

THE
BIBLE A MIRACLE;

OR

The Word of God its own witness:

THE SUPERNATURAL INSPIRATION OF
THE SCRIPTURES SHOWN FROM THEIR
LITERARY, THEOLOGICAL, MORAL,
AND POLITICAL EXCELLENCE.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE object of the following work is two-fold; first, to present more fully than has yet been done the argument for the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures drawn from their incomparable excellence; and, second, to meet the infidel assumption that 'miracles are incredible, if not impossible,' by showing that **THE BIBLE ITSELF IS A MIRACLE.**

We take for granted that the New Testament was written by Jewish authors about eighteen hundred years ago; and that the books of the Old Testament were of an earlier, some of them of a much earlier origin. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History* demonstrates that the books of the New Testament were in existence soon after the commencement of the Christian era. Their peculiarities of language and thought prove that their authors were Hellenistic Jews. The testimony of Josephus shows that the books of the Old Testament were in use among the Jews *more* than eighteen hundred years ago. We understand that these facts are admitted by intelligent and reasonable men; and assuming them as granted, we build our argument upon them.

To prove some of the points discussed, we rely, as the reader will see, more upon facts, well-established opinions, and the admissions of opponents, than our own argumentation.

We have freely used the thoughts of others. Whenever we have done so, we have endeavored to make the proper acknowledgment. We may have failed to do so in some cases, through oversight. We have, doubtless, sometimes used the thoughts of others unconsciously. We are conscious of indebtedness to various authors of which we can only make a general acknowledgment, as now we do.

Our aim has been to make our book instructive to readers in general. Hence we have, as far as possible, employed language and illustrations that may be understood by the unlearned as well as the learned. For the same reason our quotations from foreign authors are given in English. We have not thought it necessary to burden our pages with the original of the passages quoted.

We do not claim that we have exhausted the various subjects discussed. Much that we would like to have presented has been omitted, in order to avoid swelling our volume beyond a proper size.

CHERRY FORK, OHIO; *October, 1871.*

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PART I.
*THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE
OF THE BIBLE.*

PART I.

THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

THE Bible claims to be divinely inspired. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God* is the emphatic declaration of one of its principal writers.¹ Besides this and other declarations of similar import, we find that the writers of the Bible quote each other's words as having divine authority. Nor is the divine inspiration, which the writers of the Bible claim for themselves and ascribe to one another, left a vague uncertainty as to its extent and influence. 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue—For the prophecy came not of old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'² The inspiration thus claimed by the writers of the Bible is an influence from God prompting and enabling them to write as they did. They assert that they wrote, not according to their own judgment or will, but as they were directed and influenced by the Spirit of

¹ 2 Tim. 3: 16. ² 2 Sam. 23: 2. 2 Pet. 1: 21.

God. They represent themselves as clerks or amanuenses, who wrote what God dictated to them, and what they knew to be agreeable to his will.

Such is the inspiration which the Bible claims for itself. Is this claim true or false?

This question should not be decided hastily. For many false claims to divine inspiration have been set up. All the heathen nations of antiquity of whom we have any knowledge, believed in pretended revelations from heaven. The fact that the Bible claims, and is generally believed, to be divinely inspired, does not prove it to be such.

There are, however, some things connected with this fact, which at least recommend the claim of the Bible to respectful consideration. It is the only book, whose claim to divine inspiration has generally been admitted, and has stood the test of time. It has been revered as the inspired word of God by the great majority, not only of enlightened people, but also of those whose virtues, talents, and learning entitle their opinions to the highest regard. The majority of the greatest scholars, actors, and thinkers of modern times,—Bacon, Newton, and Locke; Shakespeare, Milton, Addison, Cowper, and Macaulay; Luther, Calvin, and Knox; Sir W. Jones, Grotius, Pascal, Buckland and Miller; Hampden, Cromwell, the Princes of Orange, and Washington; Lord Hale, Sir W. Blackstone, Adams, Hamilton, Chief Justice Marshall, Judge Story, Chancellor Kent, Lord Brougham, and Daniel Webster,—the greatest and best of men, the master-spirits of the human race, during eighteen hundred years, have

believed in the supernatural origin of the Scriptures. It is true that many men of wit, learning, and genius,—Voltaire, Gibbon, Göthe, Rousseau, Byron, Humboldt,—have been sceptics. But such men constitute a small minority among those whom the enlightened world esteems not only gifted, but also great and good.

These facts do not, indeed, decide the question in regard to the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures. But they create a presumption in favor of such inspiration. At the least, whatever has stood the test of time, and has been received and revered by the great majority of enlightened people, and by the greatest, best, and most learned of mankind for many centuries, and has been believed in by every nation that has been made acquainted with it, ought not to be rejected in haste, or dismissed with a sneer.

The presumption thus established in favor of the claim of the Bible to supernatural inspiration is strengthened by the failure of all the efforts made to falsify that claim. During eighteen centuries the opponents of the Bible have labored to show that it is not of God. They have endeavored to prove contradictions and inaccuracies in its statements. To furnish themselves with evidence and arguments, they have studied the contemporaneous writings of ancient nations; have appealed to history, chronology, astronomy, geology, and other sciences; have examined the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians and the astronomical tables of the Chinese and the Hindus; have scanned the stars and the milky-way, and ransacked the strata of the earth. But all has been

in vain. Notwithstanding the labors and efforts of shrewd and learned infidels, the majority of scholars and scientific men,—historians, chronologists, astronomers, geologists, philologists, and naturalists,—together with the majority of people who live in enlightened countries, still persist in believing the Scriptures to have been given by the inspiration of the Almighty.

Yet, if the Bible is not what it claims to be, its falsity is peculiarly liable to detection and exposure. It is not a single book written by one man. It contains sixty-six books, which purport to have been written by nearly fifty authors. These authors did not live at one time or place. They were scattered over a period of fifteen hundred years; occupied different stations in life; and differed widely in character, gifts, learning, and other circumstances. They were kings, priests, statesmen, warriors, shepherds, farmers, fishermen, poets, prophets, apostles, learned men and unlearned, Jews and Greeks. Their books purport to have been written under circumstances the most strangely and strikingly diverse,—in the city and in the desert; in the palace and in the dungeon; in the tented camp and in the quiet dwelling; in the bosom of society and amid the rocks of the lonely island; at Jerusalem, at Babylon, at Rome, at various places in different countries. The books are as diverse as the characters and circumstances of their authors. They contain poetry, proverbs, prophecies, prayers, precepts, parables, orations, biographies, epistles, sermons, commentaries, confessions, ecclesiastical history, national chronicles, mili-

tary annals, political statistics, travels, laws, songs, descriptions of natural scenery, accounts of the creation and predictions of the final destruction of the earth. The Bible, indeed, embraces almost every species of composition, and treats of almost all sorts of subjects. Yet, in all these books, varied and diverse as they are, and purporting to have been written at various times, and in different places and countries, and by more than forty authors, who occupied diverse stations in life, and whose united lives stretched over a period of fifteen hundred years, there is nothing which, in the estimation of the majority of intelligent people and learned men, invalidates their claim to inspiration and infallibility. In all these books, which contain compositions of almost every conceivable kind and form, and on almost every kind of subject, there is not one statement, reference, or allusion, which the enlightened world regards as inconsistent with their claim to be the word of God. There is nothing in the whole book, varied, diverse, and multiform as its contents are, which, in the judgment of mankind, invalidates its historical character, or convicts any of its numerous authors of dishonesty or mistake. Though much has been said about inaccuracies, discrepancies, contradictions, and other improprieties in the Bible, the world remains unconvinced of their reality.¹

If the Bible were not what it purports to be,—if its books were not historical; if they were not written at the times they purport to have been written, and by the persons whose names they bear; if it con-

¹See Part v, ch. 4.

tained blunders in language; if its authors contradicted one another; if they contradicted trustworthy contemporary authors, or the teachings of natural science; if, in short, there were anything in its language, style, idiom, allusions, statements, or teachings, inconsistent with its claim to be the inspired word of God,—most assuredly some critical sceptic would have been able to prove it to the conviction of an intelligent world. No spurious production can stand the test of time. Literary frauds are never long successful. In such attempts at fraud, the peculiarities of language, idiom, and style; allusions to contemporary authors and events; the kind of ideas and sentiments expressed; and many other circumstances; ensure detection, and render continued success impossible. Pollio, whose taste had been formed on the banks of the Tiber, detected the inelegant idiom of the Po in the style of Livy. Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, after trying to unlearn his mother tongue, and after reading, speaking, and writing French for half a century, could not compose in that language without making ridiculous mistakes. Macaulay asserts that Dr. Robertson's Dissertations on India, and Sir Walter Scott's Waverley and Marmion, contain Scotticisms at which a London apprentice would laugh. Such facts as these demonstrate the impossibility of ultimate success in literary imposture. But the Bible *has* stood the test of time. It has resisted the assaults of its enemies for eighteen hundred years. Though history, astronomy, geology, philology, and criticism have all been employed against it, yet the judgment

of an overwhelming majority of the intelligent and learned, and good and great, has ever been, that it is what it claims to be; and that its language, style, and thoughts prove it to be the work of Almighty God. Since success in literary imposture is impossible,—since one man cannot successfully counterfeit, imitate, or plagiarize the works of another,—how could any man or set of men successfully counterfeit or imitate the language, style, and thoughts of the Almighty?

The reception which this book, or rather these books, have met with, and the esteem and reverence with which, notwithstanding the learned and labored efforts of opposing infidels, they have ever been regarded, appear still more remarkable, when we consider the character of the people among whom they originated. We do not admit that the Jews were as rude and debased as some authors, desirous of setting aside the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, have represented them. Gibbon describes them as an obscure, unsocial, obstinate, ungrateful, and selfish race, who for many ages were the most despised portion of the slaves of the Assyrians and Persians.¹ Voltaire declares that the Jews are both our teachers and our enemies, whom we believe and detest at the same time; that the Arabs, their kinsmen, have been infinitely more favored by God, and have prodigiously surpassed them even as robbers.² The design of these writers in such representations is very evident. But the Jews certainly were not a superior race. According to their own writers,

¹ Ch. 1, sect. 15.

² Phil. Dict., Art. *Abraham*.

they were originally a nation of slaves, and of course endured all the inevitable consequences of slavery; among which are, ignorance and barbarism. For ages they were rude and uncultivated. They never did become a refined, literary people. They had no Academy or Lyceum. Their only institutions of learning were their schools of the prophets. Their only poets were their seers. Oratory, painting, and sculpture, were almost unknown among them. Their own literature consisted almost exclusively in their religious writings; and of foreign literature they were almost entirely ignorant. They occupied a small portion of territory, about 120 miles long and 60 broad; less in extent than one-fourth of the state of Ohio; hemmed in between the desert and the eastern end of the Mediterranean sea. They were a nation of farmers; had scarcely any foreign commerce; and were almost entirely secluded from the rest of mankind. Yet among these people,—formerly a nation of slaves, rude and uncultivated, without literary institutions, without the sciences and the fine arts, without philosophers and literary men, without foreign commerce, and cut off from the surrounding nations,—among these people originated a literature consisting of sixty-six books, treating of or alluding to almost every conceivable subject, and containing almost every species and form of writing, composed in two languages, and purporting to have been written at different times and at various places, in different countries, and by about fifty authors, who occupied almost every station in life, from the

highest to the lowest, and the earliest and latest of whom lived at periods separated by an interval of more than fifteen centuries; yet these books, claiming to be a revelation from heaven, and an infallible guide in religion and morals, though attacked as no other books have ever been, though their language, style, statements, allusions, and doctrines have been examined and criticized in the light of history, philology, astronomy, geology, and other sciences, are yet regarded by a vast majority of the good and intelligent and learned as having been written by men who were guided by the inspiration of the Almighty.

If this judgment of the overwhelming majority of the enlightened and learned who have lived during eighteen centuries be not correct, then have the Hebrew writers perpetrated the most stupendous imposture the world has ever seen, and in literary skill and cunning have surpassed all the rest of mankind. Or, if their honesty is admitted, as it now generally is, the conclusion must be, that without design or agreement, in their unconsciousness and simplicity, the authors of the Bible have done what all the genius, learning, skill, and cunning of the world could not do,—deceived the majority of the most intelligent and learned of mankind during centuries and ages. In either case, this long-continued deception of mankind is unparalleled and unaccountable; and the book itself is a miracle of imposture.

We do not say, by any means, that these facts and considerations are conclusive evidence of the miracu-

lous inspiration of the authors of the Bible. But they constitute presumptive evidence; and may serve to rebuke, though scarcely to repress, the assuming, patronizing, dogmatic spirit and air so often manifested by the advocates of infidelity.

CHAPTER II.

FREEDOM OF THE BIBLE FROM ABSURDITY.

THE Bible is distinguished from all the other writings of antiquity by its freedom from absurdity. Though it abounds in the most sublime poetry and eloquence, it is uniformly sober, reasonable, and truth-like. It, indeed, deals largely in the supernatural and the marvelous. It claims to be itself a supernatural production. But the supernatural and marvelous, of which the Bible treats, contain nothing monstrous, ridiculous, or childish. In it are found none of the exaggerations nor puerilities which abound in all the ancient literatures. It tells us of no garden of the Hesperides, producing apples of gold, and guarded by a dragon with a hundred heads; no monster Centaurs, half-man and half-horse; no huge Cyclops, gigantic, one-eyed men, feeding on human flesh; no Gorgons having heads adorned with serpents instead of hair, mouths armed with teeth like boar's tusks, and eyes that turned all beholders into stones; no hydras, griffins, pigmies, or other monsters which figure so largely in the history and poetry of antiquity.

1. The Egyptians were the most cultivated people of early antiquity. Egypt was the cradle of civilization, the nursery of science and philosophy. To Egypt, as to a university, resorted the most distinguished men of other countries,—historians, legisla-

tors, philosophers, mathematicians, and physicians,—to learn the arts, the sciences, philosophy, and law. The wisdom of the Egyptians is often mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures.

But famous as the ancient Egyptians were for their learning and wisdom, their literature was disfigured and degraded by many ridiculous fancies. They held an absurd system of astrology. By this pretended science, their wise men claimed that they could foretell pestilences, earthquakes, inundations, the appearance of comets, and years of plenty and scarceness. Their belief was, that some of the movements of the planets are beneficial, others injurious; and they pretended to assign the influence which the day of an individual's birth would have upon his character and fortunes. The human body was divided by them into thirty-six parts corresponding to the divisions of the zodiac, and under their influence a god or demon was supposed to preside over each part. The opinion that the heavenly bodies have an influence, according to their position in the heavens, on the different parts of the human body, interfered with the practice of medicine. Thus the medical art among the Egyptians became contaminated with their astrological absurdities. The belief was prevalent among them, that even the soul of a man enters into life through one of the twelve signs of the zodiac; the first six being favorable, the remaining six unfavorable.¹ Though they observed and noted all remarkable phenomena, they took account of them only as *prodigies*.² The tendency

¹ Kenrick, vol. 1, p. 287-292.

² Herod. 2: 82.

among them to mingle fancy with science, is illustrated by the chronological fable of the bird phœnix, which was supposed to visit the temple of the sun at Heliopolis at the termination of certain regular periods of time, carrying the body of its deceased parent enclosed in myrrh.¹ The doctrine of the transmigration of souls was a part of their system of belief; if system they had at all. They thought that when a man dies, his soul enters some other animal; and that, after having inhabited every species of beast and bird, it finally enters a human body a second time. They affirmed that it completes this succession of changes in the period of three thousand years.²

Such are some of the fanciful and absurd notions which prevailed among the learned men of the most cultivated nation of early antiquity. All the knowledge of Egyptian literature which we possess is derived from pyramids, tombs, mummies, hieroglyphic inscriptions, and the hints of foreign authors. These are to us the only monuments of Egyptian learning. Still, we know enough to be assured, that had not their book-literature perished, we would find it characterized throughout by puerility and folly.

2. The literature of the ancient Hindus also abounds with absurdities. Nothing can be more absurd than their cosmogony and geography. According to their books, the world was hatched from an egg, from which after an incubation of millions and millions of years, Brahma, who includes in himself all things, and is the universe, sprang forth,

¹Herod. 2: 73. Tac. An. 6: 28. ²Herod. 2: 123.

having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand arms. According to the Hindu geographers, the earth is a flat, circular plain, measuring hundreds of millions of miles in circumference; the habitable part consisting of seven islands, each surrounded by an ocean; the first ocean consisting of salt water, the second of the juice of the sugar cane, the third of spirituous liquor, the fourth of clarified butter, the fifth of sour milk, the sixth of sweet milk, and the seventh of sweet water; the whole resting upon an enormous snake with a hundred heads, and the snake upon a tortoise.

The *Vedas*, the oldest portion of the Hindu literature, contain many things both foolish and indecent. The literary character of these ancient hymns may be inferred from the subjects of which they treat. In some of them the hawk, the partridge, the mortar and the pestle, and even the wheelbarrow, are the subjects of laudation. In one a gambler complains of his ill luck; in another, we find a loose conversation between a man and his wife; and in another, an address to food, seemingly composed by a hungry glutton.¹ A distinguished Hindu scholar declares, that large numbers of the vedic hymns are childish in the extreme; and that though this part of Hindu literature contains but little that is bad, it contains a great deal that is foolish.² Of the *Brahmanas*, the same distinguished scholar says, that for pedantry and downright absurdity they are scarcely paralleled. His own words are, 'The general character of these

¹ Wilson's *An. Hindu Hymns*. ² Max Müller's *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 1, pp. 26, 37.

works is marked by shallow and insipid grandiloquence, priestly conceit, and antiquarian pedantry.¹

The writings of the Buddhists abound with errors equally wild and absurd. Their cosmography is as follows: There are innumerable worlds, each world having its own earth, sun, moon, and stars. Each world has an earth, with its oceans, continents, islands, and a mountain in the center. Each earth has four continents, the inhabitants of which have the same shape as the continent in which they are born. The first continent has a shape like a square seat, and its inhabitants have square faces. The second is like a half moon, and its inhabitants have faces like half moons. The third is like a round mirror; and the fourth is triangular. At the base of each world the air is 9600 miles in thickness; above this is the water 4,800,000 miles* in thickness; and above the water is the great earth 2,400,000 miles in thickness. In the center of the earth is a mountain 1,680,000 miles high, from the summit of which a stone would be four months in falling to the earth. The square-faced inhabitants of the first continent are never sick, and, though they live a thousand years, they never appear to be more than sixteen years old. They obtain their food and clothes from a tree which grows to the height of 1000 miles.²

¹ His. of An. Sanscrit Literature, p. 389.

* *Yojanas*. The length of the *yojana* is estimated at from 4½ to 16 miles. For convenience we assume 10 miles as its length.

² Hardy's Manual of Buddhism, pp. 1-15.

Such are some of the vagaries of Buddhism; which is an off-shoot of Hindu philosophy, and is of a piece with the more ancient and the orthodox Hinduism. Wild, extravagant, and ridiculous as are the theories and speculations of the Buddhists, they are not more so than those of the Hindu philosophers; who represent the duration of human life in the first period of the world's existence as 100,000 years, and human stature as 37 feet; who describe heroes with 10 or 12 faces and 15 or 20 arms, and tell of tens of thousands of sons begotten of one man.¹

Yet the ancient Hindus were a cultivated and literary people. They attained to a high degree of civilization. Their language was remarkable for the beauty and perfection of its structure, and is regarded as the most polished and copious language ever spoken by men. Their learned men assiduously cultivated poetry, astronomy, philosophy, and theology. But notwithstanding their advancement in civilization and refinement, and their employment of a language unequalled for beauty and copiousness, their literature—the product of their most gifted and learned men—abounds in the wildest fancies, and the most ridiculous exaggerations and blunders.

3. The literature of the ancient Persians, in the respect just mentioned, was little better than that of the Hindus. The fable of the original bull, who was killed by the devil-god Ahriman, and whose soul after death went to heaven, and out of whose body useful kinds of grain were formed, is an illus-

¹ Allen's India, pp. 19-20. Ward, vol. 1, pp. 17-18.

tration.¹ Equally absurd is the fabulous account of the sea of Vouru Kasha, with the three-legged ass standing in the middle.² We have another specimen of absurdity in the account of a fabulous water-animal, said to be produced from a thousand male and a thousand female dogs, and for the killing of which so great a punishment was denounced.³ Many of the prescriptions for purification, and of the enactments for the punishment of moral and ceremonial transgressions, that are contained in the books ascribed to Zoroaster, as we will hereafter show,⁴ are grotesque and ridiculous. Nor do these old Persian books possess any literary excellence to atone for their childishness and folly.

4. Fables, fancies, and blunders characterize also the ancient Chinese literature. Confucius, who flourished in the sixth century before Christ, was the great literary man of the Chinese; and it has generally been supposed that he was a man of genius, and that his productions were characterized by originality and literary merit. But the recent publications of Dr. Légge do not justify the exalted opinion of Confucius and his teachings, which many have heretofore entertained. His literary remains are generally commonplace, and often puerile. The so-called philosopher was frequently a driveler. He believed and endorsed the fable of the *Fung* bird, which was said to appear only when a sage ascended the throne, or when right principles were about to prevail through the empire. He also believed and endorsed the fable of

¹Yacna, 1: 6 (Spigel's German translation). ²Vispered, 8: 18, 20. ³Vendidad, 14: 1-4. ⁴Part II. ch. 3.

a monster with the head of a dragon and the body of a horse, said to have arisen from the water, and by the marks on his back to have given to *Fuh-he*, the first of the sages, the idea of diagrams and maps.¹ His geographical ideas were absurd. He regarded China as indeed the 'Middle Kingdom,' and as 'All under heaven;' and thought that beyond it were only rude and barbarous tribes.² These and other absurd notions characterize the ancient Chinese literature throughout. Williams in his *Middle Kingdom* remarks, that the ancient Chinese were characterized by the appetite for wonders which marks the infancy of nations as well as of individuals; and that their early national vanity and love of the marvelous furnished materials for many tales in succeeding times.³ Confucius accepted his country's literature as he found it. He was not an original thinker, nor an innovator. He said of himself, 'I am one who is fond of antiquity—a transmitter, and not a maker; believing in and loving the ancients.' Dr. Legge says; 'emphatically he was a transmitter and not a maker; not a great man, nor before his age.'⁴ Hence the narrowness of his views: his national prejudices, and his absurd notions, are to be traced to his country's literature, which he studied and loved.

A few years ago, a periodical which persistently opposes the supernatural inspiration of the Bible, represented Confucius, in accordance with the prevailing opinion concerning him, as being a very great and learned man; as teaching a philosophic creed;

¹ Legge's Conf., pp. 95-6, 104. ²p. 109. ³Vol. 2, p. 194.
⁴pp. 95-6, 114.

announcing only common-place truths to the multitude, but reserving his abstruse doctrines for sages and the learned. But after the publications of Dr. Legge had been given to the world, the same periodical represented Confucius and the Chinese literature as objects of contempt. 'The things recorded of him are very small, but we must remember the littleness of the Chinese mind. * * * *
The moral, social, and political precepts of Confucius are perfectly childish in comparison of Greek ethics or Hebrew proverbs.'¹

5. The literature of the Greeks and Romans was by no means free from absurd vagaries and blunders. Their poets employed the fables and tales current among the multitude to adorn and popularize their productions; but many unreasonable and nonsensical things were asserted even by their historians and poets. Herodotus records many absurd fables and stories as veritable history. His observations concerning natural phenomena are often only wild conjectures. For instance, in accounting for the overflowing of the river Nile in summer, he asserts that in winter the sun, driven by storms from his usual course, ascends into the higher regions of the air above Libya, and dries up the waters of the upper Nile; so that their diminished volume, when it reaches lower Egypt, is retained within the banks.² Thales, first named one of the seven wise men of Greece, declared that the cause of the overflowing of

¹ Westminister Review, April, 1857, p. 302. Oct. 1867, p. 254. ² Her. 2: 24-6.

the Nile was, that its waters were driven back by the Etesian winds.¹ Cleanthes thought that the sun is nourished by the vapors of the ocean.² Cicero represents one of his interlocutors as maintaining, that the stars are animated divine beings, and are fed by the vapors, which ascend from the earth and the sea, and which are purified by their long passage to the heavens.³ Anaxagoras declared the sun to be a mass of burning iron, larger than Peloponnesus. He accounted for aerolites by asserting that the whole heaven is composed of stones, which are held together by its rapid revolutions; and that when these revolutions become less rapid, the stones fall.⁴ In one of Cicero's works, it is asserted that the heart is employed as well as the lungs in respiration, and that by one of its ventricles the breath is communicated through the arteries.⁵ Tacitus, the Roman historian, records the arrival of the fabulous phoenix in Egypt in the consulship of Paulus Fabius and Lucius Vitellius. He declares the accounts of this bird not, indeed, to be entitled to *unqualified* credit; but he records its arrival as an *actual* event worthy of the attention of his readers.⁶ Socrates maintained the absurd doctrine of the transmigration of souls. His theory was, that after death they inhabit the bodies of beasts, birds, and insects; that such as have practised gluttony and wantonness enter into the bodies of asses and similar brutes; such as have practised oppression and injustice, into the bodies of wolves, hawks, and kites; and the just and temper-

¹Diog. Laer. 9. ²De Nat. Deor. 2: 15. ³2: 15, 46.

⁴Diog. Laer. 4, 8. ⁵De Nat. Deor. 2: 54-5. ⁶Annal. 6: 28.

ate, into bees, wasps, or ants, or perhaps into human bodies again.¹ This celebrated philosopher also thought, that what men call the earth is only a great hollow; that on the earth are many hollows about which men live, as frogs about a marsh; and, that the true earth is in the heavens among the stars, as men would see if they could only fly up to the summit of the air.² It is but just, however, to remember, that the opinions of Socrates are known to us mainly through the writings of Plato; who may not have reported them in all respects correctly. It is certain however, that Plato held the absurd notions and doctrines which he ascribes to his master. For some of his opinions, this so-called prince of philosophers was, doubtless, indebted to the Egyptians, whose country he visited, and among whom he studied. He adopted their doctrine of metempsychosis. He taught that timid and unjust men are in their second generation changed into women; the light-minded and curious into feathered birds; men who make no use of philosophy, into quadruped and multiped wild beasts; and the most ignorant and unthinking, into fishes, water snakes, and oysters.³ He described the world as an eternal animal and a blessed god. He ascribed soul and intellect not only to the earth, but also to the sun, to every star, and to every large body. According to his account, the soul of the world is composed of three ingredients, *same, different, and essence*, divided and subdivided into minute parts, and then classified and united in certain proportions. He declares that the world was made

¹ Phædo, 70-71. ² 133-5. ³ Timæus, 72-3.

without eyes or ears, because there was nothing external for it to see or hear; and that it was made without legs and feet, because it could move six or seven ways without them.¹ Aristotle taught that the stars have animal life and activity;² that they are eternal substances animated by divinities, as the body by the soul;³ and that they generate heat and light by rubbing against the air.⁴ One reason assigned by him for believing that the stars are in shape spheroidal is, that spheres have no organs of motion.⁵

6. The Arabic literature also contains many ridiculous blunders and exaggerations. The Koran, which is the highest literary as well as theological achievement of the Arabic mind, speaks of a man following after the sun in his course until he found it to set in a spring of black mud.⁶ Not among the least of the absurd things contained in the Koran is, the account of the young men and their dog sleeping in a cave three hundred and nine years.⁷ It contains many other absurdities, such as, that the Almighty placed mountains on the earth to hold it still;⁸ that He transformed some of the disobedient Jews into apes and swine;⁹ that Moses, in anger at Aaron for making the golden calf, seized him and dragged him along by the hair of his head;¹⁰ that Jesus Christ, while an infant, addressed men in articulate speech, and made a living bird out of clay;¹¹ and that Satan

¹ Epinomis, 6. Tim. 11-14, 18. ² De Cœlo, 2: 12.

³ Metaphys. 11: 8. ⁴ De Cœlo, 2: 7. ⁵ 2: 12.

⁶ Koran (Sale's trans.) ch. 18. ⁷ ch. 18. ⁸ ch. 31.

⁹ ch. 2, 5, 7. ¹⁰ ch. 7. ¹¹ ch. 7.

is to be driven away from men with stones.¹ Gibbon, who seems to have admired the character and career of Mohammed, describes the Koran as an endless, incoherent rhapsody of fable, precept, and declamation, which sometimes crawls in the dust and is sometimes lost in the clouds.² Carlyle expresses his opinion of it, in characteristic style, as follows; 'I must say, it is as toilsome reading as I ever undertook. A wearisome, confused jumble, crude, incondite; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement; most crude, incondite;—insupportable stupidity, in short.'³

Such is the literary character of the Koran. But if any one wishes to have a full view of the fables, fancies, and absurdities in which the Arabic mind expatiated and delighted, let him read the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*.

7. The writings of the Hebrews, except those contained in the Bible, are characterized by absurdities and blunders similar to those which abound in the writings of other nations. Josephus, though a man of sense and learning, asserts many absurd and impossible things; such as, that the river which watered the garden of Eden flowed round the whole earth; that the lower animals originally possessed the faculty of articulate speech, and used the language of men; and that serpents were created with feet, on which they walked upright.⁴ From the Talmud, however, it is most clearly seen in what puerilities and monstrosities the Jewish mind, out-

¹ Chs. 15, 16.

² Decl. and Fall, ch. 50.

³ Hero-worship, p. 58.

⁴ Antiq. of the Jews, 1 : 1.

side of the canonical Scriptures, rioted and reveled. It tells of things most incredibly and ludicrously extravagant and enormous;—of a cock, that with his feet on the ground, touched the heavens with his head; of a kid as large as mount Tabor; of a man (Og, king of Bashan), whose hip-bone was more than three miles long; of a man who ate three hundred calves and drank three hundred measures of wine for a lunch only; of a fish with embankments of sand and with growing rushes on its back, and on which a ship's crew landed and cooked provisions, not discovering their mistake until the heat of their fire caused the monster to dive; of a fish, which, when cast ashore, threw down sixty villages, which sixty other villages ate of, which sixty other villages salted of, the fat of one of whose eyes filled three hundred barrels, and the bones of which were afterward employed as materials in rebuilding the villages which had been thrown down; and of many other things equally monstrous and absurd.

8. In nothing were ancient writers more absurd than in chronology. Desirous of availing themselves of the veneration for antiquity prevalent among mankind, they set up for their national origin, religion, and literature the most extravagant claims.

The Egyptian chronology is confused and contradictory. According to Lepsius, it embraces 21,903 years, including the fabulous, unhistoric, and historic periods. According to Herodotus, who received his information from the most learned of the Egyp-

tians, their native monarchy continued 11,340 years.¹ But according to the Egyptian account, the dynasties of men were preceded by the reign of gods and demi-gods. Lepsius makes the period of the gods, 13,870 years; of demi-gods, 3,650; and of man, 4,383. Manetho, as related by Africanus and Eusebius, makes the period of the gods and demi-gods together, 24,000 years. According to an Old Chronicle quoted by Syncellus, the reign of gods and demi-gods continued 36,525 years, which would make 25 periods of 1461 years each. The time allotted to the beast-god, Apis, was 25 years. The fable of the phœnix, which, as some affirmed, lived 1461 years, or as others affirmed 500 (this latter period was probably obtained by dividing 1461 or in round numbers 1500 into three equal periods), was doubtless originally designed to symbolize these 25 periods of 1461 years, making together a period of 36,525 years, the supposed duration of gods and demi-gods. Thus Egyptian chronology is founded on fiction and fable. Kenrick remarks that to these dynasties of gods and demi-gods 'were arbitrarily assigned long periods of domination.'²

The Hindus are still more extravagant in their claims to antiquity. Their chronology as contained in their sacred books consists of four periods, which together make four millions, three hundred and twenty thousand years. The Hindu writers refer to still longer periods, declaring a kalpa, or one day of

¹ 2: 142. ² Lepsius' Letters from Egypt. p. 496. Herod. 2: 142. Kenrick's An. Egyp., vol. 2, p. 77-8. Tac. An. 6: 28.

Brahm, to consist of four billions, three hundred and twenty millions of years; a period equal to seven hundred and twenty thousand times the supposed duration of man on the earth. They boast also that there never was a time when their *Vedas* did not exist, and that they are as old as the universe itself.¹

The Chinese also exceed the truth in boasting of their antiquity. Their early history is mythological, and is the production of subsequent times. To this mythological period a very remote antiquity was assigned, and is sometimes yet.² The sceptical Bellingbroke asserts, that according to the chronology of the Chinese, the table of *Fohi* is nine or ten centuries older than Adam.³

The Grecians also set up extravagant claims to antiquity. The Athenians boasted that they sprang from the soil which they inhabited, and that they were as old as the sun. In token of their springing out of the soil as grasshoppers were supposed to do, they wore golden grasshoppers on their heads. The Arcadians boasted that they were before the moon. Indeed, in Greece as elsewhere, almost every tribe claimed to be a primeval race, and to have inhabited their own country from the beginning of the world.

Thus we have shown that ancient literature abounds in ridiculous errors. The blunders, puerilities, exaggerations, childish fables, and monstrous lies, that might be collected from the writings of the ancient poets, historians, orators, and philosophers, would fill many volumes. Cicero declares that he

¹ Allen's *India*, An. and Mod. pp. 19--20.

² *Middle Kingdom*, vol. 2, p. 184. ³ *Phil. Works*, vol. 3, p. 7.

knew nothing so absurd as not to have found an advocate in some one of the philosophers.¹ The writings of Cicero himself contain many errors of this kind, some examples of which are presented above.

But the Hebrew writings contained in the Bible constitute an exception. It alone of all ancient books, is uniformly reasonable and truth-like. It contains no ludicrous exaggerations, no wild conjectures, no monstrous stories, no absurd statements. The account which it gives of the creation—a subject on which the absurdest theories and wildest conjectures have been proposed—is simple and reasonable, though at the same time sublime. The first statement is, that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. The second is, that at first all things were in confusion and darkness. The third thing asserted is, that God by his fiat caused light to appear. In the fourth place, the historian mentions the separation of light from darkness, and the succession of night and day. The fifth thing recorded is, the appearance of the dry land. Thus, step by step, the writer of Genesis proceeds in the account of the creation and arrangement of the world, without making one statement which reason or common sense can pronounce fanciful or absurd. Moses is in perfect contrast with all other cosmogonists. No other writer has given an account of creation which any enlightened man does or can believe.

There is also a striking contrast between the Bible

¹ De Divinatione, 2: 58.

and other ancient books in regard to chronology. It sets up, neither for itself nor for the people among whom it originated, any extravagant claims to antiquity. The Jews boasted not that they were the first race of men, nor that they had inhabited their own country from the beginning of the world. They were taught by their religious books that there were powerful kingdoms before they existed as a nation; and that originally they were slaves to an older and stronger race. Indeed, the only objection urged against the chronology of the Bible is the smallness of its numbers. This freedom of the Bible from all boastful pretensions to antiquity, and its representing the people among whom it originated to be a modern race compared with some of the surrounding nations, distinguishes it from every ancient literature.

Again, in regard to historical events and natural phenomena, the Scriptures are eminently truth-like and reasonable. The testimony of Humboldt on this point is very decided: 'As descriptions of nature, the writings of the Old Testament are a faithful reflection of the character of the country in which they were composed; of the alternations of barrenness and fruitfulness, and of the alpine forests by which the land of Palestine was characterized. They describe in their regular succession the relations of the climate, the manners of this people of herdsmen, and their hereditary aversion to agricultural pursuits. The epic or historical narratives are marked by a graceful simplicity, almost more adorned than those of Herodotus, and most true to nature; a point on which the unanimous testimony of modern travelers may be

received as conclusive, owing to the inconsiderable changes effected in the course of ages in the manners and habits of a nomadic people.¹ Similar testimony is given by the great German poet, Göthe, who speaks of *the strong naturalness of the Old Testament*.²

This faithfulness of the Bible to natural phenomena, prevailing manners and customs, and other historical matters, is evinced by the fact, that sceptics, in their efforts to falsify the claims of the Bible, appeal not to *common sense*, but to *science*. They do not attempt to convict it of puerility, absurdity, or palpable falsehood; but would be well pleased, could they but succeed in convincing a majority of enlightened people that some of its statements are inconsistent with scientific facts established by the profound investigations of modern times. This is now their aim and hope. The most strenuous efforts are put forth; much learning and research are employed; books, reviews, and essays are written in quick succession, to fasten upon the Bible the charge—not of absurdity, not of misrepresenting natural phenomena, not of falsifying national manners and customs, not of contradicting the dictates of common sense and sober reason, but—of scientific inaccuracy. This fact virtually concedes its accuracy in matters of common observation; that very accuracy which is wanting in all other ancient books, and the absence of which is alone sufficient to demonstrate their human origin, and the fallibility of their authors.

Even the accounts of miracles contained in the

¹ Cosmos, vol. 2, pp. 412-13. ² Truth and Poetry, B. 12.

Scriptures are characterized by sobriety, simplicity, and dignity. The marked difference between the Bible and other ancient books in this respect, will readily recur to every classic reader. It tells of no willows weeping blood, no monstrous births, no shocking and direful prodigies. The Westminster Review,¹ though the thorough-going advocate of infidelity, makes the following declaration: 'The miraculous stories of the New Testament, with hardly an exception, and the majority of the miraculous stories of the Old Testament, whatever else they are, are certainly not childish. What, for instance, can be more sublime and well-sustained, than that most incredible of Hebrew legends—the account of the ascent of Elijah? What imagination could be more powerful and profound than that which produced the story of the transfiguration? The tales of the apocryphal gospels are for the most part childish: and this has been fairly urged on the orthodox side as an argument for plenary inspiration.' Thus even determined opponents of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures admit, that what they call *stories* and *legends* are characterized by dignity and sublimity. If these opponents would abandon the assumption that the supernatural is impossible, or at least incredible, they might see that the Biblical accounts of miracles, not 'with hardly an exception,' but altogether without exception, are anything else than childish.

Thus the Bible throughout is free from absurdity.

¹ July, 1866, pp. 29--30.

There is nothing puerile, extravagant, or unreasonable in its cosmogony, chronology, history, descriptions of natural phenomena, or accounts of miracles. Different, as we have shown, is the literature of every ancient nation. With the single exception of the canonical books of the Bible, all the literary productions of antiquity—whether originating among the Egyptians, Hebrews, Hindus, Persians, Chinese, Grecians, Romans, or Arabians—are characterized by blunders and absurdities. The Egyptians, with their early civilization, their hieroglyphics, books, astronomy, geometry, art of embalming, and all their celebrated stores of wisdom; the Hindus, with their ingenuity, philosophy, most comprehensive and accurate of languages, and all their cultivation; the Persians, with the learning and literature of the Assyrians and Babylonians added to their own; the Chinese, with their knowledge of magnetism, decimal fractions, gunpowder, the art of glass-making, and the mariner's compass; the Arabians, with their discoveries in medicine, botany, chemistry, algebra, geometry, astronomy, and other sciences; the Greeks, with their eloquence, poetry, philosophy, refinement, and attainments in the fine arts; and the Romans, appropriating to themselves the philosophy, science, poetry, and arts of the world;—all these nations created literatures containing blunders, nonsense, fanciful conjectures, and monstrous fables. But the Hebrews,—almost entirely ignorant of art and science, confined to a mere patch of territory, having little or no intercourse with foreign nations, a people not only uncultivated and unrefined, but, according

to their own writers, strange, obdurate, and stubborn,—have given to the world a literature in sixty-six books, containing poetry, history, biography, sermons, epistles, precepts, proverbs, and almost every species of composition, that is uniformly characterized by sober reason, common sense, and truth-like simplicity and dignity.

Nor is this freedom from absurdity secured by the silence of the Biblical writers on difficult and dangerous subjects. They treat of, or allude to, almost every thing knowable by man. They speak of the earth, sun, moon, and stars; of the rivers, seas, deserts, islands, and countries; of the creation of all things, the division of the human race into nations, and their settlement in different regions of the earth; of the rise and fall of kingdoms, the destruction of cities, and the successes and defeats of armies; of the winds, clouds, seasons, minerals, vegetables, and animals, and of all kinds of natural phenomena, human actions, and providential and miraculous events. Yet, in all their statements, descriptions, allusions, and references, they avoid the blunders, exaggerations, puerilities, and fabulous stories that abound in the Hindu, Persian, Chinese, Grecian, Roman, and Arabic authors; in the remains of Egyptian literature; and in the uncanonical books of the Hebrews themselves.

Such a book, coming from the ages of ignorance and superstition, is indeed wonderful. That it originated among oriental people, who delighted in marvelous and fanciful stories and fictions, and among uncultivated minds, in whom fancy and imagination

predominate over judgment and reason, makes it still more wonderful. And the wonder is increased by the fact, that it was the product of the Jewish mind, which—as is shown by the Talmud and the Apocryphal writings—delighted in childish stories, ridiculous exaggerations, monstrous fables, and enormous lies.

CHAPTER III.

CONSISTENCY OF THE BIBLE WITH SCIENCE.

IN the preceding chapter, we have shown that all the ancient literatures,—Egyptian, Hebrew (excepting the books of the Bible), Hindu, Persian, Chinese, Grecian, Roman, and Arabic,—contain statements and speculations that are contrary to the dictates of reason and common sense. Our references and quotations serve equally well to illustrate the inconsistency of these ancient literatures with the teachings of science. Without again adverting to the absurdities which abound in ancient literature in general, we will direct attention to the scientific errors of the Grecian authors. Though the Greeks were the most philosophical and scientific nation of antiquity, the writings of their most learned and gifted authors contain many opinions and theories that are demonstrated to be false and fanciful by the scientific discoveries of modern times.

Herodotus asserts that Europe in length much exceeds Africa;¹ and that the Danube is the largest of all rivers.² He represents the sun as being driven out of his course by winter storms.³ He pronounces the account of the circumnavigation of Africa by the expedition of Necho, king of Egypt, incredible, for the reason that the men engaged in it asserted that

¹ 4: 42, 45. ² 4: 50. ³ 2: 24, 26.

they had the sun on their right hand;¹ which must have been the case as long as they were south of the equator, sailing as they did from left to right.

Anaxagoras, in addition to the absurdities mentioned in the preceding chapter, held, that heavy bodies, such as the earth, occupy the lower situations; and the light ones, such as he supposed the sun, moon, and stars to be, the higher; and that the middle spaces are assigned to water and air. He maintained that the stars originally moved about in confusion; and that the milky-way is the reflection of the light of the sun.²

Anaximenes conjectured that the stars are riveted like nails in the heavens, which he regarded as a solid crystal sphere. Philolaus represented the sun as a glass-like body throwing upon us the rays which it has received from the central fire. Thales held the primary element and the source of the universe to be *water*; Anaximenes and Diogenes, *air*; Anaximander, a vast *chaos*; and Heraclitus, *fire*. Empedocles held air, earth, and water to be the origin of all things; and all things as uncreated and indestructible. Parmenides regarded creation as *impossible*. The Pythagoreans held that numbers and music are the first principles of the entire universe; and that the world is regulated by numerical harmony.³

Plato was deeply imbued with the opinions of the Pythagorean school. In his theorizing about creation

¹ 4: 42. ² Diog. Laer. 4. ³ Aristot. Metaphys. lib. 1, cap. 3-6. Cic. De Nat. Deor. 1: 10-16. Diog. Laer.

and nature, he made much use of proportion and numbers. He held, like many other Grecian philosophers, that the world is composed of four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, united together in certain proportions. The world being thus, as he says, constituted an *eternal animal*, was provided with a soul fixed in the middle of it. This soul was composed of an indivisible essence and another essence divisible and corporeal, which the Creator combined into one *idea*. He then took one part of the whole compound, then a second part double the first, next a third one-and-a-half times the second, and so on, until he had a seventh part twenty-seven times the first. Then again dividing and uniting the parts, he placed intervals between them, in the ratio of the numbers 256 and 243. After splitting the composition into two parts, uniting and bending them, and performing various other processes, the Creator had the soul of the universe complete, and proceeded to fix it in its proper place.¹

In addition to this account of the formation of the universe and of a universal soul, which is at war with common sense as well as with science, this prince of philosophers maintained, that though the universe is a sphere, the earth is in shape a square block.² He asserted that water condensed takes the form of stones and earth; when melted, that of vapor and air; the air, when burnt up, becomes fire; fire, when condensed and extinct, becomes air; air, collected and condensed, becomes mists and clouds,

¹ Tim. 11, 12, 14.

² Tim. 30.

mists and clouds, when compressed, become rain, and from water are again formed stones and earth.¹ He also maintained the unscientific and absurd notion that the stars are living beings, divine and eternal animals, to each of which an intelligent soul is assigned.² His notions concerning the various organs of the human body and their functions were equally erroneous. He thought the lungs were designed merely as a sort of cushion around the heart, to cool it when angry. He regarded the liver as the seat of the intellect and the affections, and as especially designed for divination. He declared that the marrow is composed of earth, air, fire, and water, mingled in certain proportions 'with straight and smooth triangles of the first order;' and that God formed the bones of pure and smooth earth, mingled and moistened with marrow, first placed in fire, then plunged in water, once more placed in fire and then again plunged in water. He declared also that the blood consists of fire combined with moistened mud, and is therefore red. His opinions concerning many other parts of the human body were equally erroneous and absurd.³

As we have already shown,⁴ Aristotle taught that the stars are living and active beings, and that they produce heat by rubbing against the air.⁵ He rejected the Pythagorean doctrines concerning the universe, and in opposition thereto maintained that the earth is the centre of the world; and that the sun,

¹ Tim. 22. ² Tim. 15-17. Epin. 7: 6. ³ Tim. 45-61.

⁴ Preceding Chap. ⁵ De Cœlo, 2, 17, 12.

moon, and stars revolve around it.¹ Among the errors which he held are also the following: that the planets have many motions;² that the fixed stars do not revolve;³ that the stars are small bodies; that the earth is 400,000 stadia (about 50,000 miles) in circumference;⁴ that the milky-way is a large comet;⁵ that comets are meteors which belong to our atmosphere;⁶ that aerolites are large stones raised by hurricanes; that the number of celestial spheres is either forty-seven or fifty-five, but cannot be greater;⁷ and that India is near the Straits of Gibraltar.⁸

Such are the scientific errors which abound in the ablest writers of ancient times,—errors in geography, geology, astronomy, physiology, chemistry, and almost every branch of natural science. If such were the errors of Plato, Aristotle, and of all the distinguished Grecian philosophers and naturalists, what a mass of scientific error and absurdity must be contained in the writings of the many less gifted authors who flourished in ancient times!

Nor is modern literature free from scientific errors. They abound in the writings of modern authors of every class. Voltaire maintained that the marine shells found in the mountainous regions of Europe had been dropped from the hats of pilgrims returning from the Holy Land. The distinguished theologian Turretin, argued against the Copernican system, and maintained that the heavenly bodies revolve round the earth. Leibnitz imagined that the

¹ De Cælo, 2: 12-13. ² 2: 12. ³ 2: 14. ⁴ 2: 12. ⁵ 2: 14.

⁶ Meteor. 1: 8, 11-14. ⁷ Metaph. 11: 8. ⁸ De Cælo, 2: 14.

earth was originally a burning mass, which has been undergoing a process of cooling ever since its creation; that, when the outer crust had cooled sufficiently to allow the vapors to condense, they fell and formed a universal ocean, covering the loftiest mountains; and that, afterward the crust broke and allowed the waters to rush into the subterranean hollows, so that the level of the ocean was lowered and the dry land appeared. Burnet, whose *Theory of the Earth* Addison and Steele commended, explained why, as he supposed, the earth enjoyed perpetual spring previous to the flood, and how the crust of the globe, being fissured by the sun's rays, let out the waters of the supposed central abyss. Whiston—whose theory was panegyricized by Locke—supposed that the earth was originally a comet; and that the deluge was caused by the near approach of another comet. Buffon thought the earth was originally a globe of liquid fire, smitten from the sun by the percussion of a comet; but he adopted in the main the theory of Leibnitz. Bacon favored the theory that the earth is the centre of the world, and that the sun and other heavenly bodies revolve around it. He believed in alchemy, or at least in the possibility of transmuting the baser metals into gold. Milton wrote about the *crystalline sphere*, and *male and female light*; and embodied in his immortal poem many of the scientific errors of his times. Sir Charles Lyell formerly opposed the Lamarekian theory of the gradual development of new from old species. But since the re-statement of that theory by Darwin,

Sir Charles has given in his adhesion to it;¹ and the idea that men, beasts, and birds are descended from the same original ancestors, which he formerly opposed, he now advocates.

But we have not space to illustrate at length the scientific inaccuracy of modern literature. It abounds in errors like those mentioned above. Modern as well as ancient writers present theories, conjectures, opinions, statements, and allusions that are clearly inconsistent with the teachings of science, and even of enlightened reason.

But there is in this respect a striking contrast between the Bible and every other collection of writings. There is no real discrepancy, but a remarkable harmony, between its declarations and the truths of science.

1. In the first place, the Bible does not *contradict* science. Science has corrected some mistaken interpretations of the Bible, but has not demonstrated any of its declarations to be false. Many attempts have been made to array science against it, but always without success.

It has been urged that the earth is much older than the Bible represents it. But the Bible really makes no declaration in regard to the age of the earth. Its simple but sublime declaration is, that *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*. It asserts the fact, but does not fix the time of the creation. There was a time of darkness and chaos after the creation of all things out of nothing. The earth may

¹ New edition of the *Principles of Geology*.

have existed a thousand, a million, or ten thousand millions of years before the creation of man, and before the commencement of the six days' work. The admissibility of this interpretation was recognized before the science of geology was known.

The command of Joshua to the sun and moon to stand still,¹ has been represented as inconsistent with the established theory of the revolution of the earth on its own axis. But this command, and the account of the stopping of the sun and moon in their course, are expressed in accordance with the modes of speech universally prevalent among men, and do not contradict any of the facts taught by astronomical science. The very men who declare Joshua's command to be inconsistent with the known motion of the earth, themselves use language in accordance with the *apparent* motion of the heavenly bodies. Their own mode of speech refutes their objection, and vindicates the Bible account of the stopping of the sun and moon in their course, from the alleged inconsistency with the fact of the earth's diurnal revolution. It is not necessary that a book, designed to instruct the whole human race in regard to moral and religious subjects, should be more scientific in its language than the ordinary speech of Newton, Humboldt, and scientific men in general. Were a writer or speaker, in treating of a moral or religious subject, to use other phraseology than that employed in the Bible in regard to the apparent motion of the heavenly bodies, he would subject himself to the charge of pedantry and affectation.

¹ Josh. 10: 12.

It has also been asserted that the author of Genesis contradicts the teachings of astronomy, in representing the creation of the sun and other heavenly bodies as taking place on the *fourth* day, and subsequently to the creation of the earth.¹ But it is only a *making*, not a *creation*, that is declared to have been the work of the fourth day. The sacred historian asserts that the heavens and the earth (the heavens are first mentioned) were created *in the beginning*. The word *heavens* certainly includes the heavenly bodies. According to the Mosaic account, therefore, the sun and moon were created in the beginning, but on the fourth day were *made* luminaries to the earth.

It has been further urged, that the Scriptures favor a scientific error in calling the atmospheric heavens a *firmament*.² The word *firmament* does indeed suggest the idea of something solid; which the heavens are not. But the Hebrew word translated *firmament* has no such meaning. It is correctly translated *expanse* in the margin.

Another supposed error has been pointed out in the account of the Noachian deluge. It has been asserted that there is not water enough on the globe to overflow all the land and to cover the highest mountains to the depth of fifteen cubits and upwards; and that, therefore, the declarations in Gen. 7: 18, 19 are incorrect. But it is not certain that the author of Genesis represents the deluge as universal. The declaration that 'all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered,' does not necessarily imply its universality. In Deut. 2: 25, it is declared

¹ Gen. 1: 14-19.

² Gen. 1: 8.

that the fear of the Israelites 'should be upon the nations that are under the whole heaven'. Also in Col. 1: 23, it is declared that 'the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven.' It is very evident that in these declarations, the words *whole heaven* or *under heaven* are used in a limited sense. They are often so used. We may say during a thunder-storm, that a black cloud covered the *whole heaven*, or that during a conflagration, the flames illuminated the *whole heaven*. By such phraseology every intelligent person would understand, not the heavens as extending round the earth, but the heavens as extending over a certain country or region. The other phrases employed in Genesis in regard to the extent of the deluge may be understood in the same way. Pool and other commentators, and Miller and other Christian geologists, have maintained that the deluge extended only over the regions of the earth that were inhabited by men. Before the objection mentioned can be urged with any force against the Mosaic account of the deluge, it must be shown that that account asserts its universality.

It has been asserted that the Bible is at variance with geology, in teaching that all death is the consequence of man's sin. Geology teaches, or is thought to teach, that death was introduced before sin: that beasts, birds, fishes, and all kinds of animals died before man appeared on the earth. The Bible, however, does not, as many suppose, teach a contrary doctrine. It asserts only, that the death of men is the consequence of their sins; and that thus they are degraded to a level with 'the beasts that perish.' It

does not assert that beasts were immortal before the fall of man; or that they became subject to death through man's sin.

Such, in the main, are the objections that are urged against the scientific accuracy of the Scriptures. We do not by any means assert that these are all the objections that are urged. We present them merely as specimens. In regard to these objections in general, we remark:—(1) that they are founded in most cases on mis-translations or mis-interpretations. (2) These mis-translations and mis-interpretations have been pointed out, and the objections founded on them refuted, again and again. (3) These objections, though often urged with dogmatic assurance by the opponents of the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, have been declared invalid by Newton, Cuvier, Buckland, Miller, Mitchell, Silliman, Hitchcock, and other distinguished men of science. (4) Infidels themselves have abandoned the most of these objections. Every little while an objection is started, that takes with sceptical minds for a time, but is soon laid aside. Thus it has been with the objections drawn from Egyptian hieroglyphics and chronology; Hindu and Chinese tables; astronomy, and geology. Infidels abandon them all in turn, and fall back upon the assumption that 'miracles are incredible, if not impossible.'

There are some objections, however, which are of very recent origin, and to which some of the above remarks do not apply. These objections are, there-

fore, entitled to a more careful consideration. One of them is, the objection urged of late against the teachings, or supposed teachings, of the Bible, in regard to the age of man upon the earth. The Bible is generally believed to teach that Adam was created about six thousand years ago; and until within a recent period all geologists assented to this chronology. But it is now maintained by not a few geologists, that man has existed upon the earth during a much longer period. The most distinguished advocate of this theory is Sir Charles Lyell. Between the theory advocated in his *Antiquity of Man* and the chronology of the Bible as generally understood, there is an irreconcilable contradiction. Either the chronology of the Bible, as generally understood, is incorrect; or Sir Charles has mis-interpreted the facts of geology.

1. It is to be observed, in the first place, that it is possible that the *early chronology of the Bible is misunderstood*. This admission need give the Christian no alarm; nor is it a just ground for exultation on the part of the sceptic. If the Bible be what we regard it—a divine revelation—science will not contradict any of its statements; though it may correct some of our *interpretations* of them. It is the glory of the Scriptures, that all branches of science contribute to their elucidation.

We are not, indeed, convinced that the chronological computation, founded upon the Biblical history, and making the human race less than six thousand years old, is incorrect. We assert only the *possibility* of its incorrectness. This possibility

is demonstrated by the fact, that that computation does not by any means command universal consent. What is called the Christian Era, according to which the creation of man took place 4004 years before the birth of Christ, was introduced by Dionysius Exiguus, a monk of Rome, in the sixth century. This is the chronology of the *Vulgate*, and is received by the Roman Catholic church. The *Samaritan Pentateuch*, however, makes 4,700 years instead of 4,004 between the creation of man and the birth of Christ; the *Septuagint*, 5,872; the *Greek church*, 5,508; *Hales*, 5,411. Dr. Pritchard, whose orthodoxy as well as learning is unquestioned, declares that, while the time of the arrival of Abraham in the land of Canaan may be ascertained with close approximation to accuracy, 'beyond that event we can never know how many centuries, nor even how many chiliads of years, may have elapsed since the first man of clay received the image of God and the breath of life.'¹

In view of these facts, it is wise to admit that the chronology of the Bible may not be rightly understood; and that the facts of geology may contradict some of our interpretations, without invalidating any of its chronological statements.

2. It is possible, however, that the facts of geology that are supposed to teach the remote antiquity of man, are misunderstood. Geologists are no more infallible than Biblical commentators. It is even yet to be seen, whether the theory advocated by Sir

¹ Physical History of Mankind, vol. 5, p. 570.

Charles Lyell has the approbation of even a majority of geologists. He himself admits that nearly all the facts which he cites to prove the great antiquity of man, are inconclusive. He mentions ancient bricks found buried sixty or seventy feet beneath the surface of the Nile valley in Egypt, and declares that, according to the supposed rate of increase of the Nile mud, some of these bricks must be 12,000 and others 30,000 years old. Yet he admits that there have been no satisfactory measurements of Nile mud in reference to the rate of increase, and that the bricks in question may be comparatively modern.¹ Besides, bricks might *sink* sixty or seventy feet in the soft loam of the Nile valley in two or three thousand years.

In the delta of the Mississippi, supposed to be many tens of thousands of years in forming,—probably more than 100,000,—a human skeleton has been found sixteen feet beneath the surface. Dr. Dowler is quoted as assigning to this skeleton an antiquity of 50,000 years. Sir Charles, however, says, ‘I cannot form an opinion as to the value of the chronological calculations which have led Dr. Dowler to ascribe to this skeleton an antiquity of 50,000 years.’²

In 1857, in a cave near Dusseldorf in the valley of Dussel, a human skull was found, one hundred feet below the surface of the earth. To this skull a great antiquity has been ascribed. But our author states, that there is a fissure extending from the cave to the upper surface of the country, and suggests

¹ *Antiq. of Man*, p. 38. ² p. 44.

that through this passage the body, to which the skull belonged, and the loam in which it was found buried, may have been washed into the cave below.¹ Hence these bones may not be even a century old.

A fossil human bone has been found at Natchez on the Mississippi, accompanied by bones of the mastodon and megalonyx, which is supposed to have been washed out of a more ancient alluvial deposit. But the geologist suggests that this bone may have been derived from the vegetable soil at the top of a cliff, near which it was found; and remarks, that since we have but one isolated case, it is allowable to suspend our judgment as to the great antiquity of the fossil.²

Thus, in regard to all the human bones found beneath the surface of the earth, and referred to as proof of man's high antiquity, our author makes some statement which shows that after all, they may have been deposited at a very recent date in the caves or alluvium in which they were found. To the objection that the bones of men are found as fossils only in caves and other dark recesses where the fauna of different periods may have been washed by the floods and have found a common sepulture, he replies only by referring to the fact, that flint knives and hatchets *have been* found imbedded in regular and undisturbed strata far beneath the surface of the earth.³ We have thus a virtual admission that none of the fossil human bones that have yet been found, can be relied on to prove the antiquity of

¹ p. 76-77. ² pp. 200-3. ³ pp. 93-4.

mankind. It is strange that they should be referred to in a scientific work for such a purpose.

In regard to the artificial knives and hatchets found imbedded in undisturbed strata, and supposed to be very ancient, it is a remarkable fact, that *no human bones have been found along with them*. Bones of mammalia, of both living and extinct species, have been found in abundance along with these ancient flint implements. But the author of the *Antiquity of Man* admits, that though in the course of the last quarter of a century thousands of such bones have been subjected to the examination of skillful osteologists, they have not been able to detect among them *one fragment of a human skeleton; not even a tooth*. He remarks, that this fact is naturally a matter of no small surprise; and says, that he 'confidently expects that some human remains *will be found in the older alluvium of the European valleys*.'¹ Would it not be well to suspend judgment in regard to the antiquity of man, until this confident expectation shall have been realized? Heretofore, the absence of the remains of a race of animals from any particular stratum has been considered incontestable proof, that at the time of the formation of that stratum such race of animals had no existence. Lyell requires us either to abandon this principle, or to accept his own confident expectation referred to above as equivalent to an established scientific fact.

But flint implements have been found in gravel beds twenty or thirty feet beneath the earth's surface, mingled with the bones of extinct animals; and, not-

¹ pp. 144-5.

withstanding the absence of all human remains, the conclusion has been drawn, that human beings were contemporary with those extinct animals; and that the human race is much more than six thousand years old. There are, however, several things which must be proved, in order that the argument may have any validity. (1) It must be proved that the knife-shaped and hatchet-shaped flints are really artificial, not natural formations. (2) It must be shown that they were not fabricated by fraudulent workmen, tempted by the high price which such articles command. (3) It must be proved that they could not have been formed by animals having a little higher order of instinct than the ape and the beaver, but destitute of reason. (4) It must be proved that these flint implements and the bones of extinct animals were deposited together, at the time the gravel beds in which they are found were formed, and did not get mingled long after the disappearance of the extinct animals from the earth. (5) It must be shown that these knives and hatchets were not formed by intellectual beings who had become extinct before man appeared on the earth.

It may, indeed, be, that the first four points have been demonstrated to the satisfaction of all candid investigators. But until human bones shall have been found mingled with these implements, the supposition may be entertained that they were manufactured by intellectual beings other and earlier than the human race; and that they prove nothing in regard to the antiquity of man. Some of the facts which Lyell presents seem, indeed, to suggest the

existence of an intellectual race antecedent to man. The skull found in the cave near Dusseldorf, as mentioned above, is described as scarcely human. We are informed that doubts were expressed by several naturalists, whether it was truly human. Prof. Huxley remarked at once, that it was the most ape-like skull he had ever beheld; and after closer examination declared, that 'this skull is the most brutal of all known human skulls.' Sir Charles himself declares, that 'undoubtedly there is a nearer resemblance in the outline of this skull to that of a chimpanzee than had ever been observed before in any human cranium.'¹ Now, if this skull is more than six thousand years old, it may have belonged to a being inferior, but antecedent to man. The flint implements, to which so much importance is attached by some geologists, may have been formed by that antecedent race; and their intermingling with the bones of extinct animals in ancient gravel beds may thus be accounted for, without assuming a higher antiquity for man than that ascribed to him by the prevailing chronology.

Perhaps, too, the mortal remains of beings superior to man lie imbedded beneath the surface of the earth. Sir C. Lyell, as stated above, confidently expects that human remains *will be* detected in the older alluvium of the European valleys. But instead of human remains, there may be found, not in the alluvium only, but in the lowest formation—even deeper down than the geologist has yet penetrated—the mortal coils of beings as much superior to men

¹ p. 78-92.

intellectually and morally, as the mastodon and megatherium exceed in size the largest races of living animals. The geologist may be called away from hunting after rude hatchets and knives of stone in ancient gravel beds, by the startling discovery of the relics of art more perfect and beautiful than man has yet attained.

It is thus seen, that the discovery of flint implements beneath the surface of the earth, which may be shown by their position and accompaniments to have been manufactured by intellectual beings hundreds of thousands of years ago, does not demonstrate the incorrectness of the chronology which assigns to man an antiquity of only about six thousand years. And even if geology should prove him to have appeared on earth at a much earlier period; the result, so far as the Bible is concerned, might only be, to rectify the inferences that have been drawn from its chronological statements.

We do not, indeed, regard the evidence of the great antiquity of man, presented by Lyell, as conclusive. We are not even convinced, by all that geologists have said, of the great antiquity of the earth. Our doubts on this latter point arise from the fact, that it has not been proved that the various strata of the earth were formed at different times. They are nowhere all found in super-position. They are, indeed, found in a certain order, where they exist at all. But in no one place are they all found together. In the region where we write, the Silurian system is at the surface. Strata, miles in depth, and which are supposed to have been deposited at inter-

vals of millions of years, never had an existence here; or if they had, have all disappeared. If the latter, where have they gone? and why are not their fossils scattered among the strata of other regions? But if all the fossiliferous rocks from the Silurian up, not only are, but always have been wanting in various regions, it is evident that some of the strata must have been formed at the same time—while the Silurian or the Chalk formation was being formed in one locality, the Old Red Sandstone or the Carboniferous System was being formed in another. If such be the case, no theory in regard to the age of the earth can be founded on its strata and fossils. Until geologists demonstrate that the various strata were formed at different periods, they can really establish nothing either in regard to the age of the earth, or the age of man upon it.

In regard to the philological argument; which is, that according to the chronology of Scripture, there was not sufficient time for the formation of the diverse languages that are known to have existed in very early times; it may be observed, that it is founded on the assumption that linguistic changes took place as slowly in very ancient times as at present. This assumption, however, seems incorrect, when we consider the isolation of ancient tribes and nations, their frequent migrations, the occasional subjugation and absorption of one by another, their ignorance of the art of printing, by which modern languages have become fixed, and other circumstances which must have accelerated linguistic divergences and fluctuations in ancient times. A similar

error has been committed by some geologists, in assuming that changes on the earth's surface at no period in the past progressed faster than at the present time; and in building upon this assumption their theories in regard to the vast antiquity of the earth. But if the Bible is what it claims to be, the diversities of human language were produced suddenly by the interposition of the Almighty;¹ and hence, notwithstanding the existence of these diversities in very ancient times, the received chronology may be correct.

In regard to the argument drawn from the advanced state of the arts soon after the Noachian deluge, we simply remark, that it is far from proving a long lapse of time; since a knowledge of the arts, which had more than fifteen hundred years for their development previous to the deluge, would be preserved by Noah and his sons in the ark.

But whatever geologists and chronologists have proved, or shall prove, in regard to the antiquity of the human race, the only effect, so far as the Bible is concerned, will be, as we have said, to correct mistakes in regard to its chronology. The effort to falsify its chronology, like all the other efforts to prove a contradiction between it and science, has failed. Though both ancient and modern literature abound in obvious and absurd contradictions of science, mistakes in chronology, astronomy, geology, geography, physiology, and history, the Bible stands all the tests of advancing science and of time.

Nor is this fact to be accounted for by the silence

¹Gen. 11: 1-9.

of the Bible in regard to the matters of which the natural sciences treat. There is no book whose contents are so comprehensive and various as those of the Bible. It describes the creation, and predicts the destruction of the world. It speaks of the heavens with their sun, moon, stars, and milky-way; of the earth, with its mountains, rivers, plains, seas, islands, and countries; of the clouds, winds, rains, dews, snows, hail, vapor, and of all the elements and phenomena of nature. It treats of almost all beings—God, angels, men, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects; of almost all events, from the thunder-storm and the earthquake, to the voice of the turtle and the chirping of the grasshopper; of the trees, shrubs, grass, flowers; the cedars of Lebanon, and the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. Though the chief design of the book is to teach theology and morality, many of its declarations touch on botany, zoology, astronomy, geology, physiology, history, philology, and almost every branch of science. It is the only book of the *universe* that we possess. Of all books it is the most worthy of being called the *Cosmos*. The celebrated author who chose that word to designate his great work, in speaking of the descriptions of nature contained in the Scriptures, makes the following declaration: ‘It might almost be said that one single Psalm (104th) represents the image of the whole Cosmos. * * * We are astonished to find in a lyrical poem of such a limited compass, the whole universe—the heavens and earth—sketched with a few bold touches.’¹ The Bible, in thus de-

¹Humboldt’s *Cosmos*, vol. 2, p. 413.

scribing the whole universe, and in alluding to matters which pertain to all the natural sciences, speaks freely and unhesitatingly. Its writers tread the ground fearlessly. They are very out-spoken. Yet in all their narratives, descriptions, statements, and allusions, they avoid saying any thing which the discoveries of modern science demonstrate to be incorrect.

But they not only avoid scientific errors; they also present much scientific truth. They not only avoid contradicting science, but also allude to facts which have been made known only by the profound investigations of modern times. Their scientific accuracy may be illustrated by many examples.

Instead of representing the earth as resting on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise, as did the ancient Hindu writers, the Bible declares that God *hangeth the earth upon nothing*.¹ Instead of, like Plato, describing the earth as a square block, it represents God as sitting on the *circle* of the earth;² as setting a compass (circle) on the face of the depth;³ and as walking in the circuit (circle) of heaven.⁴ Instead of, like Empedocles and many other ancient philosophers, representing the heavens as a solid mass, it describes them as an *expanse*⁵—something *spread out* like a curtain.⁶ Instead of, like Plato and Aristotle, representing the stars as having life and activity, it declares that the heavens and all inanimate things were created before the living animals,⁷ and thus designates all the celestial bodies as

¹ Job, 26: 7. ² Is. 40: 22. ³ Prov. 8: 27. ⁴ Job, 22: 14.

⁵ Gen. 1: 6--8, marg. ⁶ Is. 40: 22. ⁷ Gen. 1: 1, 14, 24.

lifeless, inactive substances. It contains no absurd system of astrology, such as was in vogue among the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and other ancient nations; it ascribes no magical influence to the luminaries of the night, and mentions astrologers, star-gazers and monthly prognosticators only to deride them.¹ It speaks not, like Herodotus, of the sun being driven out of his course by winter storms, but represents him as running his accustomed course (circuit or circle) like a strong man.² It tells not, like the Hindu writers, of an ancient king reigning one billion and two hundred millions of years (about two hundred thousand times longer than the supposed duration of the human race), nor of sixty thousand sons begotten of one man, born in a pumpkin, and nourished in pans of milk; but it gives us a very reasonable and credible chronology, and makes no monstrous representations in regard to the longevity of primitive men, and the rapidity of their increase. It never represents fire, earth, water, or air, nor all of them combined, as the beginning and source of all things; but it makes the simple and sublime declaration, that *in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*,³ and asserts that *things that are seen were not made of things which do appear*.⁴ It does not, like the Koran, represent the sun as setting in black mud, but declares that he goes on continuously in his course; after his setting, hastening to his place of rising.⁵

¹ Is. 47: 13.² Ps. 19: 5, 6.³ Gen. 1: 1.⁴ Heb. 11: 3.⁵ Eccl. 1: 5.

There are several important facts mentioned in the Scriptures, which could be known to their authors only by profound scientific investigation, or by the peculiar favor of heaven.

One of these facts is the unity of the human race. The Scriptures teach that all mankind are descended from one pair;¹ and that God hath made all nations of one blood.² This truth was unknown to the ancients or was disbelieved by them, and has been called in question even in modern times. But by the aid of physiology, philology, ethnology, history, chemistry, and other sciences, the unity of the human race has been established as a scientific truth; disputed or doubted only by Agassiz, and perhaps a few other scientific men.

Another truth, which, until within a recent period, rested on the testimony of the Bible alone, is the original sameness of human language. It asserts that originally the whole earth was of one language and one speech.³ The number of languages spoken among men, and their apparent diversity, seem inconsistent with their common origin. But modern philologists have demonstrated the similarity and common origin of all languages. As Dr. Max Müller says, in this way is established the claim of a common descent, and a legitimate relationship between Hindu, Greek, and Teuton.

Another fact brought to view in the Scriptures, and demonstrated by modern science, is the countless multitude of the stars. The Scriptures again and

¹ Gen. 1: 28. 3: 20. ² Acts, 17: 26. ³ Gen. 11: 1.

again refer to them as innumerable.¹ To the ordinary observer, however, only about a thousand stars are visible, and the whole number visible in both hemispheres is not five thousand. But, as is well known, the telescope reveals the existence of millions and millions of stars scattered through the depths of space, and demonstrates the correctness of the Bible in representing them as innumerable.

The scientific accuracy of the Bible is farther seen, in its ascribing weight to the wind (atmosphere);² in its representing the moon as standing still at the same time with the sun at the command of Joshua,³ a matter likely to be overlooked by a historian ignorant of the diurnal revolution of the earth; in its representing light as having an existence independent of the sun,⁴ a fact known only to modern naturalists; in its declaring that there was vegetation before the appearance of the sun in the heavens,⁵ a fact demonstrated by modern geology; in its representing the earth as containing under its outer crust as it were fire,⁶ another fact taught by modern geology; in its representing the mountains as being raised and the valleys as being depressed,⁷ which accords with the teachings of geological science.

The scientific accuracy of the Scriptures has been recognized by many distinguished men. Lord Bacon speaks of the Book of Job, the Prophets, and the Mosaic writings, as 'pregnant and swelling with

¹ Gen. 15: 5. ² Job. 28: 25. ³ Josh. 10: 12-13.

⁴ Gen. 1: 3. ⁵ Gen. 1: 11. ⁶ Job. 28: 5.

⁷ Ps. 104: 8, marg.

natural philosophy,' and as having 'great aspersion of natural philosophy.'¹ Baron Humboldt, in expressing his astonishment at the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the Scriptures, makes the following remarkable declaration: 'The meteorological processes which take place in the atmosphere, the formation and solution of vapor according to the changing direction of the wind, the play of its colors, the generation of hail and of the rolling thunder, are described with individualizing accuracy; and many questions are propounded which we, in the present state of our physical knowledge, may, indeed, be able to express under more scientific definitions, but scarcely to answer satisfactorily.'² We thus find, that the scientific accuracy with which the phenomena of the material universe are delineated in the poetry of the Bible, excited the astonishment of one who was acquainted with the entire range of modern science. This testimony will doubtless appear to some to be stronger, from the fact that Humboldt rejected the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. The declarations of this celebrated man, and the illustrations above presented, demonstrate a wide difference between the Bible and every other collection of writings, both ancient and modern. Its language and statements harmonize with scientific truths and facts, which were unknown to, or were disbelieved by all the ancient poets, historians, philosophers, and learned men. We may challenge the opponents of supernatural inspiration to name fifty authors of any age

¹ De Aug. B. 1. Filum Lab. 7.

² Cos. vol. 2, p. 414.

or nation, or of all ages and nations, who allude to natural phenomena as frequently as do the Biblical writers, that do not abound with contradictions of science.

The sceptic is not likely, indeed, to admit the consistency of the Bible with science, but there are some facts connected with this subject which every intelligent and candid man will admit.

1. It is an undeniable fact, as we have shown, that ancient and modern literature abounds in scientific errors. The remains of Egyptian literature, the voluminous writings of the Hindus, the Persian Avesta, the books of the Chinese and the teachings of Confucius, the Koran, the Jewish Talmud, and the Apocryphal Gospels, the best productions of the Grecian and Roman authors, and much of the literature of modern times, are characterized by such errors. These errors are great and numerous. No intelligent man can doubt their reality. By them the divine inspiration claimed for the Shasters, the Talmud, the Avesta, and the Koran, is disproved beyond the possibility of doubt. Nor is there any collection of writings, ancient or modern, except the Scriptures, whose human origin is not demonstrated by undeniable inconsistencies with science.

2. It is also an undeniable fact, that the opponents of the supernatural inspiration of the Bible have labored long and hard to convince mankind that it contains scientific errors. Their efforts have been, of later years, directed especially to establish this point. They have employed history, chronology, as-

tronomy, geology, and almost every other science, together with Egyptian hieroglyphics, Chinese tables, and other antiquarian monuments; have written books, reviews, and essays; and have labored learnedly and indefatigably to convict the Bible of scientific error. The very necessity of making so great efforts to establish this point, demonstrates that the Bible is, in point of scientific accuracy, superior to all the literary collections of ancient and modern times. It would be possible, with half the effort, or with no effort at all, to prove the scientific inaccuracy of every other collection of writings.

3. It is another undeniable fact that infidels, with all their learned and protracted efforts to convince the world that the Bible contradicts science, if they have not signally failed, have had, to say the least, but very partial success. Undoubtedly some persons have been led, on this ground, to disbelieve its plenary inspiration. But scarcely, at any time, in any country, have the majority of the people been infidels. It is not certain that a majority of the French even at the close of the last century, or of the Germans at the beginning of the present, were infidels. It is undeniable, however, that with scarcely an exception, the enlightened nations have regarded the Bible as a super-human book. During eighteen centuries, infidels have been largely in the minority. During eighteen centuries the great majority of intelligent people and learned men have believed in the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures. Such, too, is the belief of the majority of intelligent people and learned men now living. If the Bible contains

scientific errors, not only have they escaped the notice of the majority of the most gifted and learned of mankind; but many of the most distinguished men of science have failed to see them, after what are claimed as such have been pointed out. Such men as Newton, Locke, Grotius, Sir W. Jones, Cuvier, Miller, Buckland, Hitchcock, Silliman, Brewster, Schlegel, Chalmers, Tholuck, and a host of others deeply versed in modern literature and science, after reading the Bible carefully, and hearing all that infidels have to say, declare, that between its statements and the teachings of science they see no contradiction.

These are facts which every intelligent person must admit. But if the Bible be merely a human book, the infidel ought to be able to point out unmistakable scientific errors in it, as in all other ancient books. It is certainly a strange and wonderful thing, that those fifty old Hebrew authors, in their simplicity or cunning, in their ignorance or knowledge, should write on almost all kinds of subjects in such a way, as to be regarded by many of the most distinguished men of science as completely accurate and infallible, and so as to baffle all the efforts of sceptical learning and genius to convict them before the world of one scientific mistake. When we consider how the writings of all other ancient authors, even the most learned and gifted, and also much of the literature of modern times, abound in scientific errors and even absurdities—errors and absurdities that are admitted at once and on all hands to be such; and when we further con-

sider that, after all that has been said and written by the opponents of plenary inspiration, the verdict of the enlightened world is, that the Bible is entirely consistent with science; *its merely human and Jewish origin appears altogether unaccountable.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF THE SEEMINGLY LEAST VALUABLE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE.

CONSIDERABLE portions of the Bible are not only destitute of beauty and eloquence, but these also deal in minute details, that doubtless appear to many as uninteresting and worthless. This is especially true of the book of Leviticus and such other portions as treat of the laws, regulations, ceremonies, and other internal affairs of the Jewish nation. Yet these portions of the Scriptures are really rich in historic information. They make us acquainted with the civil and criminal laws, the military, municipal, and sanitary regulations, the religious ideas and rites, the social and domestic customs and manners, of a very ancient and remarkable people. Legislative enactments, the regulations of cities and military camps in regard to health and cleanliness, statutes in regard to garbage and slaughter-pens, the accounts of the construction and management of sinks and sewers, and other such matters, certainly do not constitute tasteful and attractive reading. But it is thus that we are enabled to know the condition and progress of a nation, and what kind of life they lived. The duty of the historian is not merely to tell us of mighty kings and warriors, and of battles and

sieges, but to make us acquainted with the character, the thoughts, the actions, the every-day life, of the people. The ideas that once prevailed in regard to the *dignity of history* have happily passed away, and historians have learned to treat of ordinary matters, as do the Biblical writers. Often do literary men visit the sites of ancient cities in order to secure just such items of knowledge as the less interesting and seemingly less valuable portions of the Bible contain. They chase the owls, bats, and hyenas from their dwelling-places; dig among the ruins of walls, palaces, temples, and altars; and when, after great labor, they find some half-rotten column, or a fragment of some old rust-eaten pot or cup, bearing the inscription of a few letters or hieroglyphics, they rejoice as one that finds a long-lost treasure, hoping to decipher the half-effaced characters, and make out the decree of some Egyptian or Babylonian despot concerning his fish-ponds, or the livery of his servants. Every thing that illustrates the religious and moral ideas, or the manners and customs, of the Egyptians, Hindus, Persians, and other ancient nations, is considered valuable. For books that would make us minutely acquainted with their laws, religions, and customs; their style of dress, their mode of preparing food, treating the sick, and burying the dead; the form and size of their drinking-vessels and soup-dishes; their forms of betrothal, marriage, and divorce; and everything pertaining to their every-day life,—literary men would make almost any sacrifice. To obtain them, they would endanger health and life, traverse continents, sail round

the globe, and dig into the very bowels of the earth.

Now, the Bible gives us in regard to the Jews, precisely the information which is so highly valued, and so eagerly sought after, in regard to other ancient nations. The minuteness with which it recounts the civil, military, and criminal laws, the sanitary regulations and ceremonial observances, of that peculiar people, is in reality one of its excellences. Some of their regulations and ceremonies may seem strange and outlandish—as those in regard to the distinction of meats, the leprosy, and the purification of women, must do, if their sanitary character and moral significance be overlooked; but this does not detract from the literary value of the books which faithfully record them. Since the historical details which make us acquainted with the theological and moral ideas, political laws, religious rites, and the manners and customs and modes of living, of ancient and powerful nations, are regarded as important and valuable; much more important and valuable are such details in regard to the nation from whom the whole enlightened portion of mankind have received their theology and morality.

But the portions of Scripture, which seem to many persons so uninteresting and valueless are not destitute even of poetic beauty. In this respect, the law-books of the Jews are unlike those of any other nation. What, in a literary point of view, is a legislative journal, or a modern statute-book? They are composed of minute details concerning taxes, jails, school-houses, wharf-boats, stray mules, and sheep-killing dogs; and are as destitute of

poetic beauty and sublimity as is the desert of Sahara of grass and flowers. None but lawyers and politicians, whose business compels them, reads such books. But it is not so with the law-books of the Bible. They contain many gems of poetic beauty, and strains of soul-stirring eloquence. The closing chapters of Deuteronomy, especially, are characterized by beauty and grandeur. In the song of Moses, there recorded, his 'words drop as the rain, and his speech distills as the dew.'¹

The law-books of the Jews have another excellence which distinguishes them from those of other nations;—they mingle useful and grand moral truths with the minute details of criminal, military, and sanitary regulations. The fact that they contain the Ten Commandments—a code, in which the wisdom and learning and philosophy of the world have not been able to discover any error or suggest any improvement—renders this portion of the Bible more important and valuable than all the other judicial books of the world, or than the entire literature of the ancient Egyptians, Hindus, Grecians, Romans, and all the ancient nations, combined.

When we come to speak of the *political* excellence of the Scriptures, we will show that these old law-books have exerted a beneficial and powerful influence on the politics and legislation of the world. Nor should it be forgotten, that the Mosaic regulations concerning the distinction of meats, corporeal uncleanness, and the rites of purification, not only had a sanitary character, but were also designed to

¹ Deut. 32: 2.

teach a debased people the nature and necessity of *moral* purity; and hence the literary excellence of the books containing them consists, in the faithfulness and accuracy with which they are recorded.

The portions of Scripture, then, seemingly of the least value, are rich in historic information concerning an ancient and remarkable people who are the theological and moral teachers of mankind; abound in snatches of sublime poetry; and contain many grand moral utterances: and hence they constitute a very important and valuable part of the world's literature.

CHAPTER V.

RICHNESS OF THE BIBLE IN GRAND AND BEAUTIFUL SUBJECTS.

IT will enable us better to appreciate the literary superiority of the Bible over other books, if we compare the subjects treated of in it with those treated of by the Hindu, Grecian, and Roman authors. We speak of Hindu, Grecian, and Roman authors; because it is but fair to compare the writers of the Bible with the writers who lived nearest their own times, and because modern literature has been largely enriched from its abundant stores.

In one of the preceding chapters, we alluded to the frivolous subjects of many of the Vedic hymns—celebrating the praises of the hawk, partridge, mortar and pestle, and even the wheel-barrow! Other portions of Hindu literature treat of absurd and indecent cosmogonies and mythologies, and licentious and debasing loves and passions. The Grecian and Roman poets sing of love, war, and glory; of the jealousies, and resentments, and licentious amours of Jupiter and Apollo, Juno and Venus, and other imaginary gods, male and female; and of the fierce passions, daring encounters, shocking crimes, and the successes and misfortunes, of men remarkable, not for intellectual vigor or moral worth, but only for their

physical strength and courage. They describe the garden of the Hesperides, with its golden apples, and guarded by a dragon with a hundred heads; the Elysium, with its meadows and streams and singing birds, where the dead Achilles waged war with wild beasts, where the slaughtered Trojan chiefs amused themselves with horses and arms, and where the voluptuary and debauchee pursued the same gratifications as he had done while on earth; Gorgons and Hydras dealing death and destruction; and battles in which gigantic Titans, one-eyed Cyclops, or Centaurs—half-man and half-horse—were antagonists.

The Bible treats of subjects infinitely more noble and exalted—the unity, the infinite power and goodness, the dreadful holiness and sovereignty, and the awful majesty of the Godhead; the creation of the heavens and the earth; the innocence and happiness of the first pair as they dwelt amid the flowers and fruits of Eden; the fall of the angels; the fall, guilt, and ruin of man; the brevity and wretchedness of human life; the dreadfulness of future punishment in the lake burning with fire and brimstone; the worth of the human soul; the futility of human merit; the love and condescension of Jesus; his perfect and glorious character; his mysterious agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and his death on the cross; his glorious resurrection and ascension; the organization of the New Testament church and the progress of Christianity in apostolic times; the thousand years of universal righteousness and peace; the coming of the Son of God to judge the world at the last day; the raising of the dead; the assembling of

all nations before the great white throne; the departure of the wicked into everlasting fire; the eternal happiness of the righteous; their crowns of glory that shall never fade away; and the beauty and grandeur of the heavenly city with its pearly gates, its golden streets, and its pure river of the water of life clear as crystal, all flashing in the light and glory that shine from the face of God.

The richness of the Bible in grand and beautiful subjects, is further demonstrated by the fact, that modern authors have borrowed so much from it. Milton and Bunyan were indebted to it for the leading ideas in their immortal works. We neither deny their originality, nor accuse them of plagiarism. Macaulay says, that though there were many clever men in England during the latter half of the seventeenth century, there were but two creative minds; and that one of these produced the *Paradise Lost*, and the other the *Pilgrim's Progress*.¹ But these great writers did not produce the grand themes on which they wrote. These were already produced to their hand in the Scriptures. Milton in his great poem wrote

‘Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat.’

But it is only in the Bible that ‘the height of this great argument’ is made known to men; and but

¹ Essay on *Pilgrim's Progress*.

for the Bible, the *Paradise Lost* could never have been written. It is a suggestive fact, that more than a thousand years before Milton's time, his chief work was anticipated by a writer much inferior to him in poetic genius. Saint Avitus, bishop of Vienne in France, born about the middle of the fifth century, wrote six poems, three of which were on the *Creation*, *Original Sin*, and the *Expulsion from Paradise*. This triad of poems, Guizot declares,¹ should in justice be called *Paradise Lost*; their resemblance to that work, in subject, general conception, and even some of the more important details, being so striking. This resemblance certainly did not result from the imitation of the poems of the French bishop by the English poet. As Guizot suggests, Milton was probably not aware of the existence of such poems. The resemblance is fully accounted for by the fact, that both these authors drew their subjects, and many of their conceptions, from the same source—the Bible.

Bunyan also drew his subjects, and a large part of the details of his great work, from the Bible. All the prominent ideas contained in the *Pilgrim's Progress* have a Scripture origin. The Christian as a *pilgrim*, the Christian life as a *journey*, the sinner clothed with *rags*, and sin as a *burden* on his back, the *City of Destruction*, and the *Celestial City*, the *Wicket Gate*, the *Cross* and the *Sepulchre*, the valley of the *Shadow of Death*, the *Delectable Mountains*, the land of *Beulah*, the *River* without a bridge and very deep, and the *celestial Gate* beyond it;—

¹ Hist. of Civ. Lect. 18.

all these ideas are taken directly from the Scriptures.

Another great writer, who borrowed much from the Bible, is Dante. The visions and conceptions of the prophets and bards of Israel, are found running all through the *Divine Comedy*. Schlegel names him first among the Christian poets who took their subjects, or their models, from the Scriptures.¹

The main excellence of these great works—the *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Pilgrim's Progress*—consists in the grandeur of their subjects, and in their rich profusion of beautiful and sublime conceptions and ideas. The poetry of Homer—the greatest poet of antiquity—is attractive mainly by its language and imagery. Its chief design is, to celebrate the courage and bloody deeds of half-savage warriors. Its subjects, conceptions, and mere story, when compared with those of the above-mentioned works, are insignificant and mean. This fact demonstrates the surpassing excellence of the literary topics treated of in the Bible, since to it the authors of these works were indebted for their subjects and general conceptions—subjects and conceptions which, by comparison, make those of the greatest poets of ancient times appear trifling and contemptible.

But not only did Dante, Milton, and Bunyan, draw subjects and conceptions from the Bible; so also have nearly all modern poets. The *Olney Hymns* of Cowper have not only Bible subjects, but also contain many ideas, truths, figures, and expressions, taken from the same source. The same remark may be made in regard to Pollok's *Course of*

¹ Hist. of Literature, Lect. 9.

Time; the subject and conceptions of which poem are grand, though it is especially deficient in the simplicity which characterizes the poetry of the Bible. Henry Kirke White wrote many pieces on Scriptural subjects. One of his best pieces is his *Star of Bethlehem*. Many of Willis' pieces also are on Bible subjects; such as, his *Sacrifice of Abraham*, *Christ's Entrance into Jerusalem*, *Hagar in the Wilderness*, *The Death of Absalom*, and others. The titles of some of Landon's poems are as follows; *St. John in the Wilderness*, *The Nativity of Christ*, *Christ Blessing the Bread*, *Christ Blessing Little Children*, and *Christ crowned with Thorns*. Mrs. Hemans has poems on *Christ's Agony in the Garden*, *The Hebrew Mother*, *The Wings of a Dove* (Ps. 55: 6), *The Angels' Call*, and *The Voice of God*. We have Pope's *Messiah*, Young's *Last Day* and *Paraphrase of the Book of Job*, James Montgomery's *Psalms* and *Elijah in the Wilderness*, and Milman's *Belshazzar* and *Fall of Jerusalem*. Dryden's *Absalom and Ahithophel* is founded on Bible history. In *Ivanhoe*, one of the best of Scott's novels, the heroine, Rebecca, is a Hebrew character; and her hymn is a Hebrew hymn. We have Moore's *Sacred Songs* and Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*,—unchristian poets though they were. We have Voltaire's *Saul* and *Samson*, as well as Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. As we will hereafter show, Voltaire was indebted to the Bible for the subjects and conceptions of his most successful tragedies, his *Zaire* and *Alzire*. We will also show that Göthe appreciated the rich store of literary subjects contained in the Bible, and borrowed from it. The first part of

his *Faust* is from the opening chapters of the Book of Job. The great work of Klopstock—the founder of modern German literature—is the *Messiah*; the subject and general conceptions of which, like those of *Paradise Lost*, are taken from the Bible. Calderon, the great Spanish poet, has many pieces on Scripture subjects, such as his *Locks of Absalom*, *Belshazzar's Feast*, *Gideon's Fleece*, *The Sheaves of Ruth*, *The Wheat and the Tares*, and a large number of others. We may adduce also the poems of Edward Henry Bickersteth, (published within the present year,) who is greatly admired by many, and who certainly as a poetic writer is not without merit. We refer especially to his *Samson*, *Nineveh*, *Ezekiel*, and *John Baptist*; not to mention his larger poem, *Yesterday, To-day, and For-ever*.

These statements might be much extended; but those instances already given may serve to inform or remind the reader, of the large indebtedness of eminent modern authors to the Bible for their subjects. The poets of Great Britain, America, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and almost every land, have gone to the Bible to find subjects for tragedies, epics, lyrics, oratorios, and almost every species of composition. For more than a thousand years, the master minds in literature have taken from it their noblest subjects; and its abundant stores are not yet exhausted. This fact demonstrates how rich this wonderful book is in literary subjects—subjects beautiful, dignified, and grand; worthy of all the honors and ornaments which the hand of genius can bestow.

CHAPTER VI.

INDEBTEDNESS OF LITERATURE AND LITERARY MEN TO THE BIBLE.

THE subject announced in the heading of this chapter has already been in part illustrated. In the preceding chapter we have adverted to the fact, that many of the most celebrated authors of modern times borrowed their subjects and grandest conceptions from the Bible. Modern literature and literary men are indebted to the Bible in various other respects. But this subject can be best illustrated by considering national literatures separately.

1. *English Literature.*

Not only did Milton and Bunyan borrow their subjects and general conceptions from the Bible, but also their ideas and figures are often taken from the same source. Milton was indeed a learned poet, and borrowed much from the Greek and Roman authors. But he borrowed still more from the Bible. The whole of his chief poem may be said to be founded on it. It contains much of Scripture imagery and history. Its very language indicates the profound acquaintance of its author with the sacred writings. From them he derived that solemnity and majesty of style in which he excels all other poets, except those of the ancient Hebrews. His wonderful poem

is characterized throughout by Bible subjects, Bible conceptions, Bible figures, Bible scenes, Bible episodes, and Bible language. Bunyan also was indebted to the Bible for much more than his subject and general conceptions. It was almost the only literary book which he read. His mind was filled with its scenes and figures. His soul drank in its sentiments and spirit. His language and style were modeled after the common translation. In short, of the *Pilgrim's Progress*—which Macaulay has called 'the highest miracle of genius'—it may be said, that not only its subject and general conception, but its ideas, imagery, spirit, language, style,—every thing on which its literary excellence depends,—are taken largely from the Bible. We need not speak particularly of Cowper—the poet of mild beauty—whom Coleridge declared the greatest of modern poets. He is universally recognized as one of the *Christian* poets, who garlanded with flowers the cross of Jesus, and mingled with his own music the strains which he learned of the apostles and prophets. Byron was a great admirer of the Bible as a literary composition. It is one of the four books which he kept constantly on his table. He committed to memory many of the Psalms in early childhood, and studied Lowth on Hebrew poetry all his life.¹ It is asserted that, though he often ridiculed and reviled revealed religion, he yet read the Bible more faithfully and stately than most Christians.² He made large use of it in the composition of some of his works. The

¹ Moore's Life of Byron, p. 8. ² Literature and Lit. Men, p. 48.

sweetness of his *Hebrew Melodies* is drawn from the Psalms. The subject of his *Heaven and Earth*, which Hazlitt declares his best piece, is the same with that of Moore's *Loves of the Angels*, and is taken from the Scriptures. So also is the subject of his *Cain*. In both these pieces he employs also ideas and figures taken from the Scriptures, or suggested by them. A considerable portion of his *Ode to Napoleon* is an imitation of Isaiah's description of the fall of the king of Babylon.

The poet Shelley, who at one period of his life, and perhaps in his mature years, was an avowed atheist, and who declared Christianity an *execrable thing*, was yet, like Byron, a great admirer of the Bible as a composition. When it was reported (though incorrectly,) that at the time he was drowned he had a copy of the Bible next his heart, Byron declared that it was quite probable, from his known admiration of it. His admiration for the Bible, and his acquaintance with it, are evinced by his writings. The Bible is the only book from which he quotes in his preface to the *Revolt of Islam*, his first piece. He mentions the translators of the Bible first, and then Shakespeare, along with Spencer, the dramatists of the age of Elizabeth and Bacon, as 'those mighty intellects which Great Britain has produced since the Reformation.' In the poem itself there is much taken from the Bible. The battle between the *Eagle* and the *Serpent*, the beautiful *Woman* with the *Serpent* coiled in her bosom, *Man* murdering his *Brother*, the conflict between the *Spirit of Good* and the *Spirit of Evil*, the *Golden City*, the black *Tartar-*

can Horse with a rider like an *Angel* robed in white, the *Smoke* by day and *Fire* by night, and other ideas and figures, beside direct quotations, are either taken from the Bible or suggested by it. Were all the Scripture ideas and imagery taken away from the poem, its beauty would all be gone.

The great English dramatist, though he mainly wrote tragedies—a species of composition unknown to the Hebrew writers, and almost the only species of composition not found in the Scriptures—nevertheless often makes quotations from them. The writer has in his library a book in which this fact is clearly exhibited.¹ It is an octavo volume of more than 200 pages, and is mainly filled with quotations of ‘Moral Sentences’ from Shakespeare, and with the passages of Scripture from which they were taken, or to which they correspond. The compiler remarks concerning these quotations, that ‘they present incontestable proofs that the great poet was fully read in Holy Writ, and that his mind was most sensibly imbued with the sublimity and hallowed character of the Sacred Writings.’ In all that he wrote there is no sentiment contrary to their teachings, or in opposition to their inspiration and divine character. He presents the same views of human weakness, depravity, and guilt, as the Biblical authors. He resembled the old Hebrew bards and prophets in his broad simplicity, homely wis-

¹ Moral Sentences culled from the Works of Shakespeare, compared with Sacred Passages, drawn from Holy Writ, dedicated to the Shakespeare Society, by a Member: Second Edition: London.

dom, straight-forward plainness, earnest thought, and profound conviction. This resemblance was due, in part at least, to the influence of the Bible upon him, either directly, or indirectly through the age and society in which he lived. Whatever may have been his creed and conduct, whatever he may have been as a man, Shakespeare was a Christian poet.

English prose writers have also borrowed much from the Bible; of which we have space to present only a few illustrations. Few English writers in modern times have been more generally read and admired than Macaulay. He is admitted to be one of our clearest, strongest, and most beautiful writers. He was a man of great reading; being especially familiar with the Grecian, Roman, and English classics. But he was also well read in the Scriptures, and he admired them for their sublimity. His allusions to and quotations from them are very frequent. In his Essays, he quotes more frequently from them than from any other book, or from all other books together. He employs Bible language and figures generally without acknowledgment, and perhaps often unconsciously. For instance, in speaking of the progress of truth, he says; ‘Faint glimpses of truth begin to appear, and *shine more and more unto the perfect day*. The highest intellects, like the tops of mountains, are the first to catch and to reflect the dawn. They are bright, while the level below is still in darkness.’¹ The force of this passage depends

¹ Essay on Mackintosh’s History.

on the words which we have placed in italics, and which Macaulay took from the book of Proverbs,¹ unconsciously perhaps, certainly without acknowledgment. Again, in summing up the character of Barrere, he says: 'Whatsoever things are false, whatsoever things are dishonest, whatsoever things are unjust, whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever things are of evil report, if there be any vice, if there be any infamy, all these things, we know, were blended in Barrere.'² For this sentence, in which the author wished to pour out his indignation and abhorrence in one pointed and powerful expression, he was indebted to the apostle Paul.³ The most eloquent passage in the writings of Macaulay is, perhaps, his description of the character of the Puritans:—'If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read *in the oracles of God*. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in *the Book of Life*. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, *legions of ministering angels had charge over them*. Their palaces were *houses not made with hands*: their diadems *crowns of glory which should never fade away*. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a *more precious treasure*, and eloquent in a *more sublime language*—nobles by the right of *an earlier creation*, and priests by the imposition of a *mightier hand*.'⁴ This really

¹ Prov. 4: 18. ² Essay on Barrere. ³ Philip. 4: 8.

⁴ Essay on Milton.

fine passage is characterized throughout by Scripture ideas, figures, and language. Take these away, and its beauty and power will all be gone. Indeed, if any one will examine, he will find that the charm of Macaulay's writings depends very much upon the Scripture ideas, figures, allusions, and quotations with which they abound. We blame him not. For the Bible is the one book from which authors may borrow almost to any extent without subjecting themselves to the charge of plagiarism.

We have referred to Macaulay only as one of many examples. Carlyle, Hazlitt, and many others of our best prose writers, borrow as much as he from the Scriptures, or even more.

English oratory, also, owes much to the Bible. We will state a few facts illustrative of this point.

One of the most eloquent speakers that ever used the English language was Patrick Henry. His power, like that of every other orator, lay, of course, mainly in his delivery. But style and diction are also important to an orator; and those of the American Demosthenes took their character and color largely from the Bible. Observe how its language and figures run through his celebrated speech in the Virginia convention:—'We are apt to *shut our eyes* against a painful truth—Are we disposed to be of that number *who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation?*—I have *but one lamp by which my feet are guided*—Suffer not yourselves to be *betrayed by a kiss*—An appeal to arms and the *God*

of hosts is all that is left us—Until our enemies have bound us hand and foot—*The battle is not to the strong alone*—Gentlemen may cry *peace, peace, but there is no peace*—Forbid it, Almighty God! Throughout the whole speech, there is no idea or figure taken from profane authors, except in the comparison of delusive hope to the fabled sirens.¹ In another address, delivered at the commencement of the Revolutionary struggle to arouse the people to activity, the predominance of Bible ideas, figures, allusions, and language, is still more marked. In it he reminded his hearers, that ‘*the same God whose power divided the Red Sea for the deliverance of Israel, still reigned in all his glory, unchanged and unchangeable—was still the enemy of the oppressor and the friend of the oppressed—that he would cover them from their enemies by a pillar of cloud by day, and guide their feet through the night by a pillar of fire.*’² This brief extract is a fair specimen of the Scripture style, both of thought and expression, that characterizes the entire address. When Mr. Henry was well advanced in years, on the occasion of a political election, he was surrounded and followed by an admiring crowd. A clergyman, whose piety was wounded by this homage paid to a mortal, asked the people aloud; ‘Why do you follow Mr. Henry about? Mr. Henry is not a god!’ Mr. Henry, deeply affected both by the scene and the remark, said; ‘No, indeed, my friend, I am but a poor *worm of the dust*—as fleeting and unsubstantial as the *shadow of the cloud that flies over your fields, and is remembered no more.*’ Every

¹ Life of P. Henry by Wirt, pp. 133-9. ² pp. 156-7.

heart was affected, and every voice silenced.¹ This incident shows how the deep emotions of the orator's soul found vent in Scripture language and figures. Indeed, in his fire, energy, ideas, figures, and language, he resembled one of the old Hebrew prophets.

No orator of the English tongue had a better style of language than Daniel Webster. It was characterized by simplicity, purity, beauty, clearness, and strength. Its excellence, he himself declared, was due to the Bible. 'From the time,' said he, 'that, at my mother's feet, or on my father's knees, I first learned to lisp verses from the Sacred Writings, they have been my daily study and vigilant contemplation. If there be any thing in my style or thoughts worthy to be commended, the credit is due to my kind parents, in instilling into my early mind a love for the Scriptures.'²

We have thus showed that the excellence of these two masters of eloquence—Henry and Webster—was due to their acquaintance with the sacred scriptures; and from this fact we may judge how much English secular oratory and English secular orators owe to the Bible.

Pulpit oratory, of course, owes still more. But we have not space to speak of Whitefield, Wesley, Hall, Chalmers, Mason, and Edwards. Not only did they draw from the Bible subjects and materials for their discourses; but they were also largely indebted to it for their mental and moral culture, and

¹ Life of P. Henry by Wirt, p. 408.

² Harper's Mag. vol. 13, p. 498.

for the beauty and power of their ideas and modes of expression.

2. *German Literature.*

The literature and literary men of Germany are also much indebted to the Bible.

We have already referred to Göthe, who is regarded as Germany's greatest poet. He informs us, that in his boyhood he learned to read the Scriptures in the original tongues; that his love for them could not be taken from him; and that the peculiarities of the Old Testament always strongly interested him.¹ He gives a detailed account of the events and scenes recorded in its earlier books, and then remarks, that in all his mental conflicts and perplexities *those oriental regions were his safe retreat.*² He was the most cultivated of poets. With him *moral* culture meant only the education of his intellect and imagination, and the development of his poetic powers. Yet he declares, that to the Bible almost alone did he owe his moral culture; and that its events, its doctrines, its emblems, its similes, were all deeply impressed upon him, and in one way or another influenced him. He further declares, that he became too deeply attached to the whole book ever to do without it.³ His *Faust* indicates his knowledge of its teachings and history, and illustrates his skill in the employment of them to give interest, dignity, and power to his poetry. Yet, notwithstanding all this, Göthe 'left the church and the altar behind him,'⁴ and be-

¹ Truth and Poetry, B. 4. ² B. 4. ³ B. 7.

⁴ Truth and Poetry, B. 7.

came, in the language of one of his own countrymen, a refined heathen, without even the desire of salvation which characterized the noblest minds of Greece and Rome.¹

But the indebtedness of German literature to the Bible cannot be properly appreciated without a reference to Klopstock. In regard to his writings, we must rely wholly upon the judgment of others; but in this we are kept in countenance by the declaration of Schlegel, that his chief poem, the *Messiah*, is admired chiefly upon *trust*. Dr. Schaff calls him *the German Milton*. Schlegel says that 'every gradation, blending, and depth of elegiac feeling is handled by him with the power and ease of a master.'² With regard to the influence of Klopstock on German literature, this able critic declares that with the *Messiah* the new literature of Germany may be said to begin; so immeasurable have been the benefits derived from it, particularly in respect to style and expression; and that Klopstock's mighty hand put an end to the greatest reproach of German literature.³ Göthe also speaks of him as the creator of a new epoch, the founder of modern German literature, and says his works gained an incredible influence. The account which he gives of Klopstock's principal work and the source of his poetic inspiration, is as follows: 'The *Messiah*, a name which betokens infinite attributes, was to be glorified afresh by him. The Redeemer was to be the Hero, whom the poet contemplated accompanying through his earthly hu-

¹ Schaff's *Germany*, p. 148. ² Hist. of Lit. Lect. 15.

³ Lect. 15.

manity and sorrow to the highest heavenly triumphs. Every thing godlike, angelic, and human that lay in the young soul was here called into requisition. Brought up by the Bible and nourished by its strength, he now lives with the patriarchs, prophets, and fore-runners as if they were present; yet all these are only evoked from the ages to draw a luminous halo round the One, whose humiliation they behold with astonishment, and in whose exaltation they are destined to bear so glorious a part.¹

We find, then, that Gothe, the greatest of German poets, in his youthful days fed on Bible history, scenes, doctrines, and imagery; and that to the Bible almost alone he owed the culture which made him the man and poet he was, and gave him influence and fame. We find also that Klopstock, who was the renovator of German literature and who prepared the way for Göthe, was brought up on the Bible and nourished by its strength; lived, as it were, with the ancient Hebrew patriarchs and prophets; and was thus fitted for writing his great poem, and accomplishing his great work. It was but the Bible, with its lofty themes and poetry, speaking through the gifted soul of Klopstock, that gave new life to German literature, and awoke the poetic genius of Fatherland.

3. *Spanish Literature.*

Spain furnishes another example of a great poet, whose powers were developed by the beauties and sublimities of the Bible, and derived from it great

¹ Truth and Poetry, B. 10.

aid in the composition of his works. In the estimation of F. Schlegel, the Spanish drama reached its perfection in Calderon, whom he declares the last and greatest of all the Spanish poets. He further declares, that of *all dramatic poets Calderon is the most Christian*.¹ A. Schlegel characterizes his religious poetry as one continued hymn of thanksgiving, ever ascending to the throne of God.² Dean Trench, though he does not concur in the high encomiums pronounced upon him by the Schlegels, declares him to be the greatest of the Spanish dramatists; and the Spanish drama, after the Greek and English, to be the most glorious explosion of genius in this kind the world has ever seen. He mentions his *Locks of Absalom*, a play founded on Bible history, as the best exhibition of his skill and genius; and declares that he found his inspiration in the great mysteries of revelation and redemption.³ Ticknor, who says Calderon often sets before us models of ideal beauty, perfection, and splendor, mentions seventy-three as the number of *autos* or religious dramas written by him, beside thirteen or fourteen other full-length religious plays.⁴ From all these testimonies we are certainly safe in saying, that Calderon was a great poet, and that he was largely indebted to the history, poetry, doctrines, and morality of the Bible for the development of his genius, the subjects of his pieces, and the materials for their construction.

But there was a Spanish poet earlier than Calde-

¹ His. of Lit. Lect. 12. ² Dra. Lit. Lect. 12. ³ Trench's Calderon, pp. 36-87. ⁴ Hist. of Span. Lit. pp. 271, 281.

ron, one who flourished a century before him, dying in 1591, who also drew his poetic inspiration from the sacred writings. Luis de Leon was a monk of the Augustine order, a doctor of Divinity and professor of Sacred Literature in the university of Salamanca. He was imprisoned five years by the Inquisition, on the charge of having made a vernacular translation of the Scriptures. The ground of this charge was, his having translated the Song of Solomon for a friend. Ticknor declares that his poems are to be placed at the head of Spanish lyric poetry, and that his prose writings place him at once among the greatest masters of eloquence in his native Castilian. The following declaration of the literary historian indicates the source from which Luis de Leon drew his poetic inspiration: 'Luis de Leon had a Hebrew soul, and kindles his enthusiasm almost always from the Jewish Scriptures.'¹

These facts in regard to Calderon, the greatest of Spanish dramatists, and Luis de Leon, the greatest of Spanish lyric poets and one of the greatest masters of eloquence in Castilian prose, will enable the reader to estimate the indebtedness of the literature and literary men of Spain to the sacred Scriptures.

4. *French Literature.*

The French writers have borrowed less from the Bible than those of any other great nation of modern times. Indeed, no great French writer, except theologians and ecclesiastics, appears to have been much influenced by Scripture conceptions, sentiments, or

¹ His. of Span. Lit. vol. 2, pp. 47-51.

style. This fact may be accounted for by the peculiarity of French character, and the corresponding peculiarity of French literature. Schlegel describes it as defective in *seriousness*. Voltaire once said—‘The Frenchman is made up of the tiger and the ape.’ This caricature, uttered in a moment of bitterness, and gross as it is, points out the prevailing want of *moral* earnestness and energy in the character of the French. They have sometimes manifested earnestness and energy of the *tiger* kind, but not of the kind that enables a nation to dare and do great things. The old Hebrew psalmists, prophets, and apostles are too solemn and earnest for the volatile and brilliant Frenchman. Had the French been an earnest people, their leading literary men would, doubtless, have been imbued with the lofty and earnest spirit of the Hebrew literature, and the reproach would not now be resting on the people of France, that they have no poem which the world thinks great; no tragedy which any but Frenchmen greatly admire; no philosophy but translations of Bacon, Newton, and Locke; no literary works at all of general and permanent interest and influence, except Calvin’s *Institutes* and D’Aubigne’s *Reformation*—the productions of men who drank deep of the spirit and sentiments of Bible literature.

Yet the most celebrated writers of France have manifested, in the composition of their works, their appreciation of the literary wealth and beauty of the Bible. Voltaire himself—who heaped on the Scriptures such scurrilous abuse as a modern infidel of the more decent class would be ashamed of, and for

whose *Saul*, a burlesque on Bible history, Göthe says in his young days he could have *choked* him—obtained from the very book which he reviled, the most charming scenes, ideas, and sentiments of his best pieces. His *Samson* is founded on the Bible history of the hero of that name. His feats of strength, his betrayal by Delilah, and his destruction of himself and of the Philistines by overthrowing the pillars of their temple, are worked up by the poet into his tragedy—though he does sometimes make the mighty old Hebrew talk like a pompous Frenchman! His *Zaire* was called a *Christian* tragedy at Paris, and had a *grand success*, as is asserted by the editors of his works.¹ Chateaubriand, quoting from one of his volumes, states that Voltaire himself said in reference to this piece, ‘I shall endeavor to introduce into it whatever appears most pathetic and most interesting in the Christian religion.’² Accordingly, he represents the kingly old Lusignan as firmly adhering to his religion in the greatest misfortunes, and as imploring his long-lost daughter to hearken to the voice of the God of her fathers, and to break off her alliance with the Mohammedan prince that reigned in Jerusalem:—

‘My God! these sixty years in thy great cause
 Have I a warrior old contended.
 But I have seen thy holy temple fall,
 And of thy mighty name the memory cease.
 In frightful dungeon chained, these twenty years
 Have I with tears implored thee to protect

¹ Vol. 2, Pourrat’s edition, *advertisement*.

² *Genie du Christianisme*, 2d Part, 2: 5.

My sorrowing children; but now I find
My daughter turned to be thine enemy.
Most miserable am I; I, alas!
In prison laid, have robbed thee of thy faith.
My daughter! object of my tender cares,
Think of the noble blood that courses pure
Within thy veins, the blood of twenty kings,
All Christians like myself, the blood of heroes,
Defenders of the faith, and blood of martyrs.
O daughter! still too dear, thou knowest not
Thy childhood's fate, nor who thy mother was.
For at the moment she gave birth to thee,
The last, sad fruit of an unhappy love,
I saw her slaughtered by the maddened hand
Of robbing infidels, to whom thou hast,
In faithless, sinful union joined thyself.
Thy martyred brothers, slain before mine eyes,
From heaven stretch their bleeding hands to thee.
Thy God, whose name and cause thou dost betray,
For thee and for the world died in this place,
Where in his cause my arm so oft hath fought,
And where his blood now calls thee by my voice.
Behold! this temple and these walls now held
By plundering Mussulmans, thy masters,
All speak of God for whom thy fathers fought.
Here is his tomb; upon this mount he died,
By wicked hands, to wash away our sins;
And from this tomb he rose again to life.
In every path thou treadest in this place,
Thou dost behold the footsteps of thy God.
If thou remainest here thou dost renounce
Thy father, and thy honor, and thy God:--

I now behold thee weeping in my arms;
 On thy pale brow God puts repentance now;
 I see the truth descend into thy heart;
 I now regain my honor and my joy
 By purging from my Christian house and blood
 The taint of infidelity.¹

For the beauties of *Alzire*, another of his dramatic pieces, Voltaire was also mainly indebted to Christianity. This tragedy is declared by Schlegel to be Voltaire's master-piece.² In it are represented the Christian virtues of repentance and forgiveness. In the *Preliminary Discourse*, the author says; 'The religion of a barbarian consists in offering to his gods the blood of his enemies. A Christian badly instructed is often little better. To be faithful to certain useless practices, and to neglect the true duties of man; to make certain prayers, and to retain his vices; to fast, but to hate, to cabal, to persecute; this is his religion. That of the true Christian is, to regard all men as his brothers, to do them good, and to pardon their injuries. Such is Gusman at the moment of his death; such was Alvarez in the course of his life; such I have described Henry IV. even in his weaknesses.' The scene of the play is laid in Peru, South America. Don Gusman, the governor, is represented as a cruel, wicked man; Alvarez, his father, as a true Christian. Gusman, puts Zamor, prince of Potosi, out of the way by killing him, as he supposes, for the sake of his beautiful bride, Alzire, whom he forces to become his wife.

¹ Zaire, Act 2, scene 3.

² His. of Lit. Lect. 12.

But Zamor re-appears, as if arisen from the dead, and in an encounter with Gusman mortally wounds him. On his death-bed, Gusman repents of his crimes, forgives Zamor, and restores to him his beloved bride. Gusman's repentance is represented in the last scene of the piece:—

'I die; the veil is off; a new light breaks;
 Now, at the close of this my wild career,
 I know myself: Oh! I have trod, in pride,
 Beneath my feet my groaning fellow men.
 But heaven is just, and now avenges earth.
 My life cannot repay the blood with which
 My hands are stained; good fortune blinded me;
 But death hath oped mine eyes; I pardon now
 The hand that God did use in smiting me.
 Here I was master and I still command;
 I alone can pardon give to Zamor,
 As now I do; go, my proud enemy;
 Be free, and from this time remember how
 A Christian acted and a Christian died.
 And Oh, ye hapless victims of my lusts,
 Think how my clemency exceeds my crimes.
 Instruct Americans that Christian men
 Were born to rule them and to give them laws.
 Observe the difference 'twixt the Gods we serve:
 Thine teaches you to murder and revenge;
 But mine commands to pity and forgive
 The arm that thrusts a dagger in my heart.

Zamor to Gusman.

I stand in wonder and amazement lost.
 Is virtue, then, so great in Christians, true?
 The law that prompts thee to this act sublime,

Oh, it must be indeed the law of God.
 Faith, friendship, constancy I understand,
 But, Oh, this noble grandeur of the soul,
 This lofty virtue is beyond my reach;
 It overwhelms and yet attracts my mind.
 It now repents me that I sought revenge;
 Henceforth I love thee and admire.¹

Some of the sentiments put in the mouth of Gusman, such as the excess of his clemency above his crimes, and the natural right of Christian Spaniards to domineer over the natives of Peru, are not Christian; yet the scene represents the virtues and beauties of Christian character. Thus the religion which the poet calumniated and reviled furnished him with his most pathetic scenes, and most beautiful sentiments.*

The poet Racine also derived aid from the Scriptures in the composition of some of his best pieces, especially his *Esther* and *Athalie*. La Harpe, in his *Cours de Littérature*, says: 'The style of *Esther* is enchanting; it is there that Racine begins to take from the holy Scripture that he had taken from the Greek poets. He was penetrated with the spirit of the sacred books, and with it melted the substance in *Esther* and *Athalie*.² Schlegel says, that Racine shows himself in *Athalie* to be a Christian poet, and that it and the *Cid* of Corneille are the two most

¹ *Alzire*, Act, 5, scene 7.

*We trust our translation of Voltaire as above given will serve to give some idea of the beauty of the original, so far as *thought* and *sentiment* are concerned.

² Tom. 1, p. 571.

glorious productions of French poetry.¹ Chateaubriand says, that in this piece Racine stands unrivaled, and that it is the most perfect production of genius inspired by religion.² This exalted opinion of Racine is sustained by Voltaire, who declared him the most perfect of French poets.³ Though Schlegel declares the *Athalie* of Racine and the *Cid* of Corneille the most glorious productions of French poetry, Chateaubriand preferred the *Polyeuctes* of Corneille to the *Cid*. The *Polyeuctes* is a Christian poem; a tragedy of Christian love, devotion, and martyrdom. Sometimes Voltaire's *Christian* tragedy (as it was called) was performed in the Paris theatre instead of it.⁴

As to French oratory, it is well known that France has produced no orators more powerful or celebrated than the preachers of the time of Louis the Fourteenth—Bourdaluë, Bossuet, Massillon, and Fenelon. These pulpit orators drew the materials for the construction of their sermons, the doctrines and sentiments which they preached, largely from the Scriptures. In general, they were more Christian than Romanist. Some of their discourses, with the omission of a few sentences, would be appropriate to a Protestant audience of the present day.

5. *Italian Literature of the Middle Age.*

Italy during the middle age produced many celebrated writers. The greatest of these was Dante, of

¹ His. of Lit. Lect. 12. ² Genie du Chris. 2 P., 2: 10.

³ Theatre complet de J. Racine, p. 8. ⁴ Oeuvres de Voltaire, tome 2, *advertisement*.

whose great poem we have already spoken, in our chapter on the richness of the Bible in literary subjects.¹ He was indebted to the Bible for more than his general subjects. His writings remind one continually of the Hebrew prophets and bards. Like Milton, he was a learned poet, and like Milton he took more from the Bible than from any other book; more, indeed, than from all other books together. He refers again and again to the doctrines, scenes, and events recorded in the Old and New Testaments. The spirit of his poetry is the same that glowed in the Bible poets. Though he had a powerful imagination, he needed to be strengthened and elevated by the stern and lofty spirit and sentiments of the sacred writers, in order that he might conceive, and gaze upon, and describe the awful scenes of his *Vision*. His language, too, is such as the Hebrew poets used. Hence it is not without reason that Schlegel calls him the first and oldest of the Christian poets. It is surprising, however, that this able critic should accuse Milton of imitating him.² No; the lofty soul of the author of the *Paradise Lost* would not stoop to imitate the writings of any mortal man. But just as the painter and sculptor imitate the faces, forms, and flowers which have been created by the hand of the Almighty, and as they manifest their genius and skill by the completeness with which they thus imitate; so both Dante and Milton imitated, and borrowed from the Bible, which to them was the book of God. Genius does not degrade itself by imitating the

¹ Ch. 5.² Lect. 12.

master-pieces of the Most High. The similarity between the *Paradise Lost* and the *Divina Comedia* is fully accounted for by the fact, that their authors both read and studied the Bible; drank in and were filled with its doctrines, scenes, sentiments, conceptions, and imagery; and reproduced them in their immortal poems.

Another celebrated Italian poet of the middle age was Tasso. His indebtedness to the Bible is not so apparent as that of Dante, but is none the less real. The literary world, doubtless, acquiesces in the judgment of Schlegel, who speaks of Dante, Tasso, Milton, Klopstock, and other Christian poets of modern times, as having taken their subjects or their models from the Scriptures; and who recognizes the powerful influence of the Scriptures upon the whole literature and poetry of the middle age, as well as of modern times.¹

We have thus shown, or rather suggested, the great indebtedness of literature and literary men to the Bible. The modern literatures—English, German, Spanish, French, and Italian—have been enriched by it. The great writers and speakers of modern times have made it their study and their model, and have improved their imagination and taste by it. Prose writers, poets tragic, epic, and lyric, orators secular and sacred, have imitated it, borrowed from it, adopted its style, been penetrated by its spirit, and have reproduced its ideas, doctrines, sentiments, conceptions, and imagery, its

¹ Lec. 9.

beauties, felicities, and sublimities, in the best parts of their own glorious productions. No book has been so much imitated, borrowed from, quoted, and plagiarized, as the Bible. It is a great store-house of good, grand, and beautiful things, from which any man may take every thing he wants, without leave and without acknowledgment. It is an inexhaustible mine, in which poets, prose writers, and orators of every class and nation, have worked and digged; and from which they have drawn their brightest gems, as well as their solid ore. It has been to modern literature, in general, like the dew and rain-drops and sunshine of heaven—beautiful and glorious in itself, and scattering flowers and fruits over all the earth. In the language of the literary historian, the Scriptures ‘form a fountain of fiery and godlike inspiration, of which the greatest poets have never been weary of drinking; which has suggested to them their noblest images; and animated them for their most magnificent flights.’¹

Such is the Bible—so beautiful, so grand, so eloquent, so suggestive, so powerful, so inexhaustible—that the national literatures have been enriched from it; that epics, tragedies, ballads, allegories, orations, and sermons have been formed from its narratives, doctrines, episodes, sentiments, parables, descriptions, and figures; that its beauties and excellences have been imitated, quoted, borrowed, and plagiarized again and again; that it has furnished thought and culture and inspiration to the great poets, essay-

¹Schlegel’s *His. of Lit.* Lec. 4.

ists, historians, critics, orators, and nearly all the master-minds of modern times ; and it still remains, with its inexhaustible treasures of literary wealth, to bless and enrich mankind. It is like no other book in respect to the extent of its influence and the richness of its treasures. It is comparable only to the almighty Creator, whose resources are infinite, and whose fullness is inexhaustible.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TESTIMONY OF EMINENT MEN TO THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE.

Before we proceed farther in our illustration of the literary excellence of the Bible, we wish to adduce the testimony of able and eminent literary men. This and the two following chapters will be mainly made up of extracts; which we hope will be read not only for their important bearing upon the subject in hand, but also for their own literary beauty. We begin with the testimony of Christian men.

The testimony of *Sir William Jones*, scholar, jurist, poet, the master of twenty-eight languages, the greatest orientalist of the eighteenth century, to the transcendent excellence of the Biblical literature, is so well known as scarcely to need quotation. It is as follows: 'I have carefully and regularly perused these Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that the volume, independently of its divine origin, contains more sublimity, more important history, purer morality, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written.' And again, 'Theological enquiries are no part of my present subject; but I cannot refrain from adding, that the collection of facts, which we call, from their excellence, the

Scriptures, contain, independently of a divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry, and eloquence, than could be collected, within the same compass, from all other books that were ever composed in any age, or in any idiom.¹

The testimony which this illustrious scholar and author rendered to the literary superiority of the Scriptures, cannot with propriety be regarded as the result of education or prejudice. For it is stated by his biographer, that before his judgment was fully matured, and before he had studied the Scriptures with close attention, his belief in their divine inspiration was tinged with doubt.²

The next witness we cite is *Fenelon*, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Cambray, in France. This celebrated man possessed great learning and genius. Sir James Mackintosh describes him as a pure, gentle, modest spirit, possessing urbanity, vivacity, accomplishment, genius, and virtue.³ Schlegel says, that he wrote in the most exquisite language, from no inspiration but that of his own amiable and Christian feelings.⁴ Lamartine declares him to 'have been a legislator, poet, and statesman, as well as pontiff; a flame lighted up by the Almighty to shed radiance upon an accomplished age; the Pythagoras or Plato of France.'⁵ The opinion of such a man, on a question of literary excellence, is worthy

¹ Lord Teignmouth's Biog. p. 374-5. ² p. 380.

³ Misc. Essays, p. 126. ⁴ His. of Lit. Lect. 13.

⁵ Memoirs of Celebrated Characters, vol. 2, p. 303.

of the highest regard. In regard to the literary character of the sacred books, he wrote as follows: 'No Greek or Latin poetry is comparable to the Psalms. That which begins, "The God of gods, the Lord, hath spoken and called upon the earth," exceeds whatever human imagination hath produced. Neither Homer, nor any other poet, equals Isaiah in describing the majesty of God, in whose presence empires are as a grain of sand, and the whole universe as a tent, which to-day is set up, and removed to-morrow. Sometimes, as when he paints the charms of peace, Isaiah has the softness and sweetness of an eclogue; at others, he soars above mortal conception. But what is there in profane antiquity comparable to the wailings of Jeremiah, when he mourns over the calamities of his people? or to Nahum, when he foresees in spirit the downfall of Nineveh, under the assault of an innumerable army? We almost behold the formidable host, and hear the arms and the chariots. Read Daniel, denouncing to Belshazzar the vengeance of God ready to fall upon him; compare it with the most sublime passages of pagan antiquity; you find nothing comparable to it.'

The poet Cowper needs no commendation. The author of *The Task* is read and known wherever the English language is spoken. Coleridge declared him to be the best modern poet.¹ Though probably most readers do not concur in this judgment, yet certainly all will admit that in literary matters his opinion is worthy of high regard. This loveliest, if

¹ Hazlitt's Table Talk, part 2, p. 158.

not best of modern poets, after speaking of an accomplished man, who though he never believed the Gospel, admired the Scriptures as the sublimest compositions in the world; and of another, who, though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, could never read Luke's account of our Saviour's appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus without being wonderfully affected by it; says:—'If these men whose hearts were chilled with the darkness of infidelity, could find such charms in the mere style of the Scripture, what must *they* find there whose eye penetrates deeper than the letter, and who firmly believe themselves interested in all the privileges of the gospel? * * * The parable of the prodigal son, the most beautiful fiction that ever was invented; our Saviour's speech, to his disciples, with which he closes his earthly ministration, full of the sublimest dignity and tenderest affection; surpass everything I ever read, and, like the Spirit by which they were dictated, fly directly to my heart.'

We next present the testimony of Rev. *J. G. Herder* of Germany, a man of taste and genius. Göthe says of him that he was witchingly captivating, and radiant with intellect.¹ Menzel speaks of him as a sublime genius, philosopher, and poet.² This remarkable man, in his work on Hebrew poetry, speaks of it as unparalleled for its beauty and sublimity. He says of the third chapter of Habakkuk, that a more sublime personification is hardly possible. Of the account of the fall of Adam and Eve,

¹ Truth and Poetry, B. 10. ² German Lit. vol. 2, pp. 422-6.

he says, the falls of Prometheus and Pandora are poor in comparison. He further says, that the exhibition of art in the poetry of the Greeks is but tawdry ornament compared with the simplicity and grandeur of the Book of Job ; and that the author of the latter embraced in a single glance the heavens and the earth ; and sent forth his living spirit, his poetic fire, and his human affections, to all that exists, from the land of the shadow of death to the starry firmament, and beyond the stars.¹

It is but fair to state that Herder, though he speaks in his work on Hebrew poetry with admiration of its incomparable beauty and grandeur, is said to have acquired in after life a relish for what he had called the tawdry ornament of Greek poetry.

George Gilfillan, though like Herder a clergyman, has written books which entitle him to a place among modern critics. His *Gallery of Genius, Literature, and Literary Men*, and his *Bards of the Bible*, indicate a mind and heart to appreciate genius wherever found. He is a passionate lover of true poetry of every kind and form. He has ever an admiring eye and a grateful word for literary merit ; and whenever and wherever he meets genius, is ready to cast a garland of flowers, and worship at her feet. But though catholic and comprehensive in his love of poetry and poets, he gives the preference to the Hebrew bards. Concerning them he uses the language of an admiring lover, as follows : ‘The Bible is a mass of beautiful figures—its words

¹ Vol. 1, pp. 75, 121, 141, 210.

and its thoughts are alike poetical—it has gathered around its central truths all natural beauty and interest. * * * It has pressed into its service the animals of the forest, the flowers of the field, the stars of heaven, all the elements of nature. The lion spurning the sands of the desert, the wild roe leaping over the mountains, the lamb led in silence to the slaughter, the goat speeding to the wilderness, the rose blossoming in Sharon, the lily drooping in the valley, the apple-tree bowing under its fruit, the great rock shadowing a weary land, the river gladdening the dry place, the moon and the morning star, Carmel by the sea and Tabor among the mountains, the dew from the womb of the morning, the rain upon the mown grass, the rainbow encompassing the landscape, the light God's shadow, the thunder His voice, the wind and the earthquake His footsteps—all such varied objects are made, as if naturally designed from their creation, to represent Him to whom the Book and all its emblems point. Thus the quick spirit of the Book has ransacked creation to lay its treasures on Jehovah's altar—united innumerable rays of a far-streaming glory on the little hill Calvary—and woven a garland for the bleeding brow of Immanuel, the flowers of which have been culled from the garden of the universe. This praise may seem lofty, but it is due to the Bible, and to it alone.¹

Another clergyman who has left his testimony to the literary excellence of the Bible is *Edward Irving*, once the colleague of Dr. Chalmers, and after-

¹ Bards of the Bible, intro. p. 10.

ward the celebrated pulpit orator of London. Though eccentric and erratic, he was a man of great originality and power. The preacher who could rouse an Edinburgh audience from their beds to hear him at five o'clock in the morning in such crowds, that Chalmers himself could not obtain entrance; who had for his hearers, in London, ladies of high birth and fashion, nobles, statesmen, philosophers, painters, poets, and sturdy Scotchmen, crowding the pews or vying with each other for a standing-place in the doors, or seats in the windows; who could hold them spell-bound by his eloquence for hours together; whom Canning, in the British Parliament, declared to have preached the most eloquent sermon he had ever heard; who had such men as Sir James Mackintosh and the poet Coleridge for his friends and admirers; whose preaching, Dr. Chalmers said, was like Italian music, appreciated only by *connoisseurs*; with reference to whom Hazlitt, the English critic, said, 'Every word that falls from the great preacher in the Caledonian chapel is a pearl or flower;' and who in five years built up a congregation from fifty to a thousand members, and became the most popular preacher in the British metropolis;—such a man must have possessed great eloquence and power, and have been capable of appreciating the beautiful and sublime. His opinion concerning the superiority of the poetry of the Bible is as follows: 'If now we turn ourselves to consider the manner or style of the Book (of Psalms), and to draw it into comparison with the lyrical productions of cultivated and classical nations, it may be said,

that as the heavens are high above the earth, so are the songs of Zion high above the noblest strains which have been sung in any land. * * * For pure pathos and tenderness of heart; for sublime imaginations; for touching pictures of natural scenery, and genial sympathy with nature's various moods; for patriotism, whether in national weal or national woe; for beautiful imagery, whether derived from the relationship of human life, or the forms of the created universe; and for the illustration, by their help, of spiritual conditions; moreover, for those rapid transitions in which the lyrical muse delighteth, her lightsome graces at one time, her deep and full inspiration at another, her exuberance of joy and her lowest falls of grief; and for every other form of the natural soul, which is wont to be shadowed forth by this kind of composition;—we challenge the literature of all ages and countries to produce anything worthy to be compared with what we find even in the English version of the Book of Psalms.¹

The writings of *Addison*, as is well known, are characterized by ease, grace, and lively humour, rather than by grandeur of conception and force of imagination. While he was likely to be led by his taste and disposition to admire the simplicity of Bible language, he had not in an eminent degree those mental qualities that would enable him to appreciate the grand conceptions and sublime flights of Bible poetry. Still, he has clearly indicated his belief in its superior excellence. In speaking of the

¹ Intro. to Horne on the Psalms, pp. 4-5.

way in which the English language has been enriched and invigorated by the infusion of Hebrew idioms, he remarks as follows: ‘If any one would judge of the beauties of poetry that are to be met with in the divine writings, and examine how kindly the manners of speech mix and incorporate with the English language; after having perused the book of Psalms, let him read a literal translation of Horace or Pindar. He will find in these last two, such an absurdity and confusion of style, with such a comparative poverty of imagination, as will make him sensible of what I have been here advancing.’¹ This declaration in regard to the *poverty* of imagination in Horace and Pindar compared with the Psalmists, shows that Addison, with all his ease and elegance, considered the Hebrew poetry far superior in the higher kinds of excellence to the Roman and Grecian.

We next present the testimony of a very late writer, *Isaac Taylor*, of England; who in his various works—*Natural History of Enthusiasm*, *Saturday Evening*, *Physical Theory of a Future Life*, and other volumes—has manifested intellect, taste, scholarship, and great power of generalization. The productions of his pen especially indicate cultivated intellect, and capacity for calm meditation. On the wings of meditation he ascends to the highest regions of thought, and brings down from thence light and beauty for the improvement and guidance of men’s hearts and lives. In his work on the *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, in which are combined skillful analysis

¹ Spectator, No. 405.

and far-reaching generalization, he often speaks of the surpassing beauty and sublimity of the poetic parts of the Bible. Of the book of Job, he says: 'Where shall we find the grandeur of Poetry, where is majesty in language, where is boldness, fire, or descriptive force, if not in these four closing chapters of this Book?' Again he says: 'Turn to the two astronomic Psalms—the eighth and the nineteenth (its exordium). Quite unmatched are these Odes as human compositions; the soul of the loftiest poetry is in them.' Of the twenty-third Psalm, he remarks, 'This is an ode which for beauty of sentiment is not to be matched in the circuit of all literature.' Again he says: 'The 90th Psalm might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions—the deepest in feeling—the loftiest in theologic conception—the most magnificent in its imagery.'¹

Judge Grimke of South Carolina was a man eminent for his scholarship, eloquence, and patriotism. He was profoundly versed in Grecian and Roman literature, and was distinguished for a refined and classical taste. Few in this or any other country were more competent judges in literary matters. In an oration which he delivered a very short time before his death, he adverted in very decided terms to the surpassing beauty and eloquence of the Scriptures. He said, 'How eminently is the religion of the Bible intellectual, spiritual, lovely, pathetic! How eloquent in its views of life, and death, and

¹ Pp. 131, 39, 35, 148.

eternity! How transcendently eloquent, when it speaks of the character and attributes of Jehovah; of the adorable and spotless Lamb of God; of the ruin and redemption of man; of the spirits of just men made perfect; of the innumerable company of angels; and of a new heaven and a new earth! Who will not acknowledge that the Institutes of Moses contain more consummate wisdom, more admirable common sense, than all the legislators and political writers of ancient Greece afford? Who will not grant that in the book of Job alone, there is more of the moral and intellectual sublime, more of purifying, elevating sentiment, than in the whole body of Grecian poetry? And who will venture to deny, that in the single gospel of John, religion is exhibited with a power, depth, beauty, and persuasiveness, such as the concentrated essence of all the moral philosophy of Greece and Rome can never approach?¹

The distinguished jurist, Chancellor *Kent*, speaking of the Bible, in a public address, said: 'It is the vehicle of the most awful truths, and which are at the same time of the most universal application, and accompanied by the most efficacious sanctions. No other book ever addressed itself so authoritatively and pathetically to the judgment and moral sense of mankind. * * * * Its doctrines, its discoveries, its code of morals, and its means of grace, are not only overwhelming evidence of its divine origin, but they confound the pretensions of all other sys-

¹ Oration delivered at Oxford, Ohio, pp. 17-18.

tems, by showing the narrow range and the feeble efforts of human reason, even when under the sway of the most exalted understanding, and enlightened by the accumulated treasures of science and learning.¹

¹ Address before the American Bible Society.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TESTIMONY OF EMINENT MEN TO THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE—

Continued.

As the distinguished men whose opinions we have quoted in the preceding chapter were not only believers in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, but were also praying, pious men; and lest on that account their testimony should be considered by sceptical minds as the result of prejudice (it is strange, however, that a man must regard the Bible as false in its claims in order to judge fairly of its literary character); we will present in this chapter the opinions of men who, though believers in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, were more secular in their spirit and character, and therefore less likely to be regarded by sceptics as prejudiced judges.

Perhaps no man, certainly no American, was better qualified to judge of the literary excellence of the Bible than *Daniel Webster*. But few, if any, were greater admirers of it than he. We are informed by one of his biographers, that he never made a journey without carrying a copy of it with him. He read it aloud to his family every Sabbath morning. He talked of the books of the Old Testament espe-

cially, and dwelt with unaffected pleasure upon Isaiah, the Psalms, and the Book of Job. 'The Book of Job,' said he, 'taken as a mere work of literary genius, is one of the most wonderful productions of any age or of any language. As an epic poem, it is far superior either to the Iliad or Odyssey. The two last receive much of their attraction from the mere narration of warlike deeds, and from the perilous escapes of the chief personage from death and slaughter; but the Book of Job is a purely intellectual narrative. Its power is shown in the dialogues of the persons introduced. The story is simple in its construction, and there is little to excite the imagination or arouse the sympathy. It is purely an intellectual production, and depends upon the power of the dialogue, and not upon the interest of the story, to produce its effects.' This was considering it merely as an intellectual work. He read it through very often, and always with renewed delight. In his judgment, it was the greatest epic ever written.¹ On another occasion Mr. Webster said: 'I have met with men in my time, accounted learned scholars—who knew Homer by heart, recited Pindar, were at home with Æschylus, and petted Horace—who could not understand Isaiah, Moses, or the Royal Poet. Why is this? Why, in cultivating profane poetry, should they neglect sacred—so far superior in original force, sublimity, and truth to nature?'²

Such was the opinion of Daniel Webster, a man,

¹ Lanman's Life of Webster, pp. 101-103.

² Harper's Mag., 1856, p. 498.

as the world knows, of gigantic intellect, great eloquence, and refined literary taste.

Hazlitt, the English critic, who in his numerous works shows himself capable of appreciating poetry of every kind, and seems to revel among its beauties and grandeurs, places the Bible above Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, Ossian, and all the poets, ancient and modern. He says:—‘There are descriptions in the book of Job more prodigal of imagery, more intense in passion, than anything in Homer,—as, that of the state of his prosperity, and of the vision that came upon him by night. The metaphors of the Old Testament are more boldly figurative.’¹ Again, in speaking of the influence of the Bible upon literature at the time of the Reformation, he says: ‘To leave more disputable points, and take only the historical parts of the Old Testament, or the moral sentiments of the New,—there is nothing like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration, or of riveting sympathy. We see what Milton has made of the account of the Creation, from the manner in which he has treated it, imbued and impregnated with the spirit of the time of which we speak. Or what is there equal (in that romantic interest and patriarchal simplicity which goes to the heart of a country, and rouses it, as it were, from its lair in wastes and wildernesses) to the story of Joseph and his brethren, of Rachel and Laban, of Jacob’s Dream, of Ruth and Boaz, the descriptions in the book of Job, the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt, or the account of their

¹ English Poets, Lect. 1.

captivity and return from Babylon? There is in all these parts of the Scripture and numberless more of the same kind—to pass over the Orphic hymns of David, the prophetic denunciations of Isaiah, or the gorgeous visions of Ezekiel—an originality, a vastness of conception, a depth and tenderness of feeling, and a touching simplicity in the mode of narration, which he who does not feel must be made of no penetrable stuff.¹

The opinion of such a man as *Schlegel*, who in his *History of Literature* manifests a knowledge and an appreciation of nearly all the literary productions of ancient and modern times, is certainly worthy of great respect and deference. Speaking of the Psalms of David, Prophecies of Isaiah, and other parts of Scripture, he says: ‘They possess a splendour and sublimity, which, considered merely as poetry, excite our wonder, and disdain all comparison with any other composition.’²

Lamartine, the French poet, historian, and orator, thus speaks of the poetry of the Psalms:—‘David is the Psalmist of eternity; what a destiny—what a power hath poetry, when inspired of God! As for myself, when my spirit is excited, or devotional, or sad, and seeks for an echo to its enthusiasm, its devotion, or its melancholy, I do not open Pindar, or Horace, or Hafiz, those purely Academic poets; neither do I find within myself murmurings to express my emotions. I open the book of Psalms, and there I find words which seem to issue from the

¹ Dramatic Lit. Lect. 1.

² His. of Lit. Lect. 4.

soul of ages, and which penetrate to the heart of all generations. * * * Prophet or not, as he may be considered by Christian or sceptic, none can deny in the poet-king an inspiration granted to no other man. Read the Greek or Latin poetry after a Psalm, and see how pale it looks.¹

¹Quoted in various periodicals from Lamartine's *Cours de Littérature*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TESTIMONY OF EMINENT MEN TO THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE—

Continued.

IN the preceding chapter, we presented the testimony of four distinguished men, one from each of the four great enlightened nations of the earth; men who, though believers in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, are not generally regarded as deeply devotional, and hence are considered by some as more likely to be impartial judges. But we are not yet done with this kind of evidence. We now invite attention to the testimony of sceptics and infidels.

Perhaps no man of the present age had as general an acquaintance with science and literature as *Baron Von Humboldt* of Germany. In religious matters he was a sceptic. William Humboldt, his brother, held a sort of compound belief made up of a few of the principles of natural theology, the idea of fate, and such views of God and nature as were held by the more intelligent of the ancient Grecians, Romans, and Germans.¹ But it is to be doubted whether Alexander Humboldt had any religious belief at all. In his writings,—even in his most celebrated work,

¹ Lives of the brothers Humboldt by Klencke and Schlesier, p. 323.

the *Cosmos*, in which he treats of the whole universe so far as made known to man through observation and science,—he hardly alludes to the existence of the Creator, or to His superintending providence. Yet this man, so gifted, learned, and accomplished, and withal so sceptical as to assure the opponents of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, of his candour and impartiality, has left on record a most exalted opinion of the poetry of the Hebrews. In his *Cosmos* he says, the Psalms of David possess all the splendour of lyric poetry; and the Hebrew poetry in general an innate exalted sublimity; that notwithstanding its grandeur and its lofty tone of exaltation, it remains clear and simple amid the most figurative forms of expression, delighting in comparisons which recur with almost rythmical regularity; that it is grand and solemn, and, when it treats of the earthly condition of mankind, is full of sad and pensive longing. He further says, that the historical narratives are marked by a graceful simplicity, and are most true to nature; but that the Psalms are more adorned, and develop a rich and animated conception of natural life; and that a single one of them (the 104th) represents the image of the whole Cosmos. ‘We are astonished,’ says he, ‘to find in a lyrical poem of such a limited compass, the whole universe—the heavens and the earth—sketched with a few bold touches.’¹ It is thus seen that this master of literature and science represents the poetry of the Bible as characterized by splendour,

¹ *Cosmos*, vol. 2, pp. 411–13.

solemnity, grandeur, graceful simplicity, rythmical regularity, exalted sublimity, fidelity to nature, and astonishing comprehensiveness.

Goethe, the greatest of German poets, considered by many the greatest poet and literary man of the nineteenth century, has also borne important testimony to the literary excellence of the Bible. Humboldt remarks that the little book of the gleaner Ruth presents us with a charming and exquisitely simple picture of nature, and then adds: 'Goethe, at the period of his enthusiasm for the East, spoke of it as the loveliest specimen of epic and idyl poetry which we possess.'¹ In one of his own productions, he speaks of the Bible as 'a work composed in the most various styles, with its poetic, warning, and instructing spirit.'² He also says, that the Bible is so full of matter that it offers, more than any other book, material for reflection and opportunity for meditation on human affairs. Again; speaking of the growth of infidelity in Germany, he says: 'English, French, and Germans had assaulted the Bible with more or less violence, acuteness, audacity, and wantonness; and just as often had it been taken under the protection of earnest, well-minded men of each nation. As for myself, I loved and valued it: for almost to it alone did I owe my moral culture; and its events, its doctrines, its emblems; its similes had all stamped themselves deeply upon me, and had influenced me in one way or another. These unrighteous, scoffing, and subversive attacks, there-

¹ *Cosmos*, vol. 2, p. 415. ² *Truth and Poetry*, B. 11.

fore, disgusted me.¹ In regard to these declarations, we remark :

1. Göthe rejected, or at least doubted, the inspiration of the Scriptures. Viewing them merely as human productions, he regarded them as *the book of books*, and as furnishing the loveliest specimen of idyllic and epic poetry in existence.

2. He regarded the Bible as more abundant in matter, and as furnishing richer material for reflection, than any other book. This indicates excellence of the highest kind—*fullness* and *suggestiveness*.

3. To the Bible Göthe owed his moral culture. Göthe's chief characteristic was *culture*; and by it he meant the development of his esthetic powers; the training of intellect, judgment, imagination, and taste to feel, perceive, and admire the beautiful and grand. The Hebrew bards, prophets, and apostles furnished the beautiful thoughts and figures, and the sublime conceptions and visions, which purified the taste, invigorated the intellect, and fired the imagination of the young poet. They prepared the nectar and ambrosia on which he fed, until he became like gods knowing good and evil. The excellence which Göthe thus indirectly attributes to the Scriptures is of the very highest kind.

Rousseau, though born in Geneva, was by descent and in character a Frenchman. He was guilty of heartless selfishness and base immorality; but he was a man of genius, and a fascinating writer. His brilliant though fickle mind was attracted and astonished

¹ Truth and Poetry, B. 7.

by the beauty and dignity of the sacred writings. Their literary excellence led him almost to believe, and in his calmer moments perhaps altogether to believe, in their supernatural inspiration. In his *Emile* he says:—‘I confess to you also, that the majesty of the Scripture astonishes me; the holiness of the Gospel appeals to my heart. Consider the books of the philosophers; with all their pomp, how little they are, compared with the Gospel! Is it possible that a book at once so sublime and so simple should be the work of man? * * * * No Jewish authors were capable either of such diction or such morality; and the Gospel has marks of truth so grand and striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor would be more astonishing than the hero. With all that, this same Gospel is full of incredible things, things which are repugnant to reason, and which, it is impossible for any man of sense to conceive or admit. What are we to do in the midst of all these contradictions? We should always be modest and circumspect, my child; respect in silence what we can neither reject nor understand; and humble ourselves before the great Being, who alone knows the truth.’¹

Such is the remarkable testimony of the strange and fickle, but gifted and brilliant Jean Jacques Rousseau to the wonderful and transcendent beauty and dignity of the Bible. Every unprejudiced person must see that, according to his own views, he ought to have received it at once as the word of God;

¹ *Emile*, pp. 369–370.

and to have regarded those things which he could not understand, or which seemed incredible to him, with respectful silence.

Ernest Renan regards the gospels as legends, Christ as an erring man, and the whole Bible as a human production. Yet he declares 'the Psalms to be the eternal poetry of religious souls, born of exalted pietism, with their divine and melancholy harmony.'¹ Though he represents the gospel history as being a compilation of legendary, fictitious, and traditionary narratives, and as resulting from an obscure and popular elaboration, he declares it to be the *finest thing in the world*.² He styles the author of the book of Daniel the *real creator of the philosophy of history*.³ To the prophets he ascribes impetuous eloquence, and splendid and eucharistic descriptions.³

Voltaire, as we have shown, was not altogether blind to the literary beauties of the Bible—hostile as he was to it as a divine revelation. He sometimes spoke with admiration of it as a composition. We present one brief extract from his writings:—'The history of Joseph, considered only as an object of curiosity and literature, is one of the most valuable monuments of antiquity which have reached our times. It appears to have been the model of all the oriental writers; it is more pathetic than Homer's *Odyssey*, as a forgiving hero is more moving than he that gluts his vengeance. We account the Arabs to have been the first authors of those ingenious fic-

¹ *Vie de Jesus*, p. 59. ² p. 23. ³ p. 77.

tions, which have been adopted in all other languages, but for my part, I meet with no tale among them comparable to that of Joseph; in almost every part, it is of admirable beauty; and the conclusion draws forth tears of tenderness.¹

That the poet *Byron* was sceptical is well known. Yet, as is mentioned in a former chapter, he admired the Psalms and other parts of the Bible. His exalted opinion of the poetry of the Bible is evinced in one of his *Hebrew Melodies*:—

‘The harp the monarch minstrel swept,
The king of men, the loved of Heaven,
Which music hallowed while she wept
O'er tones her heart of hearts had given,—
Redoubled be her tears!—its chords are riven!
It softened men of iron mould,
It gave them virtues not their own.
No ear so dull, no soul so cold,
That felt not, fired not to the tone,
Till David's lyre grew mightier than his throne.’

Carlyle, the celebrated essayist and historian, speaking of the book of Job, says:—‘I call that, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble Book; all men's Book! It is our first, ablest statement of the never-ending Problem—man's destiny, and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free, flowing outlines; grand

¹ Phil. Dict. Art. *Joseph*.

in its sincerity, in its simplicity, in its epic melody and repose reconciliation. There is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So true every way; true eyesight and vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual. * * * * Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind; so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it of equal literary merit.¹

It is well known that *the Westminster Review* is a determined opponent of the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures. Yet it fully recognizes their literary excellence. We present the following extract:—*‘Next to the Bible, I believe in Shakspeare,* was the spontaneous avowal of an intelligent woman, who, like most of us, had felt something of the catholic wisdom enshrined in the writings of the world’s greatest poet. *His works,* echoes a learned professor, *have often been called a secular Bible.* Common sense and erudition thus agree in recognizing the same broad simplicity and universal nature in the splendid utterances of Hebrew and English intelligence, preserved in these two perennially popular books. Both alike deal with the greatest problems of life; both open those questions which knock for answer at every heart; both delineate the features which mark and distinguish individual men. In both we find earnest thought and profound conviction; subtle and homely wisdom, deep historical interest, and

¹ Hero-worship, p. 44.

poetic truth; soaring imagination, sweet lyrical effusion, and grand prophetic insight. Both draw on legend, on fancy, on nature; both have the same kind of relative veracity; and both are at once authentic and fallible.¹

We call attention to several points presented in the foregoing extract or suggested by it:—

1. This able literary periodical, though persistently advocating infidelity, places the Bible on a level with the writings of Shakspeare, the world's greatest poet. It even endorses the decision which places Shakspeare *next* to the Bible.

2. Shakspeare's design was to entertain and please, and hence he aimed at literary excellence. Whatever he could find interesting in history, heroic in action, terrible in passion and agony, sublime in thought and conception, and beautiful and grand in nature, he endeavoured to present in his dramatic works for the amusement and delight of mankind. But the penmen of the Bible did not aim at literary excellence. It was no part of their design to write beautiful, grand, sublime, and terrible things for the entertainment of men. Their object was to instruct, to inculcate theological truth, to persuade men to break off from their sins and lead godly lives.

3. Shakspeare had the beauties and glories of the Bible to elevate and purify his thoughts and conceptions. He had the accumulated literary treasures of ages and nations to enrich his memory and

¹ Westminster Review, Oct. 1863, p. 173.

strengthen his imagination. He had at command a language remarkable for copiousness and flexibility. But the writers of the Bible were pioneers in literature. They knew little or nothing of the history and literature of foreign nations. Shakspeare quotes largely from the Bible, as we have shown, and manifests his acquaintance with many other books. But the Scripture authors, in general, write as if they knew not that any books but their own were in existence.

4. Notwithstanding all these things, of all the books we possess, ancient and modern; Hindu, Persian, Chinese, Grecian, Roman, Arabic, German, French, or English; whether philosophic, historic, scientific, poetic, or oratorical; the Bible is the only one comparable to the writings of the world's greatest poet.

5. There were many writers of the Bible. Even the most highly poetic parts of it, and those marked by the higher kinds of literary excellence—Genesis, Ruth, Job, the Psalms, Prophecies of Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, Lamentations, the Song of Songs, and the books of the New Testament—as their peculiarities of thought and diction show, proceeded not from one, but from many pens. Thus the Hebrew nation produced *many* men of profound conviction, soaring imagination, grand prophetic insight, and capable of enchanting the world with their splendid utterances, poetic truth, and sweet lyrical effusions;—the Hebrew nation, according to the theory of the mere human authorship of the Bible, produced *many*

Shakspeares, while all the rest of the world has produced but one.

6. Shakspeare is *our* poet, the poet of the Anglo-Saxon race especially; though in one sense the poet of mankind. Suppose that he had been a Spaniard or a Russian, or that he had lived thousands of years ago, and that his works, composed partly in one dead language and partly in another, were known to us only by the aid of dictionaries and emasculating translations; and suppose that Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Matthew, John, Paul, and all the prophets and apostles, had written in our own loved vernacular; then, doubtless, would the *Westminster Review* have uttered its glowing panegyric on the Bible alone, and been as silent in regard to the great dramatic poet as in regard to Göthe and Voltaire.

Thus have we recorded in these three immediately preceding chapters the testimony of eminent men to the surpassing excellence of the Bible as a literary book. We have not stated the opinions of men merely of one nation, class, or profession; but of various nations, classes, and professions—Englishmen, Germans, Frenchmen, and Americans; clergymen, jurists, poets, statesmen, philosophers, scholars, historians, critics, and men of science; men eminent for Christian piety; men merely favorable to Christianity; sceptics, and avowed infidels. We have shown that the most eminent men of the great nations of the earth—men most eminent in the learned professions; men most eminent for taste

and genius; men most eminent in literary achievements; men most eminent in Christian piety; and men most eminent in the advocacy of infidelity; men most eminent for everything that can give authority and weight to their opinions in the case—*do almost unanimously testify that the Bible is a great, grand, and glorious book; and that in beauty, pathos, eloquence, fullness, and comprehensiveness of thought, in grandeur of conception, and sublime flights of imagination, it excels all other books in the world.*

CHAPTER X.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE LYRIC POETRY OF THE BIBLE.

IN the preceding chapters we have showed the surpassing excellence of the Biblical literature in general. But there is one portion of it to which we wish to call special attention—the PSALMS. These constitute the main part of the lyric poetry of the Hebrews. This kind of poetry—poetry designed to be accompanied with music—is found among all or nearly all civilized nations. The Hebrews, like many other nations, had no finished epic poems, like the *Iliad* or the *Paradise Lost*; no tragedies, like those of Sophocles, Shakspeare, or Voltaire; no printed orations, like those of Demosthenes, Cicero, Pitt, or Webster; no printed sermons, like those of Chrysostom, Massillon, Chalmers, or Mason. Hence, to compare the whole literature of the Bible with literature in general, or with Grecian, Roman, English, or any other national literature, would be like comparing the stars with the flowers, the lofty mountain with the gigantic river, or a pastoral poem with a political speech. We can prove the unparalleled excellence of the literature of the Bible, only by demonstrating that it excels all other books in the simplicity of its style, in the purity and elevation

of its sentiments, in the vividness of its descriptions, in the truthfulness of its delineations of nature and of human character and passion, in the sublimity of its thoughts, the grandeur and vastness of its conceptions, and the abundance of the materials out of which epics, tragedies, finished orations, and sermons are made. But ballads, hymns, odes, choruses, constitute a part of every literature, and thus we have one point of fair comparison between the literature of the Hebrews and that of other nations.

The testimonies cited in previous chapters to prove the superior excellence of the literature of the Hebrews, serve equally well to prove the superior excellence of that part of it to which we call special attention—their lyric poetry. Indeed, many of these testimonies,—those for instance of Irving, Taylor, Fenelon, Addison, Lamartine, and Humboldt,—have special reference to the Psalms. But the fact should be noted, that the Psalms are *religious* lyrics; and that they are confessedly superior to all compositions of the same kind that have been produced in any age, or in any quarter of the world. We make no comparison between the lyrics of the Bible and those of Horace, Burns, or Moore. Such a comparison would be absurd. But we declare that no Christian hymn-writer, whatever may have been his genius and culture, has ever produced anything equal to the Psalms; and that in religious lyrics—the literary department in which the Bible writers come into competition with all the world—they stand alone in their excellence.

In proof of the surpassing excellence of the Bible

lyrics, we might take the most popular religious songs that have ever been written in the Grecian, Roman, German, English, French, and Spanish languages; and show by actual comparison, that however beautiful, powerful, and sublime they may be, some of the Hebrew Psalms possess still more beauty, power, and sublimity. But the process would be a tedious one, and there is decisive proof ready at hand—*the belief of the Christian world*. As we have shown, Christians most eminent for piety, culture, and genius have declared the Psalms to be the most beautiful and sublime compositions in the world. There are no psalms in general use among Christians but those of the Bible. Many truthful, beautiful, and edifying songs have been written by Christian authors; but their use has been local and temporary, rather than general and permanent. The hymns of the Christian Greeks and Romans are now almost unknown. The middle ages produced scarcely a song which Christians of the present day consider either beautiful or edifying. The more modern hymns are sung almost exclusively in the languages in which they were written. Luther's hymns are sung almost alone by Germans and people of German descent. The use of the beautiful hymns of Watts, Cowper, and Wesley is confined mainly to those who speak the English language. But the hymns of the Hebrew bards are translated, versified, imitated, and sung wherever Christianity is known. A living author says, 'The Psalms are wonderful. They have been read, repeated, chanted, sung, studied, wept over, rejoiced in, expounded,

loved, and praised by God's people for thousands of years.¹ This general and permanent use of the Scripture songs, indicates the belief of the Christian world in their superiority to all similar productions; and justifies the declaration of Lamartine, that *David is the Psalmist of eternity*. A writer, whose intelligence and reputation give assurance that he speaks the common sentiment of Christians, says, it is remarkable that the poetry of the Hebrews is so adapted to public worship; and that their poetry of the religious kind is all of a high order.² Dr. Tholuck, quoting from Herder, says, that the Psalms are the hymn book for all times; that they are flowers that always bloom in the beauty of youth.³ Not only do Christian people, at every period and all over the earth, find no compositions more suitable to express their devotional feelings than the Psalms; but also these ancient songs have been the model and standard of modern hymn-writers. Dr. Shedd remarks; that the lyric writers of the Christian church have been distinguished for excellence, in proportion as they reproduced the Psalter in the forms of modern metrical composition.⁴ This declaration is sustained by the judgment and practice of the Christian world.

Nor does the excellence of the lyric poetry of the Bible consist entirely in the moral and religious truth which it embodies. A fine lyrical poem, like a fine oration or a fine historical work, must excel as a literary composition. Indeed, in a lyrical poem, splendor of literary execution is an essential. Ac-

¹ Dr. Plumer. intro. sect. 1.

² Albert Barnes.

³ Com. on the Psalms,

⁴ Homiletics, p. 305.

cordingly, the uniform testimony of those best qualified to judge is, that the Psalms are characterized by literary excellence of the most exalted kind. Melancthon declared that they 'are the most elegant work extant in the world.' The declaration of Milton concerning them is as follows; 'Not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition, they may be easily made appear over all the kinds of lyric poesy to be incomparable.' Lowth, in his work on Hebrew poetry, says; 'The sweetness of the Psalms in composition, sentiment, diction, and arrangement, has never been equaled by the finest productions of all the heathen Muses and Graces united;' and 'you will seek in vain for models more perfect.'

The Psalms, then, as religious lyrics, are more valued by Christians in general than any other compositions. They are of the highest order of literary excellence; and are the model and standard of Christian hymn-writers. Though the modern writers of religious lyrics enjoy the advantage of greater learning and culture, a more expanded Christianity, and richer stores of religious knowledge; and though they compose in the loved vernacular of those for whom they write;—they have yet produced nothing equal to the Psalms, that originated in a remote and barbarous age, among a rude and secluded people, and in a language that ceased long ago to be spoken. The authors of these ancient lyrics anticipated the religious knowledge and experience of the most advanced periods of Christian culture. They describe the glories of the Godhead, the scenes of nature, and

the passions and workings of the human heart, with so masterly a hand, as to astonish and delight the world. They have poured out strains of such beauty and sweetness; and executed songs with such neatness and splendor, as to become the models of all succeeding ages, and to make competition with them in their own department impossible even by the genius, piety, and culture of the most refined and Christian portion of mankind.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE ON THE FINE ARTS.

THE influence of the Bible on music, painting, sculpture, and architecture, though not so direct as in regard to poetry and eloquence, has been very great; as might be shown by many facts and illustrations. We have not space, however, for a full discussion; and shall attempt but little more than to show, that the best subjects and highest achievements in the fine arts have been suggested by the Bible.

Art, as defined by Ruskin, is a noble and expressive language; and is designed to represent ideas. The greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind of the spectator the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and he is the greatest artist who has embodied in his work the greatest number of the greatest ideas. The importance of *execution* in art is not denied. Execution is to the artist what versification is to the poet.¹ We would say—not to improve Ruskin's definition, but to guard against misapprehension—that the greatest artist is he who represents in his works the greatest ideas in the greatest number and in the best manner. Success

¹ *Modern Painters*, P. 1, sec. 1, ch. 2.

in art depends upon the excellence of the ideas represented, as well as upon the skill and taste with which they are represented.

Now, the Bible and Christianity have contributed greatly to the improvement of the fine arts by *enlarging* and *purifying* the ideas to be represented in artistic works. This point can be best illustrated by referring to the Grecian artists. As is well known, the fine arts reached a higher state of perfection in Greece than in any other ancient country. The Grecian artists have never been excelled, and perhaps never will be excelled, as copyists of the beautiful forms of nature. They were the daintiest workmen in marble and paint that the world has ever seen. Zeuxis painted grapes so well, that the birds came to eat them. Apelles drew the picture of a horse so life-like, that a real horse passing by neighed at it. Parrhasius painted a curtain so well, that Zeuxis mistook it for a real curtain; and when undeceived, said, 'Zeuxis has deceived birds, but Parrhasius has deceived Zeuxis himself.' But skillful as the Grecian artists were in the imitation of natural forms and colors, they were deficient in *ideas*. Their greatest achievements in painting and sculpture were, to represent the faultless form of a sleeping Venus; or the muscles and joints of Hercules. They represented mere outward beauty in their pictures and statues; but neglected intellectual and moral beauty almost altogether. Grecian architecture was defective in like manner. Its columns were graceful and perfect; but no lofty ideas were symbolized by them. A Grecian temple was, doubtless,

very beautiful, in its perfect symmetry and proportions; but it lacked the dignity and grandeur which spring from moral and spiritual truth. It rose but a little way from earth, until its upward flight was cut short by entablature and cornice. It had no lofty shafts and perpendicular lines, carrying the eye and the mind of the beholder up to heaven and to God, and suggesting hope and immortality.

Of many of the great and noble ideas which the Bible and Christianity have made familiar to men in modern times, the Grecians and all the ancient Gentile nations were entirely ignorant, or knew but little. Of faith, hope, and immortality they had only vague and indefinite notions. Of holiness, meekness, humility, and self-sacrificing benevolence, they had scarcely a conception. Thus, knowing but little or being entirely ignorant of these lovely and lofty virtues and hopes, they of course did not represent them in their works. Their aim was, to represent natural beauty, and to symbolize the god-like under the perfection of the human form. Hazlitt says, 'the Greek statues are little else than specious forms. They are marble to the touch and to the heart. They have not an informing principle within them.'¹

The Bible and Christianity also did much for the advancement of art by *purifying* the ideas of men. Ancient art was degraded by association with false and impure religion. Being employed to embody

¹ *Eng. Poets*, Lect. 1.

the ideas which such religion suggests, it became the handmaid of licentiousness and obscenity. Instead of teaching men to love and admire beauty and purity, it became the promoter of indecency and uncleanness. The degradation of ancient art is demonstrated by this one fact, that many of the statues and pictures found in Herculaneum and Pompeii were so vile, that they had to be removed from public sight. But art was delivered from this debasing bondage through the influence of Christianity. It supplanted the old mythologies, with all their obscenities and indecencies. It purified the artist. It purified the people, and educated them to appreciate the good, true, and beautiful. It inspired artists and men in general with the love of moral and spiritual truth, and thus led to the presentation of it in artistic works. The great service which the Bible has performed in behalf of art, in thus enlarging, purifying, and elevating the ideas of men, is shown by the fact, that the greatest artists have taken the subjects of their master-pieces from it. That they have done so, and that the Bible has suggested the best subjects and highest achievements in art, we now proceed to show.

1. *Painting*.—The Bible has furnished the finest themes for the painter. The *Cartoons* of Raphael, the world's best painter, are declared by Hazlitt to be 'the finest comments that ever were made on the Scriptures.'¹ Besides the *Cartoons*, we may mention *The Transfiguration, Preaching of Paul, Vision of*

¹ *Eng. Poets*, lect. 1.

Ezekiel, and *Last Judgment*, by the same great master. In addition to these master-pieces, there are *The Last Judgment* by Michael Angelo; *Jacob's Ladder*, *Hand Writing on the Wall*, *Christ in Gethsemane*, and *Christ at Emmaus*, by Rembrandt; *The Annunciation*, *Fall of the Damned*, and *Resurrection of the Just*, by Rubens; *Moses Striking the Rock*, *The Deluge*, *Adam and Eve in Paradise*, *Moses Receiving the Law*, *Abraham and Isaac*, *Paul's Shipwreck*, *Christ Rejected*, and *Death on the Pale Horse*, by West. The list might be much extended by referring to the Works of Salvator Rosa, Titian, Tintoretto, Northcote, Van Dyke, and other celebrated painters; but it includes enough to remind the reader that the subjects of the best pieces of painting are taken from the Scriptures. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the celebrated English painter, recommends as themes for the pencil what he calls 'the capital subjects of Scripture history.'¹ Many of the most celebrated painters have been admiring and diligent students of the Bible. Such was the artist just referred to, Sir J. Reynolds. Michael Angelo had the greater portion of the Scriptures committed to memory. They were the constant study of Raphael. Flaxman's chief delight was, to make designs from the poets, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *the Bible*. Fuseli read the Bible in the original Hebrew. Albert Durer was well versed in the Scriptures.

2. *Music*.—We have already shown that the Psalms are the best religious lyrics in existence;

¹ Discourses, p. 49.

and that the next best are those that have been modeled after them. The largest number of our anthems, chants, oratorios, and musical pieces of every kind, have subjects taken from the Scriptures. The *Te Deum Laudamus*, *Gloria Patri*, *Gloria in Excelsis*, *Jubilate Deo*, *Vesper Hymn*, Handel's *Messiah*, *Esther*, *Samson*, *Jephtha*, and *Israel in Egypt*, Mendelssohn's *Paul* and *Elijah*, Haydn's *Creation*, and Mozart's *Requiem*, and other pieces which, with those named, constitute the grandest music in the world,—have subjects taken from, or suggested by Bible history, doctrines, or poetry. Even sceptics and other secular writers, have taken musical subjects largely from the same source. The subject and materials of Voltaire's *Samson* are taken from the Bible. The same is true of Goldsmith's oratorio of the *Captivity*. There is an incomplete oratorio of Campbell's from the book of Job. The subjects of Moore's *Sacred Songs* and Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* are also taken from the Bible.

The introduction of Christianity did more than to furnish musical composers with their best subjects. The most noble pieces of music, that had been composed in preceding times, were invested with a more ethereal and solemn harmony, by their adaptation to Christian worship and employment in it; musical masters were stimulated to compose pieces adapted to the highest end of music—the praise of Almighty God; and music itself was elevated and ennobled, by its employment to represent the grandest thoughts attained by the human mind.

3. *Architecture*.—The influence of the Bible on

this branch of art has also been great and beneficial. Michael Angelo and Sir Christopher Wren, the most celebrated architects of modern times, derived from it the conceptions which they embodied in their works. The Gothic style, and nearly all the improvements that have been made in architectural art in modern times, were suggested by it. Gothic architecture, with its perpendicular lines, tall and graceful shafts, flying buttresses, windows of stained glass giving out celestial colors, pointed arches, and spires reaching toward heaven,—is designed to symbolize the lifting up of the soul to God, spiritual hope, blessed immortality, and other doctrines and ideas derived from the Scriptures. The Grecians, so far as the beauty of proportion and symmetry, and finish of execution are concerned, were, doubtless, the world's finest architects. But the Jews, who did not cultivate the fine arts, had, five hundred years before the erection of the Parthenon, the grandest building in the world. Doubtless a Grecian temple, with its columns and capitals, entablature and cornice, all of snowy whiteness and perfect finish, as it flashed in the sunlight was a thing of beauty. But its beauty was for the eye alone. It lacked the beauty and grandeur that spring from the suggestions of moral and spiritual truth. Had the cultivated Greeks possessed a knowledge of the grand and glorious doctrines revealed in the Bible concerning God, heaven, and immortality, how much more noble would have been their achievements in architecture, as well as in other arts! •

4. *Sculpture*.—This branch of art deals almost

exclusively with mere *form*; and hence is not so well adapted to represent intellectual and moral beauty. Yet the Bible has furnished some of the finest themes for the sculptor; as well as for the painter, musician, and architect. We may mention the *Moses*, *Christ bearing his Cross*, the *Dead Christ*, *Samson*, *David*, and *Matthew*, by Michael Angelo; the *Twelve Apostles*, by Thorwaldsen; *Christ*, *Mother of Pity*, and *Eight Apostles*, by Bonchardon; *Adam and Eve*, by Baccio; and *Eve*, by Powers. The subjects of the master-pieces of the most celebrated sculptors of modern times have been taken from the Bible.

Thus we have reminded the reader that the Bible has suggested the best subjects, and the most glorious achievements, in all the fine arts. The ideas represented in the master-pieces of art are taken from it. If any further proof of this fact than what is above given, is needed, it may be found in the declaration of Schlegel, that the old masters of a loftier time preferred Christian subjects, and devoted their grandest and most important works to the honor of religion. To such an extent did those old masters thus practise, that many young artists, who confined themselves to the study of them, have been led into the error of selecting Christian subjects almost exclusively.¹

It may be objected, that Christianity has often discouraged the cultivation of the fine arts. Doubtless there is some seeming foundation for this objec-

¹ *Æsthetics*, Mod. Ger. Paintings.

tion. The religious teachers of the Jews did not encourage painting and sculpture, lest these arts should become subservient to idolatry. Pictures and statues were almost sure to be thus employed, and hence were contraband among the ancient worshippers of the true God. Perhaps the Christians generally in the first centuries were prejudiced against painting and sculpture, because of their prostitution to idolatry and uncleanness. In like manner, the Puritans of England in the seventeenth century were prejudiced against not only some of the fine arts, but also some harmless amusements and commendable refinements. Such prejudices are natural and unavoidable. Men are so constituted, that they dislike whatever is closely associated with things they hate. Christians are no exception in this respect. The aversion of the early Christians for painting and sculpture is evidence of the purity of their religion; but not of its hostility to the fine arts. Besides this, it should be remembered, that the early Christians, the Reformers, and the Puritans, were too earnest and busy to devote much time and attention to pictures, statues, fine music, and fine buildings. They had something else to do, and they did it. The fine arts have been most largely cultivated by those who had abundance of leisure. Often have tyrants and despots unintentionally favored the development of artistic talents, by preventing the development of any other kind. Painting, sculpture, and the other branches of art, flourish most where there are many people who have nothing else to do than admire pictures, stat-

ues, fine buildings, and fine music. The contempt and aversion which Christians have often manifested for the beautiful creations of art, were not inspired by Christianity or the Bible; but by these have been furnished the best subjects and ideas to the artists of modern times.

CHAPTER XII.

FACTS WHICH ILLUSTRATE THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE.

1. *Its success as a literary production.* It is more read than any other book. In the case of other books, success is regarded as incontestable evidence of excellence. Milton determined 'to write something which the world would not willingly let die;' and the fact that *Paradise Lost* is widely read is universally admitted as proof of its superior merit. A worthless book may, indeed, be temporarily popular. As in morals, so in literature the voice of the people is not always the voice of truth; but the voice of *the ages* is. Tried by this criterion, the Bible, in point of literary excellence, is far above every other book. It may be objected, that the Bible is read by many because they believe it to be a divine revelation. But this fact, since Bible readers are among the most enlightened portion of mankind, only sets its literary excellence in a stronger light. The perfection of art is to conceal art. The birds coming to eat the grapes painted by Zeuxis, and the horse neighing at his own likeness in the picture of Parrhasius, proved the surpassing skill of the artists. If the claims of the Bible to divine inspiration are false—if its narratives are fictitious

or legendary—what prodigies of genius and skill must its writers have been, who described imaginary scenes, characters, and events, and recorded fictions or legends, with such consummate art as to deceive, not birds and horses, but the majority of scholars and intelligent people during eighteen hundred years!

Suppose that Homer had described the sayings and doings of the imaginary gods, and of his human heroes, with so much of the life-like appearance of reality, that his readers had been made believe his fictions to be true history,—as many of the ancient Greeks doubtless did;—would that have detracted from the excellence of his great poem? Milton has incorporated into his immortal work much of the history, imagery, and doctrine of the Bible; and its beauty and interest are enhanced to most readers by the fact, that, believing in the Bible as they do, they also believe the main part of *Paradise Lost* to be real and true. Because Milton employed the doctrines and narratives of the Bible to impart beauty and sublimity to his poem, the sceptic does not admire him or his poem any the less. He thinks that Milton displayed judgment, taste, and genius by presenting Hebrew fictions and legends as dignified, grand, and life-like realities. How much greater must have been the skill and genius of the ancient authors, who invented or gathered up these fictions and legends, and presented them to the world in a book so truth-like, beautiful, eloquent, and god-like, that the nations and ages have read, studied, rever-

enced, and loved it as the production of the Almighty!

The claim, then, of the Bible to divine inspiration does not nullify the evidence of its literary excellence drawn from its *success*. And judged by this criterion, it is incomparably superior to every other book. It is read everywhere, by people of every class, and on all occasions. It is read by the learned and unlearned, by old and young, by the refined and rude; by the English, Americans, Germans, French, by all enlightened nations; in the frozen regions of the north and under the burning rays of the vertical sun; in the crowded cities of Europe, in the forests and plains of the New World, on the shores of Africa, and in the jungles of India; in the mansion and the cottage; in the family, the school, and the college; in the closet and in the public assembly. It is read at the bed-side of the sick and dying, and at the mournful funeral. Its sanctions are quoted in the celebration of marriage rites, and at the baptism of infants. It is used on occasions of national thanksgiving, and of national fasting and sorrow. By all kinds of enlightened people, in all enlightened countries, at all times, on all occasions, in hundreds of languages, the Bible is read.

Coleridge once said, pointing to a *well worn* copy of Cowper, '*that is fame!*' Macaulay speaks of '*that wonderful book,*' the *Pilgrim's Progress*, as obtaining admiration from the most fastidious critics, and loved by those who are too simple to admire it; as extracting praise from Johnson, the most pedantic of critics and most bigoted of Tories; and as being the delight

of the peasantry in the wildest parts of Scotland, and a favorite in every nursery. But all this and far more, may be said of the Bible. There are thousands and thousands of well-worn copies of the Bible where the name of Cowper is unknown. Where 'that highest miracle of genius,' the work of Bunyan, counts its readers by hundreds among the common people, the Bible counts its readers by thousands. All who love the *Pilgrim's Progress* love the Bible, but thousands and thousands love the latter that never heard of the former. The Bible, too, extracts praise from the great and learned. Bacon says in one of his recorded prayers, 'Thy creatures have been my books, but thy Scriptures much more.' Sir Walter Scott on his death-bed called for the reading of the Bible, saying, 'There is but one book.' Newton read, studied, wrote on, and delighted in it. These and other Christian philosophers and poets revered it too highly, and loved it too dearly, to allow them to *admire* it. It is the sceptics—Göthe, Humboldt, Rousseau, Renan, and others—who ignore or reject the supernatural claims and divine authority of the Bible, and read it only to be filled with its beauty and grandeur, that admire it most highly as a literary composition. But by one class and another, it is more admired and loved than any other book. It is oftener read, quoted, referred to, borrowed from, and commented on, than any other book. It is studied, prayed over, wept over, and rejoiced in, by many more people than any other book. It is translated into more

languages, has a deeper hold upon the hearts and minds of men, enters more into national thought and individual experience, and exerts a wider and more powerful influence on the opinions and actions of men, than any other book. It is a book which the world has not let die, and will not let die. The popularity and success of the world's greatest authors—Shakspeare, Milton, Bunyan, Racine, Göthe, Humboldt, and Macaulay—are not to be compared with the success and popularity of Moses, David, Solomon, Ezekiel, John, and Paul. The Bible, judged of by its success, is by far the most valuable literary work in the world.

2. Another fact, one that should be remembered in connection with the unparalleled success of the Bible, is that *the great majority read it only in translations*. Doubtless many of these translations are excellent. Göthe highly commended Luther's German translation.¹ It is regarded as the standard of classical expression in the High Dutch language. Klopstock and many other writers of the first rank, made it the model of their style.² The excellence of the English version is universally admitted. A Roman Catholic writer of England thus speaks of it; 'Who will not say that the uncommon beauty and marvelous English of the Protestant Bible is one of the strong-holds of heresy in this country? It lives on the ear like music that cannot be forgotten; like the sound of church bells; which the convert hardly

¹ Truth and Poetry, B. 11.

² Schlegel's His. of Lit. Lect. 15.

knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words.¹

Undoubtedly the above mentioned versions and many others are excellent. But to attribute the beauty and power of the Bible to the excellence of the translations in which it is read, is absurd. No *faithful* translation of a meritorious book can be equal to the original. The translator of an *inferior* book, by alterations and emendations, interpolating in one place and suppressing in another, embellishing here and simplifying there, may indeed get up something superior to the original. It is also possible that a book containing good thoughts, but inferior diction, may appear to better advantage in a translation. But every scholar knows, that every well-written work must lose something of its beauty and power by translation. Excellent as the English, German, French, Latin, and other translations of the Bible are, they are inferior to the Hebrew and Greek originals in beauty and power. Speaking on this subject, Daniel Webster said; ‘Much of the force and beauty of the language we lose, of course, in the translation—much from our ignorance of Hebrew versification,—of which, indeed, we retain only the division of the verses; but changed, emasculated as it is, where shall we look for its like?’²

Why cannot we have translations of Homer and other ancient poets which will be generally read and admired, which will ‘live on the ear like music and the sound of church bells,’ and which will become a

¹ Dr. Newman. ² Harper’s Mag. vol. 12, p. 498.

standard and model of style and expression? It is because the power and charm of Homer and other ancient poets lie not so much in their subjects, conceptions, ideas, and imagery, as in mere style and diction; and hence in translations their beauty is destroyed, or greatly impaired. Indeed, no great poet, except the Hebrew bards, is much read or admired out of his own native land. Scholars, indeed, do read foreign poems in the original or in translations. But from the common people, the poet—unlike the prophet—has no honor except in his own country. When a poem, however grand and beautiful, comes to us diluted in a translation, it loses so much of its strength and flavor, that it becomes an insipid thing. Not one in ten—no, not one in a hundred of English readers—knows or cares anything about Dante, Racine, Calderon, or Göthe.

But the Bible is translated into and read in almost every language. Though it was written long ago—the greater part of it thousands of years ago; in foreign tongues now dead; in lands where the natural scenery is different from ours, and among a people whose manners and customs, laws and opinions, and modes of thought and speech, were also widely different from ours; and though it comes to us somewhat impaired in beauty and power by translation; yet it is more at home with us, and is more read and studied and admired and loved, than any of our own native books. It talks like one who lisped and learned our own sweet vernacular in childhood. And it is at home not only in our own country and language, but in every country and language.

Those ancient Hebrews, secluded and unlearned as they were, or are supposed to have been, have given a universal book to men; the only book that all nations and classes can understand, appreciate, and admire; the only book the translations of which into the vernacular tongues is more read and loved by the peoples of earth, and exerts a greater influence upon them, than the productions of their own greatest poets.

3. Another thing which shows the literary excellence of the Bible, is the influence which it has exerted in the promotion of education and learning. On this subject a volume might be written. We have space, however, only to present a number of facts and authorities.

(1) The Bible exerted a powerful influence in the promotion of knowledge, education, and every branch of civilization during the first centuries of the Christian era. This fact is fully recognized by Guizot; who speaks of Christianity, which is the religion of the Bible, as one of the great events which carried civilization forward, and declares that it did so because it changed the internal condition of man, his opinions and sentiments, and regenerated his intellectual as well as moral character.¹ It is true that Christianity did not at first directly attack the great evils which prevailed in the social system, and which withstood intellectual as well as moral improvement. But this was because she had not a sufficient number of adherents to enable her to attack them success-

¹ His. of Civilization, Lect. 1.

fully. Afterward, when she had gained numbers and influence, she did attack them, and abolished them. At first, however, she necessarily labored to reform, purify, and elevate individuals; and in doing so she became the great promoter of civilization.

(2) Christianity also did much to promote civilization from the commencement of the fifth century onward, during the time that the Roman empire was being over-run by the barbarians. The author quoted above says, that during this period, there were among the Christian ministers men of profound and varied learning, who possessed a praise-worthy zeal to promote knowledge and education; that the church attacked barbarism at every point, in order to civilize and rule over it; and that, but for the church, the whole world must have fallen a prey to mere brute force.¹ It is true, that there is a difference between Christianity and the Christian church. But it is through the church, and through Christian men, that Christianity and the Bible put forth their power.

(3) During the middle age, whatever of learning and civilization survived the influx of barbarism, were preserved by Christianity and the church. The church, in her monasteries and other institutions of learning—far as they were from what they ought to have been—preserved the books and manuscripts which contained the literary and sacred productions of former generations, and which

¹ His. of Civilization, Lects. 2 and 3.

otherwise would have perished through the prejudice and barbarism of the times. The service which Christianity and the church thus performed, has been very happily illustrated by Macaulay:—‘The church,’ says he, ‘has been many times compared by divines to that ark, of which we read in the book of Genesis; but never was the resemblance more perfect than during that evil time, when she alone rode, amidst darkness and tempest, on the deluge beneath which all the great works of ancient power and wisdom lay entombed; bearing within her that feeble germ from which a second and more glorious civilization was to spring.’¹ For thus preserving the productions of ancient genius and piety, and keeping alive the germs of civilization during that dreary night of barbarism—the middle age—Christianity and the Christian church deserve the gratitude of all succeeding generations.

(4) The influence of the Bible in behalf of learning and education, was very great at the time of the *Reformation*. All the historians, philosophers, and essayists, who have written concerning that great event, except the Romanists and those of Romanist proclivities, (as for instance F. Schlegel,) recognize its happy effects both upon the moral and intellectual condition of mankind. But the chief cause and instrument of the Reformation was the Bible, and to it therefore must be attributed in a great measure the freedom of thought, the advancement of learning, and the literary activity which resulted from

¹ His. of England, ch. 1.

the Reformation. The reformers, Luther, Calvin, and Knox, appealed to the Bible as the infallible word of God, and as the repository of all the moral and theological truth attainable by man. Infidels speak of it as a reproach to the reformers, that though they delivered the human mind from papal tyranny and oppression, they subjected it to the authority of the Bible. We might at great length illustrate the influence of the Bible in producing the Reformation, and the influence of the Reformation on modern history and the advancement of civilization. But as we must consult brevity, we will present the opinions of an able thinker and writer, who is not likely to be suspected of prejudice. In speaking of the influence of the Bible on Luther's mind, and the use he made of it in urging on the Reformation, and the happy results of that great event, Carlyle says:—'It must have been a most blessed discovery, that of an old Latin Bible, which he found in Erfurt library about this time. He had never seen the book before. It taught him another lesson than that of fasts and vigils. A brother monk, too, of pious experience, was helpful. Luther learned now, that a man was saved, not by singing masses, but by the infinite grace of God; a more credible hypothesis. He gradually got himself founded as on a rock. No wonder he should venerate the Bible, which brought this blessed help to him. He prized it as the word of the Highest must be prized by such a man. He determined to hold by that; as through life, and to death, he firmly did. * * *

'The Diet of Worms, Luther's appearance there

on the 17th of April, 1521, may be considered the greatest scene in Modern European History; the point indeed, from which the whole subsequent history of civilization takes its rise. * * * It is, we say, the greatest moment in the Modern History of Men. English Puritanism, England and its Parliaments, America and vast work these two centuries, French Revolution, Europe and its work every where at present, the germ of it all lay there; had Luther in that moment done other, it had all been otherwise. * * *

‘The most interesting phasis, which the Reformation anywhere assumes, especially for us English, is that of Puritanism. In Luther’s own country, Protestantism soon dwindled into a rather barren affair; not a religion or faith, but rather now a theological jangling of argument, the proper seat of it not the heart; the essence of it sceptical contention; which indeed has jangled more and more, down to Voltairism itself, through Gustavus Adolphus contentions onward to French-Revolution ones! But in our Island there arose a Puritanism, which even got itself established as a Presbyterianism and National Church among the Scotch; which came forth as a real business of the heart, and has produced in the world very notable fruit. * * *

‘In the history of Scotland, too, I can find properly but one epoch; we may say, it contains nothing of world interest at all but this Reformation by Knox. * * *

‘This that Knox did for his nation, I say, we may really call a resurrection as from death. * * *

The people began to live; they needed first all to do that, at what cost or costs soever. Scotch Literature and Thought, Walter Scott, Robert Burns; I find Knox and the Reformation acting in the heart's core of every one of these persons and phenomena; I find that without the Reformation they would not have been. Or what of Scotland? The Puritanism of Scotland became that of England; of New England. A Tumult in the High Church of Edinburgh spread into a universal Battle and struggle over all these realms; there came out after fifty years' struggling what we call the 'Glorious Revolution,' a Habeas Corpus Act, Free Parliaments, and much else.

'Knox resembles, more than any of the moderns, an old Hebrew prophet. The same inflexibility, intolerance, rigid, narrow-looking adherence to God's truth, stern rebuke in the name of God to all that forsake truth; an old Hebrew Prophet in the guise of an Edinburgh minister.'¹

Such is the opinion of a profound, though a sceptical thinker, in regard to the influence of the Bible and the Reformation, on the progress of civilization and the history of the world. There are those who will be more influenced by the utterances of such a man, than by argumentation and the citation of historical facts.

(5) It was by the influence of Christianity that civilization was introduced into Great Britain. Macaulay says that the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity in the seventh century was the first

¹ Hero-worship, pp. 116-133.

in a long series of salutary revolutions; and that the Church—though at that period corrupted by superstition and philosophy, against which she had long contended, and by Roman policy and Gothic ignorance, Grecian ingenuity and Syrian asceticism—even yet retained enough of the sublime theology and benevolent morality of her earlier days, to elevate many intellects and to purify many hearts.¹ Even Hume speaks of the introduction of Christianity into England as a most fortunate and memorable event.² Burke declares, in his *Abridgment of English History*, that there is no revolution in English history so remarkable as the introduction of Christianity; that light scarce began to dawn until that event took place; and that it brought with it letters and the arts of civil life.³ To the same effect is the further testimony of Macaulay, who declares that *learning followed in the train of Christianity*.⁴

(6) The Bible and Christianity have done much to promote learning and literature by the establishment of schools and colleges. The free-school system originated among the Protestants at Geneva. Calvin himself was the founder of it, and of popular education.⁵ From Geneva the common-school system passed into Scotland among the Presbyterians, and into England among the Puritans. Free schools were first established in the United States by the Puritans of New England; and their example has been followed throughout the country, except where it was rendered impracticable by slavery, a cause

¹ History of Eng. ch. 1. ² His. of Eng. ch. 1. ³ Works, vol. 2, p. 512. ⁴ His. of Eng. ch. 1. ⁵ Bancroft's Misc. p. 405.

now happily no longer existing. The main design of the New England Puritans in establishing schools was, to promote the knowledge of the Scriptures:— ‘It being one chief project of that old deluder Sathan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures,’ therefore it was required that every township should maintain a school for reading and writing, and every town of a hundred householders a grammar school, with a teacher qualified to ‘fit youths for the University.’¹

The establishment of the most celebrated colleges in our country also resulted from the influence of the Bible and Christianity. Harvard University was at first a grammar school for the education of gospel ministers. It was endowed by Rev. John Harvard, in 1639, nineteen years after the first settlement of Massachusetts, with his library and the half of his estate, and was erected into a college. It was placed under the superintendence of a board of overseers, composed of the magistrates and the ministers of the six neighboring churches.² The embryo of Yale College was a school for the education of gospel ministers. The college of William and Mary, founded in 1691, was designed to educate ministers for the Church of England. Dartmouth college was at first an Indian missionary school. Princeton college was established by Presbyterians in 1746; Hampden and Sidney College was established also by Presbyterians in 1774. Brown University was established mainly by the Baptists in 1764. Rut-

¹ Bancroft’s His. ch. 10. ² Hildreth, vol. 1, pp. 370-1.

ger's College was established in the interests of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1770. At the time of the Revolution, there were in the colonies three colleges controlled by Congregationalists, three by Episcopalians, two by Presbyterians (including Hampden and Sidney College, established in 1774), one by the Baptists, and one by the Dutch Reformed.¹ Nearly all the colleges that have been since established owe their existence to the influence of the Bible and the efforts of Christian men.

In Europe, the most celebrated colleges had a similar origin. The University of Cambridge, in England, is said to have been founded by Sigebert, who restored Christianity, and introduced learning among the Angles. The University of Oxford was founded or repaired by king Alfred. Both of these institutions were originally designed to educate men for the Church.

Of the twenty-six German universities, thirteen belong exclusively to the Protestant church, eight to the Roman Catholic, and five to the two churches conjointly. They were founded by emperors, princes, or ecclesiastical dignitaries; in a few cases by the magistrates of cities. One who knows whereof he affirms says, that the motives of the founders were, without exception, pure and elevated, and generally *pious and Christian*.² There may be opponents of the religion of the Bible occupying the position of teachers in German universities, but every one of these institutions was established for the promotion

¹ Hildreth, vol. 1, p. 263; vol. 2. pp. 254, 578.

² Schaff's Germany, p. 32.

of it. Strauss was dismissed from the University of Tübingen on account of his *Leben Jesu*.

The Sorbonne, the university of Paris, was a theological as well as literary institution. It was, indeed, the great theological school in the thirteenth century; and the fact that it was the first institution named *University* indicates that in that age Christian theology was regarded as the chief science, and as the connecting bond among all the rest.

In Spain, during the reign of Isabella, both religion and learning were greatly encouraged. Colleges were established in most of the large cities. The most famous institution of learning in Spain was the University of Alcalá, founded by cardinal Ximenes. It contained forty-two professorships; of which six were appropriated to theology, and the rest to canon law, ancient languages, medicine, and other branches of learning and art. Ximenes valued especially those branches of learning which aid in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Under his patronage, the University of Alcalá executed the Polyglot version of the Scriptures, 'the most stupendous literary enterprise of that age.'¹ When the Scriptures ceased to be valued in Spain, learning languished, and the colleges declined.

These facts may serve to remind the reader of what the Bible has done to promote education and learning. Even where it has encountered opposition, it has kept alive the spirit of inquiry, and stimulated scientific investigation and literary effort.

¹ Prescott's *Ferd. and Isa.* vol. 2, p. 204; vol. 3, pp. 318-9.

Where it is a sealed book, or is altogether unknown; there education and learning languish, and intellectual stagnation prevails.

(7) Many of the greatest writers and thinkers have borne testimony to the actual influence of the Bible in the promotion of learning. Burke, who was one of the greatest thinkers of his age, says; 'The progress of Christianity has always been marked by that of letters.'¹ Cousin, another great thinker, says; 'Christianity is the foundation of modern civilization.'² Renan, the French rationalist, declares that 'Christianity completely transformed the world in three-hundred years;' and that it 'laid the foundation of true liberalism and true civilization.'³ Many similar testimonies might be presented.

4. We will mention one other fact in illustration of the literary excellence of the Bible—the *marked inferiority of the apocryphal writings*.

Some of these writings were doubtless in existence before the canon of Scripture was closed, and many of them not long afterward. But they are all unmistakably inferior as compositions. In what are called the apocryphal gospels there are many childish things—such as, the statement that the water in which Jesus had been washed, sprinkled on a child, would enable it to remain in a burning oven, unhurt; that Mary, his mother, often distributed his washing-water as miraculous tincture, and pieces of his clothes as amulets against all kinds of harm; that Judas Iscariot when a boy, being a demoniac, snapped at and

¹ Works, vol. 2, p. 516. ² His. of Mod. Philos. vol. 1, p. 280.

³ Origin of Chris.

struck at Jesus; that Satan came out of Judas in the shape of a mad-dog; and that Jesus once on a time changed a number of little boys into goats, and afterward restored them to their proper shape.

The inferiority of the apocryphal writings in both matter and style to the books of the Bible, is too evident to admit of doubt or dispute. Sceptics have noticed it, and admitted the force of the argument which it furnishes in favor of plenary inspiration. Even Josephus, the contemporary of the apostles, who was a man of superior ability, possessing much learning—more probably than all the apostles together—is far beneath the writers of the New Testament and also of the Old, in richness and elevation of thought, and simplicity and dignity of style. There is something which lifts the writers of the Scriptures above all their contemporaries, as well as above all preceding and all subsequent writers.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUMMARY.

THE sum of what has been said in the preceding chapters in regard to the literary superiority of the Bible is as follows:

1. *The Bible has stood the test of time.* It originated among a secluded and despised people, who were not remarkable for learning and refinement, nor for their attainments in the arts and sciences. It contains almost every species of composition, and treats of almost every kind of subject. It has been read, studied, examined, and criticized for eighteen hundred years. It has been assaulted as no other book has ever been. Science, logic, criticism, ridicule, have been employed against it. Learning, wit, and genius at times have been arrayed against it. Yet its historical character, supernatural origin, and divine authority are admitted by a majority of learned and scientific men, and by the great mass of enlightened people.

2. *The Bible is free from absurdity.* It contains none of the puerilities and vagaries which abound in all the ancient literatures. It avoids all conjectures. It relates no wild stories. It sets up no extravagant claims to antiquity. It gives the only account of the creation, and of the origin of man-

kind, which an intelligent man can believe. Even its accounts of miracles are sober and dignified. Though it originated among a people who delighted in strange stories, wild conjectures, and extravagant fictions; and whose other literature abounds in puerilities, fables, and monstrous lies; it is throughout moderate, reasonable, and truth-like. In these respects the Bible is in striking contrast with much of modern literature, as well as with ancient literature in general.

3. *The Bible is consistent with science.* Scientific investigation has, like a consuming flame, burnt up many philosophies, theories, cosmogonies, systems, and literatures. But the Bible has passed the fiery ordeal, and not a page of it has been singed. All ancient literature, and much of modern, abound with contradictions of science. Even the writings of the most celebrated and ablest ancient authors—Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero—contain many scientific errors. The Bible is the only collection of books free from such errors. In it—multiform, diverse, and comprehensive as its contents are—no error has yet been pointed out to destroy the belief of the great majority of learned men and intelligent people in its scientific accuracy and its infallibility.

4. *The portions of the Bible seemingly least important are of great literary value.* They are rich in historic information, giving us an account of the civil laws, sanitary regulations, religious rites and ceremonies, of a very ancient and remarkable people. They contain moral utterances of the deepest significance and transcendent beauty, and snatches of the

most sublime poetry. For historic information, moral beauty, and poetic sublimity, the old law books of the Hebrews are an exception among all the law books of the world.

5. *The Bible is rich in beautiful and grand literary subjects.* It treats not of absurd cosmologies, indecent theogonies, and debasing loves and passions, as do the ancient poets in general. All its subjects are noble, elevated, grand. The matters treated of in the Vedas, the Iliad, the Eneid, and all the poems of the ancient heathen, in comparison with the themes treated of in Genesis, Job, the Psalms, Prophecies, Gospels, and other parts of the Scriptures, are trifling and mean. Dante, Milton, Bunyan, and many other masters in modern literature, borrowed from it the subjects and general conceptions of their immortal works. The poets of many lands have gone to it for subjects of epics, tragedies, lyrics, oratorios, ballads, and almost every species of composition.

6. *The Bible has done much to enrich and ennoble modern literature.* Not its subjects only, but its conceptions, doctrines, sentiments, imagery, and forms of expression, have been incorporated in the literature of every one of the great nations of the earth. Poets, critics, essayists, orators, and literary men in general, have quoted from it, referred to it, imitated it, and borrowed from it, almost without limit, and generally without acknowledgment. The greatest authors and orators have received their literary culture from it, been nourished by its strength, elevated by its lofty spirit, and have modeled after it their

style and diction. It has been to literary men a starry firmament, at which they have looked and gazed until their souls were lighted up with beauty and glory—a field of fruits and flowers among which they have plucked and reveled. It has been an un-failing source of useful thoughts, beautiful ideas, grand conceptions, striking figures, and simple, graceful forms of expression.

7. *The unparalleled excellence of the Bible as a literary composition is almost universally admitted.* It has been admired and panegyricized as beautiful, eloquent, grand, and sublime, and as more so than any other book, by the most eminent literary men—poets, philosophers, historians, critics, statesmen, jurists, theologians, scholars, and men of science—Romanists as well as Protestants, sceptics as well as Christians—Englishmen, Americans, Germans, and Frenchmen. No book has been so generally admired and panegyricized by the gifted, the learned, and great of all professions, all classes, and all beliefs.

8. *The Bible lyrics are the finest the world has ever seen.* Christians can find nothing better to express their devotional feelings. None other have been adopted into general and permanent use. They are translated, versified, imitated, read, studied, chanted, and sung, wherever Christianity is known. The very best that Christian hymn-writers can do, is, to reproduce them in the modern forms of metrical composition. ‘The seven-fold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies’ are found only in the songs of the Hebrew bards. The highest literary

authority has declared these ancient productions unequalled for their elegance, sweetness, beauty, and sublimity.

9. *The Bible has purified and enriched the fine arts.* It freed them from their degrading subjection to false religion and vile morality. It has suggested the finest subjects and highest achievements in art.

10. *Many facts illustrate the literary excellence of the Bible.* It is more successful than any other book; is more read, studied, admired, loved, quoted, referred to, and imitated; and exerts a more powerful and wider influence than any other. Though it is generally read in translations, it is to every nation like a book written in their own mother tongue; to all its readers it is an exotic, yet is at home in every country and clime; though it was written long-ago, in languages now dead, among a strange and secluded people, it is more read, studied, revered, loved, admired, wept over, and rejoiced in by the peoples of earth, than any of the productions of native genius. It was one of the greatest promoters of knowledge and intellectual progress during the first centuries; it struggled against the ignorance and barbarism of the middle age; it introduced letters and learning into Great Britain; it was the cause and instrument of the Reformation, and the revival of learning in the sixteenth century; it originated the system of free-schools; it established nearly all our colleges and universities; it is the great civilizer.

11. Yet the Jews, whose literature consisted mainly of the Scriptures, were not a cultivated people. Science, in the modern sense of the word, was

unknown among them. They had no philosophers, and of the fine arts they were almost entirely ignorant. Their only poets were their religious teachers. Their colleges were schools of the prophets. Of foreign literature they knew almost nothing. They inhabited a small piece of territory beyond which their thoughts seldom extended. They had in reality no class of literary men. Their writers could not have been much superior to the mass of the people in learning: for almost their whole literature consisted of their sacred books, which all the people were required to read or to hear read. A few of their writers—for instance, Moses and Daniel—were, indeed, acquainted with foreign courts and literature; but even they wrote as if they had no knowledge of books, and no learning but such as came from the depths of their own souls. The Biblical literature—like the Hebrew nation—is original, diverse, unique, ignoring and contemning the literature and science of the world.

12. How, then, were these plain, unlearned, and unpolished men—shepherds, farmers, tax-gatherers, and fishermen—enabled to write such a book as the Bible—beautiful, eloquent, sublime, full of matter, graceful in language, abounding in splendid imagery and grand conceptions? How came it to pass that the secluded and uncultivated Jewish nation produced so many writers rivaling, and even excelling, the gifts and genius of Shakspeare, the towering thoughts of Dante and Milton, the pathos, gracefulness, and beauty of Bunyan, Cowper, Göthe, Rousseau, Racine, and all the poets of ancient and

modern times? Whence was it that this rude nation, through their unlearned writers, have given to the world a book which has enriched and ennobled modern literature; purified and elevated the fine arts; advanced education and science; and which has been imitated, quoted, referred to, and appropriated almost without limit; and has been recognized as the standard and model of literary excellence by many of the greatest writers and speakers of modern times? Whence was it that those old Hebrew bards, prophets, and apostles—without science, without the fine arts, without philosophy, without literary models except such as they themselves created; engaged in a continued struggle with their own obstinate people, who were ever falling into polytheism and immorality; and with nothing but the sun and the stars and the natural scenery of their own little country to teach them beauty and eloquence;—whence was it that such men, under such circumstances, produced a book the fullest of matter, the most diverse and multiform in its contents, the richest in historic information, the most simple and graceful in its language and style, the most charming in its imagery; the most eloquent in its utterances, the most grand and sublime in its thoughts and conceptions of all the books that have been produced in ancient or modern times; the only book which is for all generations and for all time, and which is at home in every language, in every country, and in every clime? How could such men, under such circumstances, produce the most simple, the most beautiful, the most eloquent, the most sug-

gestive, the most powerful, the most wonderful, the most sublime book in the world; and thus surpass in literary excellence and success all the genius, learning, philosophy, and art of ancient and modern times?

We answer, that *the Bible is a SUPERNATURAL production*. Infidelity may stammer out such answers as it can; or, like Rousseau when overcome by the purity, sweetness, and eloquence of the Scriptures, decline to answer at all, and 'observe a respectful silence.'

PART II.

*THE THEOLOGICAL EXCELLENCE
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CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

IN the preceding part of this work, we have endeavored to prove and illustrate the literary superiority of the Scriptures. We have taken up more time and space with that part of the subject, for the reason that their literary superiority is not universally recognized. The unequalled excellence of the Biblical theology, we believe, is universally recognized, and hence we shall be more brief on this part of our subject.

The superior excellence of the Biblical theology being, as we have said, universally admitted, it is not necessary that we should *prove* it. We need only state and illustrate it, so that due importance may be attached to it in estimating the general excellence of the Scriptures. The fact, however, that their theological excellence is *universally* admitted is perhaps one reason why this excellence has not had its proper influence in the controversy concerning inspiration. We do not properly appreciate the uninterrupted blessings of heaven, just because we have

always been accustomed to them. We are inclined to regard the regular rising and setting of the sun, the return of the seasons, and the refreshing showers, as matters of course, for which we need not be thankful. The Israelites born in the desert doubtless regarded the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and the perennial stream which gushed from the rock when smitten by Moses, as common things, like the rain and the dew of heaven. So too the widow, whose barrel of meal did not waste and cruse of oil did not fail through the blessing of the prophet, may have ceased to admire and be thankful, just because the meal did not waste and the oil did not fail. Though it is true only in a limited sense that familiarity breeds contempt, yet there are many facts which we disregard just because we have been accustomed to them from childhood. There are truths which have little or no influence over us, for the reason that they *are so true* that no one calls them in question. So it is with the theological excellence of the Scriptures. No one disputes it. Even infidels admit it. Hence it is regarded as a matter of course, and as of little importance in estimating the general excellence of the Bible, and determining the question in regard to its origin.

Our object, then, in this second part of our work, is not so much to *prove*, as to *illustrate* by actual comparison the superiority of the theology of the Scriptures over all other theological systems that are known to have prevailed among men. In making this comparison, it is not necessary that we

should examine every theology that has appeared among men. It is necessary to examine only those that have prevailed among the most civilized and refined nations. For if the Bible theology is superior to the Egyptian, Hindu, Buddhist, Persian, Chinese, Grecian, Roman, and Arabic theologies, we may safely infer that it is superior to all the theologies that may have prevailed among obscure nations and savage tribes.

CHAPTER II.

EGYPTIAN THEOLOGY.

THE Egyptians, the most ancient nation of whom we have any definite knowledge, were very superstitious. Their superstition was notorious even in the time of Herodotus, who says that 'of all men they were the most excessive in their veneration for the gods.'¹ As far back as we have any account of them, they had lost all knowledge of the doctrine of the unity of God. The ancient historian just referred to says, that originally there were eight Egyptian gods, and that twelve additional gods were produced from them, seventeen thousand years before the reign of Amasis.² Besides these two classes of deities, there was a third, inferior in grade, and of an indefinite number. An enumeration of all the gods whom the ancient Egyptians worshipped would fill many pages. They worshipped not only a multitude of imaginary beings, of several grades and of different sexes, but also the heavenly bodies, the natural elements, beasts, birds, reptiles, vegetables, and stones. They represented their chief deities under various forms and symbols. They represented Amun, supposed to be their chief deity—corresponding to the Jupiter of the Greeks and

¹ B. 2: 37. ² B. 2: 32.

Romans—with a body of a deep blue color, a ram's head, and a red cap from which proceeded two tall straight feathers. Khem, another of their deities, appears as a hawk with human legs, a flail, and feathers like Amun. Sevek had the head of a crocodile; Thoth, the head of an ibis; and Amun-Kor, the head of a hawk. One of their deities was represented with the countenance of a she-goat and the legs of the male; another with the ears of an ass or giraffe. Typhon was represented as an ass, bear, hippopotamus, and crocodile. Athor, a female deity, was represented sometimes as a spotted cow, and sometimes with a human face and a cow's ears. Several deities appear combined in one person, and others are represented as being both male and female. Thus the goddess Neith is represented as uniting both sexes in herself, and, though maintaining perpetual virginity, as having given birth to the sun. One of her titles is, *the great cow, engenderer of the sun.*

Natural objects were deified by the ancient Egyptians. The sun was worshipped as Ra; the moon sometimes as a male deity connected with Thoth, and sometimes as a female with Isis. The starry heaven was worshipped under a female figure. Divine honors were paid to the river Nile. Osiris, who perhaps originally was understood to represent the prolific power of nature, was identified sometimes with the sun, sometimes with the earth, and sometimes with the river Nile. To Isis, his consort, also were assigned various characters and functions.

Animal-worship also prevailed among the Egyptians. They paid divine honors to cows, crocodiles, cats, dogs, goats, hawks, vultures, larks, beetles; to nearly all kinds of beasts, birds, reptiles and insects. Crocodiles, cats, goats, serpents, and various other animals were maintained in the Egyptian temples in magnificent style and at great expense. They were bathed, anointed, and perfumed; and at night lay on soft cushions. They were fed on the choicest food. Cakes of fine flour sweetened with honey, and flesh of beasts, birds, and fishes, roasted, boiled, or uncooked, to suit the palates of all, were prepared for them. They were adorned with ornaments of gold and costly gems. They had attendants and nurses whose office was hereditary, and who in public wore insignia that they might be recognized, and were regarded with great reverence. Incense was burnt before these beast-gods. Vows were performed in their presence. Parents consecrated their children to them. They cut off their children's hair, weighed it, and gave the weight of it in silver to procure delicacies for their bleating and cackling gods. When any of the sacred animals died, they were embalmed and deposited in a consecrated place. Every family had a holy beast, and when it died, the household mourned as for a beloved child. When a cat died, every member of the family cut off the hair of his eye-brows in sign of mourning. When a dog died, they shaved their heads and their whole bodies. To kill any of the sacred animals was a capital offense. To do so involuntarily subjected the transgressor to a fine determined by the

priests. To kill an ibis or a hawk, even involuntarily, was punished with inevitable death. The destruction of any of the sacred animals by native Egyptians was almost an incredible crime. When they accidentally found one of these animals lying dead, they stood aloof and with lamentations and protestations declared that they had not killed it. Even in times of famine, the Egyptians, though driven to eat human flesh, refused to use any of the sacred animals for food.

The degradation of the theological ideas of the Egyptians is most clearly seen in their veneration and worship of their holy bull, the beast-god Apis. This animal is described by Herodotus¹ as the calf of a cow that could have no other offspring, and conceived Apis from being struck by lightning. His color was black, but he had a white spot in the form of a triangle on his forehead, the figure of an eagle on his back, and of a beetle under his tongue. The hair on his tail was double. But on some of these points the accounts of ancient authors are contradictory. Of course, some of the marks just mentioned were merely feigned, or were produced by artifice. Apis was allowed to live just twenty-five years; and whether he died a natural death, or was killed by the priests at the expiration of his allotted term, a public lamentation was performed, which lasted until another Apis was found, and was then succeeded by great and enthusiastic rejoicings. As soon as a suitable calf was found, he was placed in

¹ B. 3: 28.

a house facing the east, where he was nourished on milk four months. At the expiration of this time, he was conveyed at the new moon, in a gilded palace placed on a boat, to Memphis, and was lodged in splendid apartments, with pleasure grounds and ample space for exercise. He drank clear water from a well or fountain, but was not allowed to drink of the Nile water lest it should make him too fat. The most beautiful female companions of his own species were provided for him. The man in whose herd this divine calf was found was regarded with universal admiration.

The Egyptians really worshipped this Apis bull as a god, as is asserted by Cicero¹ and other ancient writers. They celebrated in his honor a festival which lasted seven days. On this occasion great multitudes assembled at Memphis. The animal was led in solemn procession by the priests, a chorus of children going before him and singing hymns in his praise, and the people coming forward and welcoming him as he passed. He was consulted as an oracle, and various modes of divination through him were employed. Boys who played around his stable or palace were supposed to be inspired with a divine impulse, which enabled them to utter predictions in perfect rhythm. Children who walked before him in the public processions were supposed to acquire the gift of prophecy from his breath. His receiving food readily, was considered a good omen; his refusal to eat was considered a bad omen. Some-

¹ De Nat. Deor. 1: 29.

times those who wished to consult him, after burning incense, put their mouths to his ear and asked him whatever question they wished, and then stopping their ears, withdrew from the sacred enclosure. Whatever expression they heard, after withdrawing from the presence of the animal and unstopping their ears, was taken as an answer to the question which had been whispered in his ear.

When this horned and hairy god died, he was honored with a magnificent funeral. It is recorded that a sum equal to a million of dollars was sometimes spent in celebrating the obsequies of one of these dead bullocks.

Since Apis was regarded with so much veneration, his every motion would be regarded as of momentous importance, and watched with the utmost care. The lying down and rising up of the senseless brute, his sleeping and waking, his eating and refusing to eat, the tossing of his head and the shaking of his tail, his grunting and bellowing, and all his movements and motions, would be observed and noted with greater vigilance and awe, and his appetites and desires more promptly and completely gratified, than those of the most powerful monarch. The production of offspring, and the production even of *half-human* offspring, if such a thing were possible, from this and other sacred animals, would of course be sought after as a momentous matter and a religious duty. Just here is suggested the essential bestiality of the Egyptian theology. Decency, however, forbids a full declaration. But we may refer to the statements of Herodotus, who, speaking of the offering

of swine by the Egyptians in sacrifice at particular seasons, says, that they gave a reason for it which it would be indecent to mention;¹ and who, in speaking of the representation of Pan as having the face of a she-goat and the legs of the male, says, that the Egyptians have a reason for it which it would not be proper to state, but a little further on does make a statement which indicates the abominable character of the Egyptian theology and worship.² There is enough known concerning the debasing effects of animal worship among the Egyptians to account for the stringent laws enacted by Moses against bestial impurity among the Israelites after their long residence in the land of Apis.³

It is not our business to show how the polytheism, pantheism, and animal worship among the ancient Egyptians originated. If the Bible be true, and the suggestions of secular history are to be accepted, all mankind originally worshipped the one true God. Doubtless the Egyptians beyond the historic period were monotheists. Probably their first error was the worship of the earth, sun, moon, and the natural powers and elements, as the *symbols* of the attributes of the Godhead. Next they may have glided into the belief that these symbols themselves possessed divinity, and may have come to regard them as divine beings and as gods. Then symbols would be selected also for them. The ox, with his patient labor, would represent the fruit-bearing earth; the hawk, with its bright eyes, the sun; the crocodile,

¹ 2: 46. ² 2: 47. ³ Lev. xviii. 23. xx. 15, 16.

the river Nile; and combinations of the forms of different parts of animals, as the head of an ibis or a ram on the human body, or the human trunk with the face and legs of a goat, or the human form and face with the ears of an ass or cow, would be chosen to represent the properties and functions of the gods—which the earth, heavenly bodies, seas, rivers, winds, and all the powers of nature, were now supposed to be. These symbols would in turn be deified, and thus the process would go on and on, until the knowledge of the true God was lost, and until all the natural powers, elements, and objects, beasts, birds, reptiles, and insects were worshipped as gods, or as the vehicles of gods. Sir G. Wilkinson expresses the opinion that the Egyptian religion was pantheistic rather than polytheistic, and seems to think that its errors and abuses resulted mainly from the pantheistic principle and tendency.¹ Kenrick says that the Egyptian system of theology did not originate in any *one* principle, and that it contains traces of at least three; the worship of the heavenly bodies, the personification of the powers supposed to be engaged in creation and nature, and the assignment of personal symbols to abstract qualities.² But whatever may have been the *source* of the theological errors of the Egyptians, it is certain that they were both polytheists and pantheists; the worshippers of imaginary beings, the heavenly bodies, natural elements and objects, and also of animals.

Since such was the theology or rather the super-

¹ An. Egyptians, vol. 1, p. 328. ² An. Egypt, vol. 1, p. 309.

stitution of the Egyptians, their worship was of course formal, impure, and beastly. Prayers, processions, the singing of hymns, the offering of incense and bloody sacrifices, fightings, scourgings, exposures of the naked body, revelings, and obscenities, constituted the main part of the ceremonies and services which they performed in honor of their imaginary, material, and animal gods. It also appears, that in very early times they offered human sacrifices. This is denied by Herodotus.¹ His testimony, however, is of the negative kind. He is followed by Wilkinson.² Kenrick, however, shows that human sacrifices were offered by the Egyptians until the time of Amasis; who abolished the custom, and substituted an image of wax instead of the human victim.³ It is to the credit of their humanity, that notwithstanding the debasing influence of an abominable theology, they yielded to the decree of their king abolishing the monstrous custom.

We conclude our necessarily brief and imperfect review of Egyptian theology with a general summary.

1. Though the Egyptians appear to have lost all knowledge of the Divine unity, there yet remained in their theological system—contradictory and monstrous as it became—traces of a belief at a very early period in that fundamental doctrine. The blending of the attributes and functions of their gods, and the frequent identification of one god with another, indicate that originally they were but names or sym-

¹ 2: 45. ² vol. 1. p. 411. ³ vol. 1. pp. 368-370.

bols of the one God. The fact that among the vast number of local gods, there was one, the mysterious Ra or Phra (Pharaoh), the sun, who was attended by no goddess, had no mother, and yet was born of the virgin Neith, and who was universally recognized as king and father, also points to an early belief in the doctrine of one Supreme Being.

2. Among the numerous superstitions which obscured and destroyed this belief, was that of *pantheism*. The Egyptians conceived divinity in almost every thing—in the heavenly bodies, the natural elements, the earth, animals, insects, vegetables, stones, in the whole visible and invisible creation. It was this prevalent pantheism that Juvenal satirized, when he said, that among the Egyptians it was an impious act to eat a leek or an onion; and that their gods grew for them in their gardens.¹

3. The Egyptian theology was *polytheistic*. It obscured and finally discarded the doctrine of the Divine unity. It recognized eight deities of the first order, twelve of the second, and an enormous multitude of the third,—to say nothing of the natural objects, beasts, birds, serpents, and insects that were deified and worshipped. Nowhere was the doctrine of the oneness of the Godhead more deeply buried beneath hideous superstitions than among the ancient Egyptians.

4. Their religion was further corrupted by *materialism*. They conceived of their gods as corporeal beings of different sexes, and as marrying and be-

¹ Sat. 15.

getting children. They almost invariably represented their gods in triple groups—a god, a female god (of whom the first is both son and husband), and a third, the offspring of the other two. In whatever way we interpret this triad—whether we view it as the obscure and corrupt remains of a primitive belief in the Bible doctrine of the Trinity; or as designed to represent the union of the *active* and *passive* principles in creation, and the *product* thence arising; or as symbols of the *self-existent*, hidden god; the god creating himself a body and thus becoming *revealed*; and the god as *conceived in the minds* of worshippers; the god as *self-existing, objective, and subjective*—whatever this triad in Egyptian theology may have been originally designed to represent, it indicates that the divine nature was conceived and represented as a *material substance*.

5. *Beast-worship* was universally prevalent. We have illustrated the abominable character and debasing effects of this superstition by giving an account of Apis and his worship. But many other animals were worshipped as gods—crocodiles, serpents, fishes, cats, dogs, goats, vultures, larks, nearly all kinds of beasts, birds, reptiles, and even insects.

6. The Egyptian worship consisted in merely formal services, and in indecencies and obscenities.*

*In our account of Egyptian theology, we have mainly followed Herodotus, Kenrick, and Wilkinson.

CHAPTER III.

HINDU THEOLOGY.

THE ancient Hindus were pantheists, polytheists, and idolaters. They, indeed, believed in a Supreme Being. The holiest verse of the Vedas is as follows; 'Let us adore the supremacy of that divine sun (opposed to the visible luminary), the Godhead who illuminates all, who re-creates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return.'¹ In the *Laws of Menu*, God is described as 'He, whom the mind alone can perceive, whose essence eludes the external organs, who has no visible parts, who exists from eternity, who is the soul of all beings, and whom no being can comprehend.'² But though the writings of the ancient Hindus ascribe eternity, spirituality, and many other divine attributes to the Supreme Being, their ideas concerning him were obscured and deformed by many absurd and monstrous errors. We have already referred to their absurd cosmogony.³ But their cosmogony and theology are intimately connected, and the absurdity of the one is but the counterpart of the falseness of the other.

1. Brahm is represented as the creator. During a period of time inconceivable in length, he was in a

¹ Jones' works, vol. 13, p. 367. ² Jones' trans. ch. 1: 7.

³ Part 1, ch. 2.

state of inactivity or sleep. By his thought he first created the waters from his own substance, and placed in them an egg. In that egg Brahm was himself born in the form of Brahma, the forefather of all spirits.¹ Brahma, who is thus represented as proceeding from Brahm, as we shall presently see is the universe. Thus the First Cause or Power from which all things proceed, is represented as destitute of character and attributes. After the creation of Brahma, or after he was hatched in his own egg as Brahma, Brahm relapsed into a state of inactivity or sleep. Such a being is not the object either of love, reverence, or fear. He has no temple, and is never worshipped. The sleeping god is an object of indifference. Thus the very first principle, the starting point of Hindu theology, is fatally erroneous. Its inventors did not understand the fundamental truth, that the Creator of all things is a living, active, powerful, wise, and good Being.

2. The Hindu theology is *pantheistic*. Brahma, hatched from the egg of Brahm, is *everything*. The universe is but the expansion or development of the principles and qualities that were wrapt up in Brahm, and were educed from him. The universe is represented as his manifested form, and as Brahma it is described as a human body of prodigious magnitude. This pantheistic idea is set forth in Menu; where it is declared that all nature, visible and invisible, the boundless universe, the whole assemblage of gods and all worlds, are seated in the

¹ Menu, ch. 1: 9-32.

Divine Spirit, and that the Divine Spirit pervades all beings in five elemental forms, and, as the supreme soul, is present in all creatures.¹ Thus in this ancient theology Brahma is in every thing and every thing is in Brahma; Brahma is the universe and the universe is Brahma.

3. The Hindu theology also involved *the materiality* of the Godhead. It represented the supreme god as being hatched out of Brahm as a chicken is hatched from the egg, as having a corporeal form, and the different parts of the material universe as the members of his huge body. To all the gods material forms are ascribed. They are represented as male and female, as having sexual passions, as marrying, cohabiting, and begetting children. While the supreme god and all the gods were regarded as having spiritual natures, they were at the same time conceived of and represented as material substances. The Hindus both deified material things and materialized the Divine Spirit. In their pantheistic conceptions, they confounded the Creator with the works of his hands.

4. This ancient theology was *polytheistic*. Brahma, the world-god, comprehended many gods within himself. The Hindu pantheon contained a vast crowd of deities, male and female, superior and inferior, celestial and terrestrial. The number of the Hindu gods has been estimated at three-hundred-and thirty millions. The Hindus were taught not only that there are many gods, but that they are all

¹ Menu, ch. 12: 118-125.

to be worshipped. The Brahmin was enjoined to offer an oblation of clarified butter every day to the following divinities; first to Agni, the god of fire, and to the lunar god; next to the gods collectively; afterward to Dhanwantari, the god of medicine; Cuhu, goddess of the day, after the new moon; Anumati, goddess of the day after the opposition; Prajapati, the lord of creatures; Dyava and Prithivi, goddesses of the sky and earth; to Indra, Yama, Voruna, and Soma; to the Maruts (winds), water-gods, and gods of large trees; to Sri, the goddess of abundance; Bhadracalli, the propitious goddess; to Brahma, his household god; and to all the gods assembled; to the Spirits of the day and the Spirits of the night. After sacrificing to all these gods and goddesses, the Brahmin was directed to present whatever clarified butter remained as an offering to the Pitris, human progenitors.¹

5. As the result of the pantheistic, materialistic, and polytheistic elements in their theology, the Hindus were led into many *absurd opinions and practices*. Since they were taught that the universe is God, that He is in everything and everything in Him, they regard everything as possessing divinity. They had a superstitious regard for beasts, insects, plants, stones, and all material substances. This superstitious regard, doubtless, in part resulted from their belief in metempsychosis. They were taught that the souls of men after death inhabit the bodies of other beings; that for certain sins men after death

¹ Menu, ch. 1: 84-91.

assume a vegetable or mineral form; for others the forms of beasts or birds; for others the lowest of human conditions; that souls endued with goodness attain to the state of deities, and that bad souls pass into horses, cows, dogs, bears, snakes, insects, vegetable and mineral substances. Hence, as the souls of men were regarded as sparks of Brahma, pieces of Deity, all animate and inanimate things were regarded as the vessels or vehicles of divinity. Plants, animals, and minerals, were alike considered as having internal conscience, and as being sensible of pleasure and pain.¹ The man who sought after beatitude was enjoined to drink water strained through a cloth, lest he might hurt some insect.² Agriculture was condemned, as involving cruelty by 'wounding the earth and the creatures dwelling on it.'³ Slaying a cow, working in mines or dykes, and cutting green trees, were classed along with adultery, incest, selling a wife or child, and other transgressions; as crimes of the third degree, higher or lower according to circumstances.⁴ The higher classes of society, by the possession of a larger quantity of divinity, were considered as having a right to despise and oppress the lower. Brahmins were declared to be transcendently divine—their very birth to be a constant incarnation of Dherma, the god of justice.⁵ A king was declared to be composed of particles drawn from the four guardian deities of the world, and to be a powerful divinity in human shape.⁶ The Brahmin was for-

¹ Menu, ch. 1: 49. ² 6: 46. ³ 10: 84. ⁴ 7: 59-67.

⁵ Menu, 1: 31; 7: 318. ⁶ 7: 5-8.

bidden to marry a Sudra (one of the lowest class) on pain of everlasting perdition. He was also forbidden to marry into a family in which no males had been produced, in which the Veda had not been read, or which had thick hair, phthisis, dispepsy, or elephantiasis. He was further forbidden to marry a girl with inflamed eyes, or one with reddish hair, too much hair, or no hair at all. On the other hand, he was required to marry a girl without defect of form, with an agreeable name, and who walked gracefully like a phenicopteros or a young elephant.¹

The man who killed a cow, even without malice, was subjected to ridiculous and disgusting punishments. 'He must drink for the first month barley-corns boiled soft in water; his head must be shaved and covered with the hide of the slain cow; he must fix his abode on her late pasture ground; all day he must wait on the herd and stand quaffing the dust raised by their hoofs; at night having servilely attended and stroked and saluted them, he must surround them with a fence, and sit near to guard them; he must stand while they stand, follow them when they move together, and lie down by them when they lie down. Should a cow be sick or terrified by tigers or thieves, or fall, or stick in the mud, he must relieve her by all possible means; in heat, in rain, in cold, or while the blast rages, he must not seek his own shelter without first sheltering the cows to the utmost of his power. He must not speak a

¹ Menu, 3: 7-10.

word of a cow that eats corn or grass, or of a calf that drinks milk. By waiting on a herd according to these rules for three months, the slayer of a cow atones for his guilt. But, his penance being performed, he must give ten cows and a bull, or, his stock not being so large, all he possesses, to such as know the Veda.¹

Another absurd and pernicious error embraced in the Hindu theology, is the notion, that the dumb, blind, deaf, lame, and deformed, were thus born because of sins which their souls had committed in a previous state of existence. Such persons were not compassionated as unfortunate, but despised as criminals suffering deserved punishments.²

6. The Hindu theology was *idolatrous*. They assimilated the incorruptible and invisible God to the form of corruptible men, and of four-footed beasts and creeping things. There is, indeed, no trace of image-worship in the Vedas, their oldest writings. But they fell into it at an early period of their history. Respect to the images of the gods is expressly enjoined in Menu.³

7. The *worship* of the Hindus was *in keeping with the character of their theology*. In addition to prayers, hymns, and sacrifices, which constituted an important part of pagan worship in former times, their religious services consisted in bodily austerities, the utterance of magic words, and other trivial acts of devotion. They were taught that sin is to be expiated, and holiness attained, by self-torture and

¹ Menu, 10: 109-117. ² 10: 53. ³ 2: 176.

other penances. Sliding backward and forward on the ground, standing a whole day on tiptoe, continuing in motion by rising and sitting alternately, bathing at sun-rise, noon, and sunset, and emaciating the body by starvation and other austerities, were enjoined upon them as holy and meritorious acts. He who would attain to holiness and beatitude, was enjoined to withdraw from all society and live in solitude; to have no home and no fire; to beg his food; to eat but once a day and only when very hungry; to wander about continually; to be destitute alike of hatred and affection, of joy and sorrow; to avoid giving pain to animal and vegetable beings, but to be completely indifferent to family, friends, and all human creatures; to be constantly engaged in sublime meditation; to repose entirely on God; and thus to raise himself after death to immortal glory.¹ These voluntary austerities and tortures were considered only less holy and meritorious than certain trivial acts of devotion. The Sannyasi, a Brahmin in the fourth stage of advancement, was required, by way of expiation for the death of those creatures which he had perchance unknowingly destroyed,—such as insects,—to make, after having duly bathed, six suppressions of his breath. Even three suppressions of breath, made according to the prescribed rule, and accompanied with the tri-verbal phrase *bhur bhwah swah* and the syllable *om*, were considered the highest devotion of a Brahmin.² In such a religion true devotion could have no place.

¹ Menu, 6: 32-63. ² 6: 69-70.

8. The Hindu theology is characterized by *confusion*, *inconsistency*, and *absurdity*. It is contained in a literature which is almost interminable, and which, the Brahmins say, is like the ocean unfathomable. This vast collection of writings contains, indeed, some traces of monotheism and some noble ideas of God's majesty and spirituality; but these are completely overlaid by a vast and chaotic mythology, a confused and contradictory system of pantheism, polytheism, materialism, nature-worship, man-worship, and image-worship; and by absurd speculations and hideous superstitions. The Hindu theologians vibrated between atheistic scepticism and monstrous credulity. They represented the Creator as a being without character and attributes, almost as a nonentity, and altogether as an object of indifference to rational creatures. Their fundamental principle was but one remove from atheism. But around this starting point they piled up a gigantic mass of fables, speculations, and superstitions.

In the account which we have thus given of Hindu theology, we have followed neither the earliest nor latest Hindu writings. In the Vedas—the most ancient of which, according to Sir W. Jones and other orientalists, was written more than fifteen hundred years before the Christian era—the theology of the Hindus is not fully developed. But in *Menu*, it is presented in a matured state, and yet free from the corruptions of modern times. In the Vedas, too, we find the germ of those errors which afterward grew into such gigantic proportions. Professor Wilson says, that the fundamental doctrine of

the Vedas is monotheism, but that the titles and functions given to the deities commonly addressed in these invocations give to the religion of the Vedas the character of the worship of the elements; and it is not unlikely that it was so in its earliest and rudest condition.¹ In the second hymn of the Rig-Veda there are invocations to Vayu, the god of the air; to Mitra, the sun; to Varuna, able to destroy; and to Indra, the god of the firmament. The theology of the Vedas is deeply tinged with pantheism, polytheism, and materialism; and the theology of *Menu* is but the natural and inevitable development of it. In that work we have a full representation of the theological achievements of the Hindu mind.

¹ Essays and Lects. on the religion of the Hindus, vol. 2. pp. 50-2.

CHAPTER IV.

BUDDHIST THEOLOGY.

IN the sixth century before the Christian era, two or three centuries after Brahminism had been established by the code of *Menu*, there arose a new religion which set itself in opposition to the old, and for a time supplanted it as the state religion of India. This was Buddhism, founded by Gotama, otherwise called Sakya Muni. This religion in some respects is very remarkable. Its success has been astonishingly great. It was for a long time the dominant faith from the Himalayas to Ceylon. After being driven out of the country of its birth, and enduring many a persecution, it continues to hold sway in almost every country of its adoption, and, if second to any other system of religion in respect to the number of its adherents, is second only to Christianity. Like Christianity, too, it propagated itself by persuasion beyond its own country, which no other systems of note have ever done. But when we consider the dogmas of this religion, we are at a loss to account for its power and success. In India, where it originated, it was a revolt against the tyranny of the Brahmins, against caste, the popular mythology, and the formalism and prohibitions of the old faith. It was, also, catholic in

spirit, addressing itself alike to all classes and ranks. So far, it was likely to recommend itself to the Hindus, tired of the restrictions and burdens of Brahminism. But the affirmative tenets of Buddhism are such as, we would suppose, would make it repulsive to all men in whom the natural instinct of religion was not utterly destroyed.

Buddhism is but another name for atheism. Incredible as it may at first appear, that a system which denies the doctrine on which all religion is founded, should number so large a portion of mankind among its firm and devoted adherents, it is declared by those most competent to decide, that Sakya-Muni denied or ignored the existence of God. Such is the testimony of Burnouf, Müller, and others. The first of these writers says, Sakya never spoke of God, and held that there is no God.¹ Müller says, that he denied the existence not only of a Creator, but of any Absolute Being.² Sakya also denied the existence of a real world. He maintained that there is no objective reality; nothing real but the human soul. He taught that men should seek the annihilation of their souls; that absolute nothingness is the only thing desirable. According to his metaphysical tenets, there is no reality anywhere, either in the past or future; and true wisdom consists in perceiving that the whole world is an illusion, and in desiring to become nothing. Since he denied, or at least ignored, the existence of God, he of course did not recognize any such

¹ Introduction à l' Histoire du Buddhisme, p. 520.

² Chips from a German Workshop, vol. 1, p. 227.

thing as a divine law. The idea of moral obligation did not enter into his system. He taught, not that sin is to be abhorred as a transgression or pollution, but that it is to be feared and shunned as a misfortune. Sin was supposed to originate in affection, attachment, and desire; and salvation to be attained by the deliverance of the soul from them. But this deliverance of the soul from all feeling and desire, it was thought, could only be effected by its annihilation. It seems almost incredible that such a faith should be received by vast multitudes of the human race. Yet the testimony of Buddhist scholars¹ does not permit us to doubt that by the entrance of the soul into Nirvana, the heaven of the Buddhists, was meant the total extinction of being. The idea that Nirvana was understood by Buddha and his disciples to be a state of *apathy* or *rest* must be abandoned. 'The Buddhist can discover no permanent rest, no eternity of peace, in any world; and he therefore concludes that there can be no deliverance from change and sorrow but by the cessation of existence.'²

Buddhism embraced the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Men who did not attain to holiness in this life were not allowed to enter Nirvana at death, but were doomed to a prolonged existence. The means prescribed for the attainment of holiness and annihilation were much better than the Buddhist tenets would lead us to expect. Buddha laid down 'Four verities;' the first of which asserts the

¹ Burnouf, Hardy, and Müller.

² Hardy's Manual of Buddhism, p. 508.

existence of pain; the second asserts that pain originates in sin; the third asserts that pain may cease by Nirvana; the fourth shows the way to Nirvana. This way to Nirvana consists in eight things; right faith (orthodoxy), right judgment (logic), right language (veracity), right purpose (honesty), right practice (religious life), right obedience (lawful life), right memory, and right meditation.¹ The morality taught in connection with the fourth 'verity,' though much inferior to the Christian morality, appears more excellent than all the other systems that have prevailed among men. Yet this morality was deeply tinged with the religious, or rather unreligious, metaphysics of Buddhism. Morality was to be practised, not as in itself good or as leading to happiness, but as a self-denial and as the means of self-annihilation. Virtue was defined as that which helped a man *to cross to the other shore*; and that other shore was the utter extinction of existence. Charity, even, was to be practised in a spirit of self-sacrifice. It is reported that Buddha, when he saw a tigress with her cubs nearly starved, offered his body as a charitable oblation, to be devoured by them. He and his disciples adopted the life of mendicants. Celibacy and poverty were required of those who embraced a religious life. They were required to dress in rags gathered from cemeteries, and to beg their food. They were to live in forests, and to have no shelter but the shadow of a tree. They were forbidden to lie down even in sleep; and

¹ Chips from a German Workshop, vol. 1, p. 247.

the only change allowed was their spending some nights in the cemeteries, to meditate on the vanity of all things. This asceticism was the natural result of the belief, that every thing objective is unreal; and that all affections, feelings, and attachments are to be eradicated and destroyed. Actuated by such a belief, the Buddhist arrived at the logical conclusion that the destruction of all thought, consciousness, and even existence, is to be sought after as the greatest good. Truly, as Prof. Müller says, such a religion is fit only for a mad-house. The theoretical part of it could neither be believed nor understood by more than a few, if by any, of those who called themselves Buddhists. Instinctively, and perhaps unconsciously, they would in their own minds reject it. A religion without a God is impossible. He who taught that there is no God, was himself deified and worshipped by multitudes of his followers. Buddhism soon became the worship of Buddha; and the greatest merit was supposed to be acquired by offering him presents. Instead of regarding him as a non-entity after death, according to his own teachings, the Buddhists honored him with prayers and offerings as the Lord of all life and power.

Buddhism as a metaphysical system is an anomaly, a contradiction, and a madness. It is in reality not a theology, for it denied the existence of God. It denied the existence of the objective world, with all its changes, misfortunes, and sorrows; and yet it taught that to be emancipated from them the human soul must shrink into annihilation. It asserted

that sin is the cause of all pain; and yet denied that in sin there is any demerit or pollution. It commended charity, and even encouraged men to relieve starving brutes by making oblations of their own bodies; and yet maintained that all thought and feeling, all love as well as aversion, must be suppressed and destroyed as pernicious. It seemingly set itself in opposition to the common sense, the religious feelings and instinctive hopes of men, by asserting that external things exist only in human thought, by denying the existence of God, and by teaching that the only thing to be hoped for by men is to be blown out of existence like a candle; yet its success and influence are exceeded only by those of Christianity. What is the secret of that success and influence? Its revolt against the sacerdotal tyranny of the Brahmins, its rejection of their grievous prohibitions and requirements, and its setting aside the distinctions of caste, might indeed recommend it to the people of India, but could be of no advantage to it in countries where Brahminism never existed. Its recognition of human sinfulness, and its proposed remedy—human merit, and the making of one's-self good by the mortification of evil desire and the performance of external duties—fall in with the prevailing ideas and inclinations of mankind. But, doubtless, the changes introduced into Buddhism after its first success on its native soil were the main causes of its continued growth and increasing power. Sakya Muni became a god to his followers, and his Nirvana became a place of peace and rest. Thus his system was stripped of the doctrines which

outraged the natural and religious feelings and instincts of men; and became adapted to the ignorance, prejudices, and tastes of the peoples among whom it has flourished. Among the more cultivated people of India, where it originated and gained its first success, it was discarded; and the old religion with its millions of gods, confused mythology, and absurd speculations, was re-established in its place.

CHAPTER V.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT PERSIANS.

AMONG the oldest theologies known among men is that of the ancient Persians. The writings in which it is embodied are supposed by many to be contemporary with the Vedas, and older than the oldest books of the Bible. For our knowledge of these ancient writings and the theology which they contain, we are mainly indebted to the translation of the *Avesta* by Dr. Spiegel of Germany.¹

We shall take little notice of the changes that may have taken place in the religious belief and practices of the Persians from age to age. Doubtless there are evidences of an earlier and later belief to be discovered, as the translator asserts, in the books which he has given to the world under the name of 'Avesta, the sacred writings of the Parsees.' But during the whole time covered by this motley collection of hymns, laws, prayers, ritual prescriptions, and moral precepts, the Persian theology remained *substantially* the same.

The ancient Persians, like most other nations, recognized the existence of a supreme Deity. It is

¹ Avesta, die heiligen Schriften der Parsen, aus dem Grundtexte übersetzt, mit steter Rücksicht auf die tradition, von Dr. F. Spiegel; Leipzig.

pleasing to find that in their sacred writings he is denominated the greatest and best of beings, the holy Spirit, the creator of the earth and all good things; and that to Him are ascribed the kingdom, the might, and the power.¹ This ancient people were also taught that the soul of man is immortal, and that there is a future state of rewards and punishments. They had a fable about a bridge, called *Chinvat*, connecting the present and the future world, at which the souls of the dead were supposed to be examined with regard to their past conduct.² Paradise was promised as a reward to the meritorious. Even the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is brought to view in some of their writings, though Spiegel thinks that it was unknown among them at the time the *Vendidad*, supposed to be one of their oldest books, was written.³

Yet the theology taught by Zarathustra (Zoroaster) or attributed to him, embraced many gross and superstitious errors. He taught that there are two creators; Ahura-Mazda (Ormuzd), the creator of good things, and Agra-mainyus (Ahriman), the god of evil. This doctrine of two independent and opposing deities runs through the entire Avesta. It is to this dualism of the Zarathustriac theology that Isaiah the Hebrew prophet alludes, when, in speaking of the mission and success of Cyrus the Persian king, he represents Jehovah as declaring that himself alone possesses Deity, and exercises control over both the kingdoms of good and evil:—‘I am the LORD,

¹ Yacna, 36-37.

² Vendidad, 19: 96.

³ Ven. 18: 110, and 19: 89, note.

and there is none else; I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the LORD do all these things.¹

This fundamental error of a duality of gods is the starting point of many other errors. Those who believed in *two* gods were likely to invent many more. Accordingly we find that Ahura-Mazda, *the god of goodness*, is represented as having sons and daughters, and as being assisted by many inferior deities, called Amēsha-cpentas, in the creation and government of his portion of the universe. These assistants of the god of goodness are represented as divided into several classes, terrestrial and celestial, male and female, as belonging to different ranks, and possessing unequal powers. Ahura-mazda is only the highest Genius, the chief Divinity, the first of the Amēsha-cpentas. There are six others; Vohumano, the protector of living creatures; Ashavahista, the genius of fire; Khshathra-vairya, the god of metals; Cpenta-Armaiti, the goddess of the earth and of wisdom; Haurvat, the lord of waters; and, Amereatt, the lord of trees.² Fire is declared to be the son of God; the earth his daughter. Fire is said to have descendants among the genii or demons, called Yazatas.³ These imaginary beings, called Amēsha-cpentas, including Ahura-mazda, were regarded as the creators and rulers of the world. The *Yacna* declares that 'the wise Amēsha-cpentas have formed all things.'⁴

In like manner, Agra-mainyus was regarded as a

¹ Is. 45 : 6-7.

² *Yacna*, 1 : 5, note.

³ *Vis.* 19 : 2.

⁴ *Yac.* 44 : 1.

creator, and as having a multitude of genii or demons, called Daevas, under his control. He is the Daeva of the Daevas, the *chief of the devil-gods*, who are worshipped and served by bad men, but who annoy the good, and oppose the god of light and goodness. They labor incessantly to thwart the plans of Ahura-mazda and his assistant Amesha-cpentas. If the Amesha-cpentas send rain and fruitful seasons; the Daevas send drought, cold, or scorching heat. If the former create rivers, lakes, and fertile plains; the latter create deserts, stagnant pools, and barren hills. If the former create horses, cows, dogs, and other useful animals; the latter create wasps, snakes, wolves, hyenas, and other noxious animals. If the former encourage honesty, justice, industry, and all good deeds; the latter introduce lying, indolence, poverty, disease, theft, murder, and everything pernicious and wicked.¹ Everything good in creation and providence from Ahura-mazda and his Amesha-cpentas has its evil counterpart from Agra-mainyus and his Daevas. Even the creation of man is a partnership of Good and Evil; his soul being formed by the good Deity, and his body by the devil-gods of Agra-mainyus.²

The theology of the ancient Persians embraced not only polytheism, but also *materialism*. Ahura-mazda and the other good Deities, were regarded not as pure spirits, but as corporeal beings. In the Zarathustriac system, fire was the son of the supreme Amesha-cpenta; earth his fair daughter.³ He who

¹ Ven. 1: 1-81. ² Ven. 9: 69. ³ Ven. 9: 45-6.

was thought to have begotten material things from himself, must have been regarded as being a material substance. Accordingly 'a body, the fairest of all bodies, is ascribed to him;'¹ and material objects were worshipped as the offspring of the Most High, and as partakers of his divinity. Herodotus informs us that it was the custom of the ancient Persians to offer on the summits of mountains sacrifices to Jupiter, designating by that name all the expanse of the firmament; and that they adored also the sun, moon, earth, fire, water, and winds,—which were their original deities.² The correctness of this testimony has been called in question. Gibbon declares that Herodotus was led by 'the true spirit of a polytheist' falsely to accuse the Persians of deifying natural objects; and that these were regarded by them merely as symbols of divinity, but were not worshipped as gods.³ But the old historian declares that he speaks from personal observation and positive knowledge;⁴ and the researches of modern scholarship prove his account to be correct. Gibbon derived his knowledge of the Persian religion from the French translation of the Avesta by M. d'Anquetil. But the more correct translation of the Avesta recently published in Germany demonstrates, that the ancient Persians were the worshippers of natural objects. The sun, moon, stars, firmament, air, earth, waters, winds, trees, and other material things, are expressly mentioned as objects of veneration. We present some extracts from the

¹ Yacna, 36: 14. ² B. 1: 131. ³ Decline and fall, ch. 8.

⁴ B. 1: 13, 140.

Yacna, which, though translated from a translation, are sufficiently accurate, we trust to give a proper idea of the polytheistic and pantheistic materialism embraced in the Zarathustrian theology.

‘The Creator, Ahura-mazda, we praise. The Mithra, who possesses wide pastures, a thousand ears, ten thousand eyes, who has a renowned name, and adorable, we praise.

‘The Asha-vahista (genius of fire) and Fire, the son of Ahura-mazda, we praise.

‘The water, created by Mazda, we praise.

‘The Ahura and Mithra (sun), the two great, imperishable, pure (beings), we praise; and the Stars, and the Moon, the Sun, the Trees, the Mithra, the Lord of all regions, we praise.

‘Thee, the Fire, the son of Ahura-mazda, the pure, the Lord of the Pure, we praise, together with all fires.

‘These Waters, Regions, Trees, we praise. ‘These Places, Spaces, Pastures, Dwellings, and Fountains, we praise. This Lord of the places, the Ahura-mazda, we praise.’¹

When the ancient Persian presented offerings to his gods, he made the following declaration: ‘With purification, I present offerings to these Places, Spaces, Pastures, Dwellings, Fountains, Waters, Regions, Trees; to this Earth, to this Heaven, to the Winds, the Stars, the Moon, the Sun, to the Lights without beginning, the self-created, to all the creatures of Cpenta-mainyus, the pure—male and fe-

¹ Yacna, 6 : 1, 6, 10, 36, 39, 49.

male—to the Lords of the Pure.¹ In the chapters from which the above extracts are given, the worshipper is represented giving praise and offerings to the sun, moon, stars, winds, waters, trees, and all kinds of material and inanimate things; as well as to the Amesha-epentas, genii, demons and spirits. Never have we found in any writings a more complete identification of Deity with material things than in this old Zarathustrian ritual. The only parallel to it is found in the theologies of the ancient Egyptians and Hindus. Like them, the Persians working out the pantheistic and polytheistic ideas, deified all kinds of material objects, and came in the end to regard the Almighty Spirit as possessing corporeal substance; and as differing only in degree, not in kind, from the beings and things which compose the universe.

But the writings attributed to Zarathustra, teach the worship of *men*, as well as of imaginary beings and material substances. Again and again, are the souls of the departed addressed as objects of praise and invocation. They are worshipped under the name of *Fravashis*.² Even *living* men and women receive divine honors:—‘The women, the good goddesses, who proceed from the good Father, the well-grown, I invoke with praise.’³ Zarathustra is worshipped as second only to the Most High:—‘Here by means of the Zaothra and Berecma, I invoke with praise thee, Ahura-mazda, the heavenly Lord, the Lord and Master of heavenly creatures, of the

¹ Yacna, 7: 50. ² Yac. 6: 17, 54, 26: 11-35.

³ Vispered, 2: 17.

heavenly creation. * * Here, by means of the Zaothra and the Berecma, I invoke with praise, thee, Zarathustra, the holy, earthly Lord, the Lord and Master of the earthly creatures, of the earthly creation.¹

One of the worst features of the Persian theology was its inculcation of the worship of fabulous and monstrous beings. Mithra, the god of light, was represented as having a thousand ears and ten thousand eyes.² Doubtless his many ears and eyes were at first symbolic of his office and character; but doubtless also by such symbolic representations idolatry and polytheism were originated and spread abroad. Often is 'the navel of the waters' mentioned as an object of adoration. By this was meant a fabulous chain of mountains, which, according to the Persian cosmology, girdled the whole earth.³ Also, according to the Persian mythology, there was at first a solitary Bull in the world, who was killed by Agra-mainyus. After his death, useful kinds of grain were formed from his body; and his soul ascended to heaven, where it lamented that the world was without protection against the corrupting influences of Agra-mainyus, until the Fravashi (spirit) of Zarathustra was shown to it, whereupon it was comforted. This fabulous animal is often mentioned in the Avesta as the object of religious worship. Both his body and soul are represented as worthy of veneration. Praises are ascribed to him as to a god.⁴

¹ Vis. 2: 4, 7. ² Yac. 1: 9. ³ Yac. 1: 15, *note*.

⁴ Yac. 1: 6, *note*. Vis. 10: 23.

Another fabulous animal, celebrated in the Zarathustrian writings, is the ass standing in the middle of the sea of Vouru-Kasha. This sea is a fabulous reservoir of pure water, frequently mentioned as the object of adoration along with fire, the firmament, and Ahura-mazda himself.¹ This ass was represented in the later mythology as being three-legged. Divine honors are ascribed to him:—‘The pure Ass, that stands in the middle of the sea of Vouru-Kasha, we praise.’²

In addition to the worship of fabulous and monstrous beings, the ancient Persians were led by their theology to perform absurd ceremonies for exorcism and purification. They were taught to believe that Agra-mainyus, the chief of the devil-gods, and sometimes called the Serpent, introduced death into the world, as well as other evils. He is represented as employing his Daevas to kill men; and a class of them, called the Drukhs Nacus were supposed to take possession of men’s bodies. To drive them out, a tedious process was necessary. They were driven from one part to another by the application of water. It would seem that the Daevas, which infested human bodies, like mad-dogs dreaded water. The water was first poured on the forehead. The process is described by questions and answers, recorded as a conversation between Zarathustra and Ahura-mazda, as follows; ‘Creator! When the good water comes on his forehead, whither rushes then this Drukhs Nacus? Whereupon Ahura-maz-

¹Vis. 8: 18-20. Yac. 67: 14. ²Yacna, 41: 28, *note*.

da answered, Between the eye-brows of this man rushes this Drukhs Nacus.—Creator! When the good water comes between the eye-brows of this man, whither rushes then this Drukhs Nacus? Whereupon Ahura-mazda answered, To the back of his head.—Creator! When the good water comes on the back of his head, whither rushes then this Drukhs Nacus? Whereupon Ahura-mazda answered, To his cheek rushes this Drukhs Nacus.’ By a continuance of these monotonous questions and answers, we are informed how the evil spirit is to be driven from the cheek to the right ear; from the right ear to the left ear; from the left ear to the right shoulder; to the left shoulder; to the upper breast; to the back; to the right nipple; to the left nipple; to the right rib; to the left rib; to the right hip; to the left hip; to the lower part of the body; to the right thigh; to the left thigh; right knee; left knee; right shin bone; left shin bone; right foot; left foot; right knuckle; left knuckle; sole of the right foot. Then the process is as follows: ‘With the toes turned down and the heels raised up, sprinkle the sole of his right foot. Then this Drukhs Nacus rushes to the sole of the left foot. Then moisten his left sole, and this Drukhs Nacus will be pressed back under the toes like the wing of a gnat. With the heels turned down and the toes raised up, sprinkle his right toes. Then this Drukhs Nacus rushes to his left toes. Sprinkle his left toes. Then will this Drukhs Nacus be driven back to the northern regions, in the form of a fly.’¹

¹ Ven. 8: 131-228.

We present these extracts, tedious as they are, because they show what absurd and superstitious ideas abound in the Zarathustriac books. The fact that these questions and answers, continued with tiresome iteration throughout many pages, and characterized by childishness, were supposed by the ancient Persians to have been an actual conversation between the Creator and Zarathustra, shows how low and erroneous were their theological ideas.

We call attention to one other feature of this ancient theology—the absurdity of its penances and atonements. In the Zarathustriac ritual these occupy a prominent place. As specimens we present the following. For giving bad food to a village dog (dogs are much honored in the Avesta), the transgressor was required to make atonement by receiving ‘on his sinful body’ ninety strokes of the horse-goad and ninety of the Craosho-charana. For giving bad food to a cattle dog, the atonement was heavier,—two hundred strokes of the horse-goad, and two hundred of the Craosho-charana.¹ The punishment for injuring a cattle dog so as ‘to diminish his life-power,’ was eight hundred strokes with the horse-goad, and the same number with the Craosho-charana. The punishment for injuring a village dog was not quite so severe,—seven hundred strokes with each of these instruments.² But for *killing* either a cattle or a village dog, there was no expiation. It is declared concerning the perpetrator of this crime, ‘his soul goes, full of horror, and dis-

¹ Ven. 13: 63-68. ² 13: 38-47.

eased, from this our world to the unearthly.¹ For killing a water animal which seems to have been regarded as a species of dog, and which, according to the fabulous account recognized in the Vendidad, was produced from 'a thousand female and a thousand male dogs,' a stupendous atonement was required. The transgressor was required to provide ten thousand loads of hard wood, well-hewed and well-dried, for the fire of Ahura-mazda, and ten thousand loads of soft wood for the same purpose; to bind ten thousand bundles for Berecma; to prepare ten thousand Zaothras of Haoma and flesh; to kill ten thousand reptiles which glide along on the earth, and ten thousand 'which have the bodies of dogs;' to kill ten thousand turtles, ten thousand land lizards, ten thousand water lizards, ten thousand ants which 'carry away the grains of corn,' ten thousand ants which lead 'a mischievous course,' ten thousand mice which live in the dirt, and ten thousand mischievous gnats. He was further required to fill ten thousand impure holes in the earth, and to devote twice seven instruments, axe, hammer, etc, for the expiation of his soul. All this was required as an atonement for killing an animal, perhaps a beaver or a muskrat, to which was attributed a fabulous origin.²

For the purification of the body in a certain case of constructive defilement, a man was required to slaughter a thousand small cattle and the small cattle of all the herds, as an offering; to bring

¹ Ven. 13: 22. ² 14: 1-54.

water; to furnish a thousand loads of hard dry wood and a thousand loads of soft wood; to bind a thousand bundles for Berecma; to offer a thousand Zaothras with Haoma and flesh; to kill a thousand gliding reptiles, two thousand reptiles of another kind, a thousand land lizards, two thousand water lizards, a thousand ants that drag away the corn and two thousand ants of another kind; to build thirty bridges over streams of running water, and to receive a thousand strokes with the horse-goad and a thousand with the Craosho-charana.¹ The purification of fire, waters, trees, cattle, dwellings, men, women, the earth, stars, moon, sun, light, and all good things created by Ahura-mazda, was by the repetition of certain prayers.² But in some cases the prayers were accompanied by rites of such a character that we must pass them over in silence.

The Persian theology may be summed up as follows:

1. The doctrine of a *supreme Being; the immortality of the soul*, not however to the exclusion of the annihilation of the souls of wicked men; *future rewards and punishments; and the resurrection of the dead*. Probably the resurrection of the dead and the annihilation of the wicked were not taught by Zarathustra, but became known to the Persians after his time. But the doctrine of a supreme Being, Ahura-mazda, greatest, wisest, and most powerful, is prominent throughout the Avesta.

2. *Polytheism*. Besides Ahura-mazda the god of

¹ Ven. 18: 136-152. ² 11: 6-41.

goodness, and Agra-mainyus, the god of evil, six good deities, assistants of the former, were recognized. In addition to these six principal assistants of Ahura-mazda, a vast crowd of inferior deities—Amesha-cpentas, Yazatas, Fravashis, spirits, demons, genii, beings celestial and terrestrial, visible and invisible, male and female—are represented as sharing with Ahura-mazda in the creation and dominion of the world, and as the objects of worship.

3. *Pantheistic materialism.* Ahura-mazda, though called the holy Spirit, is represented as a corporeal being, as having wives and begetting children. The sun, the earth, fire, light, and other material things, are declared to be his offspring. The ancient Persians deified not only imaginary beings, human spirits, and the heavenly bodies; but also the earth, waters, winds, trees, metals, and all kinds of material things. In their worship, they scarcely distinguished between the Creator and the creation. They materialized the one, and deified the other.

4. *Man-worship.* Zarathustra was worshipped as a god. The souls of the departed received divine honors. Some of 'the good goddesses' were women.

5. *The worship of fabulous and monstrous animals.*

6. *Absurd and outlandish rites and penances* for the exorcism of evil spirits, the purification of the body, and the expiation of sin.

Such is the Zarathustrian theology—a theology which exerted a powerful influence for centuries over a large portion of mankind. It contained some truth, as does every system of error. But it was made up mainly of fable, speculation, and ab-

surdity. It prevailed only among the people among whom it originated; and like most systems of religious error, it was destined to perish on the soil that gave it birth. It had in it but little to elevate and purify, but much to degrade and debase, the minds and hearts of men.

CHAPTER VI.

CHINESE THEOLOGY.

THREE systems of religion have been prevalent in China—Buddhism, Tauism, and Confucianism. Buddhism, which was introduced from India, was established as a third state religion about the middle of the first century. Tauism was indigenous, and sprung up before the introduction of Buddhism. Confucianism is older than either; its doctrines and worship having existed long before the birth of the man after whom it is named. This is the national religion of China. Confucius, though regarded as the founder of a religion, was not an innovator. He declared himself to be a transmitter, not a maker; one who believed in and loved the ancients. He was conservative in his tendencies, and talked much about the rules of propriety established by ancient sages. He was the great man of the Chinese; their theological as well as moral instructor. The theology of China is Confucian.

It appears that the monotheistic belief prevailed among the Chinese in very early times. At least, the doctrine of a personal God was a part of the faith of their earlier sages. In the She-King, a book composed before Confucius' time, but compiled

by him,¹ the Creator and ruler of the universe is represented by a personal name. He there appears as a personal being, ruling in heaven and on earth, the author of man's moral nature, the governor among the nations, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the bad.²

But in the Chinese theology as presented by Confucius, the personality of God is discarded. In his *Analects* he does not once designate the Supreme Being by a personal name. He preferred to speak of *Heaven*. He spoke of praying to *Heaven* instead of to God, and of men offending against *Heaven* instead of against God. In thus discarding the Divine personality and confounding him with the works of his hands, Confucius gave occasion to his followers to identify him with a principle of reason and the course of nature, and prepared the way for atheistic speculations in modern times. Dr. Legge expresses the opinion that he did not consciously and designedly make any change in the ancient creed of China; that he was *unreligious* rather than *irreligious*; and that owing to his coldness in religion, rather than to his positive teachings, his influence is unfavorable to the development of true religious feeling among the Chinese people. But be this as it may, their theology, as *expounded by their greatest teacher*, is, to say the least, indistinct and hesitating in its utterance of the fundamental truth of all religion—the existence of God.

The Chinese theology was tinged with pantheism

¹ Chips from a German Workshop, vol. 1, p. 304.

² Legge's Confucius, p. 100.

and polytheism. The rejection of the personal name of God indicates a pantheistic tendency. The worship of Heaven was substituted for the worship of the Almighty living Creator. The Chinese offered sacrifices both to Heaven and Earth. They regarded the worship of ancestors as a religious duty. Their ritual provided for sacrifices to three classes of objects—‘Spirits of heaven, of earth, of men.’¹ The worship of departed ancestors and of spiritual beings existed in China from the earliest historical times. This practice Confucius approved and followed. ‘He sacrificed to the dead, as if they were present. He sacrificed to the spirits, as if the spirits were present.’² This worshipping of departed ancestors was originally founded on a belief in their continued existence. Those who instituted it certainly did not think that all conscious being ceases with life. But Confucius never spoke explicitly on this subject. When questioned in regard to it, he said; ‘While you do not know life, how can you know death?’ He enforced the worship of the dead, without recognizing the faith from which it sprung.³ His example and teachings in reference to this matter have led many of his followers to deny the existence of any spirit at all, and to regard their own sacrifices to the dead as a mere outward form, expressive of filial regard. The spirit and tendency of Chinese theology, are indicated by the worship given to Confucius himself. Soon after his death, a temple was erected, in which sacrifices were offered to the de-

¹ Legge’s Confucius, p. 127. ² p. 130. ³ p. 101.

parted sage at the four seasons of the year. Emperors visited his tomb and offered sacrifices to him. In the year A. D. 57, it was enacted that sacrifices should be offered to him in the imperial college and in all the colleges of the principal territorial divisions of the empire. About the same time began the custom of erecting temples to him in connection with all the colleges of the country. In these temples his image is kept. On the first day of every month offerings of fruits and vegetables are presented; and on the fifteenth there is a solemn burning of incense. Twice a year the worship of Confucius is performed with peculiar solemnity. At the imperial college, the emperor is required to attend in state, and is the principal performer. After kneeling twice and bowing his head six times to the earth, he invokes the presence of Confucius' spirit. Then, his spirit being present, as is supposed, sacrifices are offered, and a prayer is addressed to him as a 'Teacher equal in virtue to Heaven and Earth.' Of this homage Dr. Legge says, *it is complete*; and that it is worship, and not mere homage.¹

The Chinese theology may be summed up as follows:

1. *The doctrine of a Supreme Being*, held from the earliest times and never entirely abandoned.
2. *The deification and worship of spirits*—beings resident in heaven and earth, who were supposed to be superior to men, and to watch over their affairs.
3. *Man-worship*—the paying of divine honors to the

¹p. 93.

dead, and the deification of Confucius himself. 4. *An element of pantheism, polytheism, and materialism*; manifested in discarding the personal name of God, setting aside His personality, offering sacrifices to Heaven and Earth as to the Creator, the identification of Him with a principle of reason, and the giving of the worship to spirits, to Confucius, and other dead men, that is due to God alone. 5. *Formality*—worship maintained as a mere ceremony and show—divine honors paid to deceased ancestors after all faith in the existence of human souls after death, and in the existence of spirits at all, had ceased.

6. We have an exemplification of the spirit and tendency of the Chinese theology in the religious or rather *unreligious* character and conduct of Confucius—cold, sceptical, and formal; a punctilious observer of ancient ceremonies and customs; and encouraging such ideas and practices as led to his own worship as a god, and to his receiving the honor which is due only to the God of heaven. There is much that is absurd, ridiculous, and disgusting in the Egyptian, Hindu, and Persian religions; but we doubt whether they contained anything so pernicious as the formality, insincerity, and scepticism embraced in the theology and worship of the Chinese.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRECIAN THEOLOGY.

THE theology of the ancient Greeks may be considered in three aspects; poetic, civil, and philosophical.

1. *The theology of the poets.* The Grecian poets were the religious instructors of the people. Their writings embody the popular theology. As is well known, this was polytheistic. The poets, in accordance with the popular belief, celebrated the praises of a vast crowd of gods and goddesses; heavenly, earthly, marine, and infernal—superior and inferior—Jupiter, Apollo, Mars, Neptune, Pluto, Vulcan, Juno, Minerva, Venus, Diana, and many others. Hesiod, who is perhaps the most ancient of the Grecian poets, speaks of the immortal gods, subject to Jupiter, and guardians of men, as being in number *thirty thousand*.¹ These imaginary beings, called gods, are represented as possessing corporeal forms and human passions; as wrangling, quarrelling, and fighting with one another; as marrying, and begetting offspring; and as committing the sins and crimes that are common among men. Homer, Hesiod, and all the Grecian poets, in their accounts of the gods, speak of their intrigues, amours,

¹ Oper. et Dier. 1: 250.

wrath, dissensions, drunkenness, adulteries, seductions, falsehood, theft, hypocrisies, feasts, births, marriages, combats, wounds, murders, and beastly vices. According to the poetic and popular mythology, Jupiter, the chief god, was a selfish tyrant and an adulterous ravisher; Juno, his wife and sister, the queen of heaven, was proud, cruel, revengeful, ambitious, and jealous; Apollo, the son of Jupiter by an adulterous intrigue, and the god of medicine and of the fine arts, was a plausible and handsome seducer; Venus, the goddess of beauty and love, was the patroness of prostitutes and adulterers, and the promoter of lewd desires and debaucheries. These were among the chief gods celebrated by the Grecian poets, and worshipped by the common people. Though they did not deify the elements and objects of nature to the same extent as the ancient Egyptians, Hindus, and Persians, their theology was more debasing and devilish. 'The elegant mythology of the Greeks,' and partly because it was *elegant*, had a seductive power. The imaginary beings celebrated as gods in the Grecian poetry, with their human passions and vices, were far more attractive and corrupting than the ram-headed Ammon, the ibis-headed Thoth, and Athor with a human face and ears of a cow, that were worshipped by the ancient Egyptians; or than the elements and powers of nature, and the fabulous monsters, that were worshipped by the Hindus and Persians.

2. The *civil* theology of the Greeks was founded on the mythology of the poets, who but reflected

the belief of the common people. The laws did not, of course, sanction all that the poets imagined and wrote; but they recognized the whole 'rabble of gods,' superior and inferior, supernal and infernal, male and female, that figure so largely in Grecian poetry, and were worshipped by the Grecian people. No new god and no new mode of worship could be introduced without the previous sanction of the magistrates. One of the laws of Draco required the Athenians 'always to pay due homage in public towards their gods and native heroes, according to the usual customs of their country.'¹ Socrates was charged with atheism because he did not worship the gods of his country. Plato was forced to dissemble his religious sentiments in order to escape being called to account by the court of the Areopagites. Paul was tried by this court on the charge of being 'a setter forth of strange gods.' In short, the civil laws established the poetic mythology, and the popular worship, as the religion of the country.

3. The theology of the *philosophers* was contradictory and absurd, and on the whole was no better than the mythology of the poets. Anaximander maintained that the gods are born and die like men. Naximenes taught that the air is God, that he was produced by generation, and though immense and infinite, is always in motion. Alcmaeon of Crotona attributed divinity to the sun, moon, and stars; and also to the human mind. Pythagoras supposed the Deity to be a soul mixing with and pervading all

¹ Potter's Grec. Antiq., pp. 94, 130-1.

nature; and that from the divine soul human souls are taken. Xenophanes asserted that everything in the world, including the human intellect, is God. Parmenides conceived an orb of light and heat around the heavens, which he called God. He also ascribed divinity to the stars, war, discord, and the human passions. Democritus classed men's images or conceptions of objects among the number of the gods. Xenocrates maintained that there are eight gods—five, moving planets; the sixth contained in the fixed stars taken together; the seventh, the sun; and the eighth, the moon. Heraclides maintained at one time that the world is a deity; and at another, the human mind. He ascribed divinity to the wandering stars. Cleanthes maintained that the world is God, that the sky is God, and that the stars are gods. Chrysippus maintained that the world is God. He deified fire, earth, water, and air. He also attributed divinity to the sun, moon, stars, and universal space.¹

The theological opinions even of the most gifted and wisest of the philosophers were dark, confused, and erroneous. Socrates believed in a supreme Being, but he recognized many gods besides. He defines the pious man as one who knows what is in accordance with the laws in respect to *the gods*, and honors *the gods* in accordance with the laws.² He spoke of *the gods* as not having bodily forms, but as manifesting their existence and power by their works. 'Therefore (said he) it behooves you not to

¹ De Nat. Deor. 1: 10-15.

² Xen. Mem. 4: 6.

despise the unseen *gods*, but estimating their power from what is done by them, to reverence what is divine.¹ He manifested his belief in a plurality of gods at the time of his death. Just before he drank the fatal hemlock, he said; 'It is certainly both lawful and right to pray to *the gods* that my departure may be happy; therefore I pray, and so may it be.' His last words were; 'Crito! we owe a cock to *Æsculapius*.'² Such was the theological belief of the wisest and best of the Grecian philosophers. He believed, indeed, in a supreme deity. He sometimes spoke of the *divinity* or the *divine thing*. But he spoke much oftener of a plurality of gods. Unless he was guilty of falsehood and hypocrisy, he believed in and prayed to many of the imaginary beings which his countrymen worshipped as gods.

Plato also was a polytheist. He does, indeed, acknowledge one supreme Deity, whom he calls the maker, father, and architect of the universe, and the cause of all things. But he also recognizes a multitude of other gods. He calls the *universe* 'a blessed god.' He speaks of the Creator forming the chief *idea of deity* from *fire*, and distributing it round the *whole heavens*. He represents the *stars* as eternal and divine bodies or animals, and declares the earth to be the first and most ancient of the gods that have been generated within the universe. His polytheistic belief is indicated by his use of the phrases 'the heavenly race of gods,' and 'the visible and generated gods.' In one place, after saying

¹ Xen. Mem. 4: 3. ² Phædo, 152, 155.

that the generation of the gods should be credited in accordance with tradition and the laws, he states that generation as follows:—‘Ocean and Tethys were the progeny of Heaven and Earth; and from these sprung Phorcys, Kronos, and Rhea, and many more with them; and from Kronos and Rhea sprung Zeus, Hera, and all that we know are called their brethren; together with others still, who were their progeny. When, therefore, all such gods as visibly revolve and show themselves when they please were generated, the artificer of the universe thus addressed them: Gods of gods, of whom I am the creator and father.’¹ He enjoins that there shall be three hundred and sixty five festivals yearly, so that there may be a sacrifice offered every day to some god or demon.² He proposes that there shall be twelve festivals in honor of the twelve gods after whom the tribes were named. He declares that the festivals of the infernal gods must not be confounded with those of the celestial gods. He speaks of the sun and moon as *the great gods*.³ In the *Epinomis* he says, or is represented as saying,* that the things in the heavens are to be regarded as gods or as images of the gods, and are to be honored pre-eminently above statues; that the stars are visible gods, who, with a most acute sight, behold all things, and therefore are the first in rank and are the most to be honored.⁴ The remark of Velleius concerning Plato, as reported by Cicero, seems to be entirely just; viz. that Plato taught that the world, and

¹ *Timæus*, 16. ² *Laws*, B. 8. ³ B. 7. ⁴ *Epin.* 7: 8.

*The genuineness of the *Epinomis* has been questioned.

heaven, and the stars, and earth, and souls, and those gods whom we have received according to the customs of our ancestors, are all to be regarded as gods.¹

The theological opinions of Aristotle were similar to those of Plato. He recognized a supreme Being, whom he calls an eternal substance. But he speaks of other eternal substances, derived from the primary eternal substance as from a fountain. He represents the heavens and the stars as secondary eternal substances, and as possessing divinity. In confirmation of this opinion, he states that 'it was traditionally reported from the earliest times and by very ancient philosophers, that the heavenly bodies are gods, and that deity comprehends the whole system of nature.'² He rejected, however, as fabulous, the tradition that these gods subsisted in human form, or were in appearance like some of the lower animals. Aristotle certainly did not believe in the Grecian mythology. He rejected the accounts of gods appearing in the forms of men and beasts. But he at least assented to the doctrine of a plurality of gods. He also assented, like Socrates and Plato, to some of the pantheistic and materialistic ideas which prevailed among the Grecians as well as among most other ancient nations. They both deified the universe, the heavenly bodies, the earth, and all kinds of material things; and they materialized the Divine nature, ascribing to their gods corporeal forms, and representing them as marrying and begetting children.

¹ De Nat. Deor. 1: 12. ² Metaph. 11: 8.

Such were the theological opinions of the Grecian philosophers. They groped in the errors of polytheism, pantheism, and materialism. Whatever they may have thought of the mythology of the poets, and the religion of their countrymen, they made no effort to correct prevailing errors. They fell in with and winked at the theological errors of their age and country, or advocated errors equally absurd and pernicious. The declaration of one of the interlocutors of Cicero, after the presentation of a synopsis of the philosophical theology of the Greeks, is perfectly just: 'Thus far I have been exposing the dreams of dotards, rather than the opinions of philosophers. Not much more absurd than these are the fables of the poets; who owe all their power to the sweetness of their language.'¹ It is, indeed, questionable whether the theology of the philosophers or that of the poets was the more pernicious. There was much in the theology of the poets that was vile and polluting, but on the whole it may have been better than hypocrisy and atheism. The speculations of the philosophers—for their theology was mere speculation—was good just for one thing, the destruction of whatever earnest religious belief the Grecians had. They had nothing of value to offer as a substitute for the popular mythology. However ingenious and profound speculatists some of them were, their theology was a barren, powerless thing. In their system, God was not represented as a living, conscious Agent; nor as the Creator and Governor

¹ De Nat. Deor. 1: 16.

of the world. They denied or set aside his personality and moral attributes. Their divine 'principles,' 'essences,' and 'substances,' their world-gods, star-gods, four-element-gods, and all their gods, being impersonal things, mere abstractions in fact,—could not be the objects of love, fear, or reverence; and could be worshipped only in form. The philosophical theology of the Greeks could in most minds produce only indifference, formality, scepticism, atheism. Vile and polluting as the popular and poetic theology in many respects was, it had for a time a deep hold on the minds of the people in general, and perhaps was not so demoralizing as atheism would have been, and hence perhaps did not produce as deplorable consequences as would have resulted from the general prevalence of the theology of the philosophers.

4. The religious worship of the Greeks consisted in processions, prayers, the singing of hymns, offerings of wine, fruits and flowers, and bloody sacrifices. In addition to these modes of worship, which have been almost universally prevalent among men, the Greeks practised others that were very objectionable. Human sacrifices were not unknown among them. The story of Iphigenia and Polyxena does not prove that human beings were actually offered in sacrifice; but it shows that the propriety of such sacrifices was at one time recognized. Themistocles, the Athenian general, was compelled to offer up three Persians as a sacrifice to Bacchus. Herodotus states that human sacrifices were offered in

Achaia.¹ At the altar of Diana in Sparta, boys were lashed until the blood gushed out; in some cases until they died. Whether the design was, as some assert, to honor the goddess by staining her altar with human blood, it is certain that this flogging of boys was practised as a religious service. In Arcadia, young damsels were beaten to death at the altar of Bacchus. Aristomanes of Messenia offered in sacrifice to Jupiter three hundred men, among whom was Theopompus, king of Sparta. The Athenians yearly put to death two malefactors at the Thargelian festival, with sacrificial ceremonies. In this case punishment for crime was combined with expiation for sin. At one period the custom prevailed, of casting every year a criminal from the Leucadian promontory, as a sacrifice to propitiate Apollo. When Alexander of Macedonia conquered the Cusseans, he slaughtered all the adults as an offering to the manes of Hephæstion; whom an oracle of Jupiter Ammon had directed him to revere as a demi-god. Other instances of human sacrifices among the Greeks might be given. From the facts stated it is evident, that such sacrifices were regarded as acceptable to the gods. Humanity alone kept them from becoming common. The gods themselves were supposed to be pleased with such offerings; but it was only in exceptional cases that the Greeks were willing to propitiate them at the cost of human blood. At one period human sacrifices were probably common. But

¹7: 197.

during the historic period, they were only local and exceptional. Their general disuse was owing to the dictates of humanity; and their partial continuance to the influence of an abominable theology.

The Greeks in their religious worship also practised some things that were indecent and vile. Venus, the goddess of wantonness, was worshipped in a way suited to her character. The rites performed in her honor were so abominable, that we must pass them over in silence. Cotytto, another goddess of wantonness, was honored with rites equally indecent. She was thought to be delighted with nothing so much as with lewdness and debaucheries. At the festivals of Bacchus, called orgies, persons of both sexes, with garlands and comical dresses, ran hither and thither, dancing in ridiculous postures, filling the air with hideous noises, and practising rites too indecent to be mentioned. According to Diogenes Laertius,¹ it was a saying of Plato's, that it was not proper to get drunk except at the festival of Bacchus; and he so teaches in his *Laws*.² Beside prayers, hymns, gifts, sacrifices, festivals, and processions, the Grecian worship consisted in revelings, hootings, howlings, drunkenness, debaucheries, prostitutions, and human sacrifices.

¹ 3: 26. ² 6: 18.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROMAN THEOLOGY.

THE Romans adopted the theology as well as the literature of the Greeks, and hence all the religious errors that prevailed among the latter prevailed also among the former. The Romans, however, in one respect erred more egregiously than those whom they imitated. They carried the polytheistic idea farther than the Greeks, or than any other nation of whom we have any knowledge. They adopted the gods of Greece and of nearly all other countries, and invented a large number of their own. They had gods greater and less, male and female, select gods, gods celestial, earthly, and infernal, gods of the sea, gods of rivers and fountains, gods of the mountains, gods of the trees, gods of the plains, gods of the fields, gods of the gardens, tutelary gods, and household gods. They worshipped the sun, moon, stars, winds, and tempests as gods. They deified kings and heroes. They deified also the virtues and affections of the human mind; as piety, faith, friendship, and hope. They erected temples and offered sacrifices to mere abstractions; as virtue, victory, safety, and honor. They deified even diseases, passions, and vices. They worshipped certain gods that they might do them good; and

others that they might do them no harm. They invented a god for every power, function, attribute, quality, relation, habit, affection, operation; for every class of objects, actions, phenomena, and existences. They had, for instance, a god for every operation in agriculture, and for grain and fruits in every stage of growth. Ceres was the goddess of grain and tillage. Seia was the divinity of seed under ground; Proserpina, of seed germinating; Segetia, of crops above ground; Neodotus, of the joints of stalks; Volutina, of leaves in rolls or folds; Patelana, of leaves unfolded or opened; Flora, of crops flowering; Lacturnus, of grain in a milky state; Hostilia, of crops earing; Matuta, of crops maturing; Runcina, of crops taken from the earth; Tutilina, of crops stowed away. We will not mention the gods that were supposed to superintend the generation and birth of infants.* The prevalent ideas concerning delicacy make it improper for us to do so. *Vaticanus* was the God of the first crying of infants. He was supposed to open their mouths in crying. Immediately after the birth of an infant, it was laid on the ground. If the father acknowledged it, he took it up. His refusal to take it up was equivalent to repudiation, and it was killed or exposed. *Levana* was the goddess of this taking-up of infants. *Rumina* was the goddess of milk for infants; *Potina*, of potions for them; *Educa*, of food; *Paventia* was the goddess of their fears; *Stimula* stimulated them; *Agenorina* en-

*The learned reader will find a discussion of these matters in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, l. 4: 1, and l. 7: 2-3.

abled them to act; *Strenia* strengthened them; *Numeria* taught them to count; *Camæna* to sing; *Cunina* was the goddess of the cradle. Other gods and goddesses had charge over children for good or ill. The goddess *Juventas* took charge of the boy at the age of seventeen. *Fortuna Barbata* furnished him with a beard. *Jugutinus*, joined him in marriage to his wife. *Domiducus* was the god of *leading home* a wife. *Domitius* kept her in the house, and *Manturna* kept her with her husband. The favor and assistance of other gods and goddesses were to be invoked by the husband.¹ The Romans had also several money-gods. At first, when cattle was almost the only medium of exchange, they had but one, *Pecunia*. But as different kinds of money were introduced, they invented gods to correspond; a god of brass money, a god of copper money, and a god of silver money. They had a goddess of vacation or respite from business, a god of grinding, a god of sewers, a god of bad smells, and two gods of manure.

This ridiculous and monstrous god-making was not confined to the illiterate and more superstitious portion of the Roman people. Their poets, priests, prophets, and law givers concurred and assisted in it. As long as there was earnest belief in the absurd and vile system, no voice was raised against it. It was only near the commencement of the Christian era, when the Romans were beginning to lose faith in their religion, that men like Varro and Seneca

¹ De Civitate Dei, 6: 9.

disapproved of prevailing errors. Even they wished to reform the existing system, not to overthrow it. They even commended the theology and worship established by the civil laws, which recognized the vast crowd of gods referred to above. The efforts of Cicero, and authors of similar views, tended to destroy belief in the prevailing system, and to promote indifference, formality, and atheism. They saw many of the absurdities and errors in the existing religion; but they could suggest no remedy but *unbelief*. Dilapidated, outlandish, and monstrous as the polytheistic superstructure was; had they piled it in ruins, no graceful edifice, no building of any kind, would have taken its place. They had no building materials. They could be only 'architects of ruin.' The ruin of the old system would certainly have been desirable, could something better have been substituted in its place. But that was impossible until the introduction of Christianity. Previous to that event, the choice was between the monstrosities of the polytheistic system on the one hand, and devilish atheism on the other.

Since the Roman theology embraced the grossest polytheism, pantheism, and materialism, the deification of kings and heroes, the ascription to the gods of the infirmities, passions, and vices of men, and the making of gods for every profession, art, attribute, habit, affection, quality, relation, and operation,—the Roman worship could not but be characterized by formality, absurdity, and impurity: Idolatry was universal. The gods were supposed to

inhabit their images, as the human soul the body.¹ We have noticed the indecency of some of the religious rites of the Greeks. The Romans in this respect went at least as far astray. Many obscenities were practised at the festivals held in honor of the goddess Cybele. The priests used indecent expressions, and performed actions suggestive of impurity. Great indecencies were also practised at the Lupercalia, a festival celebrated in honor of Pan, the shepherd god who was represented with the horns, legs, feet, and tail of a goat. At this festival, youths almost naked ran about the streets with whips, and lashed all whom they met. The Floralia, games in honor of the goddess of flowers, presented a scene of unbounded licentiousness. This festival was celebrated by strumpets, who ran to and fro naked, and performed indecent actions. Unmentionable rites were performed in the worship of the god Liber.²

But the greatest abomination which the Romans practised as a religious rite, was the offering of human beings in sacrifice. From the earliest times, persons guilty of certain crimes were by law, said to be the law of Romulus, devoted to Pluto and the infernal gods; and might be slain with impunity. In later times, a consul, dictator, or prætor might offer himself or any one of the legion as an expiatory victim. Accordingly the Decii devoted themselves in battle as sacrifices to obtain the favor of the gods; or, if they rushed among the enemy

¹ De Civitate Dei, 8: 23-4. ² 7: 21.

merely to set an example of bravery and patriotism, the way in which the Romans regarded and represented their conduct and death shows, that there was a prevalent belief in the propriety of human sacrifices. Plutarch informs us that at the commencement of one of their wars with the Gauls, the Romans buried alive, in the ox-market, two Greeks, (a man and a woman), and also two Gauls.¹ Livy states that they repeated the sacrifice at the beginning of the second Punic war.² Human sacrifices were prohibited by a decree of the senate 95 B. C., in the 657th year after the building of Rome. Nor did they altogether cease then. About fifty years later, in the time of Julius Cæsar, two men were sacrificed by the priests of Mars. Sextus Pompeius threw men, as well as horses, alive into the sea, as victims to Neptune. Augustus, after his victory over Antony at Perusia, sacrificed four hundred Roman senators and knights, or as some say three hundred, as victims on the altar of Julius Cæsar. It thus appears that human sacrifices were offered by the Romans until after the introduction of Christianity. Doubtless the shedding of human blood in honor of the gods was regarded as an awful thing, and the number of victims was never large. But it appears that until near the commencement of the Christian era, when the faith of the Romans in their religion was dying out, the prevalent belief at all times among them was, that human slaughter was the most efficacious means of gaining the favor of the

¹ In vita Marcelli. ² Lib. 22: 5, 7.

gods. They adopted it only as a last resort, in times of impending danger, and when great interests were at stake. Hence, notwithstanding their infrequency, human sacrifices were a part of the religious worship of the ancient Romans.

The Roman religion was the latest and fullest development of polytheism prior to the dissemination of Christianity. The Romans, indeed, carried the business of god-making to a greater extent than any other nation of ancient or modern times. Their theology was more debasing and demoralizing than any that is known to have preceded it. It, more than any other, encouraged beastly passions and vices, and a reckless disregard of human life. We will hereafter see that, under its influence, Roman society became shamefully and shockingly corrupt. Yet amid the endless multiplication of Roman gods, and the consequent debasement of minds and morals, the true God left himself not without a witness. There are intimations of an approximation to monotheistic belief among the Romans—references to Deity as not belonging to ‘Olympus’ motley rout’—as if there were an effort to break away from the polytheistic creed, and return to the worship of the one God. The dreadful errors of the Romans were in opposition to a monotheistic principle, instinct, or longing within them; as well as to the revelation in God’s works around them.

CHAPTER IX.

ARABIC THEOLOGY.

THE Arabic theology in its best form is contained in the Koran. Mohammed taught the unity, personality, and spirituality of God; his holiness, justice, and mercy; and the necessity of pure and spiritual worship. His theology is free from the monstrous errors that are brought to view in the preceding chapters. But this excellence of the Arabic theology is due to the Bible. Mohammed believed in the supernatural inspiration of the Old Testament, and in the divine mission of Jesus Christ. He refers again and again to Moses, David, and the prophets; and quotes largely from them. It is evident that whatever is good in his theology is from the Bible. The Koran claims to be only an additional revelation to it. Mohammedism is but an imperfect and mutilated Christianity. Carlyle says that 'at the fairs of Syria Mohammed came in contact with a quite foreign world—with one element of endless moment to him, the Christian Religion. * * * Islam is definable as a confused form of Christianity; had Christianity not been, neither had it been.'¹ Hence, the superiority of the Mohammedan theology to the theologies considered in pre-

¹ Hero-worship, pp. 47, 51.

vious chapters is but a proof of the theological excellence of the Bible. Hereafter when we speak of the errors of the world-theologies, we are not to be understood as including among them the theology of the Koran. We will hereafter show that Mohammed erred much more in morality than in theology.

CHAPTER X.

ANCIENT THEOLOGY IN GENERAL— DETERIORATION.

IN the theologies that have been reviewed in preceding chapters, there are many traces of monotheistic belief and worship. It seems unquestionable, that monotheism was the primitive religion of mankind. But there has been constant deterioration. Mankind have been advancing in general knowledge, but until the dissemination of Christianity they constantly retrograded in theology. The constant tendency has been to abandon monotheism; to break up the Deity, as it were, into separate fragments; and to deify the different parts of the material creation. Believing in the Bible account of the fall of man, we of course attribute this tendency to the dreadful perversion thereby of his moral nature. But whatever may be the origin of this tendency, its existence is demonstrated by the history of the nations that existed before the dissemination of Christianity. Until the Bible began to leaven the world with its influence, the nations went deeper and deeper into polytheism, pantheism, materialism, nature-worship, element-worship, image-worship, man-worship, and beast-worship. The earlier theology of the Egyptians was more simple

and less erroneous than their later. They went on inventing imaginary gods, dividing and sub-dividing Deity into minute parts, and deifying the various parts of the material creation, until they made gods of beasts, birds, fishes, and reptiles. The theology of the Vedas is less confused and contradictory, less absurd and monstrous, than that of the Puranas; and many of the hideous superstitions current among the Hindus of the present age are not inculcated in the Puranas. The same progress in error is brought to view in the earlier and later writings of the Persians. The Greeks made remarkable progress in literature and art, but their theology and worship were more erroneous and indecent in the time of Plato than in the time of Homer. The deterioration in the Roman theology was still greater. It received constant accessions from the national mythologies, and from the god-making inventions of the Romans themselves; until they became the most polytheistic, idolatrous, and morally corrupt nation known in history.

Not only did every one of these theologies deteriorate, but theology in general deteriorated. The later theologies in many respects were worse than the earlier. The Roman and Grecian theologies and worship were more seductive and corrupting—tended more, through the deification of kings and heroes, and the assimilation of the gods to depraved men, to inflame beastly passions and encourage beastly vices—than those of the Egyptians, Hindus, and Persians; and the Roman theology was the worst of all.

The efforts made to overthrow or reform these ancient systems, show that the human mind could devise no substitute for the errors they embraced but unbelief and atheism. Sakya Muni, in his revolt against Brahminism, denied that there is a God or a real world; maintained that the only real thing in existence is the human soul; and taught that the only hope for men is the total extinction of their being. But Buddhism in its turn revolted against this atheistic and nihilistic theory, and worshipped as a god him who declared there is no god and announced his own complete annihilation. Confucius, who taught his countrymen to engage in religious service as a mere ceremony, and who really taught unbelief in the national theology, succeeded only in producing an atheistic spirit; and has been and is now himself worshipped as a god by millions and millions of people who have no faith in the God of heaven, and no belief in the existence of spirits. The Grecian philosophers, so far as they had any religion at all, were polytheists, pantheists, and materialists. They encouraged disbelief in much of the current mythology. But their notions about divine *substances*, *essences* and *principles*, and their virtual rejection of the divine personality and attributes, would in reality leave the world without a God, and man without hope. The influence of Cicero was no better. Until made acquainted with Christianity, the Gentile mind groped in the mists and darkness of prevailing superstitions, or stumbled into the abyss of irreligion and atheism.

CHAPTER XI.

HEBREW THEOLOGY.

THE excellence of the Bible theology as contrasted with other theological systems, appears in several particulars.

1. *The unity of God.* As we have shown, all other ancient theologies except Buddhism—which was an atheistic denial of all theological truth, and really not a theology—were polytheistic. But the Bible teaches the existence of the *one* living and true God. We believe, indeed, that it teaches a trinity of persons in the Godhead. Sceptics may set this doctrine in opposition to the unity of God, and thus endeavor to prove an inconsistency in the Bible. But whatever sceptics may say in regard to this supposed inconsistency, it is undeniable that the Scriptures clearly and uniformly teach that there is but one God. The Hebrew lawgivers, historians, psalmists, prophets, apostles, and evangelists, all assert that there is no God but Jehovah. ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me¹—Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord²—Thus saith the Lord, the king of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.’³ This doctrine was em-

¹ Ex. 20: 3. ² Deut. 6: 4. ³ Is. 44: 6.

phatically asserted by Moses in the Law. It runs through the historical parts. It appears in the Psalms. It is taught in the Prophecies. It is reaffirmed in the Gospels. It is treated as an indisputable truth in the Epistles. It is prominent throughout the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Doubtless there are many persons in Christian countries who do not consider it a remarkable fact, that the teachers and writers of the Hebrews asserted and maintained the doctrine of the Divine unity. Such persons forget that their own ideas on this subject are derived from the Scriptures, and that it is entirely owing to their teachings and influence that the belief in the doctrine of one God exists among men. Except the Jews and those who have derived their religion from them, all nations have fallen into polytheism or atheism. As we have seen, the Gentile nations in general deified the heavenly bodies, the natural elements, imaginary and monstrous beings, departed heroes, beasts and all kinds of animals. If some of them avoided these monstrous errors, they ran into errors equally monstrous; atheism and nihilism. The Jews alone of all the ancient nations avoided errors in both directions, and retained the grand and fundamental truth—that there is one God and one alone.

2. *The spirituality of God.* On this subject also, the Scriptures are very explicit. Though they speak of God as having eyes, ears, hands, and other bodily parts, yet such language is plainly figurative. This immateriality is asserted in express terms. 'God is

a Spirit.¹ He is declared to be ‘the invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see.’² We consider all those passages, which speak of God as appearing to men in visible form and being seen by corporeal eyes, as entirely consistent with the truth that God has no material substance or form, but is a pure Spirit. But it is not our business at present to explain any supposed discrepancies between different parts of the Bible. So far as our argument is concerned, we may allow the sceptic to maintain, if he chooses, that in the earlier books of the Old Testament there are passages which impliedly teach that God has a corporeal and visible form. Such an admission would not affect the excellence of the Bible theology. For in the later books the perfect spirituality of God’s nature is most distinctly asserted. Even in the book of Job, which is at least among the older books of the Bible, the invisibility of God is a prominent idea.³ Isaiah teaches that God has no conceivable likeness, and that he is not comparable to any known form, or to any known being.⁴ John the Baptist declared; ‘No man hath seen God at any time.’⁵ Jesus, called the Christ, who, viewed merely as a man, was the greatest teacher that ever appeared among the Jews, reminded them that they had never heard God’s voice, nor seen his shape.⁶ If the infidel deny that these declarations were made by the persons to whom they are attributed, he must admit that they are a part of the Scriptures, and that they unmistakably teach that God is

¹ John. 4: 24. ² 1 Tim. 6: 16. Col. 1: 15. ³ 23: 8, 9.

⁴ 40: 18, 25. ⁵ John. 1: 18. ⁶ John. 5: 37.

an immaterial, spiritual Being. There is really no countenance given in the Bible to the idea that God is a material substance, has a corporeal and visible form, and is under the influence of corporeal appetites and passions. It contains no such absurdity as that the material creation is a part of the Godhead, or that the heavens and the heavenly bodies and the natural elements are the sons of God. Nowhere in it is to be found the nonsensical idea, that all material things were spun or hatched from the Divine essence; as the web from the spider, or the chicken from the egg. The Bible is free from all those speculations and theories which would degrade the Creator from a pure, almighty, infinite Spirit, into a piece of matter. While the leaders and teachers of the nations were sinking lower and lower in their ideas of God's nature, assimilating Him more and more to a material substance, and conceiving of Him as a corporeal being with corporeal appetites and passions,—the leaders and teachers of the Hebrews were attaining to a clearer understanding and a more explicit statement of His perfect spirituality. This doctrine, as well as that of the Divine unity, has been taught by them to the rest of mankind.

3. *The personality of God.* The Bible writers always represent God as a distinct personal Being. They never identify the Creator with the works of his hands. They neither represent the world as God, nor deify any part of the material universe, any material substance, or any created thing. They do not speak of God as a *substance, essence, principle,* or even as a *first cause.* Such errors as these abound

in the writings of all the poets, philosophers, and theologians of the ancient Gentile nations. In all the world-theologies, except the Buddhist, which was the negation of all theology, there was a confounding of the Creator with the creation; a wretched compound of pantheism and materialism; a degradation of the Deity into a mere abstraction—a Being without character and attributes. But in the Hebrew theology, God is represented as a personal Being, an intelligent Agent, the efficient Creator and Ruler of the universe. Throughout the Bible, He is represented as knowing, thinking, feeling, loving, and hating. It thus inculcates a soul-stirring belief in His personality; and represents Him to men as an object of interest, reverence, and love. The personality of God is another of the doctrines which mankind have learned from the Bible. There is nowhere to be found, not even in the theological writings of modern times, a clearer or more animating statement of this fundamental truth than in the old Hebrew writers.

4. *The character of God.* The Scriptures represent God as transcendently great, powerful, merciful, holy, just, and good; infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. They ascribe to Him every admirable, amiable, and venerable attribute; all dignity, verity, and sanctity; every glorious perfection. It is true they represent Him as *repenting*. But this representation is figurative, and is no more inconsistent with the immutability of God than is the ascription to Him of eyes, ears, hands, and other bodily parts, with His perfect spirituality. Throughout

the Bible, the character and purposes of God are represented as unchangeable:—‘My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure¹—I am the LORD, I change not²—With Him is no variableness neither shadow of turning.’³ It is denied that he repents in such a sense as implies any degree of mutability:—‘And also the Strength of Israel will not lie or repent; for He is not the son of man that he should repent.’⁴

The Bible also represents God as experiencing anger, and as having a disposition to exercise vengeance. But the anger of God and his disposition to exercise vengeance are the result of His holiness, justice, and hatred of sin. Did He not experience a feeling analogous to anger in men, in view of the dreadful wickedness practised on earth, he could not be the infinitely holy God. The vengeance ascribed to God in the Scriptures is, the infliction of deserved punishment. Aside from the Bible, it is evident that God is a Being of justice; and that he inflicts terrible punishments on the transgressors of his laws. He employs the earthquake, volcanic eruptions, pestilence, fire, and famine as the ministers of his wrath. The world, which is ruled by God, is full of sickness, pain, death, misery, and woe. Whoever believes that there is a God in heaven, who rules in earth, must admit that He is just such a Being as the Scriptures declare.

Nor is the divine commission which the Israelites claimed for the destruction of the Canaanites incon-

¹ Is. 46: 10. ² Mal. 3: 6. ³ Ja. 3: 17. ⁴ 1 Sam. 15: 29.

sistent with the excellence of God's character. God has again and again destroyed nations for their sins and crimes. He employs for this purpose not only the natural elements, but also the agency of men. It is no more inconsistent with the goodness of God that He should employ men for the annihilation of a wicked nation, than that He should employ the pestilence and the earthquake. The extermination of tribes and races by the slings and swords of Jewish warriors, viewed as a Divine procedure, is not different from God's killing men with fever or cholera. Had 'the blue-eyed nations of the north,' that ravaged the Roman empire, been made conscious that they were accomplishing the purposes of God, the havoc and slaughter which they perpetrated would not have been changed in character as Providential dispensations. The super-naturalness of the commission which the Israelites claimed for the destruction of the inhabitants of Canaan, however incredible it may seem to the rationalist, is, then, not inconsistent with the excellence of the Divine character as presented in the Bible. If any such inconsistency is apparent, it is no more real than the apparent inconsistency between the dreadful misfortunes and miseries of mankind, and the benevolence of God as revealed in creation and providence. The Bible represents God as declaring his own character as follows:—'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty;

visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."¹ In this grand declaration, both the goodness and severity of God are asserted; just as they are revealed in creation and providence. God does punish the guilty. He does visit the sins of one generation upon succeeding generations. Often do the thief, the drunkard, and the murderer bring misery and ruin upon their children. Yet God is good and merciful, notwithstanding the severity of his judgments. The character of God as proclaimed in the Bible, corresponds to his character as revealed in his works.

The Bible not only asserts the attributes of God, but asserts them with unequalled clearness, fullness, and eloquence. He is declared to be omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent; terrible in majesty, glorious in holiness, dreadful in power; infinite in justice, mercy, and goodness; eternal and unchangeable in his nature and character. To him is ascribed every great and glorious and amiable quality; every attribute that can make him worthy of love, reverence, admiration, and awe. There is not one single virtue that is not comprehended in the character of God as presented in the Bible. The world has not been able to suggest any improvement in it. Sceptics cannot point out any defect in it. The utmost that they do, is to endeavor to show that the Scriptures ascribe to God particular states of feeling, and particular actions, inconsistent with this perfect

¹ Ex. 34: 6-7.

and transcendent excellence. Such lofty and glorious conceptions of God the great men of the Gentile nations never reached. Plato, Aristotle, and all the ancient philosophers fell far below this grand ideal. The best that the most profound theologians can yet do, is to re-produce the conceptions of God's character furnished by the Hebrew writers.

5. *The attributes of God as exemplified in the character of Christ.* Jesus is set forth in the New Testament as a revelation in himself of the character of God. He is represented as saying,—‘I and my Father are one¹—The Father dwelleth in me²—He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.’³ Paul makes the declaration concerning Christ, that ‘in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.’⁴ It matters not, so far as our argument is concerned, whether rationalists admit or deny that Jesus claimed to be an exemplification of the Divine character. This *is* claimed for him in the Bible. And he is the most admirable and lovely character known among men. Such a combination of rare qualities—meekness, condescension, love, disinterestedness, self-sacrificing affection, gentleness, forgiveness, dignity, and lofty grandeur—has never been exhibited by any other man, nor described by any but the Hebrew writers.

‘The best of men

That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.’⁵

¹ John. 10: 30. ² 14: 9. ³ 14: 10. ⁴ Col. 2: 9. ⁵ Decker.

When we come to treat of the *moral* excellence of the Bible, we will advert to this subject again, and will prove the perfection of Christ's character by the admissions of infidel writers. It is not necessary to our argument to assume or to prove that Christ was more than man. We may even allow the infidel to maintain if he chooses, that no such person ever existed. The character of one called Jesus of Nazareth is *described* in the New Testament. The most thorough-going scepticism cannot deny the reality of the *description*. The character described, whether it be regarded as real or ideal, is the most lovely and exalted that the human mind has conceived. It is set forth as an exemplification of God's character. Now it is by our knowledge of love, mercy, holiness, justice, and other virtues manifested in men, that we are enabled to form conceptions of the attributes of God; and the ideal of excellence in Christ's character, as described in the New Testament, enables us to approximate much more nearly the conception of the perfect and infinitely glorious character of God. The New Testament writers, in exhibiting the matchless excellence of him they call Jesus, though viewed merely as a human or even as an ideal character, have done more to elevate men's conceptions of God, and to improve theology, than all the philosophers and theologians of ancient and modern times. But the point to which we call special attention is this, that in the Bible theology, the lovely and exalted character of Christ is set forth as a revelation of the glorious and infinite excellence of God.

6. *Purity of worship.* In this respect there is a marked contrast between the Hebrew and all other theologies. Neither the theology of the Egyptians, Hindus, Persians, Chinese, Greeks, nor Romans taught the true worship of God—love, reverence, gratitude, humility, penitence, resignation, and an obedient spirit. The attention of the worshipper was turned to outward things. He was taught to depend upon ritual observances for the Divine favor. Some of these observances also were outlandish and indecent; even horrible and monstrous. But the Hebrew theology is in contrast with all this. It, indeed, enjoined a burdensome ritual to be observed for a time. Its ‘weak and beggarly elements’ were suited to the mental and moral condition of a people that were at first debased by slavery and ignorance, and that never became highly cultivated. But underlying the Old Testament rites and ceremonies, there was a system of spiritual truth and religion. Image-worship and idolatry in all its forms, were expressly and positively forbidden. The worshipper was taught that mere outward observances were worthless; and that a pure heart, clean hands, and a devout spirit were necessary to acceptance with God. Along with ceremonial observances, obedience to the Ten Commandments was required. Supreme love to God was declared to be necessary. Every man was commanded to love his neighbor as himself. The spirituality and purity of the worship which the Hebrew theology taught, are set forth in such declarations as the following:—
‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not

hear me¹—The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God! thou wilt not despise²—He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy³—For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.⁴ These and similar declarations place the Old Testament worship of the Hebrews far above that of every ancient nation, in spirituality and purity. In the New Testament, the necessity of inward devotion is still more emphatically asserted:—‘God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and truth⁵—We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit.’⁶ By the reformation set on foot by Christ and his apostles, the Hebrew worship was stripped of its burdensome rites, and became a simple system of pure devotion. To the exercises of prayer, singing of praise, and the reading and preaching of the word, were added Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,—the one representing moral purification; and the other reminding the worshipper of the founder of Christianity, who is set forth as a revelation of the excellence of the divine character, and as an example for the imitation of men.

The excellence, then, of the worship enjoined in the Bible, consists in its freedom from all indecent and obscene rites, and from all rigorous and burdensome services; in its denunciation of idolatry, and of all symbolical representations of the Deity; in its

¹ Ps. 66: 18.² Ps. 51: 16-17.³ Prov. 28: 13.⁴ Hos. 6: 6.⁵ John. 4: 24.⁶ Phil. 3: 3.

rejection of human sacrifices, and its denunciation of the penalty of death against those who offered them; in its demanding inward devotion rather than outward observances; in its requiring the worshipper to forsake his sins, and to cleanse his hands, as a condition of acceptance; and in its requiring justice, mercy, love, and forgiveness toward men, as accompaniments of the worshipful feelings of love, reverence, gratitude, humility, resignation, and adoration towards God. The only pure worship offered to the God of heaven has been by the Hebrews, or by those who have adopted their religion.

7. Another peculiar excellence of the Bible theology, consists in the *comprehensiveness* and *depth of its teachings*. Many of its simple statements have profound meaning:—‘And God said, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you¹—God is a Spirit²—God is love³—God is light⁴—God is a consuming fire.⁵ These brief declarations contain more true theology than all the writings of the Gentile authors together. There is more truth concerning the nature and attributes of God contained in these declarations, than could be condensed from the works of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and all the gifted authors of the ancient heathen. They not only present the most important theological truth, but they also present it in such a way as is best fitted to arouse attention and make an impression. They contain no philosophy falsely so called, no ingenious

¹ Ex. 3: 14.² John 4: 24.³ 1 John 4: 8.⁴ 1: 5.⁵ Heb. 12: 29.

speculations, no disquisitions about an eternal *substance*, a first *principle*, or a first *cause*. But they represent God as a conscious Being, an almighty Agent, the Author of all life and light; and point out those attributes that entitle Him to our reverence, love, and obedience.

8. *The progressive improvement of the Hebrew theology.* We have adverted to the fact that all other theologies deteriorated—that, through speculations, poetic inventions, fables, legends, and the adoption of foreign gods, they became more and more confused and contradictory; more and more erroneous and corrupt; less and less worthy of the respect and regard of rational beings. But there was a progressive improvement of theology among the Hebrews. Their later books contain clearer and fuller views of God's character and worship than their earlier.

This advancement, according to their own historians, was often in opposition to the views and inclinations of the people at large. It appears, indeed, that the religion of the primitive Hebrews was polytheistic and idolatrous;¹ and that, though they were persuaded to abandon polytheism and idolatry, the nation relapsed into these errors again and again. According to the testimony of the Hebrew writers, there was an almost constant contest between the people and their religious teachers in regard to polytheism and idolatry. Jehovah's prophets were often persecuted, and some of them were killed. Nevertheless the monotheistic belief and worship

¹ Josh. 24: 2, 14.

triumphed. Notwithstanding the defections and opposition of the people and their rulers, the monotheistic teachers denounced idolatry, and continued to make fuller and clearer statements of theological truth. They reprov'd hypocrisy, formality, and mere outward show in religion; and urged the necessity of moral purity and spiritual devotion. It was under these circumstances that the theology of the Hebrews was expanded and improved. Finally, by the reformation effected by Jesus and his apostles amid deadly persecutions, it became so excellent and perfect that no subsequent improvement has been made to it during eighteen hundred years of investigation and progress. In all history, there is not a similar example. With the exception of the Hebrews, all the nations continued to sink lower and lower in their theological ideas and religious worship; and in every case their leaders and teachers urged on the retrograde movement, or at least made no earnest opposition to it. This progressive improvement in theology among the Hebrews is, then, very remarkable. Among other nations it deteriorated, but among them it improved; improved, too, in spite of the frequent opposition of a majority of the people.

9. The peculiar and mysterious doctrines of the Bible theology—the Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement—add to its excellence. These doctrines are certainly not incredible in the proper sense of that word. For they have been believed by a majority of learned men and intelligent people during eighteen centuries. These doctrines are, therefore,

not properly *incredible*, *i. e.* incapable of being believed. They are, however, mysterious. But a theology which embraces no mysteries, nothing but what is fully comprehensible, must be very superficial and barren. For God is incomprehensible, *i. e.* not fully comprehensible by finite minds. There are depths in his nature which men cannot fathom. There are mysteries in his creative and providential works. Vegetation, generation, combustion, electricity, the circulation of blood in animals, the union of soul and body in human beings, the soul itself, life, death—all are mysterious. There are mysteries within us and all around us. God, too, is a mysterious being; and true theology, a system which tells us much about God, must embrace many mysterious truths. Since the most familiar things around us are in some respects mysterious; since man is a mystery to himself; is it not unreasonable to reject a theological doctrine merely on the ground that it contains a mystery? Since in man there is an incomprehensible union of two natures—body and spirit—in one person, is it not possible that in God there is an incomprehensible subsistence of two or three persons in one nature or essence? And does not the same incomprehensible union of two natures in the person of every human being suggest the possibility of the incarnation—the incomprehensible union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Christ? Since the death of a human being, though a familiar fact, is an insoluble mystery, why object to the death of the Son of God, as brought to view in the Bible, on the ground of its strangeness

and incomprehensibility? Nay, the very mysteries embraced in the Bible theology are neither unnatural (though *above* nature) nor monstrous, but are in keeping with the infinity and incomprehensibility of God.

The peculiar and mysterious doctrines of the Hebrew theology are seen to be excellent also in this respect, that they powerfully illustrate and commend God's moral attributes. Among these mysterious doctrines, the primary and central one is that of the Atonement—the sufferings and death of the Son of God to expiate the sins of men. It is declared that he became incarnate for the suffering of death. If there be not more than one person in the Godhead, the Incarnation was impossible, and the death of Jesus was but the death of a mere man. Now, the vicarious sufferings of Christ, which are the great and central fact in the theological system of the Bible, are adduced as a proof and illustration of the excellence of the divine character. Christ's work of redemption, and especially his dying as a substitute in the room of sinners, is declared to be a manifestation of God's tender love and concern for erring men:—'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son¹—But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'² The Scriptures also teach, that the Atonement is a remarkable and striking exhibition of God's mercy, justice, hatred of sin, and readiness to pardon it—that God's love and mercy determined Him to pardon sin and save sinners, even through his be-

¹ John 3: 16.

² Rom. 5: 8.

loved Son's agony and death—and that his justice, hatred of sin, and regard for the majesty and holiness of moral law, led him not to spare his own Son but to deliver him up for us all. Thus the blood and agony of Calvary illustrate the glorious character of God. His moral attributes, in their harmony and perfection, are reflected in the light that streams from the Cross. We enter into no discussion in regard to the Atonement itself, nor in regard to any of the peculiar doctrines of the Bible. There is no intimation of these doctrines given in creation and providence, and our acceptance of them as true and excellent depends on our belief in the Bible as a divine revelation. But the question in regard to the correctness and excellence of these doctrines themselves being left out of view, they add to the excellence of the Hebrew theology, inasmuch as they illustrate God's love, mercy, holiness, and other attributes, which constitute the moral excellence of his character.

10. The transcendent excellence of the theology of the Bible, then, is seen in the following particulars: it teaches the unity of God; the spirituality of his nature; his distinct personality; his great, glorious, benevolent, merciful, holy, just, and unchangeable character; his majesty, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and all his adorable and awful as well as amiable perfections. It sets forth the lovely and complete character of Jesus of Nazareth as an exhibition of the moral attributes of God; and thus elevates our ideas of Him, by enabling us to approximate the conception of infinite perfection. It

teaches the comparative worthlessness of outward forms and ceremonies, and forbids all indecent and impure rites; it asserts the nature and value of true worship, and demands the sincere, inward devotion of the soul; it teaches that all religious services are vain, unless accompanied with justice, mercy, benevolence, forgiveness, and a pure life. Its simplest declarations contain deep and far-reaching theological truths, which the genius, wisdom, and philosophy of the world never conceived, and which are not yet fully understood; by these simple declarations, it has made the common property of enlightened people conceptions and ideas of God, that were unknown until the dissemination of Christianity among the nations. Even its peculiar and mysterious doctrines, which are *above* reason—though not known to be *contrary* to reason—and which must be received, if received at all, on the authority of supernatural revelation, serve to give larger views of God's moral perfections. The best theology known among men, and the only theology which enlightened people believe, is the theology of the Bible. Some objectors carp at it, but do not presume to furnish a better. Its excellence is generally admitted even by those who deny the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures. The majority of skeptics agree substantially with Renan, who says; 'The Semitic race, guided by its firm and sure sight, instantly unmasked Divinity; and, without reflection or reasoning, attained the purest form of religion that humanity has known.'¹

¹Studies of Religious His. and Crit. p. 115.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

IN view of what has been presented, the question may be asked, how came the secluded and half-enlightened Hebrews to possess so pure, exalted, and ennobling conceptions of God's nature, character, and worship? Whence was it that they had the purest and best religion known to humanity; the only religion which an enlightened man can adopt? Why did they not, like other nations, sink lower and lower in their theological ideas, until they worshipped the heavenly bodies and the natural elements; birds, beasts, and creeping things; imaginary beings, departed heroes, and fabulous monsters? How came it to pass that, unlike all other nations, they rose higher and higher in their theological ideas; until, by the reformation of Jesus and his apostles, their religion became so pure and perfect, that the wisdom, learning, philosophy, and genius of the world, during eighteen hundred years, have failed to suggest any improvement? While other nations, with the encouragement or consent of their greatest and best men, were falling into polytheism, pantheism, materialism, idolatry, nature-worship, man-worship, beast-worship, and the practice of unclean rites; or into hypocritical formality, scep-

ticism, and atheism; and while the Hebrew *people* were imitating them;—whence was it that the Hebrew poets, prophets, apostles, and evangelists resisted the defection, carried on an almost uninterrupted contest with their countrymen, encountered persecution, danger, and death, and continued to make fuller and clearer declarations concerning the character of God and the purity of his worship? How is the fact to be accounted for, that though the Jewish people again and again fell into polytheism and idolatry, into the practice of indecent rites and other errors common among mankind,—there is not to be found in the whole Bible, embracing the writings of about fifty Jewish authors who lived at different periods and in various countries, a single word favorable to such errors? And how is that other fact to be accounted for, that this noblest theology—this purest religion known to humanity—is embodied in psalms and prophecies and epistles and histories, the sweetest, most beautiful, most eloquent, and most sublime that the world possesses? Has the Hebrew intellect—not very highly cultivated and somewhat narrow and bigoted—originated by its own unaided powers both the sublimest theology and the sublimest literature?

There are, however, other excellences of the Bible to be presented as evidence of its supernatural origin.

PART III.

*THE MORAL EXCELLENCE
OF THE BIBLE.*

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CHAPTER I.

THE DISTINGUISHING PECULIARITIES OF THE BIBLE MORALITY.

THE Bible morality has, of course, some things in common with many other systems. In some respects, however, it is superior to every other system known among men. Its general excellencies it is now our business to consider.

1. *Its underlying ideas and principles.* Every moral system is founded on some ideas or principles which give tone and character to it, and from which it derives its authority and sanctions. Every Gentile system of morality was founded on, and derived its authority and sanctions from a false theology. How low and defective must have been the ideas concerning moral law and obligation held by those, who daily worshipped bulls and crocodiles, or imaginary beings male and female with the worst human passions, or departed heroes famous for brutal courage and bloody achievements; or who believed God to be a mere substance or principle; or who, like the primitive Buddhists, denied the existence of God

altogether! Those whose theological ideas were so erroneous and absurd, could not but have low and defective ideas of moral truth and duty. But the morality of the Hebrews sprung from grand theological ideas, and had the highest authority and sanctions. They were taught that there is but one God, the universal Sovereign, who is transcendent in glory, dreadful in holiness, infinite in goodness, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent; eternal and unchangeable. This great and glorious Person was to them the source of all law, authority, and obligation. They were also taught that the soul is immortal; that there is a future state of rewards and punishments; that all men are accountable to God and will finally be judged by Him; that He is the Creator and Father of all men; and that all men are on an equality before Him. These doctrines gave strength and character to their moral ideas. The excellence at which they were taught to aim was the perfection of Him who combines in Himself every thing great, glorious, and good. The authority of their moral code was expressed in the words—*Thus saith the Lord*. The reward promised for obedience was the favor of God, a glorious resurrection, acquittal in the day of judgment, and the everlasting glories and joys of heaven. The penalty threatened for disobedience was the displeasure of God, a resurrection of shame and contempt, condemnation in the final judgment, and the miseries of eternal damnation. The morality which sprung from such ideas of God's sovereignty and of his good, great, glorious, and paternal character; and of men's relations

to Him and to one another; and which was armed with so great authority and so powerful sanctions; could not but be good, grand, and ennobling.

2. The Bible morality is more excellent also in this respect, that *it deals with the inward affections, motives, and purposes*, rather than the outward actions. It seeks to infuse good principles into the heart, rather than to govern men by minute rules. Moralists in general discuss outward actions, particular states of mind, and mere abstractions. Very different is the spirit of the Hebrew writers. Except in the Levitical law, which was designed for the Jews alone and was of temporary obligation, they lay down no minute rules. Their system of morality is characterized by broad, high, far-reaching principles, and by the inculcation of affections, the fruit of which is cheerful outward obedience. When a lawyer made trial of Jesus of Nazareth by asking him which command is the greatest, the reply was, —‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’¹ It matters not whether the infidel admits that Jesus spoke these words or not. He must admit that they are contained in the Scriptures, and form a part of their moral system. These few words present principles which reach to the bottom and to the top of human

¹ Mat. 22: 36-40.

obligation; principles which underlie and include all the duties which men owe to God and to one another; principles which, if implanted and fully developed in the hearts of men and fully obeyed in the outward life, would lead to the practice of every virtue, and prevent the commission of every sin.

It is worthy of notice that the two great commandments, on which all that is written in the law and the prophets is declared to depend, and which include all duty and all morals, are taken from the Old Testament, and are contained in the code first given to the Jews. This peculiarity of the moral teaching of the Hebrews—this dealing with principles rather than rules—this seeking to infuse right affections and inclinations—and this aiming to control men by conscience and purified feelings rather than by minute prescriptions and mechanical rules,—begins to appear in the Law, is more fully developed in the Psalms and Prophecies, and is a prominent feature of the New Testament. This peculiarity places the Bible morality above every other known among men.

3. The excellence of the Bible morality is farther seen in *the comprehensiveness and brevity of its statements*. The Decalogue is a wonderful summary of moral duties—of the duties men owe to God and to one another. For simplicity and completeness, for brevity and comprehensiveness, it surpasses every thing to be found outside of the Bible. Every command enjoins some important duty and impliedly forbids every opposite sin, or forbids some great sin and impliedly enjoins every opposite duty.

Every duty expressly enjoined is the representative of a whole class of duties; and every sin expressly forbidden represents a whole class of sins. The express injunction of a particular duty impliedly includes every thing necessary or helpful to its performance. The express prohibition of a particular sin impliedly includes every thing that leads or tends to the commission of it. The beauty and excellence of the Decalogue consist in this, that in a very small space it enjoins, expressly or impliedly, all the duties that men owe to God and to one another; and expressly or impliedly forbids all the sins a man can commit. For sententious brevity and far-reaching comprehensiveness, there is no parallel to it in the whole domain of human learning. All the wit, wisdom, genius, and philosophy of the world, have failed to produce anything equal to it. No improvement on it has ever been made or even suggested. Even the opponents of its super-human origin tacitly admit its perfection.

The Sermon on the Mount is also a noble example of brevity and comprehensiveness. It contains all morals. It enunciates ideas and principles which include all our duties to God and to one another. Only the pure in heart shall see God. Only those who have a forgiving spirit, can obtain forgiveness. If we injure our fellow men and live at enmity with them, God will not accept our services. Before offering our gifts at the altar, we must go to our injured brother and be restored to his friendship and favor. All ostentation in the performance of duty is to be avoided. Sincere, brief, secret prayer is

very acceptable. Men should trust in God, who feeds the birds, arrays the lilies in their beauty, and clothes the fields with grass. Ucleanness is not so much in the outward act, as in the heart, its thoughts and desires. Whoever uses abusive, provoking language, or is angry without a cause, has the seeds of murder within him. Not the rich, not the powerful, not the successful are blessed; but the meek, the merciful, the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and those who are persecuted and reviled for the sake of truth and of God. Such are some of the precious gems that abound in this rich mine of moral truth. From the Sermon on the Mount, as from an exhaustless fountain, there flow out living streams to purify and ennoble the souls of men. It comprizes within a few pages more of enlightening and purifying truth than can be found in all the writings of all the moralists and philosophers of ancient times. This brevity and comprehensiveness, beauty, and power of statement, are not confined to the discourses of Christ. They characterize the Psalms, Prophecies, Gospels, and Epistles. Had such a passage as Rom. xii. 9–21, or 1 Thess. v. 14–28, been found in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, or any of the world's moralists or philosophers,—it would have been an oasis in the desert, a gem among heaps of base metals and dirt.

The excellence of the Bible morality is seen, then, in the following particulars: its underlying principles are of the deepest significance, and arm it with the highest authority and the most powerful sanctions;

it deals with the heart, conscience, feelings, and motives rather than the outward actions, and seeks to govern men through purified affections rather than by prescriptions and enactments; and, its principles and precepts are stated with remarkable brevity and comprehensiveness.

CHAPTER II.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THE transcendent excellence of the Bible morality is generally admitted, as we will hereafter show; yet objections are sometimes made to it.

1. It has been asserted that the Bible countenances impurity, by the indelicacy and even obscenity of some of its allusions and statements. Voltaire in his so-called *Philosophical Dictionary* gives several quotations from the prophet Ezekiel and also from the most obscene piece of the Roman poet Horace, and then remarks, that ‘the words of Horace and other elegant writers appear to us still more indecent than Ezekiel’s expressions.’¹ The artful objector thus contrives, by a seeming apology for the Hebrew prophet, to place him in the same category with the lascivious heathen poet.

That there are some things in the Bible that appear highly indelicate to the enlightened people of this age, is true. But the standard of delicacy is very arbitrary, and is constantly changing. Many things that are delicate and becoming in one age, become indecent in another. Ideas that are sufficiently chaste when expressed in certain words—as, for instance, generation, birth, and conjugal in-

¹ Art. *Ezekiel*.

fidelity—are intolerable when expressed in words almost synonymous. In physiological works, which the most refined may read, subjects are treated extensively and minutely, which when alluded to in the Bible, are regarded by cavilers as unfavorable to moral purity. Even Voltaire, in his article on Ezeziel referred to above, stultifies himself, by speaking in the most vulgar way of what he declares unfit to be mentioned. The most refined women hear from their medical advisers what under other circumstances would be highly offensive.

The manner in which the Bible speaks of things considered indelicate in this artificial age, constitutes one of its moral excellences. It calls things by their right names. If mankind would speak as the Bible does, sin would be stripped of many of its attractions. It is one of the excellent peculiarities of the Bible, and one which makes it powerful for good, that it exhibits vice in all its deformity and hatefulness. The squeamishness of modern delicacy is not evidence of superior virtue, but of a corrupt state of society. The plain bluntness of the Bible does not render it acceptable to the licentious and impure. The debauchee does not gloat over its pages. Wanton females do not titter over its so-called indelicate allusions. The pimp does not carry round the Scriptures in yellow-backed covers to arouse the passions of 'young men void of understanding,' and entice them to 'the house of the strange woman whose lips drop as a honey-comb.' No; such persons dislike the Bible. It declares to them the baseness of their character and conduct, and inter-

feres with their success. The very plainness of the Scriptures (or, if the infidel will have it so, their coarseness and indelicacy,) make them more hated by those who pursue the ways of vice than any other book, and constitute them a safe-guard of chastity and virtue.

2. It has also been asserted, that there are some things in the Bible which tend to encourage injustice and cruelty,—such as the alleged command of God to the Israelites to exterminate the nations of Canaan, and the direction to punish with death the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath. These things do, indeed, appear to us harsh, and even cruel. But if we therefore conclude that the morality of the Bible is imperfect, we must, in order to be consistent, conclude that moral perfection does not characterize the works and providence of God. History and observation show that God often does what in men would be cruel and wicked. The permission by God of physical and moral evil is seemingly as inconsistent with infinite benevolence and wisdom, as anything attributed to God by the Hebrew writers. He is continually doing things that are as terrible as the destruction of the Canaanites by the sword. Generation after generation is struck down by death in its various forms. Even tender infants, in the providence of God, suffer and die. The pestilence is often employed by Him to decimate communities and nations. Occasionally He strikes down by lightning persons no worse than their fellows, and no more guilty than the Israelite who was put to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. The

earthquake overthrows cities to their foundations, and crushes and mangles the inhabitants beneath the ruins. The avalanche rolls down the mountain-side and buries alive hundreds beneath its cold weight. The volcano pours out rivers of red-hot lava which suffocates and burns men, women, and children in its course. All these terrible things take place in the providence of God; and if any man objects to the conduct attributed to Him in the Bible, he must, in order to be consistent, object to the providence of God; or at once turn atheist and murmur darkly, 'with the fool, in his heart,' that 'there is no God.' With the probability or possibility of a supernatural indication to the Israelites, that God willed the destruction of the Canaanites, or the execution of the Sabbath-breaker, we have nothing now to do. It is sufficient for our purpose to point out the fact, that God does inflict just such terrible punishments, and even more terrible, on men for their sins and crimes. The Bible represents Him as employing the Jews as well as other nations as instruments to execute his will, just as he employs the natural elements for the same purpose. In the transactions above referred to the Jews are to be considered as acting the part of soldiers, who at the word of command shoot down a comrade for cowardice, or for sleeping at his post. Neither their lawgiver and teachers, nor the Bible, bases these terrible punishments on the moral principles which should guide the conduct of men in general, but on the special appointment of God. Hence they have no more to do with the Bible morality than God's destruction of millions and mil-

lions of human beings by fire, flood, earthquake, volcano, and pestilence has to do with morality in general. Should it be said that the alleged employment of the Jews in the infliction of God's wrath for sin, and their alleged conscious agency in it, must have had a demoralizing influence on them, —we would reply that the assertion is not supported by fact. For among the Jews was produced a system of morality which, as we will hereafter show, is admitted to be the best that the world possesses.

3. It has been further objected that the Bible encourages hatred and revenge. This objection is founded partly on mis-translation and mis-interpretation. The passage in which king David is represented as on his death-bed charging his son Solomon to put Shimei to death is mis-translated.¹ The words 'but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood' should read, 'but his hoar head bring thou *not* down to the grave with blood,' as is shown by the context.* Accordingly, Solomon did at first spare the life of Shimei, and would have continued to do so, had he not violated his oath in his clandestine departure from Jerusalem. Besides, the command of David to Solomon concerning Shimei is not declared to have been just and right. The historian merely records it, without expressing any opinion concerning its moral character. The account of the punishment of the Ammonites by David 'under saws, harrows, and axes,' and by 'making

¹ 1 Kings, 2: 9.

*According to Hebrew usage, the negative in the first clause of the verse is to be understood in the second.

them pass through the brick-kiln,' does not show that he put them to death; but that he spared their lives, and subjected them to hard service in various kinds of manual labor. Here again, king David's conduct is recorded without either condemnation or approval. The Psalms that are regarded by some as breathing a spirit of malice and revenge, do not really express such feelings. Take as an example the declaration in the 139th Psalm,—‘Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies;’ or take some of the declarations in the 69th and 109th Psalms. In regard to them several things are to be observed. (1) These declarations relate to persons incorrigible and abandoned in their wickedness. The enemies whom the Psalmist denounces are the determined and open haters of God, and of all that is good. The hatred which he expresses is hatred for the character and conduct of such persons. (2) There is no intention or desire expressed by the Psalmist to take the punishment of these evil-doers into his own hands. His declarations contain predictions and imprecations of punishment. He heartily approves of God's judgments. But he leaves the most detested transgressors in the hands of God, to be punished according to their deserts. There is no lifting of his own hand to take vengeance. His declarations encourage men only to look to God for the redress of wrongs. (3) The Psalmist, doubtless, knew and understood the command ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ His desiring, praying for,

and approving of the punishment, yea, the destruction of incorrigible offenders,* are no more inconsistent with mercy and benevolence, than is the arresting, condemning, and hanging of murderers inconsistent with mercy and benevolence. (4) Construe these declarations as we may, they do not affect the excellence of the Hebrew morality. Christ, the great expounder of it, forbade all malice and revenge. He and his apostles taught that men should love their enemies, and return good for evil. If the Psalms any where encourage a vindictive spirit, it affects indeed the question of *plenary* inspiration, but not our argument; since the more expanded Hebrew morality of the New Testament forbids all malice and revenge, and requires the returning of good for evil.

4. The execution of Saul's two sons and five grandsons, for his wickedness committed years before,¹ has been cited as an act of cruel injustice, sanctioned by the Almighty. The latest citation of this kind that has fallen under our eye is as follows: 'We read of a God who smote a whole country with plague for the mis-deeds of a king long since dead, and whose wrath could be appeased only by the crucifixion of seven innocent men.'² But the wrath of God in this case was justice—displeasure at gross crime. Saul had made an attempt to exterminate the Gibeonites, an innocent and defenceless people, and had slain some of them in cold blood. It was

*'Avenge, O Lord! thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold!'—*Milton*.

¹ 2 Sam. 21: 1—11. ² West. Review, Oct. 1864, p. 175.

murder, innocent blood shed by the Israelitish king, which was the alleged cause of God's anger. The Gibeonites were *foreigners*; but this whole transaction showed that the killing of a foreigner, as well as an Israelite, was to be regarded and punished as a detestable crime. The punishment of the crime years after its commission, only made the lesson more emphatic and impressive. To say that the seven men who were executed were *innocent*, as is done in the above extract, is to take for granted what is not known, and to make an unsupported assertion. The sons and grandsons of Saul may have concurred in his crime, and have been in reality as guilty as *he* was. But the transaction is an *exceptional* one, so far as it is to be viewed in its human aspect. The Jewish law declared that 'the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every one shall be put to death for his own sin.'¹ This statute regulated human punishments among the Jews. But they were taught to believe that God 'visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.'² And this is what God actually does. Often do the crimes of men entail dreadful miseries upon their posterity. The children of the thief, the drunkard, the murderer, and other transgressors, suffer for the sins of their fathers. By such dispensations God manifests his displeasure at sin, and warns men to abstain from it for the sake of their children, as well as for

¹ Deut. 24: 16.

² Ex. 20: 5.

themselves. The execution of Saul's sons and grandsons, in accordance with the Divine direction, was therefore in keeping with God's way of dealing with men. It is not presented in the Bible as an example to be followed in the infliction of human punishment, but as a special case, in which God accomplished by the agency of men what he generally accomplishes by providential arrangements and natural laws. This special case no more affects the character of the Bible morality, than the dreadful miseries which men by their crimes often bring on their posterity affect morality in general. But view this matter as we may, the Bible represents God as inconceivably just, merciful, and benevolent; forbids that the children shall be punished for the sins of their parents; and teaches the duty of universal benevolence. These alleged examples of cruelty and injustice have a bearing upon the question of the perfection and infallibility of the Scriptures; but do not affect the excellence of the Hebrew morality,—especially as presented, in its matured state, in the New Testament.

5. The passage which represents the children of Israel as *borrowing* jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians just before the exodus, has often been referred to by infidels as justifying fraud and falsehood by the divine sanction.¹ It has, however, often been shown that the word translated *borrow*, means merely to *ask* or *require* without any promise of restitution. But the objection will prob-

¹ Ex. 11: 2-3.

ably continue to be urged, no matter how often or how clearly refuted.

6. The morality of the Bible has also been objected to on account of *polygamy*. The Old Testament tolerated, but does not approve of polygamy. It declares that marriage originally was between one man and one woman. It teaches that this was the original design—‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh.’¹ This is declared to be the law of marriage, as enacted by the Almighty. The existence of polygamy is recognized in the civil laws of the Jews, and some of its evils are provided against, but it is not sanctioned. King David and other good men (or, if the infidel prefers it, men who are represented in the Bible as good) had more wives than one. Our common translation reads that Solomon ‘had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.’² We hold that the declaration that these thousand women were the *wives* of Solomon is not justified by the original Hebrew. But it matters not so far as the present discussion is concerned how many wives he had. His polygamy is very pointedly condemned. He violated an express law in marrying many wives. For it was enacted that the king should not ‘multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away.’³ King David’s polygamy was condemned by the same law. The polygamy of other men is merely recorded. That the teach-

¹ Gen. 2: 24.

² 1 Kings 11: 3.

³ Deut. 17: 17.

ing of the Old Testament is unfavorable to polygamy is evinced by the fact, that it ceased among the Jews. In the time of Christ and the Apostles it was unknown among them; or at least monogamy was the prevalent custom. It is undeniable that the teaching of the New Testament is decidedly against polygamy. Since, then, the Bible teaches that the original law of marriage is that a man shall have but one wife, nowhere sanctions polygamy, and by its influence abolished it among the Jews; and since the New Testament clearly condemns it; there is no well-founded objection to the Bible morality on account of it.

7. The last objection to the morality of the Bible that we will notice is, that it favors slavery. We admit that it does not *expressly* condemn it, but its spirit is opposed to it. The principles which it inculcates in regard to the brotherhood and equality of men are unfavorable to it. Its precepts, faithfully carried out, mitigate its evils, and finally eradicate it. The opposition to slavery has generally been by Christians; and even infidel abolitionists have ever made their strongest appeals in the language of the Bible. Some Christians, indeed, have been slaveholders; but slavery exists wherever the Bible is unknown. Slavery has often been abolished through the influence of the Bible and Christianity, and seldom or never in any other way. To say the least, the Bible impliedly condemns slavery, mitigates its evils, and prepares the way for its extinction.

8. We close our discussion of the objections that

are urged against the morality of the Bible, with a few general observations: (1) Some of these objections are founded, as we have shown, on mis-translations and mis-interpretations. The persistent presentation of these, after their real character has been repeatedly pointed out, indicates that even the supposed errors of the Bible morality are not very numerous. (2) Others of these objections are founded on the actions of men recorded in Bible history. Some of the actions of good men recorded in the Bible are approved, some are disapproved, and some are neither approved nor disapproved—except so far as the general principles of the Bible have a bearing upon them. The mere fact that the conduct of a man, declared to be good and pious, is recorded in the Bible, is not an approval of it. Yet some of the objections urged against the Bible have no other foundation. (3) Others, again, of these objections are founded upon the assumption, that God may not authorize men to do as his agents what He is continually doing by natural means. The objection drawn from the destruction of the Canaanites assumes that, though it might have been very proper for the Almighty to cut off those wicked tribes by a flood or earthquake, yet it is intolerable that He should employ the agency of men for that purpose. (4) Many of the objections urged against the Bible morality lie with equal weight against natural religion, and the moral government of God. The most dreadful punishments are inflicted on men for their sins. Famine, pestilence, and war hurry thousands

upon thousands to premature graves. Fire, flood, earthquake, volcano, and avalanche burn, drown, smother, boil, bake, crush, and mangle the bodies of men, women, and children. Men also are involved in each other's punishment. The errors and sins of one generation often come with crushing weight upon those that follow. If there is a God in heaven, who rules over men, he is continually manifesting his anger at their sins by these tremendous punishments. Göthe, skeptic though he was, speaks of 'the strong naturalness of the Old Testament.' Its very morality is confirmed by the actual state of things in this world. All those dreadful actions which it ascribes to God He actually performs, or else He does not rule in the earth. We might close the Bible, and, guided by the light of nature alone, say to the infidel, *who art thou that repliest against God?* (5) Lastly, the Hebrew morality is not fully revealed in the Old Testament. Some things were permitted among the Jews on account of the hardness of their hearts; as, for instance, the divorcement of wives by their husbands. A species of involuntary servitude was allowed; but by the institution of the Jubilee a system of emancipation was established. Kingly despotism was denounced and forbidden; but it was tolerated, and its evils curtailed. That the Jews were left in ignorance in regard to some points of morality, we admit. That many things morally wrong were *tolerated* among them, we also admit. We do not admit that anything morally wrong was actually sanctioned either in their moral or civil code. But if such were the

case, it would not constitute a well-founded objection to the morality of the Bible. For there was a progressive advancement in morality as well as theology among them. We might admit, so far as our argument is concerned, that in the Bible 'there are narratives which cannot well be surpassed for their superstitious and demoralizing character, for gross credulity, and barbarous vindictiveness.' For notwithstanding the superstitious credulity and vindictive animosity that may have existed among the Jews, and notwithstanding any moral errors that may be supposed to be contained in the books of Moses, the Psalms, or any of the older parts of the Bible, their teachers and writers continued to make fuller and clearer enunciations of moral truth, until finally the Hebrew morality became so comprehensive and complete, that during eighteen hundred years of advancing civilization no error has been detected, and no improvement suggested. Nor does it matter whether this advancement was very gradual, or whether the Hebrew morality was almost at once brought into a state of perfection. It did attain to a state of perfection in the time of Christ and his apostles; and this wonderful phenomenon is all the more wonderful because of the barbarous credulity and vindictiveness which, the skeptical objector asserts, darkened and dwarfed the Jewish mind. Most assuredly we ought to judge of the achievements of the Hebrew nation, not by what they were and did when emerging from the degradation of slavery, nor merely by their earlier writings; but by their literature, jurisprudence, theology, and moral-

ity when these were carried to the highest state of perfection. The very objections that are urged against the morality of the Bible, only make their attainments in moral science more unaccountable,—except on the ground that they received supernatural aid.

CHAPTER III.

THE MORAL PERFECTION OF JESUS.

JESUS is set forth as the model man. The writers of the New Testament enjoin upon all, the imitation of his spirit and conduct. Unlike all other characters presented in the Bible, he is declared to be sinless and perfect. Hence he may be considered as the embodiment of the Hebrew morality.

The poets and historians of the world celebrate the praises of successful kings and warriors; but the New Testament writers record the sayings and doings of one who had none of the trappings of earthly pomp and greatness to recommend him to admiration and applause. Contrary to the expectation of the Jews in regard to the Messiah, Jesus appeared as a poor man, the son of a carpenter, and an inhabitant of the despised city of Nazareth. In his personal manners, he was meek, patient, gentle, kind, and condescending. He was dignified, but familiar. Unlike the founders of Jewish sects, he was without ostentation and without austerity. He refused not to enter the houses of the rich and to partake of their bounteous hospitality; yet none were so lowly and mean as to be beneath his notice. He acted in direct opposition to Jewish pride and prejudice, in eating with unwashed hands, and in

sitting at table with publicans and sinners. He received all of every name and class. He was never idle, and never trifled. 'He went about doing good.' He healed the sick, fed the hungry, instructed the ignorant, comforted the sorrowful, cast out devils, and raised the dead. He turned not away, indeed, from the rich, the noble, and the great; but he especially sympathized with and blessed the poor, the unfortunate, and the wretched.

But, gentle though he was toward honest inquirers after truth, and compassionate though he was to the poor and the distressed, he was unsparing in his denunciations of pride, fraud, and injustice. He overwhelmed hypocrites and captious opponents with scathing rebukes and invectives. He fearlessly assailed the pride, covetousness, and deceit of the Jewish rulers and teachers; and indignantly denounced the formal, bigoted, and self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. His teaching had tremendous power. 'He spake as one having authority.' The very men who were sent to arrest him went away confounded, and declared to their employers, 'Never man spake like this man.' In the advocacy of truth he was uncompromising and daring. In the cause of humanity and righteousness, he confronted danger and death. He entangled not himself with worldly affairs. He meddled not with matters merely political. He declared, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' He claimed to be a king, indeed; but a king of truth and righteousness. With singleness of purpose and entire consecration of soul, he labored for the welfare of men. With dauntless courage,

unshaken purpose, and burning love of mankind, he toiled on, unmoved by weariness, reproach, persecution, danger, and death.

As to the matter of his teaching, it included all theology and all morals. His doctrines include all human duties, and forbid every sin. He gave the preference to faith, love, mercy, and justice, over sacrifices and tithes. Instead of ceremonial observances; he enjoined inward purity and devotion. His teaching was armed with the authority of God; and with sanctions high as heaven, deep as hell, and lasting as eternity. Both as a teacher and as an individual, he exhibited a perfect combination of the rarest qualities. He rebuked the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees in tones of indignation; yet took little children in his arms and blessed them. Though bold and unflinching in the advocacy of truth, and fierce in his denunciation of party-spirit and hypocrisy; he wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He was no Stoic; yet he stood calm and gentle before Herod and Pilate, while the excited multitude under the influence of his blood-thirsty enemies bayed and howled around him. With consummate dignity, infinite self-respect, and unbounded claims to homage and obedience; he ever manifested patience, meekness, and humility. Claiming to be the Son of God and the Lord from heaven; he made himself the servant of all, and even washed his disciples' feet. Though with a sort of religious fury he drove the traders and thieves out of the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers; he stood in gentle dignity before his accusers and judges, and suffered

with meekness all the indignities and injuries that were heaped upon him. Though he poured out his indignation on self-righteous hypocrites; he prayed for his crucifiers, saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'

One thing very remarkable in the character of Jesus is its perfect consistency. He is ever the same. He is always dignified, meek, calm, and condescending. At all times and under all circumstances—in the vast assemblage, and in private intercourse; in company with his friends and disciples, and in conflict with his enemies; in the temple, in the synagogue, on ship-board, on the mountain-top; at feasts, at marriages, by the sick-bed, at the side of the grave, in his addresses to the multitude, in solitary prayer; when healing the sick, when feeding the hungry, when casting out devils, when raising the dead; in the storm-tossed vessel; while walking on the sea; at the tomb of Lazarus; in the upper room at supper; when he washed the feet of his disciples; while suffering and praying in the garden; while confronting his judges and accusers; when scourged, spitted on, and crowned with thorns; when nailed to the cross; while praying for his crucifiers; while breathing his last; in his interviews with his disciples after his resurrection; at his departure from them and in giving them his parting blessing;—at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, he exhibited the same combination of amiable and glorious qualities; the same simplicity and calm dignity; the same self-respect and the same condescension; the same consciousness of power and

worth, and the same meekness and self-sacrifice; the same loathing of pride, hypocrisy, covetousness, formalism, self-righteousness, and sin in all its forms, and the same tenderness and compassion for sinners; the same benevolence, devotion, and humility; and the same loftiness and grandeur of soul. Never did he utter a word of impatience or fretful complaint; and never did he perform an act unworthy of his avowed mission, or of the exalted character which he claimed as the Son of God. Yet the sacred writers present his character in a calm and simple narration. They employ no eulogy. They express little or no admiration. They professedly report merely what Jesus said and did, and thus make his character stand out before us like a living reality.

As we have had frequent occasion to remark, it matters not, so far as our argument is concerned, whether the infidel admits or denies that Christ spoke and acted as his biographers assert, or even that such a person ever existed. The New Testament gives us the historical portrait of a Jew named Jesus the Christ; and his character, whether real or ideal, is the exponent of moral excellence according to the Hebrew standard. This master-piece of excellence is set before us in the New Testament for our imitation. Its writers declare that in spirit, conduct, and character, we should be such as they describe Jesus of Nazareth.

The unparalleled excellence of this model character is generally admitted even by those who disbe-

lieve the New Testament history. Some skeptics can scarcely find words adequate to express their enthusiastic admiration. We have already presented an extract from the writings of Rousseau in proof of the literary excellence of the Gospel narratives. This French infidel also expressed great admiration for the moral excellence of Christ's character. 'Where is the man, where is the sage who could thus suffer and die without weakness and without ostentation? * * * What prejudice, what blindness it is, to presume to compare the son of Sophroniscus with the son of Mary! What a distance between the two! * * * The death of Socrates, tranquilly philosophizing with his friends, is the most pleasant one could desire; that of Jesus expiring in agonies, abused, taunted, cursed by a whole people, is the most horrible one could fear. Socrates blessed the executioner who wept in presenting the poisoned cup; Jesus, amidst frightful tortures, prayed for his enraged tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God.'¹ Renan, who maintains the human origin of the Bible and Christianity, expresses the highest admiration of Christ's character as a man. He calls him 'the incomparable man, to whom the universal conscience has decreed the title of the Son of God.' He also speaks of him as 'this sublime person;' and declares that 'in him is condensed all that is good and lofty in our nature.'² Göthe tells us that he loved Christ, as well

¹ Emile, l. 4. ² Vie de Jesus, chs. 1, 28.

as the Scriptures.¹ In his *Wanderjahre*, published by him in his seventy-second year, he styles Christ *the Divine man, a pattern and an example, a model of exalted patience*. In his eighty-third year, he declared his belief in the genuineness of the four gospels, because he saw in them a reflection of the greatness which emanated from the person of Christ. He said, 'If I am asked whether it is in my nature to pay him devout reverence, I say, certainly! I bow before him as the divine manifestation of the highest morality.'² These declarations do not indicate that the German poet was a genuine believer in Christianity. He was, indeed, a genuine *doubter*; but he regarded the character of Christ as a masterpiece of excellence, admirable for its beauty and perfection. Strauss, who maintains that the gospel narratives are made up of myths, conscious misrepresentations, and an uncertain quantity of truth, speaks of the portraiture of Christ as the ideal of the greatest, best, and holiest man; and as the highest type of excellence conceivable by the human mind. He further styles him the greatest man that ever trod the earth, a hero in whose fate Providence is in the highest degree glorified.³ Theodore Parker, who agreed with Strauss in many things, and who gained his reputation mainly by the reproduction of the ideas of German rationalists, bore very decided testimony to the excellence of Christ's char-

¹ Truth and Poetry, B. 15.

² Life and Works of Göthe by Lewes, vol. 2, p. 397.

³ Leben Jesu, B. 111, s. 147.

acter. Said he, 'I think Jesus was a perfect man—perfect in morality and religion.'¹

Such are the opinions expressed concerning the moral excellence of Christ's character by the most prominent opponents of his Deity and of the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures. A volume might be filled with such testimonies. We deem it sufficient to give the above as specimens. Doubtless, most readers are aware that the more considerate class of skeptics concede the moral perfection of Christ's character, as portrayed in the New Testament.

Now, this faultless character is the exponent of Bible morality. Christ is set forth as the model man. It may, indeed, be objected that he cannot be a model for every class of men, nor for any class in every respect. But parents of forty or fifty years of age should and can teach their young children by *example* as well as by precept; and most assuredly Christ may with as much propriety be an example to mankind in general as parents to their children. Christ set forth in his conduct the motives and spirit by which all mankind should be actuated. Men, women, and children should have the same mind that was in him. They should be holy, just, temperate, benevolent, merciful, forbearing, meek, humble, condescending, self-denying, and self-sacrificing, as he was. So the New Testament teaches and commands. The Hebrew writers, in thus exhibiting a character of perfect excellence and in commanding

¹ Life and Cor., by Weiss, letter to S. J. May.

us to imitate it, *teach a perfect morality*. In setting forth Jesus Christ as the model man, they have done more to elevate the standard of human virtue, and exalt human character, than all the philosophers and moralists of the world.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEBREW MORALITY COMPARED WITH OTHER SYSTEMS.

WE will be enabled better to appreciate the excellence of the Bible morality by comparing it with other systems.

1. *The morality of the ancient Égyptians.* The moral system of this renowned nation, if moral system they had at all, was especially defective in those great truths which lie at the foundation of all true morality as well as religion. They believed in the immortality of the soul; but this doctrine was in their minds encumbered and obscured with the absurdities of transmigration. They believed, too, in a judgment after death, and in future rewards and punishments. But they by no means attained to the clear ideas on these subjects that we are accustomed to in the Scriptures. God's hatred of sin, men's accountability to Him, his coming to judge the world at the last day, the resurrection of the dead, the assembling of all mankind before the judgment-throne, their giving an account of all the deeds done in the body, the immortality of the soul in a state of conscious existence, the blessedness of the righteous, the misery of the wicked,—doctrines which are intimately connected with right moral ideas and feelings,

and which were so clearly announced to the Jews by their teachers and writers,—were either entirely unknown to the Egyptians, or were held by them obscurely and feebly. They had no such code as the Decalogue. They were ignorant of most of the doctrines contained in the Sermon on the Mount. They never attained to a knowledge of the grand truths that abound in the Scriptures. They knew nothing of such commands as ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,’ and ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’ Famed as they were for wisdom and learning, they were especially barren in morality. Their moral ideas were few and limited. They were of all nations the least governed by *principles*. Among them almost every thing was controlled by rules, customs, and legislative enactments. With all their achievements and their prolonged national existence, they did little or nothing for the moral improvement of the world. In all the ransacking of Egypt’s tombs and mummies, in all the studying and deciphering of her hieroglyphics, in all the examinations of her obelisks, sphinxes, and pyramids, and in all that is recorded of her history, arts, laws, and learning in Grecian and Roman authors,—not a single discovery has been made that is now, in a moral point of view, of any value to mankind. Her morality is as worthless a thing as one of her own ragged mummies, of interest only to the antiquarian. If all that is known of ancient Egypt were lost and forgotten, the world morally would be none the poorer. But if the Hebrew Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, or the Lord’s

Prayer, were blotted out of existence, a blank would be created which the learning and philosophy of the world could not fill.

What the actual state of morals among the ancient Egyptians was, cannot be fully known. It is ascertained, however, that the inter-marriage of brothers and sisters was allowed and practised. Polygamy was sanctioned and allowed to all classes but the priests. Slavery in its worst form was an established institution. There is reason to believe that drunkenness was common even among the women.¹ According to Moses, the Egyptians were cruel and oppressive.² Their barbarity in destroying the male children of the Israelites has rarely been surpassed. These, however, were not their worst immoralities. For when we consider the debasing influence of their beastly theology, and its inevitable effects upon their minds and manners, we cannot but conclude that the most shameful practices prevailed and were encouraged among them. We have already alluded to the fact, that Herodotus speaks of some of their customs as being too indecent to be mentioned. We have also referred to the laws which Moses enacted against bestial impurity and other abominations among the Jews, immediately after their coming out of the land of Egypt, as indicating the vile contaminations to which in that land they had been exposed.³ According to the testimony of Herodotus,⁴ chastity among the Egyptian women was very rare.

¹ Wilkinson, vol. 1, pp. 51-3. ² Ex. 1: 9-22.

³ Part ii, ch. 2. ⁴ B. 2: 11.

This testimony is strengthened by Moses in his account of Joseph.¹

It is evident, therefore, that the morality of the ancient Egyptians was vastly inferior to the morality taught in the religious books of the Jews. With the actual morals of the Jews we have nothing now to do. According to their own writers there was often a shocking state of morals among them. But this only makes the perfect and sublime morality taught by their poets, prophets, and apostles more wonderful. Whereas the immoralities of the Egyptians were in accordance with the teachings and example of their priests, theologians, and leaders.

2. *The Hindu morality.* The doctrines which lie at the foundation of all pure morality were unknown to the Hindus, or were very imperfectly understood by them. They were taught, indeed, that there is a God—or rather a vast multitude of gods; that the soul is immortal; that there is a future state of rewards and punishments; and that the future condition of men is influenced by their character and conduct in this life. But they had no such ideas of the personality, majesty, holiness, justice, and goodness of the one true God, as are taught in the Bible. Their doctrine of the soul's immortality was degraded by the fable of transmigration. And the salutary influence of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments was destroyed, or greatly decreased, by their mistaken and absurd views in regard to human merit, caste, purification, penance, the sacred-

¹Gen. 39: 7-12.

ness of animals, and the conscious life of plants and minerals. In their writings are found no such views of God's hatred of sin and of his awful justice, his boundless love and mercy, the value of inward purity above outward observances, the glorious rewards of the righteous and the dreadful miseries of the wicked, as are included in the Bible. The restraining, purifying, and elevating truths which it teaches in regard to God, the human soul, the character of true virtue, the strict accountability of men, life, death, heaven, hell, and immortality,—are unknown in the Hindu system. It is characterized also by the absence of those simple, yet comprehensive and grand utterances, which abound in the Bible. Like the ancient Egyptians, they had no Decalogue, no Golden Rule, no Sermon on the Mount. They had no hymns which an intelligent man of modern times would use for the moral instruction of his children. They had no book of Proverbs the reading of which would confirm the faltering virtue of young men, and strengthen them against the temptations of vice. They had no books so abounding in significant moral utterances as to be suitable to be used as a text-book in moral science, or as the basis of popular discourses on individual and national duties and sins. They had no Songs, Epistles, nor Histories, which it would not be an outrage to read at funerals or at the bedside of the sick and dying. No sane man would employ any of their writings to strengthen and comfort the miserable and broken-hearted. Thus their vast inferior-

ity in moral significance and value to the Old and New Testaments is demonstrated.

The vast inferiority of the morality of the Hindus is further seen, in their beau-ideal of human excellence. Their model man was a wandering, wretched, half-starved, self-righteous hermit. The *Sannyasi*, who was supposed to attain to union with the Supreme Being, and to be absorbed into his essence, was a Brahmin who spent the fourth period of his life in prayers and austerities. He forsook his family and friends, and lived in total solitude. He had no shelter, no fire, no home. He begged his food, ate but once a day, and only when very hungry. He had no hatred, fear, or love toward any human being. He drank water strained through a cloth to avoid injuring minute insects. He purified himself by suppressions of his breath and by the repetition of mystic words.¹ Such was the model man of the Hindus—such the ideal excellence which they were taught to imitate.

How different the moral excellence enjoined upon the Hebrews!—‘Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen; to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou

¹ Menu, 6: 22-79.

bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"¹ The difference, the immeasurable difference, between the Hindu morality and the Hebrew is seen in the contrast between the *Sannyasi* and *Jesus of Nazareth*,—the one, unsocial, solitary, selfish, unfeeling, haggard, emaciated, self-righteous, relying upon austerities, ceremonies, and incantations for acceptance with God; and the other, kind, compassionate, social, sympathizing, enjoying whatever hospitalities and comforts are offered him, laborious and self-sacrificing in the service of others, and showing by example as well as by precept the beauty and excellence of moral purity and disinterested benevolence. The teaching of the Hindu authors tended to produce the spirit and conduct of the secluded, selfish, and unfeeling *Sannyasi*; the Scriptures present the perfect and glorious character of *Christ* for the imitation of men.

Many of the laws of the Hindus were very immoral. Polygamy was authorized. Slavery of the most degrading kind was an established institution. Women were declared never to be fit for independence; and, as inferior beings, were forbidden to read the Vedas. Adultery was allowed in persons of the same class. Childless wives of the servile class were permitted to have children by the brothers or other kinsmen of their husbands. A wife incurably diseased might be superseded by another wife. A

¹ Isaiab, 58: 5-7.

childless wife might be superseded in the eighth year; a wife whose children were all dead, in the tenth; one who had only daughters, in the eleventh; one who spoke unkindly, without delay. It was provided that a diseased wife who was virtuous, though superseded, should not be disgraced. A king who was incurably diseased, was required to seek death in battle, or by starvation. A Brahmin who was incurably diseased was required to 'feed on water and air until his body totally decayed.' A wife, after her husband's death, was forbidden to pronounce the name of another man, and was required to emaciate her body by slender diet and the performance of harsh duties. A Brahmin, though convicted of all possible crimes, was not to be punished. The king might, indeed, banish him, but with his property secure and his body unhurt.¹ These are some of the objectionable enactments of the Hindu civil and moral code. The Institutes of Menu are supposed to have been compiled nearly 1300 years before Christ. But we discover in them the spirit and ideas which led to worse errors afterwards. The widow-burnings, child-drownings, Jugernaut-immolations, and other hideous practices among the modern people of India, are but the earlier Hindu ideas gone to seed. The Hindu mind moved on in the direction of its first errors. Whatever was bad in the Hindu system struck its roots deeper and deeper, grew stronger and stronger, and finally produced fruits at which humanity shudders.

¹ Menu, 4: 157-8; 6: 31; 8: 204; 9: 18-323.

Whatever was evil in the Hebrew system was merely permitted, was curtailed and counteracted, and finally in the time of Christ and the Apostles was abolished, leaving a pure and perfect morality as an inheritance of the nations. The Hindu morality was for ages unknown to mankind. Now that it has become known, it is found, as compared with the Bible system, to be very defective and erroneous. It contains nothing of value which is not better expressed in the Bible; it omits many important truths and duties altogether; and it enjoins many things that are pernicious, outrageous, and abominable.

3. *The morality of the Buddhists.* As we have before remarked, Buddhism is of Hindu origin, Gotama its founder being an Indian prince. Though it was suppressed in the land of its birth, it exerts a powerful influence over millions and millions of people in many lands.

The primitive Buddhists ignored or denied the fundamental principles of morality altogether. Since Gotama denied the existence of God and the reality of an external world, his moral precepts were without authority. Buddhism acknowledges really no such thing as moral law or moral obligation. The only obligation which it recognizes as resting on men is such as they impose on themselves. The Buddhists believed in transmigration; and that, for sins committed in this life, the human soul may be forced after death to inhabit one of the lower animals; and that, by the performance of meritorious deeds in this life, a man may raise himself to the condition of a god hereafter. They regarded desire,

affection, thought, all mental activity, as the source of evil; and hence they placed beatitude in the destruction of all thoughts and desires. But this could only be by the cessation of all existence. Hence their whole moral system had for its ultimate object the final annihilation of the soul. They did not regard sin as a pollution, but as an obstacle in the way of reaching *Nirvana*, nothingness. Vice was merely a misfortune. Virtue was the means of 'crossing to the other shore.' Charity, humility, patience, and other virtues, were to be cultivated and practised, not as good in themselves, not for the purpose of doing good, but as the means of self-annihilation. Hence Buddhism as a moral system was a vast scheme of profits and losses. Its highest motive, and its only motive, was selfishness. The acquirement of merit by the Buddhist, says Spence Hardy, is as mercenary an act as the toils of the merchant to secure the possession of wealth.¹

The idea that all sin originates in desire and inclination leads to asceticism. It was thought that austerities and penances tended to the destruction of all desire and inclination, and therefore were meritorious. Hence Buddha's disciples were required to clothe themselves in rags, live in forests and without shelter, sleep without lying down, and to afflict themselves in various other ways. Hence, too, virtue was to be practised not merely as laying up a stock of merit, but also as a means of self-mortification. For the same reason, the charity which would

¹ Manual of Buddhism, p. 508.

lead a man to offer his body as food to a starving tiger, was commended as heroic and meritorious.

Such being the ideas embraced in the system of Buddhism, we would naturally suppose that its adherents could hardly be anything else than monsters of vice. We would think that their atheism, their disbelief in the existence of a real world, their hoping for and seeking after the annihilation of their souls and bodies, their exaltation of the merit of human actions and self-mortification,—these mad speculations and notions, one would think, would have utterly degraded and debased their ideas on all moral subjects. Yet, strange to say, many of their moral precepts are excellent; and Buddhism as a system of morality is perhaps second only to that of the Bible. It commended charity, modesty, patience, and courage. Humility, which has been supposed by many to be exclusively a Christian virtue, was embraced in it. Its founder ignored caste, and taught the equality of all men. He also taught religious toleration. Like the Hebrews, the Buddhists had a decalogue. Their ten commandments are as follows: (1) Not to kill; (2) Not to steal; (3) Not to commit adultery; (4) Not to lie; (5) Not to get intoxicated; (6) Not to eat solid food after mid-day; (7) Not to attend upon theatrical amusements, music, and dancing; (8) Not to use personal ornaments and perfumes; (9) Not to have large or honorable seats and beds; (10) Not to receive gold or silver. This code, though perhaps not equalled by anything produced among the heathen, is much inferior to the Decalogue of Moses.

(1) The Buddhist code makes no reference to the duties which men owe to God. Its author and those to whom it was given denied that there is a God in heaven. (2) These ten commandments are merely negative. They point out no duties to be performed, but merely acts to be avoided. They were intended to be subsidiary to the destroying of desire and attachment, and were denominated 'the ten precepts of aversion.' The ten commandments of the Hebrews, though some of them are negative in form, enjoin positive duties. They are the carrying out of the two great commandments, which require a man to love God supremely and his neighbor as himself. (3) Five of the Buddhist precepts were for professed disciples only. Only the first five were considered binding on all men. These five negative commands—commands which declare merely what a man ought *not* to do—express the Buddhist idea of human responsibility and duty. How much more exalted is the Bible idea of the whole duty of man! (4) The Buddhist code errs by excess, as well as defect. The first precept, for instance, not to kill, includes all animal life. This resulted from the doctrine of transmigration; beasts, birds, reptiles, and insects being considered as animated by human souls that had sinned in a previous state of existence. Hence the first commandment of the Buddhists prohibited the taking of the life of anything—man, beast, bird, reptile, or insect. The natural result of such an enactment was, the disregard of human life. Such a law is worse than no law at all. It is not surprising to learn, that among

the Buddhists the life of a man is no more regarded than the life of an ox. (5) Every one of the precepts of the second table of the Buddhist code prohibits as pernicious and sinful what is really harmless and proper. The sixth commandment forbids partaking of food in the afternoon. This ascetic rule is unreasonable. Common sense teaches that it is just as proper to eat after mid-day as before it. The seventh commandment, among things that are wrong, forbids music and songs—another unreasonable ascetic prohibition. So also the eight, ninth, and tenth precepts err by excess, prohibiting personal ornaments and perfumes, large beds and seats, and the use of money. ‘The twelve observances,’ designed for those who were still further advanced in the religious life, erred still farther in the same direction; requiring the devotee, as we have before remarked, to live without shelter, fire, or bed; to clothe himself in rags; to eat only one meal a day and in the fore-noon; to beg his food; and to sleep without lying down, and with his back against a tree.

It is seen, therefore, that Buddhism, though a revolt against Brahminism, had much in common with it. The doctrine of transmigration, asceticism, self-mortification, the meritoriousness of ceremonial performances as well as of acts of charity and self-denial, and the possibility of securing future blessedness by living like savages and dogs on earth, are taught in both systems. There is but one step from the idea of Brahm—the inactive, sleeping God—as held by the Brahmins, to the atheism of the Budd-

hists. The Buddhistic disbelief in the reality of the external world, goes only a little beyond the contemptuous regard of the Brahmins for present and visible things. *Nirvana* is but the carrying out of the Brahminic idea, that blessedness consists in apathy, repose, absorption of conscious existence into the Almighty Spirit. Besides this, many of the immoral regulations and customs which the founder of Buddhism found existing among the Hindus, he adopted into his own system, or at least tacitly approved of them.

The inferiority of Buddhism as a moral system to Christianity, is unquestionably and immeasurably great. Were any man, in a country enlightened by Christianity, to advocate the moral ideas of Buddha, and to practise according to his *ten precepts* and *twelve observances*, he would be universally and deservedly regarded as a lunatic, a savage, or a monster.

4. *The Persian morality.* The ancient Persians believed in the immortality of the human soul, the accountability of men to their Creator, a future state of rewards and punishments, and a judgment after death. Yet their morality was very defective. Their moral ideas were few and limited. The books prepared for their instruction contain, indeed, very little elevated sentiment of any kind. There is more of elevated, purifying moral sentiment in one of the Hebrew Psalms, or a chapter of the Proverbs, than we have been able to discover in the *Yacna*, *Vendidad*, *Vispered*, and *Khoda-avesta* together. Except as sources of information in regard to the

beliefs and customs of the ancient Persians, these books are worthless. Their recent translation into a living language will not add one moral idea or truth to the stock already possessed by mankind. They contain no profound utterances, no grand truths, no comprehensive statements of duty, no far-reaching principles. They omit many of the most important virtues and duties,—such as supreme love to God, repentance, resignation, gratitude, humility, disinterested and self-sacrificing benevolence, compassion to the poor and miserable, kindness to widows and orphans, forbearance and forgiveness. The universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of men are not recognized in these old writings. The duties which arise out of the relations of men to society, government, and to one another, are not mentioned. We do not assert that all these important virtues, duties, and principles were unknown to the ancient Persians and their teachers. Doubtless they had some knowledge of some of them. But the omission of all mention of them in their writings constitutes, so far as systematic morality is concerned, a radical and fatal defect. The great amount of frivolous matter contained in these writings makes it still more evident how limited, meagre, and barren were the moral ideas and doctrines of their authors. There is more said in the Avesta about dogs, and the proper way of treating them, than about kindness to the poor and the unfortunate. There is more said about agriculture than about justice and benevolence, or the duties which men owe to God and to one another. The

first, second, and third thing declared most acceptable to Ahura-mazda pertains to husbandry. The beau-ideal of human character among the ancient Persians was, a thrifty farmer and cattle-raiser, who had one or more prolific wives and plenty of dogs. In the early period of their history, they were an agricultural people, and perhaps were generally peaceful and industrious. Of a higher order of morality they seem to have had no idea. Schlegel expresses the opinion that the intellectual religion of the Persians deserves to rank next to the Christian faith and doctrine.¹ However it may be in regard to their religion, their morality was certainly inferior to that of the Buddhists. In addition to its authorizing polygamy, the intermarriage of brothers and sisters, and other evils,—it failed to inculcate many of the higher virtues and duties of men. In the latter respect it fell much below Buddhism; and immeasurably below the moral system of the Bible.

5. *The Chinese morality.* In speaking of the Chinese theology as expounded by Confucius, we showed that there was a tendency in it to atheism. By his disuse of the personal name of God and in other ways, he discountenanced belief in men's accountability to Him. He refused to express any opinion in regard to the existence of men after death, thus indicating that he at least doubted the immortality of the soul. He ignored the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. His moral principles were

¹ Aesthetic and Misc. Works, B. 2, ch. 4.

mere 'rules of propriety,' having no higher authority and sanctions than the usages of former times. Dr. Legge says, 'This *propriety* was a great stumbling-block in the way of Confucius. His morality was the result of the balancings of his intellect, fettered by the decisions of men of old; and not the gushings of a loving heart, responsive to the promptings of heaven, and in sympathy with erring and feeble humanity.'¹ Beside destroying the foundations of morality in the minds of his disciples and worshippers, he was characterized by Chinese exclusiveness and bigotry. He did not teach that God is the Father of all men. He did not recognize the paternal character of God at all. He denied, or at least ignored, the universal brotherhood and equality of men. His 'rules of propriety' were designed only for his countrymen. Among the Chinese even, he recognized but 'five relations of society,' viz. the relation of sovereign and minister, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger, and friend to friend. He confined the application of his 'rules of propriety' to these five relations, maintaining that all moral duties arise out of these relations, and that the faithful discharge of these duties would secure peace and happiness 'all under heaven,'²—that is, throughout the Chinese empire. From these facts it is seen that the Confucian morality must be narrow and superficial. Accordingly we find it contains no deep utterances; no grand, comprehensive, far-reaching truths; nothing com-

¹ Life and Teaching of Confucius, p. 113.

² Legge's Confucius, p. 104.

parable to the depth, power, and beauty of the moral teachings of the Bible.

It has often been said, that Confucius anticipated the Golden Rule. He did indeed enunciate something similar to it—‘What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.’¹ Dr. Legge very properly calls attention to the negative character of this rule. It only forbids men to do what they feel to be wrong and hurtful. It requires the performance of no duty, but merely abstinence from doing injuries. The command of Christ is positive, requiring men to do whatever they feel to be good and right—‘All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.’ Christ’s rule is for all men under all circumstances. The dictum of Confucius was delivered only to the Chinese for their guidance in the five relations of society. As it respects the question of priority, though Confucius was before Christ, the latter says in regard to his rule, ‘this is the law and the prophets.’² He only announced the truth that had been in substance taught by the Hebrew teachers long before.

It has also been said that Confucius taught the duty of forgiveness, and repaying injury with kindness. In truth, however, he inculcated a revengeful spirit. When asked what he thought of the principle of recompensing injury with kindness, he replied; ‘With what, then, will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and rec-

¹ Legge’s Confucius, p. 111–12. Ana. 15: 23. ² Mat. 7: 12.

ompense kindness with kindness.¹ Another of his declarations was, that ‘He who returns good for evil is a man who is careful of his person.’ In regard to the murderer of a father, mother, brother, or other near relative, he affirmed the duty of blood-revenge in the strongest terms. The bad effects of this teaching are said to be evident in China even at the present time. The revengeful disposition of the Chinese keeps whole districts in a constant state of feud and warfare.²

In regard to some of the duties of ‘the five relations of society,’ Confucius taught very serious errors. He maintained that women should be kept in an abject condition—that a woman when young must obey her father and elder brother; when married, her husband; when a widow, her son: that she may not think of marrying a second time; that her business is simply the preparation of food and wine; that she should not be known beyond the threshold of her own apartments; and that she must not come to any conclusion on her own deliberation. ‘He taught that a wife might be divorced for seven reasons [of these, however, our author specifies only six],—disobedience to her husband’s parents; not giving birth to a son; dissolute conduct; jealousy of her husband’s attentions to other inmates of the harem; talkativeness; and thieving. These reasons, however, might be over-ruled by three considerations,—first, if the wife, while taken from a home, has no home to return to; second, if she has passed

¹ Ana. 25: 26.

² Legge’s Confucius, p. 113-14.

with her husband the three years' mourning for his parents; third, if her husband has risen from poverty to wealth.¹ The assigning as reasons for divorce her *not giving birth to a son* and *talkativeness*, indicates an utter disregard for the importance and sacredness of the relation of husband and wife. He spoke of the faithfulness of husband and wife among the common people, when the husband takes no concubine, as 'small fidelity.'² It appears that he treated his own wife with indifference, and finally divorced her. He treated his son with dignified and distant reserve, manifesting but little affection for him.³ It appears, too, that he was guilty of insincerity and untruthfulness. He, indeed, taught that sincerity and truthfulness are important duties, but he regarded deceit as not inconsistent with them. He feigned sickness in order to excuse himself from seeing an unwelcome visitor.³ He also deliberately violated his oath, and afterward justified himself in doing so. Being taken prisoner on his way to the city of Wei, he was released on making promise by oath that he would not proceed to that city. This oath he violated. On being asked whether this perjury was right, he replied, 'It was a forced oath. The spirits do not hear such.'⁴ Confucius was by no means the sincere, frank, truthful man whom the Christian morality teaches us to admire. This error in the example of Confucius, and this evil trait in his character, have a very pernicious influence in China to this day. Foreigners complain of habitual

¹ Legge's Confucius, p. 106. ² Ana. 14: 18.

³ 17: 20. ⁴ Life of Confucius, p. 102.

deceitfulness on the part of the Government and the people in general.

It is thus seen, that the Confucian morality was very defective and erroneous. It denied the great truths which arm morality with authority and power. It rested on mere custom, propriety, and expediency. It took a very narrow and superficial view of human relations and duties. It taught revenge as a duty, encouraged deceit, degraded women, justified almost unlimited divorce, and approved of concubinage. Such was the Chinese morality, as improved and expounded by their greatest teacher. It will not bear comparison with the broad, deep, lofty morality of the Bible.

6. *The Grecian morality.* The morality of the Greeks is presented in its best form by their philosophers. Socrates, who was perhaps the best of all the heathen philosophers, taught the existence of God (or rather of many gods), the accountability of men, the immortality of the soul, and future retribution. A short time before his death, he expressed a hope that his soul would go into the presence of a good and wise god.¹ Yet the doctrines of immortality and retribution were obscured and enfeebled in his hands by the absurdities of transmigration. He declared it probable that the souls of those who gave themselves up to gluttony and wantonness, will after death enter the bodies of asses and similar animals; that the souls of those who practise injustice, tyranny, and rapine will enter wolves, hawks, and

¹ Phædo, 68.

kites; that souls which practise temperance and justice, without philosophy and reflection, will migrate into bees, wasps, ants, or into human bodies again; and that the souls of philosophers, the true lovers of wisdom, will pass into the rank of the gods.¹ Such views are certainly not calculated to restrain vice or stimulate virtue. The belief that a man may secure his transformation at death into a wasp or ant by the practice of justice and temperance, and that unjust and tyrannical men will probably be changed into wolves or hawks, cannot have much restraining or purifying influence, since men would about as lief be changed into beasts or birds, as into insects.

In regard to many moral questions Socrates held very erroneous opinions. He is brought forward by Plato as the advocate of slavery, community of wives and children, the training of women for war, the cohabitation of brothers with sisters, the appearance of men and women together naked in public, abortion, infanticide, and all the immoralities and indecencies that are proposed in Plato's *Republic*; of which we will soon make more particular mention. Perhaps he should not be charged with all the opinions of which he is represented in that work as the advocate. Yet Aristotle quotes the *Republic* and the *Laws* as containing his well known sentiments. He even refers to these works as the productions of Socrates.² He mentions expressly his advocacy of the community of wives and children, and the training of women for war. Doubtless he held in the main

¹ Phædo, 70-71.

² Pol. 2: 2-7.

the immoral opinions attributed to him, and that Plato represents his revered master as saying nothing inconsistent with his known sentiments and character. His regard for modesty and chastity was certainly not very high. He visited the courtesan Theodota, and gave her directions how to secure the greatest success in her wicked course.¹ He was on friendly terms with Aspasia, the paramour of Pericles.² He disapproved of a Corinthian girl as a mistress merely on the score of health. He is said to have loaned his wife Xantippe to Alcibiades. He spoke of licentious indulgence on the part of men as a matter of inclination and choice.³

Plato held the views in regard to immortality, accountability, future retribution, and transmigration, which he attributes to Socrates. His views, however, in regard to transmigration and retribution were still more fanciful and absurd. He held that timid and unjust men are in their second generation changed into women; that men without vice, but light-minded and curious about things above, are changed into birds; that men who make no use of philosophy and never inquire into the nature of the universe, are changed into quadruped and multiplied animals with feet and head turned toward the earth; and that the most unthinking and ignorant are changed into fishes and other aquatic animals.⁴ Such views as these, so far as their influence upon the character and conduct of men is concerned, are no better than the doctrine of the soul's annihila-

¹ Mem. 3: 11.² Plut. in vita Periclis.³ Mem. 2: 2.⁴ Tim. 72-3.

tion. To teach that timid and unjust men will be changed after death into *women* as a punishment for their sins, and that the unphilosophical class (which embraces the vast majority of mankind) will be changed into four-footed beasts and creeping things, is to make a mockery of immortality, accountability, and retribution. Plato's representations might almost be taken as a burlesque upon these doctrines. His opinions on many points of practical morality were very erroneous. He taught, and he represents Socrates as teaching, that slavery is lawful and desirable; that agriculture should be committed to slaves, and that all classes of foreigners might be enslaved;¹ that women as well as men should be trained to war; and that men and women should appear together naked in gymnastic exercises. The reason assigned by him for this mingling of the sexes was, that male and female dogs are employed together in watching and hunting. The supposed indecency of men and women appearing naked together in public was in his view the result of mere prejudice.² He also taught as follows: that wives and children should be common, and that parents and children should not know each other; that children should be taken with their parents to war so as to be inured as soon as possible to danger and carnage; that the best men should as often as possible form alliances with the best women, in order that, as in the case of dogs and birds, the breed may be improved; that worthy young men should be allowed

¹ Laws, 7: 13; Rep. 5: 15. ² Rep. 5: 3.

ample liberty of access to women as a reward for their virtue, and in order that the greatest number of children may be born of good parentage; that the children of worthy persons should be carefully nurtured, but in such a way that no mother should recognize her own child; that the children of depraved parents, and maimed and lame children, should be destroyed by the public guardians; that children should be born of women from the age of twenty to forty, and of men from the age of thirty to forty-five; that men over forty-five and women over forty should be common to one another; that abortion or exposure should be employed to destroy the children begotten by parents over the prescribed age; and that, as drugs were trusted to physicians while private persons were not allowed to meddle with them, so governors might practise lying for the good of the state, though private citizens should be truthful.¹ He approved of the cohabitation of brothers and sisters. He also in reality approved of the cohabitation of fathers with daughters, and of sons with mothers. For in his model republic, parents are not to know their own children, and relatives are such only by adoption.² He advised, for the purpose of making husbands and wives acquainted with one another before marriage, that young men and maidens should often meet in sports and dances without clothing.³ These views need no comment. They are beastly and abominable. If carried out, they would degrade the citizen into a mere tool of

¹ Rep. 3: 3; 5: 8-9. ² Rep. 3: 3; and 5: 7-14.

³ Laws, 6: 15.

the state, abrogate marriage, overthrow the family institution, desecrate and destroy the holiest social ties and affections, take away from both men and women all modesty, chastity, and decency, and introduce practices known only among brutes, and practices unknown even among them. Yet these are the views of the so-called *divine* Plato, the prince of philosophers; who reports them as the views of Socrates, the wisest and the best of the Greeks.

Aristotle went farther than either Socrates or Plato in obscuring and nullifying the fundamental principles of morality. He often speaks of God as an eternal and immovable *substance*, a *divine essence*, first *principle*, and by other words which represent Him as a mere entity without personality and attributes. He presents no animating views of God's character or providence. Indeed he seems to deny, or at least doubt, that God's providence extends to the earth, or that he takes cognizance of the actions of men. His opinion in regard to the immortality of the soul appears also to have been indefinite and variable. In one place he speaks of the dead as still existing, but of their condition as doubtful.¹ But in another place, he speaks of death as the cessation of existence.² In the latter place his language seems to imply that the souls of the dead are no more. At all events, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul in the writings of Aristotle has no moral power. He makes no use of it to deepen man's sense of ac-

¹ Eth. 1: 10-11.

² Eth. 3: 6.

countability. The idea of future retribution is not presented, that we are aware of, in his works. Since the ideas of God, accountability, immortality, and retribution have so deep moral significance, exert so much influence over men's moral feelings, and arm conscience and right with so much power, it is seen how extremely defective the moral system of Aristotle must be. He sunk below the beast-worshippers of ancient Egypt in regard to the fundamental ideas of morality.

On some points of practical morality, he held opinions similar to those of Plato. He justified slavery as a natural and just institution. His definition of a slave is, 'a tool with a soul in it.' He declared that the ox is in the place of a slave to the poor man; that foreigners should serve the Greeks; that a foreigner and a slave are by nature one and the same; that some men are formed slaves by nature, and are fitted to be the chattels of others;¹ that slaves may be used, some as stewards and others as drudges,² and that all husbandmen should be made slaves, and be so treated as to be deprived of all spirit.³ He also prescribed that in every family only a certain number of children, fixed by law, should be allowed; that every additional child born in the family should be destroyed; and that every child born imperfect or maimed should be disposed of in the same way; or, in case the customs and feelings of the people will not permit the destruction of infants, that the excess of population should be

¹ Pol. 1: 2-5. ² Econ. 1: 5. ³ Pol. 7: 10.

prevented by the use of abortion.¹ He calls theft, adultery, poisoning, pandering, enticing away of slaves, assassination, and false witness involuntary actions, on the ground that their origin is involuntary.² He maintains further, that if a man acts not from deliberate preference, but from passion, he is not unjust though he performs an unjust act; not a thief, though he steals; not an adulterer, though he commits adultery.³ He, however, denominates as unpardonable, acts performed through passion, neither natural nor human.⁴ He approves of revenge, the returning of evil for evil. He does not justify retaliation under all circumstances. For example he does not think that an officer, who strikes some one, should be struck in turn.⁵ Yet he advocates the retaliation of injuries generally. He declares that the meek man errs by defect, since he is not inclined to revenge—but to forgive.⁶

Besides these and other errors that were advocated by the Grecian philosophers, they obscured and enfeebled moral truth by their manner of presenting it. Their writings are metaphysical, tedious, prolix. Every gem they contain is imbedded in a heap of rubbish. What little genuine moral sentiment they contain is surrounded by a mass of definitions and discussions of *ideas*, *essences*, *entities* and *entelechies*, that bury it almost out of sight. We scarcely ever find a clear, pithy, comprehensive sentence. The depth, strength, and earnestness of expression, the fullness of meaning, and the rich profusion of soul-

¹ Pol. 7: 16. ² Eth. 5: 2. ³ 5: 6. ⁴ 5: 8. ⁵ 5: 4. ⁶ 4: 5.

stirring sentiment and just maxims, which are found in the Bible are altogether wanting; and instead, we have definitions, distinctions, disquisitions, and long-winded illustrations. Thus the very *manner* of presenting moral truth that characterizes Aristotle and Plato, and also Socrates though in a less degree, places them as moralists much below the writers of the Bible.

Another thing which places these philosophers in a still more unfavorable light is, that though occupying the position of moral teachers, they acquiesced in and sanctioned many of the worst immoralities that prevailed around them. That great immoralities, both private and public, prevailed in their time is well known. Unchastity was perhaps the most common vice. The poet Homer represents his 'godlike' heroes as keeping mistresses, and as thereby doing nothing that was improper. The custom prevailed in later times. Pericles, the statesman, who was contemporary with Socrates, had Aspasia as his mistress. Before his connection with her, he had parted from his wife by mutual consent, and she had been married to another man. He had by his mistress an illegitimate son, who is said to have been sold, according to the Athenian law, as a slave. Pericles in this matter did nothing contrary to law or public opinion. The practice referred to was allowed by one of Solon's laws. Adultery was regarded as disgraceful and was severely punished; but men who kept mistresses were not regarded as adulterers. Even the prostitutes themselves attained to high consideration. No women in Greece had

so great fame or influence as the courtesans Aspasia, Theodota, Thargelia, and Thais. After the death of Pericles, Aspasia made one of her paramours, named Lysicles, the most considerable man in Athens. Socrates, as stated above, visited both Aspasia and Theodota. The advice which he gave to Theodota indicates his familiarity with unclean passions and practices. Plato in his *Menexenus* represents him as calling Aspasia 'my mistress.' We have already mentioned that he is said to have loaned his wife to Alcibiades; and that he disapproved of a Corinthian mistress on the score of health. Plato kept a courtesan named Archianassa. Aristotle married or lived with the concubine of Hermias, while Hermias was still living. Many of the Athenian laws in regard to marriage were very bad. A man might marry his half-sister, the daughter of his father. An heiress was required to marry a near relative, a brother or uncle. If she and her husband had no children, she was allowed to cohabit with any of her husband's kinsmen whom she might select. The marriage contract was voidable by the mutual consent of husband and wife.

The dissoluteness of the Spartans was still more open and undisguised. Many great immoralities were established among them by law and custom. Young men and women were required to engage together naked in the public exercises, and to dance together naked at the public festivals. Community of wives was practised; husbands loaned their wives to one another. The women were proverbially dissolute. Aristotle says they indulged without re-

straint in every impropriety.¹ Feeble infants were thrown into a cavern near the mountain of Taygetus. Slaves received a certain number of stripes every day, in order that they might not forget their degraded condition; and were murdered by thousands, lest they should become so numerous as to endanger the state. The greatest licentiousness, however, prevailed at Corinth. In the temple of Venus in that city, a thousand prostitutes were maintained; and their lewd practices were regarded as honors paid to the imaginary goddess.

Such were the immoralities of the laws, customs, and practices of the Athenians and other Grecians in the time of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. But in regard to these immoralities they were silent. Instead of denouncing and opposing the licentiousness and corruptions that prevailed around them, they reasoned against the Sophists; theorized and disputed about *ideas*, *essences* and *substances*; or advocated slavery, training of women for war, community of wives, and the slaughtering of feeble and supernumerary infants, as means of improving society and building up the State.

Such was the morality taught and practised by the best and most gifted of the Greeks. The best treatises on theoretical and practical morality furnished by Greece, ignore or obscure the great fundamental ideas of morality; are destitute of moral strength and earnestness; contain no grand moral utterances, nor brief, comprehensive, far-reaching statements of

¹ Pol. 2: 9.

truth; and advocate many things so base and atrocious, that we scarcely dare mention them. Such are the moral achievements of the finest philosophical genius, so far as is now known, the world has ever produced.

7. *The Roman morality.* The Romans adopted the morality as well as the literature and theology of the Greeks. They produced nothing better than the *Memorabilia* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* unless it be the moral writings of Cicero; who was an *eclectic*, and endeavored to bring together the best from all systems and theories. Like an artist who forms a figure of associated beauties,—taking a head here, an arm there, and a hand yonder,—Cicero appropriated whatever seemed to him true and good in the writings of all preceding authors. Yet he by no means presents a perfect system. In his treatise on *Duties*, he hurries over the duties of men toward God without telling in what they consist. He does not teach that moral duties have the sanction of God's authority; nor that men should imitate his character. His standard of right and duty is the *honestum*—the honest and honorable. The idea of future retribution is scouted by him. He doubted the immortality of the soul; but thought that if it exists at all after death, it must be happy. Thus he neglected, doubted, or denied the doctrines which have so important a bearing on morality. On many subjects his opinions were very erroneous. He speaks of Lycurgus as the inventor of a most admirable and beneficial system of jurisprudence, without expressing any disapprobation of the indecencies and immoralities

which it embraced.¹ He approved of slavery as natural and right.² He justified the enslavement of the common people according to the Spartan code; though the taking of the lands of the rich to be cultivated by them he condemned as unjust.³ He also justified suicide. It is true that he teaches that a man should not depart out of this world without the command of God. But he held that under certain circumstances, men have the command or permission of God to kill themselves. He refers, as examples, to Socrates and Cato;⁴ the latter of whom killed himself with his sword. He teaches that, in regard to life, the same law should be observed which regulated the banquets of the Grecians—‘Let a man either drink or depart’—and, that a man by killing himself may avoid the misfortunes which he cannot bear.⁵ Another of his errors was the approval of the retaliation of injuries. He thought, indeed, that it might be sufficient if the offender would repent and not repeat the injury; but at the same time, he approved in general of returning evil for evil.⁶ He also justified hypocritical formality in religion. He did not believe in ‘the rabble of gods’ worshipped by the Romans. Like many modern skeptics, he denied the possibility, or at least the credibility, of the supernatural. Yet he enjoined conformity to custom, law, and public opinion; declaring that the gods accounted celestial ought to be worshipped; and that divine honors should be paid to Hercules,

¹ Rep. 3: 9. ² 1: 43. ³ 3: 9. ⁴ Tusc. Quest. 1: 30.

⁵ Tusc. Quest. 5: 41. ⁶ De Offic. 1: 7; 3: 19.

Romulus, and other deified men.¹ He did not believe in divination and augury; but he directed that there should be public augurs to examine the presages and auspices, and that military officers and civil rulers should be guided by them. He himself held the office of augur, and declared it to be one of the greatest and most important.² In thus recommending hypocritical conformity to custom and law in regard to religion, Cicero followed the example of preceding and contemporary philosophers. Yet his conduct was very reprehensible, involving, as it did, insincerity and falsehood. Probably the most grievous error of this highly gifted man was his justification of sexual impurity. 'When was this not practised? When was it found fault with? Can the time be mentioned when this practice, which is now lawful, was not accounted so?'³

The incompetency of Cicero and all his contemporaries as moral teachers is shown, by their inability to oppose the licentiousness which prevailed around them. The morals of the Romans in his time were most deplorable. Bribery, fraud, oppression, slavery, infanticide, conjugal infidelity, prostitution, sexual uncleanness of every kind, vices too indecent to be mentioned, prevailed without restraint from law or public opinion. Women as well as men were destitute of honesty, modesty, and decency. Women of the higher class were so depraved and licentious that men were unwilling to contract matrimony with them, and instead of wives kept

¹ De Leg. 2: 8. ² De Leg. 2: 12. ³ Orat. pro Cælio.

mistresses and concubines—often their own slaves. Women desired to be childless in order that they might indulge in licentious gratifications without restraint. The government put a premium on marriage, and offered rewards to women who had many children. Childless women were forbidden to wear jewels. Penalties were imposed on the unmarried. But all efforts to correct the evil by legislation were unavailing. All relish for domestic happiness, and all pure love between the sexes, were destroyed. Virgins practised shameful indecencies. Gentlemen and ladies went to the bath together. To behold naked exhibitions, men without clothing stabbing and killing one another, the blood spouting, and the dead and dying dragged by hooks out of the arena, was the amusement of both sexes and of all classes. Triumphs and holidays were celebrated with human blood and butchery; and at the sight of death-wounds, and of prostrate, bleeding, gasping forms, the amphitheatre resounded with shouts and cheers, and women and girls laughed and clapped their hands. Drunkenness, gluttony, adultery, incest, murder, and crimes that must not be named, became so common that they ceased to be disgraceful. That this picture is not overdrawn can be shown by a short quotation from Tacitus, who speaks of ‘the ceremonies of religion violated; enormous adulteries; the sea crowded with exiles; the rocks stained with the blood of murdered citizens; Rome itself a theatre of still greater horrors; there nobility and wealth marked men out for destruction; dignities received and declined were alike treated

as crimes; virtue was the cause of certain ruin; informers received for their detestable acts wages equally detestable; rapacious men seized priesthoods and consulates as lawful prey; procurators and officers, impelled by personal hate, and armed with terror, carried rapine and plunder in every direction. Slaves were suborned against their masters; freedmen betrayed their patrons; and he who had no enemy died by the treachery of friends.¹ The monstrous depravity and corruption of Roman society would be incredible, were they not attested by the unimpeachable history of the times. These evils had not indeed reached their height in Cicero's day. Murder and other crimes of violence were not so common at the time he wrote his books as they afterward became. But the overflowing tide of vice had then set in, and he did not resist it. It was not in him to resist it. He had not the elements of a moral reformer. He had no great moral ideas or principles with which to reform society. He had not the moral nerve and earnestness to oppose the growing profligacy, venality, sensuality, prostitution, and other vices and crimes, which prevailed around him; and which afterward produced the violence, bloodshed, outrages, murders, and horrors referred to above. Neither he nor any of his contemporaries had the courage or the ability to enunciate great, soul-stirring, moral principles, that would check outbursting crime and regenerate society. In moral daring, force, and earnestness; in the enunciation of

¹ Tac. His. 1: 2.

great, restraining, and regenerating ideas; in dealing with a corrupt age, and in resisting the onward-sweeping tide of immorality; they are not to be compared with the Hebrew teachers—not with the Old Testament prophets—much less with Jesus and his apostles.

Thus we have in Cicero an illustration of the complete failure of the Roman morality. He was the most gifted and learned and best writer on morals that Rome produced. Yet, through ignorance and misapprehension, he failed to present, or to present in an effective way, those great truths concerning God's character and providence—the immortality of the soul, divine retribution, and human accountability—which lie at the foundation of all true religion and morality, and which are necessary to arm moral law with authority and power. He went grievously astray in approving slavery, revenge, suicide, infanticide, religious hypocrisy, sexual impurity, and other moral evils. He did not resist the overflowing vices and crimes around him; but connived at and fell in with them. As a moralist, he made no impression on the age in which he lived. His treatises on morality are read only by scholars, and are valuable mainly for their literary excellence, and as showing how defective and erroneous was the morality of the Romans, even when improved by 'the least mortal mind' that Rome ever produced.

8. *The Arabic morality.* Mohammed derived his best ideas from the Bible. He taught the unity and personality of God; and his holy, just, and merciful character. He also taught the immortality of the

soul, and the blessedness of the righteous and the dreadful misery of the wicked after death. In some of his teachings, however, he deviated from the Bible; and in doing so fell into serious errors. His heaven is not a place of pure and spiritual joy, but of corporeal gratification; a place in which the faithful shall eat delicious fruits, drink pure liquor, and enjoy the love and beauty of fair and black-eyed women. Carlyle says 'Mahomet's Paradise is sensual, his Hell is sensual; in the one and the other there is enough that shocks all spiritual feeling in us.'¹ Many of his ideas in regard to other matters are very objectionable. His moral precepts, as the author just referred to declares, are certainly not always of *the superfinest sort*. The Koran enjoins making war upon and slaughtering infidels, and promises paradise to all who engage in this dreadful work.² It sanctions slavery and human chattelhood.³ It authorizes polygamy and unlimited divorce.⁴ Mohammed claimed unrestricted freedom for himself in regard to the female sex; but limited his followers to four wives apiece. He had at one time sixteen or seventeen wives. He appropriated the wife of his adopted son, the latter consenting to the transfer. Though he limited the number of wives to each of his followers to four, he allowed them to take as concubines as many of their female slaves as they pleased.⁵ He did not teach the duty of forbearance and forgiveness; but justified the retaliation of injuries, the returning of evil for evil.⁶

¹ Hero-worship, p. 51. ² Chs. 2, 9, 47. ³ Ch. 23.

⁴ Chs. 2, 65. ⁵ Chs. 4, 23. ⁶ Ch. 8.

Such are the moral errors of the Koran. It appeals to the carnal appetites and desires of men; promising as a reward for their faith and obedience carnal delights in the future life—dainty fruits, delicious wines, marble palaces, dishes of gold, robes of silk, pearls, diamonds, and beautiful women. It sanctions slavery, bloody persecution, polygamy, unlimited divorce, concubinage, and revenge. The spirit and teaching of the Koran are exemplified in the character of the modern Turks and Arabs,—bigoted, persecuting, quick to shed blood, revengeful, oppressive, and sensual.

9. In concluding our review of the several systems of morality that have prevailed among heathen nations, we make the following observations; (1) We do not claim that we have presented a complete view of these systems. Our business has been, rather to point out their defects and errors than their merits. We have considered these systems of morality, not in their crude form, not as held by nations emerging from a state of barbarism; but in their most improved form, and as presented by their ablest and purest advocates. It is but fair that we should take the Bible morality in its last and most improved state; that is, as presented by Christ and his apostles. This is all the more proper, for the reason, that Christ referred to the Old Testament as containing the great moral ideas which he stated with so much beauty and power. (2) In addition to what has been said in regard to the incomparable excellence of the Christian morality, it may be observed, that the practice of the morality of any

of the ancient Gentile nations would be intolerable in any Christian country. The advocate of such morality would be regarded either as insane or as a nuisance. Were any man living in a Christian land to practise and teach as did the wisest and best of the ancient philosophers and moralists,—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Mohammed, Sakya-muni, or Confucius,—he would be excluded from all respectable society. But on the other hand, the best of men do not come up, in character and conduct, to the moral standard of the Hebrews as presented by Christ and his apostles. (3) The superiority of the morality of the Hebrews as compared with that of other ancient nations will be more evident, if we conceive the one and the other reduced fully to practice. If the morality of any of the ancient Gentile nations were fully put in practice, we would have many pernicious and debasing institutions and practices, such as slavery; war carried on as a trade or profession; the training and employment of women as soldiers; the community of wives and children; the appearance of men and women together in public without clothing; the inter-marriage of uncles and nieces, brothers and sisters; unlimited divorce; prostitution; polygamy; infanticide; revenge; falsehood; hypocrisy; beggary, starvation, and self-torture; practised as meritorious duties. We do not say that *all* these evils were enjoined or authorised in the moral system of every one, or even of any one, of the ancient Gentile nations. But *some* of these enormous evils were embraced in the moral system of every one of those nations. Even some

of the worst immoralities just referred to were recommended by the most renowned and gifted philosophers and reformers of ancient times. All the Gentile systems of morality,—Egyptian, Hindu, Buddhist, Persian, Chinese, Grecian, Roman, and Arabic,—inculcated sentiments and practices that are shocking to all who have been enlightened by Christianity. But if, on the other hand, the principles of Hebrew morality as presented in the New Testament were completely carried out, moral evil would cease—slavery, war, tyranny, fraud, falsehood, revenge, pride, envy, hypocrisy, selfishness, and all other sins and crimes, would be abolished; and there would be universal benevolence, purity, righteousness, and peace. (4) It imports but little to say that nearly all the duties and virtues enjoined by the Christian morality were taught, some here and some there, among the moral and philosophical systems of ancient times. Certainly a man enlightened by Christianity might construct a respectable system of morality by picking out whatever is good in each one of the world-systems and rejecting all that is bad. These systems may be compared to a lot of ragamuffins and rascals—liars, thieves, gamblers, drunkards, perjurers, debauchees, misers, murderers—every one of whom is guilty of many and great vices, yet none of whom is guilty of *every* vice or destitute of *every* virtue. By bringing together whatever good qualities are found here and there among them, a respectable character might be formed. The lying, thieving gambler does not drink; the drinking, swearing debauchee does not steal;

the selfish, mean, rascally old miser does not murder; the murderer does not gamble. Yet every one of them is a villain. In like manner, a perfect man might be formed from a crowd of deformed and defective persons,—some blind and lame, some armless and club-footed, some footless and handless, some crooked and dwarfed, and some goggle-eyed and hump-backed. They all together might furnish the members for the formation of a perfect human body, though each one of them taken singly looks like a burlesque on humanity. So, doubtless, a respectable system of morality might be constructed by culling out whatever is good and true in all the moral systems and writings of the heathen. Yet each one of these systems was very defective and erroneous. Besides this, without the Christian morality as a model, an eclectic would have little success in constructing a system from them all. Cicero tried it, and fell far short of perfection. He selected from all systems what he considered good; yet he approved slavery, revenge, suicide, infanticide, sexual impurity, and other crimes and vices. The Bible morality is the master-piece; combining every beauty and excellence, and attesting the inimitable skill and perfection of its author.

CHAPTER V.

THE ACTUAL INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE IN FAVOR OF MORALITY.

THE actual influence of the Bible cannot be measured. Its greatest triumphs are unnoticed and unknown. They are won by the fire-side, around the family altar, in the church, in the sick room, by the side of the grave; and over the minds and hearts of prattling children, of young men and maidens, of the aged and infirm, and of the sad and sorrowful. Many honest men and women have grown up under its blessed influence. Many of the good and lovely prize it as a precious treasure. The most sacred memories are associated with it. It is the book for the afflicted. It cheers the sick and the dying. It is the poor man's friend. Its solemn utterances have strengthened virtue, and reclaimed many an erring one from the ways of vice and ruin. It has cultivated the domestic affections, and has blessed the homes of the lowly with purity and peace.

It is no evidence of a man's virtue that he dislikes the Bible, or is ignorant of it. No thief, murderer, or other criminal ever became such through its influence. It is not generally read and loved by those who pursue pleasure. It is not a favorite book in grog-shops and gambling-saloons. We have never

heard of a criminal declaring that he had been led astray by the Bible; nor of any man regretting at the close of life that he had read it too much. But many a culprit has attributed his ruin to his neglect of the Bible, and many a man has at the close of life regretted that he did not give it more attention. It is by its influence upon individual character, its molding the thoughts and feelings of men and women as they advance from childhood to old age, that the moral excellence of the Bible is demonstrated. Yet this influence is often unnoticed. Men and women who are content to live and die in obscurity, and who are characterized by the virtues and graces which the Bible commends and enjoins—humility, meekness, mercy, sincerity, benevolence, righteousness, and the love of God—are not taken much account of in this world; while the rich, the ambitious, and the powerful are celebrated on the historic and poetic page. Yet the latter are just the ones that neglect the Bible, while the former read and love it. Hence it is that the actual influence of the Bible for good is generally under-rated. There are many historical facts, however, which show that the Bible has exerted a powerful influence in moralizing mankind.

1. In the first place, the moral excellence of the Bible is shown by its influence during the first centuries of the Christian era. The morals of the Christians during these centuries were pure. Gibbon assigns as one of the causes of the rapid spread of Christianity, 'the pure and austere morals of the Christians.' He declares also that 'even their faults,

or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue.¹ The emperor Julian, called the Apostate, even in railing against Christianity as a system of impiety, admitted the benevolence and moral purity of the Christians, and endeavored to incite the adherents of paganism to imitate them. 'Why (said he) do we not attend to what has been the chief cause of the spread of impiety,—humanity to strangers, care in burying the dead, and that holiness of life, which they so ostentatiously display,—all which things I desire to have our people to observe.'² The testimony of these two opponents of Christianity, Julian and Gibbon, to the sanctity of the early Christians, is conclusive. Yet the people at the commencement of the Christian era were shockingly depraved and immoral. As we have shown, at the time the Gospel began to circulate through the Roman empire, society had become utterly corrupt. Men had lost honesty and honor, and women no longer regarded modesty or decency. Yet the morals of the Christians were pure and austere, according to the testimony even of their enemies. Christianity operated like salt to keep society from putrefaction. As in the great desert, water, wherever it is found, is surrounded by verdure and flowers; so wherever Christianity penetrated, *there* flourished benevolence, chastity, righteousness, and all the virtues.

Besides this; through the influence of Christianity, many moral evils which had been established by

¹ Decline and Fall, Ch. 15. ² Letter to Arsacius, high priest of Galatia, preserved by Sozomen, lib. 5, cap. 16.

long usage, and by civil laws, were abolished. Infanticide, which Gibbon calls 'the prevailing and stubborn vice of antiquity,' was one of those evils. Great numbers of infants, exposed, according to the inhuman practice of the times, by their parents, were rescued from death by the Christians; were baptised and educated; and were maintained at the expense of the church. Finally the inhuman practice was entirely eradicated by the severe enactments of the Christian emperors, and the empire ceased to be stained with the blood of infants.¹ Through the influence of Christianity also, woman was elevated to her proper position in the family and in society. The Roman laws and customs in regard to marriage and divorce were very objectionable. The wife by a fiction of the Roman law became the adopted daughter of her husband, and as fathers might, according to the Roman law sell or kill their children, husbands might sell or kill their wives. But when the morals of the Romans became very corrupt, although the Roman matrons became the voluntary companions of their lords, marriage was regarded as a mere contract voidable at the pleasure either of the husband or the wife. Divorces were obtained according to passion, interest, or caprice; and marriage was degraded into a temporary partnership of profit or pleasure. But the dignity and purity of marriage were restored by the Christians. Gibbon says, the Christian princes were the first who specified the just causes of divorce.² Christianity was also opposed to slavery.

¹chs. 15, 44. Theod. Cod. ix. tit. 14, 15. ²ch. 44.

By teaching the equality of men in the sight of God, it discouraged the holding of one man by another in an abject condition. Though the church did not demand the abolition of slavery, she did much to prevent its increase, and to promote its gradual extinction. Manumission was encouraged as an act of Christian love. Many prisoners doomed to slavery were rescued from their unfortunate condition. For the redemption of such persons the gold and silver vessels of the churches were sometimes employed. Constantine and his successors facilitated and encouraged the liberation of slaves by their edicts.¹ Another great evil which Christianity abolished was the gladiatorial games. These bloody shows, in which thousands of human beings yearly slaughtered one another or were torn to pieces by wild beasts for the amusement of the Roman people, were very popular at the time Christianity began to prevail through the empire. The most enlightened and humane of the Romans approved, or at least did not oppose, the detestable custom. Constantine issued the first edict which condemned it. But notwithstanding this edict the gladiatorial games continued to be celebrated in the great cities of the empire. They were finally and completely abolished by the Christian Emperor Honorius, at the instance of a Christian monk of Asia; who traveled to Rome to protest against these bloody exhibitions; and who threw himself into the arena, separated the combatants, and was immediately afterward stoned to death by the populace, enraged at the interruption of their amusements.²

¹ Cod. Just. vii. 5, 6.

² Gibbon, ch. 30.

The service which Christianity rendered to mankind at its first promulgation, in the abolition of immoral ideas, customs, and institutions, has been recognized by many skeptics. The testimony of Gibbon is that of an unwilling witness. Other writers of similar views are fuller and more explicit. We present the admissions of a writer who attempts to account for Christianity as a merely human production. 'In giving prominence to what are called the passive virtues, it aided in the development of the gentler or feminine qualities of the mind; in announcing a common brotherhood, it favored the abolition of slavery; in recognizing the private judgment of the Christian wife, it elevated the marriage institution; in its attempt to evangelize the world, it showed a noble spirit of universality. * * *

A characteristic merit of the religion taught by Jesus, is its unrelenting hatred and systematic discouragement of vice and crime, and its enforcement of moral obligation. The frantic licentiousness of an idolatrous civilization, the abominations of Cotyto and Isis, the horrible sensual sins of the resplendent Athens and the majestic Rome, the barbarous cruelty of the amphitheatre, the loathsome indecency of literature,—were all directly combated or indirectly discountenanced by the spirit and practice of a religion which taught that God was too pure to behold iniquity. It is for these services and characteristics that Christianity is entitled to respect and gratitude from mankind; it is through them that

it has proved its right to be regarded as a redemption and a restoration.¹

Such was the blessed influence of Christianity during the first centuries. It denounced and combated the immoralities and indecencies that pervaded society, literature, religion, and the laws. It made the morals of its own adherents so pure amid the prevailing corruption, as to excite the admiration even of their enemies. It opposed and abolished infanticide, unlimited divorce, and the gladiatorial games. It elevated woman and purified marriage. It encouraged the emancipation of slaves, and inculcated principles which finally led to the extinction of slavery. Now, the influence of Christianity is the influence of the Bible. The doctrines of Christianity are contained in the Bible. Christians, even to the disgust of infidels, have ever appealed to the Bible as containing the doctrines of their faith.

2. The moral excellence of the Bible is further demonstrated by its influence at the time of the Reformation of the 16th century. As has already been adverted to, the Bible was largely instrumental in producing that event. Luther, Calvin, and Knox, and their co-laborers, appealed to it as the infallible word of God, and as the repository of all the moral as well as theological truth attainable by men. They accepted as right and good whatever they thought it approved, and rejected whatever they thought it condemned. The infidel Bolingbroke says; 'Before the Reformation, Christians knew nothing of the Bible more than the church told them. It might,

¹Westminster Review, July 1863, p. 15.

or it might not, be a rule to the pastors; but it was none to the flocks. After the Reformation, it was put into the hands of every one.¹ Many infidels speak of it as a reproach to the reformers, that though they delivered the human mind from Papal tyranny, they subjected it to the authority of the Bible. A book thus regarded as the inspired word of God and as the infallible standard of truth and duty, and almost universally read and studied, must have had a powerful influence over the opinions and morals of men. Hence something of the character of the Bible may be known from the state of morals before and after the Reformation. Just before the Reformation, when the Bible was a sealed book to men in general, and when priests and bishops spoke of the New Testament as a heretical and dangerous book, the greatest disorders and licentiousness prevailed. The clergy were characterized by ignorance, avarice, and impurity; while the vilest forms of superstition, and the greatest corruption of manners, prevailed among the people. Indulgences for sins and crimes were hawked about the streets and sold at a low price. Incest, if not detected, cost five groats; six, if it became known. There was a fixed price also for perjury, adultery, murder, and other crimes. Society was inundated with a torrent of immorality and crime.² But the Reformation introduced a salutary change. It was a moral as well as religious revival. The chief reformers, like the Hebrew prophets and apostles, were men who hated

¹ Phil. Works, vol. 3, pp. 326-27. ² D' Aubigne, His. Ref. B. 1, ch. 3. Mosheim, His. Ref. sec. 1, ch. 1.

sin. They were laborious, self-denying, God-fearing men. They denounced immorality and licentiousness. They enjoined purity, benevolence, and righteousness. By the movement they were instrumental in setting on foot, there was as great improvement produced in morals, as in theological belief and general intelligence. This moral as well as religious and intellectual advancement was in a great measure due to the influence of the Bible. The reformers relied on it as their main instrument and support.

3. The moral excellence of the Bible is also demonstrated by its influence on the character and conduct of the Puritans in the 17th century. The Puritans had their faults, but they were neither hypocritical nor licentious. They were honest, sincere, earnest men. A class of men who had for their leaders Hampden, Cromwell, Milton, Howe, Baxter, Bunyan and others; who were eminent for their genius, talents, learning, piety, and virtue; are entitled to the respect, if not the admiration of mankind. We may smile at the manners of the Puritans; we may condemn some of their opinions; we may denounce the excesses which they sometimes committed;—but their ability, courage, patriotism, and moral purity will not now be questioned by men of intelligence and candor. Macaulay says that before they had gained the ascendancy, they were eminently a pure body of men, and that their conduct was generally blameless; but that afterward they were joined by time-servers and hypocrites, who are always disposed to attach themselves to the

victorious party, and generally disgrace it by their licentious conduct.¹

The character of the Puritans is exemplified in Cromwell and his soldiers. They were brave on the field of battle, and sober and upright in the camp. In England, Scotland, Ireland, Flanders, the Puritan warriors, though sometimes contending against three-fold odds, not only never failed to conquer, but never failed to break in pieces and destroy whatever force was opposed to them. They came at length to regard the day of battle as a day of certain triumph, and marched against the most renowned battalions of Europe with disdainful confidence. 'But that which chiefly distinguished the army of Cromwell from other armies was, the austere morality and the fear of God which pervaded all ranks. It is acknowledged by the most zealous royalists that in that singular camp no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen; and that during the long dominion of the soldiery, the property of the peaceable citizen and the honor of women were held sacred. If outrages were committed, they were outrages of a very different kind from those of which a victorious army is generally guilty. No servant girl complained of the rough gallantry of the red-coats. Not an ounce of plate was taken from the shops of the goldsmiths. But a Pelagian sermon, or a window in which the Virgin and Child were painted, produced in the Puritan ranks an excitement which it required the utmost exertion of the

¹ His. of Eng. vol. 1. pp. 128-9.

officers to quell.' When the soldiers of Cromwell were disbanded at the Restoration, they committed no disorders. The royalists themselves admitted that in every department of honest industry the discarded warriors prospered beyond other men; that none was charged with any theft or robbery; that none was heard to ask an alms; and that if a baker, a mason, or a wagoner attracted notice by his diligence and sobriety, he was in all probability one of Oliver's old soldiers.¹ Such was the character of the Puritan soldiers; steady, brave, and invincible on the field of battle; and temperate, sober, and upright in the camp. They were as remarkable for their moral purity as for their military bravery and achievements. How was this moral purity attained and preserved? Mainly through the influence of the Bible. The Puritan soldiers were men of decided religious convictions. They were deeply read in the oracles of God. Bible scenes and truths were ever present to their minds. They conversed in the language of the prophets and apostles. Their evenings in camp were spent in conference and prayer. At their religious meetings, they talked in regard to the state of their souls, and the duty and means of spiritual improvement. Privates presided and exhorted, and often reprov'd colonels and majors for their coldness and backslidings. Every soldier carried a copy of the Bible, and made it his daily study. They committed much of it to memory. They continually quoted it in their common inter-

¹ Macaulay's *His. of Eng.* vol. 1. pp. 94-5, 120.

course. They sung Psalms as they went into battle; and charged upon their foes in the name of the God of the Bible.

Thus educated and influenced, Cromwell and his soldiers became not only the most formidable warriors in the world, but also remarkable examples of moral purity. By them we may judge of the genuine Puritans—those of them who were Puritans from honest convictions, and who had belonged to the party before it gained the ascendancy. The excellence of the character of these men is generally admitted. The worst that even their opponents attempted in defaming them was, to ridicule their austerities, long prayers, and Scripture phrases. Sir James Mackintosh pronounces ‘the Puritans the most severely moral men of any age.’¹

The moral influence of the Bible during the domination of the Puritans is set in a strong light by the profligacy of the succeeding age. The depraved passions and tastes, which under the rule of the Puritans had been sternly repressed, and if gratified at all, had been gratified by stealth, broke forth with ungovernable violence as soon as the check was withdrawn. The corruption was general. All the lighter kinds of literature were deeply tainted by the prevailing licentiousness. Poetry stooped to be the pander of every low desire. Ridicule turned her formidable shafts against innocence and truth. Scarcely any rank or profession escaped the infection of the prevailing immorality, but those who made

¹ Misc. Essays, p. 330.

politics their business were perhaps the most corrupt part of the corrupt society. These were the days of servility and sensuality; of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices; of cold hearts and narrow minds; of cowardice, bigotry, and slavery. Such was the state of morals in England in the time succeeding the Restoration, according to the account of her celebrated historian and essayist.¹ England under the Puritans, contrasted with England under the restored Stuarts, demonstrates the excellence of the Bible morality. During the domination of the former, the Bible had a powerful influence; after the Restoration, conformity to its moral precepts was unfashionable and disreputable.

4. The superior state of morals in Protestant countries, as compared with Roman Catholic, is another illustration of the purifying influence of the Bible. In the former, it is generally read and exerts a much more powerful influence than in the latter, where it is read by comparatively few. That the state of morals is better in Protestant than in Roman Catholic countries can scarcely be doubted by intelligent people, and might be demonstrated by a comparison of the former with the latter—the United States with the South American Republics; Scotland with Ireland; the Protestant parts of Ireland with the Roman Catholic; Prussia with Austria; Holland with Belgium; and the Protestant cantons of Switzerland with the Roman Catholic. This comparison has been made by Roussel, to whose book we refer

¹ Macaulay's *His. of Eng.* vol. 1. pp. 140—41. *Essay on Milton*, pp. 14—15.

the reader.¹ We have space only for a few facts in regard to the United States and the South American Republics, and in regard to Scotland and Ireland. The testimony of M. de Tocqueville is, that the morality of the people of the United States is superior to that of the nations in general; and he attributes this superiority to the influence of religion. Says he,—‘It directs the manners of the community; and by regulating domestic life, it regulates the state. I doubt not that the great strictness of morals to be noticed in the United States originates in religious faith. Religion there is often unable to restrain man amidst the numberless temptations of fortune; nor can it moderate in him the passion for gain which all around excites: but it reigns supreme over the mind of woman, and woman is the protector of morals. In all the world, America is certainly the country where the marriage tie is most respected, and where conjugal happiness is most highly and worthily appreciated. In Europe, nearly all the disorders of society originate in the irregularities and impurity of domestic life.’² Roussel, by various facts and quotations, shows that the morality of the United States, bad as it is, is superior to that of other countries.³ His account of the moral condition of the people in the South American states embraces the following statements: unchastity even in married women is not regarded as disgraceful; incest between brother

¹Catholic and Protestant nations compared, in their three-fold relations to wealth, knowledge, and morality; by Rev. N. Roussel of Paris. ²American Institutions, ch. 17. ³pp. 57—63.

andsister is not uncommon, especially in the country; thefts are also common; obscene jests and gestures are sources of amusement; robberies and assassinations are frequent, and are seldom punished; the love and practice of gambling are general; drunkenness is very prevalent. It is not asserted that there is no virtue among the South Americans; but there is a great deal of vice and crime among them, especially among the lower classes.¹ The comparison between Scotland and Ireland yields similar results. The Scotch are an industrious, frugal, and sober people; the Catholic Irish, as is well known, are addicted to drunkenness quarreling, and violence. In one year (1850) there were more committals for crime in Ireland (33,326) than in all Great Britain (31,281). Within certain years, the number of accused persons in Scotland was in the proportion of 1 to 880 inhabitants; in Ireland, 1 to 460. The number of assassinations within certain years in Scotland was in the ratio of 1 to 400,000 of the inhabitants; in Ireland, 1 to 107,000: homicides, in the former country, 1 to 266,000; in the latter, 1 to 46,000. The number of thefts within certain years in Scotland was 186, 1 to 13,000 of the inhabitants; in Ireland, 3,026, 1 to 2,700. The condemnations to death within certain years, in Scotland were in the ratio of 1 to 257,000; in Ireland, of 1 to 52,000. The executions within certain years, in Scotland were in the ratio of 1 to 610,000; in Ireland, 1 to 221,000. By these facts it is shown, that in proportion to the

¹ pp. 65—74.

population, the commitments are twice as numerous in Ireland as in Scotland, thefts five times more numerous, homicides six times, assassinations four, the condemnations to death ten, and the executions three. That the larger proportional number of crimes in Ireland does not result from the character of the laws, but from the moral condition of the people, is demonstrated by a comparison of the Protestant counties with the Roman Catholic. In Antrim the Protestants are to the Roman Catholics nearly as 3 to 1; in Down, 2 to 1; in Derry, 1 to 1; in Donegal, 1 to 3; in Cork 1 to 16; in Limerick, 1 to 22; Kerry and Waterford, 1 to 23; Mayo and Galway, 1 to 24. The number of those who could not read in Antrim was 23 per cent.; in Down, 27 per cent.; Derry, 29; Limerick, 55; Donegal, 62; Cork, 68; Kerry, 72; Waterford, 73; Galway, 78; and Mayo, 80. In all these counties, those who could not read were almost all Roman Catholics. In the four Protestant counties of Antrim, Down, Derry, and Donegal, the number of committals was, in proportion to the population, less than *one fourth* of the number in the four Roman Catholic counties of Kerry, Limerick, Galway, and Mayo. Of 69 criminals hanged in Ireland within certain years, 13 were executed in Limerick alone, only four in Ulster—the stronghold of Protestantism, and none in any of the Protestant counties except one in Donegal (in which, though classed as Protestant, the Roman Catholics are as 3 to 1). Of the 33,226 committals (in 1850) not one sixth part were in Ulster. Of the 23 executions in 1849 and 1850, only two

occurred in Ulster. These statistics indicate a better state of morals in the Protestant part of Ireland than in the Roman Catholic.¹

We have not space to pursue this subject much farther. But we will remark, that the facts presented by Roussel, and the testimony of travelers, demonstrate that the morals of Protestant nations are purer than those of Roman Catholic. In Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, at Rome, at Naples, among the Roman Catholic populations of Ireland and South America, there are confessedly more ignorance, squalor, prostitution, bastardy, conjugal infidelity, and vice of almost every kind, than among the Protestant populations of Great Britain, Holland, Switzerland, and the United States. On this point we present the testimony of Lord Macaulay. After speaking of the progress of Scotland and the decline of Italy, the elevation of Holland and the descent of Spain to the lowest depths of degradation, as illustrating the injurious tendency of Papal domination, he says; 'Whoever passes in Germany from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant principality, in Switzerland from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant canton, in Ireland from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant county, finds that he has passed from a lower to a higher grade of civilization. On the other side of the Atlantic, the same law prevails. The Protestants of the United States have left far behind them the Roman Catholics of Mexico, Peru, and Brazil. The Roman Catholics of Lower Canada remain in-

¹ pp. 75—128.

ert, while the whole continent round is in a ferment with Protestant activity and enterprise.¹ It does not weaken this testimony that the author remarks that it is difficult to say whether England owes more to the Roman Catholic religion or to the Reformation. For at the time the Roman Catholic religion exerted a beneficial influence in England, the Romish church was not what she afterward became, the opponent of the Bible. During the middle age, she was the depository of nearly all the Bible knowledge which the world possessed. England owes much to the Romish church for delivering her from paganism; and she owes much to the Reformation for delivering her from the Romish church. Protestant countries, in intellectual and moral improvement, are in advance of Roman Catholic countries; but the latter are in advance of countries that know nothing of the Bible and Christianity. In the above extract the historian speaks of the greater advancement of Protestant nations in wealth, power, knowledge, civilization. But advancement in civilization implies advancement in morality. The decay of morals must sooner or later be followed by a decline of civilization. Indeed, morality is the chief branch of civilization. The superiority of Protestant nations in civilization proves their superiority in moral purity.

Christian morality is founded on the Bible. The nations that receive the Bible as an infallible guide in religion and morals, who read it the most, and over whom it exerts the greatest influence, as we

¹ His. of Eng. vol. 1. pp. 37—38.

have shown, have the fewest criminals and are the purest in morals. There are those, however, who endeavor to account for the superiority of the morality of Protestant countries by other causes than the influence of the Bible and Christianity. Not long ago, a writer in an infidel journal made the following declaration: 'In the Catholic countries of the Continent, where divorce is impossible, the sanctity of wedlock is a laughing-stock, and marriage is a mere matter of convenience. In Protestant countries, the possibility of divorce in cases of extreme misconduct has operated beneficially, as every measure of freedom accorded to intelligent beings usually does operate; and has contributed to a purity in wedded life that has long been the admiration of the world.'¹ Here it is intimated that the impossibility of divorce in Catholic countries causes husbands and wives to commit adultery; and that in Protestant countries husbands and wives are faithful to one another, just because in case of adultery divorce is possible. The truth is, however, that conjugal impurity indicates, and results from, corruption of morals in general; and conjugal fidelity and happiness result from mutual love, and a sense of moral obligation. As Paul says, the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient. The great majority of citizens do not refrain from killing because murderers are hung, nor from stealing because thieves are confined in the Penitentiary. Nor do husbands and wives in Protestant countries love one

¹ Westminster Review, April 1868, p. 222.

another and live together happily because of the law of divorce. The purity in wedded life which, as declared above, 'has long been the admiration of the world,' exists only where there is general purity of life and character. Wherever 'the sanctity of marriage is a laughing stock', there is general corruption of hearts and manners. The admirable purity in wedded life that prevails in Protestant countries is proof of a higher grade of morals, and is an illustration of the purifying influence of the Bible and Christianity.

CHAPTER VI.

FACTS ILLUSTRATING THE MORAL EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE.

THERE are several facts which indirectly vindicate the moral excellence of the Bible, and which we now present.

1. One of these facts is, that all men of true moral greatness,—all true reformers, men possessing great, earnest, magnanimous, disinterested, self-denying souls, and willing to labor and dare and die in the cause of truth and humanity,—have revered the Bible as the word of God, and taken it as the guide of their faith and conduct. Luther, Calvin, Knox; Hampden, Cromwell, the Princes of Orange, Washington; Newton, Locke, Milton; Howard, Wilberforce, Lincoln, and all who deserve to be named as benefactors of mankind,—were men whose thoughts, feelings, convictions, and actions were influenced by the truths, precepts, earnest spirit, and solemn utterances of the Bible. Many skeptics have manifested courage, talents, and genius. Hume, Gibbon, Rousseau, Voltaire, Göthe, Byron, Shelley, Bolingbroke, Frederick the Great, Humboldt and others, who rejected the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, were among the most gifted of men. Yet not one of them can be regarded as a pattern

of moral excellence. They were selfish and egotistic. They wrote or labored for self-aggrandizement. They lacked the true earnestness, the moral convictions, and the self-denial, that are requisite to form characters truly great. Some of them, by the productions of their genius, amused and delighted mankind. All of them gained what they sought—admiration and fame. But they did little or nothing to purify and elevate mankind. They strove not against tyranny and oppression and crime and sin and misery, nor endeavored to relieve human suffering, nor to make the world morally better. Prior to the advent of Christ, and the dissemination of Christianity, the world's great men and heroes were powerful kings, daring warriors, successful generals, orators, poets, and artists; men who labored to build up their own country on the ruins of others, or to aggrandize themselves. Even the peaceful orators and poets had no higher object than wealth and fame, or their country's glory. Their very patriotism was only a species of selfishness. But since Christ—the model hero—appeared, meekness, humility, disinterestedness, and self-sacrifice have been recognized as elements of true greatness. The world no longer regards brute courage, military skill, poetic genius, political sagacity, or rhetorical power, employed for the acquisition of wealth and fame or the advancement of national glory, as entitling their possessors to the name of heroes or benefactors. The most gifted skeptics of modern times, though they possessed intellect, wit, learning, and genius, and though they could appreciate the good, true, and beautiful, lacked

the moral depth and earnestness, and the spirit of self-denial and self-consecration, which are necessary to the formation of truly great characters; and without which the greatest talents and success cannot long command the reverence of mankind. The qualities of true heroism, disinterested benevolence, self-sacrifice, and deep moral earnestness, are alone inspired by Christianity. They are produced by the precepts and principles, the grand truths, the solemn utterances, and the glorious hopes presented in the Scriptures; and are exemplified in the model character of Jesus of Nazareth. Hence, infidelity has been and always will be a failure. It never has produced and never can produce such characters as Luther or Knox, Cromwell or Washington, Milton or Dante, or even Mohammed. For he derived his best ideas from the Bible; imbibed the earnest spirit of the Hebrew prophets; adopted many of their lofty utterances; and even borrowed much from Jesus and his apostles. The blessed influence of Christianity is seen, then, in this, that it has given to the world a higher standard of moral greatness; and has produced heroes characterized not merely by talents, genius, and success, but by disinterestedness, benevolence, self-denial, and deep moral earnestness.

2. Another thing that demonstrates the moral excellence of the Bible, is the fact, that opponents of Christianity almost invariably attack the character of the Christian clergy and professors, rather than the Bible. From the days of the apostles down to the present time, the argument most frequently used against Christianity is, that its advocates are bigots,

hypocrites, fanatics, or at least are no better than other people. This repeated charge is a compliment to Christianity. It is a virtual admission of the excellence of its moral teachings. It is the exalted and perfect morality of the Bible which by contrast makes the faults and imperfections of Christian professors appear so badly. It is the inconsistency of their character and conduct with the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount, and the whole teaching of the Bible, that creates all the scandal. The hypocrisy or immorality of a clergyman is a shocking affair, but the misconduct of an infidel never creates an uproar. Gibbon declared that he was more scandalized by the burning of Servetus than by all the burnings of the church of Rome. Why? Just because persecution is inconsistent with the spirit and teaching of the Bible, which Calvin and the other reformers adopted as their guide. The immoralities and obscenities of Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, Byron, Shelley, and other skeptics, create no scandal, because they were not violations of any law or principle by which they professed or endeavored to regulate their lives. But the Christian is expected to endeavor to obey the pure and perfect precepts of the Bible, to love God supremely and his neighbor as himself, to imitate the faultless character and conduct of Christ, and to be diligent in every good word and work. Of course he comes short, for perfection is not possible among men on earth, and the unattainable excellence of the standard by which he endeavors to regulate his conduct gives occasion to enemies and opponents to blaspheme. The very

clamor that is raised by skeptical objectors about the delinquencies and transgressions of the clergy and members of the Christian Church, is a tacit acknowledgment of the transcendent excellence of the Bible morality.

3. Another significant fact is the failure of the opponents of the divine inspiration of the Bible to suggest any improvements in its morality, or even to do anything to improve the moral condition of mankind. They indeed denounce bigotry and superstition, but they are concerned about the bigotry and superstition only of those who believe in the Bible as the word of God. They have little or nothing to say about the superstition of the thousands and millions of people who believe in Buddhism, the Koran, or the teachings of Confucius. They regard the errors of the heathen with much indifference. But oh! the dreadful superstition of Christian Englishmen and Americans! It is not a matter of much regret to infidels that the majority of mankind are pagans. It is not very shocking to them that in all countries where the Bible is unknown, the people believe in hobgoblins, worship devils, and practise all kinds of abominable things. But they regard it as intolerable that people should believe in the supernatural origin of Christianity, and worship Christ as the Son of God. Infidels generally admit Christianity to be the best religion known among men. Their theory is, that it is the highest *development* of the religious element in man's nature yet attained. They often speak in rapturous terms of the sublime and pure morality of the New Testa-

ment. But instead of endeavoring to substitute this purest morality for the heathenish ignorance and superstition and vice into which the majority of mankind are sunk, infidels are constantly laboring to remove the supposed errors and delusions of Christian men and women; to convert the enlightened portion of mankind from the doctrines held by Bacon, Milton, Newton, Locke, and the majority not only of the greatest but also of the best of men. What infidel ever went as a missionary to India to labor for the reformation of the Hindus, and for the overthrow of the system which constrained the mother to drown her child in the Ganges, and the widow to die on the funeral pile of her husband? What infidel ever went to contend against the bigotry, tyranny, and sensuality of the Turk? What infidel ever wrote a tract to reform the drunkard and the libertine? Oh no! It is Christianity which the infidel is bent on reforming. He wishes to destroy belief in the supernatural origin of Christianity, so that the way may be prepared for a still higher religious 'development!' It is too small a business for him to labor for the reformation of the drunkard, the liar, the libertine, the Hindu, the Turk, and the Mormon. He is not content to labor for the dissemination of the best religion and purest morality among the ignorant and degraded millions of our race. He is afraid that mankind will have too high a regard for this best religion and purest morality known among men. He wants something better. He longs for 'a higher development!' But it is high time we had 'a higher development' of morality

than the Christian, if we are ever to have it at all. Eighteen hundred years and more have passed away since the Christian morality began to make its way in the world—eighteen hundred years of change, scientific investigation, intellectual progress, and advancing civilization. But as yet no 'higher development' has been brought to light, and the morality of the Bible is a finality. Infidels, freed from *prejudice* and *bigotry* and from the trammeling belief in a *book revelation*, point out no defect and suggest no improvement, though longing and sighing for something higher and better. This fact seems to indicate that the morality 'developed' among the 'bigoted' and 'fanatical' Jews is not only the noblest and best known among men, but is also faultless and perfect.

4. The moral excellence and purifying influence of the Bible, are also indirectly proved by the errors of those who have rejected it. The most famous infidels have propagated some very immoral opinions, and maintained some very immoral practices. We refer not to the errors which such men committed in common with the people of their age or through extraordinary temptation, but to errors which they committed in opposition to the sentiments of their age, and which they never regretted. Hume, though perhaps free from immorality (being brought up under the influence of Christianity), advocated the lawfulness of self-murder, and also of deceit and falsehood. In one case he advocated and advised hypocrisy in religion. Actuated, as he was, by literary ambition, and devoting his life and labors to

the acquisition of fame, he taught that the chief duty of man is self-aggrandizement.¹ Rousseau inculcated the disregard of chastity, and of the sanctity of the marriage tie. He sent his own illegitimate children to the foundling hospital. Hobbes taught that the will of the sovereign is the source of all moral law and duty; and that, therefore, in religion and morals, all should conform to the will of the sovereign, however seemingly unreasonable and wicked it may be. Even Hume declares that 'Hobbes' politics are fitted only to promote tyranny, and his ethics to encourage licentiousness.'² Bolingbroke recommended polygamy, and condemned only the higher degrees of incest. He condemned the intermarriage of fathers with their daughters, and of sons with their mothers; but not of brothers with their sisters. He maintained that the modesty which human beings have, but of which beasts are destitute, is artificial; and that it is produced by human laws, prejudice, and habit.³ Göthe, who was splendidly endowed both physically and mentally, and who had the power and opportunity to do much to elevate and purify mankind, was actuated by ambition and selfishness. He had a high appreciation of the grand and beautiful, but was destitute of self-sacrificing benevolence and moral earnestness. He deliberately permitted himself in license which morality condemns; and justified himself in so doing, on the ground that it is not the doing of any particular thing that is wrong, but the *not being able to help doing it*, and

¹ Lawrence, vol. 2, pp. 1-225. ² His. of Eng. ch. 63.

³ Phil. Works, vol. 4, Ess. 17-20.

that men who have themselves under self-control may allow themselves indulgences which in others would be sinful. The absence of all self-reproach on account of his son born out of wedlock, and his delay of fifteen years to marry the mother, are sad indications of a want of conscience and of moral principle.¹ The poet Shelley, who reviled Christianity as an execrable thing, and denied the existence of God, denounced 'marriage as hateful and detestable, and as the fruit of superstition.' He abandoned his wife without any serious misconduct on her part, and lived with another woman. This woman he married, after his wife had died by her own hands. He and his second wife submitted to the marriage ceremony merely out of respect to 'the prejudices of mankind.' Voltaire, though possessing a keen intellect, was vain, greedy, deceitful, and a deliberate liar.² Frederick the Great possessed some great qualities, but was characterized also by great defects and errors. Had not Ludmilla Assing published the correspondence of Humboldt, the world might have believed him to have been a man of great soul and heart, as well as great intellect and scientific attainments. But in his correspondence he is revealed to us as uncharitable, faithless, a flatterer, and backbiter. Byron was proud, selfish, revengeful, and sensual; though it is pleasing to know that in his latest years he seemed to aspire to a higher life. Paine need scarcely be named—most skeptics

¹ Life and Works, by Lewes, vol. 2. p. 361. ² Macaulay's essay on Frederick the Great. Carlyle's Frederick the Great, B. 16, chs. 7, 12.

of the present day are ashamed of him. The infidels who figured in France near the close of the last century are useful to mankind as frightful examples. Mirabeau, the greatest of them, was a man of very bad morals. Strauss, the famous German rationalist, is described as cold, selfish, and heartless. He married an actress, from whom he was soon divorced, it is asserted on account of incompatibility of temper, and of his extreme selfishness of disposition.¹ Comte, author of *Positive Philosophy*, was an atheist, advocating the worship of humanity as a Supreme Being.² He thought that men ought to worship women as the best types of humanity, mothers as representatives of Past humanity; wives, of Present humanity; daughters, of Future humanity. Yet he certainly had no worshipful feelings toward his own wife. For he did not live with her, and declared that his marriage was the only error he ever committed.

Such are the errors into which the most gifted men fall when they abandon the Bible as a guide in morals. If they will not walk in its light, they wander and stumble as blind men, or as walking in darkness. Good men err with the age in which they live. They sometimes fall into serious errors of which they are ashamed. But the errors enumerated above are such as nearly all enlightened people condemn, yet the authors of them gave no sign of repentance. A book which keeps men from falling into such errors must be of great moral excellence.

¹ Schaff's *Person of Christ*, pp. 228-9. ² Grand Etre.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TESTIMONY OF SKEPTICS TO THE MORAL EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE.

THE excellence of the Bible morality has been admitted even by the most distinguished men who have opposed or doubted its supernatural revelation. Gibbon, though he endeavored to impair confidence in the divine origin of Christianity by insinuations and artful colorings, admits the purity and benevolence of its doctrines, and the sanctity of its moral precepts. He declares that 'if we consider the purity of the Christian religion, the sanctity of its moral precepts, and the innocent as well as austere lives of the greater number of those who during the first ages embraced the faith of the gospel,—we should naturally suppose that so benevolent a doctrine would have been received with due reverence, even by the unbelieving world.'¹ Byron said; 'Christianity is the purest and most liberal religion in the world. * * * I admire the liberal and truly charitable principles which Christ has laid down.' Carlyle says; 'The Christian religion, once here, cannot again pass away; in one or the other form, it will endure through all time; as in Scripture so also in the heart of man is written, *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against*

¹ Decline and Fall, ch. 16.

it. Were the memory of this Faith never so obscured,—as indeed, in all times, the coarse passions and perceptions of the world do all but obliterate it in the hearts of most,—yet in every pure soul, in every Poet and Wise Man, it finds a new Missionary, a new Martyr, till the great volume of Universal History is finally closed, and man's destinies are fulfilled in this earth. It is a height to which the human species were fated and enabled to attain; and from which, having once attained it, they can never retrograde.¹ Lord Bolingbroke says that 'the gospel of Christ is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity.'² Benjamin Franklin, five weeks before his death, said of Christ, 'I think his system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is like to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupting changes, and I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity; though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it.'³ Thomas Jefferson, in speaking of Christ as a teacher, says, 'He set forth sublime ideas of the supreme Being, aphorisms and precepts of the purest morality and benevolence, with an eloquence and persuasiveness which have not been surpassed.' He also says, that in the discourses of Christ 'we have the outlines of a system of the most sublime morality which has ever fallen from the lips of man.'⁴ It is well known that Napoleon Bonaparte was skeptical in regard to

¹ Essay on Voltaire. ² Phil. Works, vol. 4, p. 144. ³ Sparks' Life, p. 515. ⁴ Jefferson's Writings, vol. 7, pp. 139, 165.

religion during the greater part of his life. During the first year of his imprisonment at St. Helena, he declared that all our religions are the work of men; and that his own belief was shocked and undecided as soon as he began to reason, which happened to him at the early age of thirteen. Yet during the time of his skepticism he recognized the excellence of the Christian morality. On one occasion he read the Sermon on the Mount from the commencement to the close, 'expressing himself struck with the highest admiration of the purity, the sublimity, and the beauty of the morality which it contained.' It appears that before his death his doubts were removed, and that he became a full believer in the Christian religion. He confessed, and received the sacrament of the Supper. It is perhaps due to the truth of history to state that Bonaparte, at the time of making a profession of his faith, declared that even while he was on the imperial throne he was at the bottom of his heart a believer; and that if any one had questioned him directly, his reply would have been, *yes, I am a Christian.*¹ But whatever may have been the belief or the doubts of this remarkable man, his testimony to the excellence of the Christian morality is very decided. Göthe,—who at times approached the strictness of the stricter sects and at others went whole lengths in skepticism,—regarded the Gospels as being what he called *genuine*, that is, 'as harmonizing with the purest nature and reason, and ministering to man's highest development.' When he

¹ Abbott's *Napoleon at St. Helena*, pp. 244, 344, 615.

was eighty two years old, he made the following declaration; 'Let mental culture go on advancing, let science go on gaining in depth and breadth, and the human intellect expand as it may,—it will never go beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity, as it shines forth in the Gospels.¹ Earnest Renan, after speaking of the fact that many of the doctrines of Christ had been taught among the Jews prior to his time, and saying that concerning alms, piety, good works, gentleness, the desire of peace, and complete disinterestedness of heart, he had little to add to the teachings of the synagogue,—makes the declaration that 'the evangelical morality remains none the less the highest creation which has emanated from the human conscience; the most beautiful code of perfect life that any moralist has traced.'² Our next and last quotation is from the Westminster Review. In an article, in which an effort is made to account for Christianity as a thing of merely human origin and natural growth, that journal says; 'A characteristic merit of the religion first taught by Jesus in the corn-fields and on the hill-tops of Judea, is its unrelenting hatred and systematic discouragement of vice and crime, and its inforcement of moral obligation. * * * Its ideal of holiness, its invisible God, its Omnipresent Christ—the symbol of suffering and glorified humanity, and the memorial image of self-devotion—its aspirations, through sorrow and defeat, towards a future of sinless perfection and calm eternal joy; its control of the realm of feel-

¹ Life and Works of Göthe, by Lewes, vol. 2, pp. 397–8.

² Vie de Jesus, ch. 5.

ings and imaginative faculty, and the solace and support which its faith in the beautiful unseen world has supplied to thousands of lonely men and women, are elements of a beneficent operation which we cannot over-rate. It is true that this influence has not always been for good. Emotion has weakened intellect; imagination has betrayed reason; and enthusiasm, dreaming of heavenly bliss, has overlooked terrestrial duties. But to oppose the sensualism and materialism of Pagan civilization, Christianity had no alternative but to create in the spirit of reaction an ideal world, with ideal duties, ideal pleasures, and ideal pains. In endeavoring to counteract the vile materialism and atrocious wickedness of the old social system, the religion of the cross, true to its origin, continued to prohibit the love of the world and the things of the world, and make an unknown and supersensuous region the centre to which intellect, affection, and action should gravitate. A retributive paradise, it may be, was necessary to allure the saint to holiness; a retributive Tartarus "to keep the wretch in order." Ere long a better day may dawn which will admit of a nobler, because of a less self-regarding morality; and the true disinterestedness inherent in the Christian type of character, may acquire in a future all too distant, a growth and energy which are now denied it by a theology whose parent principle is, in true if abstract language,—the salvation of selfishness.¹

On the above extract, we make a few remarks:

¹July 1863, pp. 15—16.

1. The writer assumes that Christianity deals largely in *fiction*. Without proof or argument, he represents Christianity as creating an *ideal* world, with *ideal* duties, pleasures, and pains. He also speaks of future retribution as a thing of the imagination. This spirit of dogmatism characterizes many infidel writers. They assume and assert the impossibility and incredibility of miracles and of every thing supernatural, and hence as a logical consequence they assume that the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures, the supernatural birth and character of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, heaven and hell, are mere fictions. Men who thus dogmatize at the very threshold of the question, incapacitate themselves both for candid investigation and fair discussion.

2. The writer, however, with patronizing air, remarks that 'perhaps a retributive Tartarus was necessary to keep the wretch in order,' and thus justifies Christianity in teaching the fiction of future retribution. But if the idea of hell punishment was necessary to enforce moral obligation, it may be the omniscient Governor of the world was aware of that necessity and provided for it; and hence future retribution may be a dreadful reality, just as the Bible and Christianity assert and teach. The necessity of something in addition to temporal rewards and punishments to restrain the wickedness of men, was not confined to the period in which Christianity originated. After eighteen centuries have rolled round, 'the fear of hell' is still needed 'to keep the wretch in order.' Burns thought so at least, and many others. There

may be a reality in a thing so much and so long needed. Has not the infinitely wise God provided for the moral as well as the physical wants of men? On this subject as well as on some others, infidels would do well to suppress some of their assurance and dogmatism.

3. The charge, that the parent principle of Christianity is *the salvation of selfishness*, and that its morality is self-regarding, is in keeping with the assumptions and dogmatism which infidels generally employ in discussing the origin of Christianity. The charge is made with cool assurance, as if no one would dare deny it. The truth is, however, that Christianity has ever arrayed itself against the selfishness of men. One of the prominent features of its morality is its inculcation of disinterested, self-denying, universal benevolence. It commands us to love our fellow-men as ourselves, to love our enemies, and to do good to those who injure us. It sets forth Christ as our example, whom it represents as suffering the most shameful indignities and a most disgraceful death in the room of the wretched and unworthy. Indeed, disinterested and self-sacrificing benevolence is the crowning Christian virtue. This is admitted by the writer when he says that 'true disinterestedness is inherent in the Christian type of character.' After this declaration, it would seem that the remark about the self-regarding morality of Christianity could have been prompted only by a desire to find fault.

4. The writer admits the improvement of Christian morality for the present to be hopeless. As we

have shown, the poet Göthe thought that the human mind, let it advance as it may, will never go beyond the moral culture of Christianity as it appears in the Gospels. But the writer with whom we are now dealing hopes for an improvement upon the Christian morality in the remote future. That improvement, however, if it does take place, will be but the expansion of 'the true disinterestedness inherent in the Christian type of character.'

5. Many skeptics speak of the Christian morality as being unknown until the time of Christ. They speak of him as a moral genius—a religious prodigy—a colossal man; and as announcing for the first time the truths and duties of the Christian morality. The fact is, however, that his main business as a moral teacher was to re-state and illustrate old truths. *This is the law and the prophets*, was his frequent declaration. The fact that his teaching consisted largely in the re-production of Old Testament truths, is well presented in the essay from which the above extract is given. 'His moral teaching, which bears an occasional resemblance to that of the Essenes, was anti-rabinical; having for its final result the enlargement and re-vivification of the Mosaic law. The originality of the new Teacher consisted mainly in the earnest living re-statement of old simple truths, obscured by pedantry or overlaid by custom.' The fact thus set forth is also fully recognized by Renan. Perhaps its recognition by infidels is owing to their desire to commend the 'development' theory concerning the origin of Christianity. But the fact was asserted by Christ him-

self according to the statements of his biographers; and we find that in his reported discourses are re-produced the truths contained in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophecies. Yes, the beautiful and sublime morality taught by Jesus of Nazareth—so benevolent and pure, with its doctrines of love and forgiveness, of loving one's enemies, of returning good for evil, and of doing all things to others which we would have them do unto us—the morality, which even infidels declare to be the highest attainment of the human mind, and in commendation of which they exhaust the resources of language—was known to the Jews, and was contained in their writings hundreds of years before the appearance of Christ.

CHAPTER VIII.

RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS.

THE incomparable excellence of the Bible morality, as presented in the preceding chapters, may be summed up as follows:

1. Its underlying principles are most excellent; and it is armed with the highest authority and sanctions. It inculcates right affections and desires rather than external righteousness,—seeks to infuse into men good principles and motives, and to purify their feelings and consciences, rather than to govern them by minute prescriptions and mechanical rules. It excels in the brevity and comprehensiveness of its statements—the Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount and many brief passages in the Law, the Proverbs, Prophecies, Gospels, and Epistles enunciate principles, which reach to the depth and height of human obligation, forbid all sin, and include every duty and all morality.

2. The objections that are urged against it are founded on mis-translations and mis-interpretations; on the sinful actions of good men recorded but not sanctioned; and on moral evils among the Jews which their moral code tolerated, curtailed, and condemned; or they are such as lie with equal force against the moral government and providence of

God. The real or supposed bad morals of the Hebrews, and the criminal actions of their best men, only make the moral excellence of their writings more remarkable.

3. The moral excellence of the Bible is seen in the glorious and perfect character of Jesus, whom it sets forth as an object of admiration and love, and a model for imitation. Since his faultless character is the Bible standard of moral excellence, it proves the Bible morality to be perfect.

4. The morality of the Bible is incomparably more excellent than that of every ancient Gentile nation. Every Gentile system of morality erred both in defect and by excess, omitted or obscured important truths and duties, and inculcated many errors and vices. Even the wisest and best of the ancient philosophers inculcated doctrines and practices that are shocking and abominable. The Hebrew morality inculcates all the moral truths, duties, and virtues embraced in all the systems of all the Gentile nations, and excludes all their errors.

5. The Bible has exerted a powerful influence for good. It has purified many hearts, confirmed wavering virtue, and saved many a tempted soul from sin and ruin. It struggled successfully against the general corruption during the first centuries, abolished or curtailed infanticide, gladiatorial games, slavery, and other evils and abuses, purified marriage, and elevated woman. It was the cause and instrument of the Reformation, which was a moral as well as religious revival. Its moral influence was exemplified in the pure morals of the English Puritans and

of Cromwell's soldiers. Its moral power is manifested at the present day in the superior morality of the countries in which the Bible is most valued and read, over that of the countries in which it is less valued and read, or in which it is unknown.

6. All men of true moral greatness—the men willing to labor, dare, and die in the cause of truth, righteousness, and humanity—during eighteen hundred years, have been largely influenced by the moral principles and spirit of the Bible. Its opponents forbear as a general thing to impeach its morality, but often assail the character and conduct of Christian ministers and professors; thus betraying a consciousness of its perfection and invulnerability. Infidelity has failed to suggest any improvement in the Bible morality, or even to do much for the moral improvement of mankind. The greatest heroes and champions of whom infidelity can boast have been, beyond other men, characterized by moral errors both of conduct and belief. Not one of them can be regarded as a model in character and conduct.

7. We have also the admissions and declarations of many skeptics and thorough-going infidels, testifying to the unparalleled excellence of the Bible morality. Nor is the force of this testimony weakened by the fact, that some of the witnesses, while they commend the morality of the New Testament, ignore or find fault with that of the Old; since the former is but the reproduction and expansion of the latter.

8. This proved and admitted fact of the unparalleled excellence of the Bible morality is not obscured,

nor can it be set aside, by the real or supposed bad morals of the Hebrews. The worse their morals are shown to have been, the more wonderful becomes the moral excellence of the writings that originated among them. If we are allowed to refer to these writings as reliable history, we have evidence in them that the moral condition of the nation was often deplorable. Their teachers, who were their writers, were engaged in an almost uninterrupted contest with them on account as well of their moral defections as their religious errors. And the question for those who deny the divine inspiration of the Scriptures to answer, is, how came these teachers and writers to ascend so far above their own age and nation, and also above every age and nation, as to surpass in moral power and wisdom all the moralists and philosophers of preceding and succeeding times, and to frame a system of morals which the combined genius and learning of the world cannot improve? and how came these uncultivated men to frame not only such a system of morals, but also a most excellent and sublime theology; and to embody them in writings unequalled, for their beauty and eloquence, by any of the literary productions of ancient or modern times?

PART IV.
*THE POLITICAL EXCELLENCE
OF THE BIBLE.*

PART IV.

THE POLITICAL EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

ITS FREEDOM FROM POLITICAL ERRORS.

WE do not maintain that the political institutions and laws of the Hebrews were the very best that could be devised. Every statesman must to some extent yield to circumstances. It is the duty of lawgivers to frame, not the best code of laws possible, but the best that their people will accept. How much the chief lawgiver of the Jews may have yielded to their prejudices, existing customs, and peculiar circumstances, we cannot tell. Nor is his thus yielding inconsistent with the claim that he was guided by the inspiration of God. Even the Almighty, in giving laws to a nation, must either by a miracle remove their prejudices, and change whatever is peculiar in their customs and circumstances, or He must to some extent yield to them. Still, in a God-given code,—accommodated as it must be to the prejudices, capacities, and peculiar customs and circumstances of those for whom it is intended,—we would expect to find marks of divine wisdom. We would expect to find it superior to other codes es-

tablished in the same age, and under similar circumstances.

One of the peculiar excellences of the Jewish code is its *freedom from many of the errors which disfigure all other ancient codes*. We proceed to point out some of the prevalent political errors from which the Jewish code, and we may also say the Bible, are free.

1. *The Bible does not favor despotism.* The Israelites for a long time had no king. During their early history they were a commonwealth. They were warned by their prophets of the evils of a despotic government. When they desired Samuel to set a king over them, he 'protested solemnly unto them and showed them the manner of the king that should reign over them.'¹ In this protest, we have as striking a display of the evils of despotism as is to be found in the whole compass of literature. Notwithstanding the remonstrances of their prophet, the people persisted in demanding a change in the government. He yielded to the popular will. Yet precautions were taken to guard against despotism. It was a limited, constitutional monarchy that was established. 'Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord.'² This is the oldest political constitution on record. But long before the establishment of the monarchy, and in anticipation of that event, Moses enacted that the king should not rule in accordance with his own arbitrary will, but

¹ 1 Sam. 8: 11-18.

² 1 Sam. 10: 25.

should himself be subject to law. He provided, further, against the exercise of despotic power, by enacting that the king should not maintain a large cavalry force; nor have a large number of wives; nor accumulate large treasures of silver and gold. During the commonwealth, and, doubtless, generally under the monarchy, the people chose judges and other officers; the priesthood alone being hereditary.¹ The establishment of the monarchy was not owing to the political institutions and laws of the Jews, nor to the influence and machinations of their priests and prophets. According to the Bible account of the transaction, the ingrafting of the monarchy into the commonwealth was disapproved of by God, who is represented as only tolerating it.

2. *The Bible does not favor slavery.* The ancient lawgivers, philosophers, and teachers in general believed in the lawfulness and expediency of human chattelhood. They recognized the right of property in man, and sanctioned and encouraged the buying and selling of the bodies and souls of men. In every ancient nation of whom we have any knowledge, a portion of the people with their descendants were doomed to hopeless slavery. But we have shown that the Bible, by its principles and spirit, condemns slavery; and that its influence has done much to mitigate its evils, and finally eradicate it.² A species of servitude was allowed among the Jews. They might have Hebrew servants, and they might acquire servants from the surrounding nations.

¹ Deut. 16: 18.

² Part iii. chs. 2 & 4.

But every fifty years all the bond-men became free. Thus Jewish servitude was in reality a system of emancipation. No such general and periodical enfranchisement was known among any other nation.

3. *The Bible opposes monopolies.* The institution of the jubilee prevented the great accumulation of wealth in real estate. With the exception of the priests, there were no privileged classes, and none of those, except the high priest, had any real advantages over the rest of the people. The poor as well as the rich, the low-born as well as those of noble rank, were eligible to office. All classes of citizens were placed on an equality before the law. The Jewish constitution prescribed that no legal discrimination should be made between native-born citizens and resident foreigners.¹ It may be said that notwithstanding this and similar regulations, the Jews did, in the administration of justice, discriminate between the foreigner and the home-born citizen. But if so, the fact only demonstrates that their ideas of justice and right did not come up to the standard of their own laws; which we very cheerfully grant. Whatever may have been the practical treatment of foreigners, their equality with native Israelites before the law shows how opposed was the spirit of the Hebrew jurisprudence to privileged classes and monopolies. The same spirit is manifested in the provision that was made for the general education of the people. As we shall hereafter show, the people generally were taught to read. Education was no monopoly among

¹Levit. 24: 22.

them. There was no regulation which tended to confine knowledge to a few favored persons. It was not the policy of the great Jewish lawgiver to keep the masses in ignorance in order that they might be the more easily managed. But not to multiply illustrations, the spirit and teaching of the Bible are in opposition to the establishment of monopolies and privileged classes. It forbids respect of persons. It commands that the rich and the poor shall be treated alike; that a man shall not be honored on account of his wealth or elegant appearance; and that even sympathy for a poor man shall not be allowed to procure favor for him in an unjust cause.¹ It enjoins respect towards princes and magistrates, but demands a tender regard for the rights and welfare of the lowly and helpless. It teaches the brotherhood and natural equality of all men; places them on a level before God; and thus promotes the establishment of equal rights and privileges.

4. *The Bible does not encourage the infliction of cruel punishments.* Undoubtedly some of the Jewish laws would be justly regarded as cruel, if established among any enlightened nation of modern times. But the Hebrews, according to the testimony of their own writers, were obstinate and rebellious. At the time of the enactment of their civil laws, they had just emerged from slavery, and were but beginning to recover from its demoralizing and debasing effects. Moreover, their government was a *theocracy*, and the willful violation of some of their moral and religious

¹Ja. 2: 1—9. Ex. 23: 3.

regulations was justly regarded as rebellion and treason against the state—which in all ages and countries have been severely punished. For these reasons, some punishments were necessary and proper among them, that would appear unjustly severe if inflicted among us. The infliction of the death-penalty on the violator of the Sabbath appears disproportionately severe compared with the offense. But among the Hebrews, constituted as they were under the theocracy, Sabbath-desecration endangered the existence of the government and of society. Their whole civil polity was based upon their religion, and was so blended with it that they could only stand or fall together. The preservation of their religion depended upon the observance of the Sabbath. Hence the violation of the Sabbath was a crime against the state, and was punished like rebellion and treason. No punishment that is necessary is either cruel or unjust. To shoot a soldier for cowardice, or for sleeping at his post, is certainly a severe punishment; but if it is necessary, it is proper and right.

But on the whole, the Mosaic jurisprudence, for the times and circumstances, was remarkable for its mildness. Seventeen crimes were, indeed, made punishable with death. But this number appears wonderfully small when we look at the penal laws even of modern nations. In Great Britain less than fifty years ago, two hundred offenses were punishable with death. Even trivial acts were capital felonies on the statute book. According to law, for cutting down a hop vine, or a young tree in a gentleman's

pleasure ground, or for having his face blackened at night, a man might be hanged, without benefit of clergy!¹ In comparison with such legislation, and with much of the legislation of modern times, the criminal laws of the Jews were exceedingly lenient. It should be remembered also, that imprisonment for life was not prescribed as a punishment by the Hebrew code; and that owing to the condition of the nation during the earlier portion of their history, the imprisonment of criminals was almost impossible. Hence the more frequent infliction of the death penalty. Notwithstanding this, the disparity between the number of capital offenses recognized by the Jewish penal code and the number recognized by the penal codes of many modern nations, is very great and striking. The comparative mildness of that ancient code is conspicuous in another respect. It took away from fathers the right of killing their children. An unworthy son might, indeed, be punished with death; but not until he had been tried and condemned before 'the elders of his city.' It was necessary that both his father and mother should appear as his accusers, and should prove him guilty of stubbornness, rebellion, disobedience, gluttony, and drunkenness. It was prescribed that after his trial and condemnation 'all the men of his city should stone him with stones.'² How humane are these enactments compared with the law so prevalent in ancient times which constituted the father the accuser, judge, and executioner of his own children;

¹Mackintosh, Misc. Works, pp. 529—530.

²Deut. 21: 18—21.

and even authorized him to kill them without accusation or trial at all!

The torturing of accused persons, and of witnesses, was not according to the laws of the Hebrews. The wheel, the rack, the boot, and the thumbscrew, were unknown among them. In this respect they set an example which the most enlightened nations have only of late become wise enough to imitate. The testimony of two witnesses was necessary to the conviction of accused persons. The mode of inflicting capital punishment was stoning,¹ though the body of the criminal was sometimes after execution burned or hanged temporarily on a tree.² Other modes of execution borrowed from foreign nations were in subsequent times introduced, but were not authorized by the laws. Consider in connection with this fact, the numerous and in some cases monstrous modes of executing criminals practised by the most enlightened nations in modern as well as in ancient times—hanging, shooting, beheading, stabbing, drowning, burning, bleeding, starving, poisoning, garroting, burning alive, impaling, crucifying, throwing to wild beasts, throwing over precipices, disemboweling, quartering, pulling to pieces, disjuncting, tearing with pincers, beating with rods, roasting by a slow fire, and other modes devised by ingenious cruelty to inflict disgrace and prolong agony. Such punishments were not authorized by the laws of the Hebrews, and only a very few of them were ever introduced among them.

¹ Lev. 20: 1. Deut. 21: 21-24.

² Lev. 20: 14; 21: 9; Deut. 21: 22-23.

Still farther; though the penal code of the Hebrews authorized scourging as a punishment for various offenses, it forbade the infliction of more than forty lashes. Had the humanity which dictated this prohibition been universally prevalent, it would have prevented the cruel flogging of sailors in the navies of the most enlightened nations of modern times. The trial of jealousy was very humane toward the accused wife.¹ It might strike terror into the conscience of the guilty, but it could not injure the innocent. Though 'the bitter water' was in itself harmless, the guilty would scarcely dare drink of it and incur the dreadful curse which accompanied it. Very different to an innocent person was the ordeal of later times. In the duel, the innocent party was perhaps as often defeated and killed as the guilty. The wife, whether innocent or guilty, was scorched by the red-hot iron which was thrust into her hands, or by the red-hot ploughshares over which she was compelled to walk, or by the melted lead that was poured over her body. When thrown, with her hands and feet fettered, into the water, she would of course sink and be drowned. But among the Jews, the suspected wife had an ordeal which could not injure her if innocent, though it might fail to detect her if guilty. Lastly, the Hebrew laws did not punish the unfortunate debtor as a criminal. They did not authorize imprisonment for debt. A poor man might, indeed, be sold, or rather might sell himself,²—that is, might for a stipulated

¹ Numb. 5: 13--31. ² Lev. 25: 39, 47.

reward bind himself to serve another for a limited time. The term of service was by statute limited to six years. It was expressly forbidden that a poor man should be sold as a bondman.¹ This law was perhaps disregarded in times of moral declension and political corruption, when foreign laws and customs were introduced and followed. In this way we are to account for the enslavement of debtors referred to in 2 Kings 4: 1, in the book of Nehemiah and the New Testament. This practice was denounced by Nehemiah as disgraceful and wicked.² The cruel treatment of poor debtors that was customary among ancient nations, and, until within a very recent period, among modern nations also, was unknown in the Hebrew jurisprudence.

But beside the mildness that characterizes the Mosaic code, the spirit and principles of the Bible are opposed to cruelty in legislation, as well as in the conduct of individuals. It does not inculcate any sentiments that would prevent the infliction of deserved punishment on criminals, but its moral teaching tends to mitigate their treatment. It requires that they shall be regarded by their fellow-men as brethren, and be treated with all the kindness consistent with the welfare of society. The complete carrying out of its principles of universal brotherhood and love would prevent all unnecessary severity in civil jurisprudence, as well as all cruelty and unkindness in the relations of private life. So, too, the complete carrying out of its principles of univer-

¹ Lev. 25: 30, 42. ² Neh. 5: 1.

sal brotherhood and love would prevent despotism, slavery, the institution of favored classes, war, oppression in all its forms, and many other evils which destroy individual happiness, and hinder political prosperity. The Bible does not favor such evils, but discourages and opposes them. Its influence has at various times abolished or curtailed them. Their complete destruction would result from the adoption of its principles and spirit by mankind in general.

This freedom from, and discouragement of, the political errors and evils that have so generally prevailed in both ancient and modern times, and that so often have been established by law and custom, is one of the distinguishing excellences of the Scriptures. This is alone sufficient to place the Hebrew code above all other ancient codes, and also above all the codes of modern times; except such as have been framed by nations and statesmen that were enlightened by Christianity.

CHAPTER II.

THE POSITIVE EXCELLENCE OF THE POLITICAL ETHICS OF THE BIBLE.

THE Hebrew laws and the political ethics of the Bible have some positive excellences which distinguish them from every other ancient code.

1. *The Bible places civil government and laws on the broad and sure basis of theological and moral truth.* The system of theology and morality which underlay the Mosaic institutions is unequalled except by the more fully expanded system of the New Testament. The unity of God, his paternal character, his holiness, justice, and benevolence, the duty of men to love Him supremely, and to love one another, their brotherhood and equality,—were assumed as the foundation of the Hebrew jurisprudence. To love the one true God supremely and to love one's neighbor as one's-self, are represented by Jesus of Nazareth as the two great commands on which hang all the law and the prophets. His teaching—which even skeptics declare to be faultless and sublime—was mainly a reproduction and development of the theological and moral principles contained in the old law books of the Jews. Civil government, according to the teaching of Moses and the Bible, is ordained of God for the promotion of peace, order,

and justice. Civil magistrates are his representatives; and should be respected as such, and should be like him in character. Civil laws should be transcripts of the divine will, and should be obeyed as the laws of God. Thus the fundamental ideas of the Bible ethics are good and excellent. If the Hebrews had given to the world nothing but the great theological and moral truths which underlie their civil laws and are blended with them, they would still have done more for the political elevation of mankind than all the other ancient nations combined.

2. Another excellence of the civil code of the Hebrews consists in *the provisions which it contained in behalf of the poor and unfortunate*. It enjoined the Israelite to open his hand and give to his poor and needy brethren. He was reminded that there would always be poor people in the land, and was warned to beware of neglecting them. It was made his duty to provide for the needy foreigner as well as for the needy Israelite. Again and again is the *stranger* mentioned along with the *fatherless* and the *widow* as an especial object of charity. Landholders, when they reaped their fields, were required not to glean their fields, but to leave the straggling sheaves for the *stranger*, the *fatherless*, and the *widow*. When they gathered their olives, they were forbidden to go over the boughs a second time, in order that some of the fruit might be left for the *stranger*, the *fatherless*, and the *widow*. When they gathered their grapes, they were not allowed to glean the vines, in order that there might be some remaining clusters for the *stranger*, the *fatherless* and the *widow*. Every

third year, the same classes of needy persons, along with the poor Levite, were to be supplied out of the store of surplus tithes. The poor hired servant, whether a native or a foreigner, was to be paid daily, in order that he might have wherewith to procure necessaries for himself and family. There was a special enactment against taking a widow's raiment to pledge. In order that the Israelites might be led by a feeling of compassion to provide for the poor and unfortunate, they were reminded again and again that they themselves had been sufferers in the land of Egypt.¹

Such are the provisions contained in the Mosaic code in behalf of the poor and unfortunate. There is no political code, ancient or modern, that manifests so tender a regard for these classes of persons. In all the ancient codes but the Hebrew, they were entirely or almost entirely overlooked.

3. The civil laws of the Hebrews indicate a *delicacy of feeling and refinement of humanity* not found in any other code. How tender a regard for the poor is manifested in the requisition, that if a poor man's garment were taken as a pledge, it should be restored before the setting of the sun!² The law, which prohibited the lender from going into the house of the borrower to get a pledge, and required him to stand without until it should be brought to him, manifests a tender regard for the feelings of the indigent, in protecting them and their humble homes from the unwelcome intrusion of their more fortu-

¹Deut. chs. 24 and 25. ²24: 12-13.

nate neighbors. Of the same character was the prohibition from taking a millstone as a pledge, it being needed to grind meal for the daily use of the family.¹ There is also a refined humanity in such laws as the following: 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn²—Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk³—But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat⁴—If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree or on the ground, thou shalt not take the dam with the young; but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee.'⁵ These and similar regulations were, doubtless, intended not merely to secure brute animals from cruel treatment, but mainly to foster in men feelings and habits of refined benevolence. They are in accordance with the sentiment expressed by the gentle Cowper;—

'I would not enter on my list of friends
 (Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
 Yet wanting sensibility,) the man
 Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.'

Rude and hard-hearted as the Jews are often represented to have been, or as they may in reality have been, their laws inculcate a more refined and benevolent sensibility than the laws of any other nation, ancient or modern; a sensibility equaled only by a few of the most tender and gentle spirits that have appeared in any age or quarter of the world.

¹Deut. 24: 6. ²25: 4. ³Ex. 34: 26.

⁴Gen. 9: 4; Lev. 19: 26. ⁵Deut. 22: 6-7.

4. Another peculiar excellence of the Hebrew code, was *the provision it made for the protection and welfare of foreigners*. Other ancient codes were characterized by bigotry and exclusiveness. They manifested little concern for the rights and welfare of foreigners. Not so the Jewish laws. 'Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.'¹ This command is often repeated. Often did the lawgiver of the Jews remind them that they knew by their own experiences in Egypt how sad the stranger feels.² They were required to love him as they loved themselves, and to relieve him when in distress, as one of their own brethren.³ A servant escaping from any of the surrounding nations was to be treated like other foreigners. The Jews were not allowed to deliver him to his master, nor to enslave him themselves, but were commanded to permit him to live wherever he chose.⁴ The foreigner and the citizen were placed on an equality before the law;⁵ but special favors to the foreigner as well as to the widow and fatherless were required.⁶ This liberal and catholic spirit was peculiar to the Hebrew code. Nothing equal to it, or even like it, is to be found in any other ancient code. The clannish and exclusive spirit, real or supposed, of the Jews may be in contrast with, but does not detract from, the wisdom and equity of their laws. It only makes them appear more wonderful.

5. Another peculiarity of the civil code of the

¹ Ex. 22: 21. ² 23: 9. ³ Lev. 19: 33-34.

⁴ Deut. 23: 15-16. ⁵ Lev. 24: 22. ⁶ Deut. 24: 19.

Hebrews is, *its repression of national pride and arrogance*. In their laws, frequent reference is made to their humble origin, and their former abject condition. Often were they reminded that once they were a nation of slaves, despised and degraded. It was evidently the design of their lawgiver to mortify their national vanity. One of his laws required the Israelite to bring every year an offering to the tabernacle or temple, and to say, *A Syrian ready to perish was my Father*.¹ Similar in design was the command which required the Israelite to teach his son, saying, *We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt*.² Again and again are the people called upon to sympathize with strangers because they themselves were strangers in Egypt, and to love the Lord because he delivered them from bondage. These humbling references to former national degradation are peculiar to the Mosaic code. None but the Jewish lawgiver ever thus endeavored to repress national pride and arrogance, and to foster sympathy and kindness for the oppressed and degraded. Even the most enlightened moralists and statesmen of modern times do not in this respect come up to the Mosaic standard. They encourage national pride in a greater or less degree, and dignify with the name of patriotism and virtue what ought rather to be regarded as national prejudice and selfishness.

6. Some of the provisions of the Hebrew constitution are remarkable anticipations of the more advanced political ideas of modern times. (1) The world has

¹ Deut. 26: 5-6. ² 6: 21.

been very slow to learn that 'governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed;' but popular sovereignty was assumed as a fundamental truth in the Jewish polity. Even under the monarchy, the will of the nation was recognized as sovereign. Samuel yielded to the appointment of a king because the majority was in favor of it.¹ David became king by the consent of all Israel.² He appointed Solomon his successor with the consent of the nation.³ The popular sovereignty was manifested by the meeting of all Israel to make Rehoboam king, and by their rejection of him when he refused to accede to their demands.⁴ Doubtless the monarchy, as moral and political corruption increased, set aside more and more the original constitution. But in the Mosaic institutes, popular sovereignty is recognized, and the expressed will of the people is established as supreme law; subject only to the will of God. (2) Our home-stead laws were anticipated by the Hebrew lawgiver. The Israelite never lost his title to his paternal inheritance. He could not, if he tried, entirely alienate it. He could only lease it until the year of jubilee. Every fiftieth year every man returned to his possession. This regulation was a most effectual 'homestead-exemption law.' It also prevented the ownership of a large extent of land by one man, and its accompanying evils. (3) Another important political measure of modern times anticipated by the Hebrews is, *national education*. Their law required that children should be taught

¹ 1 Sam. 8: 19-22. ² 2 Sam. 5: 1-3.

³ 1 Chron. 23: 1-2. 29: 20-23. ⁴ 2 Chron. 10: 1-19.

to read. Parents were required to instruct their children, by writing the words of God on the posts of their houses and on their gates.¹ This requisition implies both the ability of parents to read and the duty of teaching their children to read. And there is reason to believe that the people generally were taught to read. The evangelist speaks of many of the Jews reading the title that was put on the cross of Jesus.² The frequent enquiry of Jesus in his discourses was, 'Have ye never read?'³ It does not appear that schools were maintained at public expense, or that education was taken out of the hands of parents. But the Levites, not having any inheritance of land bestowed upon them, and being partly supported at the public expense, became the professional school-teachers of the nation. 'The school-master was abroad' among the ancient Hebrews. They set the first example of popular education. (4) Another thing established in their civil polity, but unknown among other nations until modern times, was, *the check of public opinion on the proceedings of the government*. In modern free countries public opinion finds expression through the press, and thus exerts a powerful influence on governmental affairs. It is the freedom of criticism which makes public opinion so powerful. The public officer is compelled by the newspapers to listen to what the people say about him. But in despotic countries, where the press is not free, there is no channel for the expression of public opinion. In such coun-

¹ Deut. 6: 7-9. ² John, 19: 19.

³ Mat. 19: 4. Mark, 2: 25; 12: 10. Luke, 6: 3.

tries kings and princes hear no criticisms, abuse, or ridicule, however much the people detest and denounce them. But among the Israelites, popular sentiment found expression through *their religious teachers*. This fact is without a parallel in all ancient history. Among all other nations religion was the engine of tyranny. Indeed, the priesthood has generally been the right arm of despotism. But the Hebrew prophets were the tribunes of the people. They confronted kings and princes to their faces. They broke in upon the tyrant in his palace, surrounded by the trappings of royalty and the instruments of his wickedness; told him of his shameful acts; and denounced upon him the nation's curse and Jehovah's wrath. Account for it as we may, the Lord's prophets constituted a sort of free press among the Israelites, and were even harder to muzzle than modern newspapers. (5) The principle of representation was also recognized in the Jewish government. Brougham has declared the representative principle to be 'the great invention of modern times,' though he says the ancient commonwealths made so near an approach to it that it is a wonder they never made that important step in the art of government.¹ This principle, however, was understood and acted on by the Jews. Officers and magistrates were chosen by the people, and *represented* the people. The *congregation (all Israel)* is often spoken of as doing what their chosen representatives did. These representatives could act without in-

¹ Political Philosophy.

structions from the people; yet they often referred their decisions to the people for ratification.¹ (6) Closely connected with representative government was the matter of general suffrage. In the Roman and other ancient commonwealths, a large number of the people,—indeed the majority of the people,—had no voice in the government. The inhabitants of the *cities* were the governors; and the country people, the cultivators of the soil, had no political rights. And even among the inhabitants of the cities, political rights depended on birth or wealth. Thus, as Guizot remarks, the Roman government was a mere municipality.² The city of Rome was the state, the commonwealth, the empire. The country was cultivated, but not *peopled*. The right of suffrage was confined to those who lived in the capital. Other cities were *free*, conquered cities even were made *free*, but had no voice in the government. Their inhabitants were dignified with the name of *citizens*, but did not enjoy the right of suffrage. And in Rome itself, such were the privileges conferred by birth, rank, and wealth, that a large portion of the population had really no voice in the government. But among the Jews there was a very different state of things. There were no political distinctions of the people. The prohibition of usury, the division of lands, and the institution of the jubilee,—though perhaps inexpedient in any other nation,—removed all danger from wealth and inequality. The country was *peopled* as well as cultivated, and through the

¹ Deut. 1: 9-18; Num. 1: 1-22; 35: 12; 1 Sam. 11. 14-15.

² His. of Civ. Lect. 2.

exercise of the right of suffrage the country people were the ruling class. Not only had the people in general the right of suffrage, but with the exception of the priesthood, every man was eligible to every office.

Such are some excellences of the political institutes of the Hebrews—the correctness of the principles on which they were founded, the provisions made in behalf of the poor and the unfortunate, the inculcation of a delicate and refined feeling of humanity, the care manifested for foreigners and the making of them equal with home-born citizens before the law, the regulations for the repression of national pride and selfishness, the recognition of popular sovereignty, the securing to every man his paternal inheritance without defrauding creditors, popular education, the check of popular opinion put upon the government through the prophets, the recognition of the principle of representation, and the establishment of general suffrage. We see not how the conclusion can be avoided that the Hebrews had the best government known in ancient history. Their institutions were certainly calculated to secure freedom, stability, morality, equality, justice, and intelligence. The immense superiority of the Hebrew jurisprudence will be made evident by a comparison with other codes.

CHAPTER III.

INFERIORITY OF OTHER CODES.

IN comparing the Hebrew code with others, and Moses with other legislators, we must consult brevity as much as possible; and, as the Grecians and Romans attained to a higher civilization than other Gentile nations, it will be sufficient, among ancient codes, to bring into comparison with the Hebrew only those of Greece and Rome.

1. *The Spartan code.* One of the most famous legislators of Greece was Lycurgus. The inferiority of his laws to the Mosaic code is seen at once by a reference to some of their provisions. Lycurgus virtually destroyed the currency by making money consist entirely of iron; thus annihilating commerce, one of the important means of civilization. By compelling the citizens to eat together at public tables, by encouraging husbands and wives to disregard the marriage relation, and by requiring children to be herded together and to be brought up as the property of the state, he destroyed the sanctity of home, and impaired the family institution. His encouraging husbands to loan their wives, and his ridiculing the prevailing ideas concerning conjugal fidelity as absurd, tended to destroy all modesty and chastity in both men and women. His providing that the

ceilings of houses should be dressed only with an axe, and the doors with a saw, was designed to suppress taste and elegance, and to keep society in a state of savage rudeness. His laws required or sanctioned many other things that were very barbarous and reprehensible,—such as the appearing of men and women together naked in the athletic exercises; the forcing of unmarried men to march naked in winter round the market place, singing a song composed against themselves; the keeping of children in companies day and night, and the compelling of them to go barefoot, dirty, and almost naked; the preventing of the citizens from engaging in manual labor, and from exercising any trade; the allowing of boys to steal, and the unmerciful whipping of them; the whipping of slaves every day, to remind them of their condition, and make them abject; the marking of them, and the murdering of them by thousands to keep them from becoming dangerously numerous. With regard to some of these regulations, it is disputed whether they should be ascribed to Lycurgus or not. But it is agreed that he was the author of most of them; and that they all were embraced in the legal code of the Spartans. Under such a system, there could be neither individual freedom nor social progress. Men were converted by it, as far as possible, into machines; and society into a treadmill. Chastity, refinement, domestic happiness, conjugal fidelity, friendship, and many of the social affections were discouraged and well nigh destroyed. The laws of Lycurgus were adapted only to a small society composed of unfeeling and savage warriors;

and their main design was to cultivate in men those qualities which they possess in common with the brutes—physical courage, strength, and endurance. Could lions and tigers have been trained to fight in battle, they would have been, according to the Spartan standard, more noble and valuable than most of the citizens. The absence from the laws of Moses of all the above mentioned regulations, is of itself sufficient to prove their immense superiority above those of Lycurgus.

2. *The Athenian code.* The laws of Athens were much superior in several respects to those of Sparta. They were less savage and cruel, and allowed more individual freedom. They tended less to harden and brutalize men. Yet the Athenian code was in many respects inferior to the Hebrew. (1) At Athens foreigners received no such generous treatment as among the Jews. According to the Athenian laws, they were not allowed to sell wares in the market, or to profess any calling. They could not transact business in their own name; but were compelled to choose guardians from among the citizens. If they failed to choose guardians, or if they failed to render to their guardians the services demanded by them, action was brought against them, and their goods were confiscated. In addition to this, the state demanded of them peculiar services. They were required to carry certain articles in religious processions. On such occasions female foreigners were required to carry vessels of water, or umbrellas to protect lady citizens from the weather. Special tribute was exacted of foreigners, male and female,

except women who had sons that paid tribute. If any failed to pay this special tribute, they were immediately seized by the taskmakers and taken to the slave market and sold as slaves. According to Diogenes Laertius, the philosopher Xenocrates, being unable to pay the tribute, was sold as a slave, but was afterwards redeemed. Compare this treatment of foreigners with that provided for in the laws of the Hebrews. The Hebrew laws placed foreigners and native citizens on an equality. The former were not required, but were allowed, to take part in religious services. Even the fugitive slave became free on Hebrew soil, and was allowed to live wherever he chose. Instead of exacting special services and tribute from foreigners, the citizens were required to show them special kindness and favor. How remarkable the contrast between these provisions and the Athenian laws, which required that the foreigner who was unable to pay the special tribute should be hurried off to the slave market and sold as a beast! (2) The Hebrew laws were milder than the Athenian in the treatment of criminals. The laws of Draco were remarkable for their severity. They made nearly all offenses—even the stealing of a few apples or pot-herbs—punishable with death. It is a well-known saying of Demades, quoted by Plutarch, that Draco wrote his laws not with ink but with blood. The same historian reports Draco as justifying the severity of his laws on the ground that small offenses deserve death, and that no higher punishment can be inflicted on the most heinous. Solon is said to have abrogated the most of Draco's

laws. Yet many of those enacted by Solon or by subsequent legislators, were unduly severe. Many of the smaller offenses were punished as capital crimes. The punishment for pilfering out of the Lyceum, Academia, Cynosarges, or any of the gymnasias a thing of the least value, such as a garment or even an oil-vial, was death. The punishment for stealing any thing above the value of ten drachms out of the baths or ports, was death. The punishment for proposing that the thousand drachms to be laid out yearly for defending Attica should be employed for any other purpose, was death. The punishment for proposing that the pay of the soldiers should be taken out of the money designated for the exhibition of shows, was death. The punishment for impiety, atheism, or denying the gods of the country, was death. The punishment for divulging the mysteries was death. The punishment for citing a fictitious law in any court of justice, was death. The punishment for giving in the election of magistrates two votes for the same candidate, was death. The punishment for usurpation of the government was death. Any one who accepted a public trust while indebted to the public exchequer, was punishable with death. The punishment for going on an embassy without a commission from the senate or people, was death. It was decreed that if any one should continue in the magistracy after the dissolution of the democratic form of government, he should be outlawed, and that it should be lawful for any one to kill him and to seize his goods. The Athenians were required to take an oath that, if any

man should endeavor to subvert their republic, or after its subversion should hold any office, they would kill him; and that half his goods should be bestowed on the slayer. The citizen who abandoned Athens to live in the Piræus incurred the penalty of death. The man who claimed what he had not deposited, incurred the penalty of death. The man who was found guilty of abusing his parents, incurred death, or any other punishment which the judges might choose to inflict. The man who frequented forbidden places also incurred death, or any punishment which the judges might choose to inflict. Kidnappers, burglars, and cut-purses were punishable with death. All counterfeiters, debasers, and diminishers of the current coin, were punishable with death. The false informer was punishable with death. The punishment for polluting the temple of Apollo was death. The drunkenness of an archon was punishable with death. Murder also was punished with death. Altogether the number of offenses punishable with death according to the Athenian laws was more than thirty. According to the Hebrew code only seventeen offenses were capitally punished. It detracts nothing from the cruel severity of the Athenian criminal laws that among the offenses punishable with death, such atrocious crimes as incest, adultery, forcible violation, sodomy, and bestiality (which were capitally punished according to the Hebrew code,) were not included. The latter prescribed but one mode of execution—stoning. The greater severity of the Athenian code is seen from the various modes of execution authorized by it; among which

were poisoning, beating with cudgels, starving, and crucifying. (3) The Hebrew laws were more humane toward servants than the Athenian. Slaves fared better at Athens than anywhere else in Greece. Masters had the right of emancipation, and sometimes exercised it. Some slaves were enabled to purchase their own freedom. A slave might bring an action against his master for maltreatment, and on sufficient evidence could compel his master to sell him to a more lenient master. But as the slave could not testify in his own case, nor introduce the testimony of his fellow slaves, it was almost impossible to convict the master of cruelty. Hence slaves were almost entirely at the mercy of their masters. The master among his slaves was virtually law-giver, accuser, witness, judge, and executioner. He might, as punishment for their faults or to gratify his own malignant passions, beat, starve, pinch, brand, torture, and kill his slaves, with little danger of being afterward convicted of cruelty. Although slaves were not allowed to plead nor to give evidence in court, yet it was customary to extort confessions from them by torture. Slaves were so often killed or disabled in this way, that whoever demanded a slave for torture was required to give security to the master for the slave's value. Such was the hopeless condition of a majority of the inhabitants of Athens and Attica—drudging, despised, liable at any time to be beaten and tortured at the will of their despotic masters, and transmitting this life of toil, misery, and shame to their remotest descendants. How different were the laws of the Hebrews in regard to

servants,—for in reality there were no *slaves* among them! It does not appear that the Hebrew master had legal authority to inflict corporal punishment on his servants at all. The law expressly provided that if he killed any of them, he should be punished; and it is evident that the punishment in such cases was death. If the master injured the eye or tooth of his servant, he lost all claim on his services, and the servant became free.¹ This provision alone demonstrates the superiority of the Hebrew code above the Athenian in point of humanity. Indeed no such provision is found in any code but the Hebrew. As we have before remarked, the Hebrew laws of servitude in reality constituted a system of emancipation. Every foreign slave escaping to Judea became free. A Hebrew could not be held as a servant more than six years; and every fiftieth year there was a proclamation of universal emancipation. This is another provision that was unknown in any other code. (4) The Hebrew laws were more excellent than the Athenian in regard to marriage and divorce. The former, indeed, tolerated polygamy, but curtailed its evils, and in the end abolished it. At least

¹ Ex. 21: 20-21, 26-27. We construe the law in regard to smiting a servant in the same way with the law in regard to smiting a citizen. If the injured person recovered, the smiter was 'quit,' that is, of murder; but was punishable for assault (Ex. 21: 18-19). So, if a man beat his servant to death, he was punished as a murderer. If the servant survived a short time, the fact that his services were of pecuniary value to the master was considered as evidence that he did not *intend* to kill him. He was 'quit' of murder; but was punishable for assault.

under the Mosaic laws and teachings it ceased to exist. The Hebrew law authorized the marriage of a childless widow to her deceased husband's brother. But this custom existed and had the force of law prior to the time of Moses.¹ He did not abolish it, but provided that the man who was very reluctant to marry his elder brother's widow might refuse to do so without incurring any other penalty than an indignity offered him by his sister-in-law, in the presence of the judges.² Besides,—the marriage of a man to the childless widow of his elder brother, as authorized by the Mosaic law, was an exceptive case; the necessity for which grew out of a long established custom, and the peculiar constitution of Jewish society and government. Marriage in all other cases between a man and his sister-in-law was declared to be unclean.³ According to the Mosaic code, husbands were permitted to put away their wives by merely giving a writing of divorcement. This separation was not a divorcement in the sense of annulling the marriage, or dissolving the conjugal relation. The parties, though separated, were still husband and wife. The husband might perhaps be tolerated in marrying again; for the law tolerated him in marrying a second wife without ceasing to live with the first. But the woman not being tolerated in having two husbands at the same time, was declared an adulteress if she married during the life-time of the husband who sent her out of his house.⁴ The explanations of Jesus, the great expounder of Jewish law,

¹ Gen. 38: 7-10, 26.

² Deut. 25: 5-10.

³ Lev. 18: 16; 20: 21.

⁴ Deut. 24: 1-4.

show that this form of divorce was merely tolerated in order to prevent worse evils; that it did not dissolve the marriage; and that neither husband nor wife was authorized to marry again,—the second marriage being in reality adulterous.¹ But in general the Mosaic laws in regard to marriage and divorce are followed by all enlightened nations. When objected to, it is generally on account of their strictness, and not on account of their allowance of licentiousness. Many of the Athenian laws in regard to marriage and divorce were very reprehensible. They authorized the marriage of a man to his half-sister on the father's side. They required an heiress to marry her nearest marriageable male relative, though he was her uncle or brother. They gave the nearest kinsman of an orphan maid, though his niece or sister, the option of marrying her or endowing her with a portion of his estate. They allowed a married heiress, who failed to have children by her husband, to cohabit with any of his kinsmen whom she might choose. Adultery according to the Athenian law was a penal offense; but the keeping of mistresses by married men was not accounted adultery. While the Hebrew concubine was a wife, and her children enjoyed equal rights with the children of the favorite wife,—the concubine according to the Athenian law was only a paramour, and her children were declared infamous and deprived of all political rights. Though the Hebrews were taught that it was wrong to intermarry with the surround-

¹Matt. 5: 31-32; 19: 3-9.

ing nations, who worshipped unclean gods, burnt their children in sacrifice to devils, and practised other abominations; and though once, at a very critical period in their history, when the existence of the nation was endangered, their leader required them to put away their foreign wives;¹ yet there was no legal penalty for marrying a woman of a foreign race, and the children that sprung from such marriages enjoyed the same rights and privileges as Hebrews of pure descent. David, the second king of the Israelites and the founder of the royal line, was the descendant of a foreigner,—his great-grand-father, Boaz; having married Ruth the Moabitess. The fact that Absalom's mother was a foreigner did not detract from his popularity, or incapacitate him for holding office.² The fourth Israelitish king, Rehoboam, was the son of an Ammonitish woman. But according to the Athenian law, if a citizen married a woman that was an alien, he was fined a thousand drachms, and his wife was sold as a slave. If an Athenian woman married an alien, her husband was sold as a slave. The children that sprung from these mixed marriages were in the eye of the law infamous persons, and were incapable of inheriting their fathers' estates, or exercising any political rights. Marriage was regarded as a temporary arrangement, voidable at the will either of the husband or wife. The woman who wished to leave her husband was required only to hand a separation-bill to the archon. Husband and wife often separated by mutual consent,

¹Neh. 13: 23-27. ²2 Sam. 3: 3.

and after doing so were at liberty to marry again. (5) The Hebrew laws were more impartial and equitable than the Athenian in the conferring of political rights and privileges. According to the former, no man was disfranchised on account of poverty; but the poor and the rich enjoyed the same rights and privileges. But the Athenian law excluded from office all those whose lands yielded less than two-hundred measures. From Aristotle we learn, that the class thus disfranchised consisted mainly of mechanics.¹ The number of citizens never much exceeded twenty-thousand; the number of slaves sometimes reached four-hundred thousand, and of foreigners ten thousand. Only the richer class of citizens were capable of holding office. Only those both of whose parents were citizens were accounted such. All those whose fathers or mothers were not citizens were declared illegitimate and infamous, and were deprived of all political and of some of their personal rights. The laws, however, on these subjects varied from time to time. In the time of Pericles, by a change of the laws, about five thousand persons who had been recognized as citizens, were deprived of their freedom and sold as slaves. The severity of the law was relaxed before the death of Pericles, but was afterward revived. The prevailing law was such as has been mentioned. Athens was a community of slaves governed by despots. In the Hebrew commonwealth, freedom and equality prevailed. (6) In several other respects, the superi-

¹ Pol. 2: 12.

ority of the Hebrew code is conspicuous. We have pointed out how carefully, and even tenderly, Moses provided for the orphan, the widow, the stranger, the poor, and the unfortunate. But in all the Athenian laws, we do not find a single provision for relieving the wants of the poor. Those provisions in the Hebrew laws that were designed to foster a delicate and refined sensibility, as mentioned above, were unknown in the Athenian code. By the prohibition of usury, the jubilee, and other regulations, injurious and dangerous inequalities among the Hebrew citizens were prevented. Whatever may be thought of such regulations, they were certainly not so objectionable as the Athenian law which required the banishment of the most considerable and wealthiest citizens for ten years, lest they should become leaders in sedition. Other particulars might be specified, but we think enough has been said to show the great inferiority of the Athenian to the Hebrew code.¹

3. The *Roman* code was even more objectionable than that of Athens, and was almost as much so as that of Sparta. According to the Roman laws, the citizen was an unlimited despot over his servants and family. He had power to punish his slaves at pleasure. He might beat, imprison, stab, starve, hang, drown, burn, or crucify them, whenever led to do so by passion or caprice. After killing his slaves, he might cut their bodies in pieces and throw them into his sty to feed his pigs, or into his ponds to feed

¹For our account of the Athenian laws we are mainly indebted to Potter's *Antiquities of Greece*.

his fish. The father had the same unlimited power over the bodies and lives of his children as the master over his slaves. According to the Roman law, the child was not a person, but a thing. In one respect, the condition of the son was more abject than that of the slave. The slave regained his freedom by the first act of manumission, but the son was delivered from the power of the father only after the formality of a third sale and deliverance. The father might sell or kill his children at pleasure. The Roman had the same power over his wife as over his children and slaves. In the eye of the Roman law the wife was the adopted daughter of her husband,—and hence might be either sold, given away, or killed by him, as children by the father.

The *Twelve Tables* have been much praised for their excellence. Cicero declares that other jurisprudence—even that of Draco, Lycurgus, and Solon—is rude and almost ridiculous in comparison with it.¹ But some of their provisions were grotesque and savage. They prescribed that a man convicted of treason should be veiled, have his hands tied behind his back, be scourged, and then crucified. The parricide was condemned to be enclosed in a sack along with a cock, viper, dog, and monkey, and thrown into the sea or river. The incendiary was whipped, and then burnt. The false witness was executed by being thrown from the Tarpeian rock. Libelers and satirists were beaten to death with clubs. The man who injured his neighbor's corn

¹ De Orat. 1: 44.

by night was hung. Magicians, judges who accepted bribes, and persons who attended nocturnal meetings in the city on any pretext,—whether of pleasure, religion, or the public good,—were punished with death. Such slight offenses as satires and attendance at nocturnal meetings, were punished with as much severity as bribery and murder. Those who were guilty of adultery, fornication, rape, seduction, sodomy, bestiality, and other flagitious crimes, escaped with impunity or were punished only with light fines. In regard to those who by violence inflicted personal injuries, the law of retaliation—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—was rigorously applied to all *poor* offenders. But if the offender were able, he might buy himself off by paying a fine of three hundred pounds of copper. The insolvent debtor was allowed thirty days of grace. If at the end of this time his debt remained unpaid, he was imprisoned for thirty days. During his imprisonment, his daily allowance was a pound of meal,¹ and he might be bound with a chain of fifteen pounds' weight. He was three times exposed in the market place in order to move the compassion of his friends. If, at the expiration of the thirty days of imprisonment, the debt remained unpaid, the debtor was at the option of the creditor either put to death, or sold into slavery beyond the Tiber. If there were more than one creditor, they might cut the body of the debtor and divide the pieces among themselves. Infants that were born greatly deform-

¹ Gibbon says, twelve ounces of rice, ch. 44.

ed were to be immediately put to death. It is undoubtedly to this law that Cicero refers when he speaks of 'those deformed infants, which by a law of the Twelve Tables are not permitted to live.'¹ The citizens who did not give in their names to be enrolled in the censor's books, or refused to enlist as soldiers, were sold as slaves. That it may be seen that we do not exaggerate the barbarities of the Roman code, we present some fragments of the *Twelve Tables*, as follows:—'Let the creditor take the debtor home with him, tie him by the neck or feet with a chain not above fifteen pounds weight. Let him be fed on a pound of meal a day. If the debtor be insolvent to several creditors, let his body be cut in pieces on the third market day. It may be cut into more or fewer pieces with impunity; or, if his creditors consent to it, let him be sold to foreigners beyond the Tiber.—Let a father have the power of life and death over his legitimate children, and let him sell them when he pleases. But if a father has sold his son three times, let the son then be out of his father's power. If a father has a child born which is monstrously deformed, let him kill it immediately.—If a man catches his wife in adultery, or finds her drunk, he may, with the consent of her friends, punish her with death. When a man will put away his wife, the form of doing it shall be by taking from her the keys of the house and giving her what she brought.'²

Such were the privileges and punishments provid-

¹ De Leg. 3: 8. ² Taken from the *Twelve Tables* as given in Cooper's *Institutes of Justinian*, p. 656.

ed by the earlier laws of Rome for her own citizens. As the Romans progressed in civilization, these laws became obsolete. Finally, by the Porcian and Valerian laws, the capital and even corporal punishment of Roman citizens was prohibited, and thus the savage severity of the Roman jurisprudence resulted in almost entire impunity. Slaves (who constituted the great bulk of the Roman populace,) and foreigners were, on proof or mere suspicion of guilt, scourged, tortured, thrown from the Tarpeian rock, nailed to the cross, or compelled to fight as gladiators. Their bodies after execution were neither burnt nor buried; but, after public exposure, were dragged through the streets with hooks, and thrown into the Tiber. Gibbon is right in declaring that the Roman laws, like those of Draco, were written in characters of blood. Compared with them, how judicious and humane are the institutes of Moses!

4. The Hebrew laws compare favorably even with the jurisprudence of modern nations. Every modern nation that is even a few centuries old has had laws more pernicious and cruel than anything that can be found in the Hebrew code. We have not space to review the legislation of modern nations; but whoever will read the life of Howard the philanthropist, must be convinced, that the most enlightened nations, less than a century ago, permitted and authorized, through their laws, the most outrageous oppression and cruelty. Consider the discoveries made by him in the prisons of England, as late as 1773: men declared guiltless dying in dungeons because unable to pay their jail-fees—debtors

who owed but a paltry sum deprived of liberty and subjected with their families to everything short of starvation, even to slow starvation itself—human beings, farmed out and fed on such a miserable pittance as to suffer the perpetual gnawings of hunger; or flung into dens or holes under-ground, there to gasp and groan amid stifling heat and poisonous vapors—men and even women, with gastly forms, haggard faces, and broken hearts, preyed upon by disease, hunger, despair, and loathsome horrors, lying in darkness and desolation, far from every friendly eye and every cheering word—some of these victims of oppression and misery being mere unfortunate debtors, some tried for crime and acquitted, and only a few declared guilty, yet counted from year to year by scores and hundreds. Such were the sights that John Howard saw in the prison-dens of England and elsewhere, in his journeys through the world.¹ What was the cause of this shocking injustice and misery? The main cause in England and elsewhere was *bad legislation*. Through Howard's influence, this bad legislation was in part corrected, and the injustice and cruelty resulting therefrom abolished. But under the Hebrew code, such injustice and cruelty were impossible. The Hebrews had no laws according to which human beings could be thus oppressed and abused. It is only within a recent period that the most enlightened nations have come up to the standard of justice and humanity presented in the Mosaic laws.

¹ Bayne's *Christian Life*, pp. 131-32.

But the political excellence of the Bible is not to be estimated merely from the institutes of Moses. The principles of benevolence, mercy, justice, and of human brotherhood, equality, and accountability, inculcated in the Psalms, Prophecies, Gospels, and Epistles, constitute an important part of the Political ethics of the Bible. The improvement of modern legislation consists mainly in the carrying out of these principles. When we take into consideration these principles, together with the whole teaching of the Bible so far as it influences government and legislation, we see *how greatly superior are the political ethics of the Bible* to those of the Grecians, of the Romans, and nations in general.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACTUAL INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE ON POLITICS.

THE political excellence of the Bible is farther seen, from its *actual influence on government and legislation*.

1. The Bible and Christianity exerted a powerful influence for good on legislation and politics during the first centuries. This is proved by the facts already cited in reference to the moral influence of the Bible during the same period.¹ Infanticide, the gladiatorial butcheries, neglect of marriage, concubinage, unlimited divorce, prostitution, and slavery were political and social, as well as moral evils; and the Bible and Christianity opposed them all, and against most of them waged an unrelenting war. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, began the work of conforming the laws of the empire to the Christian standard. Owing, however, to the force of custom and the prevalence of pagan sentiment, his enactments in many cases amounted perhaps to little more than an expression of Christian benevolence. But his successors, through the growing influence of Christianity, were enabled to accomplish the work which he inaugurated. Take as an illustration the

¹Part iii, ch. 4.

imperial legislation in regard to the power of fathers over their children, which according to the old Roman law extended to the selling of them as slaves, and the killing of them. This law was restricted before the establishment of Christianity; yet the killing of a child by its father was left unpunished. Constantine, in 318, declared it to be one of the greatest of crimes. Valentinian did the same in 374. Theodosius, in 391, decreed that children that had been sold as slaves by their fathers should be free; and Justinian, in 529, gave freedom to all exposed children.¹ Gibbon attributes the cessation of child-murders to the efforts of Valentinian and his colleagues.² The legislation of the Christian emperors was also opposed, though not so directly, to slavery. Constantine facilitated manumission; allowed it on the Sabbath; and empowered the clergy to emancipate their slaves by their own word, without legal formalities. By some of his successors emancipation was still further encouraged. Justinian abolished servitude as a punishment for crime; removed all the restraints that had been imposed on manumissions; elevated freedmen at once to the rank and rights of citizens; and in other ways promoted the liberation of slaves.³ Gibbon declares that the spirit of Justinian's laws promoted the extinction of domestic servitude. He further testifies that the custom of enslaving prisoners of war was totally extinguished in the thirteenth century, by the prevailing influence of Christianity.⁴ In regard to marriage and divorce, the laws fluctuated

¹Cod. Theod. ix. tit. 14-15; iii. 3, 1. ²Ch. 44. ³Cod. Jus. vii. 5-6. ⁴Milman's Gibbon, vol. 3. p. 602, *note*.

between the customs of the pagans and the teachings of the gospel. From the time of Constantine, concubinage was forbidden, and adultery was punished as a gross crime. The boundless liberty of divorce was abolished. Justinian even attempted to conform the laws to the demands of the church and the precepts of the gospel; but, through the influence of pagan custom and the laxity of public sentiment, he was compelled to allow divorces for other causes than conjugal infidelity.¹ Still, through the influence of Christianity the laws in regard to marriage and divorce were much improved. The skeptical historian states that the origin, validity, and duties of marriage were regulated by (what he calls) the tradition of the synagogue, the precepts of the gospel, and the canons of general and provincial synods; and that the 'Christian princes were the first who specified the just causes of a private divorce.'² So also the benign influence of Christianity was felt in the abolition of crucifixion as a punishment, the branding of criminals, and the gladiatorial games; in making public provision for the poor; and in reforming the laws in regard to many other matters. Gibbon testifies that 'a new spirit of legislation, respectable even in its error, arose in the empire with the religion of Constantine;' and that the laws of Moses were taken by the Christian princes as a guide in framing their penal statutes.³ In thus reforming the Roman jurisprudence, the Bible has exerted a powerful and beneficial influence on the legislation and politics of all Christendom.

¹Theod. Cod. iii. tit. 16; ix. tit. 7. ²Ch. 44. ³Ch. 44.

2. The political influence of the Bible at the time of the Reformation was great and beneficial. The truth of this proposition is demonstrated by the fact, that wherever the Reformation was not trammelled by princes and politicians, but was allowed to go its own way, there it produced order, justice, freedom, and prosperity in a good degree. The Reformation had its own way at Geneva. Calvin indeed believed in persecution, but he learned it from the age in which he lived, not from the Bible. It is common for a certain class of writers to sneer at him as narrow-minded and bigoted. But one whose judgment in such matters must be considered decisive, in defending the great reformer against the attacks of sectarians and witlings, speaks of him as follows: 'It is intolerance only, which would limit the praise of Calvin to a single sect, or refuse to reverence his virtues and regret his failings. * * * It is too true, the influence of an ancient, long established, hardly disputed error, the constant danger of his position, the intense desire to secure union among the antagonists of Popery, the engrossing consciousness that his struggle was for the emancipation of the Christian world, induced the great reformer to defend the use of the sword for the extirpation of heresy. Reprobating and lamenting his adherence to the cruel doctrine, which all Christendom had for centuries implicitly received, we may as republicans remember that Calvin was not only the founder of a sect, but foremost among the most efficient of modern republican legislators. More truly benevolent to the human race than Solon, more self-denying

than Lycurgus, the genius of Calvin infused enduring elements into the institutions of Geneva, and made it for the modern world the impregnable fortress of popular liberty—the fertile seed-plot of democracy. We boast of our common schools; Calvin was the father of popular education, the inventor of the system of free-schools. We are proud of the free States that fringe the Atlantic. The pilgrims were Calvinists; the best influence in South Carolina came from the Calvinists of France. William Penn was the disciple of the Huguenots; the ships from Holland that first brought colonists to Manhattan were filled with Calvinists. He that will not honor the memory and respect the influence of Calvin, knows but little of the origin of American liberty.¹

Such is the testimony which the historian Bancroft gives in regard to the character of Calvin as a statesman, and his important services and influence in behalf of popular rights, liberty, and education. How did Calvin attain to these advanced political views? He did not learn them from the age in which he lived, nor from ancient philosophers and statesmen. But he was a close student of the Bible. He imbibed its democratic spirit. He was taught by it that God is no respecter of persons, and that all men are on an equality before him. He learned from it the worth of man, individual responsibility, and that civil government is for the sake of the people. He was familiar with the political institutions of the Jews, and wished to see the main fea-

¹Bancroft's Misc. p. 405.

tures of their government reproduced in modern times—popular sovereignty, the principle of representation, the election of officers by the people, graded courts, and popular education. Calvin was in advance of his age as a legislator and statesman, simply because he was guided by the spirit and principles of the Bible.

In the Netherlands also, where the Reformation was untrammelled, we have another illustration of the beneficial influence of the Bible on politics. At first, indeed, the Provinces did not understand the religious rights of men. But they advanced from one step to another until they claimed freedom of conscience not only for themselves, but for all. When William was appointed sovereign of the land, he was directed to maintain 'the Reformed evangelical religion,' without permitting injury or hindrance to any man on account of his religion.¹ According to the union of Utrecht, every man was allowed to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. The Netherlanders, thus recognizing the religious rights of men, and animated by an ardent love of liberty, were prepared to dare and suffer in the cause of truth and humanity. For eighty years they struggled in deadly conflict with the most powerful empire on earth. The history of that dreadful struggle and its results are well known. Human freedom and rights were vindicated. The Dutch Republic, established in a mere hand-breadth of territory, became a great naval and commercial

¹ Motley, vol. 3, p. 59.

commonwealth, which girdled the earth with its dependencies, and for two hundred years was an illustrious example of human progress and national prosperity. For the origin of this republic, and for its powerful influence in behalf of human freedom and progress, the world is indebted to the Bible. The historian claims for it 'the same high, religious origin as that of our own commonwealth.'¹ The early reformers in the Provinces were generally Huguenots in belief, and the Netherland Protestants were characterized by the reverence and study of the Bible common among those of their faith. They loved it more than life. They were sustained by its doctrines and hopes on the scaffold and at the stake. Men took each other by the hand and walked into the flames, and women sang songs of triumph while their executioners were shovelling the earth upon their living faces. Preaching, praying, the singing of Psalms, and reading of the Scriptures, were daily employments. The Psalms translated by Marot were sung everywhere. The character of the Netherlanders who fought against tyranny and founded the Dutch Republic is exemplified in the Prince of Orange their leader. The historian says that his life was a noble Christian epic, and that he was more than anything else a religious man, his piety being the most prominent of his moral qualities. He bowed his noble mind submissively to the teachings of the Bible, and made it the guide of his life.

3. The Bible has also exerted a great influence

¹ Motley, vol. 3, p. 261.

in favor of freedom and good government in Great Britain. Hume, the enemy of Puritanism and of Christianity, admits that 'the precious spark of liberty was kindled and preserved by the Puritans alone;' and that 'to this sect the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.' The infidel historian further asserts that the attachment of the Puritans to liberty resulted from their religious views and practices. In the same way he accounts for what he calls the violent turn of the Scotch toward republicanism, and their zealous attachment to civil liberty. He remarks that the bold and daring spirit, which was manifested in the prayers of the English Puritans and Scotch Presbyterians, appeared in their political speculations; and that they used the same freedom in addressing their earthly sovereign as in addressing their Maker.¹ Hume's judgment in regard to these people is not altogether trustworthy. But his statements show that the most ardent lovers and earnest advocates of liberty in Great Britain, those to whom the English are indebted for the preservation of their rights and liberties, have been the greatest lovers and most diligent students of the Bible. It is a fact now generally conceded, that England under Cromwell and the Puritans was better governed and more respected than she had ever been before.

4. The Bible has exerted a powerful influence for good on society and government in the United States. The people who first settled in our country

¹ His. of England, ch. 41.

—those who laid the foundations of American society and government—were firm believers in the Bible. In speaking of the character of the colonists, Daniel Webster said; ‘They brought with them a full portion of all the riches of the past in science, in art, in morals, religion, and literature. The Bible came with them. And it is not to be doubted that to the free and universal reading of the Bible is to be ascribed, in that age, that men were indebted for right views of Civil Liberty.’

The first Congress manifested their appreciation of the Bible in a very decided way, ordering the committee on commerce, in 1777, to import, at the expense of Congress, twenty thousand English Bibles. Again in 1781, the importation of Bibles being entirely prevented by the existing war, the subject of printing the Bible was referred to a committee. This committee recommended to Congress an edition printed by Robert Aiken of Philadelphia; whereupon, the following resolution was adopted: ‘*Resolved*, That the United States in Congress assembled, highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aiken, as subservient to the interests of religion; and being satisfied of the care and accuracy of the execution of the work, recommend this edition to the inhabitants of the United States.’ It is true that there were some skeptics among the prominent men of the country. But the great majority of the prominent men and the great mass of the people were believers in Christianity, and lovers of the Bible. Even the infidel Paine, when endeavoring to revive the flagging spirits of the revolution-

ists, and urging them to persevere in the struggle for independence and liberty, wrote like a Christian. He appealed to the Bible to justify the cause in which they were engaged, and to stimulate their hopes and courage. In so doing, he recognized the powerful influence which the Bible had over the minds of the people, and virtually conceded that its teachings are favorable to liberty and human rights.

5. The influence of the Bible and Christianity in favor of freedom and political progress has been recognized by many of the most distinguished historians and jurists. The declarations of Hume in regard to the character and opinions of the Puritans, and their agency in preserving the liberties of the English people, are a virtual acknowledgment of the preservation of English independence and freedom through the influence of the Bible. It would seem that Hume had a grudge against independence and freedom because they had been so preserved. The following declaration of Bancroft is also an indirect recognition of the beneficial influence of the Bible on politics: 'An Augustine monk denouncing indulgences, introduced a schism in religion, and changed the foundations of European politics; a young French refugee, skilled in theology and civil law, in the duties of magistrates and the dialectics of religious controversy, entering the republic of Geneva and conforming its ecclesiastical discipline to the principles of republican simplicity, established a party of which Englishmen became members, and New England the asylum.'¹ It was by preaching

¹ Bancroft's Hist. of U. S. ch. 8.

the truths of the Bible, and persuading people to read it for themselves, that Luther and Calvin exerted so mighty an influence on the political as well as religious affairs of the world.

The comparison which Macaulay makes between Protestant and Roman Catholic countries, is an important testimony to the beneficial influence of the Bible on politics. In addition to the quotations heretofore made from his writings,¹ we present the following: 'It cannot be doubted, that since the sixteenth century, the Protestant nations—fair allowance being made for physical disadvantages—have made decidedly greater progress than their neighbors. The progress made by those nations in which Protestantism, though not finally successful, yet maintained a long struggle and left permanent traces, has generally been considerable. But when we come to the Catholic Land, to the part of Europe in which the first spark of reformation was trodden out as soon as it appeared, and from which proceeded the impulse which drove Protestantism back, we find at best a very slow progress, and on the whole a retrogression. Compare Denmark and Portugal. When Luther began to preach, the superiority of the Portugese was unquestionable. At present, the superiority of the Danes is no less so. Compare Edinburgh and Florence. Edinburgh has owed less to climate, to soil, and to the fostering care of rulers, than any capital, Protestant or Catholic. In all these respects Florence has been singularly happy.

¹ Part iii. ch. 4.

Yet whoever knows what Florence and Edinburgh were in the generation preceding the Reformation, and what they are now, will acknowledge that some great cause has, during the last three centuries, operated to raise one part of the European family, and to depress the other. Compare the history of England and that of Spain during the last century. In arms, arts, sciences, letters, commerce, agriculture, the contrast is most striking. The distinction is not confined to this side of the Atlantic. The colonies planted by England in America have immeasurably outgrown in power those planted by Spain. Yet we have no reason to believe that, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Castilian was in any respect inferior to the Englishman. Our firm belief is, that the North owes its great civilization and prosperity chiefly to the moral effect of the Protestant Reformation; and that the decay of the Southern countries of Europe is to be mainly ascribed to the great Catholic revival.¹ Those who with Ma-caulay believe that ‘reason and Scripture were on the side of Protestantism,’ must regard the facts presented by him as demonstrating the immense influence of the Bible in the promotion of political prosperity, as well as of intelligence and morality.

Chancellor Kent makes the following declaration: ‘The influence of Christianity was very efficient towards the introduction of a better and more enlightened sense of right and justice among the governments of Europe. It taught the duty of be-

¹ Essay on Ranke’s His. of the Popes.

nevolence to strangers, of humanity to the vanquished, of the obligation of good faith, and the sin of murder, revenge, and rapacity. The history of Europe during the early periods of modern history abounds with interesting and strong cases, to show the authority of the church over turbulent princes and fierce warriors, and the effect of that authority in meliorating manners, checking violence, and introducing a system of morals which inculcated peace, moderation, and justice.' * * Francis Bacon thought in this manner,—'The Christian religion is the chief band of society—there was never any philosophy, religion, or other discipline, which did so plainly and highly exalt the good which is communicative, and depress the good which is private and particular, as the Holy Faith.' Judge Story says; 'One of the beautiful traits of our municipal jurisprudence is, that Christianity is a part of the common law; from which it seeks its sanction of its rights, and by which it endeavors to regulate its doctrine. And, notwithstanding the specious objection of one of our distinguished statesmen, the boast is as true as it is beautiful. There has never been a period in which the common law did not recognize Christianity as lying at its foundation. For many ages it was almost exclusively administered by those who held its ecclesiastical dignities. It now repudiates every act done in violation of duties of perfect obligation. It pronounces illegal every contract offensive to its morals.'

The influence of Christianity on legislation and politics, as well as on individual character and the

affairs of private life, is described by Sir W. Jones as follows: 'We speak of our civilization, our arts, our freedom, our laws, and forget entirely how large a share is due to Christianity. Blot Christianity out of the pages of man's history, and what would his laws have been? what his civilization? Christianity is mixed up with our very being and our daily life; there is not a familiar object around us which does not wear a different aspect because the life of Christian love is in it—not a law which does not owe its gentleness to Christianity—not a custom which cannot be traced, in all its holy, healthful parts, to the gospel.'

The testimony of many other distinguished historians, jurists, and statesmen to the powerful influence of the Bible and Christianity in reforming and purifying politics and jurisprudence might be given. But we have presented enough to show that no book has exerted in this respect so powerful and beneficial an influence as the Bible.

CHAPTER V.

RECAPITULATION.

THE political excellence, then, of the Bible may be briefly summed up as follows:

1. *Its freedom from political errors.* It does not favor despotism, it discourages slavery, opposes monopolies, and forbids the infliction of cruel punishments. Such not only were the spirit and teachings of the Bible in general; but such also was the character of the Mosaic institutes, accommodated as to some extent they were, to the prejudices and peculiar circumstances of the Jews. For the times in which they originated, and in the particulars above mentioned, these institutes manifest a wisdom, equity, moderation, mildness, and catholic spirit that are truly remarkable.

2. *The positive characteristics of the Hebrew code, and the political ethics of the Bible.* The moral and theological truths which underlie the Mosaic political laws and are blended with them, and the principles they inculcate concerning the design and duties of civil government, and concerning qualifications for civil office, are most excellent. The excellence of these laws is farther seen, in the care they manifest for the poor and unfortunate; in the inculcation of a delicate and refined humanity; in providing for the

protection and welfare of foreigners, and in repressing national vanity. Still further, many of the provisions of the Mosaic code anticipate the more advanced political ideas of modern times—popular sovereignty, homestead-exemption, popular education, the check of public opinion on the government, the principle of representation, and general suffrage in the election of officers.

3. *Superiority to other codes.* The most celebrated codes of ancient times,—Spartan, Athenian, and Roman,—were vastly inferior; being characterized by exclusiveness, selfishness, oppression, cruelty, and by the encouragement of many of the greatest immoralities and barbarities. The superiority of the Hebrew code is especially conspicuous in its treatment of foreigners, the punishment of criminals, protection and emancipation of servants, its provisions concerning marriage and divorce, its care for widows and orphans, for strangers and the unfortunate, and in making all the people, both natives and foreigners, equal before the law. Even much of the legislation of modern times is vastly inferior to the Hebrew laws; as seen in the number of crimes made punishable with death, the imprisonment of debtors, and the treatment of accused persons. But in addition to this, the teachings of the Bible in regard to justice, mercy, and universal benevolence, and human brotherhood, equality, and accountability, place the political ethics of the Bible immeasurably above every other system.

4. *The actual influence of the Bible on politics.* It reformed the Roman laws. It made Calvin the

wisest statesman of his time, and Geneva the pattern and fortress of popular liberty. It originated the Dutch Republic, and constituted it one of the most remarkable examples of political progress and national prosperity in modern times. It animated the Puritans with the love of liberty, and made them the champions and preservers of the independence and rights of Englishmen. It laid the foundations of American society and of American freedom and progress. Its services in behalf of human rights and freedom, and in reforming and purifying jurisprudence and politics, have been recognized by many of the most distinguished historians, jurists, and statesmen.

Thus it is shown that the Bible contains not only the best literature, theology, and morality, but also the best political ethics the world has ever seen; and that it has done more than any book or collection of books, not only to elevate and enrich literature, reform the theological ideas and religious customs of mankind, and purify their morals; but also to enlighten them in regard to jurisprudence, and the design and duties of civil government. Such a book, originating in times of political ignorance, social barbarism, national antipathy, and despotic government, is indeed a wonderful production. The man or men who, thousands of years ago, established popular sovereignty, representative government, general suffrage, and the periodical emancipation of all bond-men in the land; asserted the universal brotherhood of men and made all classes, foreigners as well as home-born citizens, equal be-

fore the law; opposed the creation of privileged classes and monopolies; favored popular education; taught the true design and duties of civil government, and the worth and accountability of individual men; and enunciated those fundamental principles of public morality and justice which have made the Bible and Christianity the chief promoters of political progress and prosperity,—were far in advance of the world around them. The most advanced nations are now only just beginning to put *their* ideas into practice. It is for the infidel to explain how the writers of the Bible came to be in advance of all the world in political ethics, as well as in literature, morality, and theology.

PART V.

*MODES OF ACCOUNTING FOR THE
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PART V.

MODES OF ACCOUNTING FOR THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

INFIDEL THEORIES.

WE have demonstrated the political, literary, moral, and theological excellence of the Bible. How, then, are we to account for its origin? Is it merely a human—or rather, merely a Hebrew book? Were the Hebrew writers superior to all others in ancient and modern times? Whence that genius, wisdom, sagacity, and moral force which enabled them to create the best political ethics, the most beautiful and sublime literature, the truest theology, and the purest system of morals the world has ever seen? Every effect must have an adequate cause. The world was not created by mere men. Men have, indeed, achieved many great undertakings. But the sun, with his genial heat and glorious light; the midnight sky, lighted up with the stars; the earth, with its mountains and plains, streams and ever-tossing ocean; indicate the existence of a super-human power by which they were created. So we believe that the excellence of the Bible—its beauty, purity, power, grandeur, truthfulness, and blessed

influence—demonstrate that it could not have been originated by mere men, much less by the uncultivated Hebrew authors; but that its origin, like that of the grand and beautiful things of earth and heaven, is *supernatural* and *divine*.

Many theories, however, have been invented, to account for the merely human origin of the Bible.

1. One of the first theories invented for this purpose is, *that it is an imposture*—that its writers and compilers were guilty of deliberate fraud and falsehood. This is the theory advocated by Celsus and other ancient infidels, and by Voltaire in modern times. The *tendency* theory of F. C. Baur also involves the charge of contrivance, deception, and dishonesty. In opposition to this theory, we might, as has often been done, point to the character of the Bible itself—its simplicity, purity, earnestness, naturalness, and even its apparent discrepancies. Could, or would, impostors and liars write such a book? If any book in the world gives evidence that its author or authors were honest and truthful men, that book is the Bible. But this theory only sets in a stronger light the evidences of its supernatural origin. The question is, how did this wonderful book originate? The Christian maintains that God must have dictated it—that the Jewish authors were incapable of inventing it—that a book of such political, literary, moral, and theological excellence—the most eloquent, most sublime, most read, most loved, most powerful, and most excellent book in the world—could not have been originated by the unaided intellect of unlearned and bigoted Jews.

The infidel maintains that the unaided Jewish intellect did originate this wonderful production; and the theory under consideration asserts that its authors were not only unlearned and narrow-minded Jews, but also (as if to increase the wonder and mock credulity,) asserts that they were impostors and liars. If, indeed, the writers of the Bible were impostors and liars, we might reject its accounts of miracles and of its supernatural character as false. But the Bible itself is a fact whose existence cannot be denied; and the production of such a book—so simple, earnest, eloquent, powerful, and excellent—by rude, narrow-minded, selfish, lying, and knavish men, is a more stupendous miracle than itself records. Such men more than all others would need supernatural inspiration to enable them to write such a book. The theory, therefore, which represents the writers of the Bible as willful deceivers, only sets the impossibility of its merely human origin in a stronger light. This theory has, however, been abandoned by the majority of infidels; and it is now generally admitted by them that the whole Bible bears indubitable marks of honesty and earnestness, and that its penmen believed what they wrote.

2. Another theory advocated by some infidels is, that the gospels and other parts of the Bible are composed largely of *fictions*. Those who advocate this theory do not maintain that the Biblical penmen were either willful liars or crazy enthusiasts. It is admitted that their writings show that they were honest and truth-loving men. Yet it is maintained that large portions of their narratives are fictions—

that by a kind of pious fraud they relate events which they knew never took place, and assert as fact what they themselves did not believe. This theory is substantially the one which has just been noticed. If the evangelists and other writers of the Bible consciously dealt in *fiction*, they were not honest and truthful men. It is true a certain kind of fiction is consistent with honesty and veracity. Shakspeare's *Plays* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are in a certain sense fictitious. But the fictions which they contain are not *fraudulent*. They are not *intended* to deceive, and in fact do not deceive any intelligent reader. But the same cannot be said of the Bible narratives, if they are fictitious. For they are set forth as veritable history, and the great majority of Bible readers regard them as such. Evidently their authors wished them to be so regarded, and if they did not believe their own narratives, they were guilty of intentional fraud and falsehood.

But suppose that the Biblical naratives *are* fictions, and (a thing that seems altogether incredible,) that the writers of the Bible, though honest and truthful, did pen what they knew to be false,—the question still remains to be answered, how is the transcendent excellence of the Bible to be accounted for? Suppose that the accounts of the creation and of the giving of the law, of Ezekiel's vision, and of the birth, miracles, and resurrection of Christ, are fictions—suppose that the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Golden Rule are fictitious—suppose that all the prophets, teachers, evangelists, apostles, and heroes mentioned in the Bible

had no real existence—suppose that the whole Bible is a fiction—the question is, *how* was it invented? It originated among the Jews, an uncultivated, bigoted, narrow-minded people. A Jew, or rather many Jews were its authors. If they *invented* the Bible with all its literary, political, moral, and theological excellences, similar achievements are possible now. Then let some infidel, gifted, learned, and cultivated,—free, of course, from all ‘prejudice and superstition,’ and illuminated with all the wisdom of antiquity and the revelations of modern science,—invent something that will not be altogether unworthy of being compared with the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and the Sermon on the Mount—something that approaches the purity, beauty, and elevation of moral sentiment and depth of spiritual meaning contained in the Psalms, Gospels, and Epistles—something that will be read and admired and loved for its beauty and eloquence, and for its moral excellence and grandeur, by one-half or one-tenth the number of people that study and love and weep over the Psalms, the Book of Job, and the Gospels—let him collect from the literature of the world, ancient and modern, poetry, history, philosophy, jurisprudence, and oratory, all that he considers true and beautiful and good and grand—let him arrange, combine, condense, expand, curtail, and add at pleasure—let him thus produce a collection of writings which in the judgment of mankind will be anything like equal to the Scriptures in fullness of matter, richness of thought, and depth of meaning; in moral purity and power, and in literary beauty and sublimity;—and then perhaps it will not

be utterly preposterous to assert that all the beauties and excellences of that wonderful book were invented by the unaided intellect of secluded and semi-barbarous Jews.

But the theory we are considering leaves the question in regard to the origin of the Bible and Christianity altogether untouched. According to this theory, the infidel can set aside as untrue as much of the Bible history as he pleases, and thus can get rid of miracles and the supernatural character of Christ; but the question is, how could the Jews invent the advanced political ideas, the literary beauties and sublimities, and pure and faultless theology and morality of the Bible? How could the Jews—bigoted and exclusive beyond all nations known to history; actuated by the most inveterate prejudices and most inflexible fanaticism; and blindly attached to their own laws, customs, and superstitions—ascend to the moral grandeur, elevation of sentiment, catholic spirit, and purity of thought which characterize in some degree nearly all parts of the Bible, but especially the New Testament? How were they enabled to embody the most elevated moral sentiments in the most beautiful and sublime poetry, to express the grandest and most comprehensive truths in the simplest language, and give to the world a theology, a morality, a literature, and a system of political ethics so true, so good, so catholic in spirit, that the human race for eighteen hundred years (notwithstanding the efforts of infidels,) has persisted in believing that they came down from heaven? Purity and elevation of sentiment, chaste-

ness of style, and catholicity of spirit, characterize even those parts of the Bible which originated at a time when the Jewish nation had sunk to the depths of superstition and immorality. At the time the Gospels and Epistles were written, the Jews were actuated by national pride, sectarian bitterness, and cruel fanaticism. Hypocrisy, party-spirit, formalism, and selfishness were almost universally prevalent. Ceremonial distinctions, fanciful interpretations and wretched perversions of their more ancient writings, absurdities, and puerilities, were the intellectual food of the nation. It was in such an age that men, who, with one or two exceptions, were among the unlearned of the nation, wrote the Gospels and Epistles—productions having nothing in common with the spirit of the age, destitute of everything that could render them acceptable to the nation at large, and possessing almost every characteristic that would make them an object of dislike and hatred—productions free from all vulgarity, absurdity, and extravagance; denouncing national pride, prejudice, and fanaticism; exposing the prevailing hypocrisy and formalism; charging the nation with the blackest ingratitude and wickedness; and threatening the most dreadful punishments for their sins and crimes—productions severely chaste in style; abounding in the most noble sentiments and far-reaching thoughts; enjoining the purest morality the world has ever seen; and teaching a theology which human genius and learning and philosophy cannot improve. Those Galilean Jews;—among the most unlearned and despised of an unlearned and despised

nation; amid the corruption, hypocrisy, and fanaticism of the times; notwithstanding their national pride, and the prejudices of education and the influences of party-spirit and sectarian fury;—produced writings so beautiful, so grand, so truth-like, and so godlike, that the majority of enlightened people in all ages and countries have believed that not men but God was their author! The advocates of the theory under consideration cry out—fictions! but they fail to tell us how such men could invent *such* fictions. On this point they are wisely silent. As well might it be asserted that a rude, unlettered hod-carrier, or some half-savage, wrote Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Macaulay's *History of England*, as that the fishermen of Galilee invented the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, and Christ's farewell Address and parting Prayer. But it is the proposition that the life of Christ recorded by the Evangelists is a fiction, that demands the largest amount of credulity. It requires us to believe that four men, sincere and honest (for the theory we are considering concedes the sincerity and honesty of the New Testament writers,) agree together to create a fiction and to palm it off as true history—a very unlikely thing for *sincere* and *honest* men to do! They write four independent narratives, all fictitious, and in their artless simplicity insert in them several apparent discrepancies in order to allay suspicion, and present the appearance of truthfulness. How very prudent and sagacious those simple-minded men were! In order, however, as it were, to increase the difficulties of their undertaking and

challenge detection, they continually refer to contemporary persons and events, and commingle their fictions with current history so as to seem a part of it. As if to insure the rejection of their fictitious narratives, they ascribe to their hero such a character as was repulsive to their countrymen and to men in general. They attribute to him declarations which were insulting to Jewish pride and prejudice, and to the spirit of the age. As if to make the success of their undertaking utterly hopeless, they represent their hero as possessing a double character,—as taking part in the common affairs of life, and yet continually manifesting supernatural power by the utterance of mysterious words and the performance of miraculous deeds; as being the meekest and humblest of men, and yet as claiming and as entitled to unlimited and universal reverence and homage. Still farther, they undertake to portray him, not by ascribing to him particular traits of character, or asserting his freedom from infirmities and faults; not by words of praise;—but by narrating his acts and reporting his words. They endeavor to present him as a living reality by declaring what he said and did and suffered, and then leave their readers to form their own conclusions in regard to the excellence and consistency of his character. Yet in this stupendous undertaking (according to the theory which we are now discussing,) the evangelists have succeeded beyond all example; have palmed off on the world their fictions as true history—a thing which no writer or writers before or since have ever been known to succeed in doing. Those *artless* and

honest men in cunning and contrivance have beat the world! In spite of their ignorance and honesty, they have so cunningly wrought fiction and history together, inter-weaving facts and fancies, natural events and miracles, in the most seemingly-simple, yet in reality the most cunningly-contrived narratives; have written different and independent narratives so apparently contradictory and yet really so consistent and truth-like, in opposition to their own inveterate prejudices and those of their age and nation; have conceived and described so lofty an ideal of moral excellence, exemplifying it in a character more amiable, great, and glorious than any poet or historian has ever conceived or described—a character which was despised and rejected of men at first, but which the world has since learned to admire and worship; have so artfully blended together in one imaginary person the earthly and the heavenly, manhood and Godhead, and have wrought human words and actions and mysterious, unearthly incidents into such an exquisite harmony; have attributed to their imaginary hero words and actions so human and yet so God-like; have put into his mouth utterances at once so simple and grand, truths far-reaching and all-embracing, incomprehensible by the Jewish mind, but worthy of the Son of God; have represented this great and glorious character so uniformly consistent with itself in every posture and attitude, and in all places, and under all circumstances; and have portrayed it in narratives so adapted to every language and nation and kindred on earth;—that enlightened people in general, during eighteen centuries, have

firmly believed in the Gospels as veritable history, and thousands of men and women have gone to the scaffold and the stake rather than deny the person whose words and actions they record!

If the Gospels are fictions, there are several things which are altogether unaccountable. (1) The unparalleled audacity of the undertaking. (2) The inconsistency of the falsehood and deception involved in it with the admitted honesty and sincerity of the writers. (3) Their accumulation of difficulties and their needless exposure of their work to various tests, as if to court detection and insure defeat. (4) The unparalleled success of the imposture—fictitious narratives becoming more real, and being more read, admired, and loved than any true history, or than any other writings whatever—a fictitious character, the book-portrait of an imaginary person becoming an ever present reality through century after century to millions and millions of hearts, and exerting a more enduring and powerful influence than any real hero, reformer, or man of genius! (5) The dignity and simplicity of the style of these writers—their freedom from vulgarity, exaggeration, and absurdity—the unique, lovely, and sublime character of their feigned hero—his uniform consistency, his god-like actions, his profound utterances, his noble sentiments—his scattering out conceptions, truths, and precepts so sublime, and yet clothed in language so simple and graceful—conceptions, truths, and precepts incomprehensible by the Jewish mind, but suitable to the supposed character of Jesus as the Son of God—the whole being the invention of ignorant and big-

oted Jews, rude fishermen and tax-gatherers! Well did the infidel Rousseau in view of these things exclaim, 'Fictions are not so made. * * * * It is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the gospel. The marks of its truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.'¹ Renan declares that 'Jesus, far from having been created by his disciples, appears in all things superior to his disciples;' and that 'The evangelists themselves, who have given to us the portrait of Jesus, are so far below him, that they constantly disfigure him because they cannot attain his height.'² The audacity of this author in claiming to know more of Jesus than the evangelists, though knowing nothing of him but what they relate, needs no comment. Yet he recognizes and clearly presents the inability of the evangelists to invent the character of Christ and the gospel history. Theodore Parker has said, 'It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus.' Other testimonies drawn from infidel sources might be presented, in regard to the impossibilities and absurdities involved in the theory of fiction as applied to the origin of the gospels and of Christianity. This theory is satisfactory to but very few of the opponents of divine inspiration.

¹ Emile, livre iv. ² Vie de Jesus, ch. 28.

3. *The mythical theory.* This theory is not very different from the one that has just been considered. The points of difference are two. The theory of fiction supposes *conscious* invention on the part of the originators of the gospel history, while the mythical theory supposes *unconscious* invention. The former attributes the invention to the sacred historians themselves, while the latter represents the early followers of Jesus—the men, women, and children that constituted the first Christian community—as furnishing the stories or tales which the evangelists compiled into something like methodical narratives. According to this latter theory, the so-called facts of the Gospel history originated in the imagination of the primitive Christians. Thus the declaration of Isaiah that ‘a virgin should bring forth a son’ is supposed to have been the foundation of the *myth* concerning the miraculous birth of Christ; and the Old Testament account of the healing of Naaman the Syrian to have suggested the healing of ten lepers by Christ. The restoring of the widow’s son to life, and the ascent of Elijah to heaven, are supposed to have originated the story of Christ’s resurrection and ascension. Thus the gospel narratives are supposed to be made up largely of *myths*, ideas, and imaginations, clothed in stories unconsciously manufactured and believed in by the inventors as realities. The supposition is that the authors, like children whose feelings are controlled by their own imaginations, believed, or came to believe, the stories which they themselves fabricated. The design of this theory is, of course, to get rid of the miracles

recorded in the New Testament; but to do it without impeaching its authors of falsehood and deception. The accounts of miracles are declared to be myths—idle tales indeed—but the authors of them are supposed to have invented them unconsciously, and the evangelists are supposed to have recorded them in good faith as historical verities. This theory, however, is obnoxious to nearly all the objections that bear with such irresistible force against the theories of imposture and of fiction, and to some that are peculiar to itself. (1) One of the objections of the latter class is, that there was not sufficient time for the formation of what the advocates of this theory call the *myths* of the Gospel. Mythologies are in one sense inventions, but in another they are not; they are not properly *invented*; they *grow*. But the Gospel *mythology* sprang up at once. It was formed (or invented, according to the theory under consideration,) between the time of Christ's death and the end of the first half of the first century. For Christians were burnt at Rome and elsewhere for believing it, about A. D. 60.¹ If we allow twenty years for the propagation of Christianity after its origin, there will be left but a few years for the formation of what some infidels call the myths of the New Testament. Can any intelligent man believe that any mythology ever sprang up in ten, twenty, or thirty years? Can even the credulity of skeptics entertain the notion that the Christian system,—including the doctrines of the incarnation,

¹ Tacitus.

atonement, resurrection, ascension, the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and the various accounts of miracles recorded in the Gospels, constituting a stupendous mythology, if a mythology at all,—grew up in a natural way between the time of Christ's death and that of the destruction of Jerusalem, or of the propagation of Christianity at Rome and elsewhere? (2) But in the second place, the inventors of *mythology* work out results in accordance with their own prepossessions and prejudices. The Greek mythology is elegant and seductive, revealing the peculiarities and proclivities of the Grecian mind. The Hindu mythology is gigantic, confused, and contradictory, partaking of the peculiarities of the Hindu mind and thought. But the Gospels bear no traces of Jewish prejudices and errors. The very miracles, the accounts of which the advocates of the mythical theory endeavor to discredit, were designed to overthrow Jewish prejudice and to humble Jewish pride. How did the Jews (for the first Christians were Jews,) come to form myths and narratives which were directly contrary to their most cherished opinions and their national pride, and which accused them of the most detestable ingratitude and the blackest crimes? How did the men, women, and children, that constituted the first Christian community, and that are represented as the makers of the gospel myths, come to get rid of all their prepossessions and prejudices? The truth is that the mythical theory inverts the order of things—in familiar phrase, puts the cart before the horse. It supposes that there were Christians before Christianity—be-

lievers in Christ before Christ was made known. It virtually asserts that there were believers in Christ before there was a Christ to believe. (3) History shows that mythology springs up and spreads only in ages of barbarous ignorance. It may be said, indeed, that the Jews were barbarous enough in the first century to form *myths*; but how is the dissemination of their myths to be accounted for? Christianity spread rapidly among all the civilized nations, in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Why did the most intelligent portion of mankind receive the Gospel as true history, and its doctrines and miracles set forth in them as real facts? Myths diffuse themselves, as well as originate, only among barbarians,—which the Greeks, Romans, and many other nations were not in the first century. (4) But the objection which mainly concerns us at present is, that this theory does not account and does not pretend to account for the unparalleled excellence of the New Testament writings. We ask, how could mere men, unlearned and prejudiced Jews, *invent* the great truths presented in the Gospels and Epistles? and we are told in answer that they contain *myths*. If we say that their chasteness of style, sublime eloquence, and elevation of moral sentiment indicate that they must have had a higher source than the unaided intellect of rude fishermen, the reply is; ‘O yes, the writers were only compilers; they only collected and arranged myths and stories that were floating in the minds of thousands of people.’ If we ask how the *multitude* could furnish the pure and elevated thoughts, the far-reaching truths, and sub-

lime utterances of the New Testament, we are told that 'the accounts of miracles are certainly mythical.' Thus the mythical theory fails to account for the unparalleled excellence of the New Testament writings. The Sermon on the Mount, even if it was never delivered, is not a myth. The Golden Rule is not a myth. The *description* of Christ's character, though the character itself were ideal, is not a myth. His farewell Address and parting Prayer are not myths. The New Testament with its beauty, pathos, eloquence, pure morality and theology, and all its excellences,—is not a myth, but a reality. It originated among the Jews. The question is, how did it originate? How were its authors enabled to ascend so far above their own level, and to reach a height which has been reached by no other men before or since? If its reputed authors were mere compilers, and if its real authors were a great multitude of people, poor unlearned men and women,—how were they enabled to conceive so great and glorious a character as that of Jesus; and to attribute to him so noble and lofty sentiments and so godlike a life and death? No solution of this problem is offered by the mythical theory.

But this theory never was accepted by many skeptics, and now seems to be abandoned by nearly all. Theodore Parker ridiculed Strauss's work in which it is elaborately advocated. After remarking that it is wonderful that some of the absurdities of the theory have not struck the author himself, and that it is doubtful whether there was genius enough in the first two centuries, or the first twenty since

Christ, to devise such a character as Christ's with so small a historical capital as Strauss leaves, he says, that 'Strauss takes the subject, as he thinks, of a Christian myth out of the air, and then tells us how the myth itself grew out of that idea.' He further says, that according to this method half of Luther's life might be resolved into a series of myths; and that the history of the United States might be called a tissue of mythical stories, borrowed in part from the Old Testament, in part from the Apocalypse, and in part from fancy. He says that the *Leben Jesu* reminds one of the ridiculous prediction mentioned by Jacobi, 'that our world will become by and by so fine that it will be as ridiculous to believe in a God as it now is to believe in ghosts; and then again the world will become still finer, knowledge will undergo its last metamorphosis, and then men will believe in nothing but ghosts, and will be as God. They shall know that Being and Essence are and can be only ghosts. At that time reason will have completed her work, humanity will have reached its goal, and a crown will adorn the head of each transfigured man.'¹ It is thus that Parker (who gained whatever reputation he had, mainly by the reproduction of the ideas of German rationalists) wrote concerning the mythical theory as presented by its ablest advocate. Though at least partly believing in it himself, he treated the *Leben Jesu* as an object of ridicule; thus indicating that his American *common sense* appreciated the absurdities which the mythi-

¹ Parker's Misc. Writings, pp. 335-36.

cal theory involves, or to which it necessarily leads. A theory the full development of which was thus received by Parker and other men of similar views with shouts of laughter, will in a short time be abandoned altogether. Even Strauss himself has already virtually abandoned it. In his *Life of Jesus for the German People*,¹ he represents the originators of the Gospels—not as artless, enthusiastic devotees, mistaking fiction for fact, and representing their own fancies in good faith as real events,—but as the conscious fabricators of false narratives, and as designing theologians endeavoring to accomplish their purposes by artifice and fraud. He thus abandons the mythical theory and goes back to the theories of fiction and imposture.

4. *The legendary theory.* Very similar to the mythical theory is that of Renan. Though his theory has been called legendary, it might better be called *romantic*. Admitting the real existence of Christ and his immense superiority, and conceding that all the books of the New Testament were written before the close of the first century (not more than sixty years after his death,) his so-called life of Christ reads more like a fairy-tale than true history. According to this author, Jesus lived in a sort of magic world. Galilee was a most glorious country, beautiful in its scenery, garnished with flowers, and fanned with delightful breezes. The women, especially those of Nazareth, were handsome and affable. The beasts and birds were remarkable for their gen-

¹ *Das Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk.*

tleness and beauty. The turtle-doves were lively and graceful. The storks had a grave and modest air. The blue-birds were so small as not to bend a blade of grass with their weight. The little brook-turtles had quick soft eyes. The very mules had large black eyes shaded with long lashes. Jesus himself was gifted with infinite charms of person and speech; and by means of these external advantages delighted and captivated the people. He was a favorite especially among his fair country-women, who rivaled one another in their affectionate esteem and devotion, and in listening to him and serving him; and one of whom, named Mary of Magdala, was cured of nervous diseases by his pure and gentle beauty. Thus surrounded with beauty and delight, Jesus lived as in an earthly paradise; and as he traversed Galilee on a fine black-eyed mule, enjoyed a perpetual holiday.¹ Such is a specimen of Renan's *Life of Jesus*. In it romance and conjecture are predominating elements. In the end it will be regarded on all hands, yea is now regarded, as one of the many abortive attempts to account for the Christian literature, morality, and religion, as the natural production of the human mind. Even skeptics speak of it with contempt. The *Westminster Review* declares that it is a wonder how Renan 'can cheat himself into the idea that his picture is anything more than a dream.'² His theory founded on assumption and conjecture, and recommended by little else than a romantic and brilliant style of thought and dic-

¹Chs. 2, 9, 10. ²Oct. 1866, p. 148.

tion, needs no refutation. This unsuccessful effort is but another proof that the origin of the Bible and Christianity cannot be solved on infidel principles.

5. *Gibbon's account of the propagation of Christianity.* This celebrated historian does not pretend to treat of the *origin* of the Bible and Christianity; but he evidently wishes to insinuate that they were originated by mere men. Beginning after apostolic times, he treats professedly of the success of Christianity; which he attributes to five secondary causes. But none of these causes had in reality anything to do in *originating* Christianity, and some of them hindered its subsequent success. The first cause he mentions is, 'the inflexible and intolerant zeal of the early Christians.' The intolerance of Christianity (by which is meant its refusal of alliance with other religions, and its demand for their complete abandonment,) could hardly have recommended it to pagans and polytheists; and certainly does not in any degree account for its *origin*. Christianity existed before there were any Christians to be intolerant. The second cause assigned for the success of the Gospel is, 'the doctrine of a future life.' But how could the denunciation of everlasting fire as a punishment, not only for flagrant crimes, but also for pride, selfishness, and godless pleasures, and the promise of nothing in the future world but pure and spiritual delights as a reward for faith and holiness in this life—how could such teachings as these recommend Christianity to people who were characterized by the love of worldly and sensual pleasures? But even if the doctrine of a future life did promote

the success of Christianity in the first centuries, the statement of this fact gives us no information concerning its origin. The third cause which Gibbon mentions is, 'the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive Church.' *Real* miracles would of course promote the growth of the church. But pretended miracles were doubtless in the mind of the historian, and it is at least questionable whether a *pretense* of this or any other kind could be of any real advantage. But we have as yet no light thrown upon the *origin* of Christian doctrine. The church, of course, existed before miraculous powers were ascribed to her, and Christianity existed before the church. 'The pure and austere morals of the Christians' are assigned as the fourth cause of the rapid progress of Christianity. It is, again, questionable whether this cause accelerated or retarded the progress of Christianity among the immoral and pleasure-loving peoples embraced within the Roman empire during the first and second centuries. But at all events Christianity existed before it was recommended by the moral purity of its adherents. The fifth and last cause assigned is, 'the union and discipline of the Christian republic.' But this cause, like some of the preceding, though it may have contributed to the increased success of Christianity, had nothing to do in originating it. Thus the historian fails to tell us anything as to how Christianity got its start in the world. He does indeed say, willingly or unwillingly, sincerely or insincerely, that the victory of Christianity over the established religions of the earth was owing 'to the convincing evidence of the

doctrine itself, and the ruling providence of its great Author.' But, aside from the admission implied in calling God the author of Christianity, the historian says nothing about its origin. His five 'secondary causes' are all the accompaniments or results of a religion already in rapid progress. He tells us that 'a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men;' but says nothing as to *whence* it came, or *how* it came, except that *God is its Author*. No intelligent man will refer to the 15th chapter of Gibbon as giving a satisfactory account, or an account at all, of the origin of the Bible and Christianity.

CHAPTER II.

INFIDEL THEORIES CONTINUED—FACTS AND CONSIDERATIONS FURTHER ILLUSTRATING THEIR INSUFFICIENCY.

THE insufficiency of the infidel theories to account for the origin of Christianity is shown by their statement, but may be further illustrated by several facts and considerations.

1. In the first place, infidels do not grapple with the whole difficulty. Their efforts are mainly directed to reconcile what they claim to be false accounts of miracles in the New Testament with the apparent candor of the writers. They endeavor to tell how the *stories* concerning Christ's supernatural birth and character, his working miracles, and his resurrection and ascension, originated. They concern themselves mainly with the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles; and only with these so far as they bring to view the supernatural element. But even if they *could* explain the supposed falsehood in the accounts of miracles, and reconcile the claims of Christ and the excellence of his character and teaching with his mere humanity, they have a stupendous difficulty to encounter in the unparalleled excellence of the Biblical writings in general. Let the reader bear in mind what has been demonstrated in regard

to the political, literary, moral, and theological excellence of the Bible considered as a whole, and in regard to its influence over the minds and affairs of men. How could rude, bigoted, narrow-minded Jews produce books so free from extravagance and absurdity, so consistent with science, so true to universal nature and to man, so full of grand and beautiful conceptions, so catholic in spirit;—books that embody all the true morality and theology in the world, and not only have become the standard for the world in morals and religion, but are also studied as specimens of poetic beauty and sublimity, and as models of style;—books the most read, admired, loved, quoted, imitated, and plagiarized of any in the world; and that are so substantial in their excellence, that they may without serious detriment be translated into any language, and are at home in every country and in every clime;—books that have enriched and ennobled all modern literature, and that exert a controlling influence over the thoughts and feelings of men;—how was it, and whence was it, that such authors wrote such books? The theory that they were impostors, or that they consciously dealt in fiction—the mythical or legendary theory—if substantiated, would enable us to treat any of their historical statements as either true or false, at pleasure; and thus to reject their accounts of miracles. But *the miracle of the book itself* would still be left on our hands, and would be rendered all the more remarkable and striking by the way in which its own accounts of miracles had been set aside.

2. In proposing and advocating their theories,

infidels pursue a very arbitrary, inconsistent, and illogical course. They can reject the miracles recorded in the Bible only by impeaching the character of its writers as historians. Yet, though denying their historical veracity, they accept much on their testimony alone. These infidel theorists declare one passage in the Gospels inaccurate; another untrue; another incredible. They charge the evangelists with inventing or recording lies, fictions, myths, legends. If this charge be true, the evangelists are altogether untrustworthy as historians, and we should believe nothing on their testimony alone. The witness who is proved to have testified falsely in one case, is declared incompetent, and is ordered out of court. Yet skeptical writers accept as true much of the gospel history. In order to set aside the accounts of miracles, they represent its writers as untrustworthy; yet they claim to know much about matters treated of by no other historians. Now, we have the very same kind and degree of evidence that Christ wrought miracles, and that he himself rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, as that there was ever such a person in existence. If infidels, in endeavoring to eliminate the supernatural element from the Gospels, should succeed in proving that impostures, fictions, 'tendency-writings,'¹ myths, legends, are recorded in them as veritable history, the character of their authors as historians would be completely destroyed, and in that case we could know nothing and should believe

¹ *Tendenz-schriften.*

nothing concerning the work and character of Christ. Indeed in that case it would be doubtful whether such a person ever existed. This fact is recognized sometimes by skeptical writers. One of this class declares in substance, that if the miracles of the Gospels are to be thrust aside as incredible, it follows irresistibly that the credit of the Gospels is in every respect gone, and it argues an *unbounded credulity*, if we accept particular details as historical without corroborative evidence from other witnesses known to be contemporary. He further says, that as the state of things is not much more satisfactory in the Acts of the Apostles, we cannot be said to know any more of the first preachers of Christianity than of its founder.¹ But this 'unbounded credulity' is exhibited by skeptical writers in general. They write biographies of Jesus, of whom according to their own showing they know nothing, and in support of their theories and speculations cite witnesses whose testimony they continually impeach. Scarcely any two of them agree as to how much of the Gospels is to be accepted as historical and how much is to be rejected as imposture, fiction, and legend. Yet each one advocates his own views as if nothing but prejudice, ignorance, or obstinate stupidity could withhold assent. Thus inconsistency, assumption, dogmatism, and—to use the phrase of the writer quoted above—'unbounded credulity,' characterize the reasoning of the infidel theorists in general.

3. As we have already shown, infidels not only

¹ Westminster Review, Oct. 1866, pp. 148-151.

differ in regard to the character of the Gospels, but also in regard to their origin. One class maintains, or rather *did* maintain (for their theory is almost entirely abandoned,) that they originated in imposture and fraud, that they contain palpable lies, and that their authors were knaves and liars. But another class of infidels declare that this theory is entirely too gross and vulgar, and that writings so pure and elevated could not have been produced by base or bad men. This class maintains that, though honest and candid, they invented and recorded fictions, asserting as true and real what they knew to be false, and practising deception for pious purposes. But neither is this theory satisfactory to the majority of infidels. Indeed, only a few rely on it as explaining the origin of the Gospels. Hence the mythical theory has been started, acquitting the writers of intentional fraud and of conscious invention, but representing them as the compilers of fictions and stories unconsciously wrought out by others. This theory asserts the Gospels to be a conglomeration of facts and fictions, unconscious inventions, and an uncertain amount of historical verity—a sort of deposit from the debris of Jewish history, fancy, and floating tradition. But even this theory has but few advocates. Its greatest champion has virtually repudiated it, and gone back to the older theory of conscious invention, which he advocates under the new name. The legendary theory has but one advocate—its romantic founder. It is thus that theory after theory is proposed to show that the Bible and Christianity are merely human, or rather Jewish productions.

It is thus that infidels oppose and demolish each other's theories. Every little while a theory is started that is welcomed by infidels as settling the whole question; but it is soon displaced by another, that lives its short day, and then gives place to a third. The writings of the Tyndal and Morgan school are now obsolete, and would be almost unknown, but for the accounts of them in Leland's *View of Deistical Writers*. The majority of educated infidels are ashamed of such writers as Voltaire, Bolingbroke, and Paine. Strauss sets aside the theory that the evangelical writers were guilty of contrivance and intentional deception. Baur, under the name of *tendency-theory*, renews and advocates the charge of contrivance and intentional deception. Strauss yields to his stronger rival, and under the *name* of the mythical theory revives the stale charge of fiction and fraud. Parker ridicules and laughs at Strauss. Renan deviates from them all. The Westminster Review denounces the assumptions, dogmatism, and inconsistency of Renan; and exposes his 'unbounded credulity.' And this infidel journal stultifies itself by speaking at one time of the fascinating character—the solemn grandeur—and elevating, enriching, guiding, glorious career of the Saviour while on earth;¹ and by asserting at another, that the gospel narratives are not trustworthy; and that we cannot be said to know anything either of the Founder or the first preachers of Christianity. It thus contradicts itself, and subjects itself to the charge of *boundless*

¹ April, 1863, p. 269.

credulity which it fastens upon Renan. Thus infidels have done, and are doing, little but demolishing each other's theories. Their writings and conjectures remind us of the Bible account of the slaughter of the Philistines by Jonathan and his armor-bearer: —'Behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another.'¹ Hence we think Christianity has nothing to fear from the multiplication of infidel books. They but contradict and refute one another. It is the mercenary and materialistic spirit of the age, and its selfishness and frivolity, rather than the theories and argumentation of infidels, that resist the influence of the Bible, and retard the progress of Christianity. Infidelity by its assumptions, dogmatism, inconsistencies, contradictions, and 'boundless credulity,' will work its own cure in earnest and reflective minds; while the transcendent excellence of the Bible above all other books will ensure the recognition of its supernatural origin and divine authority.

¹ 1 Sam. 14: 16.

CHAPTER III.

THE INFIDEL ASSUMPTION THAT MIRACLES ARE INCREDIBLE.

THE abstract impossibility of miracles is asserted by few if any intelligent men who believe in the existence of God. It would take an irreverent and daring man, or a very ignorant one, to assert that the Almighty *cannot* work a miracle. It is a dictate of common sense that the Infinite Being, who created the heavens and earth, can arrest the sun and moon in their course, and change the motion of the earth. He, who creates the human body and soul, certainly has power to reanimate a human body,—to replace the soul in a body from which it has been removed by death. The almighty Creator,—who knows all the bones, muscles, veins, arteries, nerves, and all the organs, vessels and tissues of the human body, and all the diseases to which they are subject,—certainly has the power instantaneously to cure every such disease. For aught that men on earth can know, there may be in some of the starry worlds intellectual beings whom God by his infinite power might transport to earth as messengers of his will. Who will assert that God has not the power to transport a human being alive to some of the planets or fixed stars, and to bring him back again

to earth? He who believes that there is a God in heaven must admit that such things are possible with God, and therefore must admit the abstract possibility of miracles. God, who is a supernatural Being, possesses supernatural power, and can, if he chooses, *do* supernatural things.

But infidels seldom deny the abstract possibility of miracles. They generally assert only that 'miracles are incredible, if not impossible.' Tacitly or expressly admitting their abstract possibility, they roundly assert their *incredibility*. But the possibility of miracles demonstrates their credibility. A possible thing is a thing that *may be* or *may take place*. An incredible thing is a thing that *cannot be believed*. If a man admits that a thing is possible, he admits that he believes that it may be, or may take place. To say that a thing is possible but not credible, is virtually to say that though a thing *may* take place, it is impossible to *believe* that it may take place! To assert that miracles, although possible, are not credible, is virtually to assert that though a miracle may take place, no one can *believe* that a miracle can take place. Hence the possibility of miracles demonstrates their credibility. Indeed, it seems strange that any man who knows anything about human history, or the religious opinions of mankind, should assert that miracles are incredible; that is, that it is impossible to believe in them. For the majority of men in all ages have believed in them. The Egyptians, Hebrews, Hindus, Persians, Chinese, Greeks, Romans, Arabians, and every nation and race known to us in history have believed

in them. The supernatural is the basis of every system of religion known among men. Every religion,—Christianity, Judaism, Paganism, Moham-medism, down to Fetichism,—assumes or asserts the reality of miracles. Infidelity, which rejects the reality and credibility of miracles, is not a religious system, but a mere negation. This fact of the almost universal belief in miracles, gives the lie to the assumption that miracles are *incredible*. Is it not strange that an intelligent man should assert that miracles are incredible, while all history demonstrates that nearly all mankind have believed in them? It is not strange that an honest man should assert that a thing is incredible—cannot be believed—while he is making an effort to destroy a widespread belief in that thing? ‘Miracles are incredible—they cannot be believed,’ cries the infidel; while his regret is that a very large portion of mankind have actually believed, and, notwithstanding all his efforts, continue to believe in the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures, and the supernatural events recorded in them!

Even if the infidel should assert that miracles are incredible by *philosophic* and *educated* minds, his assertion would be manifestly false. Jesus of Nazareth, Paul, John, Isaiah, David, Moses, and others of the Biblical writers,—who had something better than modern education and philosophy, and have given to the world the most sublime literature, morality, and theology ever known among men,—believed in miracles. The greatest poets, historians, philosophers, and statesmen among the ancient hea-

then believed in miracles. Augustine, Athanasius, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Pascal, Fenelon, Wesley, Hall, Chalmers, Mason, Edwards, and other theological chiefs,—who had the most gifted and best educated minds of their age,—believed in miracles. Bacon, Newton, Locke, Milton, Grotius, and other giants in literature and science, believed in miracles. Indeed, the majority of learned men, and the overwhelming majority of enlightened people that have lived and died during eighteen hundred years, have believed in the very miracles which the infidel wishes especially to disprove—the supernatural inspiration of the Bible, and the supernatural character of Jesus. These miracles are yet believed by a very large number of the educated and enlightened portion of mankind now living in this latter half of the nineteenth century. It is not true that educated minds cannot believe in miracles. The assumption that they are incredible is manifestly and glaringly false. The assertion indicates a want either of consideration or candor. Nor is this the only instance of infidel persistence in assumptions and assertions to which history, observation, and experience give the lie. Miracles, then, are both possible and credible. God can, by his infinite power, perform miracles; and hence they are possible. Since they are possible, they are not altogether incredible. They are shown to be credible, that is, *believable*, by the fact that they have been believed by nearly all men in all ages.

Miracles are believed; but *ought* they to be believed? The *reality* of miracles is the main question.

We assert that all men except thorough-going atheists, do believe in their reality. Hume, Voltaire, and Rousseau so believed. Strauss, Renan, the Westminster Reviewers, and the many skeptical writers who assume with so much assurance and dogmatism the incredibility of miracles, do after all believe in them. We do not assert that they believe in the Christian miracles—the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures, the supernatural character of Christ, and his resurrection and ascension. But they believe in other miracles. A miracle is a supernatural event, something *above or beyond nature and its laws*. (1) The class of writers to whom we now refer have much to say about *the laws of nature*. But the existence of the laws of nature implies a supernatural power which established them. There can be no law without a lawgiver. A law neither establishes itself nor executes itself. The establishment, then, of what are called ‘the laws of nature’ is something above nature; and the intelligent thinker who believes in the *laws of nature* must believe in *supernaturalism*. (2) Most people who believe in the existence of God, believe in his superintending Providence. Voltaire often speaks of ‘Divine Providence,’ even in his attacks on Christianity.¹ Gibbon attributes the success of Christianity partly to ‘the ruling providence of its great Author.’² Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and the best of the heathen philosophers, acknowledged an over-ruling Providence. Such we understand to be the belief of all intelligent theists.

¹Phil. Dict. Art. *Christianity*. ²Chap. 15.

Now, Divine Providence *is above nature*, and whoever believes in the former believes in the *supernatural*. It matters not, so far as the present argument is concerned, whether the skeptic believes in a Providence that is universal and minute, or only *general*. We may allow him to get very low down in his ideas on this subject. If he does not believe that God, after creating the universe, entirely abandoned it, and that it is now in reality without a ruler and without a God—if he does not believe that the Creator, after starting the universe, left it to run on forever of itself, and that it does not need even so much as to be wound up like a watch—if he believes that God now exercises any care over his creatures, or has now anything to do with the works of his hands—if he believes that God puts forth any power or energy in the production or direction of the earthquake, storm, and pestilence, in the rise and fall of nations and empires, or in any of the momentous affairs of the universe;—if he believes in a superintending Providence at all, he believes in supernaturalism—something *above nature*. (3) The creation of all things out of nothing is a miracle—a most stupendous miracle—in which nearly all men believe. We are not aware that any skeptics now maintain the eternity of the universe. Many of them admire the opening declaration of the Bible as sublime and true. All of them so far as we know, admit the stupendous fact of the Creation. Some of them maintain ‘the development theory.’ A few of them go perhaps as far as Darwin; who advances the opinion that the various

races of animals and plants have been *developed* from four or five, or probably from one primordial form;¹ that men, asses, kangaroos, and rattlesnakes have a common progenitor; and that the bear, by swimming much in the water with open mouth, was, by slight changes, gradually continued generation after generation, metamorphosed into the whale; and that all animals with tails formerly lived in the water and used their tails to steer by in swimming; and that even man was once a water animal that 'swam the ocean stream,' but afterward came out on land and lost all the organs and appendages which then ceased to be useful. But even Mr. Darwin does not exclude the idea of creation and of the supernatural. He does not represent the one primordial form, from which he supposes all plants and animals to have descended, as *creating itself*; but as *being created*. He also speaks of 'the laws impressed on matter by the Creator.'² It is thus seen that 'the development hypothesis'—carried to the very verge of atheism—still of necessity admits the idea of the *supernatural*: that 'primordial form,' monad, triad, pentad, or whatever it may be imagined to have been, did not create itself. The laws which were impressed upon it, and according to which it began to 'develop' itself into all kinds of plants and animals, did not establish themselves. That starting point of the universe implies an act of creation. Those laws imply a law-giver. Skeptical speculatists do, indeed, well nigh in theory exclude God from the universe. They, however,

¹ *Origin of Species*, p. 419. ² p. 423

admit His power and agency at one point; and in so doing they admit *something above and beyond nature*. That first existence or form of which Darwin speaks, not being the production of natural laws or forces, was supernatural or miraculous. (4) But the Darwinian or Lamarckian theory is by no means universally accepted by scientific men. Sir Charles Lyell,—though he formerly opposed it,—has, indeed, indorsed it. But its advocates as yet are in the minority. Darwin himself says that ‘authors of the highest eminence seem to be fully satisfied with the view that each species has been independently created.’¹ Many geologists assert that their stony science demonstrates that existing species of plants and animals have again and again disappeared from the earth, and been succeeded by new species. These new species are represented as coming into existence by an act of *creation*. Even Sir. C. Lyell himself speaks, or *has* spoken, of them as being thus called into being.² This repeated introduction of new species, as demonstrated by geology, is a supernatural event. The creation of the megatherium, iguanodon, or any other new species of animals or plants, and its introduction among existing species,—thousands of years after the original creation,—is just as great a miracle as the instantaneous curing of the blind and the sick, and the raising of the dead. If God should before the eyes of the infidel destroy an existing species of plants or animals, and cause a new species to spring up out of the earth, he would,

¹p. 423. ²*Prin. of Geol.* pp. 704–7.

according to his own views, reject the evidence of his senses, on the ground that 'miracles are incredible, if not impossible.' Yet he admits the creation and introduction of many new species thousands or millions of years ago, as demonstrated by the discoveries of geology. One of the new species thus created and introduced is man. The unity of the human race, and their descent from one original pair, are now well established scientific truths. Does the infidel accept the Darwinian theory in regard to the production of the first human pair, and maintain they were derived by 'natural selection' from pre-existing brutal species? Does he hold that men, even as it regards their intellectual and moral faculties, are brothers to the monkey and the ass? We understand, indeed, that the great majority of scientific men, whether Christian or skeptical, admit that there was one original human pair; and that this pair constituted a new species, being called into being by a creative act of the Almighty. We understand further, that the majority of scientific men whether Christian or skeptical, admit—or at least do not deny—that as God called into being the first human soul or first pair of human souls by an immediate act of creation, so human souls are perhaps called into being by immediate creation now. The antiquity of man as advocated of late by some geologists has nothing to do with this question. The creation of a human soul fifty thousand, fifty millions, or fifty thousand millions of years ago, is just as supernatural an event as the creation of a human soul now. The creation of new species, as taught by ge-

ology and as exemplified in the human race, demonstrates not only the credibility, but also the reality of miracles.

It is thus seen that all who believe in a Creator and supreme Ruler, do in reality believe in supernaturalism. Indeed, most skeptics seem very willing to admit supernatural agency and power in the creation of the world, the establishment and execution of the laws of nature, an over-ruling providence, and the creation of the first human pair,—if not also in the continued creation of human souls. Many of them also seem willing to admit supernatural agency and power in the repeated introduction of new species, as asserted by some of the ablest geologists. Skeptics seem to have no difficulty in admitting supernaturalism to have manifested itself fifty thousand or fifty millions of years ago, and in the material universe. It is only the supernaturalism of *the Bible* to which they object. Indeed, it is only as an argument against the supernatural inspiration and divine authority of the Scriptures that the incredibility of miracles is asserted. Candor, however, certainly requires of the champions of infidelity the admission of the following propositions;—

1. God is a supernatural Being, and can do supernatural things. Since he created the universe out of nothing, he can annihilate it. Since he possesses almighty power, he can arrest the planets in their course, or change their size and motion as he chooses. Hence, supernatural events, that is miracles, are at least *possible*.

2. Since miracles are possible, they are credible.

If miracles are possible, they may take place. To assert their incredibility, then, is virtually to assert that though we believe that they *may be*, yet it is impossible to *believe they may be!*

3. The credibility of miracles is further shown by the fact, that the great majority of men have believed in them. Not only have people in general, but a majority of learned and philosophic minds during eighteen centuries, have believed in the miracles of the Bible. It is, therefore, absurd to assert that miracles are not credible; that is, not *believable*.

4. The creation of the world and of the first human pair, the over-ruling providence of God, and other events and operations in the natural world, are *supernatural*,—resulting from an agency and power *above nature*.

5. As a law can neither establish nor execute itself, the so-called laws of nature imply supernatural agency and power in their establishment and execution.

6. If the almighty Creator merely, as it were, started the universe and then left it to run on for ever by means of the forces and laws contained within itself—without interposition, direction, or any influence from him,—the world would be without a God, and not a single change would have been produced, had the Almighty immediately after the creation ceased to exist.

7. The interposition of God, in any way, in any of the affairs of the universe—his direction of them, or any influence from him on any part of the universe, in whatever way exerted,—is supernatural;

just as the power which the superintendent of a machine exerts in starting it to run, increasing or decreasing its speed, changing its direction, altering any of its parts, or stopping its motion, is not from the machine, but in the superintendent.

8. Whether God ever has intervened in the affairs of the world; whether he has since the creation exerted any influence to produce effects which would not otherwise have been produced; whether after the creation God put forth any power to produce any change; or, whether all things have taken place just as they would have done had He immediately after the creation ceased to exist,—is a question to be determined, not by any *a priori* argument, but by the examination of evidence. Hence;

9. The reality of the supernatural events recorded in the Bible is to be admitted or rejected according to the evidence offered to establish them; and the assumption of the impossibility or incredibility of the supernatural is a mere begging of the question

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO THEORIES, CHRISTIAN AND INFIDEL.

THERE are in reality but two theories—the Christian and infidel—in regard to the origin of the Bible. The Christian theory is, that its writers were inspired and superintended by the Spirit of God. The infidel theory is, that it was wholly the work of mere men. Differing from one another and contradicting and opposing one another, as infidels do, they agree in holding and advocating this one idea, that the Bible is merely a human production. All their learned labors, conjectures, assumptions, theories, and argumentation are designed to prove its merely human origin and character. Their confused and contradictory theories that have been noticed in preceding chapters,—the mythical theory, the legendary theory, the theory of fiction, the theory of imposture and fraud, and the varying assumptions of German, French, English, and American skeptics,—all take for granted that the book, with its varied and wonderful contents, was produced by the unaided human intellect; and differ only in regard to the *mode* of its production.

The question, then, is, whether the Bible is supernatural, or merely human? whether mere men, or God was its author? We have demonstrated its

unparalleled excellence—its superiority to all other books in ancient and modern times. As some infidels have admitted, the Jews were incapable of inventing its literature, morality, and theology. Its sublime poetry, its matchless eloquence, catholic spirit, lofty sentiments, soul-stirring truths, advanced political ideas, moral beauty and power, and divine theology, must have proceeded from a higher source than the uncultivated minds of bigoted and exclusive Jews. And since the human, Jewish origin of the Bible is inadmissible, the theory that its writers were aided by a supernatural influence is the only one that accounts for its origin. Mere men—unlearned and narrow-minded Jews—could not originate such a book. But with God all things are possible. The supernatural origin of the Bible is at least possible, since there is an almighty God. Between these two theories we must choose—the one, supposing an impossible thing, and involving its advocates in endless contradictions and absurdities; and the other, assigning a possible origin to the Scriptures, and attended with no greater difficulties than the belief that God is the Creator and Ruler of the world. (1) Indeed, the argument in favor of the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures drawn from their transcendent excellence, is strengthened by the close correspondence between their statements and the facts of nature and providence. The Bible sets forth God's dreadful hatred of sin, and his infliction of vengeance on wicked transgressors; and the actual providence of God teaches the same lesson—the world is full of proofs of God's hatred of sin, and

of terrible examples of his vengeance. The Bible asserts that God has, by means of the natural elements and by the agency of men, exterminated whole communities for their sins; and history and observation teach that God does destroy thousands and thousands of human beings with sword, famine, pestilence, earthquake, and burning lava, and that often men, women, and children are involved in a common slaughter. The Bible teaches that God is partial toward his creatures in this sense, that he favors some more than others; and the actual condition of men demonstrates the same truth. The Bible teaches the doctrine of hereditary sin and punishment; and we find that the murderer, thief, drunkard, debauchee, and other transgressors do generally entail disgrace and misery, and often their very crimes, upon their offspring—thus illustrating the truth of the declaration, that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. The Bible contains many statements that appear inconsistent with the infinite love and mercy which it ascribes to God, and with the universal benevolence which it enjoins on men. But the same apparent inconsistency is found in the lessons taught by nature and providence—the prosperity of the wicked and the miseries of the righteous have ever been a stumbling-block to the thoughtful and pious, and in view of the ever-flowing tide of human woe they are often tempted to ask in despair, ‘Has God ceased to be merciful for ever-more?’ The Bible contains many dark sayings—mysterious doctrines that can be but imperfectly understood; and in the world around us there are unfathomable mys-

teries—in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the fire that warms us, the light that illuminates us; in the circulation of the blood, in the nervous system, in all parts of our bodies, and in our very souls. Generation and birth, life and death, are mysteries. The Bible contains some apparently very *little* truths—references to matters that seem to us, perhaps, unworthy of God's notice; but in the actual world there are many very little things, and things that appear altogether useless, yet God is the maker of the minute insect that dances in the sunbeam, and of the nasty worm that crawls in the dust—as well as of the earth, sun, moon and stars. Thus the doctrines and statements of the Bible, that are oftenest objected to, are seen to be in harmony with the facts of history, observation, and experience. They constitute what Göthe called the *strong naturalness* of the Bible, and afford strong evidence that it and nature have a common author. How could such men as the writers of the Bible are known to have been, invent and bring together such dreadful doctrines, hard sayings, and unfathomable mysteries, as seem to the careless observer and captious objector to be false, unnatural, and pernicious, but which a deeper philosophy and a more careful observation discover to be consistent with, or analogous to the facts of humanity and providence? If the mysteries and difficulties presented in the Bible are greater than those presented by reason and observation, this is only what we are to expect if the Bible be a divine revelation. For as in a dark night the traveler whose torch or lantern throws its light the farthest, is sur-

rounded by the widest circle of partially illumined and indistinctly perceived objects,—so the Bible, throwing its light farther over the region of morals and theology than do philosophy and science, brings more distinctly into view, and in greater numbers, the mysteries and difficulties which often perplex the inquirer after truth. Yet the close analogy that exists in this respect between the Bible and nature creates a strong presumption that, as the latter, so the former had a higher origin than human wisdom and power.

(2) The fact that there are apparent discrepancies in the Bible seems to us in reality to strengthen the argument in favor of its supernatural inspiration. We admit, that, if it contains any *real* discrepancies—if any of its parts, as originally written, do *in reality* contradict one another—if it contains mistakes and inaccuracies—it can hardly be the word of God. It seems to us to be of no avail to say, (what is doubtless true,) that the alleged discrepancies and inaccuracies in the Bible do not affect any important doctrine. For the Almighty certainly never commits even little mistakes, nor makes even harmless blunders. It seems to us worse than useless to account for alleged discrepancies and inaccuracies on the ground that the Biblical writers were guided by divine inspiration only in regard to the *thoughts* to be expressed, but not in regard to the *language* to be used in expressing them. For the alleged discrepancies and inaccuracies are in the *thoughts*, not in the language employed to express them. And if the writers were not guided and superintended by

divine inspiration in the use of language, we have no assurance that even the most important doctrines are anywhere accurately expressed, and the Bible is not an infallible guide even in theology. Nor does it afford any relief to assume, that the Scripture writers were infallible in the presentation of doctrines and precepts, but not in historical statements; for the most important parts of the Bible are historical—those containing an account of the life, character, death and resurrection of Christ. It seems to us, therefore, that the existence of real inaccuracies in the Scriptures is scarcely reconcilable with their divine origin and authority. Yet the existence of such inaccuracies, if proved, would not necessarily destroy our belief in supernatural inspiration. Partial inspiration is *possible*. God *might* inspire men to write an imperfect, fallible book; though we think it very *improbable* that he would do so. But the *merely human* origin of the Bible was *impossible*. The learning, philosophy, and genius of the world could not, much less could Jewish ignorance and bigotry, produce a book of such transcendent excellence. Improbable as is the theory of *partial* inspiration, it is more credible than the one which assumes the Scriptures to be merely a human, Jewish book.

We, however, regard the alleged discrepancies and inaccuracies as only apparent. We believe that the most of them are easily shown to be such. Thus the apparent discrepancy between John 20: 1 and Mark 16: 1-2 is removed by our considering that John does not assert that Mary Magdalene was *not* accompanied by other women in her visit to the

sepulchre, and that Mark mentions her *first*, as being the most prominent among them; and, that the former speaks of the time of their setting out to go to the sepulchre ($\epsilon\iota\zeta$), and the latter of the time of their arrival *at* the sepulchre ($\epsilon\pi\iota$). The supposed inaccuracy of Matthew¹ in ascribing language to Jeremiah that is not found in his prophecy, is explained by our considering that Matthew quoted a prediction that was *spoken*, but not recorded, by Jeremiah; just as Jude quotes a prediction by Enoch that is recorded nowhere in the Bible except in Jude's quotation.² The alleged mistake in Matt. 23: 35 is shown to exist only in the imagination of objectors, by the consideration that Jesus and the evangelist were better acquainted with Jewish affairs in their own times than modern critics, and doubtless knew of the violent death of one named Zacharias, son of Barachias, as mentioned in the passage referred to. The discrepancy between the statements in Matt. 4: 1-11 and Luke 4: 1-13 is shown to be only apparent, by the fact that Matthew observes the chronological order in his account of the three temptations, and that Luke, according to his custom, does not. The apparent discrepancy between John and the other evangelists in regard to the time of the crucifixion, is explained by our reading in John 19: 14, *third* instead of *sixth*, according to several ancient Greek manuscripts; or by our understanding John to follow the Roman method of noting time.

¹ Matt. 27: 9-10. ² Jude 14-15.

We believe, indeed, that most of the alleged discrepancies and other textual difficulties presented in the Bible have been satisfactorily explained. They are mostly such as arise from errors in transcribing, mis-translation, or mis-interpretation; and have been noticed by Bible commentators again and again. After all the learned labors of critics, we must say that so far as alleged discrepancies are concerned, very little that is new has been produced of late, either by thorough-going infidels, or the opponents of the *plenary* inspiration of the Scriptures. We consider such books as Colenso's well-nigh to an insult; asking us to give up deliberate convictions on grounds that have been examined and repeatedly declared insufficient, and offering us nothing but alleged discrepancies and textual difficulties that we have been familiar with nearly all our lives.

But we freely admit that there are apparent discrepancies and other difficulties presented in the Bible, of which perhaps no explanation entirely satisfactory can be given. We maintain, however, that this fact does not weaken, but strengthens the argument in favor of the divine inspiration of the Bible drawn from its surpassing excellence. Without some such difficulties it could hardly be the word of God. It is to be expected that a book containing a revelation from God will present some things hard to be understood, and some things apparently inconsistent with one another. A book without apparent inconsistencies and contradictions would not correspond to the works of God. In the world around us there are many apparent discrep-

ancies. The benevolence of God is manifested in creation and providence. But with the lesson thus taught many things seem utterly inconsistent. One part of God's works appears to contradict another. Why did God create barren deserts? Why did God create the mirage, which serves only to lure thirsty travelers, to their own destruction, into the trackless wilderness? Why did God create bogs and marshes which breed only filthy reptiles, stench, and deadly diseases? Why are some men born with hereditary diseases and deformities? Why does God create idiots and miserable hunchbacks? Why do infants suffer and die? Why do men die at all? Why is this world which God created and rules, so full of wretchedness and misery? If, in answer to these questions, it is said, that men suffer on account of their sins; it may be asked, is it on account of their own sins that some men are born idiots, and others diseased and deformed? Is it on account of their own sins that infants suffer and die? Even if it could be shown that God inflicts punishment for sin by anticipation before its commission, this would not account for the sufferings of idiots and infants. For thousands and thousands of idiots and infants die without becoming accountable for their actions, and without committing any sin. And though human sinfulness may account for the sufferings of adults in general, yet why are there so great inequalities in the condition and punishment of men? Why do the guilty often escape, and the innocent often suffer. Why do many selfish, cruel, murderous tyrants and oppressors enjoy continued health,

ease, and prosperity; while many honest men and pure and lovely women spend days, months, years, their whole lives, in ceaseless toil and sorrow? In addition to these unanswered and unanswerable questions, we may ask, why did God permit the existence of moral evil? Why did he create a world in which there is so much sin and so much suffering? Why does not God prevent lying, drunkenness, war, oppression, murder, and other evils? Do you say he cannot? Do you say that if he would make the attempt he would fail? Do you say that if God had tried, he could not have created a world in which there would be no sin and no suffering? The truth is, that in creation and providence there are many things that appear to us short-sighted mortals, to be mistakes. The permission of moral evil appears a dreadful mistake. The subjection of infants to suffering and death seems another dreadful mistake. The man born without eyes, the man born without hands, that miserable hunchback—the man who, like king Richard, is sent into the world deformed, unfinished, ‘scarce half made up, and that so lamely and unfashionably, that the dogs bark at him’¹—seem to be blunders of the Great Artist. How does every theist reason with regard to these matters? He admits that there are mysteries, and apparent discrepancies and mistakes in creation and providence. He admits that there are many things in the world around him which he cannot reconcile with one another, nor with the infinite wisdom, good-

¹ King Richard iii. Act 1, scene 1.

ness, and power of God, and his over-ruling providence. The theist does not, however, conclude that therefore God did not create, and does not rule the world. Nor does he conclude, as did the ancient Grecians and Romans, that God is controlled by fate, against which he struggles in vain. Nor does he adopt the opinion of the ancient Persians, that there are two Gods,—one of light and of goodness, and another of darkness and of evil. Notwithstanding the apparently irreconcilable contradictions and inconsistencies in creation and providence, he holds to the belief that they have but one Author, who is absolutely free and sovereign. Notwithstanding the many seeming indications of mistake, malevolence, or weakness, he firmly believes that God is infinitely wise, benevolent, and powerful. He admits that in God's works there are mysteries which he cannot understand; apparent contradictions which he cannot reconcile; and apparent mistakes which he cannot explain. Yet he maintains that notwithstanding these, all God's works are righteous and perfect. He believes that were his mental powers and his knowledge much enlarged, he would be able to explain many apparent contradictions and mistakes in creation and providence; and that infinite wisdom can explain them all. So the Christian may admit that there are mysteries in the Bible which he cannot solve; apparent contradictions which he cannot reconcile; and apparent mistakes which he cannot explain; and yet maintain that God is its author. He, too, may say, that had he much enlarged powers and knowledge, he might understand and explain many

of the mysteries, and apparent inconsistencies and inaccuracies at which the skeptic stumbles. These alleged inconsistencies and inaccuracies no more disprove the supernatural inspiration of the Biblical writers than do the mysteries and apparent contradictions and mistakes in creation and providence disprove the existence of God, or that he created and rules the world. Notwithstanding these mysteries and apparent contradictions and mistakes, it is easier to believe in the existence of God and his over-ruling providence, than to believe that the world was made by chance. So, however formidable the objection against the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures drawn from their seeming discrepancies and mistakes may appear, it is easier to believe that an increase of knowledge would enable us to explain them, and show that they are *only* apparent, than to believe that the book—with its transcendent literary, political, moral, and theological excellence—was originated by the unaided intellect of uneducated and narrow-minded Jews. Whatever difficulties the Christian may have to meet in maintaining the supernatural origin of the Bible, they are not so great as those the infidel has to meet in maintaining that it is merely a human, Jewish production; or the theist in maintaining God's creation and government of the world. But beside this, the apparent inaccuracies and mistakes in the Bible constitute an analogy between it and the works of God. Were it free from them, we could hardly believe that it and nature had the same Author. But in both there are mysteries, alleged

and apparent contradictions and mistakes, and this similarity is presumptive evidence that He who made the world is the Author of the Bible. Had modern skeptics been the fabricators of it, they would have avoided all apparent discrepancies and contradictions; and thus it would have been made unlike the works of God, and should have betrayed its human origin. If the writers of the Bible were not divinely inspired, they had deeper insight into nature and providence than modern skeptics with all their philosophy and learning.

(3) Another consideration strengthening the argument drawn from the general excellence of the Scriptures is, that they furnish us all the knowledge we possess on many points of the greatest interest and importance. If we have any knowledge at all of the origin of man, his primitive state, his condition and progress during at least the first twenty-five centuries, the causes of his present moral and physical condition, or his final destiny, it is from the Scriptures; and if they be not what they purport to be—the product of a superhuman intelligence—we must abandon any belief we now have on these and on other subjects of vital import, and be content to remain in blank ignorance concerning them. For in regard to the creation of the world, the origin of man, his primitive condition, and many other questions historical, moral, and cosmical, the only knowledge we have or can have must be superhuman. Hence, in regard to these momentous questions, we must remain in profound ignorance, if the writers of the Bible had no supernatural knowledge.

(4) Another consideration bearing upon the question of supernatural inspiration is this, that though in literature, science, and politics, in regard to which the Bible does not claim to be a complete revelation, the human race have progressed and are progressing,—yet in morality and theology, in regard to which it claims to be a full revelation, no progress has been made since the canon of Scripture was closed. In regard to God, his nature, attributes, and providence; and in regard to man, his origin, present condition and duties, and future destiny,—the human race, after about sixty centuries of observation, investigation, and experience, possess not one truth that is not contained in the Bible. Nor can even the wisest, best, and most gifted of men state any moral or theological truth that is not already stated in that grand compendium of moral and theological knowledge. After eighteen hundred years of investigation and improvement, the human race,—even the most profound thinkers in morals and theology,—are compelled to leave moral and theological science where they were left by the Jewish authors. These two facts—the fact that the Bible, so far as it claims to be both perfect and infallible, (that is, in reference to all moral and theological subjects,) is a finality to all mankind, containing all the truth attainable by the most gifted minds; and that in literature, science, and politics, (in reference to which it does not claim to teach a complete system, though infallible as far as it goes,) the human race have progressed and are progressing—these two facts taken together are accounted for by the supernatural inspi-

ration of the Bible writers, and are accounted for in no other way.

These considerations strengthen the argument drawn from the excellence of the Scriptures to prove their divine authorship; and render still less credible the theory of their human, Jewish origin. To the infidel assumption, then, that miracles are incredible, if not impossible, we answer—that **THE BIBLE ITSELF IS A MIRACLE**; as is shown by its theological, moral, political, and literary excellence.

THE END.




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