness, the centre and source of all blessing for mankind, share equally in the affectionate tribute. And this because of Jehovah who reigns therein. "Blessed be the Lord out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem" (Psalm cxxxv. 21).

Isaiah testifies (lxii. 6-7), "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." But what is it to be "a praise in the earth"? Listen to what Jeremiah testifies (ch. iii. 17), "At that time they shall call Jerusalem **THE THRONE OF THE LORD**; all the nations shall be gathered unto the name of the Lord, to **JERUSALEM**." Is not this a literal Jerusalem, on a literal earth, in the midst of literal nations? Here are topographical particulars respecting this holy and heavenly city. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord, from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner," &c. After some more details, the city is described as being "holy unto the Lord;" and it is added, "It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more for ever." Describing the reign of the Messiah in the earth, Jeremiah says (xxxiii. 16), "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called—*'the Lord our Righteousness.'*"

Notably among the prophets, Ezekiel, in the last chapter of his testimony, describes the situation and the sacred character of the holy city. In the midst of an allotment of the land which is measured out and specified, and which is declared to be "a thing most holy," the city rises in lasting glory in the vicinity of the

sanctuary of the Lord. "And the name of the city from that day shall be 'THE LORD IS THERE'" (v. 35).

Here, then, we find that "city of the great king," which stands revealed to us in the words of Christ; the metropolis of the kingdom of God; the "new Jerusalem," which is apocalyptically described as a "holy city, coming down from God out of heaven," and which prepares us for the words which follow, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people" (Rev. xxi. 3). This is "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" to which believers are said to have "come" (Heb. xii. 22)—not that they have yet "come" in an actual experience of citizenship, for this would make the epistle contradict itself, as the deceased saints are not yet "made perfect" (ch. xi. 40), but they are "come" thereto, in having established their relation to the order and economy of things there described. "Now they *desire* a better country (than Mesopotamia), that is a heavenly; therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, *for he hath prepared for them* A CITY (xi. 16).

From this "City of the Great King," from that "holy hill of Zion," waves of authority and persuasion, coercion, and blessing will proceed with an ever-widening reach till from pole to pole the reign of the spirit is beheld and the triumph of its Christ. No one can over-estimate the triumphing force upon mankind in the earth, of a community of righteous ones, both following its labour and taking its repose under the shield and shadow of the Immortality which will over-watch its interests, and direct its operations. Whatsoever it doeth will prosper. Blessed will be the protectorate of that heavenly Jerusalem over the inhabitants of the glorious land. On the skirts of him that is then a Jew ten nationalities shall lay hold, nervously eager for the virtue that flows from the hem of his garment. The problem of humanity will be solved, the end of history reached, the glory of God secured by that kingdom of God as it transmutes human politics into one grand divine performance, and finishes the mortal experiment of evil with the established facts of righteousness and truth. In this seed of Abraham, then, at the head of a divinely-ordered civilization, all the families of the earth will be blessed. By this means alone can the world be "converted," and this is the only means that the Scriptures recognise. The preaching of the Gospel (not the gospel of the sects) is *to take out of the nations a people* for the name of the Lord (Acts xv. 14), that at the coming of the Lord to make the kingdom of this

world his own, the divine NAME may be adequately represented in the earth.

The name of that city which is yet to rise in splendid forms of heavenly architecture, we have seen, will be "THE LORD IS THERE" (Ezek. xlvi. 35), which name will explain everything predicted of it and the kingdom of which it will be the metropolis.

When the fumes of brimstone have passed away, which will rise from the ruins of Rome, now called the "Holy City," that den of ecclesiastical devils doomed to fire, the Holy City described by Ezekiel and John will glisten in the light of skies refulgent as heaven itself. The chief thing remarkable, however, will be this contained in the words "the LORD is there." With his royal brethren, his chosen friends, the King will dwell in Zion and sit on David's throne, reigning over the restored nation of Israel. But it is the effect of this fact upon the heart and life of humanity, during the thousand years of its continuance, that attention is called to. For that reign, though primarily over Israel, extends to every nation and tribe under the whole heaven. In the ferment of society that will then take place, the old traditions of government, morality, and religion will dissolve and disappear, celestial ideas will be begotten and brought forth. It is saying very little to observe that a new civilization will start forth. The word stands for that which at present is so hollow and empty, relating to mere manners and customs, that it fails to convey any adequate idea of the radical change that will grow up from the roots of society as the seed of the kingdom is sown. Christ calls it a REGENERATION (Matt. xix. 28), and that is the only sufficient account of it. It will be a new birth of the world and of mankind; society will be cradled in truth, and educated in obedience to laws divinely framed and divinely administered. If Moses and the prophets do not teach this, they teach nothing, and the Gospel is nothing but what Moses and the prophets have said should be (Acts xxvi. 22).

The PARABLES of "the Kingdom of Heaven" give us so many pictures or aspects of the age to come. Reflected in familiar incident and story, the truths concerning the future order and constitution are pendant for our study. With a vividness sufficient to make them interesting, they are also veiled enough to hide the celestial features from the stare of the foolish and the dull eye of the heedless. To them of earnest heart, whose reverent hands draw aside the veil, a living form of Truth stands revealed, and a living voice speaks of things which angels have desired to

look into. If Christ could say of himself that he was a "door," so it can be said of these parables, that they are "doors" which will open to those who knock, and admit to a temple that is filled with divine glory.

This temple is divided into two parts, an outer and an inner, or, to speak without a simile, the parables of the Kingdom illustrate the future age, *when it shall actually have arrived*, and also some of the preparatory providences which will lead up to it. Sometimes both of these are illustrated in the same parable. A loose indiscriminating interpretation however lumps them together and gives them all a present application. The parable of "the tares" as it has come to be called, and the parables of "the mustard seed" and of "the leaven," all recorded in Matthew xiii., are instances of this false application. Imagining that the Kingdom is already established (which Luke xix. 11-15 disproves by saying that the Lord is not in "occupation" of the Kingdom till he returns to the earth), it is necessary to find the analogy for the growing tree and the spreading leaven, and so the worldly growth of a bastard Christianity answers to these. The beautiful budding branches, whose young foliage gives promise of shelter and shade to the birds of the air, are found in the dark and poisonous green of the earth's ecclesiastical upas tree. The leaven which permeates and unites the meal of human society is also found in the adulterations of modern theology. *It cannot be.* Rather can this tree now rooted be compared to those symbolic trees beneath which profligate Israel sought illicit love. Compare this leaven rather to the teaching of the false prophets of old. Is not a tree known by its fruits? Cannot the bitterness of bad leaven be perceived?

Besides, a careful reading of this chapter shews that "the end of the world" spoken of (verse 39) is not the conclusion of this preparatory dispensation, but the winding up of the future age of the Kingdom. No such weeding process will take place as is described in verses 39 and 40, when the saints with Christ begin their reign on the earth. When that process occurs, every bad element in society will be taken away, leaving only "the righteous" to "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." The very phrase, the *Kingdom of their FATHER*, ought to be enough to lead us to understand what "end" is meant and what "Kingdom" is referred to. It is the time when the Kingdom of Messiah shall be delivered up "to God, *even the Father*" (1 Cor. xv. 24).



A wrong understanding of some of these parables prevents the mind from seeing that the spread of a corrupt Christianity cannot be the sowing of "the seed of the Kingdom." The truth of this Kingdom is not sown, except where Christ's few brethren are able to scatter some handfuls here and there, which good work is not contemplated in this parable. That sowing will take place, when in the coming æon, the events symbolised in Rev. xiv. 6 occur, when an angel is seen flying through the earth, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto all its inhabitants. During that period the tares will mingle with the wheat; the rank and poisonous weeds that have fattened on the soil will indeed be rooted up (Rev. xiv. 9, 10, 11), but the *professedly believing* will remain till "the time of harvest."

Every fresh parable gives us a new angle of the truth. At present the Lord is gone to receive or to be invested with his kingdom, his servants are just now quietly "occupying" till he comes. They are waiting for him, as he too waits till the time is ripe for his enemies to be made his footstool, and, when asking of God, he shall have the nations for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

The MIRACLES also recorded of Jesus Christ and his apostles illustrate the power of the spirit which will be exercised in the age of the Kingdom of God. The miracles of healing, *e.g.*, lead us to believe there will exist a higher science of medicine, the secrets of which will reside with those who possess the diploma of the spirit. We are confirmed in this view by the testimony symbolically given in Rev. xxii. 2, where it is said, "The leaves of the tree (of life) are for the healing of the nations." Among many other things, this means will operate to reduce the ravages of death in that healthful, exhilarating age, and to arrest the quick decay which now ruins our bloom and dissolves us in the dust. There is nothing unreasonable in all this. If the spirit is the source of life in man, as the Scripture affirms it is; if the spirit is the power in the resurrection of dead men (and this is testified also); if our change after the resurrection to immortality is by that which was a "natural body," then becoming a "spiritual body," what is more in accord with the testimony, then, than that in the age of the kingdom, the spirit-gifted immortals will undertake, under right conditions, for suffering mankind. Such ministry as this will have a teaching value for the heart of man, (indeed, the whole governmental work will produce educational results), and will

prepare the way for the final abolition of death and the destruction of the grave.

We do not suppose for a moment that natural science, and what is termed the healing art, will be entirely superseded by the operation of the spirit. Much that is merely empiric may pass away, and certain it is that all quackery will cease. With the simplification of life, of labour, of habit; with improved sanitary conditions and a return to the healthful order of nature, there will be a vast diminution of physical evil generally, while the methods of treatment will be more scientific, more simple and certain, than in the tradition-ridden age that we are in. Outside and beyond all this will be an encircling sphere of ministry and help, whose grace and healing will flow in upon mankind where conditions of faith will present points of contact, or open up avenues of blessing to its life. While nothing will be so strong as the Government of Christ, nothing will be more tender, for nothing can afford to be so gentle as omnipotence.

It is this view which enables us to understand the words of Christ: "But if I with the finger of God (the spirit) cast out devils (heal diseases), *no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you.*" Christ identifies such action as that spoken about with the work peculiar to the kingdom; as indicative of the gracious genius of the age that was coming, and, in thus bringing the blessed dispensation near to them, that they, peradventure, might see it and love it, *the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.* It was brought near to them, and made visible in him whose power and purity and love included all its glory, and made its history possible. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" was the royal herald's note, therefore; ringing in the fact, not merely that there was another sphere and order of things for God's servants (of that they had been long assured), but that this brilliant orb was then drawing near, travelling just across their ken, and that men might behold its glory and discern its grace and truth. It was not that then and there the Kingdom was to become a historical and political fact; the interpretation would make the testimony flatly contradict itself, and reduce the herald's message to a cuckoo's note; it would spoil the exhortation based on the fact that Christ is to come "as a thief in the night," and take off the force of his observation in Luke xix. 12; but it was, that in him who was to appear—in his spirit qualities and gifts; in his perfect discernment and unfailing resources; in his matchless wisdom and majestic power; in his

absolute authority and also in his transcendent moral kingliness, the Kingdom of Heaven had approached the radius of human vision, and revealed itself to the generation then within call. All that constitutes the divine royalty appeared when he appeared, and in seeing him the Jews saw all that was fundamental in the Kingdom of Heaven.

On a larger scale of blessing we shall soon see the spirit qualities which were in him operating in our midst, ministering not only to minds diseased, but in all circumstances of ill to which the flesh is heir, taking away at last all causes of sorrow, and wiping away all tears.

The work of Christ during the period of the heavenly control will affect society in every part of it, and solve every social and political question that now baffles the wisest and the best.

Everybody confesses that one of the crying evils of all ages has been the marked and manifest *separation* of the different classes of human society. The ideas of caste which obtain in India are only an exaggeration of what has been exhibited everywhere throughout history. The present age, notwithstanding its vaunted advancement, does not differ from past ages in this; or if it do, it is by shewing us a wider and more frightful gulf between class and class than ever has existed before. For, boast as we may about the stains of slavery and serfdom having been at last wiped from the earth, a *practical slavery* has come about under the laws of selfishness prevailing everywhere, a hundred-fold more dreadful than domestic bondage has ever been. Even the bitterest slavery that we read of in bible history, viz., the bondage of the Hebrews in Egypt, was not worse than the enforced rigours of life under which tens of thousands in London groan to-day. The institution of slavery generally was far more humane and kindly than the oppressive system which now exists. And the tendency of things is not to narrow but to broaden the chasm that has been created between rich and poor—between the toilers and those who reap the fruits of toil.

In almost every age men have been yearning for and feeling after a better state of things, and now, in our own times, the subject is seething in many hearts. Strange theories are being put forward: desperate remedies are being tried. But we believe this political cancer is incurable by any human means; the disease is deep-seated in the blood. Still we are by no means without hope, the reason being that we are not "without God in the world." We believe in

divine remedies; that these remedies are now preparing; that we shall soon be upon the period when they will be applied.

We repeat, we believe that men can do nothing more than patch up society; they cannot renew it. The world has had a pretty good spell of time to prove what resources it possesses, and what it is capable of doing for itself, and what has it discovered? What is the moral of all history? A century ago the Clubs of Paris painted on their banners in letters of red blood, the words, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*. They were grand words—noble mottoes—significant of things that the poor world shall enjoy some day; but to the Jacobin it was a mere dream—

“Vast images in glimmering dawn,  
Half-shewn, are broken and withdrawn.”

Men have done next to nothing but dream. So true is this, that one of their famous efforts to construct an ideal state of society, in which natural equality and happiness should be realised, has supplied the world with a *word*, which has stood for the last 300 years, to describe everything that is chimerical and impracticable. We have all heard of “utopian” schemes, and understand pretty well what the word means. *Utopia* was the name of a book written by Sir Thomas More, in the reign of Henry VIII., in which work was reflected the social discontents and aspirations of that age, the author endeavouring to shew how the mere efforts of natural human virtue could realise those ends of security, equality, brotherhood, and freedom, for which the institution of society seemed to have been framed. It was a mere dream, and now the word “utopian” describes all such creations of the brain.

Many others have dreamed besides Sir Thomas. More than a hundred years later “Lord” Bacon—whom the satiric poet describes as

“the greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind,”

prophesied of social improvement in his *New Atlantis*, in which religion and politics, learning and labour, were all made to contribute to the welfare of the happy islanders. During the last century of years, particularly, “Socialism,” with its philosophy and its practical experiments, has been before the world. The teachings of Lassalle and Karl Marx, and the experiments of Owen, not to mention less popularly-known socialistic leaders, shew how earnestly the world is struggling after a condition of things “more equal.” To us it is quite touching to witness these struggles and to listen

to these schemes. We have yearned in sincerest and well-nigh weeping pity towards such men as Ferdinand Lassalle as we have read his passionate protests and pleadings. We have thought, surely these men are feeling after the Truth; would to God we could shew it them. Not being "without natural affection" and tender sympathies, aware though we are that their schemes must be futile, we are deeply moved as we watch them in their fevered dreaming.

But men have not only dreamed, but done foolish and desperate deeds, in their wild hope and resolution to change the intolerable situation. But we have no room to describe either the absurdities of "communism" or the horrors of "Nihilism." All such schemes must be in vain. Society can never be brought into just, happy, and permanent relations by such means. The stinging lines on Communism, by Ebenezer Elliott, are not too severe. Says he—

"What is a Communist? one who hath yearnings  
For equal division of unequal earnings:  
Idler or bungler, or both, he is willing  
To fork out his penny and pocket your shilling."

It cannot be: this is not the equality that can stand.

Of Nihilism it must be said, it is merely madness and murder. The only equality it aims at is that of death and destruction.

But, turning away from all such dreams and desperations, there is an order of things which belongs to the age of the Kingdom of God, and of which we learn many things in the Word of Truth. There is an "equality" spoken of in the Scriptures, but vastly different from the false notions of Socialism.

The equal condition of things to obtain in the earth by-and-by will be brought about by men "bearing one another's burdens," and so fulfilling *the law of Christ*. The operation of this law may be witnessed in things recorded in several places of the Scriptures. The political economy under which Israel lived when Joshua settled them in Canaan, was "a shadow of good things to come." When ecclesial life was first organised in Jerusalem we find a state of things existing, having marked analogies to that which will obtain under the rule of Christ and his brethren. And in the mutual helpfulness of the disciples, such as is described in 2 Cor. viii., we have a picture of things which will be realised on a wider scale in the age which is approaching. Let us consider these cases.

Taking first the political and social arrangements of the nation of Israel, we find that each tribe and family had an inheritance in the soil. There was no landed aristocracy in those days, nor foolish laws of primogeniture which kept the ownership of the soil in the hands of a few individuals. The land was divided by lot to the different families of each tribe, and a curse was pronounced upon him who should remove his neighbour's landmark. And seeing that no arrangements made could possibly prevent the decline of family fortunes here and there, the most generous provisions were made against poverty, which obviated the necessity of any such objectionable arrangements as our English poor-law system. Under such arrangements there could be no such thing as permanent and ever-deepening poverty. If a man was compelled to borrow, he was charged no interest; if he had to put himself in pledge, he regained his freedom in the year of release; or if he had to mortgage his inheritance, it returned unencumbered to him at the jubilee. When each man could dwell under his own vine and fig-tree; holding his inheritance under a divine tenure; reaping where he had sown, and gathering where he had strewed; with every motive and encouragement to industry; sure of a harvest in proportion to his faithfulness to Jehovah; his labour a prayer and a psalm of praise; where no one was enormously rich and none could be distressingly poor—who does not see that in such a condition of things we have a shadow of the good things to come? Doubtless the land-laws of the nation of Israel will form the basis of the world's future economic legislation. There we have the divine idea of how people should be rooted in the soil. When that idea prevails there will be a true equality, not an absolutely dead level of society, but a true human equality nevertheless—an equality as true as that of the surface of the globe, the curve of whose sphere is not affected by its ridges of hills or undulating plains.

But this is by no means a full statement of that "law of Christ" which is to prevail. Turning now to the first Christian organisation in Jerusalem, we learn something more. We do not believe that the body of believers was a "communistic" body. Though there are some expressions in the *Acts* which seem to favour the view that private property was done away, there are other expressions which clearly show that it was not. For instance, the believers had private *homes*, where groups of them met for the regular breaking of bread (*Acts* ii. 46). Putting all the facts together, the utmost that can be concluded is that they all contri-

buted to a general fund, from which the extraordinary demands of the time were met.

As the ecclesias multiplied and grew, the need and occasion increased for the exercise of this law of helpfulness among the brethren. And while the changed circumstances did not permit the existence of a fund which should be common to all the ecclesias, still the same spirit survived to inspire many deeds of practical sympathy among them. The *Acts* and the *Epistles* confirm each other by shewing us how the brethren rendered mutual assistance through days of scarcity or famine. In this way a beautiful equality was promoted. The more opulent brethren in Achaia and Macedonia supplied the wants of the poorer brethren in Judea. He that had much had nothing over, and he that had little had no lack.

Now, it cannot but be that these laws, being laws of righteousness, will operate largely in the kingdom of God. At the bottom of all there will be an equitable allotment and distribution of the soil, while the more superficial inequalities will be modified by a fraternal sympathy that will grow up and prevail under the benign rule of him who shall promote "good will amongst men." Every valley shall be exalted, and the hills shall be brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. Selfishness, as a motive power in the world, will be restrained, and the ruinous principle of competition, will be knocked on the head. We do not expect for a moment that private property will be abolished. Industry will secure its reward. But power will not be permitted to ride over weakness roughshod. The oppressor will be hurled from his seat, and "cliques" and "rings" will be impossible. Rogues will think about turning honest men when they find their roguery outwitted. The sharp trick will cut the trickster's fingers.

The whole material life of men will be regulated by the truest economical laws, which will promote general prosperity and contentment. Even now many persons are wishing that the State would assume a more perfect control on behalf of our national interests, feeling that anything must be better than this private conspiracy of man against man. And the State intends stepping in before long. But it will be with Christ as its head, and immortal and wise ministers in its cabinet.

One of the pressing problems, calling for, but never getting solution in the present age, is that of LABOUR. The education and political emancipation of "the masses" have made labour not only

one of the front but one of the frowning questions of the day. How to secure to the toiler an equitable share of the wealth he has assisted to create, and how to make toil yield some return, or rather, carry some accompaniment of enjoyment, as well as result in so much net production—that is the question. It is a question which this age will never solve, for none of the powers that be can free themselves from that false gravitation under which human nature has fallen since selfhood has taken the place of God. The law of “self” is instinct in all mortal nature, and, though this law is modified somewhat by the ties and attachments of blood, nothing can materially check the sweep of this great fly-wheel of life. As long as men are mortal and struggle for existence, or as long as this struggle is not controlled by powers which are not the victims of it, so long will weakness be crushed by strength, and the wolf will devour the lamb.

Even those who are not taught of God see, in part, the vanity of expecting “natural laws,” such as political economists are so glib about, doing anything to remedy the existing evil. In that glimmering perception they are not wrong. Natural laws cannot alter natural facts. The most universal fact of nature is this, that man will ride hard after his own interests, considerably blind to whom he runs over in his way. Like fact, like law. And so, ruminating on the evil, it is now being considered how best this gallop may be stopped, and how natural law may be improved upon. A section of the public of Paris, some months ago, insisted that the manufacture and sale of bread shall not be left to a clique of bakers in that city, but that the municipality should take the thing in hand in the interests of the citizens. In looking to *the State* for interference and help, no doubt men are on the right scent, for “the Truth” brings before us the State—the Kingdom of God—as being the instrument of all manner of blessing to the world. But no perfect State can be made out of imperfect men: the machinery cannot be better than the metal of which it is made; and so we are hopeless until some one gets to the head of affairs who is not sick of the disorder it is attempted to cure. We do not say improvement in regard to the condition of labour is impossible by State regulation, but we deny the completeness and permanence of a cure.

For one of the great things needed doing is not only to get the products of labour more evenly distributed, but to rescue labour itself from being a demoralising thing. The minute division and



sub-division of labour robs it of all its interest and power of education. Whatever may be gained, one of the principal things that ought to be preserved in labour is lost when it requires a dozen different men to make a pin. Intellectual interest must ever die down into mere mechanical routine, when "economics" have forbidden that a man should see his work growing to completeness in his hands—confining him all his weary days to a single branch, or less than this, of his manufacture. Better to have a less degree of material excellence in the work than rob the worker of all education and enjoyment to be derived from his art. There is very little art left in many occupations now, though, when the various processes are completed, it may appear as though an artist or an *artizan* had been at work.

In such respects we may well believe there will be a return to reason and respect for the faculties of man, when the wisdom of Heaven will rule the earth and regulate human life. We are not without hints in this direction. Turning to Exodus xxxv. 30-35, we read that in the construction of the tabernacle, the spirit of God "filled with wisdom" the artificers Aholiab and Ahisamach, "to work in gold, in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones and the carving of wood," and in other very dissimilar branches of handiwork. With what delight would these workmen pursue their varied labour, turning their hands to all the requirements of their task; their imagination filled with the business as well as their hands, and realising therein the truth contained in the Latin proverb that "labour is prayer." We do not suppose for a moment that, in the future age, the spirit of God, in like manner, will qualify the ordinary workman in his art, but we can believe that what now makes toil unintelligent and unimproving will be changed for a system which, while slower in production, will tend to make labour a source of education and happiness to the worker. When the aim of the capitalist is not to increase the rate, while diminishing the cost of production; and when competition no longer rules the market; when some consideration is shewn for the elevation of the workman, and moral interests have to be calculated as well as wages, we may expect a very different result than that which disgraces civilization to-day.

Such results, however, can never obtain by human means. The most perfect State regulation possible, of human provision, could not accomplish them. In the struggle and hurry and scramble of business life, men confess that they have no time to do much in the

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way of their *own* mental and moral cultivation, to say nothing about their servants. A guinea towards a "working-man's institute" is the utmost they can do for others.

Reforms are wanted in all directions. Some industries will be suppressed; others will be created; man will cease to be a machine, his labour contributing to intelligence and morality; work will be better done, and *all* will have to do it; and the rewards of industry will be justly apportioned.

We believe all this because we are acquainted with the principles on which it is announced the Kingdom of God will be established. We know nothing but what is testified. But we have seen the *shadow* of the good things to come in the constitution under Moses; we have seen an application of divine principles in *ecclesial* life; we know well what are the King's views on questions of morality, and therefore we are quite clear and sure upon the work that will have to be done. As long as there are mortal nations on the earth, labour will be a necessary fact, and it will be one of the functions of Christ and his brethren to control the industries of mankind; to lighten heavy burdens; to rebuke idleness; to make labour honest and intelligent, and to see to the distribution of its rewards.

Of course critics will be found ready to object to all this on the score of it being *supernatural*. We reply that what is supernatural now will some day be natural enough. Nature at present is the sum total of those facts and forces which constitute the circular chain of *cause and effect*. The supernatural is those *powers*, not found as links within this chain, but which operate upon it. Hence, as Bushnell teaches, and the bible also, nature consists of the world of *things*; the supernatural consists of the world of *powers*. When within the chain of connected *things* a result succeeds a change—as when a railway truck gives, by a push, momentum to all the other trucks in that train—that is the operation of nature; but when from outside the chain, and quite independently of molecular causation, POWER FROM ON HIGH operates upon the chain of things, then we behold the supernatural.

Now, when we say that some day the supernatural will become natural enough, we do not mean that the distinction between *things* and *powers* will ever become effaced, that distinction will always remain; but we mean that the effects which we for many centuries have not seen wrought by powers upon things, we shall soon see as "the order of the day." For many ages we have not *seen* the

insertion of the divine hand in mundane affairs; there has been "no open vision;" yet we cannot believe that God's interest in the earth is ceased, or that his arm is shortened. Unless the entire biblical history were a lie, there have been periods and occasions when Jehovah has manifested himself in the earth; when his spirit has acted in manifold ways upon the order of nature, making for the time being a new order; and what has been, can be again. Nay, we are distinctly informed it shall be, and by much and various delineation we are taught what we may expect to witness. Chief among these things will be the manifestation of Jehovah himself, in an order of beings who will be "partakers of the divine nature," and "equal to the angels." In days past the Elohim have been occasional visitants to this earth, and by their power many mighty works have been done; but, at the time we speak of, the regular life of the world will be controlled and regulated by these. In a more perfect and permanent form than before, this mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, will be revealed, not in corruptible flesh and blood, but in the imperishable substance of the spirit. Christ "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phillip. iii. 21). The operations of the spirit through the Christ and through his apostles enable us, then, to understand heaven's new order that will be established in nature in the future age. Our citizenship or commonwealth which at present exists in heaven (Phillip. iii. 20) will then be established in the earth, and this kingdom of Heaven will realise for mankind what human politics have in vain attempted. "Righteousness, peace, and joy IN THE SPIRIT" will then be the order of things; the visible and unchangeable character of the saintly rule, instead of diplomacy, brute force, and terror, which characterise the rule of the flesh to-day.

It will be the result of Christ's universal kingdom to unite all the races of mankind in a common brotherhood.

In that book of symbols—the Apocalypse—we are told that in the future constitution of things in the earth there shall be *no more sea*. Like most other phenomenal statements in the book, such an observation is not to be understood literally of the waters which form about two-thirds of the globe; but, comparing this passage with others of a similar nature in the Apocalypse, we learn that *rivers and waters* represent the various divisions of humanity separated by racial and political lines. The *Euphrates*

signifies the people in power in the east (Rev. ix. 14, xvi. 12); the "flood" which seeks to overwhelm "the woman" flying to the wilderness, signifies a human host of heathen invaders who press hard upon the servants of God; and, in general, not only in the Apocalypse but elsewhere, *waters* stand for nations, and peoples, and tribes of men. With this clue in our hand it is not hard to find the meaning of the words, "and there was no more sea" (Rev. xxi. 1). They signify that the division of mankind in distinct nationalities will then exist no more; all peoples will be federated under one head and in one universal kingdom. The division of humanity into various nations was, in the first instance, caused, and has since been promoted, by the selfish and sinful proclivities of man, for the dispersion ensued on a proud attempt at organization which should aggrandise those at its head. No human chieftains were permitted to gather round any Babel that might be built, and where they might establish and consolidate their unholy rule. As a preventative, the "one speech" of the human family was "confused," and the tie was then broken, which, more than any other bond, holds men together. Wandering apart from each other, this disunited family formed different settlements. Physical conditions, operating on the plastic nature of young humanity, have mightily tended to widen the distance between its members, and to form racial though not specific differences which are so great, that, to some minds, they seem to suggest different origins. Dr. Prichard, in his *Physical History of Man*, has shewn however, on scientific grounds, that there is no reason to conclude against the unity of the human species, which leaves the biblical history of the dispersion without objection.

But, though sin has tended to disunite our species, it will be the blessed work of the kingdom of God to band men together again; and, when this is accomplished, then, in the language of symbol, *there will be no more sea*. We make light of all that sceptical ethnologists have written about the distinction of type and race; these distinctions, if they exist, will fade away before the potent action of causes that will tend to unify humanity and promote a general brotherhood. For what is essential to *man* does not depend upon the colour of his skin, or any fact of physiology merely; as a rational and accountable being he is united to his species, and will be brought within the sphere of the divine protection and government. Divine tuition and control will act upon the black Ethiopian as well as on the fair Caucasian, and a common

faith and language and aspiration will unite lands and peoples that are now far asunder. An unifying power will proceed from him who is to be head over all. The broken masses of flesh and blood that now struggle with each other, and bring one another to nought, will cease from their strifes and forget their estrangements as the work of healing goes on.

That the times are getting ready for this great world-change, is seen in the many astounding inventions and discoveries of modern science, which enable man to almost annihilate distances of duration and space; to talk with the antipodes and to transport himself to places across wide oceans with the greatest ease. Never were such preparations being made as now, in the ever-fresh and further applications of electricity, for a world-wide empire and the unification of man. Surely such things augur *the fulness of time*. By this chronology of circumstances we are able to check the prophetic periods. The prophecies tell us of a time when in the earth there shall be one king and one government; one law and language; one faith and worship; when all nations shall *flow together* to Jerusalem; and every year that passes, we can see, *in the material world*, at least, the melting away of obstacles and barriers to such a condition of things, and nature preparing itself, as it were, to be the instrument of new ordinances of life. How interesting becomes the record of discovery and invention when looked at in this light; making us to smile gladly as we watch the proceedings of nature working out "the secret of the Lord" in the eyes of "them that fear him."

"No more sea." These words contain suggestion as well as meaning, or perhaps the meaning embraces the suggestion. The sea, with its ever-heaving motion, is a fitting symbol of the restlessness of the nations, disturbed by the power of the political planets that rule them. There is a constant murmur of humanity like the murmur of the restless, sleepless sea. The prophet compares sinful human nature to "the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Ever since history has been recorded we find that this perturbed condition has obtained: we can see the heaving and tossing of humanity through history's dark and sad pages, and we can see the causes which have largely tended to this distress. A false constitution of society, based on might and selfishness, explains it all, and this, fighting with the instinct which looks towards righteousness and truth, has filled humanity with unrest.

The kingdom of God will be the panacea of this evil also. The same power that will unite all nations in one, will also settle them in calm political content. There will be no more tumult of the sea—at least, no perpetual, moaning motion, such as now is. In the waters there will be neither stagnation nor storm; in sure resting-places and quiet habitations mankind will dwell, cultivating the arts of peace and eating of its fruits. Dreams of ambition will not haunt their sleep, nor dread of ruthless power keep them, terrified, awake; but the days of men will soften into sweet repose, and their agitation will fade away into the serenity of safety well assured.

It follows, from what has just been written, that, under the kingdom of God, WAR will cease. The *causes* of war being removed, the evil will disappear. What is at the bottom of this game of war? Is it not the wickedness of rulers? The farmer does not want it; the merchant does not demand it; the professions do not clamour for it—not even the profession of the soldier. It is that the reigning families have their “traditions,” their “missions,” and their “destinies”—the latter directed by the former, and these dating from times when plunder and murder were hatched in the barbarous hearts of kings. The lion, the bear, the tiger, the eagle, and the vulture, fittingly represent the savage and rapacious instincts of empires; and the savage instinct is not less savage to-day than of old. Are we reminded of the “humanity” of modern warfare? Are we told of the care taken of the wounded; the burial of the dead, &c.? What rubbish is all this when we remember the cruelty of forcing *a nation* into the army; of mowing down men by machinery; of hurling column after column upon destruction; when we remember the Gatling, the mitrailleuse, and the torpedo, and the tender humanity that ever seeks deadlier weapons still! Do not attempt to meet these facts by presenting us with the last annual report of the Peace Society! The affairs of the Peace Society are just as likely to create the spark which is wanted to set the world in flames as anything else. More unlikely things have happened. Nothing can extenuate the wickedness of war, nor hide the fact that the unrighteous rulers are at the bottom of it. Nothing can hide the fact that the war-spirit is more rife than ever; that the gigantic preparations for wholesale slaughter are more ruinously costly than ever; and that the imminence and certainty of general conflagration are greater than ever.

Is it always to be so? Are the people always to mourn beneath wicked and ruthless rule? Is righteousness never to get its turn, and rejoicing to have its day? Listen to Paul, writing to the Corinthians (1 Ep. vi. 2)—“Do ye not know that THE SAINTS shall rule the world?” Aye—we know it well. The prophets contain the cheering announcement, “Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment . . . . and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever” (Isa. xxxii. 1-17). Paul spoke of this *as future* in his day (Acts xvii. 31), and it is still future in ours. But, though future, it is not afar.

It will be the crowning glory of the kingdom of God, established in the earth by Jesus Christ, that it will lead up to and issue in a moral consummation in which, according to the testimony (1 Cor. xv.), *God shall be ALL IN ALL*. In these sublime words, so few and simple, and yet so exhaustive, we have presented to us the end towards which Deity has been ever working, and which, when reached, will reflect a divine justification upon all the mysterious means by which such a conclusion has been gained.

We are accustomed to say that little has been revealed to us concerning the infinite æon which shall be subsequent to the thousand-yearèd age of the Kingdom. But this, in the deepest sense, is hardly true. The crevice of the testimony is a very little one, to be sure, but as we bring the eye close to it and look steadily through, what an infinite vista of glory stretches before us! We cannot conceive of less being written, and yet we cannot imagine more being said. This one touch and stroke of the inspired pen leaves us both more informed and more bewildered than if we were presented with a dozen volumes dealing with that great beyond. For a dozen volumes would not—could not—unfold all that those six monosyllables contain. We have searched our mind for an adequate metaphor to help us in calling attention to this fact, but we have found none. There is no image or parallel for the ever-unfolding meaning of—“*that God may be all in all.*” It is altogether too trivial to speak of a budding rose whose close-cleaving petals open into a round and marvellous fulness of bloom: these budding words have never done expanding in the warm light of thought. The tide of ocean rolls in upon us—and in—and in—rising higher hour by hour; but the tide of glorious truth that sets in from this verse ebbs never, but flows on till the highest peaks of imagination are covered, and all our thoughts are drowned.

What we are called upon to contemplate is a world and a world's life, filled, suffused, and redolent with God. This is a condition of things that cannot be described. When the whole circle of created things, with its myriad parts, becomes an organ of divine power—each phenomenon thereof being a manifestation of divine glory, and the thousand-fold activities of life having both their reason and result in God; when the entire tissue of being shall grow from the Spirit, and the heart of angelic humanity shall beat with the divine heart, and history shall become the diary of Deity—then these words will be fulfilling.

O the endless picture of wonder succeeding wonder, and marvel upon marvel, as this verse begins to unfold before us!

We cannot look anywhither but God is visible; we cannot listen but God is heard; we cannot sound our hearts but God is sweetly felt. The shape of God is in the clouds; his voice is in the sounding sea; it is his spirit in the tops of the trees, and the sunbeam is the warmth of his smile. The angelic men who dwell in the ransomed earth are erect in his image, with righteousness and true holiness stamped on every brow, and their effluent life is only the going on—and on—and on—of an immortal joy. Nothing in this state of existence stands unrelated to God. He is the root, and stem, and branch, and flower, and fruit of all. A high Pantheism, such as has never yet been taught, now becomes true. The truth of which Universalism has only dreamed is here. The Buddhists' hope of *Nirvana* (when rightly understood) is in this made good. Every seed-truth that has ever dropped from heaven comes to find its flowering and fruitage in that time. The age forms the ideal of God, and is the theme of the poetry of Heaven.

By way of dark contrast, we turn to the state of things existing in the world *now*. Alas! And yet people would have us believe that the kingdom of heaven, which leads up to the glory we have been trying to contemplate, is afoot already, and that God is getting his will done in earth as it is in heaven. What are the facts? The world of to-day is one huge denial of God. It is full of many things, but God is not among them. Politics and warfare, trade and science, poetry and religion—these things fill up the world's existence, but God is not there. His *name* is there—ah! initialled on every coin of our realm—but his power is not felt, his presence is not seen. The names of the Pharaohs are on the tombs and monuments of Egypt, but where is the might of their sceptres now? Religion travesties God instead of revealing him, and turns



his truth into a lie. In the roar of the world's trade, the very thought of God is lost, while the current philosophy declares that he cannot be known. No—THE FLESH is all in all at present, and will be for some time to come. "All that is in the world" is "the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." God enters into neither brain nor sinew, neither love nor labour. The flesh does not need him, feeding on bread alone; and bread, not God, rules the age that now is.

We are not utterly cast down as we consider all this, for we know that God has considered it before us, and, in sight of what shall eventually be, we can rejoice with him who has made the evil as well as the good. If evil had not been *unto* good, it would not have been at all, and when the good arrives the evil will be as though it had not been. In those mistless ages that will ensue, when sin's last shadow and breath shall have vanished for ever, it will never occur to the immortal mind to ask at what expense of evil has such a glorious end been bought. The ever-present and endless fact of God inspiring all things, and being mirrored in all things, will exclude all pensiveness. Nothing will weigh over against that good. No traces will remain even in recollection of the painful past. God will be all in all, and in the beams of this round orb of revelation we may well warm, even now, our chill hearts.



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE FIRST AND SECOND COMING OF THE CHRIST.

HAVING drawn out what we believe to be a scriptural view of the age or world to come, and tried to shew that the testimony concerning the kingdom which will exist through this era, constitutes the "gospel" for humanity, we must now turn to consider by what means sinning and death-stricken human beings may be prepared for its honours. For it is needless to observe that no such glorious kingdom could be administered in the earth by man in his present weak, corrupt, and mortal condition. With excellent reason Jesus told Nicodemus that flesh and blood cannot inherit this kingdom; that it demands such a change, from flesh to spirit, as Paul speaks of, when, concerning the saint's death and resurrection, he says, "Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body;" and also Peter, who says that by (the power of) certain *great and precious* PROMISES we are *partakers of the divine nature*, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust. The kingdom of God is to be an institution marked, first of all, by *righteousness*, and, until a race or generation has been prepared which has graduated therein, no steps can be taken to establish it.

This leads us to consider the work of Jesus of Nazareth in relation to the setting up of God's kingdom; a work accomplished in two stages, and coincident with his first and second coming in the earth. We find it impossible to separate the work which Jesus has already done from that which he is yet to do; the two things are halves of one whole, and, in order to be understood, must be considered together, or, rather, in their mutual relation.

The whole of Christ's work in the earth is summed up in Revelation i. 5, where he is said to be—

1. The faithful *witness*;
2. The *first-begotten* of the dead;
3. *The prince of the kings of the earth.*

The former part of Christ's work has been fulfilled, and in his resurrection from the dead we have the attestation of what has been already done, and the guarantee of what yet remains to be performed.

Christ's work on earth was essentially a work of *witnessing*. He sent the twelve apostles into the earth to be his "witnesses" (Acts i. 8, xxvi. 22); and he tells us (John xvii. 18) that as *he* was sent into the world, *so* he sends the disciples into the world. He also tells Pilate that the reason why he came into the world was that he *might bear WITNESS TO THE TRUTH* (John xix. 37). It amounts to the same thing when we are told (Rom. xv. 8) that "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision *for the truth of God, TO CONFIRM the promises made unto the fathers.*" In other words, what Christ did was a witnessing testimony to the truth which those promises contain, and a brilliant evidence that they would be made good.

What was the fundamental thing which, underlying all the promises, was the deepest matter which Christ witnessed to? Listen to the largest and amplest statement which the book contains in answer to this question—"Whom God hath set forth as a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood, *to declare* (or shew) *his RIGHTEOUSNESS* in the passing over of past sins (the sin in the flesh which comes by inheritance) in the forbearance of God; to declare (Paul affirms again) his righteousness, that he (God) might not only be righteous, but become the *righteouser* of him which hath faith in Jesus." What Jesus "witnessed" to, then, was the "righteousness" of God. This also was the object of "the law;" and so we read (Rom. x. 4), "Christ was *the end of the law FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS,*" and so, also, Christ could truly say he had "not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil" it. What it affirmed imperfectly, Christ "declared" or shewed resplendently. Without this affirmation of God's righteousness there could have been no "confirmation" of the promises, for this confirmation consisted not in just repeating them over again, but in shewing how they were rooted in an arrangement which, though of grace, was an arrangement having strict regard to the integrity of the moral law. Christ confirmed the promises by shewing how God could fulfil them consistently with his own righteousness; how he could be just, and, at the same time, be the justifier of them who should believe.

To manifest the righteousness of God in an impressive manner, we say, was the principal object of Christ's past mission in the earth, with a view to the justification of such as should avail themselves of the provisions of grace. When the question is asked—*How* did Christ manifest God's righteousness? the answer is

supplied in Romans viii. 3—*by receiving the condemnation of sin in his flesh*. It is perfectly true that God's righteousness is forthshewn every time a sinner is carried to his grave; but then if nothing was done beside this, where would the possibility of salvation be, even for a single creature? In that case righteousness would simply find its vindication over the graves of the entire human race, as one by one the sinning beings dropped into death. Death, then, to the sinner would have been the end of him, with no chance of justification; and for the survivors, though a pathetic occurrence, it would not make that impressive spectacle of righteousness which was needed; in the light of which, the fact of sin would be borne in upon them as *exceeding sinful*. In order to get, therefore, a perfect moral *tableau* in which sin and righteousness should each, by contrast, heighten the other, a personally sinless representative was arranged for, who, dying as God's lamb for no personal guilt of his own, should, representatively, receive sin's condemnation in his sin-stricken flesh. Then, as men "behold the lamb of God" who thus "taketh away (in possibility) the sin of the world," surely the whole question of sin will, by this spectacle, be raised in their awakening hearts; sin's full sinfulness will be recognised; God's righteousness will be recognised; repentance will be created; and with murmured gratitude God's provisions of justifying grace will be accepted. If we wish to see *how* this impression of sin and righteousness is made upon the heart of humanity, we cannot do better than recall some of the incidents of the crucifixion. Two thieves, or robbers rather, were crucified with Christ. Upon one of them the spectacle of the dying Christ made a profound moral impression. In the words, "we, indeed, suffer justly," we see that he had received an apprehension of sin and its true deserts; but he had reached an advanced stage of reflection when he said, "*but this man hath done nothing amiss.*" Christ's death was doing its work upon that robber, and it is precisely *the same work* that it is intended to do upon humanity. Looking, as this robber did, upon an evidently sinless, yet dying, man, the question will be forced upon us—What is putting him to death? When that question is put, the heart is in a fair way for repentance and the exercise of a scriptural faith. It will not, then, be long before the cry is forthcoming, "What shall we do?" and the ear will be quite attentive to listen to the terms of grace.

The theological ideas which have gathered round the cross of Christ have hidden from our eyes, this, its simple truth and reason.

We have been told that Christ's death was "substitutionary;" that he suffered "in the sinner's stead;" that he died as "a satisfaction to the divine justice;" that he died "to reconcile an offended God;" that he died "to appease the divine anger," &c. Every one of these statements concerning the purpose of Christ's death is false, and some of them are preposterously foolish. It is not merely that the truth of the subject is distorted, but it is utterly misconceived, and the statement of it is entirely misleading.

Christ's work was not a "*legal*" one in any sense; it was a practical work of "witnessing," "declaring," "manifesting," "shewing," "confirming." When legal terms such as "ransom" and "redemption" are employed in connection with it, it is because the *practical result* of Christ's work answered to these things. When used practically, therefore, such terms are true; when employed theoretically, they are false. *Ransom*

Even when Christ is said to have given himself "a ransom" for all, it is sometimes pointed out (as in 1 Tim. ii. 6) that it is only in the practical and not in the legal sense that the word "ransom" is used. In the passage referred to, Christ gives himself a ransom, in order that this work of his might be A TESTIMONY. So that we cannot escape from the fact that Christ's past work was essentially to give a testimony. Taking the word "ransom" in a literal and legal sense, we may ask, Who did Christ ransom us from? There is no sensible answer to such a question, which proves that the question is without sense; that the word is not to be taken in any such legal way; that it has simply a practical meaning. So, when Christ is said to "redeem" us, is it in the legal sense of paying a price for us, and of his blood having a substitutional value for ours? Nothing of the sort. He "redeems" us by his work having a redeeming power on our life; redeeming us from sin and the grave—a practical thing from first to last. The theologians have fastened upon metaphors which were chosen by the spirit, because they faithfully set forth the practical results of Christ's work, and they have extracted a theory from them altogether repugnant to common-sense. That theory is, through all its varieties, the doctrine of *substitution*. Christ is our "ransom" and our "redemption," say they, by suffering "in our stead" all that we and the human race would suffer should sin take its course. The theology of the day is reflected in the popular lines—

"O Christ, what bur-lens lowed thy head,  
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"O Christ, what burdens bowed thy head,  
Our load was laid on thee;  
Thou suffered in the sinner's stead," &c.

Next to the teaching concerning "eternal torment," nothing has done so much to promote doubt and infidelity as this irrational and impossible doctrine of "substitution." For what does it amount to when stripped of sophistry and nakedly expressed? It means that one sins and some one else legally suffers for it. That I sin and you suffer. Now, it is perfectly true that in the world of society the sin of one individual does often involve the suffering of others who may be innocent, but this is on account of that solidarity of society, which, though carrying incidental evil with it, is the best possible arrangement under which human beings could be placed together. This, therefore, is a very different thing from a judge in a court of law finding one man guilty and pronouncing the guilty man's sentence upon another. How long will men with hearts and brains listen to sleek blackcloth and white linen publishing for God's truth immorality like this? Substitution! It is the blindest blasphemy that ever led to hell. It baffles and bewilders our entire instructed reason; it contradicts us in every purified fibre of our moral sense. How has that reason been begotten, and that moral sense, how has it been wrought within us? By Scripture teaching such as this—"The soul that sinneth IT SHALL DIE" (Ezek. xviii. 4); or, such as this—"Be not deceived; God is not MOCKED: *whatsoever a man soweth, THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP*" (Galat. vi. 8). How has it been wrought within us? By observing all down the history of God's dealings with mankind, that in regard to every judicial transaction on record, given to us to be a comment on God's ways, to reflect the truth and prove the principles of heavenly order, there is not a single instance of departure from the eternal intelligibility of the words just quoted. When and where has God ever acted on the principle of substitution? Are we told of the bullocks and lambs of the Mosaic system? Nay; we shall find that substitution was no more true of these than it was of Christ. What! substitute an animal's life for a man's! Is the one an equivalent of the other? Surely then the argument would need mending, which says, "It is *not possible* for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin." Why the "not possible" if the life of the animal was *instead of* the life of the man? Being "instead of" means "doing duty for." But we shall see that the animal sacrifices were no more substitutional than the sacrifice of Christ. Where, then, has God illustrated this principle? We are confronted from end to end of the Scriptures with men suffering or being blest either by inheritance or by direct results of their own acts, and *never* by judicial transfer of guilt to innocence, or of innocence to guilt.



The truth is, Christ died, not as a substitute for men, but as *the REPRESENTATIVE man of the human race*, in whom humanity might see the righteousness of God manifested in the condemnation of sin in its (humanity's) own flesh—and so see it, that to its eye and heart might appear the heinousness of sin. When that has been done, then all has been done for laying down a basis of redemption. A mighty truth is let loose among the hearts of men, which, working amidst them, will as assuredly draw certain ones unto it and unto him who sends it forth, as a magnet will find the particles of iron. Christ witnesses to a truth—a truth of righteousness—and in doing so, he lays the first plank in that platform on which God can stand and offer terms of life to a dying race.

The teaching that Christ was a *substitutionary* victim, sacrificed for the human race, is contradicted by that abundance of Scripture testimony (which is confirmed by every-day experience) which shews that men die, *each man for himself*, under “the law of sin and death.” If Christ died as our *substitute*, how is it, then, that WE DIE? According to this, if death is the penalty of sin, and Christ paid the penalty *instead of us*, then we ought to go free, which, as a matter both of testimony and fact, we know we do not. Let it not be said that we do go free, in virtue of our resurrection from the dead. For we do not by this go free in the sense we ought to do if Christ was truly our substitute. For if Christ really suffered death *instead of us*, then, obviously, we ought not to suffer death at all. When a man dies he pays the penalty of sin, irrespective of whether he is raised from the dead or no. Death is the penalty of sin, and when each man dies, each man pays the penalty himself; and if so, it is folly to say Christ paid it for him. So that the “substitution” of Christ is as impossible as it would be immoral.

But, again, the same school that contends for the doctrine of substitution, has also created the fiction of “eternal death,” by which it, generally, means endless *existence* in some degree or other of suffering. At this point we are not concerned with destroying this fiction of “eternal death,” but we ask, how does this other fiction of “substitution” look side by side with it? If the penalty due to sin is “eternal death,” did Christ pay this penalty? He must have done so, if he were our substitute. Now, mark how theological subtlety comes in here to meet and, if possible, prevent the force of the objection thus raised. It is said that the “infinite value” of Christ's sufferings, arising from his dignity as the son of God, *made*

*up* for every deficiency in respect of the finite duration of the suffering. But this reply fails by its argument proving too much. For, admitting this "dignity" of Christ (for argument's sake), it would then have rendered it unnecessary for Christ to die at all; for this "infinite value" would have been sufficient to have made Christ's suffering a complete offering at *any stage* of it, prior to his crucifixion. A single tear; a mere sigh; a solitary pang, added to the "infinite value" arising from this "dignity" of the sufferer, would have been sufficient, and so the argument which tries to shew that it was not necessary for Christ to pay the (imaginary) penalty of "eternal death," proves that his death was superfluous altogether.

It is freely admitted that there are many forms of expression employed in the Scriptures, in connection with the death of Christ, which *are capable* of this "substitutionary" meaning being attached to them; but it must be remembered that these same expressions are susceptible of another and equally natural interpretation. For example: Many times in the Scriptures, and in one form or another, Christ is said to have died "FOR us." A striking passage where this form of expression occurs is in the words—"Who died, the just FOR the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter iii. 18). One instance is as good as many. Now, while the word "for," here, might be understood as "instead of," it may also be taken, quite naturally, to mean "on account of," or "because of." Christ *did* die "for us" when he died as the *representative* of the race; but he *did not* die "for us," as *substituting* his life for ours. He died "because of" us; "for our sake;" "on account of" us. The whole pathos and beauty; the miraculous magnetism of his cross was in this, that he "gave himself for us," not as undertaking, *by legal transfer*, to take off sin's penalty from our shoulders, but as consenting to stand, un murmuring, as God's human lamb, to have, representatively, our sin—all sin—condemned in his flesh—so hoping—ay, knowing—that the spectacle might lead many to "*behold!*" and beholding, turn, constrained by a consciousness of righteousness and a sense of love, to seek remission of sin and resurrection from its death. Why should we seek to fasten upon such expressions as "he gave himself for us," an immoral and unnecessary meaning, while another meaning, which rushes home to our reason, lies near to our eye? For in affirming that Christ was the representative of the race, we are not affirming more than the Scriptures warrant. Was not the "first Adam" the repre-

sentative head of the race, and did not God deal with humanity in dealing with him? Was this "first Adam" the "substitute" of humanity? The bare suggestion is absurd. Then let us listen to Paul (1 Cor. xv. 45), speaking of Christ as the "LAST Adam." Why the "last Adam"? Surely because of the parallel between the two in this matter of "representative" headship. No other parallel is possible, and that this one is in the apostle's mind is evident from the words in the same chapter—"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (verse 22).

The "representative" relation of Christ to the race is further sustained by the argument contained in Romans v. 11-21, which may be summed up in the words of verse 19—"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Obviously, it is not as the substitute but as the representative of humanity that the case of Christ is referred to here. God has dealt with the world in dealing with Adam and with Jesus Christ: through one representative man came sin and death; through the other came righteousness and life.

All this, we contend, is consistent with the expression, "he gave himself *for us*;" and not only is it consistent with this expression, but sometimes it is necessarily required by it, no other meaning of the words "for us" occasionally being admissible. For example, we find Paul saying, in 2 Cor. v. 14, "We thus judge, that if one died *for all*, then WERE ALL DEAD," which cannot possibly be understood if the "for all" be taken in the sense of substitution. If substitution were meant by the words, the sentence ought to run, "We thus judge, that if one died for all (*i.e.*, instead of all), then *all go free*;" but this is not the way the sentence terminates. Paul wishes to say, that when one died for all, then the "all" died in the dying of their representative. They did not actually die, but they died representatively. While still actually living, they saw their sin-nature put to death, and "beholding" this, they sought (at least this was the object in view) the remission of sins ere the grave swallowed them up. In this case no other meaning can attach to the words, "died for all," and in no instance is the idea of representation foreign to the expression, or forced upon it. It is the only sense which saves the bible from the imputation of teaching a monstrous and immoral doctrine.

We learn also that this arrangement, by which God manifests his righteousness, and, while condemning sin, also passes over it, was an arrangement originating in the pure grace of God. There

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is no necessity to quote anything to make good so well-known a fact as this. But, if this is true, what becomes of the theological representation that Christ died to appease the divine wrath, or that he died to satisfy the divine justice? If the death of Christ was a wrath-arrangement, it was not a love-arrangement; but the bible everywhere declares it was the latter, and nowhere declares it was the former. It was *nothing but love* that prompted the sacrifice—love in Christ and in God; in the former because in the latter. Christ does *not* reconcile God to the world, he reconciles the world to God. God is angry with sin in the sinner, but he is not “angry” with “sin in the flesh.” It is the latter that is “condemned” by Christ’s death. It was “grace” that arranged for its condemnation. God can condemn without being angry, even as a judge can pronounce sentence without getting red in the face. To represent God as suffering from anger which needs appeasement, is to break up into an incredible chaos the whole harmony of bible teaching. For creation and redemption are simply and only *one scheme*, which has been worked out along one foreseen line of love and wisdom from the beginning. In the counsels of his own eternity, was God, then, scheming his own anger and its appeasement, or was he contemplating the manifestation of his love? He could not be doing both at once; and the utter silence of the book, except about the love of God in the gift of Christ, justifies us in saying that towards the human race, born into the sin-state, God felt no anger at all. When a man had entered under law, and by transgression provoked the anger of God, then nothing but confession and intercession could obtain forgiveness and favour.

Then the statement that Christ died “to satisfy the divine justice” is unscriptural, unless it means no more than to “declare God’s righteousness.” But unquestionably it is intended to mean more than this, for it implies that what justice would have exacted had it visited every human being with death, Christ paid by the infinite value of a substitutionary offering. There is not a vestige of Scripture for this view. Neither would this be to “satisfy justice” nor to “declare God’s righteousness,” for neither justice nor righteousness know anything of substituting the innocent for the guilty. It is robbing the facts of all their love and beauty to interpret them in this legal way, or illegal way rather. Christ died for us because he loved us, and sought by a grand moral *tableau* and spectacle of righteousness to get at our hearts, and so “redeem” us, “ransom”

us, from sin. God sent Christ to us for this selfsame reason. There is a law of love, but it is not the law of *exaction*; there is a language of love, but it is not (taking humanity by the throat) "pay me that thou owest."

The work which Christ came to do at his first appearing was altogether preparatory to what he is yet to do WHEN HE APPEARS AGAIN.

Christ came, we have seen, to affirm God's righteousness, and at the same time and by so doing, CONFIRM CERTAIN PROMISES. When he comes *again* it will be to FULFIL these same promises, and ESTABLISH this same righteousness in the earth.

The literal return of Jesus Christ to the earth is demanded, if our previous interpretations of the Scriptures are correct; and side by side with this remark we place the constant, the incessant teaching of the apostles, that Christ is coming to the earth again. To shew how varied and frequent is this teaching, would require us to quote a large part of the apostolic writings. Beginning with Christ's own testimony, we find that, when he was leaving the world to go to the Father, he told his disciples that *whither he was going* THEY COULD NOT COME, *but that he* WOULD COME AGAIN TO THEM (John xiv.)

So the apostles have this fact ever before them, and everything they write is related to it. It is constantly at the end of their pen. The following quotations, which might be largely augmented by similar testimonies, will prove what we have said. (One or two of Christ's own words are included):—

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and *he shall send Jesus Christ,*" &c. (Acts iii. 19, 20).

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha;" which, being interpreted, is, "Let him be accursed—*our Lord cometh*" (1 Cor. xvi. 22).

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love towards one another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, *at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints*" (1 Thess. iii. 13).

"When Christ, who is our life, *shall appear*, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. iii. 4).

"The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to

all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world ; looking for that blessed hope [even], *the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ* " (Titus ii. 11-13).

"For *the Son of man shall come* in the glory of his Father, with his angels ; and then he shall reward every man according to his works " (Matt. xvi. 27).

x "And now, little children, abide in him, that, *when he shall appear*, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him *at his coming* " (1 John ii. 28).

"We know that *when he shall appear* we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure " (1 John iii. 2, 3).

"Behold, *I come quickly* ; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be " (Rev. xxii. 12).

+ "For our conversation is in heaven ; *from whence also we look for the Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall change our vile body," &c. (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

"Watch therefore : for ye know not what hour *your Lord doth come*. Therefore, be ye also ready ; for in such an hour as ye think not *the Son of man cometh* " (Matt. xxiv. 42-44).

"Watch therefore : for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein *the Son of man cometh* " (Matt. xxv. 13).

"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord *when he cometh* shall find watching " (Luke xii. 37).

"Behold *I come as a thief* : blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame " (Rev. xvi. 15).

"Behold, *I come quickly* : blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book " (Rev. xxii. 7).

x "Nevertheless, *when the Son of man cometh*, shall he find faith on the earth " ? (Luke xviii. 8).

+ "We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure ; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer : seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you who are troubled rest with us, *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven*," &c. (2 Thess. i. 4-7).

+ "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will

of God, ye might receive the promise : for yet a little while and *he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*" (Heb. x. 36, 37).

✕ "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto *the coming of the Lord*. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receiveth the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James v. 7, 8).

✕ "Wherein (in the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time) ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory *at the appearing of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter i. 6, 7).

"Let your moderation be known unto all men: *the Lord is at hand*" (Phil. iv. 5).

✕ "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet. i. 13).<sup>f</sup>

✕ "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ *at his coming*?" (1 Thess. ii. 19).<sup>f</sup>

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment <sup>1/2</sup> without spot, unrebukable, *until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Tim. vi. 13, 14).—

✕ "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead *at his appearing* and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2).

✕ "And *when the chief shepherd shall appear*, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter v. 4).

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, *until the Lord come*," &c. (1 Cor. iv. 5).

We will conclude these quotations with the significant words, which we may call the last syllables of the spirit, to be found in Rev. xxii. 20—"He which testifieth these things saith, *Surely I come quickly*;" to which the devout heart responds, "*Even so, COME, LORD JESUS.*"

Events of enormous magnitude will follow the reappearance of

the Son of David in the earth. There will be a resurrection to immortality of such as have died in Christ, and a corresponding "change" of such as are alive in him (1 Thess. iv. 13-17; 1 Cor. xv. 20-23.)

Those who have lived and died in ignorance, and are not what Isaiah calls God's dead, will have "*perished without law*" (Rom. ii. 12). Isaiah testifies of the ignorant heathen that "they are dead, *they shall not live*; they are deceased, *they shall NOT RISE*; but concerning God's dead, he cries, "THY dead men *shall live*, together with my dead body shall they arise" (Is. xxvi. 14-21).

Enlightenment in the truth of God is the basis of all responsibility to judgment as Jesus told the Jews (John iii. 19, ix. 41). The Ephesian Gentiles were "alienated from the life of God by *the IGNORANCE that was in*" them (iv. 18); and when men wander out of the way of understanding, they "remain in the congregation of the dead" (Prov xxi. 16). The testimony of Christ that the hour comes when "*all that are in the graves*" shall hear his voice and come forth, is qualified by the remaining words—"they that have done *good*, and they that have done *evil*" (John v. 29). There are many who have breathed and lived and died, who have done neither (Romans ix. 11.)

Associated with his risen and immortal friends, endowed with the powers of spirit, Christ the Hope of Israel will proceed to organise his kingdom. Welcomed by the Jews as their Deliverer, their Hope and Consolation (they will be partially restored to their own land, and be beginning to flourish on the soil), Christ will erect his throne in Jerusalem; and, gathering the nation of Israel together, will re-establish, in a perfect form, the THEOCRACY in the earth.

He will assume universal power, destroying all coalitions of the flesh against his authority; and by a world-wide mission of Heavenly Government, he will cause evil and sin gradually to disappear, bringing "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace amongst men of good will."

A thousand years of blessed and heavenly control will teach mankind wherein its true good consists and resides, and though the "flesh" will make another revolt against the spirit before the abolition of sin and death (see Rev. xxii.), the sun of human history will shine with advancing glory through that age, and be the fitting prelude to that eternal state in which God shall be all in all.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE "EVIDENCES" OF THE TRUTH.

WE now wish to call the reader's attention, briefly, to the evidential value of what has been written; drawing out one or two things which call for some enlargement.

In the deepest sense, the truth is its own evidence. That is to say, when the truth is understood, it will contain within itself a power of conviction which will satisfy the mind quite apart from any external or foreign aids. The "conviction of things not seen" will be strongest in him who is most intimately versed in the system of things contained in the oracles of God. That Christ was a divine man, that the Jews have been in supernatural communication with God, that the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdom of heaven, with every other matter represented in biblical testimony, are truths ascertainable without going outside the Book at all. Whoever possesses a bible carries the best work on Christian evidences under his arm, and, though historical and literary knowledge is helpful in enabling us to understand that Book, it is in a secondary and not an absolutely necessary way. We put on record this experience, that nothing satisfies our doubting nature so well as the home-born evidence which the truth carries within itself. Its very grandeur, harmony, fitness, and completeness, are a watermark in the Scriptures which guarantee them genuine.

One thing must be remembered ever. Unbelief and ignorance are traceable in a very large degree to MORAL condition. Read Matt. xvi. 1-4, and ponder it well. The true force of the evidence from "signs" or miracles was not in that which the Pharisees had ability to perceive, viz., their physical wonderfulness, but lay rather in that which they were morally impotent to see, viz., their quality of divineness. The eye could take in the spectacular effect, but was blind to the vision of grace which beamed through the physical fact to the eye of the devout observer. We are responsible for the moral condition we are in, and in which the evidence of the truth is approached. Hardness, highness, scornfulness, intellectual self-complacency, supereciliousness, these states will disqualify for appreciation of the finest and truest evidence.

Remember, too, what Christ said in one of those electric and illuminating sayings of his, which make a perfect daylight to our reason—"If the LIGHT that is in you be DARKNESS, how great is that DARKNESS" (Matt. vi. 23).

Like the bright sun in the heavens, these words cover with a flood of clearness a whole continent of fact otherwise dark, and form a clue to entire centuries of mysterious mental history. The wide area we refer to is the fact of Christendom—lost to the knowledge of the truth; and the fact that, though the centuries have been brightening with a certain light, the general spiritual darkness is as appalling as ever.

The words just quoted supply us with the only possible, yet all-sufficient, explanation of this. They teach us that *light may make for darkness*, and that, when it does so, the darkness will be extreme and utter. Just as extreme cold has some of the same effects as extreme heat, so a certain light in one direction may produce a condition of eclipse in another.

The cardinal mistake of Christendom has been to transfer its own thinkings into the pages of revelation; to read its own thoughts into the book; the words of which, then, are a mere reflexion of its own opinions. But human opinions are perfectly worthless in respect of those things of which revelation treats: the light that is in man is utter darkness in this extra-human sphere. A man can no more develop divine truths by the natural intelligence which belongs to him, than the photographer can develop a picture in unsifted sunlight. If man is to know anything, he must be willing to be taught, and begin the lesson by remembering that he knows nothing. As the photographer excludes every white ray when developing his picture, so man must carefully exclude every fancy, desire or suggestion of his own from his mind. To allow his own presumptions to enter in, will be to turn all the light that is in him to darkness.

History shews us, by its many instances of men who have been called leaders of human thought, how prone is the flesh to substitute its thinkings about divine things for the teachings of revelation. Even where there has been some professed recognition of the necessity for scriptural guidance, it is extraordinary how quickly a departure has been made from the sound principle accepted at starting.

The greater the faculty for seeing, the greater the danger of light turning to darkness; for great gifts are generally accompanied by large self-consciousness and pride. This is the peril and penalty of

intellectual power. Then, when one great mind has gone astray, ten thousand mediocere minds will follow, and a score of powerful arguments will appeal to greatness to abide with error after that error has been discovered.

But perhaps generally it is not discovered: let us hope that ignorance is commoner than dishonesty. Often we have dreamt, when asleep, we were *not dreaming*; the thing has been so real to us that we have said "nay; this is not a dream." So religionists are dreaming, and they know it not. How far they are responsible for being asleep, we do not know. Our responsibility is to do all we can to awaken them. Let us first point them to the testimony which says, that God's ways are not as their ways, nor his thoughts as their thoughts; let us remind them that if natural intelligence had been equal to finding out for itself the things made known by revelation, that revelation would not have been given; that to probe the life to come with faculties which are naturally only adjusted to this life, is like searching for gems with a steel magnet, or applying a carpenter's rule to the higher phenomena of being. Let us point them to the multitudes of speculations and theories which are annually being brought to the world's fair; let us remind them that the history of science has been a history of blunders; and that the questions which agitated the human mind when philosophy was born, are still unsettled now its locks are grey.

The jest in Pilate's lips, when he turned away from the Man he questioned without waiting for an answer, is still a blatant cry amongst men; and just now, the acme of hoplessness seems to have been reached, in the doubt whether an answer will ever be forthcoming. But, to those of us who believe that *the truth* is incarnate in the Christ, that despondency is not shared, and the jest is without point. There is a light which maketh not for darkness, but which exalts and refines human intelligence to a perception of things only spiritually discerned. Into the vacuum made by the casting out of self-consciousness and pride, that light is poured; and now, instead of interpreting the spiritual by the natural, the case is reversed, and nature becomes intelligible in the light of the spirit.

Remembering the "moral condition" which qualifies for receiving evidence, the next thing to be distinctly kept in view is THE QUESTION AT ISSUE between those who contend for and those who oppose "the truth." Our contention is that the scheme of things unfolded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures contains within itself the evidence that it is of God, and that it is being providentially devel-

oped in the earth. The adverse view is that the Scriptures contain a series of *myths* which undergo dissipation when criticism is brought to bear upon them. And by "myth" is meant the result of imagination exercising itself upon real or only reported facts, and clothing those facts with fancies according to a view or expectation prevailing at the time. The position taken by modern unbelief is that the Scriptures are mainly composed of devout fancies, which, gathering round certain facts, have given to those facts a shape and complexion by no means justified by a strict regard to truth, and determined by an existing sentiment which has embalmed them. It must never be forgotten that it is with the *mythical* explanation we are dealing; that no one now pretends that Christ and his apostles and the prophets were imposters, or that the history of them is an intentional literary fraud. Within the last 140 years two waves of unbelief have swept over Europe, the first rising in the era of the French Encyclopædists with Diderot at their head; the second beginning with Strauss, who, in 1835, published the first edition of his "Life of Jesus." It is from the latter period that modern unbelief dates; there is no weapon wielded but is made of this German steel, and it is therefore useless to take the trouble of defending ourselves from any other attack. The ribald writing of the Encyclopædists is now neither remembered nor read; once made popular in England by the writings of Paine, it has given place to the far more deadly criticism of German philosophy, which, in order to find standing-room in the world, must needs cut historical Christianity down to the roots. It has attempted to do this by introducing the explanation of *myth*. If the reader will remember that this is the sole issue, viz., myth *v.* divine scheme, finding historical development, it will assist the understanding very much. We are not now concerned with the question who wrote this or that, or any other question of literary moment, but, opening the two Testaments as for the first time, and carefully examining all their contents, the question is simply this: Is the matter herein a plan or scheme of God, hanging together as parts of a consistent divine movement in the world, or is it a succession of conceits, a tissue of fancies which has only to be carefully read to be exposed?

One word more. It would never have occurred to seek an explanation of Christianity by the myth theory, if the necessities of philosophy had not called for it. When Strauss wrote his book, he was a theological tutor, but it was not biblical research that led to its writing. He wrote that book to meet the case of a pre-received

philosophical theory. Following in the steps of Hegel, his master and a Pantheist, and having confused God and the world, he *needed* an explanation of historical Christianity that would reconcile the latter with his view of the universe.

But a truly scientific method demands that history shall ever precede philosophy, for philosophy is that system of thought in which *ALL the facts* of life and the world find their proper setting.

One more preliminary sentence. The evidences which will be adduced *link together*. This must be remembered, because evidence has a very different strength if it form part of a chain than if it stand in isolated circumstances. For instance, the argument from prophecy has much more strength when it is shewn that God has a purpose which is being developed in the history of nations. The argument from Christ's miracles also is much assisted by shewing that these are the natural and to be expected adjuncts of such a man as Jesus claims to be: that Jesus Christ *without* the miracles would be a greater improbability to explain, than is created by miracles themselves.

The first evidence of the divine origin of the scheme of the Scriptures is *the unique grandeur of the governing conception of that scheme*. This evidence is of the same direct and intuitive character which streams in upon us when standing meditatively in the presence of the glorious works of God, which compel us to assent to the truth of a Creator—evidence swifter than reasoning, more subtle than thought, and chiefly satisfactory as a private argument to him who is capable of feeling it.

It is hardly necessary to remind the reader what that governing conception is. Surely it is the bringing about of perfect well-being for man by means of a KINGDOM—a *kingdom OF GOD—of heaven*, charactered in righteousness, peace, and joy, the essential qualities of spirit which will breathe and bloom in the ruling of the age to come. Now, we say it is the perfect enchantment, the absolute divineness of such a gospel, which best quells and quenches doubt; which gives us wings that bear us lightly over all the briers of difficulty which (without wonder) infest our steps and catch us at every turn. This conception is a melody of a harp touched by more than mortal skill, exorcising the demon of scepticism from the breast.

It is gradually unfolded. In the first pages of the Old Testament, the problem for solution is more than hinted at, how best to prepare a race of mortals for holy and incorruptible being—how best to

establish a race of men in a delectable earth, whose lives should reflect the glory of God, and whose happiness should form the refrain of God's own joy. That transcendent project begins in Eden, and is never lost sight of, but gleams at intervals through the darkness of human history until Abram is called. At this point the light struggles less, and burns more steadily. At the earliest possible moment God chooses this man, whose immediate seed form the rudiments of a kingdom, which, in an imperfect, because preparatory manner, adumbrated the kingdom of Heaven, toward which all events tend. And, though this nation, because of its unfaithfulness, meets with repeated disaster, and, at last, suffers political destruction, the very darkness of the picture only permits the brightness of the prophetic testimony to shine out more conspicuously. No one can study that testimony without feeling that the scheme of God, instead of changing, is unerringly pursuing its conception and purpose, and that a necessary development is going forward. While the rudimentary kingdom of God is lying in ruins, to accomplish the period of its desolation, power over God's heritage is transferred to the kingdoms of men. Gentile power is permitted to be supreme, and to hold control long enough to show how utterly incompetent man is to govern himself, and to compass his own welfare. This long and necessary lesson (conned yet) precedes the setting up of a perfect kingdom of God, which will at last solve all problems, and teach the inhabitants of the earth, by its gracious control, wherein man's true good resides.

If it be granted that such a governing conception as we have pointed out does actually exist through the Scriptures; that the whole revelation gathers about and centres in a kingdom of God, which is intended to become a divine power of blessing in the earth, then the evidential force of this becomes at once apparent; for, without establishing the date and authorship of any of the books of the Scriptures, and only assuming what is simply palpable to the dullest student—that they were not all written at one time and by one hand—the myth explanation becomes ridiculously inadequate. For, in the first place, the perfect sublimity of this conception, together with its reasonableness, has no parallel (even the most remote) with the acknowledged religious myths of any peoples. If mythology were not such an out-of-the-way subject for the general reader, and information upon the world's myths was more common, it would be impossible even for ingenious sceptics to impose this "explanation" upon the common-sense of the average mind. The

best thing we can recommend is for the reader to get out of some library one or two good handbooks on the subject of mythology, and read for himself the childish imaginings of the early inhabitants of earth, as they stood awe-struck and musing in the presence of the phenomena of nature, and he will turn away with incredulity from him who tries to explain the conception and history of the kingdom of God by that which accounts for these dreams and fancies. This is a subject which is susceptible of much illustration, but we must content ourself with putting the reader on the track of the evidence.

X Then, in the second place, *the continuity of purpose* displayed in the divine working demands an explanation which the myth theory cannot provide—for fancy is bound to no plan, and preserves no consistency of drift, the proof of which is in the fact that (as Cox says in his Manual) it is often impossible to make the stories of the gods agree together, each country and city following its own version. Now, no such vagrancy and eccentricity of fancy can explain the steady and harmonious purpose of Jehovah, in which, from rudimentary beginnings, he unfolds a sublime plan of heavenly empire, which shall sway the world in righteousness and peace. To meet the case, it would require to be shewn us a *long series* of myths, which should have the coherence of reason and the harmony of a plan. But this it is impossible to show us—as impossible as clouds drifting across the sky in geometric or artistic forms.

Though we pronounce this governing conception sublime, it is strictly rational: we mean that what revelation describes as the outcome of history is in perfect keeping with the interim of history. What more natural to believe than as now (under God's providence) the highest corporate life is reached in the life of the *nation*, and the greatest effort that can be put forth, securing the highest temporal good, is *national* effort, so hereafter a kingdom or chosen nation shall be instrumental in giving effect to the final purposes of God? If it be understood that the powers that be are ordained of God—not meaning by this that any particular king or dynasty or *form* of government is so ordained, but that the institution of government is a divine institution—is it not reasonable to believe that such a power will be wielded in the blessing of all mankind? If the kingdom of God has had already a rudimentary form as constituted under Moses, why should its perfected establishment under Christ be incredible? The reasonableness of the conception is seen in just this, that it represents God as employing the mightiest engine among his providential ordinances for the reorganisation of a world. This.

is no dream, but shews a certain fitness of means to ends. All that feeling after the truth, that yearning of the mind discovered in those writers to whom the prophets of Scripture are not the "word of the Lord," as in Plato's "Republic," Moore's "Utopia," and the socialism of Karl Marx and Lassale, points to the true remedy of the world as revealed in the Scriptures, and is a tacit testimony to its reasonableness.

The evidences of the truth must always be considered in a twofold manner. First, the positive evidence must be noticed, and then it must be observed how the case would look if the evidence were false, and the opposite position to the one sought to be established were true. We wish this to be done now.

Let it be supposed that there is no proof that a sublime scheme for the world's renewal is on foot, that the bible contains through all its parts no golden thread of divine purpose, which is the clue to a glorious consummation of existence—what then are we shut up to? Remember there is no other book professing to be a revelation, waiting to have its claims discussed. Philosophies there are many; Revelation there professes to be but one. For Mohammedanism is but a corruption of Christian ideas, and is not, in the sense intended, a new revelation.

What, then, is the negative side of this internal evidence just adduced? Ask the current unbelief! It attempts no explanation of the world; it protests against such attempt; it has banished all enquiry about first or final causes. All it knows is that we are tossing on an unsounded sea, drifting with the tide of causes and consequences, of which tide no man knows anything. It has no notion where we hail from or where we are drifting; and, though some of its cultivated exponents talk about the "Time Spirit," "a stream of tendency," "a power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness," such language is nothing but the disguise of poetry thrown over the dark reality of its own negation. If unbelief is true (and by unbelief we mean that which denies that the bible contains a divine provision of life and blessing for the world), then human existence is reduced to the despair of a wreck at sea; and Mr. Frederic Harrison must be told that to preach "the religion of humanity" to the dying skeletons on that raft, would be as daft or as diabolic a proceeding as the suggestion to clear the planks for a last dance to death. If despair has not seized upon the individual unbeliever already, it is because he inhales the oxygen of the general faith; but let this element (however impure at present),



become exhausted, and the carbonic acid of unbelief prevail, and the haggardness of its atheism would soon be visible.

This subject branches out into many directions, but, keeping strictly to the spot where all the turnings meet, we put it to you, reader, that, rejecting the "divine scheme," you quench all human hope; you lose all motive of worthy exertion; you give up the only definite rule of righteous action; you cripple your faculties, by denying them that exaltation which they evidently are capable of enjoying; you involve yourself in the inconsistency of confessing that you can admire the consummate wisdom of nature in ten thousand of her detail purposes, but that the governing purpose has nowhere been made manifest.

The full force, then, of this first item of evidence is not perceived until we turn our back upon it, and face the gloom against which it shines. On the one hand, we discern the glory of a moral purpose in the van of the world, a pillar of fire, or cloud which hovers guidingly near to humanity as it traverses the desert—a moral purpose containing a splendid moral issue for the world; on the other hand, we see a world without a governing plan; a conflict without a victory; a history without an end; aspiration without fulfilment, and an agony of crying that is mocked by the echoes of despair. To him who has stood and shuddered on the brink of this cold despair, how pleasant to turn again to where the warm light of revelation streams, which forms a rainbow even from the tears of men, and from which excellent glory falls a voice, "In him is life and the life is the light of men."

Next to the governing conception of the scriptural scheme, we come to the second item of evidence which is seen in—

II. *The peculiarly transcendent and unworldly method* by which, according to the Scriptures, the contemplated end is to be reached and the divine purpose realised. Recollecting that end to be the creation of a heavenly kingdom in the hands of incorruptible rulers, we point out that the path by which this end is to be reached is a path which, there is amplest proof, no human mind could ever have hit upon. This path or method contains three stages or movements: 1st, the passing of the human race through an experience of sin and evil; 2nd, the manifestation of God's righteousness by the condemnation of sin in the representative flesh of an innocent sufferer; and, 3rd, the creation of a race of immortals on the ground of faith in, and obedience to, the anointed representative.

That the evidence may be quite clear, it will be necessary to take

each of these three movements for separate remark. For it is admitted that the method is a complicated one, the reason being, that the problem to be solved is a complicated problem. The solution of it is by no means so easy as to find the conditions under which it is possible to produce a perfect gem or a perfect flower, or a perfect brute, for the *moral* in man has to be provided for, which creates the whole difficulty. But the very complication of the method is not without a certain evidential force, shewing how improbable must have been its human invention, just as a savage could hardly be supposed to have invented a watch.

To restate the problem: Given, finite beings, with moral capacities but without experience; how to bring such beings out into an established and triumphant righteousness, into glory, honour, and immortality?

Now, the evidence of the truth will appear as we trace the divine procedure in working this problem out, and contrasting it with those imaginations concerning human perfectibility which appear natural to the human mind.

That the path commences with a descent of men into the Valley of the Shadow of Death is first to be noticed. The race must know, experimentally, the bitterness of sin. Before it can supply a generation which shall be characterized and principled in obedience, it must have sounded the depths of evil, and been wrung with the rigours of wrong-doing. No verbal instruction will be sufficient; the flesh must make painful proof of its weakness; desire and lust must demonstrate their vanity; self-love must become utterly exposed. In absence from his God, man must feel a horror of great darkness falling upon him; in spiritual hunger, and thirst, and weakness, and sorrow, he must exhaust the promises of evil, and bitterly prove the hollowness and mockery of all that is not of God. To get a generation that can rise to the divinest heights of righteousness, man must undergo all this, or he fails of the necessary finish of character, or moral fitness for immortality.

Now, this strange beginning of the process by which the neutral tint of man's innocence becomes at last the blanched white righteousness of a divine character, is *insupposable* as the result of human thought and imagination directed to the subject; the proof of which is that where revelation has not penetrated, or where it has been overridden by speculation, this fact of evil has received the most irrational treatment. Let it be confidently said that no explanation of that fact, other than the one supplied by revelation, can be given

which will stand the tests of reason. Making a rough division of those explanations which reason has in vain attempted, we are met by the theories of Eastern dualism, or the Western and atheistic theory of necessity. Dualism affirms two eternal principles, and accounts for man's unhappy condition by the internecine struggle between them. The short criticism which is absolutely destructive of any such view is simply this: that two or more *eternal and independent* powers or principles cannot logically exist: reason refuses to recognise two eternals in anything. Next we are confronted by the philosophical theory of necessity which, denying sin *as* sin, affirms that evil (or evils rather) are the incidental circumstances attending development. All the evils of the world are, according to this, so many errors and mistakes arising from ignorance and infirmity which we shall get rid of some day when evolution has done a more perfect work upon us. The simplest answer to this is that it contradicts our consciousness, which assures us that there is a sphere in which we are under no compulsion of any kind, but where our will, pivoted on the understanding, moves in the orbit of its own freedom. In addition to this, it can be shewn that the explanation of evil by "physical necessity" is full of ridiculous contradictions; as, for instance, when it speaks of sin being an incident of our *advanced* development, and then says that to get rid of it we must wait till we have *developed further*: or, for another instance, when evil is said to be physically necessary in one breath, and of being got rid of in the next!

The only necessity which reason can recognise is not physical but moral; relating not to essence but to character; in other words, the scriptural explanation of evil is the only credible one, yet one which it requires a revelation to discover, viz., that in order to a suitable and sufficient *character*, man must be permitted to transgress: he must know sin's thralldom and bitterness; he must have shuddered in its Gethsemane, and endured the agony of its cross.

But who cannot see in this a divine arrangement—a scheme which it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive?

By being passed under an experience of sin and evil, man has been taught what SIN is. The next step in God's method is one in which a grand moral impression of *righteousness* is to be given to man, and an arrangement made by which that righteousness may be communicated to him, to the end that a generation may be saved from sin and death, in whose hands the kingdom of God may be established.

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It must be borne in mind that the evidence appears in this, viz., the manifest difference between the method revealed in the Scriptures of recovering the world to righteousness, and the thoughts of Paganism, say, or Deism, on the subject. Of course, these thoughts have varied in different ages, and in different civilizations, and range from the crudest and most barbarous notions of obtaining forgiveness and favour by human sacrifice, self-mutilation, and material offerings, to the easy notions of recovery by self-amendment. Nothing can make a greater contrast than such feeble dreamings or such fanatical imaginations, and the divine method of providing for redemption, as set forth in Romans iii. 25, 26.

Taking this method in review, it appears that the first thing to be done is to exhibit to the world in a powerfully impressive form (at the proper time) *the righteousness of God*. With sin for a dark background, this fact must be made luminously clear. Now, how can this be done? It is true God's righteousness is manifested every time men suffer for transgression, and die under the penalty of sin, but such a manifestation has not all the impressiveness that is needed, besides which it does not provide for the action of God's grace in rescuing us from death. If God proved and vindicated his righteousness merely in this way, no one could escape from the tomb. God, in that case, might be just, but would not be the justifier of them under condemnation. It seems that the only way open to accomplish the twofold purpose was to treat the race through a representative, man; one who, wearing our nature, could carry and bear the condemnation and penalty of the flesh, yet whose perfectly obedient life would entitle him to resuscitation from the dead, and might become the ground on which the grace of God could stand and offer renewal of life to such as should qualify themselves for it. The scheme of the Christ, therefore, at once impresses us as being a wonderful divine arrangement, such as warrants the apostle's exclamation, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

How could a more augustly impressive picture and proof be given of the divine abhorrence of sin than in the sorrow and death of an absolutely just man; of one, the perfect moral glory of whose life none could dim by a breath of blame, yet who *dies* because *his nature comes under the law of sin and death*. It is a picture that once turned a felon from his sin when he cried to his fellow, "We indeed suffer justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; *but this man hath done nothing amiss.*" "Behold" this "Lamb,"

as he takes thus "away the sin of the world," and confess that he surely is "of God." It is "an unspeakable gift;" and the truth concerning it is a "mystery" which "has not entered into the heart of man, but which has been revealed by the Spirit of God." When that "Lamb" died, the earth trembled and the light of noon failed, for nature herself felt the pangs of the curse at this moment as never before; and every man who has gazed upon that dying Christ must be filled with the awe of righteousness, and tremble at a new discovery of the vivid sinfulness of sin.

Condemnation of sin having been effected by the death of the representative Jesus, and the race having been taught a lesson in righteousness, what is next to be done? The anointed one is to be raised from the dead as the reward and result of his obedience, so that they who having been reconciled to God by his death may now be saved by his life. Side by side with the righteousness, the grace of God appears. For it is purely of His free goodness that God privileges Jesus Christ to extend the life he has won for himself to such as may become his brethren in the way he will appoint. It is but to be observed that, uninstructed by revelation, the human mind has never thought of recovery from sin by the moral effect of the exhibition of divine righteousness; the pendulum of human thought having swung between an appeasement of wrath by substituting one victim for another, and the presumption that God would indulgently overlook transgression.

The question next arises, By what arrangement can God best communicate the righteousness realised by the anointed one, to others who may be by it qualified for eternal life?

Remember here what was said about the evidences linking together. For if the human mind could furnish no idea how a basis of redemption could be *laid*, as we have seen already, neither can it now know by what means righteousness may be *communicated* to a sinful generation. The fact is, in this part of the subject we are in a region that is to human reason an unexplored country; it has not made for itself so much as a track. Revelation is here all alone, and the truth stands or falls by the strength or weakness of its self-evidence. For though reason cannot say before a revelation is given what that revelation should contain (this being plainly absurd), yet, when the revelation has been made known, it will contain its own justification to our understanding.

Now the evidence is here: that, antecedent to revelation, man could not say how a seed or germ of righteousness could be created;

and, next, how such a seed should be made to germinate in the heart of humanity. Or, to speak without a figure, man could never know how God's righteousness could be made a visible fact in the earth, while sparing the race, and how such righteousness should be made reproductive of itself in the lives of sinners.

We have already seen how revelation solves the first part of this problem; let us now see how it deals with the second.

Directly we open the New Testament, we find that a great deal is said about FAITH. We are taught pretty fully that men succeed to righteousness, their hearts opening to a new potency, by *faith in God's Anointed One*, and, getting in this way a new start in a life of obedience, they proceed to work their obedience out, and to make good their righteousness by an unwearied progress of well-doing. Remembering that the attitude of God, after having raised Christ from the dead, is that of free goodness waiting to find an avenue to human hearts, by which this righteousness of Christ may pass to those hearts, to become their righteousness too, we now ponder the perfect *suitableness* of FAITH to this end.

We know we are in some danger of missing the full and exact meaning of the term "faith in Christ," for theology has expounded it, as a rule, too loosely, and left out of sight much that is essential to it. But, dismissing such expositions, let it be remembered that "faith" is a controlling conviction, filling brain and heart; that Jesus was anointed of God to confirm and realise the promises made unto the fathers; all of which is wrapped up in the saying, "I believe in Christ." In this it is, of course, implied that we believe those promises.

Now, the more we consider the nature and working and results of faith, the more it grows upon us how well adapted this arrangement is, to unfold a seed of righteousness in man and to qualify him for future life. In the first place, it throws us absolutely on the grace of the Creator, making pride impossible, and so excluding all boasting; at the same time being to ourselves the commencement of a new responsibility. Then it brings the allegiance of our whole nature round to God; for a true faith rallies all our faculties to the spot whereon it stands to command and lead; our whole being answers to the clarion note, and just this is what a perfect righteousness requires. Besides which, faith in *Jesus Christ* lends the force of a devoted personal attachment to our purpose of well-doing, for now "the love of Christ constrains us." This is greatly in our favour, seeing we are surrounded by influences of another kind,

coming from persons who are, in a sense, dear to us; so that now the development of our godliness will go forward, not as a thing that is being schooled by tutors, but a thing won and inspired by affection. Then, again, this method of righteousness makes it convenient for our ideal of holiness to be made stand, not in any abstract statement or definition of virtue, but in the faultless beauty of a human life. And still again, this method cheers us forward in our efforts after a personal righteousness, by the sense of companionship we feel with one who has already "overcome the world." Such observations by no means exhaust this argument of fitness, but are a sample of what may be justly said on the subject, and may suggest further thought. There seems nothing that could give God such a grasp of our nature; nothing that could create such constraining force within us; nothing that could make such a suitable soil for righteousness to grow in as this arrangement, by which faith is demanded in a representative man, whose reward and privilege it has become (through the grace of God) to confer immortality upon his brethren.

This will be a convenient point to notice an objection that will certainly be raised against the truth; an objection to the whole notion of conferring immortality on such creatures as the human being. It is really an objection to the revelation which contains this notion; for, admitting that the book does teach that God intends to immortalize a race of qualified and accepted men, it is held that the whole notion is unreasonable, and so the book which contains it is supposed to be discredited.

The objection rests upon purely utilitarian ground, and may be expressed thus: The Creator, no doubt, intends the greatest happiness for his creatures, and more happiness, on the whole, accrues to them under the present arrangement, by which one generation succeeds another with its fresh young life keen to appreciate life's joy, than by making one generation immortal, enjoying existence for ever.

The answer to this objection will bring before us one or two points we shall do well to remember. The first observation is, that God's purpose is not *merely* the greatest happiness of the creature, but the greatest happiness of such creatures *as exist to his glory* (Rev. iv. 11; John xvii. 4). We find the reason of our existence in that we glorify God, and it is intended that the happiness which comes of this, and is its sweet concomitant, we shall enjoy. The question is, therefore, not simply one of a greater or less total of happiness

as mere creatures of God, but under what circumstances can the happiness of righteousness be caused to exist?

Now, it appears from a number of considerations, that righteousness can only enter upon its true beatitude as it enters also upon immortality—that immortality, indeed, belongs to righteousness as its right condition and its natural sphere; so that, if it is not absurd to say that the creator is aiming at making a righteous generation, it is not foolish to assume that he proposes that such generation shall live for ever. Life is the natural complement of righteousness, as death is the annexed necessity of sin; for when a man is *wholly* RIGHT (and this is the meaning of our word) he has a *right* to live. It is not immortality that should be the incredible thing, but *death*, which shews man fallen out of the order of nature; only, being so accustomed to the fact of death, we invert the truth, pronouncing death to be nature's true order, and immortality (if it be true at all) a miracle. The true state of things, which creation is ever striving after, is not *a succession* of lives of flowers, or brutes, or men; but *one race*, which, existing in righteousness, and abiding for ever, shall declare the glory of God, and manifest his praise. An unfading Eden, and an immortal Adam, are the true order of the world, an order which will some day be reached, present chaos and sin notwithstanding. John Stuart Mill (we have said) calls it expressively, "the *irony* of nature," that a man, after having, through the discipline of a long life, reached some greatness of character, should *die* just as the world is beginning to reap the advantage of his presence. That irony cannot last for ever; there is a provision in nature (of which revelation is the unfolding), by which the fittest will survive, or, to use the exact language, by which the just shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. †

Then, again, be it observed, it is not true that a larger total of happiness is obtained under a system in which life is constantly producing young and tender shoots of being; for, though the possibilities of keen enjoyment in the young are admitted, this zest is nothing, probably, compared with the quick and quivering delight of incorruptible beings. Even the youths shall faint, and the young men shall utterly fall: not so in the age when the inhabitants shall never say "I am sick." Immortality knows no weakness nor satiety; it cannot grow old or grey; weariness and ennui, and the sensation of palling, are the milder symptoms of death. The bloom will ever be on its ripe delight; its sense and satisfaction will be always new and deep; exercise, indeed, and use will



do unlimitedly what now; to a certain degree, they do, when they deepen our capacity, and sharpen faculty to a finer point.

Instead, then, of there being any objection against the notion of immortality, there seems to be all that reason in its favour which exists for the expectation that God will at last get a godly and wholly righteous generation for the occupying of his earth. If this objection be then disposed of, the whole weight of the evidence last submitted remains, in which we saw God pursuing his purpose of developing an incorruptible rulership by a totally unworldly and unimaginable plan, viz., submitting the race to the searchings of evil, creating for it a representative righteousness, and making this righteousness personal to such individuals as might put it on by the investiture of faith.

If it is reasonable to believe, on the representation of Scripture, that the creator aims at establishing a righteous generation in the earth—that, in fact, a *righteous creaturehood* which shall glorify God is the motive and end of all creation—then we should expect to find both nature and revelation framed to this idea, tuned to this note, inspired throughout with this reverence for righteousness, and marked by this habit of exalting it.

Now, leaving out of this discussion the question whether or not this is true of nature, it is to be observed that revelation exactly answers to and fulfils this expectation, which is manifest in two ways, viz., that it is consistently throughout filled with this sentiment of righteousness, and that it does, actually, create an atmosphere of righteousness which, in the measure that men drink it in, purifies the veins of humanity, and gives a better complexion of health to national and social life.

Let us look at the first statement. It is affirmed that this professed sentiment of righteousness is traceable between the lines through every book of the bible; that it is the reason of its histories and narratives, the key to its prophecies, the text of its moral teachings, and the inspiration of its songs. It begins by putting man in a certain position in which righteousness is the problem to be solved, and ends with this problem found out, and man in the felicitous possession of the discovery for ever. We cannot make "head or tail" of this book unless we remember that this is what it is all about; but remembering this, its language and its accent are easily understood. It is quite remarkable that everything in this composite book is in the same vein—all has relation to righteousness—probation and destiny; commandment

and conduct; penalty and reward; everything that is treated of is beheld in the light and handled in behoof of this thing. No writer falls beneath the grand key; no note can be detected flat, but the magnificent strain is preserved until, in the age to come, the "bells of the horses" even chime with the rapture of righteousness, which rings through the world.

Now, if this "note" is traceable throughout the bible, it constitutes an evidence that the book is of God; for it is incredible that the many various writers should, unaided (to keep up the figure), tune their instruments to such a note as this, and maintain that pitch everywhere and throughout. It is not that they all play the same air (this fact was noticed previously), but that each writer is in tune, and keeps up to the high pitch of the note "righteousness," which is, however, not wonderful at all, if it is understood that God is assisting the writers, and that the revelation aims at preparing a godly generation in the earth.

The affirmation that an identical note of righteousness pervades the whole bible, is supported by the fact that the Scriptures actually create an atmosphere highly favourable to righteousness quite perceptible to the moral senses of those who habitually study them. It is contended that it is not simply a wonderful sentiment that pervades the book (as when Job's friends make the subject of righteousness a matter of philosophical palaver), but that this sentiment grows so incorporate and concrete in the sayings and doings of the records that the atmosphere of the Scriptures is as perceptibly beneficial to us as agricultural air, or the breezes of the ocean. So that if this is so, the evidence of the senses, as well as the evidence of criticism, shows the Scriptures fulfilling our expectation by the moral tone they take and maintain. Of course, the question of the healthy influence emanating from the Scriptures must be decided by each man's moral sense; but, speaking for a great number of candid persons, it may be said that, notwithstanding the few places in the Scriptures which scepticism points to as inimical to the purity of the reader's imagination, their pages exhale that which is quickening and bracing to moral life, and yield a salt which is good against the corrupting and enervating power of the world. A healthy mind may read through the whole of Leviticus with less harm than would be received by passing through a gallery of Grecian sculptures. It cannot be said of the reading of Shakespeare, or most of our poets, that there is no danger to the student, for the muses have ever had their faults of

wantonness; but the historians, prophets, and apostles of the Scriptures have no such charge at their door. The ever-present idea and intention of righteousness that we insist upon, disinfects everything that might otherwise, perhaps, promote disease, and leaves the book full of the fragrant air of the Spirit, and with breezes blowing health from the heights of God. We have but to walk through the odorous fields of the Scripture, and the whole moral man feels regaled in a way that would be strange were it not for the explanation which is given by the saying, "My words are spirit and life." We feel that this must be so, as our cheek is fanned by their pure breath, and as we drink in the health of their spirit-pervaded sentences. We are all very quick to feel what kind of an atmosphere we are in, whether in the presence of books or men; and instinct is a good analyst in such matters; so, when we read the Scripture, the very air it makes forbids the idea that its ground is mere pretence or fancy, but suggests that we are in the realm of highest truth, where

" 'Tis Nature all, and all delight."

So true, indeed, is it, that an atmosphere of righteousness pervades the bible, that beneath its influence, we find, has formed a perfectly new and unique conception in the religious heart of humanity—a conception demanding a new word in the vocabulary of religion. The conception spoken of is that of HOLINESS; and such is the word that has been fitted to the idea. Safely may it be said that, never until the truth obtained a complete statement by Christ and his apostles, did the conception of Holiness, as a possible quality pertaining to man's entire being and life, grow within the thought of mankind. Mankind from its earliest history has been familiar with the idea of the sacred, but in a lower and more limited sense; as in connection with its sacred places, its sacred classes, and its sacred seasons. The grove, the priest, and the times of festival are instances of this. But a much loftier and larger conception than this has come to the world since Christ has been here to tell us of our "high calling," and to exemplify the divine idea of human life by his own absolute sanctity and obedience unto death. It is now seen that in body, soul, and spirit—in all the aims and ambitions and labours of life—man may be blameless and consecrated before God; that, without going out of the world, he may be redeemed from its sin, and entered into sanctified relation to God.

Admitted, that this beautiful thing called Holiness is seldom seen actually in this fallen age; that human blindness and folly have generally sought for it in ways wherein it never could be found; still it is something that the thought has not perished from our hearts, and that the beautiful word still lives to redeem our sin-stained speech, and point us to the heaven from whence this ray of sunlight fell. For words have a history. And he who traces the history of the word *Holiness*, and who seeks the genesis of this thing, will find that once in the history of the human race a religious luminary arose in the firmament, with light beyond the brightness of the sun, in which light the human race sees the possibility of a transfigured being, and of rising to heights of purity undreamt of before. That transfigured being, that unique possibility of purity, that strange new hope of living in white undefilement before and unto God, demands an explanation. Though it were but a vision—a dream—still it would demand this, for still it would be historically true that this new thing of beauty has obtained a place in our thought and speech. Say, then, how the New Testament idea of holiness arose, and we shall then discover and prove that atmosphere of righteousness just insisted on, for it was in this element the notion was born, and drew its first breath of life.

The "myth" explanation of much of the contents of Scripture is reduced to utter foolishness when it is remembered that myth requires the heroes of each story to be transfigured by the fancy of the writer, while the way of the Scripture is to speak of its characters with the strictest impartiality of truth. The fact is, never has history, to say nothing of legend, been written as it is written in the Scriptures. There is nothing like it in literature in this particular. There is no prominent character in the book except Jesus whose faults are not distinctly marked; the shadows of the lives recorded are in complete contrast to the bright righteousness of God. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Eli, Saul, David, Peter, Paul, John, are examples, among many more, of excellent men whose lives have been noticed with an unsparing hand. The absolute faithfulness of the history cannot possibly be reconciled with that fond treatment of the fancy which loves to magnify virtues and to hide or diminish faults. It is no reply to this observation to say that the mythical stories of the Grecian gods abound with crimes which those gods are said to have committed. For such crimes find mention, not because the myth-maker was compelled in

his integrity to mention them, and against which, as a dark background, he might pourtray the divine ideal of virtue; but they find mention as giving an element of humour or tragedy to the story, which motive cannot be detected in the Scriptures. All the faults of the godly men sketched therein are mentioned in the interest of that "righteousness" which it is ever the habit of the book to exalt and reverence. The moral inculcation of the bible is both positive and negative—positive as the bright vision of holiness is caused to fall upon our hearts in the better moments and nobler deeds of spirit-inspired men—negative, as we are made to feel why it is the heavens are darkening and the moral thunders are being unloosed. If Nathan say to David, "Thou art the man!" or if Jesus tell Peter, "Thou savourest not of the things that be of God but of men," what is it but a testimony to the perfect truthfulness of what is written?—a truthfulness not to be warped though David is to be established in his throne for ever, and Peter is to become a rock on which a church shall be founded. If Samson's story is a myth, what shall we say of the history which points out (which is ever true) how nearly his great strength and his great weakness lay together, how his great physical and animal power, which was too much for the *men* of the Philistines, was the very snare into which, when laid by a woman, he readily fell. For a myth, it is all too faithful and too real; as a history, these are the credentials of its truth.

Having considered the "scheme" of the Scriptures, and seen in a variety of ways how it carries an air of credibility with it, and is in fact justified to our faith by an internal reasonableness which appeals to us at each review, we turn now to another branch of evidence. This new evidence is recognised as we contemplate HIM round whose character and life all the truths and teachings of revelation circulate and gather. It will not be denied that the scheme unfolded in the Scriptures is therein connected with One whose mission it is to work out God's plan. The Anointed One of the Old Testament, and the Jesus Christ of the New, cannot possibly be disconnected from that plan of God which gives to Revelation its aim and end. The truth focalises in him, and therefore in him, his life, character, and work, as far as these have been made known, we may expect to see the brightest evidences of the truth. If it is true that a man has come from God, anointed and possessed with holy spirit; higher than the angels, to become the light and life of men; then, surely, beholding him, the honest

heart and unclouded eye will discern a glory in him that will prove and establish the divinity of that system of which he is the central fact and figure. That glory will shed forth its own evidence. Indeed, the evidence of Christ's own life is the highest and most satisfying evidence that can be submitted to the mind. Here we are not in the thin air of metaphysics, nor dealing with subtleties of speculation; faith feels no hard compulsion from the severities of logic, nor does it depend on the uncertainties of history, but from out the firmament of that life there falls the warm light of truth; and he whom the world has not altogether frost-bitten, has nothing to do but let this wealth and flood of truth and grace bathe his feeling, and deep and sweet conviction will quicken and grow within him. If there were no other evidence, this might well be sufficient, that Christ has come into the world to be its light and truth; to manifest God the Father; to bear witness to the truth; to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and now, whosoever is of the truth heareth his voice, and goeth unto him to find rest for their souls.

The object, then, of some succeeding pages will be to shew that what reason anticipated—viz., that the evidence of the truth would be brightest in the character and work of him who is the truth incarnate—is actually realised on a due study and consideration of him.

For if it can be shewn that, while being perfectly human, as possessing all the parts and capacities of man, he was filled without measure with the divine spirit, which wrought in him a supernatural character, and qualified him to do a supernatural work, then the scheme of the truth, of which his very existence is an attestation, is fully confirmed as a scheme devised by God, and pursued under his will.

It can most certainly be shewn that this supernatural character belongs to Jesus Christ: that, while he was a man, he was not a *mere* man, and cannot be classified with men, nor explained by that which explains human character generally. There was a certain element or quantity in him which separated him by whole leagues of distance from the finest specimens of men humanity has produced. Under inspection we shall discern all this with perfect clearness. It is the general impression of this fact that has given to Jesus that unique and absolute position in the intellectual regards of men which is granted not by professed believers merely, but by those who build no Christian hope upon him, and which

constrains such a man as Emerson to write, "Christ is born, and millions of men so grow and cleave to his genius, that he is confounded with virtue and the possible of man." This admirable and admiring confession (and it is but one amongst many such) could not possibly have been made by one of the highest intellect, unless under the profound impressions which have stamped themselves upon the heart of Christendom generally. Those impressions have not come from the contemplation of any mere human character. They go to show (what a particular inspection confirms) that Jesus Christ came, as he said, from God, that while man is from beneath, Jesus Christ is from above, and that a plenary investment of divine power and wisdom equipped and qualified him in his career. Indeed, it has never been attempted in modern times to put Jesus Christ on the same platform and footing with the saints and sages of humanity. The myth theory requires, indeed, that he should be disrobed of those glories with which, it is said, a fond imagination has clothed his form, leaving him little more than the ordinary and natural beauty of a pure Jewish moralist and religious reformer. But it is many centuries since (taking Christ as he stands in the gospels) it was sought to shew Pythagoras, Appollonius, and other pagans to be as great and as good as he. Time has settled this question for the world by covering with dust and oblivion the records, and almost the names of these poor humans, and establishing Christ's name and fame and claims broader and deeper in the intelligence of the race. For though, by the race, Christ is vastly misunderstood, yet as to that elementary recognition of his supernatural origin and business in the world, an apostate Christendom is a competent witness in the case.

It is, then, in Jesus Christ's obviously supernatural character, fulfilling in itself the expectation raised by the scheme of the Scriptures, that we find the strongest proof of all that this scheme is of God.

Quite apart from the truth or falsehood of the gospel narratives; historically considered, and on just opening the books, we behold a strange glory in the pages, a man of so pure and sublime presence, of such a sacred air, and heavenly bearing, and godly mien, that our heart is constrained to acknowledge the supernatural is here. But even historically considered, such a narrative must be true. Consider the improbability that four writers should *create* a supernatural character and history that would not shock the *savants* of literature by their grotesqueness and folly. To measure

the difficulty of describing a supernatural being without authentic original facts to work from, let it be considered how trying it would be for four writers to sit down and write the biography of the orthodox "devil." What incongruities of error and folly they would fall into who attempted such a task! Yet, it should be easier to biographise a devil, than to depict a Christ, for deformity is easier to paint than beauty. The apocryphal gospels shew us only too well what extremes of improbability will be run into when mere human imagination undertakes to tell us what a supernatural story should be. But every capable critic of the genuine gospels has confessed that therein is a picture of one in whom all majesty and beauty, all strength and sweetness, all divine and human graces blend and beam. Neither is it because of any discerned flaws or detected incongruities of form that the refusal arises to confess it supernatural, but as already stated, because, forsooth, a certain one-eyed or mole-blind philosophy demands that the supernatural, wherever found, be rejected. So that to assume the substantial truth of the gospel records is only to say we do not see how four such confessedly perfect pictures of superhuman life and story could get written unless there was such an original to work from. It is not that among the many legends and stories of imaginary divine beings there were a few about as good or little inferior to these four; but it is, that here we have a picture that is still the enchantment of the intellectual world, and everywhere else crude nondescripts which can move to neither smiles nor tears.

Let us, then, turn over the pages of these gospels, and as we gaze upon him whose glory fills our vision, and glides before our eyes, we shall discern more and more how utterly inexplicable he is from the point of view of human explanation.

The *amazing* PRETENSIONS of Christ and his *astounding* CLAIMS would have involved him in universal derision centuries ago if it had not been felt that Christ was no mere man, but in some way a supernatural being in the world. See what a position it is he assumes. Associating himself with the Deity, he declares that he and the Father "are one"—that Deity resides "in him." He declares himself to be "the light of the world." Referring to himself he says, "Behold a greater than Solomon is here." Stepping out in front of mankind he beseeches men to come to him and he will give them rest. He tells the Jews that they "are from beneath," he himself is "from above." Indeed, from beginning to end of Christ's recorded sayings there is one uniform and exalted



tone of assumption, which forbids the thought that he is simply a great and good man, and which makes the "human" explanation ridiculous. For imagine, if we can, any *man* assuming this dignity and posing before the world in a style like this. The best specimens humanity has ever produced, would simply cover themselves with the scorn of their kind who should apply to themselves words which Jesus uses of himself without offence to any. How the earth would reverberate with laughter if one of its great ones should announce himself as "the light of the world;" who should say of himself, "Behold a greater than Solomon is here!" In the case of a popular living poet, we have seen how dangerous to reputation it is merely to presume to teach mankind in a *style* of verse borrowed from the great Solomon; but how the critics would roar with delight if any sage were to announce himself as one before whom Solomon would have to "pale his ineffectual fires"! Yet the world's laughter does not burst out upon Christ; the quickest critical sense does not feel that there is even the slightest egotism when Christ uses such words—and why is this? According to their theory, Christ was merely a man, whom myth has clothed with a fictitious story. Then, let them tell us how it has come to pass that, as a mere man, Christ has come unmocked before the world with pretensions which, if made by Plato or Paul, Marcus Antoninus Pius, or *Martin Tupper*, would have made their names ridiculous for evermore.

It is not simply that the multitude having accepted it that, in some sense, Christ was divine, they now feel no shock when he puts forth such amazing claims; but even unbelievers testify unconsciously to the fact of his divine origin, by the very fierceness with which they contest and deny his claims. It is not merely that Christ *claimed* a supernatural position among men, but that he does this without offence to any one's feelings; without shocking the most critical sense; managing thus what no mere man possibly could do. Such speeches would strike us with their utter absurdity of arrogance if spoken by one of the saints or sages of mankind: from their lips they would be the silly dreamings of fanatical pomposity and pride. From him, they fall on the ear as the natural language of the Spirit that dwelt in him without measure.

Looking again at the "Son of God," we see how utterly unconscious he is of error or imperfection, either of conduct or opinion; that, while making no ostentatious display of infallibility, he quietly and even *meekly* assumes it as his natural stature, and as certain of

being admitted without any necessity of directly asserting it. Now, nothing is more certain than that this would *not*, would *never* have been admitted if Jesus Christ had been merely human. Why, so true is it, that we have it as a proverb that "to err is human." Yet Jesus never acknowledged any error, either of action or judgment, but ever moves consciously, surely, and sweetly, in the orbit of duty. While men's visions of the spiritual arcana are generally dim, through their senses being sin-laden, his perceptions are clear because of his perfect purity, and while the best of men are bowed and broken in penitence before God, even sinking to humbler self-emptiness the higher their ideal of holiness grows, from this man escapes no sigh of sorrow, no word of regret. No tear of penitence ever glistens in his eye, nor does his voice ever tremble with the emotion of confession. It is true that he betakes himself to John for baptism, but instead of this being an indication of repentance, John utters surprise that one so spotless should seek immersion, but receives a gentle admonition in the words "Suffer it to be so now, *for thus it becometh us TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS.*"

Though Christ was thus superhuman in his excellence, we must be on our guard against supposing that *he could not err*, which would be taking from him that humanity which the Scriptures distinctly affirm. That he did not err is the more glorious because he carried our sin-nature about with him. The fact receives its explanation in his miraculous begetting of Mary, which, while leaving him to receive the vesture of our sin-nature from her, at the same time relieved him from those propensions to evil which come from the law of heredity. *In the mode of his begetting* he was a supernatural being, and this is proved in that, through all stress of trial and temptation, he slipped not, nor did he fall; he took no step that needed to be retraced, and uttered no word which called for an apology. This cannot be affirmed of any other man. Weighted as we are by heredity, *it is not possible* to live free from all consciousness of infirmity and error; though our wills may be so staunchly sustained in the truth that we *may* live free from any known sin. So humility becomes us as conscious of our infirmities. Yet what man cannot do is exactly what Jesus succeeds in doing. There is the quiet consciousness of a spotless feeling betrayed in every word he utters; the beautiful and astounding fact that he forgives others' sins, and the happy words of sonship, as when he said, speaking of his Father, "I do always those things that please

him" (John viii. 29). From the cradle to the cross there is the same consistent unfolding of a perfect character, the very humility of which is seen to grow, not from any sense of sin or infirmity, but from the loving willingness of one so good and great as he, to mix with men who are as far beneath him as the clods of earth are lower than the clouds of heaven.

And with the same air of infallibility (never felt to be offensive) he corrects all opinions, bringing everything to the standard of "I say unto you." Never was such egotism as this accepted by the world before. Who is this that is sweeping away, without argument, what has been laid down by "them of old time?" What man is this who, in the hour of his greatest peril, when he hears his adversaries whispering of death, tells his judge that "all who are of the truth hear his voice"; that it was "for this end he was born, that he might bear witness to the truth"?

The long and short of it is this: the man who pretends to infallibility of teaching is a fool, and he who pretends to an inviolate life of duty is full-blown of spiritual pride. Yet Jesus assumes both these things in a way most absolute, yet contrives to shock nobody. In the spectrum of criticism no dark lines indicate the least presence of moral and intellectual infirmity in him, and in his pure presence we all feel constrained to cry with Peter, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

The impossibility of classifying Christ with mere humanity is further seen in HIS UNIVERSAL AIMS *both as regards the earth and the ages*. Viewing him simply as a man, and even supposing he were a fanatic, there would be too utterly ridiculous a contrast between his weak and obscure position and the loftiness of his purpose, which embraces the round-earth and looks down to the limits of all time. Read from each of the gospel narratives what that purpose is. It has to do with mankind at large, though in the first instance having concern with the Jews. It is a purpose which binds all the æons together in one, and stands related to them as their consummation. It is that, under God, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together all things in himself both which are in heaven and which are on the earth (Ephes. i. 10). Ambition never rose to heights like these. Fanaticism itself is left far behind here. Christ outdistances by whole leagues of far-reaching purpose all who have ever dreamt of empire or yearned for power. Fit representative, indeed, is he of him "who sits upon the circle of the earth." We have read of men who have sought in

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some narrow sense the conquest of the world, and who have succeeded in overruling many countries, but no dream of Alexander, or Tamerlane, or Napoleon can command our thought while thinking of the unbounded dominion (to be) of this King of kings. In the world-wide and age-lasting magnitude of this purpose we see an unmistakable evidence of something different from human ambition or the dreams of religious enthusiasm. For it is next to be noted, Christ takes no adequate human means of securing the success of his purpose; and at the same time he never shews the least doubt or anxiety about that success.

All men who seek to accomplish a great work in the world do so on certain well-known and long-established lines of procedure. As they may aim at political or mental dominion, so they employ the sword or the tongue in accomplishing the end. (In modern days the pen has largely superseded the tongue.) And nothing can be done on any grand scale touching the world except by great and long-continued and well-organised efforts. A revolution cannot happen, nor any great change be effected in the world of thought or manners, except through the potent action of great forces hidden and long at work therein. But while Jesus is contemplating vast ends, such as the total regeneration of the earth, he takes no measure, such as the great ones of the earth take, in accomplishing it. He refuses to wield the sword, declaring that his kingdom is not of the current æon. He appears to have written nothing, but simply accepted and accentuated anew what was already written. He did not even formulate his doctrine, or put his teaching into new type, but ran his beautiful wisdom into the moulds of Moses and the prophets. As though he were the soul of truth (as indeed he was), he spake to the hearts of men. He simply spake, and lived, and died. (Keeping out of view, for the moment, his resurrection, and simply looking at his own efforts.) What was there in all this to ensure to him the fulfilment of purposes so universal and gigantic, that in comparison therewith all the schemes of men are less than nothing?

It is impossible to explain the composed confidence and absolute certainty exhibited by Christ of the final triumph of his work in the earth, unless it is granted that he was supernaturally endowed with the spirit of prophecy. As a single instance of this composure he said on one occasion, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Could any mere man utter himself in such sublime self-confidence as this? How did he know that

his words would never fail and fade? For what is more likely to perish than a word whispered into the atmosphere, and simply committed to the ears of men? A bit of down falling from a sea gull's wing into the waste of ocean would seem to have more chance of survival, and drifting to some shore, than that an obscure man's words should find an overlasting lodgment in the heart of humanity. But this miracle has happened, for there is no pretence that Christ's words are becoming forgotten. That the heavens and earth should perish and vanish is not impossible from the point of view of astronomical contingency, but that Christ's words, however misconstrued, should lose their hold of the thoughts of men seems quite impossible. The explanation lies in the fact that he was filled "without measure" with that Spirit which (in part) constituted him a divine man, and made him capable of an outlook and vision impossible to mere human eyes. He knew the issue of his work, and saw the end. Holding the reins of events in his hands, and knowing that soon he would be able to say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," he spake with perfect calmness of his future.

So calm was he, being quite assured that nothing could happen to frustrate his purposes, that this calmness was sometimes the cause of anxiety and perplexity to the disciples—"Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee and goest thou into Judea again?" To all such observations he replied in the same manner. He assured them that "his hour" was not yet come. When this same strange serenity was so perplexing to his judge, as to urge Pilate to say, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee?" the unmoved reply is "Thou hast no power over me at all, except it be given thee from above."

When the disciples are panic-stricken and are flying, thinking that all is lost, he himself is facing the fact of death with less trouble and trembling than the judge who is passing sentence. Again let it be asked, What manner of man is this who is forming plans for the earth for all time, and who is seen studying no heroic means for their accomplishment, and yet contrives all the while to maintain a heart beating as quietly in its perfect hope as if those plans were already realised? Great schemes themselves involve anxiety—bitter and organised opposition increase it; the desertion of trusted followers intensifies it; but Jesus, with a world-plan before him, is never seen to falter, though the disciples have left him and the populace is clamouring for his blood.

It still remains to be remarked that, contrary to all human

notions, it was *to his DEATH that Christ looked for his power* and that he sought the passage to his glory *through the tomb!* This fact is more than remarkable: it is astonishing, and would be incredible if Christ were merely a man. It is perfectly evident that he recognised throughout his ministry the fact that he must suffer a cruel death. He foresaw the fatal cross looming from the brow of Calvary. He knew he must expire thereon. But in the very words which (as John says) signified what death he should die, he taught this unworldly truth, that death to him, instead of being the extinction of all his hopes and plans, would be *the very means* of bringing on their glorious climax and consummation. Listen to this strange, unhuman teaching: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me" (John xii. 32), and "Verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat *fall into the ground and die* it abideth alone, *but if it die, it bringeth forth MUCH FRUIT*" (25th verse). Here is a divine insight into spiritual laws which no "human" hypothesis can explain. For just imagine any man having a great work on hand depending on himself, building his hopes of final success on the fact of his own death! The language of human nature is just this, "Oh, whatever should we do if HE were to die, and we lost our leader!" "Whatever would become of the cause if HE should happen to be taken from us?" When Luther was engaged in the work of the Reformation, his friends thought that if he should happen to lose his life, the work would be very much impeded, if not altogether stopped, and so they counselled him to take great care of himself and, at last, their fears getting the better of them, they ran away with him and put him in a castle to preserve him. But in the case of Christ, instead of him fearing that his work might come to nought if he should die before he has consolidated it, it is to his death (or through it, rather) that he looks for his ascent to power. All this is totally unlike anything human, and cannot be explained except by granting that Christ had a supernatural insight into divine mysteries, which enabled him to enunciate this truth. While the disciples are thinking that all is lost, Jesus knows that all is being won, and though he cries, "O, God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" it was but the weakness of a moment, incidental to the loss of blood, and does not detract in the least from his calmness and full assurance when not spent in death.

The miracles which Christ performed are *precisely consistent* with his supernatural character, and are exactly what we might expect him to work, if he were such an one as he is said to have

been. Not now citing the miracles themselves in proof of the supernatural in Christ, we point to the *exact harmony* of them with his professed character as the Son of God. Every one of those works is exactly characteristic of God, and forms the proper divine signature to all his heavenly ministry among men. In them his character finds its perfect setting, his purpose its most suitable expression, and every one of those deeds of grace may be taken as a sample of the wonders he will do on a world-wide scale when he comes to give all the families of the earth the covenanted blessing. The fact is, it would be harder to explain the Christ, without the miracles, than with them, and so in the measure in which they assist an explanation, they form part of the truth's internal evidence. For whatsoever makes clear, is evidence, and nothing makes Christ's position and work in the earth more intelligible than observing him going about with a motive of mercy in his heart, doing a redeeming work among the sons of men. It is not strange that the dead are raised, and the sick healed, and the poor fed, nor even that at a feast, water is changed to wine; for what are these but hints and intimations of a power and grace that aim at vanquishing sin and death and sorrow, and transmuting all things having the earth quality into that which is of the essence and flavour of heaven? What Christ does in the way of miracle is not to astonish the mind by a forth-putting of prodigious power; he does not seek to amaze our imagination, or leave us filled with dumb surprise. He just acts out the character of "the power and wisdom of God," seeking to initiate a redemptive work in a world that is deranged, broken, and fallen from the life and peace of God. It is evidence of the truth of the narratives of his life that he is said to have worked no miracle until he had entered upon his public work, clearly shewing the difference between an inspired narrative of facts and the credulous compositions of human fancy, which represent Jesus working many foolish wonders, while he is yet a child. But when Christed of the Spirit, his public ministry has begun. What more *natural* than that this Redeemer should here and there allow some gleams of the redeeming grace to be visible, tokens and proofs that God was with him, and also of his aims being towards the restitution of all things.

Viewed in this way, Christ's miracles cease to be regarded as violations of natural order, but show themselves to be in the direction of a restoration of that order. The fact is, there is no such thing as *order* in nature at present, but as the Psalmist says (82nd

Psalm), "The foundations of the earth are out of course;" and what Jesus did was an instalment of that work in which he will "make all things new." The miracles, then, are an evidence that Jesus was a real Christ, for these are just the works that might have been expected of him.

Summing up the points of evidence which we have now passed in review, we see how the scheme of the truth is sustained by those internal marks which indicate its divine origin and forbid the thought that it is a tangled skein of human ideas and teachings. We were struck first by the unique grandeur of the governing conception of a kingdom of heaven; we were impressed by the visible continuity of the divine purpose working towards this end; we beheld the reasonableness of the idea that such a kingdom should be the instrument of blessing to the earth; we felt the impossibility of accepting the negation of unbelief, such as the rejection of the truth involves; we traced the divine wisdom through its transcendent and unworldly method of getting a generation fit for immortality, accounting for sin and revealing the beauty of redemption; we then noticed how the Scriptures were tuned to the note of righteousness and create an atmosphere of righteousness in which virtue flourishes; and how, since Christ's day, the unique idea of holiness has dawned upon the hearts of men; and how all bible characters are judged impartially by this standard; we saw finally how the purpose of God gathers round an Anointed One who, viewed from various points, reveals his heavenly origin in his human life and makes the purpose of God visible in himself.

By these internal marks, we are assured that the scheme of the Scriptures cannot be explained by the "myth" theory. There is too much completeness and harmony and coherence of reason, too much that is unexpected and unhuman, too much removed from the line and level of men's thoughts for us to believe that such a system is the construction of religious fancy. The same kind of argument which shews that Israel could not have framed and fashioned their own laws—viz., that they forsook those laws and falsified them—shews us that men could never have constructed from their own brains the system of the truth, for that system is altogether different from the untutored religious speculations of mankind, and has been generally forsaken for fables of man's own devising. In various parts of the globe, we are supplied with instances of man making for himself a system of (fancied) truth, and framing a religion. The study of these has made us acquainted with human fancies



concerning the earth and the human family; man's hopes and fears; his ideas of sin, and atonement, and retribution, have been revealed. And what does it amount to but a dim and distorted perversion of the truth, which man could feel after but could not find? Myth may have had to do with Buddha and the Nirvana, with Odin and the Valhalla, but surely it is far different with the Christ and the kingdom of God. If these had been similar creations to those, it would never have been written that the preaching of "Christ crucified" was "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness," for what human fancy had created, human fancy might have admitted. The scheme of the Scriptures, unfortunately, is widely misapprehended, hence its truth and beauty fail to be acknowledged; but the day is not far distant when God's light and truth shall be sent forth into all lands, and the world will gladly admit then what it now ignorantly gainsays.

He has said some very  
good things, D.C.R.  
3/4. 1910. Salem Ohio.



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