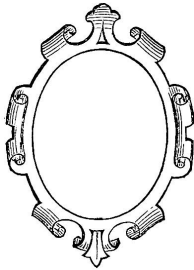


KA1832

THEOLOGY
OF THE
PAST AND THE FUTURE.

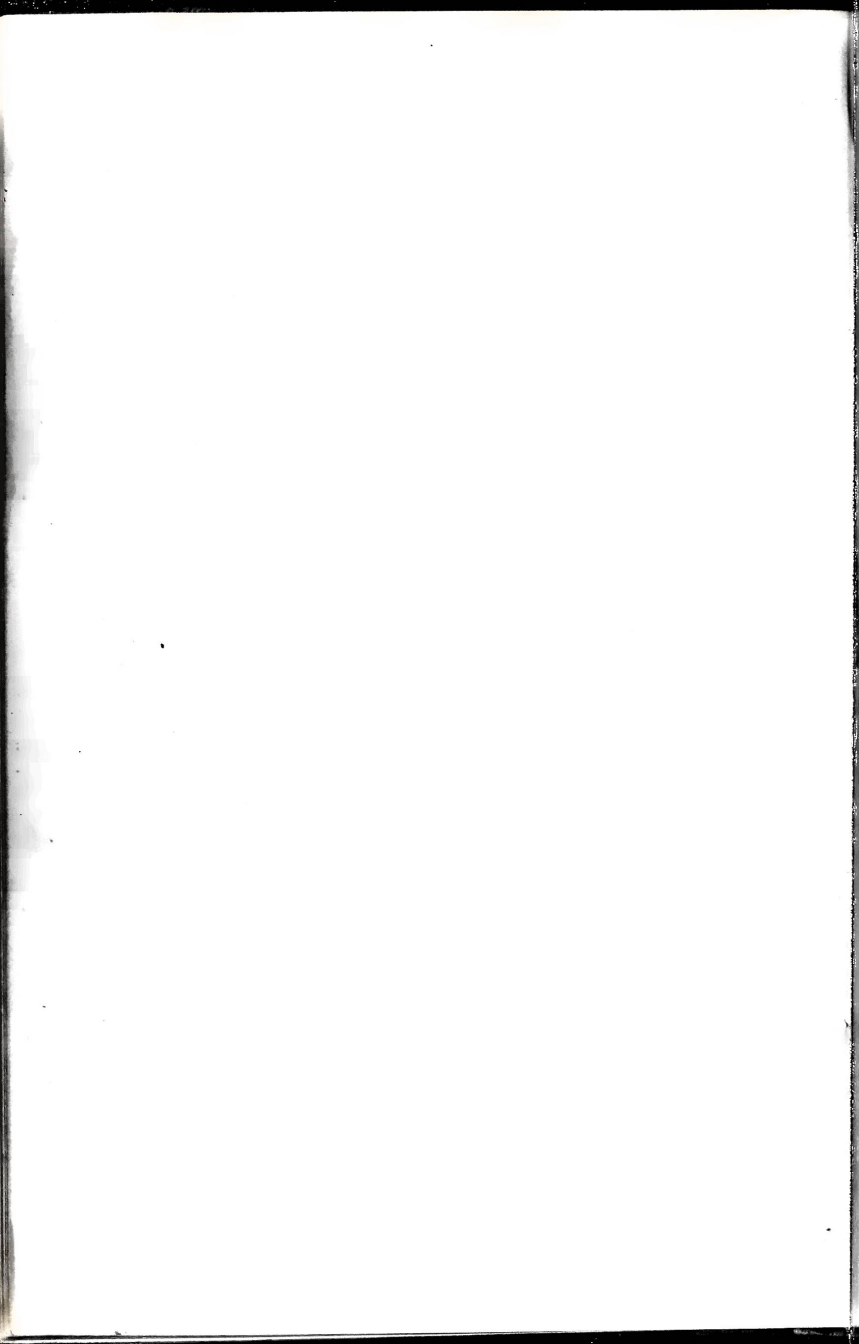
BY
M. M. KALISCH, PH.D., M.A.

REPRINTED FROM PART I. OF HIS COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS.



PUBLISHED BY THOMAS SCOTT,
MOUNT PLEASANT, RAMSGATE.

Price One Shilling.



P R E F A C E.

MY DEAR MR SCOTT,

I have carefully considered your proposal of reprinting from the First Part of my "Commentary on Leviticus," the Chapter on "The Theology of the Past and the Future;" and though I believe that the views set forth in this Treatise receive their full light only if read in connection with the preceding enquiries in the same volume, of which they are the logical inferences, I readily assent to your suggestion, hoping that, even in this isolated form, the Essay may help to promote the great object which you pursue with so much zeal and judgment. The Second Part of the "Commentary on Leviticus," which is about to be published, contains several Treatises corroborating the conclusions here summarised, both with reference to the composition and the theology of the Biblical Canon.

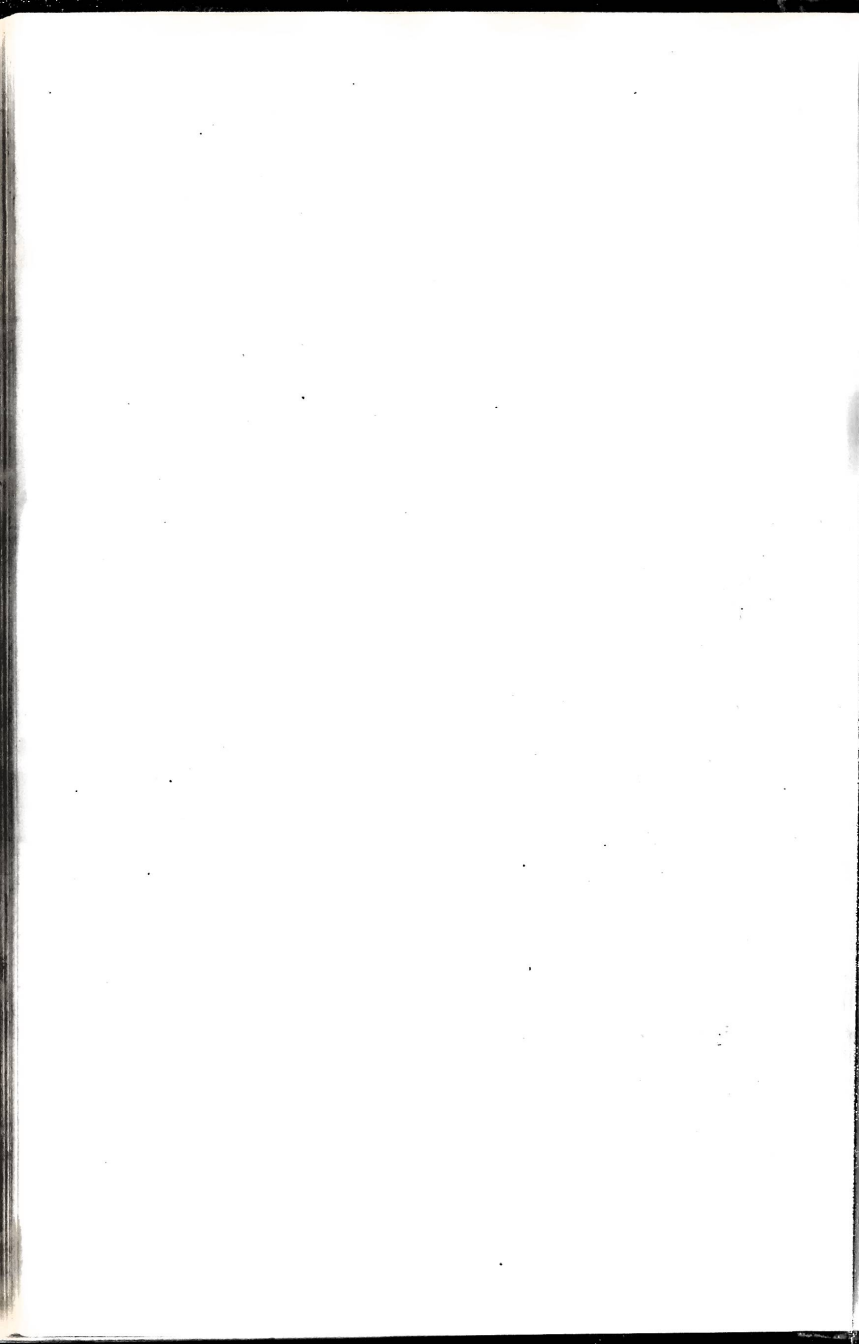
Believe me,

Yours very faithfully,

M. KALISCH.

LONDON, *April 25, 1871.*

*To THOMAS SCOTT, Esq.,
Mount Pleasant, Ramsgate.*



THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST AND THE FUTURE.



IT has too long been customary, even for liberal and acute critics, merely to comment on the *facts* contained in the Bible, and to weigh the degree of reliability they merit, while the *ideas* and the *teaching* have either been declared final for all ages, or have been tacitly assumed as unimpeachable. The time, however, has arrived for abandoning this questionable course, for determining by a searching and calm enquiry the positive value of the notions that pervade the Scriptures, and for ascertaining by a candid estimate, how far they satisfy the modern mind, or correspond with the philosophical and scientific results of the last centuries. This task will either show the entire sufficiency of the Bible for all our spiritual needs ; or, if it lead to a different conclusion, it will prove an essential preliminary to the attempt of constructing a system of theology that shall be in harmony with our general modes and habits of thought, accord with the achievements of science and with the ordinary tenor of our lives, and which shall therefore beneficently influence our conduct and progress.

In our age, we are accustomed to look upon every occurrence as the natural and inevitable consequence of human action, or of some other circumstance with which it is connected. We attempt to trace effects to adequate causes. Unchangeable laws regulate

the life of individuals and nations, and prescribe the course to universal history. The gradual development of mankind is the necessary result of the abilities, energies, and passions inherent in men. The happiness of the individual depends, in a great measure, on his mental and physical organisation; for it is the ordinary concomitant of healthful vigour of body and mind; while wretchedness is the usual fate of infirmity and morbidness. Prosperity is the combined product of personal exertion and favourable opportunity. Man is, therefore, in some respects, a free agent; but in a much higher degree, he is a creature of necessity. The works which he produces result from the talents he may possess, and from the activity he is able or willing to display. They are prompted by that internal impulse which is inseparable from his idiosyncrasy. He is capable of improvement and advancement, as he is liable to retrogression and decline. He labours as his powers bid him; he succeeds according to the measure of his gifts or of his usefulness; and he finds his chief reward in the consciousness of having zealously cultivated and honestly employed his faculties.

If, imbued with these notions which underlie our whole life, we turn to the Scriptures, we are at once struck by a different sphere of thought, by a strange and unfamiliar spirit. Forced away from the circle of ideas which guide us in our daily pursuits and reflections, we are abruptly transferred to conceptions and views, which indeed occasionally touch a sympathetic chord, whether from their poetical and imaginative beauty or from the ineffaceable impressions of childhood, but which our maturer manhood finds it impossible to acknowledge and to adopt. And finally, the affection for a venerable tradition that may linger in our hearts, must yield to the severer truths dictated by our intellects.

1. THE CREATION.

The Scriptures teach that the universe and all it contains, were called into existence in six days, by God's direct command. This Biblical cosmogony (Gen. i. 1—ii. 4) is grand and sublime, but it is faulty and unscientific; it disregards those attributes of matter which, by their own inherent power, of necessity produce the changes and combinations that constitute the cosmos; therefore, it arbitrarily compresses within the limits of a few days what was effected by the gradual operation of myriads of millenniums, and it transforms into acts of personal agency what we are wont to regard as the result of clearly defined and unchangeable laws.

2. MIRACLES.

The same personal interference continues in Biblical *history*. For special ends, the eternal course of nature is altered, and *miracles* are performed. Yet the idea of miracles is absolutely opposed to our notions of the universe, as derived from a patient cultivation of the natural and historical sciences. It gains ground whenever men, unable to understand their position as a subordinate though organic part of mankind, consider themselves or their community as the chief end of creation and general government. For it rests virtually on the assumption that nature pays special regard to the deeds and destinies of individuals or single nations, and bestows aid and sympathy, or displays resistance and enmity, in accordance with the behests of a ruling power; whereas her whole economy is one and indivisible, embracing the universe, and working in majestic impartiality for all worlds alike. Therefore Spinoza justly used *miracles* and *ignorance* as convertible terms, and he added the weighty words fraught with significant meaning, "I believe the

principal difference between religion and superstition to be this that the former is founded upon wisdom, the latter upon ignorance; and I am convinced that herein lies the reason why the Christians are distinguished from other men not by an honourable life, nor by love, nor the other fruits of the Holy Ghost, but merely by an opinion; because, like all the rest, they fortify themselves only by miracles, that is by ignorance, which is the fountain of all wickedness, and thus convert faith, however true, into superstition."

Ancient nations felt strongly the influence of the divine power in nature; but as they had explored nature most imperfectly, all her remarkable or unusual phenomena appeared to them as direct manifestations of the deity, or as miracles, which inspired them both with terrifying awe and sublime veneration; and these feelings worked the more powerfully, the more vividly their youthful minds were affected by all impressions, and the more consistently they were accustomed to develop and to apply every new and great idea. The assumption to which we have alluded gave rise, among the Romans, to the fictions of *prodigia* or *portenta*, by which the gods were believed to announce impending calamities or important events—the sky appearing in a blaze of fire, or flaming torches illumining the air; spears or hands burning but not consumed; men of fire assailing and fighting with each other; flesh or worms, earth, stones, or blood raining from heaven; the water of rivers changed into blood; women giving birth to monstrosities; animals speaking, mules bringing forth young, and wonderful animals, as snakes with the manes of horses, starting up; trees springing from the soil full grown, and cut stems suddenly rising to an extraordinary height; rocks moving spontaneously; birds, in anguish without apparent cause, seeking refuge; marvellous or alarming sights and sounds produced by

delusion of the senses ; images of gods speaking, or shedding tears.

The Biblical miracles are founded on similar conceptions. By the command of God, heavenly bodies are said to have been arrested in their course (Josh. x. 12-14 ; Is. xxxviii. 8) ; yet we know that such a contingency would be inevitably followed by a complete derangement of the sidereal systems, and by the incalculable ruin of thousands of worlds. Occasionally even the Bible shows a gleam of the conviction of nature's immutable stability : " He has established the heavens for ever and ever ; He gave a law, and they trespass it not " (Ps. cxlviii. 6) ; " He said to the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed " (Job xxxviii. 11) ; " I have placed the sand for the boundary of the sea by an eternal law, that it cannot pass it ; and though its waves rage, they cannot prevail " (Jer. v. 22). But such incidental admissions do not materially influence the spirit and tenor of the narratives. According to Biblical accounts, the Divine will constantly changed those intrinsic properties of things which constitute their very character and essence. But if we read that the water of the Nile was converted into blood (Ex. iv. 9 ; vii. 17-20), and that ordinary water was at the marriage of Cana, changed into wine (John ii. 1-11) ; that the waves of the Red Sea were divided and stood upright like a wall (Ex. xiv. 21, 22), and the floods of the Jordan, touched by Elijah's mantle, opened a dry path (2 Kings ii. 13, 14) ; that an axe, which had sunk to the bottom of the river, rose by Elijah's will and swam on the surface (2 Kings vi. 6), and that Christ walked on the water of the Lake Genesareth (Mark vi. 48, 49) ; that the men of Sodom and Bar-Jesus (Elymas) were suddenly struck blind (Gen. xix. 11 ; Acts xiii. 6-11), and blind men recovered their sight as suddenly (Matt. ix. 28-30 ; xx. 32-34) ; that a staff became a serpent and a serpent a staff, a healthy hand was by

a word made leprous, and a leprous hand healthy (Ex. iv. 2-7); that the earth opened its womb to engulf alive rebellious offenders (Num. xvi. 30-33), and the dead were revived or raised alive from the grave (John xi. 1-44; Matt. ix. 18, 24, 25); that Moses was forty days on Mount Sinai without requiring any food whatever (Ex. xxxiv. 28), and that a limited supply of flour and wine was practically unlimited, and sufficed for the household of the widow of Zarephath a considerable time (1 Kings xvii. 14-16); that every vessel which could possibly be procured, filled itself spontaneously with oil by Elisha's command (2 Kings iv. 3-6); that 4,000 men, besides women and children, were satisfied by seven loaves and a few little fishes, and left over seven baskets full of broken pieces (Matt. xv. 32-38); that a fig-tree, covered with leaves and capable of bearing fruit, instantaneously withered away (Matt. xxi. 19); that the ass of Balaam spoke (Num. xxii. 28, 30), a raven provided Elijah regularly with bread and meat (1 Kings xvii. 4-6), and a whale preserved Jonah in its womb three days and three nights, and then threw him on the dry land unhurt (Jonah ii. 1-11): if we read all this, we might be led to the perplexing conclusion that there is nothing stable and fixed in nature, were we not taught by science to regard undeviating uniformity as nature's first principle. All reality is destroyed, and the things, devoid of a well-defined character, lose their intrinsic value and absolute existence. "The miracle changes the serious code of nature into a merry book of fairy-tales; but for this reason, miracle itself deserves to be ranked no higher than a fairy-tale." Disdaining, like fancy, to which it is largely indebted, the fetters of necessity, it capriciously confounds the qualities of matter, combines what is naturally incompatible, and disjoins what is inseparable. Every miracle "paralyses reason;" for it checks the specific work of reason, which consists in searching for laws and causes, and, by depriving it of the safe support of experience,

renders it valueless even for pointing out the path of practical duty. The miracle attempts to sway nature, but not, like reason, by penetrating into its organism, but by misusing it for arbitrary ends. Unrestrained by any limit, and unshackled by any condition, it appears in power boundless and inexhaustible. Exercising a complete rule over matter, and reminding man of his own inborn yearning for the infinite, it is by unreflecting generations easily mistaken as divine. Hence the East is the home of miracles; because the East is most apt to confound fancy and reflection: these two faculties have indeed abstraction as a common element; but fancy defies or disregards reality, while reflection judiciously preserves and spiritualises it.

It is not only useless but objectionable to reduce the miracles by ingenious and strained interpretations, to the least possible number, or to explain their force away, by representing them as ordinary occurrences told in a marvellous or imaginative form. Thus it has been asserted that the Bible contains nothing that is opposed to the rules of nature, and that, for instance, the prolonged day in Joshua's time may be accounted for by the supposition that a large quantity of ice happened to be in the upper region of the air, and caused an unusually strong refraction of the solar rays; and this led to the vague and untenable opinion that all Biblical statements found to be in opposition to the laws of nature are "either poetical metaphors, or are related according to the opinions and prejudices of the writers, or have been inserted in the Scriptures by sacrilegious hands"—which principles manifestly deprive the narratives of Scripture of all definite meaning and value. Equally questionable is the device of separating the "end and essence" of the revelations from the accessory notions associated with them, and of insisting upon the truth of the former, while relinquishing that of the latter, a device which would

open the floodgates to every variety of arbitrary distinction. Yet these views have been adopted by earlier and later writers, and among them by Reimarus, the famous "fragmentist" of Wolfenbüttel, who by attempting "natural explanations" of events which the authors of the Bible obviously meant to describe as supernatural, was misled to the most curious fancies, as for instance, that the thunder which accompanied the revelation on Mount Sinai was possibly produced by the sudden explosion of "a sort of gunpowder," while Moses communicated with Joshua, who was in the camp, by means of a speaking-trumpet.

This observation has a still wider scope. The utmost perplexity must be created if the results of philosophical thought are by strained expositions grafted upon the Scriptures, in the vain hope thereby to save the authority of the latter; thus Spinoza rightly maintains that the ceremonies of the Old Testament contribute nothing to virtue and happiness, and that they can therefore form no part of a Divine Law; but it is idle to assert that this is the view of the Old Testament itself, which enjoins moral and civil laws, religious doctrines, and ceremonies as equally binding and equally irrevocable; the endeavour to prove the contrary is necessarily futile and ineffectual. Yet Spinoza severely denounces, in theory, the method which he himself repeatedly follows; he inveighs especially against Maimonides, and justly so, for advocating that method, which he describes as "noxious, useless, and absurd;" he is equally decided in censuring forced reconciliations of texts manifestly at variance with each other; he declares and proves that Scripture ought neither to be subordinated to theological convictions, nor theological convictions to Scripture, but that both ought to be kept apart in so far as theology is the result of independent reasoning; but such is the bane of vagueness, that elsewhere he expresses almost the opposite opinion: "Yet we do not desire to accuse those men

of impiety because they accommodate the words of Scripture to their individual conclusions; for as Scripture was once itself adapted (by its authors) to the capacity of the people, thus every one is permitted to adapt it to his own views, if he sees that he is thus able to obey God, with the fuller consent of his conscience, in all matters that concern justice and love." Who does not see that such principle, or rather such absence of principle, renders all religious knowledge uncertain and fluctuating, and renounces beforehand all absolute truth?

It is equally unavailing to confine miracles to certain periods; Catholicism, in this respect more in accordance with the spirit of the Bible than Protestantism, which attempts an unsuccessful compromise between belief and reason, extends their operation beyond the limits of tradition, and supposes their constant and living manifestation. For the Biblical narratives do not simply contain miracles, but are throughout framed in a miraculous spirit. They are entirely compiled on the assumption of a perpetual and immediate intervention of God in the natural course of events. That extraordinary "offering of jealousy," (Num. v. 11-31), which is evidently an ordeal involving the regular and miraculous interference of God, is alone sufficient to disclose the wide chasm which separates the Biblical from the scientific notions beyond all possibility of agreement. Wonders are freely employed to remove difficulties, even where these might have been overcome by natural agencies. Whether Noah and his family are alone rescued amidst the universal destruction of living creatures, or Lot is by special messengers of God saved from the calamities which overthrew his entire district; whether Pharaoh is, by unparalleled afflictions, forced to release the Hebrews, or the persons and the property of the latter remain untouched when the land is visited by appalling misfortunes; whether God personally guides and protects the patriarchs, or afflicts

the women of Abimelech's household with barrenness because that king took Sarah into his house (Gen. xx. 17, 18); whether He gives to the myriads of wandering Israelites food and water in abundance for forty years, or makes the hostile Syrian army hear a noise of vast numbers of horses and chariots, to delude them into the belief of large hosts approaching, in consequence of which they flee panic-stricken, leaving their whole camp behind them (2 Kings vii. 6, 7)—these and the numerous traits of a similar kind defy all laws both of reason and experience, and substitute phantasmagoric playfulness for sober historiography to such a degree that even the attempt at harmonizing them with scientific results bespeaks the slothfulness of a mind equally unable to form an independent estimate of the antiquated past, and to keep pace with the growth of modern inquiry. "By the direction of God," observes Spinoza, "I understand the fixed and immutable order of nature or the concatenation of natural things. The general laws of nature, by which everything happens and is determined, are nothing but the eternal decrees of God, which ever involve eternal truth and necessity. Therefore, whether we say that everything happens according to the laws of nature, or that everything is ordained by the will and direction of God, we say the same thing." These views, whether they be avowed or not, rule our lives and our thoughts. They must form the starting point of all future theories of philosophy and theology. Sometimes indeed the Bible records natural facts in connection with miracles; for instance, Moses threw a certain wood, which God had shown him, into the bitter waters of Marah, which then became drinkable (Ex. xv. 25), and similarly Elisha rendered salubrious for ever a deleterious spring of water by casting into it a quantity of salt (2 Kings ii. 20-22); Elisha leaned repeatedly over the dead boy, till the latter grew warm and returned to life (2 Kings iv. 34, 35); the

Syrian general Naaman was healed from leprosy after bathing seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings v. 1-14); and the ten plagues of Egypt are all based on natural phenomena of almost regular occurrence in that country: but these facts, though affording *to us* valuable hints and explanations, were by the Biblical narrators not meant to remove the miraculous character of the events; they prove, on the contrary, that even where a natural explanation offered itself, and was suggested by tradition, it was rejected by miracle-loving generations, and set aside in favour of the assumption of extraordinary agencies. Yet, what natural basis can be discovered for the legends that Miriam became suddenly "leprous like snow" because she had spoken slightly of Moses (Num. xii. 10); that a corpse which touched the bones of Elisha, became alive and rose from the grave (2 Kings xiii. 21), or that diseases were cured, physical defects removed, and evil spirits expelled by touching the hand or the garment of Christ (Mat. viii. 13-15), or "an handkerchief or apron" of the apostle Paul? (Acts xix. 12); that a large number of fiery horses and chariots appeared to deliver Elisha from his pursuers? (2 Kings vi. 17); that fire came out of a rock by striking it with a staff, and consumed the meat and the cakes placed thereon by Gideon as an offering? (Jud. vi. 20, 21); that the sea raged because it bore the guilty Jonah, and became tranquil as soon as the latter was removed from the ship? (Jonah i. 12-15).

And yet the Bible itself lowers considerably the force and effect of miracles by attributing the power of performing them not only to Hebrews worshipping foreign gods, and to heathens controlled by the might of Jehovah, as in the instance of Balaam, but to idolaters who work in opposition to Jehovah Himself, as the magicians of Egypt (Ex. vii. 11, 12). The New Testament goes even farther; it supposes that miracles are performed by "false Christs and false prophets" (Mat. xxiv. 24) to such an extent "that if

it were possible they might deceive the very elect ;” the enemy of the Church represented under the form of a beast rising out of the earth “ did great wonders, made fire come down from heaven, and thereby deceived many men” (Rev. xix. 20); and “ the spirits of the devils,” which betray the kings of the earth and of the whole world, work miracles (Rev. vi. 14). Wonders, therefore, neither testify to the greatness of God, nor to the purity or truth of doctrines. It is, moreover, extremely difficult to distinguish between a true and a false miracle ; all criteria that have been fixed, are either misty or fallacious.

The inference to be drawn from these facts is as decisive as it is significant. Can a gift that an idol is able to bestow, have any value or reality ? Can those powers be supernatural which a Hebrew prophet shares with a priest of Baal ?

Miracles are both impossible and incredible—impossible because against the established laws of the universe, and incredible because those set forth by tradition, are palpable inventions of unhistoric ages.

The belief in miracles may, in certain periods, not be without advantage and importance ; it emanates from a spiritual elevation, perhaps from a moral impulse ; it may serve to strengthen the religion of the heart, and to sanction those doctrines which the mind recognises as true and eternal ; it may thus prove a material aid to a genuine faith ; but it can, at best, only be a means to that end ; it loses its usefulness when it loses the connection with the mind ; it becomes injurious and dangerous and leads to mechanical ritualism or fanatic vehemence when it is isolated from the moral faculties ; and engenders hypocrisy and falsehood when it ceases to be conceived in simplicity and childlike ingenuousness. According to the current and traditional views, miracles were wrought exclusively in the early times of deficient education and imperfect knowledge ;

they are no longer reported in the more enlightened epochs of progress and research. Why should they have so suddenly and so completely ceased? It is futile to reply that they were performed only as long as they were necessary for the training of the human race; for miracles, by confounding and often insulting reason, and hence fostering superstition, especially magic, witchcraft, and sorcery, to which they are akin, far from promoting, tend to retard the education of mankind. They are valueless for our advancement, whether in religion or philosophy; for neither the one nor the other can be improved by phenomena which the human mind is unable to understand; those facts and ideas only can influence us which lie within the sphere of our common nature; "from an effect which surpasses the capacity of man, he cannot deduce intelligible truths, and those are silly who, if unable to understand a thing, have recourse to God; forsooth, a ridiculous mode of displaying ignorance."

The notion of "rational wonders" which has been propounded is preposterous; for all wonders are irrational; they realise their character the more completely, the more irrational they are; for reason penetrates into the depth and essence of things, while the miracles play lightly on their surface. The *love of the miraculous*, innate in human nature, and strongest in imaginative or enthusiastic minds, and in the early stages of development, is the parent of miracles; they germinate not in the quality of things but in the propensity of men. "Believe you that I am able to do this?" Jesus asked the blind men who came to him to be cured, and "they said to him, Yea, Lord," (Matt. ix. 28); a leper appealed to him saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," and Jesus said, "I will," and the leprosy was immediately removed (Matt. viii. 2, 3). Miracles are desired and demanded when they are believed in; their origin lies neither in the sphere of metaphysics

nor of theology; they can be explained only as psychological phenomena. Mohammed was pressed on all sides to perform miracles in vindication of his alleged mission; the incessant requests of both friends and foes, justified by the precedents of the Old and New Testament, almost brought him to despair; and in vain he insisted, that the greatest miracles are the creation, the animal and vegetable kingdom, heaven and the seas.

The untutored and youthful mind delights in uncommon and astounding mysteries, the manly intellect endeavours to reduce all uncommon and astounding mysteries to ordinary and intelligible laws. The one is, therefore, prepared to witness miracles as soon as an occasion arises, the other refuses to acknowledge them even after they are supposed to have happened. The childlike believer feels his yearnings unsatisfied by the severe, impartial, and uniform rule of ever-balancing and all-embracing reason; the thoughtful philosopher disdains the insinuating flatteries of aspiring enthusiasm, and of exceptional or providential protection, because he divines eternal harmony and order in the stern sameness of nature's working. The former, therefore, in order to be awed, requires extraordinary marvels, since "the miracle is the darling child of faith;" whereas the latter is impressed with a sense of sublimity by examining the common and daily operations of nature. Confiding apathy beholds in the affairs of life the inscrutable and desultory play of preternatural influences; energetic reason is restless to discover the connecting thread of cause and effect. Hence the former either disregards or reads in vain the book of the past, while the latter derives from it the most fruitful lessons for his guidance and training. The feeble-minded, conscious of his helplessness, constantly tries to support himself by some unexpected and unaccountable aid; the resolute man of action glories in his ability of maintaining his due place in the system

of creation by his own energy and the legitimate exercise of his strength. And while the one is eager to be lifted, on the wings of fancy and of faith, immeasurably beyond his natural sphere, the other prefers laboriously to conquer, by the sword of thought and science, his proper domain as a rational being, and to desire no more, convinced that he is great only in the same degree as he is independent, and that his conquests are sure and inalienable when he obtains them by his own exertions and the unrestrained powers of his nature. The contrast, therefore, between the miracle-loving Scriptures and the productions of pragmatic history, is the contrast between poetry and truth, between the hazy beauty of the morning-dawn and the clearness of the mid-day-sun, between the first creditable efforts of reflecting infancy and the safe conclusions of experienced manhood.

History rests on proofs and the internal evidence of facts; the Biblical narrative introduces elements lying beyond the test of ordinary examination, and often directly opposed to experience, reason, and possibility. While, therefore, the one possesses objective truth, the other may be accepted or discarded according to the individual principles of the reader.

The Scriptures habitually represent drought and famine, pestilence and earthquake, floods and every other disaster caused by the elements, as the results of idolatry and wickedness; they make the cessation of these inflictions dependent on the people's repentance and reformation, and hence they speak, for instance, of "the ignominy of famine" (Ez. xxxvi. 30): but the scourges of nature result from physical laws which, though they should never be thoroughly understood, certainly repudiate the notion of a direct influence of the moral upon the physical world. And with respect to the living creation, the conception of the Bible is so childlike, that it assumes the pos-

sibility of moral degeneracy in animals, usually supposes a simultaneous corruption of men and beasts, and includes the one and the other in the same exercises of penitence, fasting, and humiliation (Jonah iii. 7-8); nay, it imagines that even the earth, the abode of man, and the material from which his body was framed, may share the general depravity; and hence it couples the destruction of man, as in the deluge, with the destruction of the beasts, and at least the temporary devastation of the earth, if not, as in the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah, its utter annihilation—all which notions are to us like strange and fanciful echoes of a remote past.

The veil which once covered and hid nature, has in a great measure been withdrawn. The awe which men felt at her grandeur, has thereby not been diminished; on the contrary, it has gained in force and reality. But enquirers have arrived at the conviction that they must renounce the hope of fathoming a power that rules her working; that she does not enable us to understand the distinction between "a primary cause" and "secondary causes," since, throughout her dominion, she reveals causes that we must consider as primary, and beyond which we cannot pass if we desire to penetrate into the genesis of things; and that, therefore, man's dignity and his happiness depend on the earnestness with which he explores nature's laws and obeys her suggestions and behests.

3. PRAYER AND OTHER DEVOTIONS.

From the principles laid down with regard to miracles, it will not be difficult to estimate the value of several other fundamental notions which pervade the Bible. If every effect produced in the material world is the consequence of a commensurate physical cause to which it is intrinsically related, human supplication, sacrifices, fasting, or any other form of

devotion or asceticism, cannot possibly exercise an influence on the course of events or on the destiny of men. There exists no conceivable connection between the one and the other. The spiritual aspiration of prayer lies in a sphere totally different from that which causes the changes or the progress of the external world. If we read that Elijah's prayer suddenly called down from heaven a fire to consume his sacrifice (1 Kings xviii. 36-38), we are startled by a complete overthrow of all the truths to which we are accustomed with regard to the permanent order of things, and we find it impossible to abandon the undisputed results of science in favour of a doubtful tradition, even if this tradition did not form part of a narrative coloured throughout by fanciful legends. If the entreaty of Abraham at once removed the barrenness which had afflicted the women in Abimelech's household (Gen. xx. 17, 18), if prayers are supposed to effect or to accelerate the recovery of the sick (Num. xii. 13, 14) and even to restore the dead to life (Acts ix. 40), or to cause sudden blindness (2 Kings vi. 18), we fail to see, how words, however fervent, can effect a physiological process resulting from the complicated operation of the human organism. And yet the New Testament plainly teaches, "Is any one sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him . . . and the prayer of faith shall save the sick" (Jas. v. 14-16); nay it contends, "If you shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done; and all things whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Mat. xxi. 21, 22); and thus it consistently asserts, "all things are possible to him that believes" (Mark ix. 23). By what inherent force is prayer able to stay a pestilence or a locust-plague, or to procure the victory in war? If people pray for rain to secure a plentiful harvest, they cannot be aware of their irrational proceeding; or else they would not

cherish the impossible hope, that for the sake of the limited district in which they happen to live, the meteorological laws which fix the distribution of rain over the whole globe, should be capriciously upset, a contingency which, were it feasible, would utterly derange the atmospheric relations of our planetary system. In short, the efficacy attributed to prayer lies entirely in the unreal region of the miraculous. When, in 1865, public prayers were appointed to be offered up throughout Great Britain for the cessation of the cholera, the objections entertained by many of the most educated men were well expressed by Prof. Tyndall. "The great majority of sane persons," he observed, "at the present day believe in the necessary character of natural laws, and it is only where the antecedents of a calamity are vague and disguised that they think of resorting to prayer to avert it;" he calls this a "pagan method of meeting the scourge;" and he adds, "the ideas of prayer and of a change in the course of natural phenomena refuse to be connected in thought."

If the heart of a man is filled with humiliation and shame on account of moral transgression or deficient zeal in the exercise of virtue or of duty, let him, in contrition, confess to himself his weakness and apathy, and atone for his guilt by increased energy and diligence in all noble pursuits. If his soul rejoices in the possession of boons and benefits, let him prove that he deserves these blessings by using them unselfishly, by banishing pride, by lending his indefatigable assistance to the less fortunate, and by unostentatiously aiding every good cause. And if his mind contemplates with admiration the grandeur of nature and the wonderful fitness of all her parts, let him evince his appreciation by an eager study of her marvellous mechanism and by an ungrudging obedience to the lessons she teaches. But it is vain and irrational to utter supplications for such objects as health, long life, or posterity, riches, success, or dis-

tion; for they either lie entirely beyond the control of man, or depend on the measure of his abilities and his vigour, or they follow, as an inevitable sequence, from the organisation of society and the order of the physical world. Ancient writers already pointed out the difficulty, that different men of equal earnestness and piety often pray for opposite things, which the deity cannot possibly grant simultaneously. "Some sailors," observes Lucian, "pray for the north-wind, others for the south-wind; a farmer desires rain, a cloth-worker sunshine, and often Jupiter is uncertain and hesitates in his decision." Nay Plato classes the belief in the possibility of moving the gods by sacrifices or prayers among the worst forms of impiety and among the unfailling causes of wickedness.

Hence we may estimate the value of the prayers sanctioned by the different creeds and sects; and we take as a specimen the chief Christian prayer attributed to Christ himself and partially borrowed from the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish sources (Matt. vi. 9-13), a prayer which is allowed by common consent to be one of the finest forms of supplication. "Our father which art in heaven." Is that Being which is adored as divine enthroned in one special abode? or does it pervade the universe and fill all things that surround us, nature with her wonders and her wealth? And what is "heaven" in the scientific language of our time? Nothing distinct from sky or air, atmosphere or ether.—"Hallowed be Thy name." What does this traditional phrase and the following one, "Thy kingdom come," express which cannot be conveyed with much greater clearness by terms derived from the sphere of practical ethics—by an exhortation to self-sacrificing devotion and unswerving rectitude, universal diffusion of peace and virtue, of knowledge and truth?—"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." This absolute power of decision in all things contradicts our views of the general course of events as regulated by our own exertions and

by unchangeable conditions.—“Give us this day our daily bread.” Even the most pious can see in these words hardly anything beyond the *wish* that the efforts of his intelligence or activity may be successful, or that the operation of the elements which constitute our social organism, may be favourable for securing his sustenance or establishing his worldly prosperity.—“And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Only the latter part of this invocation depends upon ourselves, and if carried out in a free and generous spirit, forms our highest moral glory; but the former part is in many cases unfeasible; for a guilt can only be condoned by those against whom it has been committed; and very often the community does not and cannot pardon guilt, but exacts the most rigid retribution, which, however, involves the expiation of the offence.—“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” It is against the well-known order of things that circumstances and events should be guided with the special view of keeping individuals away from temptation; they take their necessary course, and trials can only be avoided and misfortunes overcome by prudence and moral strength.—“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever.” These words can receive a distinct meaning only by depriving the world of matter of all independence, and human society of all responsibility.

Devotion, in the spirit above indicated, is not only beneficial, but indispensable to every moral mind; while prayer in the vulgar sense is at variance with reason and intelligence. “Praying,” observes Kant, “taken as a formal act of worship and a means of grace, is a superstitious illusion; a sincere wish to please God in all our ways, that is, the frame of mind accompanying all our actions and making them appear as being performed in the service of God, is the spirit of prayer, which can and ought to work within us incessantly.”

Before beginning difficult or uncertain and dangerous enterprises, men feel disposed to pray and to invoke a higher assistance. What is the motive or impulse of such prayers? They express the wish, that all external circumstances also may be propitious, which, no less than man's own strength and ability, prudence and perseverance, are required for the successful issue; they are, in a word, appeals to fortune, or if it be preferred, to chance, which consists in an auspicious concatenation of extraneous conditions.

It may be that in many cases prayer, by producing a calm confidence, enhances the energy of man, and contributes to his success; but it does not exercise that influence because it is in reality efficacious, but because he who prays *believes* it to be so. Therefore, rational men will prefer earnest reflection, or any other means of rousing their activity, to a fictitious help founded upon delusion [and prompted by weakness. Men have indeed at all times wavered on this point. Intelligence and a sense of independence urged them to expect their happiness from their own exertions, but inertness and indolence led them to rely, at least partially, on prayer. This fluctuation gave rise to utterances like this, "Trust in the Lord and do good," (Ps. xxxvii. 3), or the time-honoured injunction *ora et labora*, and many similar adages. In the Bible we read, on the one hand, "Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with all thy might" (Eccl. ix. 10); and on the other hand, "Cast thy destiny upon the Lord and He will sustain thee," (Ps. lv. 24), or "unless the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it; unless the Lord guard the city the watchman wakes in vain" (Ps. cxxvii. 3); and progressing almost to the verge of paradox, the same text continues, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late . . . for He (God) gives it to His beloved in his sleep." The Bible indeed attaches prominent weight to *reliance* and *faith*, as might be expected from its eastern

origin and from the childlike stage of intellectual development which it represents ; and it is, on this account, especially foreign to our present modes of viewing life and the government of the world.

Kindred with prayers are the *blessings* and *curses* pronounced upon others : the blessing of Isaac, even supposed it were not written *post eventum*, was powerless to secure the prosperity of Jacob's descendants, who had to depend on their own conduct and the favour of circumstances ; nor could the curses of Balaam have exercised any influence upon the career of the Israelites. The belief in the efficacy of blessings and curses, though often emanating from the laudable desire of securing the good wishes of the pious, or from the well-founded fears of a guilty conscience, is, in fact, based on that fatal confusion of the moral and the material world, which is the prolific parent of deplorable and most dangerous superstitions.

That which is true of prayer, the purest and most spiritual form of devotion, applies with increased force to all other pious exercises, as *sacrifice* and *fasting*. There is no connection between these practices and the ordinary affairs of human life. No degree of self-castigation can avert a calamity inevitably resulting from a chain of events or from physical conditions. It cannot be too often repeated—to expect an effect without a corresponding cause, is superstition. Yet the Biblical narrative constantly introduces or recommends prayer, sacrifice, and fasting, and attaches to them a profound and mysterious reality. Who will deny, that any ceremony, however unmeaning in itself, if performed in a spirit of earnestness and humility, may serve the best and holiest ends of religion, by rousing the soul and directing it to right and duty ? But here again, it is not the ceremonies which work so beneficially, but the frame of mind which they tend to call forth ; however, this frame of mind, very different in different wor-

shippers, can be produced in many other ways, and is, in fact, more surely engendered by means better consistent with the true nature of man and his place in creation. Even the so-called *good works*, as charity and alms-giving, truly ennobling and elevating if exercised from a consciousness of the obligations which man owes to man, and from a feeling of single-minded self-denial, are noxious and perverse, if performed in the selfish hope of obtaining the favour of the deity and thereby securing temporal or eternal happiness; not only do the good works thus lose their chief merit and grace, not only do they cease to be the brightest glory and most precious ornament of man's life, but they contribute to foster both egotism and superstition (Luke xiv. 12-14). We must advance even a step farther and weigh the value and force of *penitence*. If the destruction of a town as Nineveh is all but impending, and is yet averted by the repentance of its inhabitants (Jonah iii.); we are justified in asking, how such an effect can be wrought by such a cause? (Jer. xxvi. 13, 19). We are far from undervaluing the supreme merit and wonderful power of repentance, which is to be prized as the chief means of purification and peace of mind, because it is alone able to counterbalance our inherent weakness, or at least to mitigate its baneful operation: but we cannot attribute to it any practical or outward influence; for the confession of sinful or wicked acts cannot make them undone; a deed cannot be effaced by a thought, but only by another deed, or by uncontrollable circumstances; on the contrary, experience and reflection teach us alike that no penitence, however sincere and unremitting, can wipe out a transgression; sin must be expiated by suffering; but the sufferer is upheld by the conviction that, as his vice, his indolence, or his imprudence has plunged him into distress and sorrow, so his virtue, his energy, or his thought-

fulness can restore him to happiness and harmony of mind.

4. REVELATION.

The principles above laid down enable us to assign its due place to another group of notions affecting the very groundwork of the Scriptures—revelation, inspiration, and prophecy.

The main precepts of the Pentateuch claim to be directly communicated by God to Moses ; and both the earlier patriarchs and distinguished men of later times are represented as having enjoyed God's personal intercourse at decisive epochs of their lives. Let us examine the dogmatic foundations upon which such conceptions were built up. It is true that the incorporeality of God is theoretically taught in the Pentateuch ; yet He appears in human form (Gen. xviii. 2, 17), and is seen in the visions of the prophets (Is. vi. 1) ; He speaks distinctly and intelligibly, and thus communicates His thoughts and designs to His elected mediators (Ex. xxxiii. 18-23). There is but one step from these views to the doctrine of incarnation ; and thus theology almost returns, as if by a circular movement, to the point from which it at first started—to the notion of personal gods with human attributes. But how can a Spirit that pervades the universe, and which is only accessible to our intellects by the works that fill the world, and by the laws that govern it, commune bodily or personally with men, and reveal to them commands or doctrines ? The most Divine power of which we have knowledge and consciousness, is human reason, and this suffices to secure man's dignity and his happiness. Wise and good men, intending to convey to their fellow-beings what they regarded as irrefutable truth, clothed their teaching in the form of a revelation, because this is the most impressive, and was therefore, for such purposes, the most usual and familiar mode of communication.

Let us analyse a clear instance of revelation or *theophany*; we choose one distinguished by simplicity and grandeur, and composed by Isaiah who is unquestionably to be counted among the noblest and most gifted of the ancient Hebrews. "In the year that king Uzziah died," he writes (Is. vi. 1-13), "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lofty, and His train filled the Temple. Above Him stood seraphs; each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried to another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. . . . Then said I, Woe to me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"—after which a seraph touches the prophet's lips with a live coal, and God charges him with the mission of preaching to the Israelites. Has this narrative literal truth? Can it have reality? Isaiah *sees* God. Can God be seen? Would the prophet in sober earnestness admit the possibility? Can he then fear instantaneous death on that account? He sees God *sitting* on a *throne*. Can a spirit be so conceived, and is it tied to the conditions of space? The *train* of God is noticed. How is this to be understood? And has He any form that admits of the contrast between *above* and *below*? The prophet observes that the train filled the Temple. Is God enclosed within the walls of an edifice? And in what manner can the garment of a spiritual being fill a circumscribed space? He sees, moreover, seraphs with six wings. What are seraphs? Are they not, like all angels, demons, and spirits, both good and evil, pure and impure, which are so prominent in all parts of the Bible and most so in the latest, are they not beings of eastern mythology, creatures of fancy, without possible reality? Yet he sees them "standing above God." What does it

mean "above God?" What can there be above Him who fills the heaven and the heaven of heavens, and the whole universe? Then the seraphs speak, and God speaks, and Isaiah answers, and the angels perform a symbolical act. How is communion between God and man possible by means of language? Does an incorporeal being utter articulate speech intelligible to man? Can an enlightened person in addressing God expect a verbal reply?—Now in what light are we to look upon this vision of Isaiah? The idea of deception or imposition must be utterly discarded, and is at once banished by the loftiness and purity of Isaiah's character. Is the vision, then, the result of wild self-illusion and religious ecstasy? The usual calmness and clear-sighted penetration of the writer would fainly make us abandon this alternative. Is it, therefore, merely and simply a poetical invention, a form of composition designed to describe interestingly his vocation as a teacher and his initiation as a prophet? The earnestness and depth of the author forbid us to suppose frivolous playfulness in relating the holiest and most important event of his life. What view, then, remains? Though the narrative evinces prominently neither the fervour of religious enthusiasm, nor the beauty and effectiveness of poetry, it appears to imply a combination of both. Isaiah, in common with his time and people, believed the possibility of a direct revelation; and he had ardour enough to persuade himself that the powerful impulse which stimulated him to his great work, might be hallowed or confirmed by a solemn theophany. On the other hand, he could scarcely deceive himself so far as to imagine that he had actually received such revelation by the personal appearance and address of God; yet he might well *describe* his initiation in a form which was familiar to his contemporaries, and which he was able to employ with clearness and impressiveness.

Visions, usual in works of eastern theology, and

naturally varying according to the disposition and talent of the authors and the taste of their times, grew more and more in favour among the Hebrews; they are found with increased frequency in the later writings, especially in the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of St John, till they were overloaded with an exuberant, if not extravagant, admixture of symbolism and allegorical adornment. Narratives like that under examination, have, therefore, a very high psychological interest, but they can be fully understood and appreciated only if viewed as an illustration of the age in which they were written, or to which they refer. This applies pre-eminently to the most important of all revelations, those of the Pentateuch. The authors of these compositions, living many centuries after the events they narrate, and imbued with the idea that God appears personally to His messengers to charge them with His commands, of course, believed that Moses had above all other men been deemed worthy of receiving Divine revelations; and that as his legation was more momentous than that of all his successors, so the personal manifestations of God had, in his case, been more direct, more striking, and more grandly communicated than on any previous or later occasion. Eager to exalt his mission, they enlarged and, it may be, exaggerated the notions of their own time with regard to theophanies; and their narratives are, therefore, the combined result of conviction and of logical inference. Hence it is futile in the extreme to reduce all visions of the Bible to suggestions by dreams, as has been attempted by Maimonides and others. Much nearer the truth are those who refer them to the working of the imagination, a faculty which they require even more than superiority of mind. But this is sufficient to determine the degree of their reliability. "By what laws of nature those visions happened," observes Spinoza, "I confess my inability to decide. I might indeed say, like others, that they happened by the power of God; but this I should con-

sider as idle nonsense; for it would be like attempting to explain the nature of some extraordinary thing by a transcendental term." But we must not stop here; we can, in our age, not rest satisfied with resignedly declaring, "It is not necessary that we should know the source of prophetic knowledge, and we have no concern in fathoming the principles of the Biblical documents." By knowing that visions are, in a great measure, the result of an active imagination, we know their source or principle, and are perfectly enabled to estimate their value. We must therefore question the philosophical truth of the remark, "As the prophets received the revelations of God by the help of imagination, it cannot be doubted that they were able to conceive many truths that lie beyond the limits of the intellect:" imagination, which is by Spinoza himself called vague and inconstant, and declared unfit to understand the things accurately, cannot really and of itself suggest higher truths than calmly weighing reason; and indeed the same thinker, perhaps advancing too far on the other side, maintains, "Those who desire to learn from the books of the prophets wisdom and knowledge of natural and spiritual things, are entirely in error," because imagination, without the judgment of reason, involves no certainty; and he proves elaborately that "prophecy never made the prophets more learned, but left them in their preconceived opinions, and that we are, therefore, in no way bound to believe them in merely speculative matters;" that the prophets were ignorant of the causes of the phenomena of nature; "that they have taught nothing new about the Divine attributes, and held the vulgar notions of God, to which they adapted their revelations." But if imagination is understood as a medium of "Divine revelations," the argument is not advanced a single step, as it would still move within the sphere of the supernatural, especially if it is clearly contended that "the revelations pass beyond the reach

of human capacity ;” though it is, on the other hand, averred with strange inconsistency, that “the doctrine of the Scriptures does not teach sublime speculations and philosophical tenets, but the simplest things which are accessible to the dullest understanding.”

The books that are called revealed have, in fact, disclosed nothing that reason and experience are unable to suggest ; they contain many truths which reflecting minds of all nations have concurrently discovered ; they abound in errors which, in many instances, almost destroy the beneficial effects of those truths, and which the persevering exercise of reason and of observation has alone been able to notice and to correct. But even if their human origin were not sufficiently disclosed by internal evidence, if they did not, by innumerable tests, betray themselves as the compositions of fallible, imperfectly informed, though mostly noble-minded and gifted men, we should not be able to accept them as anything else. The writers indeed considered as reality and fact what they supposed to be possible or what appeared to them desirable, because it was a necessity in their age, and was therefore not likely to be questioned by their contemporaries. But they could not have been aware of the incredible mischief which their pretended “revelations” have produced. For they professed to proclaim *final* truths, “to which nothing was to be added, and from which nothing was to be taken off ;” and thus they fettered thought and research, and retarded human progress in its most important spheres. Moreover, as their words were considered as the utterances of *Divine wisdom* itself, every opposition or even deviation was looked upon as blasphemy and crime punishable by human authorities ; heresy was no more an error, but rebellion against the supreme Lawgiver ; and thus were caused those fearful struggles and appalling persecutions, which will for ever remain a dark stain in the history of the human race, and which, for fierce and merciless

cruelty, are unparalleled even in the annals of pagan superstition.

Instead of directing man to exert his own faculties, the Bible dictates to him what he is to consider as the end of all research and knowledge; it makes him a passive recipient of truth, whereas he feels the unconquerable impulse of searching for truth himself; and instead of leaving to him the triumphs of well-employed reason, it claims them entirely for a Being immeasurably above him. Revelation, therefore, in so far as it coincides with reason, might work beneficently, and has fortunately worked so in a considerable degree; but it derogates materially from the *moral* value of the actions which it prompts; for actions, not performed from spontaneity and choice, but in obedience to an authoritative command from a higher power, not only lose the noblest attribute of virtue, but are open to thousandfold evasions and perversions: this double danger is effectually avoided by leaving the sovereignty to reason itself, instead of delegating it to revelation, its temporary and imperfect embodiment. Morality does not deserve its name, unless it flows from pure and free motives. Works of charity, benevolence, and good-will, performed because they are commanded with the promise of reward and the threat of punishment, cease to be meritorious. In short, revelation, based upon a defective notion of the Deity, enslaving human reason and slighting its strength and dignity, enforcing the dangerous surrender of human enquiry in favour of a supernatural code, unjustifiably converting cosmic or anthropological truths into theological dogmas, and boldly pronouncing, in the name of an invisible spirit, as eternal law what is no more than the emanation of human thought, and what, therefore, is liable to error and capable of improvement, depending on the intellect of man for all it utters, and then presumptuously demanding the mastery over him, and hence fostering sophistry and casuistic distortion, which are required to harmonise the later advancements of

truth with its own immovable dicta—the idea of revelation combines all that is objectionable and preposterous in positive religion, and manifests at a glance its weakness and its fallacy. The term revelation which, in its essence, precisely coincides with human knowledge and wisdom, can therefore be dispensed with altogether, and ought only to be employed conventionally for describing the traditional view of orthodoxy.

The greatest confusion is, however, created by an indiscriminate use of that word as well in its dogmatic or technical meaning and also in a figurative sense as merely synonymous with enlightenment or the productions of genius. This may often arise from indistinctness of thought, but it is, we are afraid, not unfrequently the result of insincerity and equivocation. Yet it is highly objectionable unfairly to attribute a new notion to an old term which unsuspecting readers naturally understand in the vulgar sense. An honest mind will shun a duplicity designed to conciliate opposite views, but really satisfying neither the believer nor the critic, and enveloping the most important questions in deluding haziness. How little either religion, philosophy, or history gains by such unmanly and allegorising playfulness, may be best proved from Lessing's treatise on the Education of the Human Race, which, composed in the deceptive form of a fictitious logic, in no manner advances the subject which it endeavours to elucidate. We shall briefly review its leading ideas. "That which education does for individuals, revelation works for the whole human race" (Sec. 1). Here the term revelation is manifestly employed in its usual or orthodox acceptation. But we pass to the following clause:—"Education is revelation which is imparted to individual men; and revelation is education, which has been imparted, and is still being imparted, to the human race" (Sec. 2). In what manner is it "still being imparted?" Theologians are agreed that re-

velation, in its dogmatic meaning, has completely ceased many centuries ago; nor is education a supernatural disclosure conveyed from beings of a superior species or order to those whom they educate. Revelation must then, in that clause, not be taken in its traditional, but in a metaphorical sense, as increase of knowledge or wisdom. In what mazes of perplexity are we thus intricated! In reading the essay, we must be on our guard wherever the word revelation occurs, and try whether the one meaning or the other suits the context; the term is therefore an indistinct hieroglyphic to be modified and interpreted at pleasure.—“Education conveys to man nothing which he might not learn from his own mind; it conveys it to him only more rapidly and more easily. Just so revelation conveys to the human race nothing that human reason, left to its own resources, would not also discover, only it conveyed and conveys to him the most important of these truths earlier” (Sec. 4). Can the confusion go farther? That “revelation” which teaches nothing except the suggestions of human reason, is not the revelation of orthodoxy which is beyond human reason and often opposed to it; for orthodox faith acknowledges the principle, “I believe it, because it is absurd,” and it insists upon the reality of all Biblical miracles, which are absolutely contradicted by human reason. Yet that revelation is asserted to teach certain truths “earlier.” Then it is, after all, some supernatural communication which anticipates the operation of human reason. This idea of revelation is entirely novel, and has little in common with the dogmatic definition of the term; for according to the former, it merely accelerates the discoveries of man’s intellect, while, according to the latter, it unfolds new truths not attainable by unaided reason. So then, to complete the chaos, we have a third definition of revelation more vague than either the traditional or the figurative acceptance; for we may ask, which are “the more important truths” which

“revelation” communicates to men “earlier?” and would nations and tribes, not favoured with these revelations, arrive of themselves at the same results in the course of time? Orthodoxy attributes to revelation the disclosure of all truths necessary to “make wise unto salvation,” and “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16); and it contends that these truths can on no account be derived from any source except the revealed or inspired Books. Inaccuracy so wavering and so shifting necessarily engenders the grossest fallacies; and indeed Lessing thenceforth mainly develops the vulgar and absolutely unhistorical view of the progress of human civilization. “God has seen fit to keep a certain order in His revelation, and to remain within certain limits” (Sec. 5). He furnished the first man with the notion of one universal Creator; but man, then left to his own reason, soon misunderstood that notion, and divided the one Infinite God into many finite beings, each with peculiar attributes; and this was the origin of polytheism or idolatry; “and who knows, how many millions of years human reason would have strayed on these false paths, although some individuals in every land and at all times knew that they were false paths, if it had not pleased God to give human reason a better direction by a new impulse?”—namely by singling out the Israelites for His immediate care and guidance, in order to effect, through them, the education of mankind (Secs. 5-9, 18). The sentences quoted contain all the current elements of error and absurdity. They are as unphilosophical as any other system of orthodox theology. God is suddenly introduced as a real *deus ex machina*, whenever the author sees no other means of helping him out of historical difficulties. How has this working of God or the whole process of education attributed to Him been arrived at? Exclusively through the Books which are supposed to contain “revelation.” But no

proof of the reality or possibility of a revelation has ever succeeded. We move, therefore, in a narrow circle which entirely shuts out the exercise of logical deduction. The first man, it is maintained, was furnished with a correct notion of the indivisible unity of God. This assertion is against all psychological and historical probability. We know that, for many ages, religion consisted in the deification of nature, because untutored generations, awed by her powers, were unable to comprehend her laws; and it is certain that many ages passed by before the abstract idea of one all-comprising God was conceived and maintained. The course of development was, therefore, exactly the reverse of that stated; for how is it possible that the errors of polytheism and idolatry should have taken such deep roots all over the globe, if the knowledge of one God had once been known, especially as it is admitted that "some individuals in every land and at all times knew that they were false paths?" Surely, if revelation, as was before contended, imparts nothing but what human reason is of itself able to discover; and if, moreover, the notion of one Deity had once been revealed to man, and was thus stamped as a truth consonant with his reason and attainable by its efforts, he could not so utterly have lost it, as to require "millions of years" to return to it anew. And as the great Lessing was, by the unwarranted use of the term revelation, misled to conclusions unworthy of his acumen and philosophical genius, and elaborately carried out through a lengthy chain of biassed reasoning, in which biblical history, allegory, and reflection are fancifully commingled; so the same mistakes were repeated and aggravated by men determined not to pass beyond certain self-imposed boundaries, and often blindly disinclined to attach weight to the lessons of history and to the methods of philosophic thought. A similar obscurity is caused by Spinoza's terminology, which renders an exact appreciation of his views extremely difficult;

he speaks of the "commands of God" (*jussa Dei*) and the "Divine Law" (*lex divina*), but he is far from attributing to these terms their traditional sense; "the means required by the end of all human actions, that is, by the knowledge and love of God, may, inasmuch as the idea of Him is in us, be called commands of God, because they have been prescribed to us as it were by God Himself, in so far as He exists in our minds; and the mode of living which has that aim in view, might very well be called the Divine Law." We believe, certainly not "very well," but to the serious detriment of clearness in the most important questions. The Divine laws and commands, as the Bible understands them, are not those which flow from our divine reason, but those which a power above, and distinct from our reason, is said to have proclaimed. Even with respect to the notion of God, Spinoza continues the same ambiguity; he observes, on the one hand, that God "can be called King, Lawgiver, just, merciful, and the like only in adaptation to the imperfect capacity of the people, and from defective reasoning, since all those attributes appertain to human nature only, and must altogether be kept removed from the Divine nature;" yet he maintains, on the other hand, that "God acts according to the necessity of His nature and perfection, and directs all things; that, in fact, His decrees and volitions are eternal truths, and ever involve necessity." The impersonal character of the Deity, conveyed with sufficient clearness in the first remark, is almost hidden in the second, and will only be detected by those who are thoroughly familiar with the philosopher's system.

5. INSPIRATION.

It would be needless, after the preceding remarks, to characterize minutely the term inspiration. Those who, in our age, persist in regarding it as a suggestion from some superhuman source, have forfeited the

right of speaking in matters of historical research. Inspiration is in reality nothing but intellectual or moral elevation of man himself striving to rise to the utmost greatness and purity of his nature ; therefore the word, if employed at all, may with equal propriety be applied to the earnest and noble effusions of any gifted mind. The point has indeed been virtually surrendered even by orthodox divines. "A doctrine of inspiration," observes Tholuck, at the conclusion of his exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "which assumes uniform correctness of the words of Scripture cannot be accepted in accordance with the results here obtained." "The treatment of the Bible in conformity with the theory of literal inspiration," says Dr Doellinger, "would render all theology impossible;" and Dean Stanley writes, "This doctrine of literal inspiration can henceforth no more be imposed on the English Church." If there is a difference between the so-called "inspired Books" of the Bible and "profane" works, it arises from the circumstance that the Scriptural Canon includes, on the whole, such writings only as are either directly designed to elucidate religious doctrines, or are at least composed from a spiritual or theocratic point of view, and may therefore be considered in the light of religious text-books. But the Hebrew Canon represents very imperfectly the wealth of the literature of the ancient Hebrews ; for its compilers, pursuing a special object, narrowed the scope of the collection to one particular class of writings, though they were not quite consistent in their plan, for they admitted several portions entirely "profane" in tendency, as the erotic "Song of Solomon" and the worldly forty-fifth Psalm. Hence it follows, on the one hand, that Hebrew literature was both more varied and less severe than would appear from the Hebrew Canon ; and on the other hand, that the works allowed to form a part of the Volume possess, even in doctrinal matters, no higher authority than they deserve on a critical examination of their contents.

But in this respect we notice two different stages. Some divines admit historical errors and internal discrepancies in the Bible, and hence refuse to accept the *facts* and *narratives* which it includes ; but they maintain the immutable and eternal truth of the Biblical *doctrines* and *dogmas*, and look upon them as indispensable and all-sufficient for happiness, wisdom, and salvation ; therefore they yet attribute to the Bible a Divine or supernatural origin, and declare that the doctrines, and not the facts, were the end of revelation. Others again believe that the manifest historical errors of the Bible indeed compel us to ascribe to it an ordinary human authorship ; but they nevertheless hold or would seem to hold that the spiritual and religious views laid down in the Scriptures, are the highest and purest at which human reason is able to arrive in its search after truth, and that they must, therefore, be for ever adhered to as the standard of faith. We do not know which of the two views is the more inconsistent. If one part of a book, however subordinate that part is declared to be, abounds with errors, the book is not infallible, and cannot, therefore, be considered Divine ; moreover, it is an unfounded assumption that the portions of the Bible which contain narratives are unessential ; it is a misconception of the spirit of the Scriptures, to regard, for instance, the account of the Creation, of the Flood, or the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert, as collateral or indifferent ; the Bible itself makes no distinction between important and unimportant parts ; it insists, on the contrary, that no single word ought to be added or taken away (Deut. iv. 2) ; either the whole of the Bible is Divine or the whole is not Divine ; any intermediate opinion is a feeble and unavailing compromise, whether arising from insincerity or from a conviction too timid to follow out its own consequences. On the other hand, if the Scriptures are the work of human reason, it is difficult to understand, why human

reason should never be able to pass beyond them, and produce something more perfect; it is against all historical evidence to assume that man reached some thousands of years ago the pinnacle of enlightenment of which he is capable, and that ever afterwards his only task consists in preserving and guarding the intellectual treasures then discovered. This theory is devoid of all foundation; for we know that man has, since those times, largely advanced in every valuable acquirement; that he has in particular made marvellous progress in those branches of knowledge which disclose the depths of the human mind and the mechanism of the universe, in *philosophy* and *the natural sciences*; and even now he feels that he has scarcely mastered more than the rudiments of either. As men wrote the books of the Bible, so men may, at subsequent periods, write books that surpass the Bible; and later again, works superior to the books that surpass the Bible; and till the genius of mankind is degenerated or exhausted, every following generation will attempt to outstep the efforts of anterior ages.

6. PROPHECY.

The gift of prophecy which all ancient nations attributed to elected favourites of the deity, is again nothing else but the gift of human reason and judgment, striving to penetrate through the veil of the future, and hence naturally liable to error. We are far from denying the peculiar importance and the most beneficent influence of the Hebrew "prophets." They were the ever movable element of Israel's religious training; and they counteracted, and for a long time successfully, the dangerous stagnation engendered by the growth of the Levitical spirit. They fought with undaunted courage against the narrowness of the priesthood, and often against the presumption of kings; and they vindicated the right of the spirit against the lifeless rigour of formulas, and

the claims of morality against the encroachments of ritualism and the dogma. They appealed with fervid eloquence to the hearts and consciences, not to the fears and prejudices of their hearers. They loved their country with almost enthusiastic patriotism. Uplifted by the feeling of a higher impulse and assistance, they were enlightened teachers in religion, and clear-sighted counsellors in politics. These objects—the purification of faith, the improvement of morals, and the advancement of national prosperity—constituted their chief mission; prediction of the future was only their subordinate function. The erroneous translation of the Hebrew word *nabi* by *prophet*, while it means “overflowing speaker,” has frequently caused its innermost import to be misunderstood and distorted; for it raises the accessory feature to almost exclusive importance. The prophets of the Hebrews, high-minded and unselfish, unequalled as a class in singleness of motive and purity of aim, in perseverance and intrepidity, practical experience and literary ability, were indeed superior to the seers of any other nation; they showed, moreover, greater sagacity in the delineation of impending events, since, as a rule, they were politicians, moving in the very current of public life: but they were not the less fallible; their activity was tied to the common and ordinary limits of the human mind; and therefore, they occasionally predicted occurrences which either were not fulfilled at all, or happened in a different manner. Thus the prophet Amos (vii. 11) foretold that “Jeroboam would die by the sword, and Israel would surely be led away captive out of their own land;” whereas, according to the historical account, “Jeroboam slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead” (1 Kings xiv. 20). Jeremiah (xxii. 18, 19) prophesied of king Jehoiakim, that “he would be buried in the burial of an ass, and drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem” (Jer. xxxvi. 30); but history records that “he slept with his fathers”

(2 Kings xxiv. 6). Again, Jeremiah (xlix. 7-22) announced concerning the Edomites, that all their towns would be given up to eternal desolation, that in fact the whole of their territory would be converted into a dreary and uninhabited desert, the horror and mockery of all strangers, like Sodom and Gomorrah, and that the people themselves would be helplessly carried away by Nebuchadnezzar; and gloomy predictions of a similar nature, likewise suggested by deep and implacable hatred, were uttered by Ezekiel, Obadiah, and other writers. Now the Edomites were indeed subjugated by the Babylonians, and suffered considerable afflictions; but they remained in their own land; they succeeded even in appropriating to themselves a part of southern Judea including Hebron, which was, therefore, frequently called Idumea; they took an active part in the Maccabean wars, in the course of which they were compelled by John Hyrcanus (about B.C. 130) to adopt the rite of circumcision, and were incorporated in the Jewish commonwealth. Ezekiel promised the political union of the empires of Israel and Judah (Ezek. xxxvii. 22), which was never realised. The total destruction of Gaza is repeatedly predicted in distinct terms (Amos i. 6, 7); yet the town exists to the present day. The coincidences are certainly much more numerous than the failures; but the prophecies were commonly framed in general, and often in vague terms; the poetical elevation and the rhetorical emphasis with which they were set forth, were even unfavourable to nice accuracy; precise details were avoided, names of persons were never mentioned, and dates usually stated in round numbers, or altogether omitted. Moreover, many professed prophecies are in reality nothing but history in the form of prophecies, and were composed after the events to which they relate; for ancient writers of all nations, anxious to furnish a comprehensive survey of the past, or to endow national institutions with a higher autho-

riety, were accustomed to make pious and renowned men of earlier ages pronounce the *facts* as *prophecies*, which, however, the authors desired to be regarded as real predictions of the men to whom they ascribed them—a style of writing which recommends itself by impressive solemnity, and to which Hebrew literature owes some of its finest and noblest compositions. Besides, the Bible teaches that false prophets may venture predictions which God allows to be realised in order to try the Hebrews whether they love Him with all their hearts (Deut. xiii. 4); and to crown the confusion, the truthful or fraudulent nature of prophecies uttered in the name of Jehovah, was according to the Law to be tested by their realisation; predictions proclaimed in the name of Jehovah, but not justified by the event, were regarded as criminal deceptions to be punished by the death of the impostor (Deut. xviii. 20-22): thus the practical value of prophecies as such was extremely precarious and almost nugatory. In short, the belief in prophecy has the same origin as the doctrines of revelation and inspiration—namely, the impossible supposition that the deity enters into a direct and personal intercourse with some men specially chosen.

These notions are, moreover, the source of other errors, widely diffused in ancient times, and also shared and recognised by the authors of the Scriptures—the faith in *oracles* and *dreams*. Minds unaccustomed to strenuous efforts and self-reliance, and untrained in tracing cause and effect, were led to suppose that, in perplexing situations, they might be enlightened and guided by an immediate communication from the deity, whether conveyed through the medium of some remarkable person, or through the instrumentality of some consecrated object. Who can contemplate, without grief and pity, the fraud and the mischief necessarily caused by so irrational a belief? The most important private and public enterprises were made dependent on the heart or liver of a sacrificial animal,

on the smoke or flame that rose from the altar, on the flight or cry of birds, the movement of serpents, or the neighing of horses, on the figures formed in the water of a goblet, on lightning or an eclipse of the sun or moon, on comets and meteors, on the position of rods or arrows thrown on the ground, the decision of lots, the persons first seen or met in the morning or just after deliberating on some enterprise, and on thousand similar chances which possess no conceivable connection with the matter at issue, and the interpretation of which was left to the shrewdness or cunning of the official expositors. Soothsaying became a trade, and the soothsayers were used as tools of the powerful, if they did not serve their own avarice and ambition. Auguries often checked the most promising, and encouraged the most pernicious schemes. Oracles were consulted for private and for public purposes, and they helped not seldom to produce the effects which they predicted. Now, the Bible forbids indeed the Israelites to consult the *heathen* gods and their ministers (2 Kings i. 3, 6, 16), and to indulge in divination, magic, or necromancy, but it unreservedly sanctions oracles obtained of the God of the Hebrews (Ex. xxviii. 30) through prophets (1 Sam. ix. 9) and by the Urim and Thummim (Num. xxvii. 21), or granted by dreams (Num. xii. 6) or by the lot (Josh. vii. 14-18).

7. CONCLUSION.

Let us now try to sum up the result of the preceding remarks.

It is not sufficient to appeal from the letter of the Bible to its spirit; indeed the one "kills," but even the other is no longer life and truth to us. The spirit of the Bible is not the spirit of our time; it is not the light that illumines our path and points to our goal.

Many suppose they have removed all difficulties by urging that religion must be separated from philosophy; that "there exists between both neither community nor relationship," because, as they contend, the one aims

at obedience and piety, the other at truth, and the foundations of the former are Scripture and revelation, of the latter nature and general principles; that the Bible is not intended to teach science, and condemns disobedience but not ignorance; that therefore all speculations which do not directly make men obey God, whether they relate to the knowledge of God or the knowledge of natural things, do not concern Scripture, and are to be kept apart from revealed religion. But we adjure those who adopt this view of Bacon, Spinoza, and others, earnestly to weigh its scope and tendency. What, in the name of truth, is left for religion to achieve, if it refrains from teaching the knowledge of God and the knowledge of natural things? How can it satisfy man's nature, and be to him all in all, if it disregards and leaves untouched his most essential interests? how can it claim to direct manly and intelligent minds, if it excludes *truth* from its sphere, overlooks *nature*, and banishes from its doctrines *general principles*? If some declare that religion needs not to enquire what is God, "whether Fire, Mind, Light, Thought, or anything else, nor to examine in what sense God is the prototype of true life, whether because He has a just and merciful heart, or because all things exist and act through Him, and man therefore also thinks through Him and discerns through Him what is right and good, for it is indifferent what view people hold on these matters;" if, more questionably still, they assert, that faith is in no way concerned whether people believe "that God is omnipotent by virtue of His essence or of His power, whether He governs all things by liberty or the necessity of nature, whether He prescribes laws as ruler or teaches them as eternal truths, whether man obeys God from liberty of will or from the compulsion of a divine decree, and whether the reward of the good and the punishment of the wicked is natural or supernatural in its mode:" if, we repeat, religion admits such notions, it works its own destruction; it can have no importance for

man, as it eschews his deepest and most sacred problems. Viewed in this manner, religion and philosophy are not sisters, but are forced to become deadly rivals. The separation of both does not involve their conciliation but their hostile opposition. That fatal contrast bears the guilt of the unhappy confusion which convulsed many centuries. Safety and peace do not lie in the division but in the union, or rather in the identity of both. Truth is one and indivisible. It is a paradox to assume a religious truth in contradistinction to a philosophical truth. Faith has no power and no reality, unless it flows from our rational conviction and is at one with it ; and our philosophy is imperfect, sterile, and unprofitable, unless it leads to a "religious" life, that is, a life of love and justice, of serenity and active benevolence. Philosophy and religion must henceforth not mark out two different provinces, but two chief divisions of the same province ; the joint aim of both is truth and moral training ; and while philosophy has strenuously to search for principles and first causes, religion must conscientiously apply them in practical life. And inasmuch as virtuous action is the ultimate aim of all human efforts, it matters little if we call philosophy the "handmaid" of religion, provided we remember that it is also its "torchbearer."

Those who assign distinct spheres to philosophy and religion, however sincerely disposed to acknowledge the rights of reason, drift unavoidably towards views very nearly approaching those traditional opinions which they mean to combat. Thus De Wette arrives at the conclusion, that as "we require a certain external unity and fundamental standard" of faith, it is indispensable "to recognise the authority of the confessions, in which Biblical interpretation finds a safe support"—which result is distinguished from the orthodox creed only by its vagueness ; for the author does not desire to have the Bible explained "according to the letter," but "symbolically,"

that is, so that the literal truth and accuracy of the Scriptural narratives may be denied and abandoned, provided the ideas they were intended to convey are upheld and acknowledged. The separation between form and thought in the Bible is indeed not only justified, but imperative; but if our confidence in the correctness of the former is shaken, it is impossible for us to consider the latter as infallible, and as eternally unalterable.

Head and heart, reflection and life, are identical; true philosophy is, by its nature and tendency, practical; it does not only include religious elements, but is itself religion.

Again, it is not enough to admit that there is in Scripture "a Divine and a human element," a phrase which occurs a thousand times in recent works of speculative theology; the "human element" is a concession reluctantly wrung from reflecting minds by the implacable force of facts; but the concession is rendered illusory and worthless by the supposition of a Divine element, which is conceived to be above the capacity and nature of man, and which is compatible with assertions like these: "The Holy Scriptures differ from every other book, because they alone contain a guaranteed revelation, which lifts the veil, so far as needed, from both the earliest past and the remotest future, to disclose the motive, the sanction, and the law of man's labours, and because the Holy Spirit, which watched over the delivery of that revelation, filled the spirits of the writers with a more complete and pervading presence than ever presided over the execution of a merely human work." This passage is a tissue of fallacies and groundless assumptions; the revelation embodied in Scripture is no more "guaranteed" than any other alleged supernatural communication; it is philosophically impossible and historically undemonstrable; it has taught men nothing reliable whether with regard to the history of his race, the origin

of the universe, or the development of our planet ; it can teach him nothing certain with regard to his future ; for prophecy is subject to error like every other human speculation ; it “discloses the motive, the sanction, and the law of man’s labours” from points of view which have been essentially modified by later convictions ; and there is no “Holy Spirit” distinct from the intellect of man. The books which compose the Bible must, therefore, be measured by the ordinary standard of human faculties ; and the result of an impartial enquiry will be that they possess indeed those peculiar merits which fitted them to serve as religious guides during many generations, but that they have been eclipsed by other works in accuracy of historical facts, in depth of philosophy, and exactness of science.

It is true, in a certain sense, that “opinions taken absolutely without regard to actions involve neither piety nor wickedness, and that a man has a pious or an impious belief only in so far as his opinions move him to obedience, or afford him a pretext for sin and rebellion ;” but, in the first place, the great questions of our time do not simply relate to the practical results of faith, but at least as much to its truth and intrinsic credibility ; for else we should arrive at the paradox that in itself the darkest superstition is unobjectionable ; and in the second place, dearly bought experience teaches, that the only safe guarantee of practical virtue lies in the enlightenment of reason and the clearness of general notions ; nay, that a mistaken obedience to a law ostensibly divine has led to the most execrable enormities which it is difficult to recall without a feeling of shame, such as the criminal burning of witches, the fiendish tortures of the inquisition, the sanguinary persecution of the Jews, and the implacable cruelty of religious wars ; of such excesses of horror and frenzy, even Christianity was capable, because Christianity also ventured to despise the rule of reason, and to cast it into the fetters

of unfathomable dogmas. Hence there is an internal impossibility in the proposition, that "whosoever, while believing the truth, becomes disobedient (that is, depraved), has in reality an impious faith, but whosoever, while believing falsehood, becomes obedient (that is, virtuous), has a pious faith;" or in the maxim, "Not he shows the best faith who shows the best arguments of reason, but he who shows the best works of justice and charity." Within certain limits, and under favourable circumstances, simplicity of heart may indeed exercise virtue and self-denial, but it is only the "true faith," that is, enlightened conviction or obedience to reason, which *ensures* the practice of rectitude and kindness in all relations of life; and as a rule, those will show the best works of justice and charity, who can show the best arguments of reason. It is, therefore, not only an erroneous, but also a most dangerous opinion, that "faith requires pious doctrines rather than true ones, and though there be among them many which have not even a shadow of truth, they are harmless, provided that he who adopts them is not aware that they are false." For without truth genuine piety is impossible. The root of error and falsehood cannot bring forth fruits of justice and benevolence. Error, though believed to be truth, necessarily manifests its fatal traces in deed and thought. Our faith will be more perfect, and our life more righteous, more honourable, and more useful, the farther we advance in true knowledge.

Religion must become a reality in life; but this it can become only if it is *understood*; if it buds forth from our own reflection and feeling; if it is neither above nor below our nature; if it is as far removed from mystic speculation, as from the low impulses of selfishness and pride. It must, therefore, on the one hand, discard all unintelligible and sterile notions, such as revelation, inspiration, and prophecy, and renounce uncertain traditions, fictitious narratives, and lifeless ceremonies; but it must, on

the other hand, foster the purest and highest virtues of the human heart, and it must lead to an active life of devotion, love, self-control, and cheerful sacrifice. This feeling of ready abnegation and useful work must be regarded as the only precious reward to be coveted. The writers of the Bible not unfrequently describe such a religion with force and beauty; it may suffice to insert a few of their utterances, as it is impossible to adduce all. "God has shown thee, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of thee, but to act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. vi. 8). "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness on the earth; for in these things I delight" (Jer. ix. 22, 23). "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law" (Gal. v. 22, 23). "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them; for this is the Law and the prophets" (Matt. vii. 12). "All the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal. v. 14). "Love is the fulfilling of the Law" (Rom. xiii. 8-10). "Let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God; he that loves not knows not God, for God is love . . . If we love one another God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us . . . He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 7, 8, 12, 16). These and similar principles form the eternal and indestructible kernel of the Bible; they are the secret of its intellectual conquests and of its civilising power; they contain, indeed, the germs of a universal faith, and every progress in religion must be marked by their zealous realization in life.

If they are taken as guides, the complaint will cease, that "men who boast of professing the Christian religion, that is, love, joy, peacefulness, moderation, and fidelity towards all, wrangle with reckless harshness, and constantly act against each other with the bitterest hatred, so that from these contentions rather than from those virtues the creed of each is discernible." For "what does it profit, though a man say he has faith, and have not works, can faith save him? . . . Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone . . . You see then, that by works a man is justified and not by faith only" (Jas. ii. 14, 17, 20, 24). Yet all these beautiful fruits of religion are never safe and reliable, unless that faith is derived from the light of man's own mind; to be practically efficient, it must be the result of his own reflection, experience, and individuality; it will help to extend the empire of charity and morals on earth, not if it is merely handed down to him from the distant past and from bygone ages, but if it is the creation of his own nature, of his own wants, and his own ideals.

The views here propounded may create, in some minds, a twofold apprehension—first, of a confounding diversity of religious creeds, and secondly, of intellectual intolerance and persecution. But on every essential point, the religious convictions of all will be identical or kindred; for they follow from the essence of human nature, which is virtually the same under all zones and all conditions of existence, which shows everywhere the like aspirations, hopes, and endeavours, the like spiritual needs and efforts; and however varied the speculations, practical morality tends invariably to the same end. And as regards intellectual toleration, nothing is so certain to lead to gentleness, humility, and forbearance, as honest research; for every step onward discloses to us our limits; and if the wisest has finished his labours, he knows only that he "knows nothing," and—to use a well known simile of one of England's greatest philosophers—he feels

that he resembles the child that gathers pebbles on the beach, while the ocean of truth lies all unexplored before him.

Henceforth, therefore, we do not desire a religion of fear which is the fruit of delusion, but of love which flows from intelligence; not a religion of severity which breeds servitude, but of joy which is the witness and seal of freedom of mind and heart; not a religion of strife which persecutes others through the haughty assumption of infallibility, but of peace which respects all honest convictions that can show works of charity and unselfish devotion. Above all reason, instead of being slighted and denounced as feeble, fallacious, perverse, and corrupted, must be restored to its right and functions as the supreme tribunal; its light alone can dispel the darkness of folly, pernicious illusion, and superstition; without it, religion is hardly more than "credulity and wretchedness." Occasionally the Bible also expresses similar views (Prov. ii. 3-5); yet it insists that the revealed Law alone is true wisdom and understanding (Deut. iv. 5, 6; Prov. ix. 10). It avails little to proclaim reason as the highest judge in matters of religion, unless it be consistently treated and respected as such. There is, however, a class of honest thinkers who timidly take back with one hand what they have liberally conceded with the other. Thus it is declared that history is not itself religion, because it employs the purely intellectual and critical, and none of the moral and spiritual faculties, and because thus the intellect, and not the soul, would be the first authority in religion. Nobody, we presume, has ever identified history and religion; but if a religious influence is attributed to the study of history, it is not on account of the faculties employed in ascertaining the facts, but of those engaged in examining and estimating the facts so ascertained; not the learned labour of historical criticism, but the philosophical use made of the results of that criticism enlarges our sympathies and

elevates our views ; and in this respect history, or the intellect working for its pragmatic survey, is indeed not without a strong religious influence. Besides, the strict contradistinction between intellect and soul must be rejected, as it tends to produce the utmost confusion in the chief branches of moral philosophy. The two notions do not exclude each other ; for the true intellect includes soul ; the intellect that does not include soul is defective and unsound ; a well-balanced intellect cannot possibly act coldly, selfishly, or cruelly ; it is noble, magnanimous, and gentle ; it is conscious of its own boundaries, and, therefore, unassuming and humble ; it knows too well what it owes to others to be otherwise than indulgent and charitable ; an intellect which does not possess these attributes, hardly deserves the name, for it lacks its most essential characteristics. The apparent exceptions which are occasionally found, will, on close scrutiny, reveal some radical defect in the organization of the mind, or in the philosophical system it has worked out or adopted.

Not obedience to doctrines imposed by extraneous commands must be the rule of our actions, but freedom of will and choice, or obedience to our reason and our conscience. Not a number of books traditionally handed down, and singled out by fallible judgment from a vast multitude of works, is the true source of religion, but the spirit which thirsts after truth, and the heart which yearns for love ; the "word of God" was not merely heard during a limited period of human history ; it has not been mute for thousands of years ; it was proclaimed at all times when intelligence and moral excellence uttered their thoughts and aspirations ; and it will be heard as long as the instinct to great and noble deeds lives in mankind. There is therefore considerable force and propriety in the following remark : "History is neither *likely* to be the source of our religious knowledge, nor actually *capable* of being satisfactorily

established as such. Let us face this truth candidly. Let us renounce the false ground at once and for ever, and build as well as we may on what remains. True that with the claims of history we renounce the hope of obtaining an infallible creed. True that the consciousness which remains for basis is often obscure and variable. . . . Still, still we say, let it be done ! It is worse and more dangerous to stand still than to go forward. If an historical religion be built on the sand, the sooner we learn it, ere the storms beat it down and overwhelm us in its fall, the safer shall we be." When the law is engraven on the tablets of the mind, it cannot be lost, it cannot be destroyed, it is living and working, and blossoms forth incessantly in deeds of charity and good-will. If the voice of reason is hushed, man is certain to sink into idolatry ; does it matter whether the idol is a figure of stone or a Book that demands unreasoning reverence? That Book was sacred and Divine as long as it represented men's innermost emotions, and was honestly acknowledged by them as the chief guide of their lives ; it ceased to be sacred and Divine when it began to fall upon our minds with a strange accent, and reflected a world which we felt had passed away. We may still study it for understanding a most remarkable phase of human civilization ; we may cull from its pages many a practical and spiritual truth conveyed in language wonderfully apt and impressive ; but, as a whole, it cannot edify us ; it cannot uplift us to the height of our nature. It will always be cherished with deep gratitude as the educator of many generations ; but it must yield the precedence to the new light which the exploration of the forces of nature and the powers of the human mind have thrown upon the general economy of the world. Its blessing is changed into a bane if it presumptuously claims to be the sole legislator for all times ; it has, in a great measure, fulfilled its mission ; it can henceforth only be an individual element among numerous means of human culture.

Yet many have argued, that the Bible, with all its deficiencies, ought for ever to be maintained in authority, because it offers great consolation to the less strong-minded, is useful to the State, and can in no way be injurious to the believer. Its truth can indeed not be proved ; but this matters little, as most human actions are uncertain and full of fluctuations—an opinion which necessarily involves the most serious errors, and leads to the obnoxious distinction between a creed for philosophers and a creed for the vulgar mass ; as if that which is illusion and falsehood for the former could be truth and light for the latter. A belief which does not satisfy the most acute enquirer, can by honest men never be deemed sufficient for the simple-minded. Many pretend that the distinction is demanded by policy and expediency ; but it is generally prompted by pride and arrogance, and always engenders hollowness and hypocrisy. These characteristics are almost glaringly manifest in the singular observation, that “the Law was given for those only who are devoid of reason and the supports of natural intelligence :” the pride lies in the assumed superiority over the bulk of mankind, and the hypocrisy in the ostensible profession of “revelation ;” for if revealed truths were sincerely believed in, they would not, with evident contempt, be described as important for the silly only, but would be prized as no less valuable to the most gifted.

Every man is, by his nature, subject to superstition, because he is, by his nature, subject to fear ; but by knowledge he must subdue fear and superstition ; he must, on the one hand, rise to the consciousness of his dignity and power ; and he must, on the other hand, modestly subordinate himself as a serving link of universal creation. But how does he rise to his full dignity ? If his mind strives to penetrate into the first causes and the essence of things ; if his heart conquers selfishness and all base emotions ; and if his actions, guided by love, aim at promoting

58 *Theology of the Past and the Future.*

the welfare of his fellowmen. Therefore, TRUTH, VIRTUE, and ACTIVE LOVE—these three form the creed of the Future; but the greatest of these is TRUTH (1 Cor. xiii. 13); for enlightenment leads to self-control and to self-denying deeds; and knowledge alone is able to keep man on the path of moderation and thoughtfulness, and thus to secure, through virtue, his inward peace and happiness.