Anglican Church Handbooks

EDITED BY

THE REV. W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS, D.D.

PRINCIPAL OF WYCLIFFE HALL, OXFORD

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

AND MODERN IDEAS

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OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

AND MODERN IDEAS

BY

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CONTENTS

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: METHOD OF TREATMENT

WHAT grammar is to language and science to nature, that Biblical theology is to Scripture. The business of the theologian is to detect the system of Divine Truth which underlies the strangely varied surface of the Bible. The present manual has to do with the Old Testament, which contains the foundation truths common to the true faith of Israel and to Christianity.

§ 1. *What is the Old Testament?*

The Old Testament is not a book of philosophy, metaphysics or ethics, nor does it contain the annals of the Jewish nation. The Scriptures are not merely so much "literature." They exhibit human nature without formally analysing it; their main business is practical rather than speculative; they deal with the most absorbing of topics—the relations of man with his Maker—in the simplest and clearest style possible, effecting their purpose largely by means of historical and biographical picture lessons, and making God's dealings in the past the key to the present and the guarantee of the future. They inspire us with true thoughts of God, because their writers were themselves inspired by Divine in-breathing; the treasure is in earthen or frail vessels, yet the vessels are made to honour and are adapted for their unique task.

It is impossible to divorce Biblical Theology from Philosophy. It has to do with the springs of life and with

the Author of all being. It touches human nature on its spiritual side. It is essentially objective and ontological; it offers the key to true metaphysics in the original sense of the word. Psychology and morals also naturally come within its scope, and there is hardly a question occupying the mind of the thinker of to-day which has not been provided for in some elementary way in the pages of the venerable Books which make up the Old Testament.[1]

These documents, as we have received them from the Jew, are of varied ages and styles. They include (i.) a strong historical element which can be traced from Genesis to Nehemiah and Esther; (ii.) a prophetical element which is partly interspersed with the history and partly confined to the writings of Isaiah and his successors; and (iii.) the poetical and proverbial elements which include the Psalms, Job, Proverbs, and some smaller books. Beginning with cosmogony, we close with a narrative of the varying fortunes of a nation which still continues among us and stands as a pillar of salt to testify to the truths underlying its own sacred writings.

§ 2. *Method of Treatment*

The course which will be adopted in this manual is, first, to take a brief general survey of the theology of the Books, beginning with the Prophets and Psalms and working back gradually to the dawn of sacred history; secondly, to examine the names, titles and attributes of God as presented in the volume as a whole; thirdly, to investigate the teaching of the Old Testament in what may perhaps be called a scientific method, bringing it as far as possible into touch with the questions of the day. For this last purpose all parts of the Hebrew Scriptures will be freely quoted without reference to speculative questions as to authorship and composition, the unity of the Scriptures being recognised throughout, and the Books being taken on their own profession as *bona-fide* and authoritative documents received by the Jewish Church and accepted by the Christian.

[1] On this subject see Augustine's *City of God*, Book VIII.

CHAPTER II

REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

§ 1. *The Nature of Revelation*

THE leading idea of the Old Testament is that it records a revelation of God both in speech and action, especially the latter; in other words, that God has revealed Himself both by what He says and by what He does. Perhaps these two elements in the Scripture, though tacitly recognised, have not been fully distinguished in modern theology. This is partly owing to the use of the word "inspiration." This term properly covers not only the spiritual forces brought to bear on the mind of the Prophets, but also the kindling and enlightening influence of their words, primarily on the original recipients of their message, and secondarily on those of later ages who take the record as true.

Inspiration is many-sided, and the word may be said to stand for the action of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man, in order to carry out Divine purposes through human agencies. God in speech and God in action: such is the subject of the Old Testament, not the historical development or evolution of a Divine Being, but the history of God's manifestation of Himself and His purposes "at sundry times and in divers manners to the fathers by the Prophets." The formula, "Thus saith the Lord," is only one of many ways of expressing revelation, and the revelation itself may have come through dream or vision or angelic message or direct utterance, or it may have been simply a commission to write what the Prophet knew to be true. The documents thus produced would gradually mount up in number and become part of the sacred archives of Israel, or, as St. Paul calls them, the oracles of God.

§ 2. *How can God speak to man?*

A preliminary difficulty faces the student of Revelation which must be briefly discussed. How can the Infinite reveal Himself to our finite minds? or how can we who are children of the dust grasp or comprehend the nature and ways of the Author of the universe? Theoretically, it may seem impossible, but practically it is an accomplished fact. We have only to suppose, for the purpose of our present inquiry, that the Creator has a special object in bringing man into existence, and that human beings are so constructed that they are capable of receiving more or less clear and accurate impressions of Divine truth. Man is highly gifted by nature, *i.e.* by God; he is constantly reading the unseen in the light of the seen, correcting his first impressions by further experience—his own or other people's—and projecting himself into the outside world as if it were his world made by such an one as himself. The book of nature, which was written by God, is read by man, for he is made capable of reading it. The world is rich in illustrations of the ways of God, and so the Infinite awakens and illuminates the finite. After all, as it has been truly said, Nature conceals God, but man reveals God. The stellar universe, the growth of plants, the falling of the dew declare the glory of God in such a way that the intelligence of man can say "Amen." But a single act of loving self-surrender gives a truer idea of God's character than can be learnt by gazing into infinite space.

§ 3. *Anthropomorphism*

Few amongst us doubt the possibility of revelation in its most elementary sense, viz. that ordinary men have in them something which makes it possible for them to recognise the footsteps of the Creator in nature. But for the purposes of a special revelation, such as that contained in the Old Testament, more is required than the exercise of intelligence. God's being, character, and purposes must

be brought within reach of the human mind, either by the things which He does or by the things which He says; and these must be translated into human life and language. The knowledge of Him is not attainable by an image, or a symbol, or a star, but by the best products and powers and experiences of human life. It is this which underlies St. Paul's teaching in Acts xvii. and which we shall discover frequently in the Old Testament. We call it *anthropomorphism*, but the word is hardly good enough.[1] Anthropomorphism means that analogies from human life are the best, if not the only available means of getting true thoughts of God, and that Divine action and feeling are best interpreted by what we ourselves do and feel. As a potter moulds a jar, so God moulded a man (Gen. i. 7); as a builder builds a house, so God built a woman (Gen. i. 22); as a man legislates, writes books, acquits, condemns, repents, is angry, so it is with God. The man has eyes, ears, hands, feet, heart, will, a spirit, thoughts; he loves, hates, remembers, forgets, dwells in one place, comes to another, turns his face towards or from another person; and God acts as if He were human in these respects, though without human organs, imperfections, and limitations. The Psalmist does not say: He that moulded the eye, shall He not have an eye, but shall He not see (Ps. xciv. 9).

After all, the most extreme materialist is compelled to be anthropomorphic. The only difference between himself and the theist is that the one applies human analogies to the automatic "building up" of nature (as may be seen in Clodd's *Creation Story*), the other applies them to Him "who built all things."

Revelation then must be anthropomorphic in some respects, but it is because man is theomorphic. It is true

[1] The late Duke of Argyll (*Unity of Nature*) suggested "anthropopsychism," but the older word is nearly as good and cannot lightly be dispossessed. Theomorphism hardly brings out the human side. The anthropomorphic view of God in Scripture was mocked at by the early opponents of Christianity, but was fairly expounded and defended by the early Fathers. See *e.g.* Clem. Al. *Strom.*, ii. 16, and Origen against Celsus, iv. 12, 71.

that our language is defective, for it is largely the creature of the necessities of every-day life and is not constructed primarily as a means of conveying spiritual truth. Such words as "heaven," "spirit," and such prepositions as "in," "above," "under," belong originally to the scaffolding of life and not to its essence. They need to be held in check and corrected by other expressions, which remind us that, after all, God's thoughts and ways are not ours. Thus they awaken and illuminate thought, but do not fully satisfy it. Of course, they are provisional, as all our knowledge of God must be. We find, as a matter of fact, that Biblical language fulfils its intention. It leads us into truth, and guards us against error. It invites us to read God by human analogies, but bids us correct the false deduction that God is merely a magnified and glorified man. We have to eliminate from manhood all that is of the flesh, of the senses, of the temporal, of the imperfect, and of the evil; and to hold fast all that helps us to understand what the Author of the universe is, and feels, and does, and how He regards the children of men.[1]

In his *Principles of Philosophy*—the last part of his scheme which he lived to complete—Descartes says: "If God reveal to us or others matters concerning Himself which surpass the natural powers of our mind, such as the mysteries of the Incarnation and of the Trinity, we will not refuse to believe them, although we may not clearly understand them; nor will we be in any way surprised to find in the immensity of His nature, or even in what He has created, many things that exceed our comprehension. . . . We will never embarrass ourselves by disputes about the infinite, seeing it would be absurd for us who are finite to undertake to determine anything regarding it, and thus, as it were, limit it by endeavouring to comprehend it"

[1] See Isaac Taylor's *Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry*, also Charnocke "On the Spirituality of God," Litton's *Dogmatic Theology*, Flint's *Theism*, Stokes' *Gifford Lectures*, also article on "The Metaphorical Language applied to God in the Old Testament," delivered in Bradlaugh's Hall of Science by the present writer, and published by the Christian Evidence Society, 1873.

(I. 25, 26). He proceeds to point out the distinction between the infinite and the indefinite; and closes this part of his discussion by saying that "*apart from things revealed*, we ought to assent to nothing that we do not clearly understand" (I. 76).

Pascal in meditating on the same subject says: "If we submit all to reason, our religion will contain nothing mysterious or supernatural. If we shock the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous" (V. vi. 2). And again: "Faith tells us much that the senses do not tell us, but never the contrary of what they tell us. It is above them but not opposed to them" (II. vi. 4). Vinet in his *Studies on Pascal* develops this thought, but points out that Reason does not mean dry argumentative logic, but "the elementary principles essential to the organisation of the human mind, and the basis of all its operations, which prove all things and which nothing proves."

§ 4. *Mansel and his Critics*

When Professor Mansel preached his celebrated Bampton Lectures he was really attacking the methods and conclusions of certain German philosophers, who thought that by elaborate reasoning they might get rid of God. In exposing their mistakes he was led on to assume what seemed to some an almost agnostic position. It is true that he constantly guarded himself against misinterpretation, and showed that though in one sense we human beings cannot "know" God—for we can neither conceive nor comprehend Him—yet through faith in Christ we get a practical working knowledge of Him. Mansel's utterances were strongly objected to by Professor F. D. Maurice and others, including the late Mr. R. H. Hutton, who urged that in spite of the fact that we cannot know God to perfection, yet our knowledge of Him is very real and personal, for we read His heart and we know what He feels by what He has done and said. "I utterly disavow," says Hutton, "Dr. Mansel's interpretation of Revelation as a message intended to regulate human

practice without unfolding the realities of the Divine mind. . . . I hold that it is an unveiling of the very character and life of the eternal God; and an unveiling, of course, to a nature which is capable of beholding Him. It is not, in my belief, an overclouding of Divine light to suit it for the dimness of human vision, but a purification of human vision from the weakness and disease which render it liable to be dazzled and blinded by the Divine light." [1] There is evidently much to be said on both sides, and our study of the Old Testament may help us to a sound conclusion on the subject. One cannot read the controversy between these thoughtful men without realising that minds are not constructed alike, that truth presents itself differently to them, and that words and definitions do not awaken the same ideas to their understandings.

§ 5. *Divine Speech Confirmed by Action*

We must conclude that when the Author of all being speaks, He adapts the expression of His purpose to the intelligence—the specially quickened or inspired intelligence —of man, and, in spite of the limitations thus involved, his will is made sufficiently clear. But when instead of speaking He works, the infinite becomes more distinctly definite, though not necessarily finite. The language of action is more intelligible than that of speech. The thing done remains, even though the way in which it was done is inscrutable. It stands forth as a monument, whether it be an actual object, as a created world, or an event which happened in past ages but is recorded in history, as the Exodus. Confusion or variation of speech may cause misunderstanding, but some actions are intelligible to every human being. In the tongue of the so-called "Lengua Indians" no word has been discovered for God, worship, praise, sacrifice, holy, sin, virtue, reward, punishment, duty;[2] but every Indian can appreciate the kindness and

[1] Hutton's *Theological Essays*, 2nd edition, p. 107; but see *per contra* Mansel's Preface to his 3rd edition.

[2] *South American Missionary Magazine*, Jan. 7, 1908.

skill of a medical missionary, and the endeavour of a mother to save her child. It is "gesture language" of the highest quality. It reaches the heart readily and effectively, whilst oral speech is slowly making its way to the understanding. When Joseph chose to speak through an interpreter his brethren did not take in the Egyptian phrases; but when the tears welled forth from his eyes, all who were present must have realised that he was feeling something intensely. When a greater than Joseph spake of the resurrection of Lazarus, his words were barely taken in; but when the tell-tale tears were seen, men said, Behold, how He loved him.

§ 6. *Trustworthiness of the Record*

It is needless to dwell more largely on these preliminary considerations. We are now in a position to open the sacred volume and see what the Books actually tell us, and what sort of theology they embody. It is our business as students to take them as they stand, to read them in the light of their age and surroundings, and in sympathy with the spirit which animates them, not forgetting the remarkable characteristics of the language in which they are presented to us.

It would be beyond the scope of this short volume to discuss the canonicity of the thirty-nine Books before us, still less to go into the *minutiæ* which modern critical ingenuity has spread out before us. Whilst allowing room for what may be called editorial modifications all the way through, the present writer sees no reason for departing from the view which has been maintained in *Lex Mosaica*, *The Bible Students' Library*, Orr's *Problem of the Old Testament*, also Professor Raven's *Introduction to the Old Testament*. On the linguistic side reference may be made to a little book on *Hebrew Criticism, its Bearing on the Integrity of Scripture* (Shaw), also to the works of Sinker, Redpath and Conder.

CHAPTER III

THEOLOGY IN THE PROPHETIC WRITINGS

§ 1. *The Work of the Prophets*

THE prophets whose writings we possess are not one-tenth, probably not one-hundredth, of those who were raised up in Old Testament days as messengers and missionaries from God to Israel. They appear to have belonged to different Tribes though the priestly element predominated. Some of them have left but a few short utterances, whilst others spoke and wrote at length. They addressed the people, the priests, the rulers, the kings of their day. They spoke with force and did not mince their words. They had the courage of their opinions and knew that they were often carrying their lives in their hands. Religion had become degenerate and worn out in their day; Ritual had become hollow; bribery, oppression, covetousness, immorality and idolatry had sapped the constitution of Israelite society. If we had nothing of the Old Testament but the volume of the prophetic writings from Isaiah to Malachi, we could see all this and much more for ourselves, and we should be led to look for traces of some previous and better state of things from which this strange nation had fallen. This it would be possible to find in outline, even from the books themselves; and having found it we should turn once more to the writers to see how they deal with the present distress, and to discover how it has come about, whose fault it was, and what is proposed in the way of remedy, if any were possible.

§ 2. *The Prophetic Message: its Two Sides*

The books, however, give us no time for philosophising. They are urgent, and demand prompt decision. They

prove to be a series of appeals from God to Israel as from a father to his children. "I have nourished and brought up children," He says, "but they have rebelled against Me" (Isa. i. 2). The people are accused of ingratitude, of forgetfulness, of forsaking God, and turning a deaf ear to His voice; they are besought to acknowledge their offences and to return to Him. If only they would shake themselves from the dust and arise and go to their Father, He would receive them graciously and love them freely and turn away His anger from them. Otherwise ruin is before them (Hosea *passim*).

Two lines of thought (we might call them "antinomies") run through the books. God seeks, but He must be sought. He heals men's backslidings, but they must come for healing. He saves and delights in saving (Jer. ix. 24), but there are conditions (Jer. iv. 14). He is forbearing (Lam. iii. 33; Nah. i. 3), but there are limits (Jer. xliv. 22). He acts, sometimes promptly, at any rate opportunely, but He occasionally delays, and waits to be gracious. At one time He sticks to His purpose and will not repent (Isa. xxii. 25; Jer. iv. 28; Ezek. xxiv. 14), at another He repents and changes His course (Joel ii. 13, 14; Amos vii. 3, 6; Jonah iv. 2). He punishes, visits, chastens, brings retribution; but the death of the sinner is no pleasure to Him (Jer. v. 9; Ezek. vii. 3; xviii. 33). His promises and threats run side by side (Jer. xxii. 4, 5), and it is manifestly His pleasure both to make and to fulfil certain promises, but the threats will assuredly be carried out also, even though modified in some degree, if the people will neither turn nor amend their ways, and this in spite of the prayers of the godly (Jer. vii. 16; xv. 1; Ezek. xiv. 14). In fact He must be obeyed (Jer. xi. 4), for He is not only a Father and a Saviour, but also a Lawgiver and a King (Isa. xxxiii. 22).

The people of Israel and Judah are always spoken to as if their present distressed condition was their own fault, and as if they might return to God if they chose. Everywhere we learn that God demands loyalty but does not enforce or compel it (Jer. xxxviii. 20, 21). But why not? He is omnipotent. He is the potter and they are the clay.

Yes; but He is restricted by the fact that they ought to know and do what is right. This is illustrated in every possible way. It is true that their hearts are hardened and their eyes blinded (Isa. vi. 9, 10; xxix. 10–12), so that at first sight the responsibility seems to be removed from the creature to the Creator. But in spite of this there is evidently something which they can do to retrieve their position, and that because of something which God has done or will do. The truth is, He takes the initiative; He issues the invitation which makes it possible for them, in spite of their blindness and hardness, to return. For first, the call to repentance is coupled with a strong inducement which might penetrate the most hardened culprit, namely, the promise of pardon and reception into favour (Isa. i. 18; Hos. xiv. 1), and secondly, there is the promise of reinforcement and re-enlightenment for the debased and demoralised nature through the energy of God's Spirit. He leads the blind by a way which they know not; He gives strength to the weak; He offers to inspire, lift up, and encourage, as He had done in days of old (Isa. xxxv. 3, 10; Ezek. xii. 19, 20).

§ 3. *The Future expressed in Terms borrowed from the Past*

It is at this point that a special feature of the prophetic writings come to the front. The future is frequently if not constantly described in terms borrowed from the past. The events of earlier ages are introduced both to illustrate Divine action and also to guarantee the fulfilment of Divine promises and threats. The books abound in what may be described as "prophetic forms of thought" based upon narratives known or supposed to be known by a well-instructed Israelite.[1] They add force to the appeals, and they bring God into close touch with the affairs of His people. In some cases there is the same relation between the past and the future that there is in the New Testament between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of His followers, or between the present renewal of the human

[1] See the author's *Grammar of Prophecy* (King's Printers).

spirit by the Holy Ghost and the renewal of the body in the last day by the same Spirit. It is necessary that we should examine the class of passages here referred to in some detail.

§ 4. *The Appeal to Creation*

First among those works of God frequently appealed to is the creation of heaven and earth. Hezekiah feels this to be a strong ground for confidence in prayer when he says, "Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth" (Isa. xxxvii. 16). Similarly, God speaking through Isaiah comforts Israel by reminding them of this great truth:—

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold,
Who hath created these things,
That bringeth out their host by number?
He calleth them all by names
By the greatness of His might,
For that He is strong in power;
Not one faileth" (xl. 26).

Again, when illustrating His authority, God says:—

"I have made the earth
And created man upon it:
I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens,
And all their host have I commanded" (xlv. 12).

Similarly Israel is warned in these words:—

"Thou forgettest the Lord thy Maker,
That hath stretched forth the heavens
And laid the foundations of the earth" (li. 13).

Marks of Divine power are not restricted to any primary creative act. Jeremiah reminds the people in God's name that God has "placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it"; moreover "He gives the rain, both the former (autumn) and the latter (spring) in its season, and reserveth to us the appointed weeks of harvest" (Jer. v. 22, 24).

This constantly recurring thought of the God of Israel as the author of the Universe must have exercised a powerful influence on the godly mind.

§ 5. *The Appeal to History*

Secondly, certain historical events were also ascribed to God's providential ordering and are frequently referred to in the prophetic books either as illustrations or as forms of thought or as guarantees of His faithfulness and power. Thus we have illustrations from the garden of Eden (Isa. li. 3; Ezek. xxviii. 13; xxxi. 8; Joel ii. 3); from the flood in the days of righteous Noah (Isa. liv. 9; Ezek. xiv. 14); from the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain (Isa. i. 9; xiii. 19; xxxiv. 9, 10; Jer. l. 40; Ezek. xvi. 48; Zeph. ii. 9; Lam. iv. 6; Hos. xi. 8); from the call of Abraham and Sarah and their seed (Isa. xxix. 22; xli. 8; li. 2; Micah vii. 20; Ezek. xxxiii. 24; Jer. xxxiii. 26); especially from narratives concerning Jacob and Joseph (Isa. xli. 8, 14; Hos. xii. 12; Amos v. 15); from the work of Moses (Isa. lxiii. 4; Jer. xv. 1; Mal. iv. 4); from the deliverance from Egypt (Isa. x. 24, 26; xi. 15, 16; xii. 2; xliii. 3; li. 12; Jer. ii. 6; xxxii. 30; Amos iii. 1; Micah vii. 15; Hag. ii. 5; Zech. x. 11). The cloud and fire were to be reproduced (Isa. iv. 5), and water from the rock (xli. 18; xlviii. 21), and the Tabernacle or shelter (Ezek. xvi. 10). The punishment connected with the quails is not forgotten (Isa. l. 7), nor the valley of Achor (Hos. ii. 15), nor the sin of Baal-peor (Hos. ix. 10). God is still regarded as dwelling between the cherubim (Isa. xxxvii. 16). Judges or counsellors were to be established as at the first (Isa. i. 26); the people are reminded of the Divine destruction of the Amorites (Amos ii. 9), and of the special position of the house of Levi (Mal. ii. 5), of Joshua's appeal to the sun (Hab. iii. 11), of Ichabod (Hos. x. 5); of the day of Midian (Isa. ix. 4; x. 26); and of the day of Gibeah (Hos. ix. 9; x. 9); and of many things in the life of David, including his words to Goliath (Isa. xxxvii. 17), and of the promises made to his seed (Isa. xvi. 5; xxxvii. 35; lv. 3; Jer. xxxiii. 17; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Amos ix. 11). Nor is Elijah forgotten (Mal. iv. 5). Sometimes there is a complete survey of Israel's history in order to bring home God's dealings with them, and their

own ingratitude and disloyalty; see, for example, Isa. lxiii. 7, &c.; Ezek. xx.; Micah vi.

§ 6. *Revelation of God's Nature and Purposes*

It is plain from a review of these passages that Israel's most notable men were God's living epistles, and that the events connected with the ages of Noah, the patriarchs, Moses, the judges, the kings, and the earlier prophets were stamped upon the memory of the nation, and were to be resuscitated like the ancient writing of a palimpsest in order to make the people realise God in history and to induce them to return to Him who had done such wonderful things for them in olden days and who was still the same unchanging Being.

As we turn over the pages of Isaiah, his fellows and his followers, we realise increasingly their majesty, their sublimity, and their humanity. Who would venture to criticise or even to praise such writings? They speak for themselves. Their verification does not depend upon the immediate fulfilment of some of their utterances, not is it necessarily to be sought in the series of events which constitute the mission of Christ. These, indeed, serve to intensify the conviction that it was the Divine Being who spoke by the prophets. But apart from all such true and full confirmations of our belief, there is the sunshine of the God of love breaking through the clouds of human error and weakness. Many an ancient Hebrew who sighed and groaned over the sins and sufferings of his people must have taken heart again as he pondered over the comfortable words of Hosea, the promise of the Spirit in Joel, the cheering thought of the presence and help of the Shepherd of Israel set forth in Ezekiel, and above all the constant affirmation of the reign of God in Isaiah. The Lord of Hosts was to reign in Zion and in Jerusalem and before His ancients (or elders[1]) gloriously (Isa. xxiv. 23). He was to swallow up death in victory, and to wipe away tears from off all faces, and to

[1] The word answers to that used of the twenty-four elders in the Apocalypse.

take away the reproach of His people from off all the earth (Isa. xxv. 8). How shall this be known to be true? It is enough to add, "For the Lord hath spoken it." Hence the people could remain in perfect peace, their mind stayed upon Jehovah the Rock of Ages (Isa. xxvi. 3, 4).

The restitution of the people depended on this character of God. His power and promise ran side by side, and issued out of the fountain of His everlasting love. Down into the depth of Israel's ingratitude, immorality, unbelief and idolatry the God of their fathers pursued them, seeking, searching and inviting them to come back to their Father's house. And if they did return they would realise that all the glory of their recovery was due to God, and that they themselves were simply monuments of mercy.

CHAPTER IV

THEOLOGY IN THE PSALMS

§ 1. *Characteristics of the Psalms*

THIS collection of sacred hymns is unique. While the authorship is mainly Davidic, some of the compositions are as late as the Babylonian exile, and a few perhaps later. Sometimes they speak with the direct voice of revelation, but at other times with the authority of inspired conviction, so that as a collection they are the Word of God either in the primary and direct sense, or in the secondary and indirect. They are infinitely superior to any strictly devotional books, even to those composed by Christians. In them God is everything to the godly. He is their own God. They speak to Him as to a Father. They pour out their souls before Him with a rush of prayer, and praise, and confidence, as in Ps. cxviii., carrying us along with a swing which no heart can resist. It is the human crying to the Divine, the finite to the Infinite, or rather the child or the whole family to the Parent. They do not stop to theorise or philosophise. All that is within them blesses God's holy name. They revere Him and delight themselves in Him. They extol His attributes, as in Ps. cxlv. He is their strength in times of conflict, and their light in the day of darkness (Ps. xxvii. 2). Every varied phase of life, *allegro* and *penseroso*, personal and national, is boldly brought before His face. He is freely approached and urgently called upon for help in almost the same way as Christ was in later days. Perhaps the tone of praise and triumph and confidence is the most striking and predominant characteristic of the book as a whole. This is based on God's revealed personal attributes, or on something which He has done, either in the writer's experience, or in the past. As

samples of this spirit see Pss. xxiii., xxiv., xxix., xxxiv., xlii., xliii., xlvi., xlvii., lxxi., ciii., civ., cxi., cxxx., cxxxi., cxliv., cxlv., cxlix. Many of the Psalms begin with praise, and then go back to recount some special experience which is the reason of it, *e.g.* Pss. iii., xxx., xxxii., cxvi. Others begin with prayer and close with praise, *e.g.* Pss. xiii., xxii., lv., lxix., lxxix., cix., cxlii. In some the spirit of prayer predominates throughout, *e.g.* Pss. xxvii., xxxv., xxxviii., cxliii.; whilst a few are didactic, *e.g.* Pss. l., cxxxix., or are of the nature of historical *resumés*, *e.g.* Pss. lxxviii., cv., cvi., cxxxv., cxxxvi.

§ 2. *The Secret of their Power*

As one contemplates the Book of Psalms as a whole in the light of their age, and in connection with the prophetic volumes already considered, it is impossible to help inquiring into the secret of the religion thus embodied. Is it of God? or is it of man? How is the strength, the confidence, the joy, the boldness of access, to be accounted for? The more carefully we analyse the contents, the more we are compelled to say, these men knew whom they believed, and He knew them. They are in earnest; they are sincere. Whilst they frequently express their belief in the Divine forgiveness, they know that God recognises and appreciates uprightness in conduct (see Pss. xi. 7; xv. 2; xviii. 21–26; lxxiii. 1). These convictions are evidently fostered by the knowledge of the attributes of God. On the one hand He is a heart-searcher and a judge (Pss. vii., viii., ix., xcvi., xcviii.); on the other hand He is full of compassion, gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth (lxxxvi. 15). However poor and downcast a man might be, still God is a very present help, nigh to all that call on Him in truth, hearing their cry and saving them (cxlv. 8–20).

§ 3. *Their Confidence based upon God's Works in the Past*

The question still presses for a solution: How had the Psalmists attained these deep and grand ideas? The answer

is the same as was obtained in the case of the Prophets. They realised in the present what they had inherited from the past. For example the attributes of God affirmed in Pss. lxxxvi. 15 and cxlv. 8 quoted above are drawn from a noble volume which we have yet to study: they are found in God's direct revelation of Himself to Moses in Exod. xxxiv. 6; they are pleaded by him afterwards in a time of great stress (Num. xiv. 18), and again, hundreds of years afterwards, by Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxx. 9). This revelation in words is accompanied by a revelation in deeds, and the noble works of God in the past are frequently referred to by the Psalmists as the ground of their confidence. Creation and the works of God in nature are freely referred to. Ps. civ. is the story of creation put into poetry. Compare Ps. xxxiii. 6–9:—

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap,
He layeth up the depths in storehouses. . . .
He spake and it was done,
He commanded and it stood fast."

It was easy for a writer who believed this to say, "My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth" (Pss. cxxi. 8; cxxiv. 8), or to see His faithfulness and mercy alongside of His creative power, as in Ps. cxlvi. 5–9:—

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in the Lord his God:
Which made heaven and earth;
The sea and all that therein is,
Which keepeth truth for ever:
Which executeth judgement for the oppressed;
Which giveth food to the hungry."

In the passage just quoted the Creator is called the God of Jacob. Pursuing the thought suggested by this title, we observe the number of references in the Psalms to the patriarchal and Mosaic and Davidic ages. The reference to Melchizedek (Ps. cx. 4) is the most remarkable both because of the mystery which still hangs about him and from the use here made of his "order." The story of Joseph, Moses, and Aaron, the Exodus, Korah, the crossing of the sea and

of the river Jordan, the wilderness life for forty years, the scene at Sinai, the inheritance in Canaan, the times of the judges, and as is natural, later on, the selection of David, the notable promise made to him, and the peculiar position of Zion, Jerusalem and the Temple—these and other events and personages are introduced in the Psalms as well known and engrained in Israel's history, though they were sadly overlooked at times. Many of the reminiscences are in part verbal quotations, though the Authorised and Revised Versions do not always show it: thus the blessing of Num. vi. 25 is recited in Ps. lxviii. 1, and the war-cry in Num. x. 35 is brought to the front in Ps. lxviii. 1 and in cxxxii. 8.

It thus becomes clear that the history of the past was the framework of Divine truth, and was impressed by God's Spirit on the hearts of the singers as a ground of conviction and encouragement. Nor must we forget that the guild of singers and musicians organised in the days of David survived the Captivity and sang the songs of Zion many hundred years later, testifying with voice and sometimes (it is to be hoped) with heart to the grandest truths of Old Testament theology.

§ 4. *The Spirit of Devotion*

The Psalms give voice to the devotional spirit of Christendom. We use these words for praise and prayer. They make the home and throne of God very real to us. In truth we go to heaven every time we call upon the Most High, whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell. We knock loudly again and again, appealing to God to awake and not be silent, and He hears out of His holy place; and He pardons, quickens, guides, and establishes according to our needs. When we get to Him, the past and present and the future become one. Spiritual distance and spiritual time are evidently not to be measured by the standard of earth and of our natural life. Moreover, we get above race distinctions, and realise that all the kindreds of the earth

have an interest in God and God in them. See, for example, Ps. xxii. 27, 28 :—

"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord,
And all the kindreds of the nations shalt worship before Thee;
For the kingdom is the Lord's,
And He is the Governor among the nations."

Again—

"All nations whom Thou hast made
Shall come and worship before Thee
And shall glorify Thy Name" (Ps. lxxxvi. 9).

And—

"The heathen shall fear the name of the Lord,
And all the kings of the earth Thy glory" (cii. 15).

Compare also cxxxviii. 4. It is inspiration which gives this enlargement and enrichment to the thoughts of the Psalmist, and which thus supplies such a precious contribution to the theology of the Bible.[1]

[1] See Dr. James Robertson's Croall Lectures on the *Poetry and Religion of the Psalms*.

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGY IN THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

We are now driven back to the pages of the historical books, which alone can account for the utterances and convictions of the Prophets and the Psalmists. The entrance of the nation of Israel into Canaan is described in the Book of Joshua, and from that book onwards to Nehemiah and Esther we have narratives of what claims to be a series of Divine actions and of things which God actually did. To His power, providence, mercy, and faithfulness they are ascribed; these "noble works" include the very things which are referred to in the Psalms and Prophets.

§ 1. *Lessons of History*

The successes of Israel were due not to Joshua but to the true Captain of the Lord's Host. The Lord was with Joshua as He had been with Joseph and Moses (Josh. i. 5; vi. 27), and as He was subsequently with David (1 Sam. xviii. 14). When the people did wrong, whether individually, as in the case of Achan, or nationally, as so often in the times of the judges, trouble came, and captivity after captivity was the consequence.[1] When they humbled themselves or sought the Lord, He turned to them, raised up deliverers, often saving by few rather than by many, inflicting punishment on the enemy, while chastising His own people. This was the story of centuries. We have sometimes only a few touches in a hundred years; but one Master-hand is seen in them all. During the millennium

[1] The word "captivity" is by no means restricted to the forced deportation under the Assyrians and Babylonians. One Heb. root (גָּלָה) marks "stripping," and is used as early as 1 Sam. iv. 21 of the glory departing from Israel. The other (שָׁבָה) is used of taking prisoners, as in Gen. xxxiv. 29; Num. xxi. 1; 1 Sam. xxx. 33.

from Moses to Nehemiah we have pictures of God's spirituality, providence, compassion, judgment, retribution, and willingness to answer prayer and to forgive His children on their repentance. These were the lessons which were slowly burnt into the minds of this extraordinary people.

A large amount of space is given to the fortunes of David, to his methods of administration, and to the special work of his son Solomon as a Temple-builder. The sins of both are sternly delineated. At times they were "left," as Hezekiah and others were subsequently left (2 Chron. xxxii. 31), to be proved and humbled, as if to bring out the moral weakness of human nature in contrast with the Divine holiness. Israel needed to repent in one sense while God Himself repented in another (1 Sam. xv. 35). The Divine power was exercised through the medium of many agents. These men were often exceedingly imperfect; still with all their frailty they stand out as men of mark—Joshua, and Gideon, and Jephthah, and Samson, and Samuel; David and Hezekiah and Josiah; and they did their work and then stood back, as John the Baptist and the Apostles did in the New Testament times.

§ 2. *History the Key to Theology*

The historical books thus supply the key to much which excites our wonder in the Psalms and the Prophets. Several of the writers and notable persons named in these books are referred to or come to the front in the histories. We have Samuel, David, Jonah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah taking each their part in the affairs of the nation, not as official annalists but as men of God. Their theology as exhibited in the histories is the same as that implied in the later books. Their prayers are as bold and striking as any in the book of Psalms. They take us back, as the later Books do, to certain primary beliefs about God as the God of Creation, as the God of the Patriarchs and as the God who spoke and wrought through Moses in the days preceding those of Joshua.

§ 3. *Prayers of David, Elijah, and Nehemiah*

Take three examples of prayer. When David dedicated to God the rich offering of materials for the Temple he spoke thus: "Blessed be Thou, O Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. . . . O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare (or establish) their heart unto Thyself" (1 Chron. xxix. 10–19). Again, when Elijah made his great appeal to God (1 Kings xviii.) he took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, "Israel shall be thy name," and at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice he came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel." Once more, the solemn confession which followed the reading of the Law in the days of Nehemiah begins thus: "Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein; Thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee. Thou art the Lord God who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham." The prayer pursues the main points of the narrative which had been read in public during the previous days, and identifies God as one and the same Being from the creation of the world to the days of Nehemiah. The unity, eternity, providence, and graciousness of God were evidently believed and received by the leaders of the remnant in the last days of the Old Testament; and their faith was in accordance with the testimony of the most ancient books of the Bible.

CHAPTER VI

THEOLOGY IN THE MOSAIC BOOKS (EXODUS–DEUTERONOMY)

UP to this point we have been investigating the religious literature of Israel, beginning with their entrance into Canaan and closing with their re-entrance after the Babylonian captivity.

THE EXODUS

Our business is now to go back to a preliminary stage in their history which all the later books imply, *i.e.* to the period which includes the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Law, and the desert life. The Book of Exodus finds Israel in Egypt, having grown from a family to a people, and the close of the Books of Numbers and Deuteronomy leaves them on the eastern frontier of Canaan.

The later books are so impregnated with ideas and illustrations taken from this early period that we can almost reconstruct from their pages the leading contents of the four Mosaic books (Exod.–Deut.) together with the names of the chief families springing from the twelve sons of Jacob. But we have to confine ourselves to the theological side of their contents, and we see in their pages three leading manifestations of God, viz. God in history, God in legislation, and God in ceremonial.

§ 1. *The Exodus*

The house of Jacob is introduced on the scene in bitter and cruel bondage, and they cry out in their affliction, and "their cry came up to God . . . and God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them" (Exod. ii. 23–25).

This is the true beginning of the narrative. Then Moses is selected and qualified to be leader, Aaron being his spokesman. Through his agency the series of plagues follow, and at last the family (which had become a nation) moves forth. The Red Sea is crossed and the people are free. It is God's work: "The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians . . . and Israel saw that great work (*lit.* hand) which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses" (Exod. xiv. 30, 31). Thus fear (*i.e.* reverence) and faith became the foundation stones of the national covenant, and they were laid upon the Rock of Salvation; and so they sang, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation" (Exod. xv. 2; compare Ps. cxviii. 14 and Isa. xii. 2).

During the forty years which followed, one mighty deed after another testified to God's nature, power, and character. The waters were healed, the rock was struck, the manna was provided, the enemies were defeated, and signal chastisements were inflicted on the rebellious and the immoral among the people. If anything could persuade this stiff-necked and ungrateful nation that God was acting in nature and providence and through His agent Moses, it was this long series of wonders.

§ 2. *The Legislation*

With regard to the Legislation, it is to be observed that the laws were given in detachments or piecemeal as occasion arose, and that they are recapitulated to a large extent in the parting speeches of Moses.[1] Much ingenuity has been exerted during the last century in seeking to detect differences between these so-called "codes," and inconsistencies between them and the speeches; but our business is with the theology which pervades the whole. It is manifest that the Law is based upon redemption (see Exod. xx. 1). Israel was to be holy because God was holy (Lev. xix. 1). All the

[1] See *Student's Deuteronomy* (King's Printers), where the references to the previous books are given in full for the purposes of comparison.

minutiæ of life were to be sanctified by the words, "I am the Lord," an expression which occurs no less than fourteen times in one chapter (Lev. xix.). The details of the covenant are neither entirely original nor wholly ideal. They are described as what God saw best for the people—"for their good" (Deut. x. 13)—whether during their temporary movements in the desert or after their final settlement in Canaan.[1] They were accompanied with the promise of prosperity if the people would loyally obey them, and with the most severe threats in case of disregard or rebellion. And these promises and threats, which are given at great length in Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii., are frequently referred to in the Books of the Prophets some centuries later. See, *e.g.*, the punishments in Amos iv. compared with the threats in Deut. xxviii.

§ 3. *Ceremonial*

If it is difficult for us to throw ourselves into the legislative requirements of such a nation as Israel when just entering upon an untried life of liberty amidst hostile and demoralised surroundings, it is still harder for us with our present ideas to appreciate their ceremonial system. But this, too, claims to be from God. It has often been noticed that the Law contains no directions for private or public prayer. It is inconceivable, in the light of the Old Testament as a whole, that Israel was not intended or invited to pray, or that they had no houses of prayer or altars as local centres in their towns and villages. But over and above these ordinary means of grace which are not referred to, or barely implied, they had the Tabernacle with its contents, all constructed after a "pattern seen in the mount," also a priesthood whose duties were strictly defined, and who were assisted by other branches of the tribe of Levi, to which they belonged. Thirdly, there was the sacrificial system in its four great branches, with subsidiary offices and rites, all supplemented and corrected by the

[1] See *The Laws and Polity of the Jews*, by E. W. Edersheim; also Lowman's *Civil Government of the Hebrews*, and Michaelis' *Laws of Moses*. Compare also Hammurabi's Code.

notable ceremonial connected with the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi.). Fourthly, there was an elaborate system of ceremonial cleansing; and lastly, there were the annual memorial feasts.

Though given by man, the God of Israel is referred to throughout as the author of this whole system. He is, therefore, finally answerable for its being adapted to the special purpose for which it was appointed. But what is that special purpose? Was it only to put a separation between Israel and the surrounding nations (Deut. vi. 12)? It must have been more than this. The ceremonial, inasmuch as it was in some sense designed by the eternal God, must have really pointed to something spiritual—perhaps to something future. If the feasts reminded the people of the blessings which God showered down on them years before, some of the offerings and cleansings pointed to the sinfulness of sin, and taught them that God was willing to be approached by those who had a contrite heart. Some events were unaccountable at the time, *e.g.* the narrative concerning the brazen serpent, except on the understanding that they pointed forward, and that in due time God would be His own interpreter.

§ 4. *A Prophetical Element in Mosaic Ritual*

When we take a bird's-eye view of the Old Testament as a whole we cannot regard it as an ultimate theology, whether we regard its legislation or its scheme of propitiation. In both respects Christ is the end (*i.e.* the culmination) of the Law. We may succeed in tracing development step by step through the antediluvian, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the prophetic ages respectively; but something is missing; something more is needed. In the New Testament the sacrificial system, with all its failures, and the self-sacrifice of Christ with all its efficacy, are seen side by side, and the one is giving way to the other. Christ actually does the things which the Law ordered and typified, bearing sin yet loving righteousness, tasting death yet overcoming it, breaking down the ceremonial barrier between Jews and

Gentiles, and rending the veil which obscured man's view of God. Standing in those days and looking back on the Mosaic institutions we see that the body of men to whom we owe the Psalms and the prophetic books had not relinquished their hold of Mosaism though their eyes are straining forward to the coming One. God was indeed always the same, but His ways, His dispensations were different. He always took pleasure in those who feared Him; He was always approachable; it was always not God's heart but men's iniquities which separated them from Him (Isa. lix. 2). The complicated ritual of Moses was to give way to something grander, more simple, more effective, more human, more divine. Such passages as Ps. xl. and Isa. liii. pointed the way, and showed that God had some good thing in store. The darkness would pass away, and the true light would shine, and the New Covenant would take the place of the Old.

CHAPTER VII

THEOLOGY IN GENESIS

§ 1. *Importance of the Book*

THE Book of Genesis was not only Israel's first hand-book to Palestine, but also their first manual of theology. It introduces God as the one true Author of the known universe and as making man in His own image. All was originally good. Physical evil, so far as man was concerned, came through disobedience, and that partly through unbelief suggested by the serpent. As the history of the race is further unrolled in this venerable book, God appears as permitting evil but judging the evil-doer. When things are at their worst God repents having made man. He brings a flood upon the ungodly, but saves Noah and his family. Then came the real beginning of Israel's history in the call of Abram. He is placed in a land designed for him, and notable promises are made to him (see Gen. xii.). God cares for him, shields him, rewards him, hearkens to his prayers, and provides for his emergencies; and so it is with his descendants up to the end of the book.

§ 2. *Development of Revelation*

It is important to note the gradual manifestation of God to man. First He is a creator, but though so high He was in close touch with man, so that Enoch and others were described as walking with Him. In the next stage He becomes the God of Abraham. This means a great deal—far more, indeed, than we can understand. Then He becomes the God of Isaac, and the promises made to Abraham are repeated to this child of promise (Gen. xxvi. 3–5). Then God says to Jacob, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac," and once

more the promises are confirmed to him (Gen. xxviii. 13, 14). Accordingly Jacob begins his prayer at a great crisis with the words, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who saidst unto me," &c. (Gen. xxxii. 9). The grant of the land is once more assured to him in Gen. xxxv. 11, when God speaks to him, apparently as one Person to another, and says, "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee." The strange thing is that while this book records the promises made by God, it closes without an indication of their fulfilment. The only bits of land the family possessed were a burial-place and a small portion which Jacob had taken by force from the Amorite (Gen. xlviii. 22). But the book closes with an expression of Joseph's deep conviction, "God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land (*i.e.* Egypt) unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob;" and this oath of God is what is referred to a century later in the passage already quoted from Exod. ii. 24, where we read that "God remembered His covenant with Abraham and with Isaac, and with Jacob."

It was by creation that the power, majesty and personality of God were manifested as "the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of earth" (Gen. xxiv. 3); it was by special personal dealings with the Patriarchs that he was revealed as their God; and it was by the transmission of certain definite promises from generation to generation that His eternity and fidelity were brought out, and men learnt to wait for Him until the fulness of the time had come.

CHAPTER VIII

NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT[1]

§ 1. *Elohim*

THE ordinary word translated by the English word God in the Old Testament is *Elohim* (אלהים). Though plural in form it is usually singular in meaning, and takes a singular verb after it as in Gen. i. 1. It occurs about 2555 times in the Old Testament, and is used in 35 out of the 39 books, the exceptions being Canticles, Lamentations, Obadiah, and Esther. In all but 245 cases it refers to the one living and true God who revealed Himself to Israel and claimed their worship and obedience.

The singular form *Eloah* (אלוה) occurs 57 times, chiefly in Job, almost always of the true God. The Aramaic form of the word is *Elah* (אלה), almost the same as the Assyrian *Ilu;* it is found in Ezra and Daniel, also in the Aramaic message given in Jer. x. 11. Altogether it occurs 37 times.

The still shorter word *El* (אל) is used 204 times of the true God and 18 times of false gods; it occurs in most of the Old Testament books. Its plural form is never used of the true God. An examination of the passages where this word occurs shows that it is frequently used where some attribute of God is set forth, *e.g.* in the expression *El Shaddai.*

Whatever the root and source of these words, there can be little doubt that they stood for the primitive idea or rather revelation of Deity as the First Great Cause of all things.

§ 2. *Jehovah*

The Hebrew name *Jehovah* (יהוה) occurs about 5500 times in the Old Testament. It is found in 36 out of

[1] The contents of this chapter are condensed from chap. ii. of *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (2nd edition, Nisbet).

39 books, the exceptions being Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles. Scholars are uncertain as to its origin, its pronunciation, and its meaning (but see *Old Testament Synonyms*, p. 36). It is incapable of suffixes such as are found in the case of *Elohim;* in fact it is of the nature of a personal name, whilst *Elohim* indicates an office or position. The Hebrew language barely permits of composition except in the case of proper names, but the name Jehovah in a shortened form, answering to the Aramaic and Assyrian *Jahu*, is frequently found in such names as Hezekiah, Elijah, Jehoiakim, and (Moses' mother) Jochebed. The name *Jah* (יה) is possibly the oldest form, or it may be contracted from the larger word.

It has been a source of perplexity that in spite of the fact that the name Jehovah occurs many times in Genesis, especially in the patriarchal history, we read in Exod. vi. 3 that the Lord says, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by (the name of) *El Shaddai*, but (by) My name *Jehovah* was I not known to them." This perplexity is not altogether done away with by the discovery that the name in a slightly different form is found in ancient Chaldean documents.[1] The name must have been known in the days of Abraham, and probably long before, but it was not fully understood. Do we understand it now? The passage just referred to brings out the fact that the Lord had made certain promises to the patriarchs which He was now—400 years after—about to fulfil. Thus His eternity, His faithfulness, and His special interest in the seed of Abraham were to be kept in memory by this name. It was His memorial. On turning back to Exod. iii. 13 we find that Moses had said, "When I come to the children of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers hath sent me to you, and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM. And He said, Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me to you. . . . *Jehovah*,

[1] Prof. Fr. Hommel's *Ancient Hebrew Tradition*, p. 102; Prof. Sayce, *Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 87; Dr. Pinches, *Proceedings of the Soc. Bib. Archæology*, xv. 1.

the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me to you. This is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations." Thus the Being who spoke to the patriarchs, who is named *Jehovah*, and who is described as I AM THAT I AM, is the one living and true God; and His name Jehovah is to be interpreted by the Hebrew root of it[1] which lies in the word I AM. Compare Ps. cxxxv. 13—"Thy name, O Jehovah, endureth for ever; Thy memorial, O Jehovah, throughout all generations;" also Hos. xii. 5, "Jehovah is His memorial." The name is full of memories, and it seems a misfortune that the Jew does not permit himself to pronounce it, and even the Englishman has not fully used it in his Authorised and Revised Versions.[2] It would be better to retain the much criticised pronunciation "Jehovah" than to lose it altogether. Mispronunciation is not confined to this word. We have grecised, latinised and anglicised most of the proper names in the Bible.

§ 3. *Adonai*

The third name or title of God is the word *Adonai* (אדני). In the singular form of *Adon* (אדון), it is used of any lord or master. For example, it is applied to Joseph (Gen. xlv. 9). It is used of God in a few passages, *e.g.* Josh. iii. 11, 13, where we read of "the Lord, or Master, of the whole earth." This passage is referred to with the same title in the singular in Ps. xcvii. 5, also in Micah iv. 13; see also Zech. iv. 14 and vi. 5. In the plural form, though by no means applied only to God, it is frequently used of Him, and is found in twenty-two books of the Old Testament. It gave a sense of rule or possessorship, very much as our English word "Lord" does. It is occasionally found in composite proper names, as Adonizedek, and still more often in conjunc-

[1] The relationship between the words is much the same as that which exists between the name *Eve* and the word translated. *living* (Gen. iii. 20). Thus the name Jehovah seems to denote eternal and essential Being, and is chiefly used of God in relation to man.

[2] The American Standard Revised Version retains *Jehovah* everywhere.

tion with other names of God, especially in prayers, *e.g.* Gen. xv. 2.

§ 4. *'Elion and Shaddai*

The fourth name is 'Elion (עליון), the Most High. It is used thirty-nine times, chiefly in the Psalms, but occurs as early as Gen. xiv. 18, 19, 29, in connection with Melchizedek, also in the vaticination of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 16). It reminds us that God is far above man, that He is the Most High, the Supreme Being.

The name usually translated "the Almighty" is *Shaddai* (שדי). Perhaps "the all-sufficient" would be a better translation (see *Old Testament Synonyms*, p. 32). It marks the Divine bounty, and is used with special force in the promises made to the Patriarchs. It is freely used in Job, and rarely in Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel. It occurs in Num. xxiv. 4, 16, in the mouth of Balaam, and in Ruth i. 20, 21, where Naomi the Moabitess uses it. Occasionally we find it in the composition of proper names, as in the name Zurishaddai,—"the Almighty is my Rock."

§ 5. *Other Titles of God*

There are certain combinations of names and some other titles or expressions of the attributes of God which have to be enumerated and shortly considered.

When we bear in mind the first verse of the Bible it seems natural that God should be called *Creator*, as in Isaiah frequently; but in one passage, strangely enough, the word is in the plural according to the Hebrew punctuation (Eccles. xii. 1). This may be intended to emphasise the thought. Also He is called a *Father* to Israel, though the thought of Fatherhood is not often expressed. He is "*the God of the spirits of all flesh*" (Num. xvi. 22; xxvii. 16), a title which reminds us that the immaterial element in human nature is more godlike than the material. He is "*the Holy One* of Israel" because His holiness is specially manifested in His dealings with His people. Again, He is described as the "*Strength* of Israel" (1 Sam. xv. 29), where the word (נצח) might have been rendered "victory" or "perpetuity."

Compare the expression "the Lord is my strength" (Exod. xv. 2; Ps. lxviii. 35; lxxxvi. 1; xxvii. 1; xlvi. 1). God is universally regarded in the Old Testament as the Fountain of force and energy as well as the spring of life. Thus the conservation of energy is traced to its source. The *Rock* as a sign of stability and security is used six times of God in Deut. xxxii., eleven times in the Psalms, and in twelve other places.

The expression "the *mighty One*" (אביר) is found chiefly in connection with the name Jacob or Israel (Gen. xlix. 24; Isa. i. 24; xlix. 26; lx. 16). Another word signifying "great" (גדול) is used in Deut. vii. 21, 23; and yet another (גבור) in Deut. x. 17, and other passages; whilst in Isa. lxiii. 1—"mighty to save"—the word (רב) signifies abundance. The title "*high One*" (מרום) is used both of God and of His dwelling-place (Micah vi. 6; Isa. xxxii. 15).

A notable and rare expression is found thrice over in Gen. xiv., where God is called "the *possessor* of heaven and earth." The word (קנה) is generally used of purchase or acquisition, but it must have had a special sense in ancient days, and it gives a far-reaching view of ancient monotheism.

God is also called a *Redeemer*, both as a *Deliverer* (פדה) from bondage, and as a *Kinsman* (גאל) who has the right of redemption. He is also a *Keeper* (שמר), a *Deliverer* (פלט or נצל), a *Quickener* (חיה), and a *Saviour* (ישע). This last word is applied to God in His dealings with Israel in 350 passages, the first being Deut. xxxiii. 29. One other notable expression should be mentioned, viz. "The Lord of Hosts" (יהוה צבאות). Sometimes this is applied to lordship over the stellar hosts, sometimes to the angelic armies, and sometimes to the hosts of Israel. It is rather curious that this title does not occur till Samuel's time. If the Pentateuch, Joshua and Judges, had been composed after Samuel's age, we should have found such a fitting title for God freely introduced.

§ 6. *God revealed in His Names*

Such are the primary materials for estimating Old Testament theology. The names of God suggest varied and sublime

aspects of His Being. They appeal alike to our reason, our affection and our conscience. The whole Hebrew Scriptures are thus steeped in theology of the truest and most practical kind. It is not that we have a bare repetition of words and phrases such as we meet with in Mohammedan writings, nor a series of esoteric and mystical formulæ as in ancient Egyptian religion; but we have God in Nature, God in History, and God in Redemption, God inhabiting the spirit world and supreme over the stellar world—these two worlds being harmonious but distinct, as the human mind and the body are distinct.

The Names conserve the ideas; and the history illustrates them. Thus right thoughts of the Infinite were built up in the mind of the finite. Enough was revealed to encourage men to obey, but not enough to make them giddy with the conviction that they had found out all. God was revealed, yet He hid Himself. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. xxix. 29).

CHAPTER IX

THEISTIC MONISM THE BASIS OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

§ 1. *What is Monism?*

MONISM means that all natural phenomena, the whole universe of existence, including man and all sentient beings who may be above him or below him, spring from one source, which must have in it the promise and potency of the whole. This source may be material, *i.e.* capable of being detected directly or indirectly by one or other of the senses, or it may be of some nature which is above or beyond the reach of our present senses. The Old Testament assumes Monism in its first verse, but it is Monism of the second kind. "In the beginning," *i.e.* as far back as the mind can reach,[1] "the heavens and the earth"—taking the widest view of the expression—were "created" or brought into being by "God."

Heaven and earth are always regarded in the Old Testament as solid realities but as non-eternal. They had a beginning and they will have an end. When they have served God's purpose they will be put away like a garment (Ps. cii. 26; Isa. li. 6).

§ 2. *God the Prime Mover*

It is sometimes said that the world presupposes a First Cause, Infinite and Absolute; and we talk of the Finite longing after the Infinite as if these were distinct entities. But translate these words into Old Testament language, and they tell us, as a matter free from all controversy, that

[1] The Hebrew word is so punctuated that it has to be taken in an adverbial sense, and it answers to the word "originally." Compare John i. 1.

God created the world, and that if man does not long after God, at any rate God longs after man, and puts some corresponding feeling into the human heart. Again, it is sometimes argued that because we have a thought of something or some One higher and better than ourselves, therefore such a Being exists. But the Old Testament does better for us than that. It is God that exists, whether we think it or not. It is He who is the Fountain of Life and the Source of light. Is it asked, How do you account for the *Cosmos?* But let us put the preliminary question, Why do you wish to account for it? The Bible tells us that the book of nature is written by God Himself. If any one says, no one wrote the book, or the book of nature wrote itself, that man is stigmatised as a fool (Ps. xiv. 1), for he abnegates thereby his human functions. There is planted in him by his Creator something that leads to the idea of theistic monism. We are mentally constructed to recognise all nature as one, in spite of its superficial diversity.[1] Similarly, the idea of causation is natural to us. Not only does every change in the nature of things involve a cause of some sort, as Aristotle points out in his metaphysics, but ultimately the mind pushes its way back from the endless phenomena of the present to a simpler and again a simpler state of things until we get to a primeval fact—not a state of not-being, but something very different—which is called in Genesis the creation of heaven and earth by God. Reason assents to this revelation, for the only source of change which we are intimately acquainted with is our own immaterial will. All other things are apparently sequences and successions; and our reason refuses to admit that the mere fact of one event always preceding another is all that is to be said about causation. There must be one

[1] See the late Duke of Argyll's *Unity of Nature.* Materialistic monism has been advocated by Haeckel, but Prof. Virchow was strongly opposed to it. Wundt has drawn back from it, and in his second edition of *Human and Animal Psychology* I understand that he says that his first edition weighed on him as a kind of crime from which he longed to free himself. See also Prof. Foster's *Naturalistic and Religious View of the World,* and Rudolph Otto's *Naturalism and Religion.*

living Being at the back of nature from its beginning to its end, invisible, eternal, inscrutable. The matter, ether, electrons, or whatever they may be, together with their natural powers and habits or tendencies (the so-called laws) are the result of the *fiat* of the God of whom the Old Testament speaks throughout its pages. However far-reaching Nature is in its extent and in its *minutiæ*, God tells us through the Hebrew writers that it is all from Him. Whatever happens, He does it, whether it is in a moment or whether it takes myriads of years, whether it is the result of a single divine act of volition or whether what seems to us complicated processes have led up to it, matters not. We may regard God as at rest after certain creative acts, but He is also at work all over the world and every day, sending rain and giving fruitful seasons; we may regard Him as transcendent or above nature, but He is also immanent or resident[1] in nature; we may draw distinctions between what He does in the order of nature and what He does over and above in what seems to us a supernatural sphere; we may thus divide nature (as Romanes says) into the explicable and the inexplicable; still God is the builder and the sustainer of the universe.

§ 3. *God the inexhaustible Spring of all Being*

There is no room, according to the Old Testament, for chance in nature. All is ordered, fixed and sure; and everything is made to contribute to certain great ends. The known earthly creation leads up to man; matter is the scaffolding of mind; physical causation aims at extra-physical results. Where is chance, then? We shall see later that there is a place for chance, but it is not in nature as this word is ordinarily understood. The story of the preparation of the renewed earth for man, which is so simply set forth on the first page of the Bible, is only a sample of what has been going on, perhaps, through endless ages and through infinite space. God did not then first begin to create, and He has not finished yet. While creation creeps

[1] See Clem. Al. *Exhortation*, v. and vi.

round the circumference of time and never arrives at quite the same place—for nature is more like a spiral than a circle —He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, and who inhabits eternity, remains the same spiritual, inexhaustible Being, the Fountain of all goodness, all force, all wisdom, all spiritual and personal existence, whether in the body or out of the body.

§ 4. *God and Nature*

Many students of nature wish to get further back than natural science allows in the direction of a metaphysical but impersonal First Cause. To use the words of the late Professor St. George Mivart in a letter to a friend, they may have "no leaning to atheism or agnosticism, but the inscrutable, incomprehensible energy pervading the universe and disclosed by science differs profoundly from the God worshipped by the Christians." Perhaps, however, the writer of this sentence had not given the same attention to Biblical teaching which he had done to nature. God fills heaven and earth with His presence. He is the sustainer of nature. When we have discovered the real *nexus* of mind and matter in ourselves, we shall be in a better position to discuss the relationship between God and the material universe.[1] Reason itself tells us that the Maker is greater than the made, as the potter is greater than the earthen vessel which he makes—not greater necessarily in size or bulk, for there are some things even in nature which are not to be measured by the standards we apply to ordinary dense matter. At present science is busily engaged in dematerialising matter by reducing it to what is imponderable and can only be measured by the force which it exercises. But however much the researches of science may refine matter, reason tells us that the Maker is eternally distinct from the work of His hands. As Sir Isaac Newton says in his *Principia:* "We are not to consider the world as the body of God, or the several parts thereof as the parts

[1] See on this subject Orr's *Christian View of God and the World.* Professor Orr rightly holds that the Old Testament view of God is unique.

of God. He is a uniform (*i.e.* homogeneous) Being, void of organs, members or parts, and they are His creatures, subordinate to Him and subservient to Him."

§ 5. *Meaning of Creation*

What, then, does the Old Testament mean by ascribing heaven and earth to the creative hand of God? Creation is never defined in Scripture, though it is freely illustrated. The Hebrew word does not define it. All we can say is that it signifies origination and the putting forth of force. It has been explained as "the differentiation of the homogeneous." But we must go a step further back and ask, What was the homogeneous? and how did it come into existence? It is here that philosophy and science, ancient and modern, are at fault. They can imagine, or at least discuss the possibility of, homogeneous matter—shall we call it ether or electricity?—equally dispersed through infinite space; then *something happens*, and in course of time untold myriads of various atoms, molecules, nuclei, and at last worlds are formed, located, enriched, and beautified with vegetable, animal, and spiritual life. But if our imagination can reach as far as this, why should it not go a step further and picture up infinite space with nothing in it, and then "*something happening*," *i.e.* God calls the not-being into being? After all, either way, we come back to God.[1] "He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion" (Jer. x. 13). "He alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. He maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. He doeth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number. Lo, He passeth by me, but I see Him not; He passeth on also, but I perceive Him not" (Job ix. 8–11).

[1] We seem driven to decide between two alternatives: either God made nature or nature made God; or at least that "matter fashioned man." See the treatise on the Manichæans by Alexander, Bishop of Lycopolis, chap. xxi.

§ 6. *Theories of Creation*

Professor Birks (*Supernatural Revelation*, p. 41) distinguishes seven theories of creation: (*a*) The universe was created by a good, self-existent Being, and that evil is inexplicable; (*b*) that the Creator could not be good; (*c*) the Creator is the totality of all existence; (*d*) each object in nature has its own lord; (*e*) there are rival powers of good and evil; (*f*) the Creator is physically omnipotent but morally limited; (*g*) that He is thwarted by malignant powers. All these theories are attempts to harmonise creation with evil. In a later chapter Professor Birks discusses Herbert Spencer's three theories of creation by an unknown God—(i.) The theory of an endless involution—an idea taken up lately by Arrhenius of Stockholm, who compares the universe to a self-winding clock, and would thus solve the problem of perpetual motion which so puzzled our fathers; (ii.) the theory of an endless oscillation, which sounds like the old *flux* theory; (iii.) a self-perfecting theory. None of these theories are really physical; they are simply philosophical speculations. The defect of this class of speculation is that it does not do justice to the recognised phenomena of will-force. See Mozley's *Physical Science and Theology* (Lectures, 1883); Wace's *Christianity and Agnosticism*, p. 193; Flint's *Theism* (Lectures v. and vi.); and Litton's *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*, pp. 70, 97. Sir G. Stokes in his *Gifford Lectures* (first series, p. 87), after reviewing the whole subject in the light of a past eternity, concludes thus: "We have seen how, by the freest indulgence of scientific imagination in tracing the past history of the universe, we are at last led up to the self-existent and uncaused. That name of God, I AM, seems to represent the furthest limit of human thought." Compare Sir Oliver Lodge's *Life and Matter*, which is a forcible answer to Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*. Lodge's *Man and the Universe* has been published since these pages were written; it deserves respectful and watchful study.

§ 7. *Order in the Universe*

What is true of the creation of the universe is true also of the order of nature: *cosmos* is the opposite of *chaos*.[1] We have a sense of order because our minds are endued with it by God, who has stamped all things with it. It is the business of natural science to detect and expound this order; but it is indicated on the first page of the Bible, and this is one sense in which the heavens declare the glory of God. What Habit is to human nature, that Order is to God. The convulsions of the natural world, which are so terrible in their present effects, and which largely contributed to the formation of the upper strata of our globe, are really orderly so far as these causes are concerned, though the results seem to an untrained eye so disorderly. Uniformity in causation does not always produce uniformity in result. Nature has to be read on a large scale and with a practised eye, so that we may detect order in it. The movements of the heavenly bodies, the growth of plants, the specific peculiarities in each kind of plant and animal, the marks of periodicity in human life, the regularity of human needs, the internal structure of the matter as exhibited in its chemical composition—these are among the many witnesses to the fact that the God of creation is a God of order.

§ 8. *Laws of Nature*

Hence it is that we speak of "laws of nature." They are the regulations of the Creator impressed on the material universe. We detect them by repeated and varied observations and experiments, comparing and correcting our first impressions, analysing and testing and correlating until we

[1] Descartes (*Discourse on Method*) pictures up chaos as arranging itself in such a way as to produce order by means of certain divine laws of nature "without discredit to the miracle of creation." But the Biblical idea contained in Genesis i. 2 is very different from that of Hesiod (*Theog.* 116).

can say definitely, This and that are laws of nature. The Old Testament says all this shortly. It is not a work on chemistry or physics, but it puts the key of nature into our hands in its first chapter. It tells us that Divine force works in an orderly fashion; in other words, that God appeals to our sense of power and of order in all that He does. It teaches us that nature is a system on a vast scale. The order in it is for the good of the whole, and in accordance with the design of the whole.[1] All physical forces are correlated, for nature is one, and will never clash. Seeming inconsistencies prove in the long run to be in harmony. This has been shown in astronomy, and in such an ordinary thing as the expansion of water at freezing point. But it must be added that whilst a reason may often be found for a phenomenon such as that just mentioned, a physical cause cannot always be detected. No one has succeeded as yet in detecting the nature of force.[2] All that the student can do is to point out what it does and under what circumstances. The Bible solves the matter by saying that "force belongs to God" (Ps. lxii. 11). Science has told us much during the last half-century about the persistence or continuity of force in nature, about the conservation of energy and its dissipation, and all the scientific formulæ which have been arrived at by long and exact study of phenomena testify to the unity of nature, but they leave us knocking at the door of heaven and asking that we may be permitted to take one step more, and step from dematerialised nature to its spiritual author. Still God hides Himself. He seems to say to every effort of human genius and research, "Hitherto shalt thou go and no further." "I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man labour to seek it out yet he shall not find it; though a wise man think to know it, yet he shall not be able to find it" (Eccles. viii. 17).

[1] Lactantius, one of the most "modern" of the Fathers, writes admirably on unity and order in nature.

[2] See the works of Professors Balfour Stewart and Tait, also the Duke of Argyll's *Reign of Law*, and Lord Grimthorpe's *Origin of the Laws of Nature.*

§ 9. *Design in the Universe*

What is true of order is true also of design.[1] What we feel in ourselves we see round us in nature, and we rightly ascribe it to God. It is, in fact, part of His revelation. There is mechanism in the heavens, and there is mechanism in the human frame. The one is the work of God's fingers (Ps. viii. 3), and the other was fashioned by Him day by day in the period preceding birth (Ps. cxxxix. 13–16). In human mechanism something is proposed or purposed (which is the same word), then the means for carrying out the purpose are sought, the work is executed, and the machine is set to do its appointed task. It may be as simple a thing as a wedge, or as complicated as an ocean steamer. Still it shows mind. Similarly mind—not human—is shown in the machinery which works when we swallow our food, in the muscles which regulate the movement of the eye, in the provision and arrangement of joints, in the chemistry of the digestive system, in the contraction of the muscles, in the relation of the senses to the brain, and in the gift of conscious life, without which all the rest would be in vain.

The pioneers of research, *e.g.* Bacon and Leibnitz, write strongly against the intrusion of the doctrine of final causes into the domain of natural science. Still it has its place, and it appeals to an influential department of human nature. It is strange that so many objections have been made to the use of the word "design" in respect of creation. All agree that nature is useful to man, but some suggest that there is no proof that it was intended to be useful—that it is a mere accident, for example, that coal and petroleum are stored up in the earth, though we know that without them large portions of the world would be uninhabitable; or that the lodestone should be provided, without which we could not cross the seas! Many things in the vegetable and animal world are attributed to blind *conatus*, but even that *conatus* should produce the results needs far-reaching design.

[1] Lactantius writes excellently on design in nature. Descartes is cautious: "It is by no means probable that all things were created for us in this way that God had no other end in their creation" (*Principes*, Part iii.).

The Hebrew Scriptures teach us that God had not only a will to create, but that He had a purpose in creation, and all subordinate operations in nature subservient to some great purpose. Biblical theology teaches us that the last Being to be created is the first in the purpose of the earthly system. It is man who is provided for and who is designed with the intention that he should be godlike. Nothing in the whole scheme of nature was left to chance. We see the adaptation of materials and the adjustment of means to end at every step, as in the wing of a bird; we see several steps converging to great results, as in the relations and harmonies between the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds; we study these things again and again in every department of nature, and at length we are well-nigh compelled by the convergence of the evidence to say, "Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not."

§ 10. *Design in Growth*

It is sometimes objected that while design can be traced in man's workmanship it is not so in nature, because "things grow."[1] But surely the phenomena of growth are in themselves marks of design. If man could make things grow—clothing, for instance—as God makes the grass to grow upon the mountains, would he not gladly do it? Mechanical geniuses are always aiming at producing automatic machinery. And an automatic machine is a monument to man's ingenuity; but, after all, we can get nothing out of the machine except what has previously been put into it. So it is in nature. Every plant, every animal, is an automatic machine. "The earth bringeth forth of its own accord" (lit. automatically), "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark iv. 28). This is so because God has arranged it, and so we read (Gen. i. 11): "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind; and it was so."

[1] See Sir G. Stokes's second series of *Gifford Lectures*, chap. vi., in which he specially discusses the eye, on which so much has been said *pro* and *con* since the days of Paley's natural theology; compare Professor Flint's *Theism* (notes, pp. 397 and 419).

§ 11. *Design in Instinct*

It seems hardly reasonable to speak of "blind purpose," or, as it has been ironically called, "unintentional intention"; the endless agencies in nature are supposed to give signs of purpose, but the agent is supposed to be acting without knowing it—as if by a word of command which incites something or produces in something a tendency or an instinct to do certain things. It is true that nature abounds in blind instincts—and unconscious tendency to prepare for an unknown result—for example, in the case of nest-building or of a hen turning her eggs, or of a bee providing itself with food and water before swarming. These things are not the result of scientific training. They are to some extent unwitting. Consequently they must be put down to the account of the Being who originally brought them into existence and provided them with power for getting their food and continuing their species. Nature is rich in ingenuity, and it may be difficult to draw the line between inherited instinct and reason, as in the case of the mother partridge pretending to be lame that she may draw pursuit away from her offspring; but sooner or later we find ourselves back in the first page of our Bible, which is the root of Old Testament theology. God spoke—His mind found expression—and it was done.[1]

The distinction between animal and vegetable life is as marked in Scripture as it is in nature, but there are conspicuous analogies between them. What instinct is in the one, unconscious tendency is in the other, whilst there is ingenuity of process in both. If we are struck with the skill of the beaver, and artifice of the trap-door spider, and the hexagonal work of the bee, we are equally struck with the tendril of the vine, the turpentine covering of the horse-chestnut bud, the method of scattering seed in the balsam, and the fertilisation of the nasturtium. These and

[1] The word "directionism" used by Sir G. Stokes in his *Gifford Lectures* is a useful term to illustrate the mode in which the Divine Spirit produces, suggests or develops specific faculties (pp. 159 and 245). It certainly tends to make some evolutionary doctrines more reasonable.

myriad other contrivances are means to ends. As Professor Sachs says of them in his *Text-book on Botany*, "they have the appearance of being the result of the most careful and far-sighted calculation and deliberation."

It is needless to go further down the scale of Being except to remind ourselves that the very atoms from which all nature is constructed bear the marks of being "manufactured articles" (Herschel and Clerk-Maxwell).

§ 12. *Romanes on Design*

When George Romanes wrote his *Candid Examination of Theism*, he thought that the argument from design was neutralised by the theory of the persistence of force and the primary qualities of matter. Later in his life he thought that evolution did away with design because things adapted themselves to their surroundings, whilst if they failed to do so they perished. This, which seems to many a most unconvincing assertion, hardly satisfied Romanes himself in later days, and he ultimately fell back on the conspiring of many tendencies to produce a *Cosmos*. "It is against all analogy," he concluded, "to suppose that such an end could be accomplished by chance." What is the *causa causarum?* Is it Power guided by Purpose? Or must we accept Spencer's theory that "uniformity of law follows from persistence of force"—in other words, that existence leads to causality? But how about specific determination of force? Hence Romanes was driven to conclude that physical causation springs from an extra-physical cause, and so the searcher after truth approaches Biblical Theism, which teaches us that God is the author and designer of nature. This is the fundamental conception of the living and true God.

§ 13. *View of Lucretius*

When Lucretius propounded his atomic theory of the universe—though it is really more molecular than atomic—he rejoiced in the thought that he had banished the gods from the world; there was nothing left for them to do

except to enjoy themselves. However ingenious Lucretius and his predecessors were, they made the greatest mistake in thinking that any theory of physical atoms could be realised without a creator and supreme ruler, and at times he seems to have suspected that something was missing in his scheme.[1] The ideas which these Epicureans propounded have been much lauded, and perhaps deservedly, during the last half-century by Professors Huxley and Tyndall, but they are excessively fanciful and do not contain a rational working scheme of nature. It was as well, however, that the gods whom Lucretius knew about should be banished from men's minds; but He in whom the philosopher lived and moved and had his being was waiting to be revealed, and within a century after the time when this remarkable man wrote, a Jewish prisoner was proclaiming in the same city the Gospel of Christ, which was the practical outcome of the grand theology of the Old Testament.

[1] See *Lucretius, Epicurean and Poet*, by Masson.

CHAPTER X

MAN THE LINK BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD

§ 1. *Creation of Man*

OUR attention has been frequently directed in the course of the last chapter to the faculties and methods of human beings as throwing light on the relation of God to the universe. We must now examine more definitely what Old Testament theology has to say about human nature, both at its best and also at its worst—for *corruptio optimi pessima*. Man is plainly included in the *Cosmos* and is described as the last Being or "kind" brought into existence on the renewed surface (*i.e.* the upper stratum) of the earth, and to him is given dominion over all the rest.

Man is at the top of an ascending scale. He is built of the same materials as the rest of the organised world, and as there are analogies between plant-life and animal-life, so are there relationships between the lower and the higher animals, so far as regards their internal physical structure. Whether there is a definite ancestry through birth from below, as evolutionists hold, or whether the rapid changes in the *fœtus* from the time of conception to birth (which seem so like a condensed ancestry) are really only the method of the Creator naturally adopted for the construction of each individual; at any rate, man is reached, and he stands alone. Every "kind" of creature is a *terminus* of development; and man is such a terminus, and is marked off from all the other creatures physically, mentally, spiritually.

The Psalmist, after looking up into the glorious heavens on a splendid oriental night, looks down, or rather within, turning from the work of God's fingers in the brilliant stellar universe to poor weak man,[1] the child of Adam.

[1] Note the distinctions in Hebrew between the various words for "man," vide *Old Testament Synonyms*, chap. iii.

How wonderful that God should be mindful of him and should visit him (Ps. viii. 3, 4). One thing in especial David singles out which is peculiar to the human race; it is Dominion. We are thus taken back in thought to the original utterance of Gen. i. 26. In Ps. cxliv. 3 the question is asked again, "Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him, and the son of man that thou makest account of him." He is compared to vanity, and his days are as a shadow that passeth away. Yet God is everything to him. See also Job vii. 17, 18.

§ 2. *Nature of Man*

It is evident from these passages that the relation of God to man is something peculiar, and that the more it is regarded in the light of creation as a whole, the more wonderful it proves. Wherein is the marvel? Is it in his body? Certainly a human body is a marvel, whether we regard it as a growth or as a piece of workmanship. But, after all, it is a means to an end. It is the cradle and the nursery of one who dwells in it—the true man. The senses bring him into touch with the outer world; eyesight, which has been rightly called the cosmic sense, introduces him to the solar and the stellar systems. His limbs are his servants, carrying him whither he needs and doing what he wants—within certain limitations. His brain is his thinking machine and his central intelligence department. The fact that he inhabits the framework of flesh and blood accounts for many of his feelings and desires, such as pain and hunger, whilst the circumstance that he is one of a large family explains many other departments of his nature, such as love. But there is still something else to be accounted for. God has adapted the structure of man to his earthly habitation and to his social surroundings—for man was never intended to be alone—but He has also adapted him for the carrying out of a special purpose, before which all things sink into insignificance. "Let us make man in our image after our likeness" (Gen. i. 26; v. 1; ix. 6).

§ 3. *Man's Relationship to God*

Man was made to be godlike, and was therefore capable of becoming godlike in thought, character, speech, and action. If it be true that each kind of creature is to be studied structurally in the light of that which is higher, it must be true that the human at its best must be read in the light of God. The short but pregnant sentence quoted above, which is emblazoned on the first page of the Bible, gives us a new idea about God. It is not only the significant use of the plural "us" and "our" but also the purpose that human beings should be admitted into fellowship with their Creator, a purpose which no other earthly creature was appointed to fulfil. Hence it is that so much is said in the Old Testament about man knowing God and walking in God's ways, and so much about human beings becoming God's people, and about His dwelling among them. Hence it is also that, when men went astray, the prophets were sent to bid them return, and that God is represented as making it easy for them to do so, but chastising them when they failed and refused; pitying them as a father (Ps. ciii. 13), and comforting them as a mother (Isa. lxvi. 13), rising up early and calling them (Jer. vii. 13), visiting them with the rod for their offences (Ps. lxxxix. 32), but drawing them with the cords of a man (Hos. xi. 4), and meeting them on their return (Isa. lxiv. 5).

§ 4. *The Human Conscience*

It is evident that there is not such an absolute gulf between the nature of God and the spiritual side of human nature as some suppose. It is too daring to say that God is human, but we are compelled to say that the human spirit is divine. In truth there is a remarkable testimony to God in man which neither length of time nor depth of iniquity can obliterate. It is the conscience. In his essay on "Atheistic Explanations of Religion," the late Mr. R. H. Hutton discusses the view of Feuerbach that God is only

an image projected into nature from ourselves, and that there is no corresponding reality. After pointing out objections to this view Hutton leads to the subject of moral obligation, which Feuerbach has strangely ignored. "The consciousness of moral obligation, and that of moral freedom which accompanies it, are due to no abstracting process such as Feuerbach uses to explain our conceptions of God. They are the essential characteristics of a very positive experience which, from its universality, and at the same time its absolute independence of space and time relations, forces on us the sense of a Power which besets our moral life, while absolutely penetrating all the conditions of our physical existence. . . . The experience of moral responsibility first inspires, and the personal appeals of Providence deepen, the trust in the moral Power which embraces us."

It is true that the word "conscience" is not to be found in the Old Testament, but the thing is there. It caused Adam to hide (Job xxxi. 33; Hos. vi. 7); and it enabled Joseph to resist temptation (Gen. xxxix. 9). It is the voice of God in the soul of man, acquitting and condemning, a silent testimony to the fact that there is in God not only force whereby He creates, and wisdom whereby He adapts, but also righteousness whereby He rules; and it is in this respect most of all that man has to obey and be godlike. Channing rightly says: "God becomes a real being to us in proportion as His own nature is unfolded within us. . . . In proportion as we approach and resemble the mind of God, we are brought into harmony with creation; for in that proportion we possess the principles from which the universe sprang; we carry within ourselves the perfections of which its beauty, magnificence, order, benevolent adaptations and boundless purposes are the results and manifestations. God unfolds Himself in His works to a kindred mind."[1] It is this truth to which the Old Testament points in its often repeated utterance, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (*cf.* Job xxviii. 29; Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7; ix. 10).

[1] Discourse on "Likeness to God."

§ 5. *The Angels*

While man is the topstone of the visible creation according to the first page of the Old Testament, there are other beings in the universe, frequently referred to in the Old Testament, who occupy still higher grades of existence, and whose origin, nature, and destiny are barely touched upon. We have no English name for them, but we use the Greek rendering "angels," though the word "agents" perhaps represents the Hebrew and the Greek more accurately. They are "the sons of God" who rejoiced at the laying of the foundations of the earth and who stand before the throne of God (Job xxxviii. 7; i. 6), they are the hosts of the Lord who were seen by Jacob at Mahanaim, and whose Captain presented Himself before Joshua (Gen. xxxii. 1; Josh. v. 14; compare 1 Kings xxii. 19). The knowledge of the existence of these throngs of superhuman beings must have exercised a strong influence on the Hebrew mind. It kept them from being puffed up by their pre-eminence over nature, and from being cast down by the burdens of earthly trouble.

To use the words of a popular French writer: "Man is the last link of visible creation. With him closes the series of living beings which we are permitted to contemplate. Beyond him there extends, in a world hidden from our view, a train of beings of a new order, endowed with faculties superior and inaccessible to our comprehension, mysterious phalanxes, whose place of abode even is unknown to us, and who after us form the next step in the infinite progression of living creatures by whom the universe is peopled. Situated as he is on the confines of this unknown world, on the very threshold of this domain, which his eye if not his thoughts may not penetrate, man shows to some extent the attributes belonging to those beings who follow him in the economy of nature. Doubtless it is this which makes it so difficult for us to comprehend the actual essence of man, his destiny, his origin, and his end."[1]

[1] Figuier's *Human Race.*

CHAPTER XI

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

THE nature of God is revealed and illustrated in the Old Testament partly by means of analogies presented by human nature, and partly in the way of contrasts. Each of these methods has to be borne in mind in the following brief analysis.[1]

§ 1. *God a Personal Being*

First, God is personal. This is marked by the name I AM, and by the constant use of such expressions as "I will," "I command." It is also illustrated by such actions as only a personal Being can perform, though force is essentially of the nature of will-force. This has already been referred to in part. Divine personality, however, is not necessarily the same in all respects as human. The author of personality must be at least personal, though the I in His case is sometimes better expressed as WE.

§ 2. *God Capable of Feeling*

Secondly, He has personal feelings which are constantly appealed to and aroused by the condition of His creatures.

[1] To cite patristic and modern discussions on the contents of this chapter would be an endless task. Reference, however, may be made to Theophilus of Antioch and Lactantius, to Descartes and Leibnitz, to the magnificent work of Charnocke on the attributes of God (little read now because of its length and style), to the works of our great English theologians including Thomas Jackson, an abridged edition of whose commentary on the Creed has lately been issued, and to the series of modern writers such as Chalmers, Flint, Stokes, and Orr. But these are only samples; and, after all, there is nothing like the Old Testament itself, especially when read in the light of the New. In Friedländer's *Text-book of the Jewish Religion* the primary attributes of God are unity, incorporeity, eternity, and omnipotence, and to these are added—as moral attributes—kindness and goodness, justice, holiness, and perfection.

He is not an impassive Personage, dwelling alone far from the turmoil of human life. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity. He takes pleasure in His people, though they frequently vex His holy Spirit (Isa. lxiii. 10). The Oriental idea of God as an unmoved centre of all being, and of *Nirvana* as an ideal existence, is not a Biblical one. On the contrary, God is described as full of zeal, abounding in activity, and feeling intensely. His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel (Judges x. 16), and in all their afflictions He was afflicted (Isa. lxiii. 9). Thus, though unchangeable as to His nature He is not imperturbable as to His feeling. What a false note is to a musical ear, that wrongdoing is to God.

§ 3. *God a Spirit*

God is wholly and essentially a Spirit.[1] Though this is not directly stated in the Old Testament, it is implied in such passages as Isa. xxxi. 3. While man is a composite being, of flesh and of the dust as to his body, though divine as to his spirit. But what do we mean by this word "spirit"? It stands primarily, though not exclusively, for what is immaterial and beyond the sphere of the senses. Hence while man is visible and palpable, God is invisible and impalpable. Consequently, He can only be presented to the cognisance of man either by His assuming a form or an actual nature lower than His own (yet retaining His eternal and essential Being), or by spiritualising and quickening the perceptive powers of men, so that they can see the invisible. One or other of these processes is frequently referred to in the Old Testament, *e.g.* in Exod. xxiv. 10, 11 (where note the two Hebrew words translated "saw," one being the ordinary word for eyesight, the other marking abnormal or supra-sensuous perception). The idea of "spirit" is illustrated in many languages, as in Hebrew and Greek, from Wind and

[1] The word "spiritual" does not occur in the Old Testament except by a mistranslation of Hos. ix. 7, nor is it found in the New Testament till we reach the Epistles. For the full meaning of the word "spirit," as distinguished from "soul," see *Old Testament Synonyms*, chap. iv.

Breath, which represent unseen Force and Feeling. After all, we must remember that the essence of manhood, the human spirit, is invisible. Hence the utterance of Theophilus of Antioch, "Show me thyself and I will show thee God" (*To Autolycus*, i. 2). The Father of our spirits, the God of the spirits of all flesh (Num. xvi. 22; xxvii. 16), must needs be spiritual, *i.e.* His nature must respond to what is highest, best, and most permanent in the human spirit.

§ 4. *God Eternal*

Man is a creature of time, but God is eternal. He is always the same and changes not (Ps. cii. 27; Mal. iii. 6). A thousand years are to Him as one day—that is to say, they do not affect Him as they affect us, though they are all measured out by Him (whether through movements of the heavenly bodies or through the periodicity of life and the throbbing of consciousness) for the benefit of His creatures.

§ 5. *God Almighty*

Man is weak, but God is omnipotent. We soon come to the end of our strength, physical or mental; but "He fainteth not, neither is wearied" (Isa. xl. 28). When we consider His works in creation we see that practically there is no end of His greatness and of His power. All action, all movement, all change in the visible and invisible worlds spring directly or indirectly from Him. What the sun is to the solar system that God is to the physical and super-physical universe. Having once realised this, we are driven to conviction that nothing is too hard for Him to do (Gen. xviii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 17, 27), though we have to except from this general statement everything which is contrary to His essential nature or to His eternal purposes, in fact, to His Will.

§ 6. *God is All-Seeing*

Man is ignorant, but God is omniscient. We are slow to learn and swift to forget. Even the most gifted in one department finds his limitations in another. We may know

much about microbes or atoms, but very little about music or about the human heart. We may look at a man without detecting his real character or what he is thinking about at the moment; at best we cannot attend to many things at a time. But the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth (2 Chron. xvi. 9; Zech. iv. 10). To Him all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Him no secrets are hidden (Ps. xliv. 21; Jer. ii. 22; xvi. 17).

The affairs of the individual, of the world, of the universe are within His cognisance, the whole being spread out before Him like a map.[1] The darkness is no darkness with Him, nor is the distance any distance with Him (Ps. cxxxix.). Is this inconceivable to us? Yes; and so are the wonders of modern physics.

§ 7. *God Present Everywhere*

Man, owing to his material frame, occupies a portion of space. He is there and nowhere else, and if he moves that first place is vacant. But it is not so with God. He is everywhere. He fills heaven and earth with His presence. His true Temple, of which the earthly Tabernacle and Temple were types, is in heaven (1 Kings viii. 27; Jer. xxiii. 23, 24). Zion and Jerusalem in Palestine were but steps in the ladder which faith mounts when seeking the Most High. Wherever man is, there God is; wherever nature is, there God is. The words "up," "down," "high," "low," which we are driven to adopt in such discussions, are only used figuratively and provisionally until we learn a better language. God is the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity; He dwells in the high and holy place, but He dwells also in a better sense in the heart of the humble (Isa. lvii. 15). The word "immanent" simply means resident, and God's dwelling-place is properly spiritual. Heaven is His throne and earth is His footstool (Isa. lxvi. 1), but they are as distinct from Himself as an earthly throne and footstool are from an earthly king. In His house are many mansions or spheres

[1] Dwight's *Theology*.

(Amos ix. 6), adapted doubtless to many kinds of beings, and "the Lord is among them" (Ps. lxviii. 17).

§ 8. *God free from all Limitations*

To sum up this part of our inquiry, man is a creature of limitations, physical and mental, but God is unrestricted, infinite,[1] absolute, except only where His character or His fixed determination impose limitations on His action, and it is to this question of character that we must now devote our attention.

[1] The word "infinite" only occurs three times in the Old Testament. In Ps. clxvii. 5 it means "without number," and in Job xxii. 5 and Nah. iii. 9 it means "without end."

CHAPTER XII

MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

IT would be difficult to a speculative mind to associate personality with the God who is revealed in the Old Testament as Creator of the universe were it not for other elements in the Divine nature which answer to our idea of moral character.[1] God's moral attributes are gathered up in His Name, which stands for His Nature, and is manifested in His actions. Hence it is that we read much about the Name of God in the Old Testament, and that He is so often described as acting in a particular way for His Name's sake.

§ 1. *Unity of God's Moral Attributes*

When Moses asked to be allowed to see the glory of God, it was His Name that passed before him (Exod. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 3). It contained certain definite elements of character which we best realise when we put ourselves under their influence, and begin to act them out personally. It was said by Channing that "God is the infinite moral will, pure unmixed goodness and disinterestedness." But Scripture invites us to look at Him more observantly than this, though with reverence and godly fear. Archbishop Magee (the elder) in his work on the Atonement reminds us that "our narrow views compel us to conceive the attributes of the Supreme Being as so many distinct qualities; whereas we should conceive of them as inseparably blended together,

[1] "The voice of conscience within us speaks to us of a Personal Being, to whom we are accountable, and in whom we seem, as it were, to be isolated. In this conception we, to a certain extent, are apt to lose sight for the moment of His government of all the hundreds of millions of our fellow-men and of all the vast universe, of the immensity of which the present state of our scientific knowledge gives us such an exalted conception" (Stokes, *Gifford Lectures*, first series, p. 161).

and His whole nature as one great impulse to what is best." Yes, but what *is* best? What are these distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, which we are compelled to face? In answering such questions as these, we have to put aside all reference to what is physical, and therefore due to our structure as composite beings.

§ 2. *Man's original Nature illustrates God's Eternal Moral Attributes*

As we have seen that the laws of nature, and the intelligence which perceives them, spring from something analogous to force, order, and intelligence in the Creator, so we may conclude that man's moral sentiments and impulses come from a Being who has something corresponding to them in His nature; only we see them in an imperfect light and in separate divisions answering to the phases of human nature and to the necessities rising from God's dealing with man. When probed to their depth we discover that all elements of character are correlated, as physical forces are, and when our moral conceptions are enlarged, perhaps we shall see them as one, or, at least, as harmonious. That one central and essential characteristic is *goodness* (Ps. xxvii. 13), and all that is contrary to it is evil. He that loves goodness loves God, and he who loves evil hates God—though he may not know it. Righteousness is goodness in action. The righteous God loveth righteousness (Ps. xi. 7); all His ways are upright (Ps. xxv. 8). The man who walks in those ways walks with God and pleases God (Gen. v. 24, Hebr. and LXX.). It is a pleasure to such a man to obey the Divine law; the law is in *his* heart, because it is in *God's* heart. Right is eternal, because God is eternal. As we can give up our pleasure for the good of another person, say a child, so we can submit our will and our keenest desires to the will of God, and after all it is He who draws us and inspires us and enables us to yield to that will (Ps. xxv. 4; xxvii. 11; cxix. 112; cxliii. 10).

§ 3. *Justice and Mercy*

The justice of God is really the same as His righteousness. When it becomes administrative it exhibits itself as judgment, in the best sense of the word; and so Abraham, in discussing the fate of Sodom, uttered the grand words, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do judgment?" (Gen. xviii. 25). It is in accordance with this truth that duty is summed up in a supreme love to God (Deut. vi. 5). This love implies not only admiration and appreciation of the Divine character, but also a strong desire to walk in God's steps.

In human affairs justice and mercy are often contrasted, but not rightly. Mercy is an element in true justice, and is included in our idea of equity—that which is straight or right—and it takes into consideration many things which a short-sighted or impulsive justice ignores. God not only counts but weighs our actions, and is not led away by externals or caprices (1 Sam. ii. 3; xvi. 7; 2 Chron. xix. 7). The English word mercy (*misericordia*) means pity, and pity means piety, and so it leads us up to God, who shows His power most chiefly in deeds of mercy and pity, and whose mercy endureth for ever; only God's mercy and pity are not mere amiable weaknesses. He does not clear the guilty.[1] Disobedience has to be dealt with. It rouses in Him feelings which are best expressed by such words as anger; nevertheless, where there is penitence there is forgiveness.

The teaching of the Old Testament on this subject is very rich and instructive. God holds the door of pardon open, and waits, and calls, until at last the sinner returns, or the hour of grace has passed away. But forgiveness itself, whilst free to the recipient—for this is the meaning of the word "grace"—may impose a heavy sacrifice on the donor, and may lead to vast results. This thought is embodied in the words "redemption" and "atonement," and is indicated more or less distinctly both in the Law and in the Prophets, either directly or by means of illustration.

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 7; Num. xiv. 18; Nah. i. 3. In these related passages the word "guilty" (or wicked) is in italics, yet some such word is implied. The Hebrew words touched in this section are dealt with in *Old Testament Synonyms*, chaps. viii., ix., x.

§ 4. *Faithfulness*

Another element in the moral nature of God is His faithfulness. We expect it and honour it in our neighbours, and God demands it from us. It implies truth, honesty, uprightness, and the keeping of covenants, promises, and oaths. In this respect, as in others, God is a law to Himself. He has always known what He would do, and He remembers His oath and fulfils His promise. Not one good thing fails of all that He speaks (Josh. xxi. 45; xxiii. 14; 1 Kings viii. 56). The Hebrew words translated "promise" in the Old Testament mean "to speak," and they are always applied to God. Thus the Scripture may be specially regarded as a charter of Divine promises, which are numerous, manifold, far-reaching, and faithful. God's faithfulness is unto all generations (Ps. cxix. 90).

§ 5. *Holiness*

The last element in the Divine character is holiness,[1] which seems to include all. Negatively it means separation from all which is impure, evil, and unworthy. But who shall venture to interpret it positively? It would be like interpreting light. We are content to say with the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. vi. 3). Human holiness is at best like the light of the glow-worm compared with that of the sun, and after all it is a borrowed light; but God is the Fountain, and He eternally loves that which is good and true and righteous. This constitutes His holiness.

To sum up. God is perfect—in His nature, in His attributes, and in His work. That which man is taught and inspired to aim at, and which he may attain in some degree, God *is* (Deut. xxxii. 4; 2 Sam. xxii. 31).

[1] We have to distinguish the word חסיד ("saintly" or "merciful") from קדוש ("holy"). A similar distinction exists in the LXX. and the Greek Testament between ὅσιος and ἅγιος.

CHAPTER XIII

GOD'S RIGHTEOUS ADMINISTRATION

§ 1. *Provision for Human Training*

THE human race is one vast family. This was intended from the beginning. Consequently, provision had to be made by God, in the nature of things, for the righteous administration of the world at large. The words "provision" and "nature" just used are not opposed to one another. Providence is part of nature, and nature is part of providence. The only distinct meaning of the word "natural," says Bishop Butler, is "stated, fixed, or settled"; since what is natural as much requires and presupposes an intelligent agent to render it so—that is, to effect it continually or at stated times—as what is supernatural or miraculous does to effect it for once.[1]

§ 2. *Moral Government*

The whole framework of society—as we now see it—provides a field or fabric whereon human life, character, and destiny are worked out. Accordingly, if a man does right, things go well with him in the natural order of things; and if he does wrong, he suffers for it. This, at least, is the normal state of things. We may not always see it, and the fruit of our doings may be slow in developing; but it is there. It shows itself in the long run. Sometimes the relationship between virtue and prosperity, and between vice and adversity, may be seen at once and in a glaring way. Many a man in Old Testament days showed his sin on his countenance; and so it is now. In other cases the fathers ate sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge (Jer. xxxi. 29; Ezek. xviii. 2). The soul that sins dies;

[1] *Analogy*, i. 1; on the subject of the present and following chapters compare his discussion "On the Moral Government of God."

but it may, before dying, leave its sting in its successors, as well as in its contemporaries. "One sinner destroyeth much good" (Eccles. ix. 18). There is not the exact adjustment, and *quid pro quo*, which human justice is sometimes supposed to aim at, and which is usually called retribution; but the larger the view we take of human affairs, the more clearly we read the righteous administration of God. In its essence the Divine judgment is secret. God hides Himself. But "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Ps. xxv. 14); and the secret sinner may have hidden tortures. At any rate, sooner or later a man who "sows the wind, reaps the whirlwind" (Hos. viii. 7).

§ 3. *Call for Practical Wisdom*

Experience teaches us, however, that something more than what we ordinarily call goodness is needed to insure human prosperity. Some who are "good" are neither diligent nor wise. It is the hand of the diligent that makes rich, and it is "by knowledge that the just are delivered" (Prov. xi. 9). We have to be wise in our generation. The Old Testament contains a book which gives the secret in the form of proverbial philosophy. It deals with this subject of the righteous administration of God in a very practical way, and justifies the system of social prosperity as arranged by God to reward the deserving. As the late Professor Fleming[1] said: "The measures of Divine Providence, both for the detection and punishment of vice and for the encouragement and reward of virtue in this life, are much more extensive, and much more effectual, than they are usually supposed to be. By the very constitution of our nature, every virtuous disposition and pursuit is naturally productive of tranquillity and pleasure; and every vicious passion and every criminal indulgence naturally tends to punish us with vexation and pain." The Bible gives constant testimony to the necessity of goodness and wisdom going hand in hand. Many an Old Testament saint either did wrong, or acted

[1] See his *Plea for the Ways of God*, and compare, for this and the following chapter, M'Cosh on *The Method of the Divine Government*.

unwisely, and if so, he suffered for it. There was no need of what we call a special providence to punish David for his gross offence, or Josiah for his folly. In truth, the distinction between a general and a special providence is almost illusive. Cases of the latter kind are not necessarily miraculous, but they are conspicuous. They are picture lessons for all time, and are subservient to the purpose of God in His dealings with men.

§ 4. *God's Dealings with Nations*

The lessons of the Old Testament are by no means restricted to the case of individuals and families; they have to do also with nations. The modern statesman frequently studies with advantage the utterances of the Proverbs; and the historian will do well to read the Old Testament at large in order to learn the secret of the rise, the continuance, the decline and the fall of nations. Many a nation had its opportunity in ancient days. Some made the best of it for a time, and afterwards, often through the snare of prosperity, failed. Tyre may be taken as a signal example (Ezek. xxvii. and xxviii.). Perhaps, however, the case of the Amorites is the most remarkable. In the days of Abraham their iniquity was recorded by God (Gen. xv. 16), but it was "not yet full." Some four and a half centuries later the nation had filled up its cup to the brim, and it was running over. Then judgment came. The Palestine explorers are now extracting from the *Tells* or ruinous heaps of the country evidences both of the iniquity and of the downfall of this people. A nation is responsible for its public acts. If they are deeds of iniquity wrought by a despot without consulting a people, they might at least be protested against and disavowed. But this was not always done. Three years running there was a famine in Israel. On "inquiry of the Lord" it was found to be "for Saul and for his bloody house because he slew the Gibeonites." Saul was dead and the years had slipped on, but justice demanded that some retribution should be made; and it was made (2 Sam. xxi. 1–14).

§ 5. *The Law of Habit*

Amongst the many personal and social influences which mark God's administrations of human affairs three are most noticeable: the law of Habit, the law of Heredity, and the law of Solidarity. The law of Habit is usually described in Scripture by the English word "hardening," though there are three Hebrew words by which it is described.[1] On the one hand, hardening is from God, for it is one of His providential laws written in our mental structure and analogous with physical laws. On the other hand, it is brought into operation by ourselves, and we are appealed to (as in the 95th Psalm) not to harden our hearts. Sometimes instead of hardening we read of blinding. At first sight it would seem that no man is responsible for being blind, but on further examination we find that the illustration is slightly varied, and is described as the closing of the eyes, and for this a man is of course responsible. The same is true of the ear. Inattention seems a little thing, but ordinary experience shows us what mischief it may bring both on the culprit himself and on the society of which he is a member.

§ 6. *The Law of Heredity*

Heredity[2] is a word in common use now in connection with physical descent, but in its moral sense it springs from Old Testament theology. It is part of the system under which we live. Every creature, animal and vegetable, brings forth fruit after its kind. This was so in the case of our first parents. We read in Genesis v. 1, that "in the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him, male and female created He them." But immediately afterwards we read, "Adam begat [a son] in his own likeness, after his image." From that time onwards we have been children of Adam, retaining something of the original resemblance to

[1] See *Old Testament Synonyms*, p. 66; and on the general subject see Butler's *Analogy*, chap. v.

[2] See Stokes, *Gifford Lectures* (1st series, p. 79), and compare Mozley's paper on "Original Sin" in his *Lectures and Discussions*.

God and something also of the resemblance to Adam in his degenerate condition. It is strange that some students of human nature, with marks of heredity all round them, have stumbled at this special phenomenon. The reason of their difficulty will be discussed later. The present object is simply to emphasise the fact that the race has had a mixed inheritance from the beginning of human history, and that it *is* an inheritance in the true sense. The visiting of the sins of parents on the children which is broadly stated in the Old Testament (as in Exod. xx. 5) is all too well known by us; we see it in the case of a drunkard's family; we see it also in the history of nations, as in the case of some of our neighbours on the continent of Europe, who burnt, guillotined, or banished some of their best blood.

§ 7. *The Law of Solidarity*

There is yet another element in the Divine administration with which we are familiar in experience, and which is frequently seen in the Old Testament and must be recognised as part of the Divine system of administration. It goes by the name of solidarity. It implies that a community is like a body, so that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. We cannot escape and isolate ourselves. Many a good man was pinched during the famine referred to above (2 Sam. xxi.); and so it was all through the history. Just as the sun shone on the righteous and the unrighteous, so the arrows of the enemy shot down the one equally with the other. This we are familiar with in our everyday life. As we read the Book of Ecclesiastes we find a reflection of the thoughts which cross all our minds to-day. Members of a community hang together, thrive together, suffer together. War, famine, pestilence, earthquake, and other scourges visit families and nations impartially and (in the old sense of the word) indifferently.

CHAPTER XIV

GOD AND EVIL

§ 1. *Man's Limitations of Thought*

THE student of God's self-revelation as recorded in the Old Testament, while recognising the justice of the Divine administration in the main, must face many problems and perplexities. The more he learns, the more he realises that undiscovered realms of knowledge lie ahead of him. He readily acknowledges his own limitations, intellectual and moral, but he is taught to conceive that God has no such limitations. How then is it (he is driven to ask in all reverence) that the righteous purpose of God is—or appears to be—foiled by the overwhelming mass of evil which is the blight of the human race?

No one knows God's ways in their totality but God Himself. An old philosopher, Simonides, discovered that it needed Eternity to comprehend the Eternal. Similarly, it needs perfect love and absolute holiness, as well as practical omniscience, to find out God to perfection and to justify Him in His ways. At present we are hemmed in by limitations in every direction. There may be spheres of existence, of which we have not the most remote conception, as far transcending our conditions of sense, time, space, locomotion, and volition as consciousness exceeds plant-life. How little we know of personality, human or divine; of latent memory and the power of recalling the past; of will-force and of destiny. When God convicted Job of error so that he loathed himself, it was not by moral arguments, but by an exhibition of power and design in nature. If Job did not understand the natural world, how could he understand the moral difficulties of life? It is to these difficulties that we must now give our attention.

§ 2. *The Old Testament View of Evil*

The Old Testament teaches us that all things in the known world were originally good, and it thus testifies to

the inherent and essential goodness of the Creator. He is described as providing all things needful for primeval man —a dwelling-place, sustenance, and a life-companion. The adaptation of man to his surroundings was as much a mark of God's wisdom as his original creation. If the latter word stands for God's power, the former represents His benevolence and wisdom. All this is implied in the first page of our Bible; but on the second comes Evil. How often we hear of the problem of Evil, but how seldom of the problem of Good; and yet Good is really quite as wonderful in itself as Evil. How is it that we are sure that there is such a thing as eternal goodness, with happiness dependent on it? Simply because, deep down in our hearts, there is the conviction that God is good. Hence our primary thought of Evil is that it is inconsistent with the nature of God, and that it involves the failure of His purposes; and it is here that the mystery lies.

Let us suppose for a moment a man-less world—earth, air, water teeming with life, happy, though sometimes brief, and ending in the case of each creature suddenly and without torture. The amount of suffering in such a world would seem to an outsider comparatively nothing. Then picture up man coming on the scene, beginning happily, but ending disastrously. At once the question rises, How can God have allowed such a thing to happen? Was He willing to prevent it, but not able? or able but not willing? or neither able nor willing? or is there some more cheering solution? We turn to our authority, the Old Testament, to discover its teaching.

§ 3. *Evil, Physical and Moral*

We must begin by drawing the old distinction between physical and moral evil. The word for these two kinds of evil is the same in Hebrew, just as it is in English. Physical evil is from without. God creates it (Isa. xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6), that is to say, God has so constructed human beings that they are liable to its inroads.[1] It consists

[1] "Deus est auctor mali quod est pœna; non autem mali quod est culpa."—*S. Thom. S. Theol.*

largely of pain. If nerves had been constructed to give pleasure but not pain, if some painless plan had been devised whereby the approach of injury should have been indicated (*e.g.* in the case of a burn), if the peculiar nervous action which causes the blush of shame had been excluded—in a word, if man had been made differently physical evil would have assumed a different aspect or perhaps would not have existed at all. God as a Righteous Judge would have had to chastise and to punish moral evil in some other way, or else He would have had to abnegate His functions. It is clear that the old question, "Why hast Thou made me thus?" must be left reverently unanswered. It is enough to face the facts as they are faced in the Old Testament, and to acknowledge that *physical* evil comes upon the moral evil-doer, and that he brings it on other members of his family and community. We must therefore go a step further back and discuss moral evil.

§ 3. *The Fall*

We have to read this subject in the light of the third chapter of Genesis, which is intended to express (doubtless under somewhat figurative language) what actually happened. Our first parents are described as having been placed in a beautiful garden (Ezek. xxviii. 13; Joel ii. 3), with plenty of healthy and interesting work to do under instruction and orders from their Father, who is described as habitually walking in the garden. But the Tempter comes and deceives them, prompting them to distrust God and to disobey His commandment; and God, having left them to prove them, as He subsequently left Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxii. 31), they yielded and fell. The word "sin," which was used in later days of this terrible event (Isa. xliii. 27), means, both in Hebrew and Greek, "missing the mark,"[1] failure to accomplish the end of one's being; and the act of disobedience—though the occasion seemed a mere trifle—was looked upon as so serious that the threatened punishment was inflicted. Exclusion from God's

[1] See on this and the other words expressing wrong-doing, *Old Testament Synonyms*, chap. vi.

garden meant separation from God, who is the Fountain of Life; and thus human sin brought human death into the world, and the decay of the body actually, though slowly, followed on the degeneracy of the soul.

There were only two people in the world in those days. How easy it would have been for God to nip their existence in the bud and begin a new race, enduing its members with a little more moral strength. But what has He done instead? He has permitted the race to go on multiplying and increasing up to the present day, and has allowed the mustard-seed of evil to grow into a vast tree involving millions of souls in sin, suffering and death.

All this was foreseen from the beginning; but alongside of it something else was foreseen. The voice which in Genesis iii. pronounced the doom on the sin of our first parents, lifted the veil of the future for a moment, and a gleam of hope illuminated the far-distant horizon. Something was to be done for the disobedient. While men were yet sinners, mercy was in store for them. There should be a moral and spiritual reinforcement which should enable man to conquer his enemy; but it should be not by nature but by grace. God's strength should be not only exerted but also perfected in man's weakness. This is the grace of salvation which is illustrated and looked for all through the Old Testament and which is fulfilled in Christ.

§ 4. *The Tempter*

One other point of the greatest importance has to be noticed. In its account of the sin of our first parents, the record brings the Tempter on the scene, and tells us that the first suggestion of evil came from without. Again and again under various names Satan and his evil angels are introduced, whilst heaven is described as peopled with good angels. The latter give us no moral difficulty, but we stumble at the former. We learn that the human race has an enemy of a nature distinct from our own. Explain the passage how we may, these facts stand, and Scripture is pledged to it. Human sin was not self-originated. If man had fallen from his first estate solely through yielding

to his own appetites, without any suggestion from a foreign source, his case would evidently have been much more serious, and it would have reflected gravely on the handiwork of the Creator, inasmuch as He might be charged with failure to give man sufficient self-command. So far as the narrative goes, man had this, but he was not equally provided against the risk of temptation from another sphere; and so, whilst he might have stood, and ought to have stood, he was deceived and fell.

§ 5. *Apocryphal Comments*

Whoever was the author of the second book of Esdras he certainly realised the difficulty of evil as fully as any writer of the present day. "This," he says, "is my first and last saying, that it had been better not to have given the earth unto Adam; or else, when it was given him, to have restrained him from sinning. For what profit is it for men now in this present time to live in heaviness; and after death to look for punishment? O Adam, what hast thou done! For though it was thou that sinned, thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee" (vi. 46–49). The writer of the book of Wisdom speaks with equal bluntness, but in a less pessimistic spirit. "God made not death, neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living; for He created all things that they might have their being, and the generations of the world were healthful. . . . God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity; nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world, and they that do hold of his side do find it" (i. 13, and ii. 23, 24). Compare also Eccles. xvii.

§ 6. *Charnocke and Leibnitz*

In his treatise on *The Holiness of God*, Charnocke finds himself compelled to deal with the subject of human sin. He points out that man had an ability to stand as well as a capacity to fall. Adam was created with an advantage which made it more easy for him to adhere to God as his chief good than to listen to the charms of Satan. The law under which he was created was not a hard one to obey,

even though God foreknew that he would disobey. God did not will that he should sin, but he willed not to hinder it; in other words, He permitted it, and this permission was not so much an action as a suspension of influence (compare Ps. lxxxi. 12). He permitted what He forbad.

Leibnitz discusses the whole question in every aspect, criticising Dr. King's "Origin of Evil" and all other writers who had preceded him. He is persuaded of God's infinite and absolute moral perfection, of His foreknowledge, and that all power is traceable to the Divine spring. He sees a way of harmonising all the attributes of God with the permission to man to exercise his freewill (see his condensed treatise called *Causa Dei*), and lays great stress on the privations and limitations to which creature-life is subjected. His view of the Divine *concursus* very much answers to Charnocke's "permission." The great work of Leibnitz is the *Théodicée*, issued in 1710. It is partly metaphysical and partly moral, and proceeds on the lines of reason and faith. It is impossible to give a fair idea of the wealth of thought contained in this marvellous production in its treatment of the goodness of God, the liberty of man, and the origin of evil. Every aspect of the subject is keenly discussed; the views of English writers (Hobbes, Locke, Cudworth, &c.), as well as those of continental authors, being considered. In the *Abrégé* at the end the whole discussion is summed up in logical (perhaps too logical) form. Certainly this work cannot be neglected in any serious study of the question.[1]

§ 7. *Evolution and the Fall*

Modern views of the Fall are much affected by the supposition advocated by many that man originated from below, and that the Fall was a Fall upward, or in other words an advance. It was certainly an advance and is acknowledged as such in Gen. iii. 22, but it was made at a great cost, and there is only one way out of it. In Sir George Stokes' *Gifford Lectures* (1891) there is an examination of sin under the two hypotheses of the origin of man. According to one:

[1] See his *Opera Philosophica quæ Exstant.* Ed. Erdmann, Berlin.

"The human race in its present condition was gradually formed by a slow process of evolution under natural laws from some lowly animal form. The mental condition would undergo a slow process of development just like the bodily. Sin, therefore, gradually grew up along with the development of the moral nature, and is to be looked on accordingly as part of our nature such as God made it. . . . This theory makes God the author of sin. . . . According to the hypothesis of man's special creation we are exempt from this difficulty." Turning from the third lecture to the fifth we find a further discussion. Sir George says: "The question of man's origin is closely bound up with questions of the highest importance regarding the character of God. . . . While the arguments for a continuous gradation, derivable from actual observation, are immensely short of what would be required to render the conclusion even so probable as to draw us towards its adoption, the moral difficulties which it presents are of a most serious character." After discussing the difficulties of the position he proceeds: "As regards the first difficulty (the lack of moral harmony in life), to my own mind it is vastly lightened if we may believe that man's present state does not represent his state from the first."[1]

Professor Flint in his *Theism* (Lectures VII. and VIII.) discusses the moral outlook, and in his notes points out the defects of Professor Bain's views of Chalmers' and Mill's criticisms on the defects in the system of nature. Probably little can be said against God's goodness as inconsistent with the existence of evil, which was not said ages ago by Marcion, and dealt with in his masculine style by Tertullian in his first and second books. See especially I. 14, 22; II. 3, 5, 7, 13, 18. Professor Orr's *Christian View of God and the World* and Professor Sir Oliver Lodge's *Life and Matter* are helpful on the same subject.

[1] P. 119. The whole of this Lecture will repay careful study. Professor Birks (*Supernatural Revelation*, p. 172) quotes from Mill's posthumous essays a sentence in which he says that the Creator "for some inscrutable reason tolerates the perpetual counter-action of his purposes by another being of opposite character and of great though inferior power." This is true, but we do not see the end yet.

CHAPTER XV

GOD'S COUNSEL NOT TO BE FRUSTRATED

§ 1. *Life to be Read in the Light of the Future*

ONE of the perplexities of life is its apparent irregularity and uncertainty. There are national distinctions, family characteristics, and differences of temperament in the same family, even in twins, as in the case of Esau and Jacob. Again, men turn out so differently from what we expected. Who would have conjectured that Gideon would have gone astray in the latter part of his life, and that King Saul would have proved such an utter failure? Compare the case of Charles the Bold of Burgundy. Frequently, in spite of God's laws to the contrary, the wicked prosper and the good suffer. Job (xxi. 7) asks the question, Why is this? The Psalmist (lxxiii. 2) ponders deeply over it. Jeremiah (xii. 1) puts the question afresh. There must be a solution. Though Abel is slain and Cain escapes, no one supposes that righteous judgment will fail in the long run. We have to dig beneath the surface and look for tendencies, as in Political Economy, and we must give time for development. We have to consider men's "latter end," *i.e.* their destiny (Num. xxiii. 10; Ps. xxxvii. 37). God will bring everything, good and evil, into judgment (Eccles. xii. 14). Either before death or after death, a day will come in which men will say, Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth (Ps. lviii. 11). He will judge the world in righteousness (Ps. xcvi. 14). Meanwhile the day of adversity is not an unmixed evil. It humbles, it awakens thought, it arouses conscience, and frequently makes men say, "We are verily guilty;" it also inspires courage, energy, and patience. Moreover, it calls for hope and faith, for loyalty and submission; and it enables men to sympathise with others whilst correcting their own errors.

§ 2. *Personal Responsibility and Original Sin*

When once beings situated as men have been from the beginning are gifted with a certain amount of freedom, to the extent that they have received the gift, to that extent they, and not God, are responsible. The fact that they were tempted from without reduces their guilt. The consequences would have been far worse, perhaps inconceivable, if sin had been deliberate and of their own devising. Again, the case of the first transgressors was unique. No one else has had the opportunity of facing temptation with a previously stainless heart as they did. Proneness or tendency to sin is an inheritance of a most demoralising character. The personal testimony of Solomon (1 Kings viii. 46), and of the Book of Ecclesiastes, which goes by his name (vii. 20), and of Jeremiah (xvii. 9), is decisive. It shows the conviction in the thoughtful student of human nature in those days, and it is in harmony with the experience of the most cultivated among nations in this present century. We are no better than our fathers; and beneath the veneer of civilisation we detect all too often that latent animalism which theologians call original sin (*culpa originis*).

§ 3. *Hope for the Fallen*

Nevertheless there is something almost startling in the gleams of light which shine amidst the darkness of the Biblical narrative. There is evidently hope even for the most desperately wicked of natures, *e.g.* Sodom and Gomorrah (see Ezek. xvi. 55, 56).[1] But how is it with individuals? We are sure that they will justify God in the day of visitation (Ps. li. 4), but we do not clearly see how. It is impossible to conceive that the patriarchs imagined men to be like the beasts that perish. They must have shared, to say the least, the current beliefs of Chaldea and Egypt in their time. The prophets taught them that Death and Sheol were to be done away with (see Hos. xiii. 14). Those who were in the valley of the

[1] See last section of this chapter.

shadow of death might yet see light (Isa. ix. 6) not only spiritually in this life but literally in the life to come. The Old Testament did not declare the whole truth.[1] It may be regarded as a telescope, but it does not reach the most distant stars of God's eternal promises. As a system of theology it is incomplete; but there is a tone of triumph about it, based on the known attributes of God, which made the godly of those days wait and hope. It is in such a sense that we read the 63rd, the 73rd, and similar Psalms.

§ 4. *Testimony of the Old Testament*

If the promise of Gen. iii. stood alone we should regard it as at least a vague expression of hope; but we turn over the pages of the Old Testament and read the brief narrative concerning Enoch, the wide promises connected with Noah and his family, and the promise of a blessing to all nations granted to Abraham and his seed. Taking this as our lamp we move down the ages till we get to David and the great promise made to him, and then comes the constellation of prophetic utterances in the Psalms and the Prophets in which "all nations" have their part. Israel is still to be conspicuous as an elect people, but there are to be men of other races grafted in this Israelite stock. The prophetic writings thus became an international heritage. Evidently God had a purpose which reached beyond the days of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. What was it? We have to travel beyond the pages of the Old Testament into the New Testament for an answer. And even when we have taken in the mission of the Messiah and its bearing on the destinies of the human race we have to confess that "we see not yet all things put under His feet" (Heb. ii. 8). Thus the 8th Psalm, which looks at first so simple, stands over for a further fulfilment; and if this is true of one short Psalm, we can readily understand that it must be true of many other Old Testament prophecies. There are traces of an eternal, world-wide purpose in such passages as Isa. xlix.

[1] The promise of Resurrection for the faithful, which is so clearly expressed in Dan. xii. 2, 13, is taken for granted in 2 Mac. vii., also in 2 Esdras viii. and xiv., and other apocryphal writings.

6; liv. 5; lvi. 7; Judges x. 7; Zeph. ii. 11, &c. Moreover, many of the promises, of which these are samples, must be retrospective in their effect, and they bid us pause before we measure off the destiny of the lost sinners of primitive times when the Son of God subsequently came to seek and to save.[1]

§ 5. *Ezekiel and Jeremiah on Restitution*

Attention has already been called to Ezek. viii. as setting forth the restitution of Sodom and Gomorrah. This prophet seems specially called upon to justify the ways of God. He shows that Divine warnings are conditional (iii. 18), and that if men would only repent, God would repent also. He affirms that God's ways are equal, but that men *must* change their hearts and ways if they wished to taste how gracious the Lord was (xiv. 6; xviii. 30; xxxiii. 11). He points out that God puts His mark on every godly man (ix. 6), who in some way or other will be justified and saved, while for the rest there must be retribution (vii. 3; xi. 10).

Jeremiah seems to be more tender-hearted than Ezekiel. He grieves over the sins of his people, and the retribution which they have brought on themselves. At the same time he is inspired to speak out clearly on the subject of restitution, as in the case of Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Elam (chaps. xlviii.–xlix.). The restitution in these passages is national, not personal; and the same is the case in regard to Israel and Judah in chaps. xxx., xxxi., xxxii., xxxiii., as in Ezek. xxxiv., xxxvii., xxxix. It originates in God's free mercy and sovereign grace (Jer. xxxi. 3; l. 20). To understand the full force of these passages we have to reach out beyond the pages of the Old Testament, and to study the teaching of Christ and His apostles; and, after all, the future is still obscure.

[1] Many years ago Edward Grinfield, to whom Oxford owes the Grinfield Lectureship, and who edited the valuable *Hellenistic Greek Testament*, brought out an instructive volume on this wider view of Old Testament teaching.

CHAPTER XVI

PROVIDENCE AND CHANCE

§ 1. *Providence far-reaching*

THE word "providence" marks an idea which has been recognised through all ages and under every variety of culture. It points to some overruling purpose behind the occurrences of daily life, and it became conspicuous at the time of great events. Is a battle lost or won? is some national catastrophe incurred or averted? does some great man on whom much depends escape or meet with an unexpected death?—then all men speak of providence. Cicero discusses it in his interesting work *De Natura Deorum* (i. 8), and reminds his readers of the Stoics' πρόνοια, which answers to the words *prudentia* or *providentia*, and which is a sort of mind of the universe.

The teaching of the Old Testament is very significant. The earth is the Lord's (Exod. ix. 29; Ps. xxiv. 1), and all things in heaven and earth bend to His will and express His mind. The *minutiæ* in nature are subservient to what is greater, and nature as a whole is subordinate to man. Certainly he has used the power assigned to him, especially in later days. He has been rightly called the Disturber of Creation. "In occupying the world he creates a new one; the useless bogs and swamps are covered with his harvests, the black and vacant forest is replaced by the crowds of his population, and the once poisonous marsh becomes the seat of commerce and wealth. He selects animals to aid him in his labours, or to supply him with food and clothing without the toils of the chase. With these he fills the lands which he occupies, expelling by force or otherwise the former tenants. Many must yield because their food has disappeared, and others follow in their train; the whole system is deranged, but it gives place to a better one." [1]

[1] M'Culloch's *Proofs of the Attributes of God.*

But while all things practically yield to man's control, man himself is in the hands of the Author of his being, and some Divine purpose must be looked for in human history. Purpose, however, implies Provision, and Provision means Providence in action. "The Divine Providence," says Swedenborg, "exists in the most minute particulars of nature and in the most minute particulars of human prudence, and [God] by governing these particulars governs universally." God is set forth in Scripture as not only the Creator, but as the Master and Controller of the whole of history; and what He does not rule, He overrules. His dominion is universal and eternal, and nothing escapes His notice or is beneath His consideration. Professor Fleming points out that it is a mistake to look for Providence only in great or extraordinary events, for it extends to everything, and "may be seen in those events which we call little better than in those which we call great."

§ 2. *General and Special Providence*

Is, then, the distinction between general and special Providences a mistaken one? Are all to be called general? or shall all be called special? The Old Testament inclines us to accept this distinction as a real one; for God is represented as having special purposes, *e.g.* with reference to Israel, and these imply special Providences.

We see Divine purpose wrought out in the varieties of circumstance and development to which human beings are subjected. Thus Abraham stands out alone. Neither his brother Nahor nor his nephew Lot can be compared with him. Esau and Jacob are twins, yet they prove utter contrasts in disposition and in history. God is even said to have loved the one and hated the other. These strong expressions are Oriental (compare Matt. vi. 24), and something has to be deducted from their full force, yet after all they stand in the prophetic writings as expressing phenomenal treatment of the two cases (Mal. i. 2, 3).

We are all familiar with the varieties in nature even where the organic structure is the same, as in the myriads of

divisions and subdivisions in the insect world; but these variations become far more interesting, though somewhat perplexing, when they have to do with human heredity, environment, and opportunity. If it is true that man develops nature, it is also true that nature develops man. He has to contend with his surroundings, and in so doing his real force of character—if he has any—is drawn out.

§ 3. *The Place of Chance in History*

The word Chance as applied to natural phenomena is simply a name to hide our ignorance. Science has eliminated Chance from our vocabulary. Yet there is a place left for it. It may be legitimately applied to that class of event which is brought about by human agency without any intention to produce the effect which actually follows. A man throws away a half-extinguished match simply to get rid of it. It is all a chance, so far as he is concerned, where it falls and what it does, yet a house may be set on fire through this accident or inadvertence. Thousands of acts are daily performed by us without a reason. We go this way or that, we put a book down here or there, we meet this person or that, we write a letter or postpone it, but the results may be of the utmost importance. *Dei providentiam nihil exiguitate sua latet aut multitudine confundit.*[1]

A striking instance in the Old Testament is the case of a man who drew a bow at a venture (*margin*, in his simplicity), *i.e.* aiming generally in the direction of the enemy. But the arrow happened to hit the King of Israel between the joints of the harness, and this led to his death. Thus the man's indeterminate act was swayed by Divine power to fulfil God's purpose, which had already been revealed through the prophet Micaiah. It is by these little things—apparently, though not really—that battles are won and fortunes made or lost. The very word fortune marks that there is something fortuitous in the process after all. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 33).

[1] Leibnitz.

§ 4. *Man's Will overruled by God*

The Providence of God is carried out not only by chance, but also by the determinate actions of men. They have deliberately aimed at one thing, but God has overruled their action in order to produce a further result. Thus even the wicked man may become God's sword (Ps. xvii. 13). We note this in the case of Jehu; also in the case of Doeg the Edomite. His accidental detention "before the Lord" led to his knowledge of the intercourse between David and Ahimelech, and this led to a wholesale destruction of the inhabitants of Nob (1 Sam. xxi. and xxii.). The action of an individual has two results: one on his own character, the other on the lives or interests of others. The murderer injures himself morally, while shortening the life of his fellow physically. He may be led to act by many influences—heredity, environment, predisposition, jealousy, hostility; and finally has come the decision which we commonly call the exercise of will. It is this which constitutes his deed and makes it his own, and it is for this he is to be judged (Eccles. xii. 14). But what he has thus done at his own peril has to be turned to account by God. Writing on this subject, Isaac Taylor the elder notes: "The exact contrivance which so arranges the vast chaos of contingencies as to produce with unerring precision a special order of events adapted to the character of every individual of the human family. Amid the whirl of fortuities the means are selected and combined for constructing as many machineries of moral discipline as there are moral agents in the world; and each apparatus is at once complete in itself, and complete as a part of a universal movement."[1] The only criticism which need be offered to this sentence is that, judging by the Old Testament, there is often failure to attain this completeness in the individual, though as part of the whole many incomplete lives and deeds will tend to bring about the end which God has set before Him.

[1] *Natural History of Enthusiasm.*

§ 5. *Joseph and Esther*

Two notable cases of Divine Providence are given in the Old Testament which illustrate the points which we are considering:—

(*a*) The case of Joseph. A man gives a coloured robe to his pet son. The boy has a dream, which he tells his brothers. Some traders buy a youth from some shepherds. The captain of Pharaoh's guard buys a slave. A woman invents a falsehood, and the slave is thrown into prison. Pharaoh imprisons two of his officials. The interpreter of their dreams is invited to try his hand on Pharaoh's dreams. He becomes grand vizier; and in turn his own brothers bow before him, and so his own first dream is fulfilled. We can well understand his final comment on the events: "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Gen. xlv. 5, 8); and again, "As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. l. 20).

(*b*) The case of Esther. The Book of Esther is one of the very few which do not contain the name of God. Perhaps it was through a mistaken idea of respect that the Greek translator, whose work we have in the Apocrypha, inserted a series of passages into it which make up for what seemed a deficiency. Xerxes is angry with his queen, and resolves to replace her. Mordecai, a descendant of Saul, has a cousin named Hadassah, who is selected as a possible candidate, and lest her nationality should stand in the way of her prospects she assumes the Persian name Esther (a star). A palace plot against Xerxes is foiled by Mordecai and the event is recorded in the king's annals. Haman, an Agagite (? Amalekite), through jealousy desires to destroy not Mordecai only, but the Jewish people. The king approves, but nothing can be done till a lucky day arrives. The lot was cast

day after day and month after month from the first month till the twelfth, and it was not till the thirteenth day of that month that a lucky day could be found. This caused the delay of a year, and all was prepared for the anti-Semitic outrage on the fixed day. Meanwhile the king has a sleepless night, and the story of the old palace plot is read to him out of the annals. Hitherto no reward had been given to Mordecai for his promptness in putting an end to it. Haman comes in, and is asked to fix the reward, and this he does, imagining that he himself is the man who is going to be honoured. The *dénouement* follows rapidly. The Jewish people are saved; their enemies are punished; Mordecai is honoured; Haman and his sons are hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

§ 6. *Tests of Divine Providence*

This sketch suggests the method by which we can test the Providence of God. It may be assumed generally that whenever the result of an event or action is in accordance with the known attributes and purposes of God, that result may be taken as the Divine intention. If no such result can be traced, we have to remain in ignorance. But the case becomes much clearer if we find many apparently unconnected events converging and so working together to produce such a result; and the longer the series, the stronger becomes our conviction that the hand of God is in the matter. It needs not that He should be named; and this is the beauty of the Book of Esther. God is manifested without being named. "Herein especially is manifested the perfection of the Divine wisdom, that the most surprising conjunctions of events are brought about by the simplest means, and in a manner so perfectly in harmony with the ordinary course of human affairs, that the hand of the Mover is ever hidden beneath second causes and is descried by the eye of pious affection."[1]

[1] Isaac Taylor, *Natural History of Enthusiasm.*

§ 7. *The Book of Judges*

The hand of Providence is often seen in the raising up of great men at a particular juncture. We say the need calls forth the man, but the Old Testament tells us that God calls him forth. The Book of Judges is very instructive on this doctrine of election, or rather selection, for special service. A man may be obscure in the eyes of others and insignificant in his own sight, yet God may put His hand upon him and speak to him. He thus gets what every man of power needs—an opportunity; and it is his business to use it, and to take the lead in the social or military movement which is before him. Much may depend on his wisdom and much on the choice of agents who shall carry out his plans, but after all (as Guizot says in one of his Essays), "We never calculate beforehand all possible contingencies; we never hold in our hand all the threads of lofty enterprises which are mingled with good and evil, with justice and violence; and even with the most natural and best-concerted Fortune takes a large share, and often proves how little human prescience and power avail."

CHAPTER XVII

PROVIDENCE AND PRAYER

§ 1. *Prayer in the Old Testament*

THE Old Testament contains about seventy answered prayers, and God is universally regarded as the hearer and answerer of prayer. "O Thou who hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come" (Ps. lxv. 2). To hear is with God to answer, these two English words being used for the same Hebrew word in nearly twenty places in the Psalms alone, the verse just quoted being one of them. Whether prayer is regarded as innate and hereditary, or whether it is a traditional custom arising out of a desire to hold communion with the Author of our being, or whether it be primarily a blind expression of need and an inarticulate cry of sorrow and dependence, it is practically universal; or at least the faculty for it lies deep in human nature. According to Old Testament theology, God is more than Creator; He is a Father, and He rejoices in the confident appeal of His children. While Worship is the prostration of body and soul to our Maker, Prayer is the seeking after God, calling upon His Name, and making definite requests to Him whether for ourselves or for others; and with it Praise is constantly associated. Of the various Hebrew words which represent the idea of Prayer in the Old Testament the most remarkable one is associated with the thought of arbitration (פָּגַע), and signifies the call on Another to intervene on our behalf. "This word conveys a very *objective* idea about prayer. It shows that men were not in the habit of praying merely as a relief to their feelings, but in order to ask another Being, wiser and mightier than they, to take up their cause."[1]

[1] *Old Testament Synonyms*, p. 119. The eighteenth chapter of that book discusses the various Hebrew words for Worship, Prayer, and Praise.

§ 2. *Prayer part of the Order of Nature*

It needs no great philosophical training for a child to make petitions to a father, and when once we see the Old Testament view of God we put aside the suggestion of the atheist that prayer is folly, and that of the agnostic who can hardly be expected to pray to an unknown God, and that of the deist who imagines that prayer can only have a subjective efficacy and so "does us good," though of course it leaves no room for intercession on behalf of others. Nor does the Old Testament believer strictly confine himself to spiritual objects in prayer. He can even spread out a letter before God and ask the Most High to answer it (see, *e.g.*, 2 Kings xix. 14).[1]

He is perfectly well aware that God is unchangeable, but he does not gather from this that He is inflexible. On the contrary, the Divine unchangeableness is the ground of his appeal, for God remains true to His name, to His attributes, and to His promises. From these He will never swerve. The words, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. iii. 6), are an encouragement, not a discouragement, to the man who prays. It is enough that God invites men to pray. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. l. 15).

Prayer is evidently one of the many causes or conditions which constitute Nature in its largest sense. If we may take it for granted that a cause is that which produces a change, and that it is a necessary antecedent, or rather a group of antecedents, then we are on safe ground when we pray in accordance with God's will. The doctrine of the "Plurality of Causes" leaves room for the Old Testament doctrine of prayer, whether for things physical or for things spiritual, for ourselves or for other people. An enemy may be threatening and his power overwhelming, but he may be called away (2 Kings xix. 8, 9), or seized with a panic (2 Kings vii. 6). Similarly an idea may be put into the mind of a physician to try a certain remedy, or into the

[1] See Stokes's *Gifford Lectures* (first series) on "The Possibility of holding Communion with God."

mind of a sea-captain to examine his chart at a certain moment, in consequence of which precious lives may be saved. Perhaps when the secrets of all hearts are revealed it will be found that prayer was at the bottom of many of the inspirations which have seized men's minds they know not why or how.

§ 3. *Testimony of the Psalms*

As one reads the Psalms and notes the intensity of the feelings to which they give expression, it is impossible to help wondering what were the circumstances to which they refer. Were they deep personal sorrows? agonies through sin? distresses occasioned by the wrong-doing of others? pains connected with illness? bitter persecutions? national reverses, calamities, backsliding? It is impossible always to answer; but one thing is clear: nothing was too great or too small to bring before God.[1]

§ 4. *Prayer for Fine Weather*

Perhaps few subjects of prayer have caused more perplexity in modern times than those which are connected with the weather. Men teach that every drop of rain is absolutely dependent on a preceding condition of things, that there is no room left for any intervention even on the part of the Divine Being Himself, and that consequently it is futile to pray for a fine day for a Sunday-school treat. But according to the Old Testament, God has not shut Himself out of His universe. He has specially left room for prayer in all those arrangements of nature which can touch or interest human beings (see, *e.g.*, 1 Sam. xii. 17; 1 Kings xviii. 41–45).

§ 5. *The Law of Prayer inviolable*

If laws of nature are inviolable, certainly the law of prayer is so. Laws are not forces, but rules. It is true that

[1] The communion between God's spirit and man's "may be just as much a law of our spiritual being as the laws which science investigates are of the material world" (Stokes).

so long as the causes are the same, the results will be the same. But the act of prayer introduces a new cause, and it reaches Him Who is immanent in the natural order of things, and Who finds the right way of providing an answer for every cry of His children. We need not then fall back on the idea of a preconcerted harmony, suggested by Leibnitz. This enthusiast for science and theology compared the Divine order of nature and the Divine order of will-force to two clocks set to go together, though acting independently of each other. It is enough to believe in the love of God as Israel was taught to do, and to leave everything in His hands.

§ 6. *Conditions of Successful Prayer*

The Old Testament does not teach that God answers all prayers absolutely, unconditionally, instantly, or in the exact way in which the answer is expected. Thus, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Ps. lxvi. 18); again, prayer must not go "out of feigned lips" (Ps. xvii. 1); we must walk in our integrity if we expect to be heard (Ps. vii. 8); and we are in danger of drawing near with our lips, and yet our hearts may be far off (Isa. xxix. 13). Nothing is too hard (or wonderful) for God, but it does not follow that everything is equally wise for Him to do. There may be conflicting interests, and prayers may be offered for objects which are wholly inconsistent with the real advantage of the offerer, or with the good of the Society to which he belongs, or with the general carrying out of the Divine purposes. It is true that "No good thing will God withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11), but men are like children, and do not always know what is good for them. They need concentration, perseverance, and a prepared heart if they would be successful in prayer (Ps. lxxxvi. 11; lxxxvii. 9, 13; x. 17).

After all a time may come, especially in the case of intercessory prayer, when the order may be issued, "Pray thou not for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto Me for their trouble" (Jer. xi. 14; compare xiv. 11, 12). There

is a point where the Divine longsuffering gives way to severity, and the door of grace is shut, if not for ever, yet for a time. The narratives connected with Samuel and Jeremiah are very instructive in this connection.

§ 7. *The Principle of Acceptance*

No mediator was needed for prayer according to the Old Testament. If the *person* was accepted—and for this (when there was a consciousness of sin) propitiation was provided—then the prayer was accepted. But encouragement, confidence, and definiteness were given to prayer in various ways. There was the Name of God and all which it implied; there was His Righteousness and His Salvation; there were His Covenants, His Oath, and His Promises; there were the altars as centres of worship and pledges of acceptance; and there were the mercy-seat, the Cherubim, and the Temple as a whole.

§ 8. *Solomon's Dedicatory Prayer*

The dedication of the Temple by Solomon is full of instruction. David and the people had made magnificent preparation, and a plan of the building had been drawn up under guidance from above (1 Chron. xxviii. 19). At length the structure was complete, and "the Glory of the Lord filled the House" (1 Kings viii. 11). Then Solomon spoke to God in these terms: "I have surely built Thee a house to dwell in, a settled place for Thee to abide in for ever. I have set there a place for the Ark wherein is the covenant of the Lord which He made with our fathers when He brought them out of the land of Egypt." He then stood before the altar (which was in the Court) and spread forth his hands towards heaven and offered the great Consecration Prayer. Having removed a possible misunderstanding by expressing his conviction that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, could not contain God, he makes certain definite requests, and they all have reference to the Temple. He pleads that those who prayed towards this Place should have their prayers

heard favourably, whether offered by night or by day, in times of sin, sorrow, adversity, or captivity. In accordance with the petition thus offered Jonah prayed (Jonah ii. 4), and Daniel (vi. 10), and the writers of various Psalms (Ps. v. 7; xxvii. 2; cxxxviii. 2). If these Psalms, or any of them, were composed by David (as is most probable), then we would be led to the conclusion that the idea which is at the foundation of Solomon's prayer was inherited by him from his fathers, and that perhaps it was of much earlier date. We gather from these passages that whilst God was not localised or materialised, there being no image of Him in the sacred Place, yet His favourable presence was guaranteed as an encouragement to His people. Every place was really hallowed ground, but human nature needed and obtained the help that could be given by the consecration of special centres of worship, as well as by the agency of official priests and prescribed functions (compare Mal. i. 11 with Isa. lvi. 7).

§ 9. *The Spiritual Presence of God*

It is evident that God will be inquired of not for His own sake but for man's sake (Ezek. xxxvi. 37); but the very act of inquiring involves the inquirers in a great responsibility. They must put away all evil or wash their hands in innocency (Ezek. xiv. 3; xx. 3, 31). They must seek the Lord with all their hearts, and must regard the local Temple as a symbol and representative of the true Temple, and spiritual abode of their heavenly Father (Ps. xi. 4; xviii. 6). There are many links in Scripture between the stellar world and the spirit world. They are related though distinct. The height of the heaven of heavens furnishes an illustration of the dwelling-place of God, and is regarded as a distinct help to the human mind which is under the conditions of space; but the spirit of the instructed Hebrew felt after God in another sphere the certainty of which he knew, though the conditions were largely unknown to him. We fail in all our attempts to detect the locality of God's throne. It may truly be said that when we pray we push

open the swing-door which is between us and heaven. Spiritual space is not measured by miles but by spiritual conditions, and spiritual time is measured by action not by motion. Selfishness is monotony; godliness is workfulness; pleasure is the realisation of the presence of God. The Psalms are rich on the subject of "nearness."

"We pray," says Charnocke, "because God knows; for though He knows our wants with a knowledge of vision, yet He will not know them with a knowledge of supply, till He be sought unto. Though millions of supplications be put up at the same time, yet they have all a distinct file (as I may say) in an infinite understanding which perceives and comprehends them all. As He observes millions of sins committed at the same time by a vast number of persons, to record them in order to punishment, so He distinctly discerns an infinite number of cries at the same moment, to register them in order to an answer."

CHAPTER XVIII

PROVIDENCE AND PROPHECY

WE have seen that the Providence of God can be recognised and verified, partly through the conformity of results with the general character of God, and partly through the concurrence of several apparently independent acts in producing such results. But we have an additional guide to Providence in the phenomena connected with prophecy.[1]

§ 1. *The Rationale of Prophecy*

It frequently happened in Old Testament days that a result attained by a long series of struggles was prophesied or promised long before. These things were told before they came to pass, that when they did come to pass, men might recognise the hand of God in them. Such a course seems in accordance with the highest reason, and the act of revealing the future is claimed as a special attribute of the one living and true God. Speaking of idols and false gods, Isaiah is inspired to say: "Let them shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods" (Isa. xli. 22, 23).

§ 2. *Prophecy does not lead to Fatalism*

It may be said, however, that what is prophesied is fixed and settled, and cannot be reversed or modified, and so fatalism steps in. But the Old Testament does not favour this idea. Many prophecies are conditional. As Ezekiel

[1] On the subject of this chapter, see *Grammar of Prophecy* (King's Printers).

reminds us (chaps. xiii. and xviii.), God modifies His course of action according to the way in which His promises and threats are acted upon. Thus the Present affects the Future. It was the consciousness of this Divine method of procedure which caused Jonah to prove unfaithful to his task (Jon. iv. 2). The Old Testament always teaches that it is no pleasure to God to punish. His pleasure is to give and to forgive, if only men would acknowledge their offences and turn away from their sins. This readjustment of the Divine plans is sometimes called Repentance. God repented of having made man, and He repented of having made Saul king, and He repented of the evil He thought to do to Nineveh (Jon. iii. 10), and He repented of certain chastisements which hung over the head of Israel (Amos vii. 3, 6).

Sometimes we see prophecy defeated in a very simple way. When David was fleeing from Saul he found himself in Keilah, but he felt uneasy there, and inquired of the Lord whether the men of Keilah would betray him into the hands of Saul. The Divine answer was that they would do so. Accordingly, David fled away, and the men of Keilah thus lost their opportunity (1 Sam. xxiii. 9–13). In dealing with this subject Charnocke points out that God's foreknowledge of man's voluntary actions does not necessitate (*i.e.* compel) the will of man. It does not take away liberty, for we do not feel that we are compelled.

§ 3. *Difficulty in connection with Foreordination*

This is true so far as the word foreknowledge goes; but is it equally true if we substitute the word foreordination? How far do the purposes of God reach in human affairs? The hardening of Pharaoh's heart may be taken as a sample. God not only knew that Pharaoh would harden his heart, but He made provision in nature (already referred to above in Chap. XIII.) whereby the hardening would take place. This and all other mental and physical laws contribute to carry out the purposes of God; but we must not press the argument from them too far. The warning given by Isaac Taylor in his *Logic in Theology* is not to be

forgotten. The Old Testament whilst recognising the sovereignty of God recognises also the (limited) free-will and consequently the (limited) responsibility of man. We must look at the case all round. "Man is not free in one sphere, or one department of his daily life, and necessitated in another department; he is not rewardable and punishable on the exchange or in the market, but not so at church. He must consent to be dealt with, and he must deal with himself, at all times and on all occasions, on one and the same principle. Whatever sense we attach to the abstract terms Liberty and Necessity, this same sense must be adhered to on Sunday and Monday." It is in this sense, as Isaac Taylor proceeds to show, that Sovereignty and Responsibility run together through the whole of life. The difficulty of harmonising them lies not in religion but in the limitations of the human mind, as Mansel points out in his Bampton Lectures.

CHAPTER XIX

CONFLICT WITH POLYTHEISM AND IDOLATRY

THERE were many religions or cults in the world in Old Testament days, and it is with these and not with anything later that Old Testament theology primarily comes into conflict.

§ 1. *False Deities in the Patriarchal Age*

Joshua begins one of his parting addresses with the words, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood (*i.e.* the Euphrates) in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods" (chap. xxiv. 2). This passage takes us back to Chaldea in pre-patriarchial days, and tells us that the early Semites and, it is natural to suppose, the other descendants of Noah had not remained loyal to the one living and true God, whom their ancestor Noah had worshipped. Further on in the address he refers to the matter again, and speaks of these strange gods as if they were idols or material objects which could be put away. What were these gods? An answer is found in the introduction to the Code of Hammurabi, which recites the names of several deities, and as he was contemporary with Abraham his list sufficiently illustrates the religion of Chaldea and the adjoining countries in patriarchial times. First comes *Anu* the King of Anataki, which may mean the earth-shadows or the clouds; then *Bel*, Lord of Heaven and Earth, and *Belit* his wife; then *Marduk* (Merodach), and *Ea*, together with *Zarpanit* his wife; then came *Sin* (the moon), *Shamash* (the sun), *Malkat* (the Queen of heaven);[1] then *Nana* or

[1] Jer. vii. 18; xliv. 17, 25. This seems the best interpretation, and is accepted without doubt by the R.V. As Ishtar which follows is Venus, the morning star, Malkat may be taken for the same planet regarded as the evening star. It was not then known that Hesperus and Phosphorus were the same.

Ishtar, *Ma-ma*, *Nin-tu*, *Adad* the storm-god, *Tutu*, *Dagan* (who might be either fish-god or corn-god), and *Nergal*. Here, then, is full-blown polytheism, consisting of the deification of the powers of nature—the creature largely or wholly taking the place of the Creator. These gods were doubtless put away by Abraham. No images were allowed by him, no temples or other objects of reverence were to be permitted in their honour. Thus Abraham was a Reformer, and by Divine inspiration he was enabled to inaugurate a spiritual religion; but it involved expatriation.

When Abraham got to Shechem, the Canaanites, Amorites, and other races were polytheistic and idolatrous, and had largely sunk into fetishism. The land abounded with sacred stones and other objects to which superstitious feelings were attached. The discoveries made by the Palestine explorers have made this very clear; see *e.g.* Macalister's *Gezer*.

§ 2. *Egyptian Worship*

Shortly afterwards the Patriarch went down into Egypt, and his family subsequently visited it from time to time, until at last they settled there for a long period. What was the religion of Egypt in those days? In spite of all the research of the last century it is impossible to give a definite reply. There seems to have been the same kind of degeneracy in Egypt as in Chaldea. Nature was regarded at first, perhaps, as representing its Divine Author, but already the creature had to a large extent supplanted the Creator. *Ra*, *Horus*, *Tum*, *Osiris*, represented and embodied various phases of the rising, shining, and setting of the sun. They are addressed in the old hymns and rituals in just such phrases as the Old Testament uses when speaking of God. We can easily understand that the river Nile received its share of worship; and at last various animals, which may have been taken as totems or family signs, were deified, whilst the kings were addressed as gods and bore sacred names with sacred signs.

Regarding Egyptian worship as a whole, it seems far less

gross than that of the Greeks and Romans, who received such scathing criticisms from Hippolytus and other early Fathers. Still it was degenerate, and the plagues described in Exodus were so many blows aimed at the gods of Egypt by the God of Israel (Exod. xii. 12; Num. xxxiii. 4), and the reaction in the direction of monotheism which goes by the name of Disk-worship may perhaps be read in the light of the faith of the patriarchal age.

§ 3. *Israel Infected*

Later on in history we find Israel settled in Canaan and sinking into polytheism and idolatry, and consequently into materialism and immorality. They forgot God and worshipped not only nature (*i.e.* the works of God's hand) but also the work of their own hands. This went on till the time of the Captivity; and even after the Return there were symptoms of a relapse, but they were promptly dealt with; and, speaking generally, idolatry was purged away from the Jewish people—it is to be hoped, never to return.[1]

§ 4. *The Religion of Cyrus and Darius*

The religion of Cyrus appears to have been free from much of the idolatry of Babylon and the zoolatry of Egypt. He was as tolerant of other religions as the British Government is in India. He speaks of Merodach in his cylinder-inscription as the chief among gods—"the great lord, the restorer of the people, beholding with joy the deeds of his vicegerent, who was righteous in hand and heart." Cyrus ascribes to this deity his various successes, and speaks of him as the god "who in his ministry raises the dead to life, who benefits all men in their difficulties, times of prayers, and has in his goodness drawn nigh to him (Cyrus) and made his name strong."

Darius the son of Hystaspes speaks in very different terms in his great prehistoric inscription and elsewhere. Everything is attributed to Ormazd. By the grace of Ormazd both the Magians and all other rebels were conquered.

[1] See Wisdom of Solomon xiv., xv.

Darius was practically a monotheist of good type, though he speaks somewhat casually of the possibility of other gods existing (*vide* Sayce, Introd. *Ezra*, p. 123). Xerxes has left an inscription at Persepolis which begins thus: "A great god is Ormazd, who created this earth, who created heaven, who created man, who created blessings for man, who made Xerxes king" (Sayce, p. 127). Artaxerxes speaks in almost the same terms (*ib.*, p. 78). After his time Zoroastrianism degenerates. The successors of Artaxerxes join with Ormazd, the foreign goddess *Anahid* and *Mithras* the sun-god. In fact, "a prince so favourable to the Jewish religion (as Artaxerxes) never again sat on the throne of Persia."

§ 5. *Efforts at Moral Reformation in the Outside World*

Taking a view of the world at large, the age of Nehemiah, Malachi and Artaxerxes was a remarkable one. Buddha in India and Confucius in China were calling men to live a better life, and Pythagoras was doing the same in Greece and Sicily. Grote speaks in strong terms of this latter reformer. "His preaching and his conduct produced an effect almost electric on the mind of the people (of Crotora). Political discontent was repressed, incontinence disappeared, luxury became discredited, and women hastened to change their golden ornaments for the simplest attire. No less than 2000 persons were converted at his first preaching."[1]

§ 6. *Old Testament Animism*

Augustine (*City of God*, vii. 29, 30) draws out clearly the distinction between the true and false worship. "We worship God—not heaven and earth, of which two parts this world consists, nor the soul or souls diffused through all living things—but God who made heaven and earth and all things which are in them; who made every soul, whatever be the nature of its life, whether it have life without sensation and reason, or life with sensation, or life with both sensation and reason. . . . He is wholly

[1] Grote's *Greece*, iv. 546, cited in Blencowe's *Science of Religion* (Victoria Inst.).

everywhere, included in no space, bound by no chains, mutable in no part of His being, filling heaven and earth with omnipresent power . . . governing all things in such a manner as to allow them to perform and exercise their own proper movements; for though they be nothing without Him they are not what He is." It is *animism* in its true sense as the recognition of mind in the universe which drove men to the theory that God is the soul of the world—a doctrine advocated by Varro but combated by Augustine (Cit. vii. 6), and utterly alien from Old Testament teaching.

§ 7. *Did Savage Man evolve Old Testament Theology?*

It is fashionable to speak of primitive man as a savage. The lowest tribes upon earth are hunted up and taken as types of human nature, and their fetish or something still lower (the expression of Horror) is supposed to be the faint beginning from which full-blown Christianity has gradually been evolved. The Old Testament does not lend itself to this theory, nor do the remains of antiquity justify it. The low savage is a degenerate and demoralised being. He has developed downwards. Prof. Max Müller in his *Chips* (I. xxiii.) says: "If there is one thing which a comparative study of religions places in the clearest light it is the inevitable decay to which every religion is exposed. It may seem almost like a truism that no religion can continue to be what it was during the lifetime of its founder and its first apostle. Yet it is but seldom borne in mind that without constant reformation—*i.e.* without a constant return to its fountain-head—every religion, even the most perfect, nay, the most perfect on account of its very perfection more than others, suffers from its contact with the world, as the purest air suffers from the mere fact of its being breathed." [1]

The architecture and art of ancient days bears witness to the excellent gifts possessed by early men. It is difficult to see how the supposed semi-animal savage of prehistoric times

[1] Quoted by Blackett, *Evolution of Religions* (Victoria Inst.). Compare Allen on *The Evolution of Savages by Degradation* (Victoria Inst.) and Prof. Orr's *God's Image in Man.*

became ancestor to the astronomer of early Chaldea and to the pyramid builder of ancient Egypt. It would seem rather that primeval man was specially gifted with originality in its full sense, possessing the instinct to look up to the Creator. "The universality of religious ideas," says Herbert Spencer,[1] "their independent evolution among different primitive races, and their great vitality unite in showing that their source must be deep-seated instead of superficial." The Old Testament and modern research seem to agree on the whole that both polytheism and idolatry are perversions of the true instinct of worship, and that it is painfully easy to fall into them. Although the Hebrew Scriptures do not discuss the origin of idolatry, they provide against it at every turn. Even on the first page of the Bible we see such provision, for (in an age of sun-worship) the sun is not so much as named, nor is it referred to for many chapters, and the stars, which were so much thought of in all ancient eastern cults, are only slightly mentioned, just enough to show that they were included in creation, and no more.[2]

§ 8. *Sir W. Ramsay on the Savage*

When Professor Sir W. Ramsay began his study of Greek religion he was a follower of Robertson Smith and M'Lennan, and accepted the Totemist theory as the key of truth, but the evidence compelled him to change his view. He saw that the modern savage, so far from being primitive, represents the last stage of degeneracy. In his *Cities of St. Paul*, he says: "So far as the history of the Mediterranean lands reaches, I find only degeneration, corrected from time to time by the influence of great prophets and teachers like Paul. Whether there lies behind this historical period a primitive savage period, I am not bold enough or skilful enough to judge. I can only look for facts in the light of history. I dare not rush into the darkness that lies behind. The primitive savage who develops naturally out of the state of totemism into the

[1] *First Principles.*
[2] On this whole subject vide Maunder's *Astronomy of the Bible.*

wisdom of Sophocles and Socrates, or he who transforms his fetish in the cause of many generations through the Elohistic stage into the Jehovah of the Hebrews, is unknown to me. I find nothing even remotely resembling him in the savages of modern times. I cannot invent for myself a primitive savage of such marvellous potentialities, when I find that the modern savage is devoid of any potentialitity, in many cases unable to stand side by side with a more civilised race, a mere worthless degenerate who has lost even his vital stamina; in other cases, when he can survive, showing at least no capacity to improve except through imitation of external models."

This exceedingly modern view is in full harmony with the Old Testament, and, of course, with such a passage as the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.[1]

[1] Compare *The Early Spread of Religious Ideas, especially in the Far East*, by Dr. Joseph Edkins.

CHAPTER XX

THE STORY OF ISRAEL'S FALL

§ 1. *Elements of True Religion in the Days of the Patriarchs*

IN studying Old Testament theology we have constantly to remember that we are dealing with what purports to be a Divine revelation, and with the convictions of the prophets founded thereon, and not with the actual beliefs and practices of the Hebrew race. These fall far short of their ideal. But the Books which set forth the ideal also contain the most candid narratives of Israel's constant lapses into idolatry. What were the means used by which Abraham received his first call, we know not. We read, "I called him alone," *i.e.* apart from the rest of his family (Isa. li. 2); and that is all we know. There must have been something more definite than a fast-fading ancestral tradition. Probably there were repeated dreams, visions, or appearances such as those recorded in a later stage of his history. The fact that there is no description of his call distinguishes his case from that of Moses, Samuel, and later men of God. It is noteworthy that the God of Abraham was also the God of Nahor, and that their father Terah was a sharer in their great "trek" and must have been in sympathy with their religious convictions. The same seems to be true in a measure in the case of Abimelech, King of Gerar (Gen. xx. and xxi.), for God (who is not named Jehovah in the passage) specially deals with him, as He does also with Hagar (Gen. xxi. 17, &c.). Abraham's servant, who was probably a Syrian, prays to the Lord Jehovah as the God of his master (Gen. xxiv. 12), and Laban and his father Bethuel, Nahor's son, recognise Jehovah also (Gen. xxiv. 50). So far there are no signs of idolatry; but a short time afterwards the poison of superstition which so soon leads to materialism was at work. Rachel had carried away Laban's *teraphim*, and her father accuses Jacob of the theft, saying, "Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" Yet he had just

received a dream-message from God Himself, whom he calls "the God of your father" (*i.e.* Abraham, *cf.* v. 42), and again in v. 53 Laban says, "The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father (Terah) judge betwixt us." We gather from these passages that, whatever had happened in the case of the Japhetic and Hamitic races, there was a remnant of the Semitic family which possessed some knowledge of the true God, and that this knowledge was not absolutely restricted to Abraham's seed.

§ 2. *The Mosaic Age*

In the days of the Exodus Pharaoh learnt much about Jehovah the God of the Hebrews, but it was through the medium of Moses and Aaron. He does not even profess to know who Jehovah was (Exod. v. 2), much less to yield to Him. Gradually he learnt that "the earth belonged to Jehovah" (Exod. ix. 29; *cf.* Ps. xxiv. 1), and that this august Being had to be reckoned with (Exod. x. 16, 17); but he never got further than this.

We now come to the Covenant between Jehovah and His redeemed people, and we see that no room is left for either polytheism (1st Commandment) or idolatry in any form (2nd Commandment); for God is a jealous (*i.e.* zealous) God. He is the one and only God, and He expects His people to be thoroughly loyal to Him. They saw no similitude; only they heard a voice, and no image can be made of a voice. The most precious metals were not good enough to be representatives of Him (Exod. xx. 23). False or strange gods were not so much as to be mentioned (xxiii. 13; *cf.* Ps. xvi. 4). The man who sacrificed to them brought destruction on his head (Exod. xxii. 20). Even to make an alliance or intermarry with idolaters was to fall into a snare (xxiii. 33); yet such is human nature that within a few months they make a molten calf (probably in remembrance of the Egyptian Hathor) under the superintendence of Aaron, and say, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. xxxii. 4; *cf.* 1 Kings xii. 28; Neh. ix. 18; Ps. cvi. 19). All honour to the candour of those who have recorded this terrible

downfall, but how is such speedy degradation to be accounted for? Probably what the people felt the need of was some visible symbol or representation of their Redeemer, and they chose one from what they had already witnessed in Egypt. In other words they substituted the seen for the unseen. Such is human nature all the world over. It symbolises the Deity; then the symbol becomes a representative; then the representative becomes a substitute; then materialism with all its debasing influences comes in like a flood.

The scene which followed on the detection of Israel's gross sin is one of the most vivid and striking in the Old Testament. It is like the story of the Fall over again. In graciously renewing the covenant with this strange people the command was more stringent than ever that every Canaanite idol, altar, and grove was to be destroyed, and there was to be no inter-marriage or alliance with the idolater (Exod. xxxiv. 12–17). Many gross immoralities were mixed up with false worship, and Israel was to keep clear of the whole (Lev. xviii.); otherwise they would bring ruin on themselves.

§ 3. *Utterances of Balaam*

In Num. xxii.–xxiv. we find a strange episode in the narrative concerning Balaam. God speaks to him and enables him to utter sublime words of truth and authority. This remarkable man, whose home was on the Euphrates and who was of Semitic origin, if we may judge by his name, had some knowledge of Jehovah. He may have known this name, as Abraham perhaps knew it, by tradition from older sources, or it may have come to him by revelation. At any rate his utterances claim to have been "put into his mouth" by Jehovah (xxiii. 5). They are based on patriarchal and Israelitic history, and they reveal an exceptional destiny for the seed of Jacob.

§ 4. *Degeneracy in the Time of the Judges*

We pass on to the Book of Judges. God is forsaken. False gods are served. Hence come the troubles recorded

in the Book. And yet the Lord in His faithfulness to the patriarchal covenant, deals graciously with the people and raises up judges and saviours. In x. 6 we have a list of the chief false cults which Israel had adopted in the course of three centuries. They were Baals, Ishtars, and the gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia. We are not surprised in the face of this record to read of Micah's "house of God," with ephod and teraphim, and a son for a priest (chap. xvii. 5), but it does seem strange to find a Levite who had become by some form of adoption a Judean of Bethlehem sinking down into the position of hired chaplain to Micah. Later on he obtained "preferment" (chap. xviii.), and the idolatrous worship which he established at Dan was continued till the Captivity (xviii. 30; *cf.* Amos viii. 14).

§ 5. *The Period of the Kings*

When we reach the days of Samuel we find the same story—Dagon, Baals, Ishtars (1 Sam. v. 4; vii. 3). Things became better then for a time, but Solomon let in a flood of idolatry again in his later days; whilst Jeroboam extended his patronage to Dan, which had already become a centre of evil, and also to Bethel, reverting to the calf-worship of the wilderness, and to its exact formula (Exod. xxxii. 4; 1 Kings xii. 28), having seen the real thing in Egypt (1 Kings xii.), nor did he confine himself to the ministrations of Levitical priests. This may have been out of sheer wilfulness, or it may be due to the refusal of the sons of Levi to lend themselves to the iniquity (1 Kings xii. 31).

§ 6. *Attempted Reformations in vain*

All through the days that followed there was mixture of true and false worship, the one being authorised and the other unauthorised but winked at. After the captivity of the Northern Tribes this confusion of worship was intensified. We read in 2 Kings xvii. 28, &c., that when the terror-stricken inhabitants of the cities sent to the King of Assyria he sent them one of the priests who had been carried away from Samaria. He settled at Bethel and "taught them how

they should fear Jehovah." But the immigrants from the East made gods of their own—*e.g.* Succoth-Benoth (*cf.* Zarbauit), Nergal, Ashima, Nibhaz, Tartak, Adrammelech, and Anammelech. No wonder that it was said afterwards to a member of the Samaritan community, "Ye worship ye know not what." Meanwhile Judah had sunk very low in the days of Hezekiah. Even the brazen serpent was treated as representing salvation, and was worshipped with incense (2 Kings xviii. 4), so that it had to be destroyed along with more distinctly idolatrous objects. The account of the reformation effected by Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 5) lifts the veil, and shows what iniquities had been lurking beneath the surface ever since the days of Solomon—the worship of Baal the sun, the moon, the planets (or rather, signs of the Zodiac [1]) and the host of heaven being specially referred to. These indicate Babylonian and Chaldean influence, but along with them we find Canaanite, Zidonian, Ammonite and Moabite cults. Such was the depth of polytheism and idolatry into which Judah had fallen, and from which Josiah, acting under the influence of the law of God, sought to purge them. His reformation was short-lived in its effects.

§ 7. *Retribution*

So far we have been dealing with the history of Israelite idolatry, but what of its consequences? and how were its votaries regarded in the Old Testament? To answer these questions we must turn to the Prophets. They picture up a lamentable state of things. "The land is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made; the mean man boweth down and the great man humbleth himself" (Isa. ii. 8, 9). The country was riddled with idolatry, like Athens in later days (Acts xvii. 16). Those who worshipped the true God in the right way were the exceptions, and among these the prophets of God were pre-eminent. This state of things was regarded as a change for the worse, not an evolution

[1] Heb. *Mazaloth*; compare Job xxxviii. 22; compare the Assyrian *Mazarati*. (See Maunder's *Astronomy of the Bible.*)

for the better. "My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. They have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. ii. 11, 13). Everywhere the testimony of the prophets is to the same effect. Idolatry is the forsaking of God, and in consequencet here comes retribution: God forsakes the idolater. It is whoredom—that is, unfaithfulness to the covenant between God and His people. "My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them; for the spirit of whoredom causeth them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God" (Hos. iv. 12). "Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer" (Hos. iv. 16). "They have deeply corrupted themselves" (Hos. ix. 9).

This course of evil necessarily brought shame and retribution on the offender. Hosea sets forth this in the context of the passages just cited. Jeremiah in his solemn indictment of the people (chap. ii.) says: "As a thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, saying to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth; for they have turned their back unto Me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise and save me. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble, for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah" (Jer. ii. 26–28).

§ 8. *The Wickedness and Folly of Israel is laid bare*

Various lines of argument are used to convict the people of their wrong-doing. Sometimes the uselessness of the idol and its burdensomeness is drawn out in graphic language by the prophet. These objects have eyes but see not, and ears but hear not (Ps. cxv. 4–8). They are no support or help to those who trust them, but have to be carried themselves. "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle; your

carriages were heavy laden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity" (Isa. xlvi. 1, 2). Contrast this picture with the words which follow: "I bear you from your birth, and even to old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you. To whom will ye liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him and set him in his place, and he standeth. From his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer nor save him out of his trouble" (Isa. xlvi. 1–7. Compare Hab. ii. 18).

The immorality and degradation of this corrupt system is frequently dwelt on. See Ps. cvi. 36–39.

This lying system, as Isaiah rightly calls it (xliv. 20), was not confined to men. Women and children had a share in it. "Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. Do they provoke Me to anger, saith the Lord; do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?" (Jer. vii. 17–19).

Even the Temple was desecrated and polluted by infamous practices. This was brought out in the records of Josiah's reign, but it is referred to in startling language in Ezekiel (viii. 7–16).

§ 9. *A Remedy Proposed*

Certainly the people had fallen as low as was possible, and the question arose in the minds of the devoted few, was there any hope, any remedy? or was the case incurable?

(see Mic. i. 9; Jer. xxx. 12, 15). All depended on the heart, which is described as desperately wicked (Jer. xvii. 9). If that could be cured there was hope; otherwise there was none.

There were two possible sources from which a remedy might be looked. One is an increased knowledge of God. As we read such a chapter as the 40th of Isaiah we are led to the conclusion that the more we know of God the less possible it is to make a likeness or image which can adequately represent Him. What was needed, then, was a clear manifestation of God in His grandeur, which should be impressive and convincing. The other source of hope lies deeper down, namely, in the inexhaustible riches of God's grace, which had been so often tested in days gone by. His people had backslidden shamefully. But God, speaking by His prophets, says again and again, "I will heal their backslidings" (Hos. xiv. 4; also Jer. iii. 22).

Whilst a further revelation of God was possible, his everlasting love was certain. Consequently there was hope for the lost, and a day should come when men should cast their idols to the moles and to the bats (Isa. ii. 20). But the hope for Israel proves to be a hope for the world. Any salvation which could reach an idolatrous Israelite, who had sinned against knowledge, would in the nature of things be available for the Race.

CHAPTER XXI

ANTICIPATED MISSION OF THE SON AND THE SPIRIT

§ 1. *Prospect of a Special Revelation of God*

WHILE Polytheism is abhorrent in every page of the Old Testament, it is clear from a study of the Book as a whole that the idea of monotheism revealed in it is not capable of strict definition.

We gather both from the Scriptures and from outside sources that communities and nations had special cults to which they adhered for many generations. They did not change their gods (Jer. ii. 11). The God of Israel, however, whose name was Jehovah, cannot be classed with these deities. He is regarded as the One living and true God from the beginning, and was Lord of heaven and earth; so that there was no room for any other worship. Abraham said truly that this God was the Judge of all the earth. We have seen that the supposition that Jehovah-worship sprang out of idolatry or animism or fetishism by a gradual process of improvement finds no real justification in Scripture. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the God of Elijah and of the prophets. Nothing can be grander than the utterance contained in Deut. vi. 4, 5, which is the watchword of the nation to the present day: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah; and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength."

§ 2. *A Divine Agent*

But there are peculiarities in the self-revelation of God as recorded in the Old Testament. We Christians say with Israel, "The Lord our God is one Lord." But we are not Unitarians. There is a distinction between Unitarianism (*i.e.* uni-personality) and Monotheism. "God reserved some elements in the revelation concerning Himself until Israel

was so purged from idolatry that it could receive them. After all, flesh and blood cannot take in the whole truth about God. The conditions of His nature are very different from ours."[1] The history of the word *Elohim* is remarkable. Why should it stand for the true God in 2310 places, and *Elim* not once? Why should it be used for an Israelite judge when regarded as a representative of the Deity? (*e.g.* Exod. vii. 1). How far is the personality of man an exact counterpart of the personality of the God in whose image he was created? When "the Word of the Lord came to Abram" in a vision (Gen. xv. 1), what did the patriarch see? When the angel of the Lord found Hagar and spoke in the first person as God Himself, Hagar felt that in seeing Him she saw God. Similarly God was audible and visible to Jacob (Gen. xx. 13). In fact all through the Book of Genesis there is the Sender and the One Sent, and they are essentially One. The same is the case in the history of Moses.

§ 3. *A Divine Messiah*

A different phase of truth gradually emerges as the history of Israel unrolls itself. The Angelic gives way to the Messianic. Nothing need be said here of its political, social, and Davidic side; but there gather round the Jewish hope many other elements, and all were awaiting their fulfilment when the Old Testament came to an end. The word Immanuel would have new force. The virgin's seed would have such strange titles as "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father or Source of Eternal Life, the Prince of Peace." These titles would hardly be suitable for Hezekiah, Isaiah, or Zerubbabel. The coming of this Great One would be the coming of the Lord. There would be a mission of One who should come to do God's will, whilst putting away the four great classes of Levitical offering. He would be God's Firstborn, and all nations should call Him blessed. He would be a Priest for ever, not after the order of Aaron, but after the strange and mysterious order of Melchizedek. It is not

[1] *Monotheism, Hebrew and Christian* (Longmans), which has been freely used in this section.

definitely stated that these and other predictions should all be fulfilled in one person, but this is the natural conclusion which the original recipients of the Old Testament would arrive at, and which they did arrive at.[1] The more we study the prophetic programme of the Old Testament, the more we are driven to the conclusion that the appearances of the Angel of the Lord, the Captain of the Lord's Host, in the Old Testament were intended to prepare the way for some more full manifestation of God, and that the Messianic and kindred passages point in the same direction. Who but a Divine Being could work out the purposes outlined in the Old Testament? These purposes are seven, namely, the victory of the woman's seed, the blessing for all nations, the promised Prophet, the promised sacrifice, the promised Priest, the promised way of pardon, the promised Saviour-King. Where is the man, where are the men, who did anything in the direction to which these promises point? We have indeed many great names, heroes of faith, a roll of honour, patriots, prophets, martyrs. But there is no one who attempted to fulfil the scheme. At last, when the time was fulfilled and the moment had arrived, God sent forth His Son; and each of the seven promises is fulfilled in Him—at any rate to such a degree that we feel we are on safe ground in calling upon Him as the Son of God who should come into the world.

§ 4. *A Spiritual Reinforcement*

If the Old Testament left the Hebrew reader in an uncertain but expectant attitude with regard to the great manifestation of the Lord, the same is true in regard to the coming or pouring out of the Spirit. We have seen (see p. 63) that the root idea in the Hebrew word translated "spirit" is unseen Force and Feeling; and while Force might be unconscious, Feeling more definitely involves Personality. We must not multiply personalities within the human being, nor may we do this in the case of the Deity, but we must follow our Old Testament for guidance. It teaches us that there is a communication of vital energy

[1] See Edersheim's "List of Passages Messianically applied in Rabbinic Writings," appended to vol. ii. of his *Life of Jesus the Messiah.*

which arouses and inspires, as in the time of the Judges (iii. 10; vi. 34; xi. 29; xiii. 25; xiv. 6, 19; xv. 14), and in the case of Cyrus (Ezra i. 1). The spirit of the man in these and other cases responded to the subtle influence and vital energy of God. In some cases the result may have been a sudden impulse to speak, as when the Spirit clothed Amasai (1 Chron. xii. 18); compare Judges vi. 34. This Divine energy is evidently something over and above the ordinary faculties; it does not imply the possession of omnipotence or omniscience, but it clearly furnished the agent with whatever was needed for his special work.

§ 5. *The outpouring of the Spirit on and through the Messiah*

There were certain promises connected with spiritual agency which lay in the prophetic books awaiting their fulfilment, and which have to be read in the light of the New Testament. Passing by Prov. i. 23, which might be purely personal, we come to Isaiah. In chap. xi. we find that the Messiah is to have the Spirit of the Lord resting upon Him, and producing certain results, which are enumerated. Here we have a personal agency distinct from its recipient, and the word "rest" emphasises this view. Again, in Isa. xxxii. 15 the outpouring of the Spirit from on high is the means of securing righteousness and judgment, the very blessing which had been promised in the first verse of the chapter in connection with the reign of a King (see also xxxiii. 5). In chap. xlii. 1 the influence of the spirit of judgment extends to the Gentiles, whilst in chap. xliv. 3 it has primarily to do with the seed of Jacob (see also chap. xi. 1, &c.). Turning to the prophet Joel, we find that "all flesh" is interested in the promise of the outpoured Spirit (chap. ii. 28); and in the later prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the promise of the Spirit is associated both with the new covenant and with the restoration of Israel (see, *e.g.*, Ezek. xxxvi.).

It is not till some centuries later that light is thrown on these promises, but a time came in which they were freely quoted as in course of fulfilment.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FAITH AND LIFE OF AN OLD TESTAMENT SAINT

ALTHOUGH the words objective and subjective are not in the Bible, the ideas which they stand for are there. The God of the Old Testament is not merely subjective; He is not a reflection of the human thinker. Though He is close to man's inner being, He is ever distinct, as the sun is distinct from the sunshine. The recognition of this truth is described in the Old Testament by the word Faith.

§ 1. *Meaning of the word Faith*

The Hebrew term which describes the act of faith has deep significance. It usually has to do with some Divine word or message; and "to believe" is to take the message to be true, and consequently to act upon it as if it were true. The word first appears in Genesis xv. 6, where three notable expressions are found for the first time: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned (accounted or imputed) to him for righteousness." Who wrote these words? and what did he mean by them? It is natural to suppose that Abraham kept a record of all God's dealings with him, and that this record was one of the various documents, originally written on clay, which forms the early part of our Pentateuch. This at least is the view which a survey of the Old Testament as a whole seems to convey.[1]

§ 2. *Abraham justified by Faith*

The chapter just referred to is Israel's *magna charta* or title-deed, which gave descendants of Abraham the right to the Canaanite territory. The aged, childless patriarch is bidden to look up into the heavens and gaze upon the

[1] See Conder's *First Bible.*

stars; and the Being Who brought him forth from his tent by night and laid this injunction upon him added, "So shall thy seed be." It seemed in the highest degree improbable—in fact, practically impossible—that this extraordinary promise should prove true; but having regard to the Speaker, to whom Abraham was not now listening for the first time, the patriarch took the promise to be true, for it was God's own word. Then God marked His approval in some definite way. We thus see that the faithfulness of God invites and draws out the faith of man. The same Hebrew root stands for "faith" and "faithfulness," and they are nearly related. When Matthew Arnold was discussing St. Paul's view of faith, he was led to the conclusion that faith meant loyalty to one's convictions. At first sight this definition or explanation seemed unworthy, and it was rejected by many; but it evidently contains an important truth. It is vain to say "I believe," unless we act as if we really did believe.

§ 3. *Israel's Faith*

The next notable record of faith is contained in Exodus iv. 13. Here we are told that Moses and Aaron gathered the leaders of the people together and told them what the Lord had spoken, and confirmed the word by certain signs and attestations, "and the people believed." Similarly, after the Exodus was accomplished, we read that "Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses" (Exod. xiv. 31). The whole journey through the desert was, or ought to have been, a walk of faith; and every battle with the enemy ought to have been a fight of faith.

Passing on to the later Books, attention ought to be called to an important passage bearing on faith in Hab. ii. 4. The prophet had been told to write the vision which he had seen, and to make it plain on tablets. It was not to be fulfilled immediately, but in God's appointed time, and at the end the Lord should come and the word of God should prove true. Meantime the godly Israelite was

to wait patiently. While God seemed to be tarrying, His delay was not to be counted slackness. "He that shall come, will come." But the recipients of the message fell into two classes. There were those whose soul was lifted up in pride, and who drew back from God's way. They were not men of uprightness. But there were also the just and righteous, who took God at His word, and waited patiently for Him. They should live in their faithfulness. Their faith would sustain them in their true life.

§ 4. *Trust and Faith*

It is frequently said that trust and faith are the same thing, but it is not so in the Old Testament. According to the usage of the Hebrew Bible, trust is more nearly related to hope than it is to belief, and yet it springs out of belief. It marks the confident conviction of those who take God at His word. The reason of this is that so much of what we call Revelation has to do either with the unseen or with the future, both of which are beyond the ken of our natural faculties. Faith realises the unseen; Hope looks forward to the fulfilment of the promises; Trust rests on Him Who is the revealer of His own will and purposes.

§ 5. *Practical working of Faith*

The godly Israelite was not infallible, but he knew in whom he believed, and his faith had plenty of confirmatory evidence. His very language bore the stamp of Divine truth, for Hebrew words supply fruitful studies in theology and philosophy. He had the annual Feasts which testified to the great events in the history of his forefathers. He had some access to the precious Book, which acquainted him with the will and the works of God in the past. He had opportunities of worship, at home, on the hillside, and in the Sacred Centre. If his heart ached over sin, he could think of the truths enshrined in the rites of the Day of Atonement. If he longed for the living God, his spirit would fly to Him Whose presence was assured by the ark

and the cherubim. His business was to love the Lord, Who was the Redeemer of his nation, with all his heart, and to show that love by love to his neighbour. If he failed and went astray, God, the true Shepherd of Israel, sought him, and he sought God. He saw few of the difficulties with which the modern thinker is burdened. His faith was robust. Neither creation, nor providence, nor election, nor miracles, nor prayer puzzled him. He lived in faith, and he slept with his fathers in hope, looking for the consolation of Israel. He was human, and consequently inconsistent—as we are. He knew little or nothing about the speculative philosophy which leads to pantheism, but all too much about polytheism and its attendant vices and superstitions. To sum up the practical product of Old Testament theology as it showed itself in the inner and outer life of its true adherents, we could hardly use better words than those in which the Christian character is summed up—Faith and Hope and Love.

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