

**PROVIDENCE**  
**AS MANIFESTED THROUGH ISRAEL.**

**BY**  
**HARRIET MARTINEAU.**

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"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring;  
and they will hear my voice. And there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

JOHN x. 16.

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**ISSUED BY**  
**THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION;**  
**AND**  
***ADDRESSED TO THE JEWS.***

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*MSB*



# PROVIDENCE

## AS MANIFESTED THROUGH ISRAEL.

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AN ADDRESS TO THE DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM.

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### SECTION I.—*Spirit of Judaism.*

THE peculiarity by which your nation has ever been honourably distinguished from all others is an aversion to form *systems* of religion. While, among heathen nations, princes and priests formed laws and created mythologies which the ignorant multitude adopted as soon as offered, your lawgivers dispensed only what they had received from above, and your fathers required evidence that the dispensation was from above, before they would adopt it. While the mysteries of paganism were concealed in the recesses of Egyptian temples, your fathers were assembled at the foot of Sinai, listening to the thunders and watching for the disclosures of the cloud in which the glory of God was shrouded. Your prophets and priests bowed themselves before God as children who would know the will of their father; while the wisest of less favoured nations withdrew into grottoes and groves, or approached oracles of their own institution, pretending to commune with nymphs or demigods, but in reality seeking to invest the imaginations of their own hearts with the sanctity of a supposed revelation from on high. The issues were evident to the whole world; the state of the Hebrew nation as to reli-

gion, morals, and legislation, being as superior to that of all their contemporaries as the moving pillar of fire was more awful than the descent of Belus, the Mosaic law more exalted than the twelve tables, and the Hebrew judges wiser than heathen legislators. As long as none presumed to add to or to diminish from the word which the Eternal imparted, his people were glorious, enlightened, and blessed; while the sages of the heathens could not attain to the wisdom of the least among the sons of Israel.

This unreserved submission to the voice from heaven is not, however, inconsistent with the desire and the endeavour to understand, as far as possible, the designs of that Providence whose guidance is acknowledged. Though there is sin and folly in seeking to forestall or change the Divine counsels, there is piety and wisdom in striving to comprehend them when they are disclosed; because that obedience must ever be the most perfect which is the most enlightened. Moses was reproved for his backwardness in fulfilling his mission to his brethren in bondage, and vengeance from the Lord followed Jonah when he would have evaded his duty of prophesying destruction to Nineveh, because in both cases these prophets ventured to prejudge the event which was in the hand of God: but the people were also rebuked when they yielded a blind external obedience only, instead of the ready cooperation of the heart with the will of God; and were perpetually exhorted to examine into and understand his ways, that their obedience might be not only strict but enlightened.

The duty of ascertaining the Divine purposes from his dispensations becomes more important as the facilities for the investigation are multiplied. The more ancient the dispensation, the more easy it becomes to understand its object. Ezra the scribe, and the people who listened to him as he read the law, were better able to comprehend the designs of the Allwise in separating his people from the rest of the world, than the judges who were under Moses; and those judges knew more concerning this dispensation, than any one of all the multi-

tudes on the day that they crossed the Red Sea. These designs of Providence have also been growing clearer and clearer to this day; and it therefore becomes more and more the duty of all who acknowledge that Providence, to search into his ways, and see how the spirit of man may best cooperate with God for the sanctification of man.

In such an investigation there is no danger, as long as the inquirer is careful to admit no evidence but that which God himself has given. It is indeed the highest and holiest employment in which the human faculties can be occupied, and as acceptable to him who loves the obedience of an understanding heart, as it is salutary to the heart itself. As long as men interpret, instead of imagining the ways of God; as long as they seek to know, instead of presuming to dictate his will, they may hope for some portion of that favour which blessed the child Samuel in the tabernacle, which distinguished David as "the man after God's own heart," and magnified the wisdom of the mighty Solomon.

Hesitate not, therefore, to enter on a full investigation of the designs of the Allwise in separating your nation from other nations, and in calling you peculiarly his own. Dismiss from your minds, as far as you can, all remembrance of the religious systems framed by man with which people of other modes of faith have disgusted you. Repel, with the reprobation they deserve, all attempts to mix superstition with the worship which the Eternal established among you. Cast out as impious all suggestions which would change your views of the nature and attributes of the One God, and the offices of his chosen prophets; and taking for your guides only the Scriptures of your people, and the history of your nation and of the world, endeavour to trace those ways and thoughts, which, however higher than ours, are placed in some degree within the reach of our comprehension; which, however shrouded in the future, are disclosed in the past.

The best method by which an individual can pursue such an inquiry as is now proposed, is to collect all the evidence

he can obtain, and deduce from it the truth he seeks. This is the mode in which a solitary student should proceed. But when several inquirers are invited to advance together, and are conducted by one who has gone over the ground before them, the method may advantageously be reversed, for the sake of proceeding in a clear and orderly manner : as in the schools, where a definite object is first placed before the view of the students, and then the sources of evidence are laid open to them by which they may establish the truth for themselves. Such a method will now, for the sake of clearness, be pursued. The apparent design of the Eternal in his providence towards the Hebrew nation will be first disclosed, and evidences of this design will be afterwards offered to your consideration.

The *plan* of Providence is a strictly correct expression ; because, though time and eternity are alike to the One God, though to him "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day," yet, as his children are weak in sight and narrow in comprehension, they cannot see the end from the beginning, but only understand it by slow degrees. By the gradual development of a plan only can they so far comprehend anything that exists, as to be able to use their bodily powers in action, and the faculties of their minds in understanding. If the fruits of the earth were not brought forth according to a regular plan, if the soil and the dews, and the sunshine and the seed, were not perceived to be adapted to produce the corn, there would be no seed-time and no harvest among men ; for no one would comprehend how it could be in the power of man to raise food out of the ground, and the whole race must be nourished, like your fathers in the wilderness, by miracle, or not at all. The whole of the creation was conducted by a plan ; the preservation of created things is ordered by a plan ; the destinies of the human race, spiritual as well as material, are also evolved according to a plan ;—mysterious, like other plans, in its commencement, but growing more and more intelligible as it is gradually disclosed, and



more and more evidently harmonious with other plans, and with all that is known of Him who ordained the whole.

Before a plan can be comprehended, its object must be discerned. In contemplating the plan of Providence, this consideration causes no difficulty or delay; for all who acknowledge the Eternal, acknowledge his inseparable attributes, his wisdom, his justice, his boundless love; and by the existence of these attributes are men assured that in his dealings with the human race his object is to promote their perfection and happiness. While no individual is forgotten before him, the progress of the race is advanced by all his dispensations. While some are favoured with peculiar privileges, it is for the sake of mankind that those privileges are conferred; and while your nation has been distinguished by a closer communion with him than has been enjoyed by any other, the promise has not been forgotten, that in the seed of Abraham should *all* the families of the earth be blessed.

The history of the world shows how difficult, if not impossible, it is for the unassisted reason of man to attain to the notion of One God, who should be at the same time the creator of all things, the preserver of the whole universe, the moral governor of all rational beings. Every nation on the face of the earth has had an idea of Deity, but always under the form of a plurality of gods. Some few men, philosophers here and there among the heathens, have attained the notion that the same Being might create and preserve, that there might be One Governor among many people, that One Almighty Will might dispense happiness and misery; but these instances are so few and scattered, that they produced no visible effect on the spiritual advancement of the race. If it had not been for the revelation vouchsafed to your fathers, the whole world might now have been sunk in the ignorance of polytheism; since the light of nature appears too feeble to lead men to a knowledge of the Eternal, till after the lapse of more ages than the world has yet existed. It appears, then, to have been in the everlasting counsels of the Allwise to communicate the grand truth

of his existence and government by a revelation ; and in the mode of making and conducting this revelation may be found as powerful an evidence of the wisdom and love of the Father of men as the human mind is capable of receiving.

The object of revelation was to give to *all men* the knowledge of the true God. If the revelation had been made to every individual, a great degree of perplexity might have prevailed among so many particular experiences, and the attention of the careless would not have been so intently fixed as by a national dispensation. If a separate revelation had been made to every people, the Eternal would have been regarded by each as a national God, as it is well known he was long considered by your fathers, who, while they worshiped the God of the Hebrews, supposed that other nations might each have a god, though inferior to their own. The method adopted was therefore neither to give a separate revelation to individuals nor to all nations, but to take one people under the special tutelage of Providence, in the sight of the whole world, that through this favoured nation the true God might be made known to the human race at large. From the days of Abraham until now, your nation has, for this purpose, been the most conspicuous object in the annals of humanity.

While your fathers dwelt in the land which the Eternal had given them, they were objects of attention to nations capable of observing their proceedings, of perceiving much that was remarkable in the establishment of your people, and much that was peculiar in the temporal and spiritual government of the Hebrews. They saw that the great temporal changes of your people were never unforeseen ; that all came to pass according to previous promises or warnings, and in proportion to the obedience or disobedience of the nation to the law of him who was thus clearly shown to be a spiritual governor and judge, as well as the director of temporal affairs.

The designs of God are further shown by the manner in which he chose and led forth his people from among others. Even those who knew nothing of a Providence could not fail

to be struck by the peculiarity of the history of Abraham. The eyes of many followed him with wonder when he abandoned the popular religion and his country, without (as it seemed to them,) a motive for such a change. The things which befell him in his journeyings in Egypt, and the events which followed his final settlement, were observed and remembered with curiosity and interest, if we may judge by the extent and durability of his fame in Eastern countries even to this day. Though the observers had, as yet, no idea of the peculiar Providence which attended upon Abraham and his posterity, they watched what should become of the descendants of so extraordinary a man; and everything that occurred tended to excite more wonder and curiosity. The settlement in Egypt, the grievous bondage that succeeded, and the marvellous deliverance of those who had been subjected to so degrading a captivity, the irresistible power of the mighty tribes as they issued from the wilderness, and the extraordinary manner in which they founded a religious and political constitution, unlike any that had ever been seen or heard of, were circumstances which riveted the attention and roused the passions of all who witnessed, to such a degree, that it was clear the world had already begun to learn of the chosen people.

Before the chosen people could teach, however, even by their example, it was necessary that they themselves should go through every stage of discipline, and begin their spiritual education from the very infancy of mind and heart: and thus was it ordained. Abraham indeed was of an enlightened and exalted mind, capable of understanding the promises of God, and faithful enough to trust in them through all trials; but his posterity were neither so wise nor so virtuous. Many heathen nations were more enlightened than the Hebrews during their bondage in Egypt, and for some time afterwards; and the speed and certainty with which your nation subsequently outstripped all others in civilization and improvement of every kind, was made the more remarkable by

this circumstance. The exact nature of the religion of your forefathers in Egypt is not known; but it is certain that they inclined to the superstitions of their task-masters, and that they possessed little of that firm trust in God which distinguished their great progenitor. They appear to have had no idea of the deliverance which awaited them, and to have used the necessary means to obtain it only while signs and wonders from above were actually wrought before their eyes. In the intervals of these miracles, their faith declined and their courage failed; and even Moses, who was far more enlightened than the generality of his people, seems to have been at that time only learning to believe in God; since he hesitated in undertaking the office with which he was charged, and asked by what *Name* he should make known the deliverer. The spiritual education of the Hebrews, which was soon to be carried on so far beyond that of other nations, was manifestly now only beginning.

This beginning was made by revealing to the emancipated people that the God who led them out of Egypt was the God of Abraham, the God who had made a covenant with their ancestor. They listened to messages from him more readily than they would have hearkened to a strange God; but it is plain that they did not yet know him to be the only God. He was *their* only God, the God of the Hebrews, the Mightiest of all Gods, who, because he had proved himself greater than the deities of Egypt, was entitled to their faith; but they were not yet willing to relinquish the notion that they might choose their God, and were only brought to a right understanding by the sense of their own helplessness under the power of the Almighty. As their conquests were extended, they learned to look with more and more contempt on the gods of the neighbouring nations; and for a long time afterwards the bulk of the Hebrew nation seems to have rejoiced, not in the knowledge of the One God, but in worshiping a more illustrious Deity than was revealed to any other nation.

This is no doubt the reason why the Hebrew nation was

so prone to idolatry, in the midst of the visible workings of the Supreme among them. If they had ever really believed that he was the only Deity, they could not so frequently and so readily have deserted his service for that of false gods; but if they believed that, though the Eternal was the Mightiest, and the only God of their nation, other inferior gods presided over other nations, it is much more easy to account for their occasional apostacy. When anxious to escape his anger, when desiring to enjoy pleasures which he had forbidden, the temptation was great to enter the service of inferior deities who might be less strict to punish, and more indulgent to their lusts; while such evasion and gratification could not have been hoped for, if the Supreme had been truly believed to be the only Potentate who governed the world. These observations are applied only to the bulk of the nation. Their prophets and wise men long preceded the people under them in the acknowledgement of the strict unity of God,—in the declaration that he was the Creator of the universe, the Father of all the families of the earth. By the gradual unfolding of the workings of Providence, by the consistency of his moral government, the whole nation was at length firmly convinced of this grand essential truth, reclaimed from idolatry, and for ever placed beyond the reach of error respecting the object of worship.

This great doctrine,—of the strict unity of God, was, in the case of the Hebrews and of all who learned through them, subservient to a truth of no inferior importance, viz. that God is the Moral Governor of mankind. The experience of all other nations has shown that there can be no such steady and exalted virtue among those who believe in a plurality of gods as among those who submit to the consistent rule of one. Piety is weakened when worship is divided, and obedience becomes unsteady under a diversity of control. Thus the worshipers of pagan deities believed themselves to offend one god while they propitiated another, and were utterly destitute of that firmness of expectation, that consistency of hope and fear towards God, which in the same age distinguished your

forefathers and exalted their spiritual character so immeasurably above that of all other nations. When once convinced that they could not flee from the wrath of one deity to take refuge under the protection of another, that the law which had been dispensed by God would be sanctioned by God, that none could interfere with his warnings and promises, or change or annul his decrees,—the dependence of his people became confident, and their piety unexampled, in that age of the world, for purity and steadiness.

The lapse of time perpetually affords new proofs that the evidences given to the Hebrews, that God was their spiritual as well as their temporal Ruler, were of the exact kind most fitted to their spiritual state, and that this spiritual government was precisely adapted to further that sure but gradual advance which it was the object of the whole dispensation to promote, in themselves and in the world through them. The Law, that divine instrument by which the will of God was made known in the earth, by which the spiritual faculties of man have been primarily developed, by which the best blessings of human existence were first transmitted; this law, framed by the wisdom of God and sanctioned by his power, affords now as strong an evidence of the divinity of that wisdom and power, as could be afforded on the day when it was delivered amidst the thunders and clouds of Sinai, the awful glories of the lawgiver, and the trembling expectation of the assembled tribes. Then its authority was acknowledged and its sanctity revered: this acknowledgement and reverence still remain, while the conviction which experience has wrought, that this dispensation has amply fulfilled the purposes for which it was given, and has been a perpetual testimony of the providence of God and the high destination of man, adds an ever-increasing interest to the Mosaic institutions, and hallows them as the completest evidences of religious truth. If there be any worshipers of the Eternal who disregard the Mosaic dispensation, they are ignorant of the full grandeur which has been displayed from above. If there be any who despise this

institution, they are yet untaught in the principles of true religion; and those who disbelieve in its divine origin, reject the clearest and finest indications of the design and methods with which God governs the family of man.

This law, which you are accustomed to consider perfect, had indeed that specific perfection which denotes its divine origin; while its want of absolute, independent perfection, as proved by the subsequent history of your people and allowed by Maimonides and others of your doctors, affords additional evidence of the design of God in appointing the Mosaic institution. The law was perfect in as far as it had a full capacity of attaining its ends, which were to separate the Hebrews from the idolatrous nations around them, and to make them the preceptors of the whole human race in the great truths that God is one, and the spiritual Ruler of mankind. The first object was attained by the strict provisions of the law against the superstitious belief and impure practices of the surrounding pagans, and by such obligations to the worship of the true God as could not be evaded or questioned. The second object was answered by such a visible and perpetual operation of Divine power among the people, and such an invariable retribution for their good or evil deeds, as could not fail of arresting the attention of mankind, or of carrying conviction to the minds of all who looked on with interest.

When the Hebrews were led forth from Egypt, they were not sufficiently enlightened to form clear notions of systematic obedience to God, or any rule of duty whatever. If such a rule had been given them, unconnected with external services, and referred to their consciences only for its sanctions, they would have been perplexed in its application, and weak in every temptation. If they had been merely desired to have faith in God, to be just to man, and to act always from a principle of love, the command would have been vain. They had yet to be taught the meaning of faith in One God, the rules of justice, and the nature of philanthropy. Such exhortations would have been as uselessly addressed to them, as to



the children of our day whose moral education is only beginning. The internal strength of conscience was therefore cherished by external acts, and the people were trained to obedience by the habitual homage which their ritual imposed upon them. The law once received, they were obliged to acknowledge the Supreme daily by various observances, to obtain security by obedience, and to atone for every transgression by a corresponding sacrifice. It is clear that all ramifications of moral duty cannot be displayed in an external ritual; but all may be connected with such a ritual; and this method was pursued with your forefathers, while they were yet too little enlightened to discern the principles of righteousness in the midst of the institutions in which they were embodied. They could be and were taught to avoid idolatry, and to acknowledge the Eternal by practising the rites of the tabernacle and worshiping according to forms prescribed; but the principles of truth, justice, and charity could not be embodied in any such forms. Specific and ample directions were therefore given to regulate the conduct of men to each other, and arbitrary penalties were attached to the violation of them. Till men became capable of applying principles for themselves, the application was made for them, and their business was to obey the specific directions given to them. Thus it would not have been enough to command that charity should be the rule of conduct from one to another; but this rule was applied in a large body of laws respecting the claims of the distressed, the poor, the widow, the orphan, and all towards whom charity could be exercised. There were also penalties ordained for all who should fall short of ready obedience to these laws. Again: The people were not only exhorted to be of clean hands and a pure heart, but specific directions were given for purification in every case in which defilement could be incurred, and a penalty was connected with every violation of these laws. A body of laws so specific, exhibiting perfect unity of design and strictness of detail, could not be essentially misunderstood or perverted, and was therefore peculiarly



adapted to a people whose spiritual education was commencing.

Nor were the sanctions of the law less wisely ordained than its nature. These sanctions were sensible and immediate rewards and punishments. A people insufficiently practised in obedience to form a notion or a rule of systematic duty, required of course an immediate and perpetual impulse to obedience. Till they could discern the identity of human duty and happiness, they could know little of the natural rewards of righteousness; and that little would be insufficient to support their obedience in temptation, or to engage their perpetual interest in doing their duty. Neither would the promise of these natural rewards have been much valued by those who had not yet ceased to regret the flesh-pots of Egypt, or learned to trust implicitly in the promises of the true God. Their hopes and fears were therefore excited by the appointment of such a retribution as they could understand, and which at first followed immediately upon the act of obedience or transgression. The divine wisdom was again shown in causing this retribution to be more frequently national than individual. As long as it was administered invariably, its efficiency was as great to each individual as if it had been appointed to himself; while the vicissitudes of the nation were at the same time brought home to the bosom of every man, and the minds of all were enlarged by the extension of their hopes and fears to national objects. The conviction that God was their Moral Governor was thus impressed on each and shared by all; all became interested in the obedience of each; a community of interests established a greater equality, temporal and spiritual, among this vast family than has ever subsisted elsewhere in a community so numerous, and the bond which united them as subjects of moral discipline proved indissoluble.

While your nation was thus brought to a full recognition of a moral government, a faint conception of the great truth began to spread among the observant neighbouring people. The Hebrew institutions afforded subjects of speculation;

your national privileges, of awe ; your national chastisements, of a short-lived triumph. When they moreover perceived that your national prosperity or degradation could not only be anticipated but hastened or averted with infallible precision by certain modes of conduct, they could not but conclude, (however little conversant with the particulars of your law,) that the lawgiver was powerful and consistent in enforcing its observance. The less they were aware of being themselves the subjects of moral government, the greater would be their curiosity about the peculiar people who were so ; and whether they regarded subjection to such discipline as a privilege or a hardship, they would naturally watch its operation with unremitting interest, and thus be visited by a dim reflection of the light which was shed with apparent partiality upon the people whom the Allwise had chosen.

The retribution by which God made himself known as a Moral Ruler was not the less invariable because it might be averted by relapse or repentance. Such relapse or repentance altered the position of the moral subject, and became a new occasion of punishment or reward ; so that the sanctions of the law were not impaired, while room was left for the exercise of emotions which could have found no entrance had repentance been powerless to save. By the occasional delay of punishment, and the declared possibility of escaping it by repentance and atonement, the people were convinced of the long-suffering and mercy of God, as well as of his justice. Hope and therefore love was united with fear ; so that they were enabled to acknowledge in him their Father and Friend, as well as their Lawgiver and Judge. They had beheld such awful displays of his power, were so fully convinced of his perpetual and discerning presence, and entire national obedience to the whole law was so impracticable, that they would have regarded him with unmixed terror, and have been carried back by this slavish terror into barbarism, if their fear had not been counterbalanced by the experience of his tenderness and benignity. As it was, the opposite motives were so pro-

portioned as to strengthen their faith and advance their spiritual progress by impulses perpetually renewed ; till, from ignorant and barbarous in comparison with some heathen nations, they became, not only a spectacle but a guide to the rest of the world from their remarkable superiority in wisdom and piety.

What, then, can be clearer than that the design of God in his dealings with the Hebrew nation was to enlarge and improve the mind of the human race by means of the peculiar dispensation with which he favoured his chosen people?

Another purpose was answered by the occasional delay of the retribution which was yet invariable. The people were by this means taught to look forward. They were made interested in the remote as well as the immediate consequences of their actions. Whether the blessing and the curse were reserved for themselves at some distant day, or appointed to their children of the third and fourth generation, their attention was carried on from present objects to future, and their first attainments were now made in that comprehension of mind which it is the great end of all revelation to extend. The commandment to refrain from image worship was sanctioned by a threat of punishment to a future generation ; and that which inculcates duty to parents contains a promise of long life to the obedient ; and from this time the promises and denunciations reached down to a more and more remote period of time, as the people became more accustomed to extend their views, and therefore to ennoble their principles of action. It is interesting to remark the progress of this extension of views, and to perceive how remote objects are connected with immediate, so as to make hope and fear of the future influential on present conduct. With the blessing in basket and store, in the fertility of the field and the abundance of the stall, is coupled the curse of distant captivity and protracted wanderings in a strange land. While Balaam pronounced that the tents of Israel were goodly, he declared that a sceptre should be raised in Israel, that a star should arise out of Jacob, before which the nations should bow down. The lustre of David's

reign was in part derived from an anticipation of the glory which the Messiah should shed back on his ancestor; and the woes of the captivity were aggravated by the fear that the great national promise had been forfeited. Thus a definite hope, however remote its objects, became gradually strong enough to supersede lower motives, to expel meaner desires, to inspire an energy victorious over pain and temptation, and by these means to testify to the spiritual superiority of the chosen people, and to the Divine character of that guardianship under which they had made a progress so unprecedented.

Though as a nation their advancement was unprecedented, their attainments were rivalled by individuals among the heathens; but this fact only furnishes a new evidence of the objects and the power of revelation, since such instances were few and uninfluential. A philosopher arose here and there among pagan nations, who had attained to the conception of the Divine unity and even of a future life; who had, in fact, equalled the wisest of the Israelites in spiritual discernment. But to the race it mattered little what such individuals had effected; for while the philosopher was exercising his perceptions from some astonishing height of speculation, or pondering some newly discovered truth, too awful to be communicated to the unprepared, or striving to render the conduct in some degree correspondent to the convictions, the multitudes were wandering in darkness, neither perceiving nor desiring the dawn of Divine truth, and ready to persecute any who would have directed their attention to it. The wisest of the heathens were usually the least safe and happy in society; they lived in loneliness of spirit, and died despised, calumniated, or martyred. Socrates lived traduced, and died by violence for having discerned the Unity of the Divine nature and the probability of a future state, and cherished the hope of an ample revelation from above. The Hebrew nation, at the same period, were familiar with these great truths, and rejoicing in a revelation which the wisest of heathen philosophers could only conceive and hope for. By means of the spiritual equality established

by a revelation, the whole nation had advanced together. They were led on, step by step, in close phalanx, to the conquest of truth and the acquisition of spiritual blessings. The attainments made were therefore solid and permanent. The gifts from above being common to all, there was no jealousy of superior wisdom in the family of Abraham; for where none were grossly ignorant, none could be disproportionately wise. Every accession of knowledge was a family treasure; every advance in spirituality, a national blessing; and while the pagan millions were at war with wisdom and the wise, the Hebrews were, to a man, informed respecting the moral attributes and providence of the Eternal, and cherishing with calm confidence a mighty hope whose fulfilment they were taught to refer to a far distant period of their history.

The relative superiority of your nation in intellectual and spiritual attainments was less obvious to the neighbouring nations, and even to themselves, than it is to us, now that the light of subsequent ages is reflected back upon their history. In the midst of their wonder and admiration, the pagans were too little enlightened to appreciate fully the preeminence of the chosen people; and the Hebrews had, as yet, had little opportunity of comparing accurately their own with other national institutions. They did not know but that other schemes of national worship contained miracles somewhat analogous to their own; and the full meaning of the Divine revelations was not therefore appreciated. They therefore read their law with darkened eyes, and were insensible to the depth of wisdom and beauty which was inherent in their institutions, and which was rendered obvious by their subsequent experience. When the captivity afforded an opportunity of studying the institutions of the Persians; when these institutions of the most enlightened pagan nations of the age were found to be mean, puerile, and inconsistent, in comparison with the provisions of the Mosaic Law and the grandeur of its sanctions; when the true religion was exhibited side by side with a variety of superstitions; when a theocracy was displayed in contrast

with other modes of government, the Hebrew people seem to have become for the first time sensible of the magnitude of their privileges and the splendour of their destiny. They looked back to their records, and all, even that which was most familiar, appeared to them in a new light. Beauty was apparent which had before been unheeded; power was recognised which had been disregarded; wisdom appealed to them from the annals of their history, and was for the first time heard. The revelation was complete, but it had been hitherto misapprehended. With themselves rested the shame of their blindness, their caprice, their ingratitude; and to wipe off this shame and satisfy their new cravings after truth, the nation, on their return, assembled as one man, and eagerly sought the wisdom they had so long undervalued. They listened from morning till mid-day; their ears were attentive to the words of the Law; they bowed their heads and worshiped in a new spirit, and never afterwards apostatized. Becoming fully aware of the peculiarity of their position and the superiority of their privileges, they adored Jehovah with the understanding as well as with the heart, and believed in him for ever.

In the course of their retrospect into their history,—of their reexamination of their records, your nation were now prepared to discern an ulterior purpose in all the events of the one, a profundity of meaning in the instructions contained in the other, of which they had been until now unaware. Every step of the national destiny, every stage of its discipline, was now perceived to be ordered with a view to the grand national event which was yet future, the coming of the Messiah; while the phrases in which the Divine messages were couched were seen to include a deeper meaning than was at first apparent, and promises which had always been precious were now sanctified by their reference to higher objects than had before been conceived. Much that had been mysterious, now became clear; much that had been received as narrative, now appeared to be allegory; startling truths came out of familiar aphorisms; and every form of instruction, every issue of events, every inti-

mation of prophecy, seemed to tend to the consummation of the system, the appearance of the Holy One of Israel.

To you it is given to see yet more than your fathers saw in all these things. You can perceive the success of the design to enlarge the scope of the national mind and to strengthen its powers of spiritual discernment. You can perceive by the event that the purpose for which mysterious phrases were employed was to stimulate curiosity and interest. You can perceive that the form in which abstract truths were conveyed is that most peculiarly adapted to expanding minds, and that the style was no less wisely ordered than the mode. You can acknowledge in a collection of annals, of narratives, of allegories, poems, and didactic addresses, a repository of truth whose value and interest must have been inexhaustible to an advancing national mind. You can recognise in the repetition of the same truths in various forms, or the annunciation of different truths in similar expressions, in the mixture of plainness and mysticism, and of simplicity with involution, a provision for rousing the speculative faculties, arresting the attention, and, in short, improving the collective spiritual capabilities.

The faith which it was the object of miracles and prophecy to generate being now established, the exhibition of both became less and less frequent, till at length they were heard of no more. The object of miracles was to establish a belief in Him who wrought them by the hands of his servants; that particular direction of miraculous power which takes place in prophecy has the further object of carrying forward the views of those to whom the prophecy is delivered. The effect of a miracle is an instantaneous belief in the Divinity of the power by which it is wrought; the effect of a prophecy is to rivet the attention, to excite expectation, to engage the mind in a protracted interest highly favourable to its elevation and enlargement, while the ultimate faith is, if possible, firmer than that consequent on a miracle, because it has been formed after a longer preparation. The faith of Abraham was superior to that of his descendants, probably in proportion as his insight



Into futurity was more distinct and extended than theirs. He was more willing to obey and resign himself to the Eternal, because the promises vouchsafed to him were of peculiar splendour. The assurance that the whole earth should be blessed in his seed induced him to leave his country and kindred; and he prepared to relinquish what was all-precious to him, on the promise that his posterity should outnumber the stars. Promises so vast were not given to his posterity immediately on their departure from Egypt, nor for long afterwards, and accordingly their maturity of mind was far inferior to that which had been wrought in their progenitor. In proportion as the range of prophecy became wider, their faith was extended and confirmed, till, as has been seen, it was so far matured, on their return from the captivity, that prophecy was gradually withdrawn. These relative effects of miracles and prophecy remain the same, whether prophecy be regarded as a prolonged miracle, or whether, as some view the matter, a miracle be considered as a prophecy immediately fulfilled. Both views are correct; since it is equally clear that prophecy is an exertion of supernatural agency, and that he who works a miracle only foretells an effect which will immediately take place by an exertion of Divine power. In both cases it is God who works, and whose agency is made known by the servant he has chosen. In both cases faith is generated; the only difference being, that in one instance the faith is more pure, firm, and salutary, from its growth having been more gradual, the scope of its exercise more extended, and the period of its gratification more remote. In a case of miracle there is no time for inquiry, no room for doubt, no trial of faith; the annunciation is made, and the event immediately follows. In a case of prophecy there is much to ponder; there is scope for speculation, for variations of opinion, for vacillations of hope and fear. The prediction is compounded of obscurity and clearness. Some points in it are obvious enough to excite expectation; while as a whole, it is left in sufficient obscurity to occasion uncertainty up to the moment of its accomplish-



ment. Its appropriation is decided at last by the clearing up of some one enigmatical expression or allusion, usually hidden and so apparently trivial as to have escaped previous notice; but subsequently so apt, so decidedly appropriate, as to leave no doubt respecting the true explanation or the design of the framer of the prediction. Whatever may have been the variety of speculation upon it, however difficult it may have appeared to reconcile the different parts of a prediction, no sooner is it fulfilled than the agreement of all minds in its truth is involuntary, for the conviction is irresistible. A strong light is cast on some clause which had perhaps escaped conjecture; and now this disregarded expression affords a key to all the rest, and by its coincidence with the actual event puts to flight all plausible conjecture and impresses certainty on every mind. In the instance of prophecy we have not only the evidence of design, which is apparent in every mode of communication by which truths are let down into the narrow limits of the human mind, but an example of the wise methods by which the faculties are exercised and disciplined to a longer foresight and a more extended range of hope and fear perpetually.

It can scarcely be necessary to adduce illustrations of what has been advanced to those so versed as yourselves in the history and the records of your nation; yet one example to each position may be of use to render the meaning clear. Among the phrases which conveyed a deeper signification than was at first apparent, or which were so mysterious as to stimulate curiosity, were those which referred to death and the departed. "To go the way of all the earth," to be "gathered to their fathers" or "to their people," were expressions more likely to render the mortal change a subject of speculation than the more familiar and direct phrase.

As an illustration of the variety and comprehensiveness of the Hebrew Scriptures, it is only necessary to point to the three divisions of your records, the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa; all unlike one another, and each containing

within itself as great a diversity of subjects and styles as can be imagined; but all bearing the common character of a depth of design which was not originally recognised. You now perceive the law to have been more accurately adapted to the condition of your forefathers than they could discern it to be when delivered. The prophecies have been gradually invested with a clearer light from the day of their annunciation to the present; and it is possible that you may not yet have become aware of all that may be ascertained respecting them. The devotional portions of your Scriptures also, as they speak the language of faith in the true God, can lose nothing of their truth and beauty by the further experience of the human heart in the discipline of life and the practice of faith. Your Scriptures, collectively and individually, being of Divine origin, yield more instead of less evidence of their Divinity with the lapse of time.

As to the effect of prophecy in enlarging the mind and confirming faith, it is only necessary to advert to the gradual improvement of the national faith from the time when in Egypt your people cavilled about the deliverance which was at hand, to the time when they firmly trusted that their Messiah would come, though ages must intervene. Their experience had disciplined them to a longer and a longer extension of their hopes and fears, till their faith was so far established as to allow of a cessation of miracles and prophecy.

No set of circumstances in the whole of the history of your nation is more interesting than that by which your forefathers were trained to the expectation of a future life.—There is no occasion at present to enter into the great controversy whether a future life was made a subject of express revelation to the Hebrew nation. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that at an early period of their history, the people had no idea of such a doctrine: that at the period of the cessation of miracles and prophecy their faith in it was powerful enough to inspire firmness under strong temptation, and a fearlessness of death; while there is no trace in their records of its being

offered as a sanction to the law, as was the case with temporal rewards and punishments.

The belief in a future state is prevalent in every nation in the world. It has been and is perpetually disputed whether this belief originated in a revelation made to the fathers of the race, or whether it has been obtained by the exercise of unassisted reason. However attained, this conception marks the most important æra in the spiritual history of every nation ; as it involves a higher peculiarity, and exercises a more powerful influence, than any other subject of faith whatever. In every nation where it has been known to exist this influence has been incalculable. It has stimulated to war, characterized the laws, modified the customs, pervaded the literature so remarkably as to afford a strong general presumption that where the national records bear no trace of the doctrine, the doctrine is not known. The fragments of the poetry of the northern nations of Europe bear a constant reference to a future state. The savage tribes of Asia and Africa hold it as part of their religion, and its truth is never questioned by the aborigines of America. It has from time immemorial, been interwoven with the institutions of civilized nations, and formed a prominent object in the written references to those institutions. But the early Hebrew records bear no such traces. No reference can be found to any life but the present in all early relations of public and private vicissitudes, in their songs of triumph or of mourning, in their devotional addresses, in their national instructions, in their individual speculations. There is no evidence that they were actuated by motives drawn from this faith, by interest or indeed the lowest curiosity concerning it. It could not therefore have originally formed a part of their religious belief, or have been an important subject of hope and fear ; and this doctrine cannot be received at all without becoming the most important of all points of religious faith : it is clear that it was not originally made known to your nation. It is equally clear that, after their return from the captivity, they not only had a distinct notion of this doctrine,

but that their conception of it was far superior to that of the most enlightened nations who professed belief in the immortality of the soul. Whether or not they were the first to attain the notion, when it was formed, it was more pure than any which prevailed elsewhere. It was not, like that of the heathens, vague and vacillating, attended with fancies as various as the imaginations from which they sprang. As far as your nation believed in a future state, they believed in it as a state of proper retribution, and their faith became a principle of action. Though it may be impossible to fix the date of the reception of this great doctrine among your people, it is not more difficult in this case than in others to discern the means by which the national mind was first prepared for it, and then enabled to improve on the first conceptions of it.

The obscurity of the fate of Enoch must have awakened curiosity; for whether he was translated, or whether an immature death be all that was implied in the expression "he was not, for God took him," the obscurity must have been as great to your forefathers as to ourselves at this day. The disappearance of Moses was also mysterious, and the phrases before mentioned alluding to death and the dead were ambiguous; the threat that punishment should extend to many generations was awful; and by the united force of these circumstances the people must have been prepared both for further tidings of the departed, and for the expectation of retribution at some future time. Then the fate of Elijah afforded a fruitful subject of speculation, and the notion of a future retribution might be referred to a period subsequent to his translation. In his case it might first perhaps be supposed or believed that the righteous had departed to his reward. During all this time, they enjoyed the light of natural reason as abundantly as other nations; for though temporal rewards and punishments were the sanctions of their law, the wise provision by which this retribution was made national rather than individual left the way open for the admission of the natural arguments for a future state which had the most weight with less favoured people. The strong argu-

ment for a renewal of life from the inequalities in the distribution of happiness affected them equally with others. By this union of general and special guidance, the Hebrews were prepared for that more correct apprehension of this great doctrine which we have seen that they attained, and the analogy is preserved between their advance in this and every other spiritual attainment. If they were originally behind some other nations, they eventually outstripped them so far as to prove that they were under special guidance, and to enable the advantages of this special guidance to be extended by their means to the whole world.

It cannot be proved that the bulk of the Hebrew nation firmly believed in a future life previous to the captivity, though the most enlightened among them probably did, in a manner less distinct and correct than after they had had the opportunity of comparing their own conceptions with those of their superstitious conquerors. The desponding expressions respecting death found in the Book of Job, the uncertainty of any references which may appear to exist in the Psalms of David, and the mournful questionings of the writer of Ecclesiastes, indicate a very different state of conviction from that which animated the heroes and martyrs under the rule of the Maccabees. It was probably by intercourse with their Persian conquerors, with the Chaldeans, and the disciples of the Greek philosophy, that the bulk of the nation became familiarized with the heathen doctrine of the immortality of the soul; and, comparing it with their previous conceptions and with the ambiguities of their records, became able to confirm and exalt their faith in a future state of retribution.

It cannot be disputed, however, nor can the fact be too carefully borne in mind, that the belief, whenever and however originated and cherished, still remained indistinct, partial and variable. It was superior to all conceptions that existed of the same doctrine elsewhere in that age; but as no solemn annunciation of it is to be found in the Mosaic Law, as it was viewed under different lights by various minds, as it is now to be traced

only by inferences from the events of your history, or by a reference to the opinions of the enlightened men of your nation,—it must have been held on a different tenure from the other great doctrines of your dispensation, and have been inferior to them all in positive sanctity. To the attentive observers of your national destinies, it is clear that as this doctrine is the only important one which has been essentially corrupted among you, the only one which has admitted of a wide diversity of views, the only one which has been intermixed with the superstitions of the Oriental philosophy, it must be excluded from the number of those for which an adequate exposition was provided in the Mosaic institutions. Whatever may be objected to the contents of the Talmud, it is remarkable that the incorporation of the doctrine of the metempsychosis with that of a future life, affords the only instance of a coalescence between the Oriental philosophy and a Hebrew doctrine pretended to be found in the Scriptures; and by whatever appointment or agency the notion of a future state was first communicated to your people, its pretensions to equal authority with other Mosaic doctrines will be questioned by all out of your own nation, as long as the doctrine of the metempsychosis is as generally admitted among you as it is to this day; and this the more earnestly, the more firmly they believe in the Divine origin of your institutions.

One more provision for the spiritual advancement of your people, the most extraordinary and important circumstance connected with the dispensation, remains to be noticed;—the mode by which the expectation of a Messiah was excited and cherished.

Till the time of Abraham there was a perfect equality in the spiritual state of all nations. However widely distinguishable they have since become, whether through the separation of your nation or other means, it appears that till Abraham received his appointment to become the father of an eminent nation, no portion of the race was favoured with any peculiar privileges. With the promise to Abraham of the greatness of

his descendants, was coupled an intimation that their privileges should not for ever be peculiar; a clear intimation that the approaching dispensation was designed for the benefit of mankind through the instrumentality of this one family. "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed\*." "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him†." The means by which this blessing to the race was to be administered were not discerned when the promise was given, nor for ages afterwards; but the intimation gave a solemnity to the future, highly salutary, both as it tended to enlarge the views of the expectants and to deepen their interest in their existing institutions. With the lapse of centuries one shade of obscurity after another melted away, and the great national hope assumed a form which became perpetually more definite as your ancestors advanced towards the period of its fulfilment. The cloud of glory on which their expectation rested as they travelled on through the vista of ages unfolded by slow degrees, and revealed the form of one girded with righteousness, sanctified by the spirit of prophecy, one with themselves as truly descended from Abraham and being the servant of God, but greater than themselves, as appointed to establish justice on the earth and to judge many nations. Your prophets were the first to pierce through this bright obscurity and to tell what should be revealed. Your kings were ready to bow the knee to him who reigned in the hopes of every heart. The young measured the space which had yet to be passed over before they who were still unborn should stand around the last and greatest of the prophets; and the aged who expired on the way, pointed onwards to the light which gladdened their dying eyes. There could be no delusion; for the

\* Genesis xii. 2—3.

† Ibid. xviii. 18.



voice of the Eternal had spoken the promise in the trance of Abraham and in the thunders of Horeb, whose echoes were prolonged and renewed from age to age. First the expectation was of a blessing; then that this blessing should be given through a servant of God; that this servant of God should be the prince of prophets; that he should be of the offspring of David, a branch of the root of Jesse; that he should complete their dispensation and consummate the work which God wrought upon his peculiar people; and finally, that he should appear at a period to which the tendency of events and the intimations of prophecy pointed so as to establish an agreement in the hopes of almost the whole people.

But while the expectations of the nation were referred to a particular point of time, while all were agreed respecting the lineage of their Messiah and the fullness of his Divine commission, there was no certainty respecting the nature of his kingdom. The hope of your people for many centuries after the captivity was generally of a prince who should establish the nation in glory and peace in their own land; a nation proved to be preeminent in the favour of God by its surpassing power and grandeur. In course of time however, probably about thirteen centuries ago, some of your fathers being unable to reconcile those portions of prophecy which speak of a suffering Messiah with those which promise triumph and peace, conceived the expectation of two Messiahs, who shall succeed each other; the one in a state of humiliation and sorrow, the other in a state of glory and magnificence. This notion, though highly esteemed by many, never became a general or settled belief; but it affords a clear proof that the nature of the Messiah's office was not so clearly defined in prophecy as to justify any previous certainty respecting it; not so clearly as to justify the assumption that in this case alone the expectations of the Hebrew people founded on prophecy must have been absolutely correct previous to the explanation afforded by the fulfilment of the prophecy. The object of these prophecies, as of all others, was not to make the people prophets,



but to fix their attention and prepare them equally for approaching events and for the reception of the all-powerful evidence afforded by the fulfilment of the Divine predictions. It was not more than formerly given to the people at large to see (as the few chosen ones from among them saw) the future in bright and distinct vision: prophecy was still, as before, a dim shadowing forth of things to come, to which it was for God and not for man to give a body, when the fullness of time should be come. In all cases, it was designed that events and their times should be made certainly known by the fulfilment of prophecy, and not by the prophecy itself, which would entirely fail of its object if it could establish any such certainty. Those of your nation, therefore, who entertained a confident expectation that the kingdom of the Messiah would be a magnificent temporal kingdom, went beyond what their former experience of prophecy could warrant, and proved themselves unaware of the doubt which your nation has since acknowledged to exist. The same may be said of any who ventured to decide on the precise point of time when the Messiah was to appear; while the nation was justified in referring their hopes to that century whose approach is well known to have been anxiously watched by the whole people, and in looking for some display of nobler power and greatness than had yet been vouchsafed to the most distinguished messengers of the Supreme.

By an unique manifestation of Providence, by a series of means as remarkable for their wisdom as their singularity, had your nation now been led on to occupy a position in which the eyes of the whole civilized world were fixed upon them, while their own expectation was riveted on the further revelation which was to take place. They saw that all that had been done, however wonderful and however good, was but preparatory to that grand consummation by which their dispensation, which was already relatively perfect, should be made absolutely perfect. In thus believing, they were right: while, respecting other truths evidenced by their position, they were either unobservant or mistaken, for want of the means of surveying

the condition of mankind at large. To us, who can make this survey in the light which subsequent events have cast back upon that age, it is given to discern more respecting the objects of the Mosaic dispensation and its actual influence upon the human race than could be perceived by the recipients of the revelation, even at the advanced period to which they had now arrived.

We have seen that, as all nations originally enjoyed an equality under the general providence of God, so it is designed that all should be ultimately blessed in the results of his special providence towards your nation. The distinction between Israelites and Gentiles was arbitrary and temporary, involving mighty blessings to those who were called to distinction, but having for its ultimate purpose the communication of yet higher benefits to mankind at large. The discipline to which your nation was subjected gave them a firm hold on the grand fundamental doctrine of the Divine Unity, and the equally important conception of a Divine Moral Government; and it was evident to all who observed their fortunes, that by means of these convictions they were led on from the state of ignorance and barbarism, whence they issued to a speedy superiority to all the world in civilization, in temporal advantages and spiritual attainments. While themselves learning, they became teachers to others, proving by the proportion of their fortunes to their deserts that their heavenly Ruler was one, and that he ruled their hearts as well as their state. Some few heathens so highly estimated the preeminence of your nation as voluntarily to subject themselves to the Mosaic Law. Others who declined some of its requisitions, acknowledged its essential doctrines, and worshiped the One God. Many more who made no profession of a pure faith, yet partook of its advantages in the purification of mind and manners, which spread far though faintly from this centre into surrounding countries; and countless multitudes watched with curiosity for what should next befall this peculiar people, who were known to be awaiting a mighty national change. The great harvest of blessings to the race remained, however, to be reaped in after ages, when

the seed which had been so long sown and so gradually matured should yield its fruit without partiality into the hand of every man. The fortunes of your nation were not so instructive while alternating before the eyes of men, or even while pondered in the ominous pause which succeeded to the cessation of prophecy after the captivity, as they have been since ; mankind having been slow in recognising and partaking of the spiritual blessings which were originally too vast to be appreciated even by those who possessed them.

The deficiencies which remained were certainly in some degree perceived by them, since they expected a further revelation as a completion of that which they had already accepted. These deficiencies have also been discerned by those of your teachers in any age who have shown that the general direction of your religious worship was against the idolatries which overspread the world when the law was given. By proving this by invincible argument, Maimonides has likewise proved that these religious institutions were not designed for or capable of effecting the improvement of human nature so far as to enable it to attain the supreme good, and that the effect of the law was not to make perfect, but to prepare for the highest means of perfection.

The preparation being made, the completion must soon be given, or the consequences to the spiritual state of the expectants must be disastrous ; as they are in every case where a sudden check is given to a gradually accelerated improvement, where a blank pause baffles the activity of the strengthened faculties : and the consequences are the more disastrous, the grander is the consummation looked for, and the more reasonable and active the expectation. These ill effects are analogous to those which arise in children, whose minds have been stirred up and furnished with the elements of knowledge, but are hindered from making further progress. When they have exhausted their materials, they will employ their intellectual activity in trifling with accessories for want of essentials to work upon ; they will pursue shadows, reason upon images as facts, and become

at length incapable of discerning truth, of appreciating the value of rational conviction, or of distinguishing the mandates of their teacher from the suggestions of their own perverted understandings.

Your people was prepared for a completion of their dispensation ; the consummation looked for was grand beyond conception ; and their expectation was reasonable and active. A pause succeeded. Whether this pause issued in blank disappointment, or in an indefinite protraction of their hope, or whether a consummation was given which they refused to accept, and whether the spiritual progress of the nation was therefore arrested, is the most interesting and important inquiry which can engage any who would worship the Supreme with the powers of the understanding as well as the affections of the heart.

## SECTION II.—*Spirit of Christianity.*

WHEN the voice of prophecy had ceased for four hundred years, and when the expectations of your people respecting the Messiah had been exalted to a very high pitch, it was rumoured throughout the land of Judea that one was prophesying in the wilderness, and baptizing into a new faith. In proportion as this rumour spread, multitudes went out to learn what was the object of this baptism, the nature of this prophecy ; and whether he who prophesied was the Messiah who had been looked for so long. They found one who answered in no respect to their expectation of a national Saviour : his mode of life being austere, his promises void of all reference to future greatness and glory, and his lineage well known not to be that of the promised deliverer. Yet there was in John the son of Zachariah a voice of authority which few resisted. He performed no miracles, but appealed to prophecy ; he uttered predictions whose fulfilment he declared to be close at hand ; and his doctrine and mode of enforcing it were so remarkable as to rivet the attention of the nation on his pro-

ceedings. Like many of the ancient prophets, he appeared divested of all worldly possessions and advantages. His raiment was rude, his food simple; he avoided the familiar companionship of men, and took his station in the wilderness and on the banks of Jordan, where multitudes came from all the country of Judea, and from Jerusalem itself, to hear his doctrine and to be baptized by him. There appears to have been no distinction among those who received baptism from him, however various might be their opinions concerning his mission. Many supposed him to be the Messiah, as he taught with irresistible authority: others, who rightly perceived that the circumstances of his appearance did not correspond with the prophecies concerning Christ, yet listened to him as a mighty prophet: none looked upon him with absolute unbelief; and those who conducted the spiritual affairs of the nation sent a deputation of Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to inquire of John himself who he was and what office he had assumed. The members of this deputation found him preaching repentance and purification, as a preparation for receiving a new faith. Beyond this he did not proceed. He offered no new doctrine, delivered no new message from the Eternal, and bounded his efforts to causing a more perfect preparation, a more exalted hope of some dispensation which was still future. His endeavours were seconded by the ardent prevailing desire of the people; so that, humbling as were his reproofs, and austere as was his train of preaching, men of all ranks and offices submitted to become his disciples. The Pharisees came to him to be taught, the Sadducees petitioned to be baptized, while he rebuked their pride, and overthrew the ill-grounded confidence which they entertained because they were descended from Abraham. The Publicans were warned against extortion, the soldiers against violence and insubordination, and the multitudes generally against selfishness and evil deeds and thoughts of every kind. The exhortation was, to hasten to repent of and reform all that was sinful, that all might be purified to receive certain glad-tidings which should soon be made

known. The deputation from Jerusalem saw and heard these things; they witnessed the disputes among the multitude concerning this prophet, whether he was the Christ; and going to John, they plainly asked the question, which was as plainly answered. He declared that he was not the Christ, nor Elijah (who was expected to appear), but a messenger who should prepare the way for a far mightier prophet; that he was one who, in the words of Isaiah, lifted up his voice in the desert to command that the way of the Lord should be made straight. He declared that this mightier prophet was dwelling in the midst of his nation at that very hour; so that the expectation of the people, though still deferred, should not be again disappointed, as the kingdom of heaven was nigh at hand, and he who should introduce it was prepared for his mission, and only waiting a signal from God to open it.

These glad-tidings were spread on the tongues of thousands to the remotest corners of the kingdom. Herod listened to them in his palace; the priests communed of them in the temple; the despised Samaritans looked for the decision of the controversies respecting the appointed place of worship; and the Galileans, who had no idea that one of their towns had sent forth the Deliverer, heard from afar that the name of the Messiah had been spoken on the banks of Jordan.

The promise given by John was ere long seen to be fulfilled. As the prophet was standing beside the river, teaching and baptizing, one approached him who came out of Nazareth in Galilee, and desired also to be baptized. For the first time, the prophet hesitated to discharge his office, declaring that he had more need to be baptized by the stranger than the stranger by him. The stranger, however, explained his desire to submit to all established ordinances without making any distinction of persons; and John therefore went down with him into the water. When the rite was ended, those assembled beheld in one moment that the promise of ages was fulfilled, and the patience of their expectation rewarded. They beheld the first miracle which succeeded a pause of many centuries, and

acknowledged that once again God had plainly spoken to his people. They saw the heavens opened; they witnessed the descent of the spirit on the stranger from Galilee, and heard the same voice which had spoken to Moses out of the burning bush announcing a higher dignity than had been conferred on the greatest prophet of the first dispensation. The stranger, being the son of Joseph and Mary, was of the offspring of David, a branch of the root of Jesse, and he was now pointed out as the Messiah by the voice from heaven, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The expectation of those who beheld was not immediately fulfilled by the appearance of the Messiah in Jerusalem or in any of the cities of Judea. He was not yet fully prepared for his office, and withdrew into the wilderness for forty days, where alone, and probably in communion with Him who sent him, he might be informed of all things respecting his mission, and exercised and strengthened for the labours and sufferings he was to undergo. When after a time he heard that his forerunner John had been thrown into prison, because he had rebuked the vices and therefore incurred the vengeance of Herod, Jesus withdrew into Galilee, where he first opened his mission. He taught in their synagogues, proving that the prophecies of the Messiah related to a period which had then arrived, and that the glory which had long been promised had at length risen upon Israel. As he taught with the power of the spirit, his fame spread through the whole country of Galilee.

His teaching was already confirmed by miracles. The first of these was performed at Cana, where some who had heard from John that Jesus was the Messiah were present to have their faith confirmed by this first display of miraculous power. This miracle, of changing water into wine at a marriage-feast, was followed by so many cures of the sick and infirm and lunatic, that he was believed on, not only by his immediate followers or by the dwellers in the towns where he



wrought his miracles, but by many inhabitants of Jerusalem and of the whole territory of Judea, and of the country beyond Jordan, who came to witness his words and actions. He had already made provision for securing ample and durable testimony to the nature of his preaching, of his private conduct and public acts. If he had gone from place to place alone, or accompanied by a multitude who followed him from curiosity, and who could not attend his steps everywhere, there must have been uncertainty and incompleteness in all the testimony, however strong, which could have been obtained. A fuller testimony was therefore secured. As Jesus walked on the shore of the lake of Tiberias, he saw Simon and Andrew (who had learned from John that this Jesus was the Messiah,) pursuing their occupation of fishing. He called them, and afterwards James and John, the sons of Zebedee, to follow him and remain with him. They did so; and from that day beheld his works, listened to his teachings, and received his private instructions during his life; and after his death bore testimony to what they had seen and heard by their preachings, by their writings, and by laying down their lives for the Gospel they taught. Various and competent witnesses having thus been appointed from the very commencement of his mission, we are furnished with evidence respecting the life and doctrine of Jesus which may be relied on, whatever may be thought of the innocence of the life and the divinity of the doctrine.

Some of the acts and words of the new prophet had already given offence to those religious teachers who could not conceive the idea of relaxing any of the religious observances to which they had been accustomed, of separating the ordinances of the priests from the commands of Moses, or of paying more regard to the spirit than the letter of the Law. Such men had suffered from the long protraction of the national hope, from the long absence of higher religious aims than the first dispensation had set before them. They had acquired the habit of magnifying what were merely the accessories of their institutions at



the expense of their essence; they were more anxious about the details of the Law than about its designs; and forgetting that He who gave the Law had the power of superseding the Law, and that He had actually made provision for thus causing it to be superseded, they looked upon any neglect of their most trifling observances as an infallible sign that he who authorized such neglect could not be from God, whatever might be his miraculous powers. If they had looked back to the early records of their people with an understanding heart, they might have perceived that even while the tribes were trembling before the display of the terrors of Horeb, a provision was made for changing or withdrawing the Law, if it should consist with the Divine purposes so to do. In answer to the petition of the people that they might no more hear the voice of the Eternal or behold his lightnings, a promise was given that prophets should henceforth be the exponents of the Divine will,—this promise being coupled with the necessary condition, that the voice of the prophet should be listened to and his commands obeyed as readily as if they proceeded immediately from God. From this condition there was no escape; so that by the terms of their covenant with God, they were bound to receive every message which he should send, and to honour every messenger whom he should appoint, though the one should command the overthrow of their peculiar institutions, and the other be made the agent of the revolution. It was necessary to discover by means appointed whether the pretensions of any prophet were well founded; and this having been ascertained, no alternative remained but to receive whatever he might teach, however contrary his doctrine might be to preconceived opinions, and however uncongenial with national or particular prejudices. The words of Moses were these: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me

see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto the words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet who shall presume to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him \*."

If these conditions were fulfilled by many Divine messengers, they were eminently so by Jesus, who promised health to the sick and food to the hungry in the name of the Lord, and the thing immediately came to pass. The *presumption* was not therefore in him, but in those who prejudged his claims; and expiation must be required, not of him who taught, but of those who through hardness of heart refused to hear.

This hardness of heart was most conspicuous among those members of society who esteemed themselves the wisest, and who were indeed the most learned in the Law. But learning is not always wisdom; and it was the case with many of the polished Pharisees and learned Scribes and disputatious Sadducees, as it is with many learned men in every age,—that the exclusive nature of their studies had perverted the rectitude of their understandings, and engendered a pernicious scepticism respecting everything which was uncongenial with their long-formed opinions, or which appeared inconsistent with their former belief and expectations. Over such scepticism, even

\* Deut. xviii. 15—22.

miracles had little power; and their prejudices closed their ears to the voice of God himself: while the more simple-minded, who were ready to trust to the evidence of their senses rather than to the strength of preconceived opinions; the afflicted, who were relieved by the benevolent miracles of the new prophet; the repentant, who were encouraged by the hopes he gave; and the meekly pious, who obtained from him higher ideas of duty, and deeper peace in the performance of it,—believed on him by thousands, and were more ready to be taught by him than to accuse and judge him; and this the more willingly, because they learned from himself that he came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it.

The offences which were given to the rulers and teachers of the people arose, not-so much from the explanation of his views which Jesus gave in his discourses, as from actions which were thought to indicate contempt of the Law, and a presumptuous pretension to Divine power. It will be useful to advert to the nature of these objections, in order to ascertain whether the disregard complained of were really of the Law as given by God, or of the additions which had been made to the Law by men; or whether any greater power was assumed than God had really conferred. We will take the first two or three instances which occurred when he opened his mission in Galilee. Jesus was teaching one day in the court of a house, where Pharisees and teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem and from many parts of the country were assembled around him, with so large a multitude besides that the whole space was crowded. A paralytic man was brought to the house by his friends, with the hope that Jesus would restore him; and as there was no possibility of approaching the prophet through the usual entrance, the sick man was borne on his couch to the flat roof of the dwelling, and let down into the court by cords. A more perfect testimony of the faith of those who acted thus could not have been given; and in testimony of his approbation of this faith the Teacher promised forgiveness of his sins to the sick man. Some of the Scribes who

were sitting by, and who could not conceive that forgiveness of sins could be declared by any but the Supreme himself, in their hearts, though not with their tongues, accused Jesus of blasphemy. The accusation was immediately proved erroneous. Jesus perceived what was passing in their thoughts, and at once proved that his power was real and not assumed, by commanding the paralytic man to arise and depart cured of his malady. In this instance, the cavillers were convinced; for *all* who were present glorified God, saying, "We never saw it thus."

At another time, when Jesus was entertained by Matthew, (whose narrative of the life and discourses of the Prophet was written in your language and for the use of your nation,) some guests with whom no Pharisee would have deigned to associate were at meat with him. When the Scribes saw him in company with the despised publicans and gentiles, they were offended at a condescension to which they were certainly unequal. The reply of Jesus conveyed that if these publicans and gentiles were really deserving of contempt, they stood more in need of his instructions and society than more righteous persons. "Those that are well need not a physician, but those that are sick; I came not to call righteous men, but sinners to repentance." Here the offence was, that the new teacher did not share their feelings of contempt towards those who, however cast out by proud men, were not rejected by God.

A yet greater offence was given by his mode of regarding the sabbath, and encouraging his followers to regard it. In several instances he wrought cures on the sabbath; and in one, his disciples were seen to pluck corn as they passed through the fields, rubbing it in their hands and eating. It is clear that in the first case no command was violated, as the working of the miracle occasioned no labour to the Prophet or to any other person; and that it was preeminently a holy act. It is besides inconsistent in the extreme to suppose that one who had power given him to control the course of nature

should not also have power over an institution which was only ordained for the service of men. Jesus therefore rightly declared himself "Lord of the sabbath."—The act of eating corn as they passed along was justified by him by the consideration that the institution of the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the institution; and he silenced their accusations by referring the cavillers to the fact that David and his followers did a more daring thing in eating the bread of the altar, and also to their own common practice of releasing animals who had fallen into a pit on the sabbath day, with more toil and a more worldly object than they could impute to his miracles.

It is needless to multiply instances. These are sufficient to show that at the commencement of the mission of Jesus, the objections of his enemies were not founded on any doubts of his supernatural power, but on their preconceived opinion of the immutable nature not only of the Law, but of all the observances which had been connected with it; and on their determination therefore to listen to no voice which should not chime in with their prejudices.

Another purpose for which these instances are adduced is, that by comparing them with others and with the discourses of the Prophet, the scope and aim of his mission and its connexion with the former dispensation may be ascertained.

The mission of Jesus was from its commencement different from that of John, not only in its superiority of character and design, but in the mode in which it was exercised;—austerity was the characteristic of John's; freedom and mildness of that of Jesus. The Baptist came to purify men for the reception of the new faith; the new faith brought purification with itself, with the peace and hope which it offered, and with the relaxation of (not legal but superstitious) observances which it authorized for the sake of promoting the spontaneous obedience of the heart and understanding. John subsisted on rude fare in the desert, while the first miracle of Jesus had for its object the promotion of innocent festivity. The disciples of John

followed the example of the Pharisees in fasting much and often; while the disciples of Jesus fasted not. The objections of the enemies of each were of an opposite character: John being despised as a madman on account of the austerity and singularity of his mode of life; and Jesus being abhorred as addicted to too great freedom of living in promiscuous society. In one respect, however, there was a remarkable agreement between them. Neither of them intimated any design of adding to the weight of the ritual obligations of their people, nor offered any expectation that the kingdom of God, which was nigh, should either draw tighter the bonds of the Law to those who were under the yoke, or that it should offer new institutions correspondent with the old. It was not the office of John to declare anything of the nature of the new kingdom, as he was sent only to announce its approach; but the followers of Jesus looked anxiously and perpetually for those new impositions by which they supposed the consummation of their system must be effected. There was much in his conduct to perplex such expectants; and yet more perhaps to confound the larger class, whose hopes were fixed on him as the Prince of the nation, the warrior and legislator who was to deliver them from the power of the Romans, and to establish their state in preeminent might and grandeur. In one of these characters was he regarded by all who admitted his Divine credentials. With no one such character did his actions correspond; and at length the discourses he delivered on the Mount and by the lake of Galilee, proved that the objects of his mission were far different from any which had yet been imagined.

In that collection of his discourses which, as related by Matthew, is called the Sermon on the Mount, we find instructions addressed to various classes of hearers, calculated to dispel their various prepossessions and to communicate a more accurate idea of the purposes of his mission than the people could previously have obtained. He addressed his countrymen as "the light of the world," on which the eyes of all people

were fixed;—as “the salt of the earth,” by which the whole race of men must be purified; and this distinction he urged as a reason, not for national pride and desire of dominion, but for peculiar purity of heart and eminence in piety. Jesus bore testimony to the purpose for which the Hebrew nation was separated from others when he said, “Ye are the light of the world; but men do not light a lamp and put it under a measure, but on a stand; and it shineth to all them that are in the house. In like manner let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Heavenly Father.” The nature of these “good works” is the subject which it is the aim of these discourses chiefly to illustrate. Every one who listened believed that in the person of the Teacher he beheld the Prince who was to restore the kingdom to Israel; and the virtues to which they expected to be exhorted were, therefore, zeal and courage in carrying the name of the Supreme into other lands; obedience to their Prince; devotion to the cause of the nation; and, possibly, moderation in the use and enjoyment of victory. They probably thought on Joshua, on Gideon, on Maccabæus, and hoped now to be led forth with a brighter glory and by a stronger arm; they remembered that on the summit of Tabor, where they now stood, Barak had assembled his hosts before he went out against Sisera; they looked afar where the walls of Jericho arose on the horizon before they fell at the blast of the trumpets of Israel; they gazed on their teacher, thinking within themselves that a greater than the greatest of their nation was with them there. And what did he utter in answer to these thoughts? He replied by a blessing on the lovers of peace. He declared that the kingdom of heaven was for those who endured rather than resisted evil; for those who made peace, rather than urged on to war; for the meek and mourners, rather than the proud and prosperous; for those who sought to make themselves pure, rather than those who loved wealth and glory: he taught that suffering for conscience’ sake was to be preferred to the praise of men, and that enemies should be regarded with love rather



than with desires of revenge. Those who sought glory wondered to hear him condemn the pursuit of honour among men; those who hoped to bring back treasures from their conquests, to hear that the desire of wealth is incompatible with the service of God. The entire strain of his discourse was opposite to their habits of feeling and acting, inconsistent with their expectations, and very mortifying to their hopes. The Teacher reproved with severity the practices which subsisted generally among the rulers and teachers of the people, many of whom were present to hear, if they did not choose to appropriate his rebukes, when he censured all whose charity or whose devotion was ostentatious. The practices of offering private prayer in public, of making a parade of fasting and almsgiving, and, yet more emphatically, the habit of judging and censuring the conduct of others, (all of which were practices prevalent among the spiritual guides of the people,) were condemned by Jesus, at the risk, or rather with the certainty, of provoking their enmity, and of subjecting himself henceforth to their bitter opposition.

The kingdom of God which was approaching was therefore a spiritual kingdom. He who preached it, and whose preaching was confirmed from above by a multitude of miracles, declared that it was not of this world, that it had no relation to common objects of earthly desire, but to that world within, that busy region of the heart whence arises the peace or woe of every man.

The special education of your nation, the spiritual discipline which had been carried on through so many stages, and advanced by so great a variety of means, was now to be completed by a final dispensation, which, however unlike the preceding, was perfectly and evidently consistent with it.

"Think not that I am come," said Jesus, "to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfill them. Nothing shall pass from the Law till all be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of its least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the



least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall perform and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Every act and every discourse of the new prophet confirmed these declarations. He obeyed, not the requisitions which self-righteous and disputations men had added to the Law, but all the commandments and ordinances which the Eternal had given. He set aside no word of all which the Eternal had spoken; but, pointing out the purposes for which the holy Law was given, and explaining the modes in which the prophecies had been and were to be fulfilled, he convinced all true witnesses of his mission that by him was indeed sent that consummation which had been so long expected.

The promise, however, was only that the Law should not pass away *till all was fulfilled*, and that it was not the office of Jesus himself to abolish it. That he was sent to prepare the way for its abolition and to provide substitutes for its provisions, he gave repeated intimations in the course of his mission; intimations which were not fully understood till explained and confirmed by subsequent events. He came to exhibit the spiritual objects of the former dispensation; to show how the Law had been made a means of informing the people respecting the character and providence of God, and their duty to him; to prove that all external ordinances were subservient to these purposes; and that all such ordinances are useless except in so far as they answer these purposes. He came to offer a higher system of morals, enforced by higher sanctions, which, when fully established, should render the institutions of Judaism unnecessary and even unfit for the advanced state of its subjects, and which should therefore at length occasion its abolition.—Let us see how these purposes were gradually unfolded by the circumstances which attended and succeeded the mission of Jesus.

At the first Passover which Jesus attended after his baptism, he wrought many miracles, so as to fix the attention of the people upon him and to gain many followers. Among those

who believed on him for the sake of his miracles, but who knew not yet the nature of his mission, was Nicodemus, a man in authority. His anxiety to learn of the new teacher brought him to Jesus; but his worldly caution made him choose the night for the time of their conference. This man may be taken as an instance of the utter disinclination or inability of the Hebrew rulers of that age to see further than the letter of their Law, and the outward forms of their institutions. The figurative language which was adopted by Jesus during the conference was such as was constantly in use among them, so that the misapprehensions of Nicodemus related to the meaning of what was said, and not to the mode of expression alone; and merited the reproof, "Art thou a teacher in Israel, and knowest not these things?"

The scope of the discourse was to declare that those who would have part in the new dispensation must go through a remarkable spiritual change; must be baptized into the new faith, and adopt that faith with the spirit in a more perfect manner than they had obeyed the former dispensation by outward ordinances. The new prophet was declared to have brought a purer light into the world, which all whose deeds were pure would desire to approach; while those who rejected this purer light would prove that their hearts were not right with God, and would suffer by refusing the glad-tidings now brought. Whether these intimations of the spiritual nature of these glad-tidings were understood by Nicodemus is not recorded; all that we hear further of him being that he afterwards protested against Jesus being condemned without a hearing, and that he assisted in embalming the body on the evening of the crucifixion.

A short time afterwards, when the Prophet was passing through Samaria on his way to Galilee, he sat down to rest himself on a well near Sychar. While no one was more exemplary in fulfilling the law, no one was ever so free from all the prejudices of his countrymen; and in a heart so filled with benevolence as his, there was no room for that contempt and

hatred of the Samaritans which were felt by all other Israelites—his own followers not excepted. He therefore entered into a friendly conversation with a woman of Sychar who came to the well for water. When he had fixed her attention by his discourse, and given her cause to suppose him more than a common teacher, she immediately adverted to the two subjects of the deepest interest to her people,—the expectation of a Messiah; and the long-agitated question between themselves and your nation, whether the Supreme ought to be worshiped at Jerusalem or on the Mount Gerizim. The reply to the last question contains perhaps a more clear intimation of the spirit of his mission, of the nature of the great change for which he came to prepare the way, than any other particular portion of his instructions on record. It was prophetic of the time when a more spiritual worship should take the place of the ancient ritual of your nation; when every heart should become a sanctuary, and the homage of all be equal in the favour of Jehovah. “Woman,” said Jesus, “believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall worship the Father neither on this mountain nor at Jerusalem. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for indeed the Father seeketh such worshipers of him. God is a spirit, and the worshipers of him ought to worship him in spirit and in truth\*.”

When not one stone was left upon another of the beautiful temple your fathers built; when the voice of the Eternal was heard in other lands, and his signs were seen among the gentiles, it was remembered with awe, how the Prophet had declared that God should be sought in the heart of every man, rather than on the mountain or in the temple.

Because the people of your nation had lost sight of the objects of the former dispensation in a too exclusive attention to its outward services, they were called by Jesus “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” To these rather than the

\* John iv. 21. 23. 24.

Samaritans and Gentiles he commanded the seventy disciples to bear the tidings of his kingdom. On the Scribes and Pharisees he laid the blame of having misled them by adding the traditions of men to the law of Jehovah; and yet more by displaying in their lives vices which were absolutely inconsistent with a faithful understanding and practice of the Law.

"The Scribes and Pharisees," said Jesus, "sit in the seat of Moses; all things therefore whatsoever they command you to observe, observe and do; but do not according to their works; for they say, and do not." In the exposure which follows of their habitual attention to the appearance of sanctity while the holiness of the heart was neglected, we are clearly informed that the greatest sin of your people was that they had forgotten the spiritual purposes of their institutions; and their greatest need to be brought back to the discernment of these purposes. All who believed in Jesus were thus brought back; while those who rejected him found at length that their perseverance in the external righteousness which they valued so highly, led them on to the destruction of their temporal state and the long postponement of their national hope. They perceived that in his parable of the householder who planted a vineyard, and in his subsequent observations (now to be found in the 21st chapter of the Gospel by Matthew,) the teacher had them in view. Would that they had seen the perfect justice of the application in time to avoid the realization of its prophetic close!

The mode in which higher morals and a degree of spirituality till now unconceived were taught, affords another illustration of the progressive nature of the Divine dispensations, and of their proportion to the advancement of the people to whom they were offered. In the earlier stages of their progress, it would have been useless (as it was before observed,) to propose principles of moral conduct which the people could neither understand nor apply. The application was therefore made for them, and they were furnished with a voluminous body of laws, by which their practice of piety, justice and charity in a great many instances was secured. Their long discipline fitted them for

something far more comprehensive and perfect than this, by the time that the completion of their system was at hand: and Jesus was appointed to introduce, not only a more enlarged system of morals, but to offer it in a new and better form. He did not, therefore, frame a code of moral laws; nor did he propose abstract principles. In the first case, he would have rather set back the national mind than have advanced it, by detaining it still at the specific applications of the principles from the recognition of the principles themselves. In the latter case, he would have hindered the permanent and extensive influence of the principles, by offering them in a form which could not be widely intelligible at the time, and which could not be thenceforward enlarged in proportion as the progress of mind required their development. The only conceivable method by which these various purposes could be answered, the only conceivable method by which the spiritual wants of all the people could be then supplied, and by which the growing capabilities of the race could be for ever satisfied, and their progress for ever stimulated, was by embodying these principles in a form which should be universally intelligible and ever expanding. This only conceivable method was adopted in the new dispensation, by giving its principles of doctrine and morals in the form of facts. These facts once established, are sure ground on which the race may proceed for ever in deducing the principles of their belief and of their conduct; while in every instance since the world began, where instruction has been extensively offered in any other mode, some obstacle has arisen fatal to a long and steady progress. In every instance where specific directions only have been given, the obedience has been blind and unsteady, like that of a child who, after strictly observing a command, will ignorantly violate the spirit of the precept on the very next occasion of spontaneous action. In every instance where moral teachers have offered principles in an abstract form, with however great immediate advantage, it has been found that their propositions could not be very extensively understood: and that in a sub-

sequent age they were too narrow and too peculiar for the changed circumstances or improved capabilities of the learners. No important evidence of this is found in the additions which have from age to age been made by the doctors of your nation to the moral law of Moses, and in the increasing tendency observable in you for many centuries past, and especially of late, to draw inferences and deduce principles from the records of your institutions, in the same manner that Christians infer and deduce from the facts of their Gospel. To us, it of course appears that our deductions are more just, our inferences more valuable than yours, because our facts were designed to undergo the process, while your institutions were given with no such ulterior purpose, and are in fact made to suffer perversion when thus used. We find several illustrations of this in that part of the Jew's Catechism which treats of Morals, and whose correctness is not so universally allowed by you as to make us hesitate in adverting to our objections to it.

This portion of the Catechism presents to us an attempt to frame a precise system of morals, a table of virtues and vices the original of which is nowhere to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the advantage, correctness, and beauty of which have not been attested by experience. The whole duty of man is declared to be comprehended in faith, hope, and love. Faith is originated by an inference of the possibility of all things from the fact that the world was created. Hope is a Divine gift or endowment, from which spring piety and obedience. Love is also a Divine gift or endowment, from which also spring piety and obedience to God and charity to man: this love also comprehends the whole duty of man, since on it depends the whole Law, and from it are derived the six hundred and thirteen precepts. The seed of sin is threefold: obstinacy or wilfulness, imprudence, and rebellion; imprudence being of two kinds, one ignorant, the other rash. The latter involves man in the seven abominable vices, or bodies of the tree of perverseness: sloth, pride, gluttony, lust, anger,

covetousness, and envy; which in their turn lead to six abominable impieties: presumptuous hope, distrust of God, resistance to the truth, spiritual envy, the exercise of private judgement, and finally, a resolution against repentance. There are, further, four primary mischiefs: murder, adultery, oppression, and fraud. The three parts of the soul are, understanding, will, and memory; but the three gifts on which the lively apprehension of truth depends are, faith, hope, and love.

Such is the moral system taught in the Jew's Catechism. It can scarcely be necessary to point out the repetition of the same principles under different names, the division of the same principle into many parts, the comprehension of widely different things under the same head, and especially the extraordinary classification of vices which it involves. To whatever extent this Catechism may be used among you, it must be evident to many of you that, however valuable it may have been in former days, it is unsuited to learners of the present age. The same thing is observable of all *systems* framed by the Christians of the early ages. In neither case do we object to the process of inference; but we lament that the earlier Christians should have wished to make their systems obligatory on a succeeding age; and that your people should not have found access to that precious repository of facts to which your powers of deduction would have been more correctly and beneficially applied.

It is pretty generally agreed among Christians, that no system of morals embodied in an unchanging form was offered by the Gospel, because it is only necessary to examine the Scriptures to ascertain the fact. Nothing is easier than to extract from the Old Testament, in Scripture language, a complete system of morals; and nothing is more impossible than to do the same thing with the New.

The eternal, immutable principles of morals are concentrated in the character of the prophet who came to direct our attention to them; and from a contemplation of this character, in its union of all virtues and graces, and in its freedom from



all sins and weaknesses, may more be learned than from all moral systems of human arrangement that have ever been promulgated. It is wiser to refer to the records of the life of Jesus than to enter upon any analysis of his character, which is presented for all to contemplate and interpret for themselves. It is now referred to as an answer to the question you are no doubt ready to propose, 'What and where is the moral system of Christians?'

Many and invaluable helps are afforded to the work of deducing moral principles from the character of Christ, in the discourses which he uttered, and the numberless illustrations he gave of fundamental moral truths. But all these are as well calculated as his own character to be universally and permanently understood and improved upon. We find very few abstract propositions; but a multitude of parables, allusions to natural objects which are found everywhere, improvements of trivial occurrences to which all are liable, and appeals to affections universally subsisting and always enduring. While the records of the Gospel contain so much that is Jewish as to prove their genuineness, and so clear a relation to the preceding dispensation as to identify this Gospel with the consummation which was so anxiously looked for, all its teachings are based on facts of universal interest, and illustrated by permanent analogies. How is it possible to conceive a stronger evidence of the great truth we have had in view throughout, that the spiritual advancement of the whole race of mankind was the object of the peculiar discipline of your nation?

The same remarks are applicable to the Doctrine of the new dispensation, though this application has been made with far more unwillingness by Christians in all ages than the best friends of humanity could wish. Innumerable evils have sprung, and still spring, from the notion that a system of doctrines is especially presented in the Gospel records. From this erroneous conception have arisen all the follies and crimes with which Christians have in every age been justly reproached by your nation. From it have proceeded preposterous creeds,



intolerant councils, persecuting rulers, abject slaves. From it have sprung cruelty, ignominy, perjury, torture and murder. "Why," you justly ask, "if a number of doctrines were expressly revealed, are they not universally acknowledged by Christians? If the parts of your system are clearly presented, where is the difficulty of putting them together? How is it that the divisions which agitate Christendom were never heard of in the Jewish state, where, whatever other dissensions might arise, disputes about religious doctrine were unknown?" The reason of all this is the weakness and prejudices which have been perpetuated from the times of the first corruption of Christianity, by which men open the Scriptures with false expectations, looking for what is not there, and then blaming others for not adopting that which there is no authority for believing. When Christians in general can so far dismiss their prejudices as to make the easy discovery of what it is which Christianity requires them to believe, its privileges will be duly appreciated by them, and its nature and design better understood by yourselves, than it is possible they should have been hitherto. Then it will be discovered that you have been right in steadily rejecting doctrines which you have been taught to regard as Christianity; and you may perhaps acknowledge that you have been too hasty in mixing up its corruptions and abuses with its truths, and in rejecting the whole without an adequate understanding of its claims.

It has been seen that the truths of the absolute Unity of God, and of his Moral government, were the great doctrines revealed by the Mosaic dispensation. The sanctions of the moral law were temporal rewards and punishments. The only doctrine taught by the new dispensation is a future life of retribution; and its purpose is to be a sanction to the higher moral system introduced by Jesus. All other doctrines, admitted, supposed, or incidentally taught in the Gospel, however true, however important, form no part of the Gospel: they were, or might have been, developed by natural means. The doctrine of a future life, though conceived in a former age, was not fully, clearly, unquestionably promised by God till

Jesus brought the message from him: and that this doctrine might appear fully, clearly and unquestionably true to men of all countries, in all ages, it was made known by fact.

The doctrine of a life after death had been admitted in different forms among the different nations with whom your people had had intercourse. Their notions of the state in which the departed should dwell were as various as their mythologies; and it is now hard to say which of their heavens appears the most joyless and puerile, which of their hells the most absurd and barbarous, in comparison with those hopes and fears which a better faith has long enabled Israelites and Christians to entertain. The mode in which life was continued or renewed after the close of earthly scenes was a question ever agitated, never decided; but the most common belief was, that the soul, whose connexion with the body was merely arbitrary, was released from its prison at the moment of death, and that the body perished for ever. Many, however, being unable to obtain any evidences of this, and seeing the supposition surrounded with insuperable difficulties, doubted whether the soul were immortal, and presently had a very loose faith in a future life of any kind. None but your nation had the idea of a state of proper retribution; and among yourselves, the Sadducees disbelieved on account of the apparent physical impossibilities of the case, perpetually inquiring with what body the dead should appear: while, among other sects, some reasoned, many asserted, many believed, and many continued to question mournfully within themselves, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Among all these varieties of thought and speculation, there was not one on earth who *knew* that the dead could or should live again. None had ever penetrated the cloud which rested on the confines of human life; and since none who entered it returned to converse with men, none could *know* whether a void or a better country lay beyond. To give this *knowledge*, to afford such a certainty as no philosophical speculations could hereafter invalidate, Jesus was sent into the world; and the mode in which he established this certainty, made it as stable as the human mind itself.

The first thing necessary was to show the *possibility* of a life after death, so as to sweep away all philosophical objections. This was done, not by one miracle, but by a series of miracles, each different from the rest in the preparatory circumstances, and each more astonishing to the ignorance of the witnesses than the last. Soon after the commencement of his mission in Galilee, Jesus raised to life and health the young daughter of Jairus, the ruler of a synagogue: the child had but just expired, but was so certainly dead that the mourners derided the prophet when he intimated that she should be restored. The witnesses of this miracle were the father and mother of the child, and the three disciples who were present at each similar exertion of power.—During this abode in Galilee, he drew near the town of Nain, being followed by his disciples and a great multitude of people. While approaching, he saw a funeral train issuing from the gate of the city, to convey to the sepulchre the body of a young man, the only son of a widowed mother: he must of course have been dead some hours;—nevertheless the bodily organs resumed their functions instantly at the command of God, given by the mouth of the compassionate Jesus. “He that had been dead sat up, and began to speak.” No wonder that while the mother and son were renewing a communion which had been apparently closed for ever in this world, the multitudes present glorified God, saying, “A great prophet is risen up among us. God hath regarded his people!”—Many months afterwards, when the mission of Jesus had been published to the whole nation, and when he had incurred the enmity of many at Jerusalem by the strain of his preaching in the temple, he heard, when dwelling on the other side of Jordan, that Lazarus his friend, and the friend of his disciples, was sick and likely to die. A more striking preparation was made for this miracle than for any preceding one, in proportion as its importance was greater. Jesus knew that Lazarus was dead, as he proved by an intimation to his disciples, which they afterwards saw to be prophetic. “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” he said,

"and I go that I may awake him." He had delayed for two days setting out for Jerusalem, and informing his disciples of his intention to do so; no doubt in order to make the act he was about to perform more striking, more evidently "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified by it." When he arrived at Bethany, where the mourning sisters of Lazarus dwelt, his disciples found (what Jesus already knew,) that Lazarus had been four days in the sepulchre. Yet here as instantaneously as in the former cases, where death had wrought little change in the bodily organs, were the functions of life restored. From the cold and darkness of the sepulchre, Lazarus came forth, the life-blood flowing in a healthful current, the senses open once more to material sights and sounds, and no token remaining of death but the grave-clothes, which were presently cast aside.

These three miracles, differing from each other in magnitude and importance (if these terms may be applied to events too great to be measured by any scale of relative terms), formed a grand and appropriate preparation for the last and mightiest, which was to be wrought by God without the intervention of human agency. But there was preparation of another kind. The three disciples, Peter, James, and John, who had witnessed the series of resurrections just adverted to, saw also, when apart on a mountain with Jesus, the two prophets of the former dispensation whose departure had been mysterious, and had probably initiated the nation in the conception of a future life. Moses and Elijah were seen by these three disciples to attend while Jesus was invested with visible glory, and again sanctified by an audible testimony from the Eternal himself. They thus saw that those lived who had been dead for many ages, and the conception of a future state must have been further exalted by this experience than by any assurance from any teacher, however firmly believed.

The doctrine thus intimated to the people through their own experience, was illustrated by the discourse of Jesus. He made frequent allusions to a life beyond the grave, by way

of sanction to his spiritual instructions, and a clear reference to it when questioned by those who disbelieved the doctrine. The puerility of the doubts of the Sadducees is proved by their supposing that if there were a future state, their institutions must be carried forward into it, and the relations only applicable to the present life be there perpetuated. Jesus replied, that there should there be neither marrying nor giving in marriage; "nor indeed can they die any more: for they are like the angels and sons of God."

At length the time arrived when the evidence of this great doctrine became complete, by the resurrection of him who was commissioned to reveal it by what he did, by what he taught, and by what he underwent. In this case, the prophetic intimations had been numerous, and though obscure when delivered, so clear when fulfilled as to be unquestionable. Those who heard these intimations, those who beheld him expire on the cross, those who embalmed and laid the body in the sepulchre, and saw how the grave was sealed and watched, and who afterwards beheld the form of Jesus during the forty days that he went to and fro among his followers, and witnessed his ascension, could no longer doubt, not only that the dead could be restored to life, but that this second life might be an immortal one. The three who had seen Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration had received a proof of this before; but not so striking a conviction of the nature and purposes of a future life as they now, in common with a multitude of believers, were privileged to entertain, through a comparison of the teachings of Jesus with the stupendous fact of his resurrection from the dead. They saw that the sufferings of their Master being ended and his obedience perfected, the time of recompense had arrived; and that in his person, as well as by his teachings, the future state was shown to be one of retribution. The higher sanctions were now indissolubly connected with the higher spiritual system; and the scheme was to them, as Israelites, complete, though not yet fully perceived by them to be so.

The glad-tidings of the spiritual kingdom had as yet been preached only to the Hebrews; and those who received them never dreamed of their extension to less favoured nations. But the purposes of the separation of your people being now fulfilled, the time approached when all things were to be *restored* to their original state of equality. The Hebrews having been taught the essential truth of a Divine Moral government, and been made an exemplification of this truth in the eyes of other nations, were now to be required to relinquish the individuality of their national character, and to unite with their fellow-men at large in subjection to the Gospel. This was not fully understood by the followers of Jesus themselves till the Gentiles were brought into communion with them by the express command of God, testified by a miracle.

During the life of Jesus, the Gentiles had no part in the new dispensation, further than that the faith and humility of one Canaanitish woman were rewarded by the miraculous restoration of her child\*. For fifteen years subsequent to the death of Jesus, the multitudes who were converted to the new faith were all Israelites; its disciples were found in all the towns and villages of Judea. The name of Jesus was believed on by the wayfarers of the desert, by those who heard the word in their cities, by many rulers of the synagogues, and by many priests who served the altar of the temple; yet all these converts adhered to the Law of Moses. The first covenant was not wholly fulfilled, for the second was not fully understood and established. Those who received the second were distinguished from those who rejected it, not only by the superiority of their faith and their hopes, but by the gifts of miraculous power which had been conferred from above. The superintendence of Jesus, their spiritual King, over the kingdom of which he had said so much, was evinced by the power which his disciples exercised in his name. They spoke in many languages, so that the Israelites of various countries, who came up to Jerusalem to the

\* Matth. xv.

feasts, heard the Gospel, each in the tongue of the land where he dwelt. They had power to heal the sick and raise the dead, and were led forth by the hand of God from prison. Your nation was thus divided into two parties,—that which received the Messiah, and that which rejected him; while as yet the rest of the world was unconcerned in the dispensation, and the designed universality of the Gospel was still unrecognised by even its most zealous and faithful subjects.

At length, however, the final purposes of the Supreme were made manifest, in that remarkable series of events by which the Gentiles were brought under the new dispensation. Paul of Tarsus, a learned Israelite, who had been for years a furious persecutor of the believers in Jesus, was visited by the presence of Jesus himself under circumstances peculiarly awful; and as soon as he was fully informed respecting the new faith he was thus brought to embrace, received his commission to be an Apostle of the Gentiles; a commission which he fulfilled by bearing the Gospel into many strange lands, and bringing into the bonds of brotherhood Jew and Greek, philosopher and barbarian, the ignorant and the wise, the bond and the free. Peter, who was as strongly wedded to the institutions of Moses as ever Hebrew was, obeyed a call from God to baptize into the new faith a Roman centurion and his household, who were worshipers of the true God, and therefore prepared to receive his greatest Prophet. In this case, the purpose of God was testified to Peter and his Jewish companions in a manner which they could not misunderstand or resist. The miraculous gifts of the Spirit were conferred on the centurion and his household previous to baptism; so that the Apostle gladly acknowledged them as brethren and equals, and hastened to report to his friends at Jerusalem that God had called the Gentiles into fellowship with the chosen people. This intelligence caused great astonishment at first; but as the same thing was henceforth done day by day, the Jewish believers soon learned to understand and rejoice that their best blessings were no longer of an exclusive nature, and that the glory of



Israel was, at the same time, to be a light to the Gentiles, and that in Jesus the seed of Abraham, all the families of the earth should be blessed.

While thus administering in the kingdom of their Prince, they remembered his frequent and impressive intimations that he should at length resign this kingdom to God. He had given warning that this period should be one of safety and peace to his followers, but of unparalleled woe to those who had rejected him. This period was still future when many of the Apostles resigned their lives for the new faith; but they ever pointed the attention of their converts to it, warning them to flee from the wrath to come, and exhorting them to save their brethren, if it were possible, from the destruction which was impending: all, however, did not depart before the long foretold judgement arrived. John lived to hear how the Romans had compassed about the city and the temple; how woe, such as had never before been heard of, had overwhelmed those who had rejected the new dispensation: how those who had been timely warned by Jesus had withdrawn in safety, while of the rest of the nation, some perished by fire, famine and the sword, and some were carried into captivity; and all who survived mourned in desolation of heart the destruction of their state and the dispersion of their nation. The scheme of revelation was now completed. There was no longer a sanctuary, and men henceforth were to worship neither on Gerizim nor at Jerusalem, but in the sanctuary of the Spirit. A better covenant had long been prepared to succeed that of circumcision; and the substitution was now to take place. The ritual law, which brought no spiritual perfection, was abrogated in favour of that purer law which was sanctioned by better hopes. The wall of partition between your nation and the world without was broken down, and the Gospel was offered for the common possession of all. This Gospel being essentially fitted to be permanent and universal in its influence, all inferior systems were annulled, the series of revelations was closed, miracles ceased, Jesus gave



up his kingdom, and the human race has since been governed, as it will continue to be governed, by Providence, as illustrated in ancient revelations, instead of any new special methods. However many may yet be ignorant of this revelation altogether, however some may misunderstand and others reject it, it is clear to those who observe and reason, that the Gospel of Jesus is destined to unite the whole race in perfect equality before him who conducts the education of his rational offspring, ordaining the mode, administering the means, and leading on the subjects of his discipline from utter darkness into marvellous light. The most important step in this progress was the abrogation of Judaism, when the nobler dispensation had grown out of it.

Those of your nation who rejected Jesus were thus (if we rightly interpret the Providence of God,) stopped in their spiritual progress by this rejection, as were those who attempted after the abolition of the Mosaic dispensation to unite the two systems.

The two systems were irreconcilable, though such an analogy was preserved in their modes of operation, and their tendency to the same point was so evident, that the identity of their origin was recognised by all unprejudiced observers. Both were the productions of the same wisdom, and their operation was superintended by the same benevolence; but some ignorantly endeavoured to hold the two systems in union, while others unhappily rejected the latest, and excluded themselves from the Messiah's kingdom.

As the new revelation was not appropriated to the peculiar people, but, on the contrary, was intended to abolish their peculiarity, it had a twofold character, and its administrator a double office. The Gospel was presented in one aspect to the Israelites, in another to mankind at large. For the sake of the former, it bore a particular, of the latter a universal character. To the one it was the glad-tidings of the kingdom; to the other the message of salvation from darkness and vice. To the one Jesus came as their King; to the other as the giver of spi-

ritual life. To the one he was the Messiah, to the other the Saviour. This distinction, this double character, as it was the consequence of the old institutions, was destined to disappear in their abolition. To the Hebrews who rejected the new dispensation, the Gospel was not glad-tidings, nor Jesus a King. By those who embraced it, the separation from the rest of their race, which had subsisted from their origin as a nation, was, as soon as Gentiles were united with them, found to be no longer necessary or practicable; and to them the Gospel appeared in its aspect of universality, and Jesus as a Saviour rather than as a King, as belonging to the whole world rather than to themselves. They saw that his office consisted in the introduction of a better system of religion than theirs; a system sent as a substitute for their own. All union between the believing and the unbelieving Israelites was therefore impossible. There could be no halting between two opinions. The advocates of the two systems were placed in direct opposition; and Jesus spoke truly when he said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

The systems are indeed as incompatible in their nature as unfitted by their form for a contemporaneous existence; and it is no more possible for a man to adhere to both, than for a pupil to attach himself to an elementary book while extending the application of the science it teaches to new objects. The Jewish law related to external obedience; the Christian made provision for the discipline of the heart. Infractions of the old law subjected the offender to death; but as no individual could have escaped the penalty by merit, a commutation of punishment was ordained, and sacrifices were accepted as an atonement. Infractions of the Christian law, which is spiritual in its nature and operation, can obtain pardon only by a spiritual act; and it was for the purpose of pointing out this distinction that the forerunner of the Messiah preached repentance to the Hebrews. Temporal rewards and punishments, near or remote, were the highest objects of hope and fear which ori-

ginal Judaism could present. Christianity not only revealed sublimer subjects of desire, but showed that lower objects might be regarded with feelings the very reverse of those which had hitherto been connected with them. It displayed the truth that temporal happiness may issue in evil, that the afflictions of life may prove to be blessings, and that they would no longer bear a strict proportion to the obedience either of a nation or of an individual; that, in short, they were abolished as sanctions. The distinguishing character of Judaism was its exclusiveness; of Christianity, its universality. The one appealed to feelings peculiar to the descendants of one man; the other to desires common to the race. The one was based on facts interesting to those only whose experience bore a reference to such facts; the other was founded on principles congenial to all hearts, in all regions, through all time. When therefore the Jewish disciples of Jesus had learned from the Gospel the object and destiny of the ritual law; when they had witnessed the overthrow of the institutions which rendered them a separate people; when they recognised the provisions which had been made for rendering the new dispensation universal,—they gradually dismissed from their minds their narrow notions of the national sovereignty of Jesus, and substituted for them a nobler attachment to him as a spiritual Saviour. Having first regarded the Gospel in the aspect which was adapted to their peculiar circumstances, their views became gradually enlarged till they embraced it in its universal character; and those who at first received the *glad-tidings of the kingdom*, were eager, in course of time, to exchange them for the *Gospel of life*. We may see, as they saw, that the scene of the Messiah's supremacy was in the hearts of the faithful among the chosen people; that his glory consisted in his preeminent endowments from on high, in his distinction as the beloved Son of God, in his appointment to the office of Saviour. His reign began with the exercise of his extraordinary powers, and closed when that exertion became no longer necessary; when the first covenant was ended by the destruction of the holy city and

temple, when signs and wonders ceased, and Christianity had spread sufficiently to make its way by natural means alone. We can see yet more; for events have shown how the promises of Jesus were fulfilled. According to his promise, he had been with his disciples to the end of the age in manifest interpositions of the Holy Spirit, in evident watchfulness over the interests of his Church, in personal administration of its government by communication with its appointed agents. When the essential truth of the new dispensation was completely engrafted on that of the old, when it had also struck root vigorously in a fresh soil, the hand which planted, grafted and watered, was withdrawn, and the charge was committed to the sunshine and dews of heaven. These natural influences have done their work. The Gospel has spread, and shall spread till it shall prevail; for, by the influential nature of the Divine doctrine and law, the universality of Christianity is secured. The facts which it displays are of general interest, and the media through which its instructions are conveyed are universally intelligible. Since all men die, the fact of the resurrection is of paramount importance to all. As the parental and fraternal relations subsist wherever man is placed, the parables of the prodigal son and the offending brother come home to the hearts of all. The wind blows, the field-flowers spring, the light from heaven shines around the abodes of men in every land; and the spiritualizing associations with which Jesus invested them may therefore immortalize their beauty in every heart. Not less universally intelligible will be the purposes of the Supreme in his providence towards the human race, as comprehensively intimated in the following prophetic parable of Jesus.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who made a marriage-feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage-feast: but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those that are invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; mine oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come to the marriage-

feast.' But they made light of it, and went their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise: and the rest took his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them. But when that king heard of it, he was angry; and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The marriage-feast is ready, but those who were called are not worthy. Go therefore into the branches of the ways, and as many as ye find call to the marriage-feast.' So those servants went out into the ways, and gathered together all as many as they found; and the marriage-feast was filled with guests."

### SECTION III.—*Four Questions of Orobio.*

HAVING now reviewed the course of Providence in its dealings with your nation, we can recognise the design of its separation from the rest of the world with a degree of assurance amounting to certainty. It appears that there was an original equality among all the people of the earth; that this equality was disturbed for the sake of advancing by peculiar methods the spiritual progress of one nation; that this nation was made an instructor of the rest of the world, by the peculiar manifestations it presented of a Divine Moral Government; that, on occasion of the completion of the scheme of Providence towards them, a great division took place in this nation,—one portion of it readily acquiescing in the intention of the Supreme that their peculiarity should be abolished, (not by casting them back among the Gentiles, but by raising the Gentiles to a participation of the crowning blessings conferred by Revelation,) and the other portion, refusing thus to acquiesce, and being therefore subject in themselves and their descendants to awful sufferings in the dissolution of their State, and to subsequent degradation and the manifold evils of hope deferred, uncheered by signs from the Almighty, and perplexed by the obscurity in which their fate is involved. Reasoning from the past, we may clearly discern what are further the designs of God

towards his offspring. If the latest revelation he gave be evidently adapted for a perpetual spread and development, it follows that this revelation must sooner or later be embraced universally; that it shall be conveyed to regions where it has not yet been heard of; that it shall at length approve itself to those who reject it through prejudice or mistake; and that it shall in time be clearly apprehended by those (and they are a multitude,) who receive it mixed up with corruptions which impair its value and veil its beauty.

As Christianity has ever been presented to your observation thus mixed up with its corruptions, it is not to be wondered at that its simplicity of truth has been unapparent to you, and that your objections to the system remain in full force. Those objections are indeed, for the most part, unanswerable; but then they relate, so far as they are unanswerable, to the corruptions of the Gospel, and not to the Gospel itself, which in its essence is nearly, if not absolutely, unknown among you. According to your idea of the Gospel, it declares Jesus not to be the son of David, a branch of the root of Jesse; it declares the Supreme to have imputed mortal sin to the whole race, and after thousands of years had elapsed, to have removed the evils of this imputed sin by imputing an overbalancing righteousness; it declares the future state to be not a state of proper retribution, but that its fate will depend on certain kinds and degrees of faith. These, and many other things, which have been offered to you as Christianity, are no more to be found in the Gospel than in the Law or the Prophets; and the most enlightened of your advocates, Orobio, did rightly in pressing for a reference to the origin of these doctrines. If his appeal had been candidly listened to, and fairly answered, by all who have attempted to get rid of his questions, the true source of the worst corruptions of Christianity might have been made known in many high places where those corruptions still prevail, and the countrymen of Orobio might now be rejoicing in new truths to which they have not yet found access. It is in entire accordance with our plan to refer to the four questions in which Orobio has concentrated

the strength of his objections to Christianity, since they relate to the designs of the Almighty in the scheme which we have been investigating.

It is only necessary to premise, that in all ages of the world God has communicated with man by various methods;—with the prophets of your nation, by a miraculous voice; with the people, by supernatural signs; and in an equal degree with all nations by the course of Providence, or what is frequently called the voice of Nature. A clear revelation of his will is afforded in those written records which have been formed in consequence of his peculiar communications with your prophets and sages; but the other indications of his will which are afforded by the course of events are no less clear and decisive than those which were given miraculously by visible and audible signs. The solution of our inquiries into His designs may therefore be gained with as much precision from the language of events as the language of men: with equal confidence, in as far as both are the appointed exponents of the Divine will; with greater confidence, in as much as the events constitute the revelation, while the sacred books are only the record of the revelation.

It is therefore of little importance whether our questions are answered in the language of Scripture, or by a reference to the events which are recorded in Scripture.—Orobio requires:—

I. *Ut assignetur locus aliquis, in quo Deus mandaverit, aut dixerit expresse, quod fides in Messiam est absolute necessaria ad salutem generis humani; adeo ut qui non crediderit damnandus esset.*

Such a condition is nowhere imposed, such a threat nowhere held forth.—It is easy to trace this mighty error to its source.—We have observed that the Gospel was presented in one aspect to the Israelites, and in another to the world at large, because the previous state of the Israelites was different from that of the world at large. They were under a special Divine law; a law so multifarious in its requisitions, that it was morally impossible to avoid its infraction; and so strict in its



penalties, that there was no escape from its condemnation in some point or other. The Gospel was presented to the Israelites as a mode of release from the burdens of their Law,—not by allowing moral laxity, but by substituting the spiritual penalty of repentance for the external penalties to which they had hitherto been subject. Freedom, external and spiritual, was offered them in connexion with the greater spiritual purity which Jesus enforced: the Gospel was declared to free them at once from the yoke of their ritual and the yoke of sin, by making their worship and obedience the worship and obedience of the heart alone, shown forth by spontaneous action. The reception of Jesus and his doctrine, therefore, *saved* his Hebrew disciples from the inexorable judgements of the Law: and those Hebrews who refused him and his doctrine, remained under the *condemnation* of the Law, and forfeited those blessings which its repeal would have brought them. Such was the occasional declaration of Jesus, and such was the principal theme of Paul in his Epistles; while both were filled with compassion for those of their countrymen who preferred the bondage of the Law to the freedom of the Gospel. In his Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle of the Gentiles describes at length and with great force the condition of the world at large before the Gospel was offered. He exhibits the nature of the Law, of which he was himself a subject; and after explaining the inexorable strictness of its requisitions and penalties, he adverts to the state of the Gentile world, and declares that their condition was as much worse than that of the Jews, as the bondage of ignorance and sin is more burdensome than the bondage of the old Law. He proceeds to show that their *salvation* from the grievous penalties, their *redemption* from the condemnation of guilt, is yet more a cause of thankfulness than the release of the Israelites. Nothing can appear more intelligible, nothing more just, than this reasoning, to those who understand to whom, and concerning whom, and for what purpose, it was written: but, unfortunately, these circumstances are not so generally understood as they might be; and the whole argument has been misinterpreted, in consequence of

the supposition that by the *salvation* referred to was meant the happiness of a future life, and by *condemnation* the punishments of a future life. The result of a careful investigation will be, a conviction that nowhere in the records of Revelation is the happiness or misery of a future life connected with belief of any kind: and the same result proves the first question of Orobio to be reasonable, and the doubts implied in it to be well-grounded. While, however, they shake a corrupt doctrine held by many Christians, they leave Christianity itself untouched.—He next requires:—

II. *Ut assignetur locus, in quo Deus dixerit, quod unicum medium ad salutem Israelis, et restitutionis in Divinam gratiam, est fides in Messiam jam adventum.*

In this question, as in the former, everything depends on the meaning of the word *salutem*. The everlasting happiness of any man or order of men is surely nowhere said to depend on faith in the Messiah. But if the Almighty promised the Messiah as his crowning gift to his people; if He declared by a voice from heaven that Jesus was that Messiah; if, according to his warnings, he afflicted those who rejected Jesus with long and grievous calamities,—it is clear that in the Gospel alone is his grace to be found, and that to receive the Gospel is to be restored to his favour. We refer to the whole scheme of Providence towards you, for proof that redemption from the yoke of the Law is appointed in the Gospel alone, and that in the Gospel is to be found the favour which God has dispensed through Jesus to your nation in common with every other under heaven. The time for *peculiar* favour, as we have seen, is past; not because less is given to you, but because more is offered to others. A boundless store awaits your acceptance in the last revelation which the Almighty has made or will make on earth.—The plain answer to Orobio's question therefore is, that your everlasting salvation is nowhere said to depend on belief of any kind. As for the rest, it merely amounts to this,—that you will not possess the grace of the Gospel as long as you reject it.

III. *Ut assignetur locus, in quo Deus dixerit, quod Israel propter infidelitatem in Messiam erat deperdendus, et abjiciendus in nationibus, ut non fit amplius Populus Dei, sed in æternum damnandus, donec Messiam adventum non crediderit.*

Our foregoing investigation leads to the conclusion that, because a portion of your people refused to acquiesce in an equality with other nations which God had ordained to be restored, they became inferior to other nations in honour and peace. Whether or not the Israelites received the Messiah, they were no longer to be called the People of God, since His peculiar covenant with them was fulfilled, and the purpose of their separation completed. Those therefore who believed in Jesus became speedily incorporated with the Gentile converts, while those who rejected him have been cast out among the nations; and if the voice of God speaking through Christ and the Prophets, as well as in the course of events, is to be believed, your restoration can only take place by your doing as the Christians of your nation have done,—relinquishing the antiquated covenant in which the Supreme no longer bears His part, and listening to the glad-tidings which await the acceptance of all men. That no nation or individual is threatened with eternal damnation for want of faith in Jesus, has been repeatedly declared already.

Nothing is more evident from the well-ascertained facts and the well-authenticated discourses narrated in the Gospel history, than that Jesus ascribed the approaching woes of his nation to their rejection of him; to their misinterpretation of the will of God towards them. He mourned over the lot of his enemies and of their city; he instructed his followers how to escape the fate of their infatuated countrymen; and, since the Christians did actually withdraw in safety before the siege of Jerusalem began, no further proof is necessary that the rejection of Jesus and his counsel was the cause of the miseries of that unhappy remnant of Israel. Mark the contrast which is pointed out by Jesus between those descendants of the patriarchs who accepted the *glad-tidings* of his kingdom, and those

unbelievers to whom he addressed himself. Mark how the Gentiles themselves are exalted above the unbelieving Hebrews, and determine whether this prophetic passage does not exhibit a remarkable coincidence with subsequent events:—  
 “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves removed out. And men shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall be guests in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last\*.”

Again:—“Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! because ye build the tombs of the Prophets, and adorn the sepulchres of the righteous ; and say, if we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the Prophets. Wherefore ye bear witness to yourselves that ye are the sons of those who slew the Prophets. Fill ye up therefore the measure of your fathers.”—“I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes : and some of them ye will kill and crucify ; and some of them ye will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city : so that upon you will come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zachariah, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, that all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! that killest the prophets, and stonest those that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not ! Behold, your habitation shall be left by you desolate†.”—These words were spoken while your city sat upon her hills as a throned queen, when there was peace within her walls and prosperity amidst her palaces. They were spoken,—not when Jesus had been cast out of the temple ; not when his body was subdued

\* Luke xiii. 28, 29.

† Matth. xxiii.

by scourging, and his spirit grieved by reviling and persecution, —but when a multitude of believers was around him, when his way had been strewn with branches of trees, and when the cry of the people had been, “Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord!” These words of Jesus were proved true. The wise men and scribes whom he sent forth were persecuted: Paul and Barnabas were scourged; Peter was crucified; James was cast from a pinnacle of the temple; while John lived to see how the blood of righteous men was required from the unbelieving portion of your people, when their habitation was at length left desolate.—This desolation still continues: but a better country lies before you, which many are entering from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south; which you will also enter gladly, and where your national sins and sorrows shall be remembered against you no more.

IV. *Tandem assignetur locus, in quo dixit Deus, omnia Legalia, præter moralia, fuisse umbram seu figuram futurorum in adventu Messia, et quod fere omnia quæ et in Divina Lege et in Prophetis fuere revelata MYSTICE et TROPOLOGICE explicare liceat, quantumvis sensus literalis omnino despiciatur.*

It would indeed be as difficult to find the place where God has permitted such a license as this to the imagination of man, as for the imagination to make out a perfect analogy between the institutions of Judaism and those of Christianity. Those institutions were so unlike each other, designed for such different purposes, offered to minds in so different a state, and constituted for so different a degree of extent and permanence, that nothing but error can be the result of supposing the one to be typical of the other. Error has been the result; error, which has overspread Christendom as a curse, which has hindered the remnant of Israel from entering into companionship with the redeemed portion of their people; error, which has defiled the purity of Christ's moral law, and overshadowed the glory of the Supreme. From this have arisen the dreams of imputed guilt and imputed righteousness,—dreams by which you

have ever wisely refused to be deluded. From this has arisen the pernicious notion of an arbitrary and mysterious signification in the death of Christ, which can only be understood by means of an arbitrary and mysterious gift of grace. From this has arisen the imposition of terms of salvation which are recognised neither by the understanding of man nor the laws of God. Your knowledge of the Almighty, your firm faith in his justice and in his impartial benevolence, lead you to reject these inconsistent and imaginative doctrines, and the false systems of interpretation from which they spring, and therefore fit you for a more correct understanding of the Gospel (when once its evidences are admitted,) than is entertained by a multitude who bear the name of Christ. Some of the errors of this multitude are the same which have been perpetuated from a very early age, and which arose from the intermixture of the Oriental mystical philosophy with the Gospel. Others have from time to time arisen from a misunderstanding of the purpose and mode in which the Apostle Paul and others recommended the Gospel to the consideration of your nation and of the Gentiles. The ignominious death of Christ was ever a difficulty with the men of that time. It was, as Paul declared, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;" the one being unwilling to believe that the Prince of Israel could suffer the death of a malefactor; and the other being disposed to scoff at a faith, whose founder had died under such degradation. The temptation was great, and to many who foresaw not the consequences it proved irresistible, to conciliate the attention of polite heathens by mysticizing, in their method, upon plain facts; by philosophizing, embellishing, and accommodating; till the obnoxious facts assumed a new appearance, and an arbitrary union was effected between the vain conceits of man and the imperishable truth of God. This was done, not by Apostles or original disciples, but by converts from among the Gnostics, who fitted their doctrine of *emanations* to the Christian system; intimating that the body of Christ was tenanted by a superior spirit,—an emanation from God,—and thus at-

tempting to get rid of the reproach of the cross. To remove this stumbling-block from the Israelites a different method was pursued ; advantage being taken, at first through a mistaken intention, and afterwards through a mistaken conviction, of the writings of Paul, and of that Epistle to your nation which has been generally attributed to him. It has been already observed, that his arguments on the comparative states of the converted and unconverted Hebrews and Gentiles of his time have been ignorantly and unwarrantably applied to the conditions of a future state ; and a similar misapplication of his arguments has been made in other instances. The epistle addressed to the Hebrews has been treated in the same manner. Paul was learned in all the learning of the Pharisees ; his imagination was vivid, and possessed with the imagery most natural to one who had studied the Law from his youth up, and he was devotedly attached to the institutions of his nation. His writings therefore abound in allusions to the events and persons of your history, in analogies between old and new institutions, in illustrations of what is strange by reference to that which is familiar. All this is natural ; and the beauty of Paul's writings is much increased by it in the eyes of those who understand Judaism ; while those who do not, find many things which are hard to be understood, and from which a mystical signification is therefore extracted. No wonder that you who are familiar with the stores whence he drew his imagery should refuse to admit its supposed mystical import. You are as fully justified in doing so, as you would be in rejecting the supposition that the statesmen of Greece and Rome were truly types of the statesmen of the present day because they have been connected in the classical allusions of eminent writers. The same remarks apply to the Epistle to the Hebrews, whoever might be its author. The style and argument of this Epistle were alike adapted to the purpose of conciliating the interest of Israelitish readers. The then present condition of the converted and unconverted Hebrews, the mission, death, and doctrine of Christ, and the appointed destination of the Gospel, are illustrated in every possible way



by imagery which was familiar and clear to the designed readers of the Epistles. But since no imagination can frame these allegories, references, and analogies into a consistent system; since the figures are perpetually shifted, and the imagery utterly irreconcilable in its different parts,—it is clear that no typical system was meant to be shown forth by the writer, or could have been supposed by his best informed, that is by his Hebrew readers. No one analogy holds throughout; and those which relate to the death of Christ are above all various; as he is represented sometimes as the sacrifice offered, sometimes as the priest who offered sacrifice, sometimes as the high-priest who entered the Holy of Holies; and again, as the veil of the sanctuary; and again, as the successor of Moses offering a second and better covenant. But it is useless to point out this delusion—of a typical mode of interpretation—to you, who never have been and never will be deluded by it.

The true nature of the connexion between the two dispensations has been already pointed out: namely, no mystical arbitrary connexion, but the connexion of the beginning of a scheme with the end, of the manifestation of a plan with its promised consummation. This closest possible connexion—that of absolute unity—can only be obscured by the embellishments of man's imagination; and this obscuration is the cause of the hitherto very imperfect recognition of the two dispensations as one.

Thus then do you perceive it to be acknowledged by Christians that the questions of Oratio are reasonable, and the doubts implied in them well grounded, since they all relate to the corruptions of Christianity. Examine for yourselves whether they touch Christianity itself; whether they call in question the design of God to complete the spiritual education of the whole race by a teacher sprung from your nation; whether they impeach the claims of Jesus the son of David to be your Messiah; whether they obscure the glory which we perceive in the spiritual nature of his kingdom; whether they overthrow the evidence of his resurrection, the truth of his

doctrine, or the rectitude of the moral system of which that doctrine was the sanction.

Orobio, while asking these questions, might consistently have believed that Jesus was the Messiah, that he died and was raised from the dead; testifying that there is a future life, and that that life is a state of proper retribution; that is, —Orobio, while asking these questions, might have been a Christian.

#### SECTION IV.—*Prophecy. The Prophecies of the New Dispensation.*

It is evident that a different species of testimony to the truth of Christ's pretensions was required by the different classes of people to whom his Gospel was made known,—a difference which subsists in some degree to this day. To the Gentiles, one miracle,—one unquestionable manifestation of Divine power,—was sufficient to prove the Divine authority of him who wrought the miracle: and to us, being Gentiles, satisfactory testimony to any one of the miracles of Jesus is, in like manner, sufficient to command our belief. The same amount of evidence was also enough for those classes of your people which at first furnished the greatest number of disciples to Jesus. The humble, the simple-minded, who were little versed in the intricacies of Rabbinical learning, thought the evidence of their own senses superior to any derived evidence whatsoever; and witnessing deeds of Divine power done by a man, they naturally and firmly believed that Divine power wrought through this man. But the evidence of miracles was not sufficient for those who sat in Moses' seat, or for such of their disciples as were, like them, wedded more to the Law than to truth in the abstract. To them the miracles of Jesus, however numerous, however well attested, and whatever else they might prove, failed to prove his claim to supersede Moses; since Moses also wrought miracles, not more numerous perhaps, but certainly

more splendid. Thus far their opposition is not to be wondered at; and had the claims of Jesus been authenticated by the works of his hands alone, it could not have been expected of the Jewish teachers to acknowledge his right to offer a substitute for the Mosaic institutions. The claims of Moses and of Jesus, if each reposed on miracles alone, and at the same time appeared in absolute opposition, could be no otherwise decided than by the comparative splendour of their miracles: and here, during the lifetime of Jesus, Moses had undoubtedly the most weighty claim. If Jesus had, in three instances, restored the dead to life, Moses had, by stretching his hand towards heaven, brought plague and famine over all the land of Egypt, and death into every house. If Jesus had been seen to tread the waves at midnight, Moses had led the multitudes of his people through the sea as on dry land. If the followers of Jesus, to the number of five thousand, were miraculously fed with a single meal in the wilderness, the nation under Moses was provided for forty years with bread from heaven. These comparisons were no doubt made in the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees, who rejected Jesus at the very moment when they were witnessing displays of power which they could not deny to be supernatural. To them the Law was everything, and its sanctions were known to be Divine: and assuming that Jesus desired to change the Law, they therefore rejected him; while the common people accepted the assurance of Jesus that he came to fulfill the Law, and could not but admit his claims. This is evident in the case of one miracle which was particularly offensive to the teachers of the people.

As Jesus passed out of the temple one Sabbath-day, followed by the maledictions of some who misapprehended his doctrine, he saw at the gate a man who had been blind from his birth, and who was well known, as his custom was to sit as a beggar in the most public place he could choose. The disciples of Jesus, who had not learned to separate temporal sufferings from the guilt of which they had hitherto been the judgements, inquired if the sin for which this man was punished was his

own sin or that of his parents. Jesus replied that the blindness was not the punishment of sin, but the means by which the power of God might be manifested in this man. He immediately explained his meaning by giving sight to the beggar. The bystanders brought the beggar to the Pharisees, who after declaring that no one who wrought on the Sabbath could be from God, and that a sinner could effect no such miracle, refused to believe what had been done. The testimony of the blind man's parents, however, was too strong to be gainsaid, and the fact was admitted by all: but, by a singular inconsistency, while they ascribed the glory to God, they denied the claim of Jesus to be his messenger, saying, "We are the disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses; but we know not whence this man is."—The beggar, in his simplicity, pointed out this inconsistency, though he had not yet been informed that Jesus was the Messiah. The Pharisees silenced his wise though unlearned remonstrance, and cast him out of their synagogue: thus, like bigots of every age, seeking to subdue by persecution the truth which they could not overthrow by fairer means\*.

On occasion of the resurrection of Lazarus, in the sight of many, "the chief priests and the Pharisees assembled a council, and said, What shall we do? for this man doeth many miracles. If we suffer him to go on thus, all men will believe in him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." From that day they took counsel to kill him; and not him only, but Lazarus also, because on account of him many believed in Jesus. This virulent opposition to works which were all the time admitted to be miraculous may be explained by the reasons before given, and can be explained in no other way.

The mistake of these learned men lay in their failing to perceive that Christ came to consummate the Mosaic dispensation; and however insufficient the testimony of miracle may be ad-

\* John ix.

mitted to be *to them*, nothing can justify their blindness to the other testimony with which that of miracles was connected. But for this blindness, fatal to themselves and the whole unbelieving portion of the nation, they would have allowed that, however irreconcilable the two systems might appear on a first view, that of Christ was in reality advocated and protected by that of Moses.

It could not be expected of any contemporaries of Jesus that they should discern, as we can, how the whole system of Judaism was a preparation for Christianity. It was necessary that Christianity should have long become a subject of observation and knowledge, before the value of this species of evidence could be perceived; and it could not be fully appreciated, till the first covenant was abrogated, the city and temple destroyed, and the Israelitish state overthrown. But though this store of evidence was yet undisclosed, the testimony of prophecy,—that species of testimony which was appointed for the sake of the Israelites, and specially adapted to their peculiar position,—was weighty enough to settle with abundant satisfaction the claims of Moses and Jesus, if it had been duly considered. Unfortunately, the necessary caution and humility had not been exercised in the interpretation of prophecy previous to its fulfilment. The interpreters formed erroneous notions of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and those who rejected Christ could never be induced to relinquish them: and all appeals to ancient and modern prophecy were therefore, fatally for themselves, lost upon them.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to enter on any examination of the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures. The subject is too important and extensive to be dismissed after a superficial survey; and a full investigation would lead us wide from our present track of observation. The fruits of the controversies of Christians with Hebrews, of Christians with Christians, and Hebrews with Hebrews, may be gathered elsewhere. It is enough for us that all are agreed on certain points; that the expectation of a Messiah was excited in the whole Israeli-

lish nation by means of prophecies, at first obscure, but waxing more clear and definite with the progress of events; that the lineage of this Messiah was determined in the expectations of all, as was the time of his appearance; and that though doubts remained respecting the nature of his kingdom, all were agreed that he should exercise supreme power from God in that kingdom; that his coming should be preceded by a messenger, and followed by a remarkable effusion of the spirit. This much, with the historical fact that after an interval of four hundred years the people were anxiously and daily looking for their prince, is enough for our purpose; as our design is to refer, not so much to the extraordinary fulfilment of particular prophecies in the person of Christ, as to the continuance, after a long interval, of the same species of miraculous testimony; by which a clear evidence is afforded of the continuity of the scheme we are contemplating.

Whatever difficulty might exist then, and continue to this day, in the application of some particular prophecies,—whatever unbelief might be caused then, and whatever difference of opinion now, by various expectations respecting the nature of the Messiah's kingdom,—the fact that *some one* came at the expected time, of the expected lineage, preceded by a messenger introduced by miracle, and signalizing his reign by a remarkable effusion of the spirit, is enough to exalt the claims of this person above those of Moses; since it makes Moses himself his advocate, and refers us to the Law for his credentials. In consequence, the obligation to receive Jesus rested not only on the weight of his own visible claims, but on the submission which was due to the ancient prophets, and the allegiance which had been vowed to the Law. The authority of the preceding dispensation was transferred to the present; and Christianity, however apparently designed to degrade Judaism, was necessarily acknowledged to be its appointed consummation.

That this evidence was as important to the Hebrews as it appears to us to be, we know from the practice of Jesus and

his followers, of appealing to prophecy whenever they addressed hearers of their own nation, especially those whose attachment to the Law was the most exclusive; while with Gentiles an appeal to miracles was found sufficient, though that of prophecy was occasionally added.—If we look through the history for this purpose, we shall find that Jesus not only referred his enemies and his new converts to the ancient prophets, but that on the day of his resurrection he by the same argument quieted the doubts and enlightened the minds of two of his disciples who were dismayed by his death. These men knew him to be “a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people”; and, trusting that it was he who was about to redeem Israel, they were perplexed by his death and the ignominious manner of it; and no less so by the report spread among the disciples that he had that morning been seen alive. While they yet recognised him not, he proceeded side by side with them as they journeyed, “and explained to them from Moses and all the prophets, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.” The argument was powerful; as they said one to another when he had left them, “Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us on the way, and while he explained to us the Scriptures?”

On the day of Pentecost, presently after the ascension of Jesus, multitudes of the people of Jerusalem assembled to witness the effect of the effusion of the spirit; and Peter, in the discourse by which three thousand were immediately converted, referred to the prophecy of Joel concerning this event, and the national calamities which should happen when the gifts of the spirit should at length cease\*. Stephen called the whole company of ancient prophets to witness to Jesus, and his opponents “were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.” Paul urged this argument against the Hebrews at Damascus, at Antioch, at Cæsarea, (when he almost persuaded king Agrippa to become a Christian,) and, in short,

\* Joel ii. 28—32.



on every occasion when he preached the Gospel successfully to the Hebrews.

Something more however was done than involving the claims of Jesus with those of the ancient prophets by means of an ancient prophecy. The same thing was done by the renewal of prophecy in the person, first, of the forerunner of Jesus, and next, of Jesus himself. By this appointment, the evidence of the Gospel was made to grow with the lapse of time, till the dispensation was completed, and the foundation of Divine testimony so perfected as that the faith of man may rest upon it for ever. The prophecies of John the Baptist and Jesus related to the same subjects as those of the ancient prophets; viz., the mission of the Messiah and the destiny of the nation; and as their fulfilment was necessarily more rapid, it was more strikingly unquestionable. As the evidence of ancient prophecy was the most appropriate that could be urged to your forefathers, this renewal of prophecy is that which should be most carefully investigated by you. To us Gentiles the testimony of miracles would be sufficient, if that of prophecy were wanting. If it be not so with you,—if these appear to you to render the claims of Jesus at best only equal to those of Moses; if your ideas of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom have hitherto caused you to doubt or refuse the application of the ancient prophecies to Jesus,—it cannot but interest you to ponder the annunciations which, after a pause of four hundred years, caused the long-sleeping echoes of the voice from Horeb to reverberate in all your land once more. Concerning the application of these latest prophecies no doubt has ever existed. The only question to be decided is, whether they have been fulfilled. If they were not accomplished long ago, they were false; for there is no possibility of transferring them, like the ancient prophecies, to an indefinite future period. They did not purport to extend beyond the overthrow of the Israelitish state; and the range of investigation is therefore confined within narrow bounds; viz., from the appearance of the Baptist in the wilderness to the destruction of your city and temple.

John the Baptist prophesied that the kingdom of heaven should presently arrive; that it should be introduced by a messenger from God; and that that messenger should be far mightier than himself.—Were these promises fulfilled?

It appears from the history, that the office of John was discharged without any of the opposition which Jesus had afterwards to encounter: and in the space which intervened between his appearance and the baptism of Jesus, (probably four or five months,) he had opportunity to prepare the whole nation for the reception of Jesus. Of all these multitudes, among whom, as we have seen, were the most influential teachers of the people, men learned in the Law and the traditions, none objected to his application of ancient prophecy to himself and his successor. His intimation that some of the most remarkable of the ancient prophecies were about to be fulfilled, instead of being gainsaid, added new vivacity to the national hope; and since John was then allowed to give authority to the Scriptures as well as to receive it from them, less cannot be allowed now,—if his prophecies were actually accomplished. One did come who was proved to be from God by the wonders and signs which God did by him. He was also greater than John, for John did no miracles; John knew not the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and was not even immediately certain that his great successor was the Christ. What Jesus said of him corresponded with what he said of himself;—"And Jesus said, Among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen one that is greater than John the Baptist; nevertheless I say unto you, that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." It is here evident, not only that these prophecies were fulfilled, but that they were fulfilled by Divine agency. Had the mission of Jesus been of human origin, John might have announced the new kingdom, and might have declared that the Prince of that kingdom should be greater than himself; but with God alone it rested to prove that he was so.

The prophecies of Jesus were so numerous that it is not necessary to our purpose to enter into a full examination of them all. It will best answer our object to select such as were referred for their accomplishment to different periods of time; from those of private concern which should be fulfilled within a few hours, to those of national or universal interest which could only be accomplished at the close of the dispensation.

It has been before remarked that a miracle is a prophecy instantaneously fulfilled. When therefore Jesus said "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth," he uttered a prophecy whose accomplishment immediately followed.

On the night before his death, he uttered many predictions, one of which was fulfilled immediately, another at midnight, another shortly after his resurrection, and another a few days after his ascension.—"And Jesus saith unto them, All of you will offend because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered abroad\*."

Accordingly, when the traitor and the band of officers entered the garden whither Jesus had retired, all that had been with him forsook him and fled.

"Then", continues the history of these predictions, "Peter said unto him, Even though all others shall offend, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, that today, even on this night, before the cock crow twice, thou thyself wilt deny-me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I must die with thee, I will nowise deny thee. And thus said all likewise†."

Yet all failed of their promise, not knowing as, their Master foreknew, the horrors of that hour, imbittered by the overthrow of their own narrow expectations, and overwhelming to their faith before it was made as enlightened and just as it became through his death and resurrection. Peter, who mixed with the servants of the palace, was especially exposed to observation, and consequently to temptation. Forgetting all but

\* Mark xiv.

† Mark xiv.

the terrors of the moment, he was overcome by selfish weakness in the manner Jesus had foretold, till the second appointed signal opened the fountain of bitter tears, and moved the soul of the repentant disciple.

"After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." This prediction is related by Mark. Matthew relates that the disciples met him on a mountain in Galilee, where he had appointed them, and received his instructions a short time previous to his ascension. John also relates at length an interview between Christ and several of his followers who were fishing on the lake of Tiberias. This relation is so full of touching beauty, the words and actions are so correspondent with the whole of the previous conduct and discourse of Jesus, that, even if it did not contain a prophecy (to which we shall allude hereafter), it might be declared evidently true. The fourth prediction, given the night before the crucifixion, respected the miraculous descent of the spirit. "These things I speak unto you, while I abide with you. But the Comforter (or Advocate), even the Holy Spirit which the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance that I have said unto you\*."

The further promises concerning this Comforter contained in the next chapter, and that afterwards concerning the time of its appearance, were fulfilled, as is well known, by the descent of the spirit on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand of your people immediately professed themselves Christians.

The prophecies of Jesus respecting his death were numerous, clear and precise. His intimations respecting the time and manner of it were exact, at a period when they were totally unintelligible to his followers, from their disbelief that their prophet could be persecuted to death in his own land. These intimations seem to have been given from time to time, from the day when a clear understanding was first established be-

\* John xiv.

tween him and his apostles that he was indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God,—that is, from their visit to Cæsarea (five months after his baptism, and eight or nine before his death), to the hour of his death.

“From that time Jesus began to tell his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief-priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day\*.”

Six days afterwards, as his three favourite disciples descended from the Mount of Transfiguration with him, “Jesus commanded them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, until the Son of Man rose again from the dead. And they kept the matter with themselves, reasoning one with another what rising from the dead could mean†.”

Soon after, while they were yet in Galilee, “Jesus said unto them, The Son of Man is about to be delivered up into the hands of men; and they will kill him, and the third day he will be raised again‡.”

At the feast of Tabernacles, six months before his death, he said in his discourse to the Israelites, “For this my Father loveth me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. None taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to receive it again. This commission I have received of my Father§.”

Before the last Passover, “As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took unto him the twelve disciples privately, on the way, and said unto them, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem: and the Son of Man will be delivered up to the chief-priests and scribes, who will condemn him to death, and will deliver him up to the Gentiles, that they may deride and scourge and crucify him: and the third day he will rise again ||.” As the end drew near, and a miraculous voice testified once

\* Matth. xvi. 21.

† Matth. xvii. 22.

|| Matth. xx. 17—19.

‡ Mark ix. 9, 10.

§ John x. 17, 18.

more to him in the presence of the people, he declared, "This came not for my sake, but for your sakes. Now is the judgement of this world; now the Prince of this world will be cast out. And although I shall be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me. (This he said, signifying what death he was about to die.) The multitude answered him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ continueth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, But a little while longer the light will be among you\*, &c.

Again, "He said to his disciples, Ye know that after two days will be the Passover; and then the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified†."

Jesus had repeatedly declared that one of his twelve followers would prove unfaithful: that one he clearly pointed out to be Judas, a few hours before the treachery was revealed; and immediately all took place as had been declared; the chief-priests being hurried on to the act against their previous resolution;—"Not during the feast, lest there be a disturbance among the people." On the evening before the Passover, he was betrayed by Judas: during the night he "suffered many things" from the cruelty of his foes: he was condemned to death, against the will of the governor, through the chief-priests and scribes; he was in the morning "delivered up" to the Gentile soldiers, who "derided" him with many insults, "scourged" and finally "crucified" him. By his death was his mission concluded, and therefore the judgement of the first dispensation sealed; by his death was the Gospel glorified, which should become universal; and therefore by his being "lifted up" were all men to be drawn unto him. Jesus expired at the ninth hour; and as this day was the preparation of the Passover, his body was taken down immediately from the cross, obtained of the governor by Joseph of Arimathea, who, with Nicodemus and others, wrapped it in linen and spices, and laid

\* John xii.

† Matth. xxvi. 2.

it in a sepulchre in the rock, which was immediately closed. This first day of his death then expired amidst the desolation and mourning of his disciples, who understood not yet that for them he should rise, and to them he should come on the third day. The next day being the Sabbath, his disciples made no further attempt to embalm the body; but Roman soldiers, to whom the day was not sacred, sealed the stone, and were placed as a guard over the sepulchre. Their watch was uninterrupted, and to the disciples the second day closed cheerlessly as the first. At dawn on the third day, the women who had seen him expire, and had assisted at his interment, came to the sepulchre with spices, that the body might be duly anointed: but he that was living had left the place of the dead. The Roman guard had fled before the celestial watch whom God had sent to release his beloved Son from the bondage of death, and to hail his entrance upon his long-promised kingdom. The time was now come when the eyes of his followers were to be opened; when they were to interpret rightly the many discourses they had hitherto misapprehended; when they were to be convinced of the spiritual nature of their Master's rule; and to minister in his kingdom, not as temporal chiefs, rulers, or judges, but as dispensers of the new privileges, proclaimers of the new law, to which obedience was required, first from the twelve tribes, and afterwards from the Gentiles. Their views having once become enlightened, their obedience became as steady, their self-devotion as heroic, as the one had previously been wavering and the other imperfect. Henceforth, knowing that their conflicts were not to be in the field, nor their triumphs in palaces, in camps, or on the judgement-seat, they looked for more arduous conflicts and for nobler triumphs. Henceforth they were for a while in troubles and dangers from their own countrymen and from Gentiles, from false brethren, from cruel foes: they bore labour and toil, fastings and watchings, cold and nakedness, much torture of body and frequent peril of death. Yet under all this they were blessed infinitely above the unbelieving of their nation. They knew in whom



they believed; they were supported by an unfailing faith, cheered by an unquenchable hope, and animated by an unremitting love of God and man. While their deluded countrymen were blind to all signs, deaf to all warnings of approaching destruction, gazing at the sunshine and unaware of the gathering clouds on the horizon,—the followers of Jesus looked beyond the gloom which appeared to others to encompass them, and anticipated with assured joy the perfect day whose dawn had already risen upon the nations. Thus were fulfilled those intimations which promised safety and peace on the one hand, peril and woe on the other, to those who should have believed on or rejected him, when the day of the consummation should arrive.

None of the predictions of Jesus were more remarkable from their obscurity at the time, and their present evident completeness, than those which relate to his kingdom, or the spread of his Gospel. By his immediate followers the general meaning of the parables in which they are contained was apprehended at the time; and his foes took to themselves some of his reproaches: but as the scheme of revelation was yet incomplete, the full signification could only be developed by time. The rejection of his Gospel by those to whom it was offered, their treatment of the messengers of God, and especially of Jesus himself, and the consequent transference of their privileges to the Gentiles,—are as clearly foretold in parables which were spoken before the Gentiles had heard even the sound of a promise, as the minute circumstances respecting his death, which it was equally impossible for natural reason to foresee. As one of these parables (that of the marriage-feast,) has already been related, it is only necessary to select one besides; which is chosen because it shadows forth the whole scheme of Revelation, from the primary separation of your people to the final overthrow of their dispensation.

“There was a certain householder who planted a vineyard, and put a hedge about it, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to his husbandmen, and went into

another country. And when the season of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and cast stones at another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did to them in like manner. But last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.—But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. So they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.—When therefore the owner of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to those husbandmen?—They say unto him, He will wretchedly destroy those wretched men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen who will render him the fruits in their season.”

How remarkably is the prophecy here made out between the words of Jesus and those who answered his questions! The murderers did indeed awfully perish; and their children have ever since wandered abroad, excluded from their ancient possession. Other labourers, once despised, have been brought in, and to them this grace has not been given in vain; since their earnest desire is to invite and welcome back those whom they have not voluntarily supplanted.

Before we proceed to the fullest and most important of Christ's predictions, we will advert to one which at the time appeared to be of private interest only; but which, from its fulfilment, becomes important as an evidence.—Before the disciples knew the nature of Christ's kingdom, they could not of course understand precisely the nature of its period or the purpose of his “coming,” of which he so often spoke. They naturally supposed that the entrance upon a future life was thus referred to; and it was wisely left to time to explain the truth, as otherwise these prophecies would have failed of their object, and could not now have been cited as evidence. At the time when Jesus made known to his collected disciples that he was indeed the Messiah, he referred to his death, and to

his subsequent "coming in his kingdom;" concluding with the words, "There are some standing here who shall not taste of death till they have seen the Son of Man coming in his kingdom\*." John, the beloved and probably the youngest of his disciples, was present when these words were spoken.

After the resurrection, when Jesus met his followers by the lake of Tiberias, Peter, pointing to John, said, "Lord, what shall this man do?" Jesus answered, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to thee?" It was reported among the brethren, though not supposed by John himself, that he should pass into a future life without dying. The prediction, however, was fulfilled by other means. When his fellow-apostles and most of his early friends had laid down their lives, and left him one of the few living witnesses of the first appearance of the Christ, John, in extreme old age, witnessed that "end of the age" to which he had been so long taught to look forward,—witnessed the completion of the covenant of his nation; witnessed the restoration of equality among the nations by the free gift of the Gospel to all, when the last impediments to its free course were removed by the overthrow of the Israelitish state. He saw the accomplishment of the predictions whose delivery he had heard; and by his testimony was evidence of a most valuable kind delivered pure from the apostolic to the succeeding age.

The prophecy respecting the destruction of your state,—the last and greatest to which you are to be referred,—is the most definite in its terms, and the most unquestionably fulfilled, of any on record. The precise time of its accomplishment Jesus declared to be known to God alone; but announced that that generation should not pass away before the consummation should be witnessed. For the original predictions you are referred to the 24th chapter of Matthew's history, and to the 21st of Luke; and for the narrative of their accomplishment, to those historians who have written of the destruction of Jerusalem, and especially Josephus, whose relation is so circum-

\* Matth. xvi. 28.

stantial as to afford evidence as valuable to Christians as it is interesting to Hebrews. We will, however, illustrate some particular points of the prediction, from the involuntary testimony of your great historian, trusting to your candour in verifying the rest.

The immediate occasion of the prophecy was the pride which the disciples of Jesus naturally felt in the grandeur and beauty of their temple. They pointed to it as it crowned the brow of Moriah, springing from the valley below to the height of from five to eight hundred feet,—its battlements, its courts and porticos, its ranges of priests' apartments, its holy places and inmost sanctuary, forming together such a pile of sumptuous buildings as might well be the glory of the nation. "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

The Roman prince who besieged Jerusalem sought by all means to preserve this temple, but in vain. Its destruction was complete, notwithstanding every effort on the part of the soldiers and people to stop the conflagration. Nor were even the walls left standing, nor did any portion of them long remain. The very foundations were ploughed up; verdure sprung up where the pavement of the holy courts had been trodden, and the lamb browsed unharmed on the spot where the smoke of the morning and evening sacrifice had risen for ages.

The exhortation to the believers to flee to the mountains when the foe should be known to have entered the holy parts of the land, was borne in mind by the Christians, who were thus brought out and separated from the guilty and blind among their countrymen, and saved by their faith, as had been promised. They departed from the city amidst the wonder and derision of their unbelieving brethren, and sought a timely refuge among the mountains, where tidings were brought them from afar of the strife and famine and utter desolation which laid waste their beautiful city, and the house where their fathers

had worshiped. The Passover was kept with its accustomed pomp, when the Roman army had withdrawn for a time from before the city. The glittering roof of the temple rose like a mountain of snow in the noonday sun; music was wafted on every wind; there were greetings in the streets, and at the various gates, as throngs of worshipers approached to keep the feast. The followers of Jesus alone were thoughtful amidst the joy of these greetings: they alone went forth from the city, when all others were crowding into it; and those of them who dwelt in the country were the only Hebrews who refused to join in a pilgrimage to the sanctuary. And why? They had on record the words of Jesus:—

“As the days of Noah were, so will the appearance of the Son of Man be. For as in the days which were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark; and understood not until the flood came and destroyed them all: so will the appearance of the Son of Man also be. Then will two men be in the field; the one will be taken, and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; the one will be taken, and the other left,” &c.—“Let those that are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let those that are within the city depart out; and let not those that are in the country-places enter therein. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.”

When we read of the brutal pillage and the horrible slaughter which the citizens inflicted on one another, of famine which drove a maddened mother to slay and eat her own child, of the blood which drenched the holy courts, of the cries of woe which reached the ears of the invading army, and of the death-like silence which succeeded, appearing to them more ominous still; when we observe that a man's worst foes were those of his own kindred, and that each faction in turn proved a greater scourge than the foreign enemy,—we see the application of the words of Jesus:—“Then will be great affliction, such as hath

not been since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever will be."

Lest the believers should share the superstitions of their infatuated brethren, warning was offered them to give heed to no signs but those which were foreshown, and which were too important to be mistaken.—"Then if any say unto you, Lo! here is the Christ, or there,—believe him not. For false Christs and false prophets will rise, and will propose great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if it were possible, even the chosen. Lo! I have foretold you this. Wherefore, if men say unto you, Behold, Christ is in the desert,—go not forth: Behold he is in the secret chambers,—believe them not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth to the west, so will the appearance of the Son of Man be."

This warning was needed. Impostors arose here and there who led the people away to destruction, while the real testimonies from God were unheeded: so that their own historian exclaims concerning them, "How easily were these superstitious wretches seduced into a belief of false oracles, counterfeits, and impostors!" While disorder and faction were apparent in every department of the state, these false prophets drew the people after them in shoals; from him who came out of Egypt, appearing "in the desert," and promising that the towers of Jerusalem should fall at his word, to him who reported that one was "in the secret chambers" of the temple, who should deliver all who took refuge within its walls. While their deluded countrymen were perishing beneath the swords of the Romans, or amidst the flames and crashing ruins of the sanctuary, the Christians were peaceably worshipping, far from Gerizim and from Jerusalem, in the depths of distant valleys, or among the groves on the hill-side. There they acknowledged how this day of vengeance had "come as a snare upon all who dwelt on the face of the whole land." There they heard, with grief for their nation, that there was "great dis-

treachery in the land, and anger upon the people: that they must fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem be trodden down by the Gentiles." There they uttered thanksgivings for themselves and their companions, that they were accounted worthy to escape all those things which must come to pass, and to "stand before the Son of Man" when so many had fallen in this his promised retribution.

The accomplishment of the whole series of the prophecies of John and Jesus being thus complete, it only remains to be proved that these predictions have been faithfully preserved from the time they were delivered,—i. e. from about forty years previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. The chain of evidence from prophecy will then be entire, and must be acknowledged by the Hebrew to be as satisfactory a testimony as the evidence of miracles is already found to be to the Gentile. As Moses sanctioned Abraham and was sanctioned by him, Jesus sanctioned Moses and was sanctioned by him. They were united by one spirit of prophecy, in a mediation between the Almighty and the human race.

#### SECTION V.—*Historical Evidence respecting the Delivery of the later Prophecies.*

THE circumstances attending and succeeding the life of Jesus might be originally attested by three different classes of historians: Hebrew writers who believed on him; Hebrew writers who did not believe on him; and Gentile historians. (As the Gospel was not originally offered to the Gentiles, it is evident that contemporary Gentile writers could not be believers.) Let us estimate the value of the various evidence of these three classes.

Of the first class, there were eight writers who witnessed the events they related. Of the second class, there were none who were contemporaries of Jesus, and only one who wrote within



a century after. Of the last class, there were none who, living in Palestine, witnessed the life of Jesus and the actions of his followers. Of such as could, within a short period, have been informed respecting these circumstances, there are many who confirmed the testimony of the eight writers of the first class; some, who like Josephus, are silent respecting Jesus and the Christians; and one, Tacitus,—who attests the history of Jesus, without admitting his claims. It is clear, on the mere enumeration of numbers, on which side the *quantity* of testimony preponderates. In considering its *quality*, we will begin with the class most insignificant in point of number.

The silence of your historian Josephus on the subject of a life so remarkable as that of Christ, is very striking, and forms of itself an evidence for or against the claims of Jesus to be a Divine messenger. It is denied by no one living that Jesus advanced extraordinary claims, pretended to do extraordinary deeds, and was believed on by your countrymen to the number of many thousands. These circumstances, be the claimant who or what he might, are too remarkable to be passed over entirely without notice by so voluminous a writer as Josephus, without special reason. Since the occurrences were, at all events, not insignificant, it is clear that they ought to have been either confirmed or denied; and that they must have been so, if they had been regarded by the writer in the light of ordinary history. He had some strong feeling respecting them. If he had known the pretensions of Jesus to be false, he would have denounced them, as he has done those of many impostors whose claims and influence were comparatively insignificant. We all know that he was not an avowed Christian; and the only supposition remaining is, that Josephus could not confute the claims of Jesus, and was therefore wisely silent respecting them. The silence of Josephus respecting Christ was not the only testimony which he unwittingly afforded to the Christian claims. The coincidences of his History with that of the apostolic writers are so numerous, so inartificial, and so complete, as to constitute him a secondary witness to the truth of the evan-

gelical narratives.—It appears a singular charge against Hebrews that they are less fully informed than others respecting any portion of their national history; but a due attention to the historians of other nations will convince the learned among you, that the *influence* of Jesus, whatever were his *authority*, the *progress* of Christianity, whatever might be its *truth*, constitute a remarkable period of the Hebrew history which is veiled from the observation of the bulk of your people, while it is eminently conspicuous to all besides.

The silence of Gentile writers respecting Christ has by many been regarded with nearly as much surprise as that of Josephus: but it is not in reality at all surprising. The fact is, that many of them were not silent, having left very powerful testimony to the truth of our faith: but because they were themselves Christians, their evidence is set aside as being partial. This is manifestly unreasonable: since the fact of their becoming Christians, in opposition to worldly interests of every kind, forms of itself a powerful evidence; and, since it also testifies to their own sincerity, it gives authority to everything which they wrote. Their testimony is also confirmed by the silence preserved in the writings of unbelieving Gentiles. There was no opposition between the two classes of writers; as there surely would have been, if the one had believed in a series of impostures which could be proved to be so by the other. It will not do in this case, any more than in that of Josephus, to hint at the insignificance of the subject. Claims which gave rise to repeated persecutions, to changes in the subordinate governments of the empire, to movements of the soldiery, to councils in palaces, to proclamations, to a multitude of public executions, could not be beneath the notice of historians. There was reason enough for their suppression of the facts in the unacceptableness of the subject to those whom they sought to please, and not less to themselves. Those who had any real knowledge of the circumstances, and those who had not, were probably equally at a loss what to say, and therefore wisely said nothing. This has never been the case with a heresy or

rebellion of any other kind; historians usually being very ready to pronounce on such events, supplying their own want of well-ascertained information by following the opinions of others; and if Christianity had been viewed in the light of such a heresy or rebellion, it would have been thus treated. We should have had the leading events in the life of Jesus and his followers presented in all, accompanied with political speculations or expressions of philosophical scorn, or of proud compassion; ending, in every case, with a decisive sentence upon the vanity or falsehood of such pretensions, and abundance of wonder that they should be supported by any contemporary writers. Such is the common course in cases of doubtful but imposing claims. Instead of this, we have a great deal of positive testimony on the one side, to which nothing is opposed but the silence of a few,—a silence which was most certainly not that of contempt, and which therefore is a negative testimony to the truth of that which is thus mysteriously passed over.

There is, however, one exception to this remarkable system of advocacy on the one hand and silence on the other. We have the testimony of a Roman historian to the facts of the Gospel history, without any advocacy of the Gospel. Tacitus relates that there was such a person as Jesus, who introduced a new religion, and suffered death in consequence, under the administration of Pontius Pilate. He relates the progress of this new religion in Judea, its temporary check by persecution, its revival, and ultimate spread as far as Rome itself. It is well that this testimony is extant, if it prove satisfactory to any about to become Christians. To Christians it is also satisfactory as far as it goes; but they have much that is better. It is something to have the testimony of a man of understanding and approved veracity; but it is much more to have the testimony of many who were so much better informed about these very facts as to be able to interpret them rightly. Whether Tacitus neglected to inquire into a faith which he believed to be a mere modification of Judaism, or whether he thought it his duty to adhere to the established religion of his country, or

whether he believed in the resurrection of Jesus without declaring or acting on his belief, is of little consequence to us, as long as many men equally capable of judging and of recording their judgement have informed themselves more fully concerning the facts, and left us their testimony; a testimony which cannot be weakened by the fact of their having become Christians, founding their evidence on conviction, and sealing it by martyrdom.

Before we take leave of these heathen writers, it is right to remark, that though they tell us nothing of Christ and Christianity, they cast a light upon the state of Judea, the provisions of its government, and the persecuted condition of the primitive Christians; so as to place us in the right position for judging of the testimony of these primitive Christians themselves. The result of a comparison of this class of evidence is in every case favourable to the veracity of the evangelical writers.

We now turn to the remaining class of writers,—Jewish historians who believed in Jesus.

It is well known that the generality of ancient historical facts rests on very scanty testimony. One writer perhaps gives a relation, which is copied and enlarged by another at a short distance of time; his relation being, in turn, improved or stript of its improvements by succeeding authors, whose number is perpetually on the increase. We believe such relations in the absence of all testimony against them, and should believe them probably even if our religious system depended on them, as long as there was no counterbalancing testimony. But the Jewish and Christian histories stand on much better evidence than this. It is needless to you, as to ourselves, to point out the evidences of the Hebrew Scriptures, since they are alike believed by you and ourselves; but it is desirable to show how differently the historical process has been carried on in the case of the Gospel, and all other cases. In no other instance, perhaps, have eight contemporary writers given the original history of any series of events. We speak of history in the case of all the eight writers, because it is in fact so,

whether expressly detailed in narrative, or implied and attested in a course of reasoning upon that narrative. You can be in no danger of adopting the extraordinary notion that these eight testimonies are but one, because they are bound up in one volume,—a notion which it is still sometimes necessary to protest against in the case of unbelievers in all revelation. It is evident to you, that as your Scriptural writers lose none of their individual authority by being connected with each other, the same is the case with the evangelical writers, be their testimony true or false. The evidence of the succeeding Prophets does not interfere or become one with that of Moses, because they wrote concerning the same God and the same people, or because their works have been collected and formed into a regular series; and in the same manner, the testimony of John, of Luke, and of Paul, forms three testimonies, whether they be united for a special purpose, or kept as distinct as the works of Raschi, Maimonides, and Abarbanel.

Of the eight writers referred to, Matthew, James, Jude, Peter, and John, were among the followers originally chosen by Jesus to witness his words and actions, and the events of his life; and they were therefore the persons best qualified to attest the delivery of those prophecies which it is now our principal aim to establish.

Matthew wrote his history in your language and for the use of your nation; and being, doubtless, aware of the peculiar appropriateness of the arguments from prophecy, as well as of the surpassing interest of the predictions of Jesus to his own countrymen, he gives them at greater length and with more careful explicitness than the other historians. His narrative is judged to have been written first; but as it is evident that neither Mark nor Luke had seen it, it could not have been published long before they wrote.

James (surnamed the Just, on account of the excellence of his character,) gave his testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus by his death, which took place, by a decree of the supreme council of your nation, in the interval between the death of Festus

and the arrival of the next Roman governor. His Epistle bears as unquestionable testimony as his self-sacrifice to the design and spirit of the Gospel. It is not possible to imagine a more beautiful exemplification of the pure system of faith and morals introduced by Jesus than this epistle affords. Its corroboration of the historical records of his brethren is as completely satisfactory, as if he had given his explicit sanction to every detail.

Of Jude little is known, but the date of his Epistle may be nearly ascertained from its purport. It is directed against the corruptions which the disciples of the Oriental philosophy endeavoured to intermix with the simple faith, for the purpose (before alluded to,) of making the Gospel more acceptable by getting rid of the reproach of the Cross.

The testimony of Peter is as valuable from its fullness and variety, as from the weight imparted to it by the character of the man. His character is shown by facts to have been originally impetuous and unstable. Of all the Apostles he was the most forward in enterprise, the least persevering in difficulty,—the first in eagerness, and the soonest dismayed. He was therefore the most conspicuous in the history; and through this pre-eminence we know how perpetually he was the companion of Jesus. The questions, the remarks, the protestations, the remonstrances of Peter; his hasty actions and their consequences, the influence which his ardour gave him over his companions, the love mixed with compassion with which his Master regarded him,—stand out from the narrative on every occasion, and prove that Peter was, as he declared, a perpetual witness of the Messiah's conduct and teachings. In proportion as the new dispensation became more fully revealed, the views of Peter became more enlarged, and his convictions and the conduct arising from them more stable, till he became the prince of the Apostles; acknowledged to be so by them, and especially honoured by the importance of the offices appointed him from on high. It was he who converted the multitudes on occasion of the descent of the Spirit; it was he who was appointed to

bring the Gentiles into the new covenant by baptizing Cornelius and his household ; and henceforth he was distinguished by the zeal, courage and patience, with which he employed and finally sacrificed his life in the service of the Gospel. It is observable that on all occasions he laid great stress on arguments from prophecy, both that which was ancient and that which his own ears had heard. He superintended the composition of Mark's Gospel, in which the prophecies of John and Jesus are detailed ; and in both his Epistles,—in the second at considerable length,—he explicitly refers to the most important predictions of Jesus, testifying that some had been already fulfilled, and declaring that the accomplishment of the last and greatest was at hand.

If the value of such testimony as this could be surpassed, it could only be by that of John. The truth of each is alike unquestionable ; but the evidence of John is more ample, from the circumstance of his being "the beloved disciple," the confidential friend of Jesus, and therefore the best informed of all things concerning him ; and also from his life having been prolonged to witness the total and final accomplishment of the Messiah's prophecies. It was no doubt because his knowledge of Jesus and the Gospel was admitted to be eminently full and accurate, that he was requested to prepare his history (in the prospect of a general dispersion of the Disciples), for the sake of supplying the deficiencies of those narratives which were already published. His history, being written for this purpose, contains little which is related by the other Evangelists ; but all that it contains is corroborative of their narratives. With respect to the prophecies especially—he amply testifies in his Gospel to their purport, and to their actual delivery ; and, by his later experience and latest writings, to their accomplishment.

The three writers who were not among the original twelve disciples of Jesus, are Mark, Luke, and Paul.

Mark was the nephew of Barnabas and the companion of Paul, from whom he had the opportunity of learning the Go-



spel in its purity, and being informed respecting the communications from Jesus himself with which the Apostle of the Gentiles was often honoured. Nor was his information less complete respecting the circumstances of the life of Jesus. He was the intimate friend of Peter, under whose inspection he wrote his Gospel; so that this history may be considered as the joint testimony of him who heard the prophecies of Christ delivered, and of him who saw the greater part of them fulfilled.

Luke is said to have been a physician at Antioch, and to have been included in the number of the seventy disciples. His writings prove him to have been a man of education, and one thoroughly informed respecting the events he undertook to relate. His history of the Acts of the Apostles includes a mass of evidence to the fact of the Messiahship of Jesus, which it would require a volume to unfold, by comparing it with itself, with the other evangelical writings, and with the histories of heathen writers. He was the companion of Paul in much of his journeying, and therefore well qualified to relate whatever we know of the life and acts of this extraordinary man.

In directing your attention to the Apostle Paul, it is difficult to decide whether to present him as an evidence of the entire scheme we have been contemplating, or as a remarkable witness to the truth of the Gospel history. We can only touch on the principal points of his singular story. Paul seems to have been created for the purpose of consolidating the system of revelation, of presenting in his own person an epitome of its designs and evidences, of becoming a mediator between your nation and the rest of the world, and, finally, of occupying the space which divided the personal friends of the Messiah from strangers and enemies; between those who had witnessed his living signs and wonders, and those who could only believe them by their report. Paul knew not Jesus during his mission; but was nevertheless fully instructed by him. Paul was among his enemies at the time of his death, and one of the scoffers at his resurrection; yet the most exalted advocate of the hopes of the Gospel. No one was more wedded to the

first covenant than Paul ; yet above all others he prized the second. No one was ever a more blameless servant of the Law ; yet none was so thankful to exchange it for the Gospel. Being famed for his reverential adherence to Moses, he yet gloried in his allegiance to Jesus. Having been proud, to the most exalted degree, of the honours and privileges of your nation, he spent his life in hastening the extinction of those honours and the abolition of those privileges. Versed in the intricacies of the national theology, and in all the other studies of the most learned of his time, he used these stores only as a preparation for that high but simple knowledge to which he applied himself with the meekness of a disciple and the ardour and power of a matured mind. With the stubborn faith of an ancient Hebrew, with the proud complacency of a son of Abraham, with the learning of a Pharisee, and the accomplishments of polished heathens, he seemed little fitted to adopt or diffuse Christianity ; yet this was the man who laid open his understanding and his affections to truth and love, who used his endowments for self-denying purposes, and thought it an honour to be the servant of the despised Gentile disciples of a despised faith. There is but one way of explaining all this. Paul understood Judaism well ; so that when he also understood Christianity, the whole scheme was complete before him, and he became peculiarly qualified for making it clear to others, whether Israelites or Gentiles. He understood the previous circumstances and the present relative position of both parties, and was therefore fitted to bring them together, and to include them under the possession of common blessings. While he no longer prided himself on his acquisitions, he was far from despising them, or relinquishing the advantages they gave. With him, knowledge was power ; and he felt this, and acted upon it with far more meekness than in his days of comparative ignorance. His enlarged views, his consistent convictions, his bright well-defined hopes, inspired him with an intellectual and spiritual vigour, as influential over the souls of others as animating to his own : and by his conspicuous position, its

operation was equally powerful on the two parties whom he sought to unite. When the wall of partition was already trembling to its fall, he stood last on the battlements; and while the eyes of the hosts without, and of the remnant of Israel within, were fixed upon him with equal intentness, he interpreted the signal from above, that their estrangement should cease, and that they should live like brothers, side by side. For his own account of the views which this eminence presented to him, and for his own expressions of the rapture which their recognition caused to him, you are referred to the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans; or rather to the whole preceding part of the Epistle, of which the eleventh chapter is a summary. The history of Paul is well known to you; that he was brought up a blameless servant of the Law, belonged to the straightest sect of the Pharisees, and was well instructed in all sound and ornamental learning; that he was one of the fiercest foes of the new faith, urging on the persecution, and actually assisting at the martyrdom of its professors; that while travelling in pursuit of such objects as these, he was arrested by the miraculous presence of Jesus himself, and informed of the destination appointed for him; that after being relieved from a temporary blindness, he professed the new faith in the customary form; retired into Arabia for some time, in order to be instructed and exercised in the religion of the Gospel, in preparation for teaching it to the Gentiles; that being largely endowed with the gifts of the Spirit as well as with eminent natural qualifications, his mission was attended with extraordinary success; that he conveyed the glad-tidings from shore to shore, publishing them among many nations, and preparing for their further spread in more distant lands; and at length, after years of outward peril and sufferings, which could not shake his inward peace, was beheaded at Rome at the time of the persecution by Nero; being privileged as to the mode of his death, from being a Roman citizen, over Peter, who was crucified about the same time.

The testimony of this extraordinary man is of two kinds,—

that of his life, as related by Luke; and that of his opinions, as given at large and in various forms by himself. The first would have been sufficient of itself for the purposes we have now in view, as Paul was converted in consequence of the fulfilment of some prophecies, and spent his life in unconsciously aiding the accomplishment of others. But we have also his own declarations of the completion of many predictions, and of firm faith in others which he knew to have been delivered, but which were not verified till after his death. He testified to the promises of Jesus respecting his own death and resurrection, the descent of the Spirit, and the bringing in of the Gentiles; and he also wrote of that period, yet future, when all distinctions should be done away. These declarations were made, not systematically, or collected in one written form of testimony, but interspersed through familiar letters, to the number of thirteen, addressed to the assemblies of Christians he had visited, or to private friends. The principal doctrine of the Gospel,—that of a future life of retribution, as taught by the death and resurrection of Jesus,—is largely exhibited in that portion (among others) of his writings which is famed for its eloquence among those who regard not its truth,—the fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthian church. The principal historical fact connected with the operation of the new system—the bringing in of the Gentiles—is the prominent subject of all his epistles; while the spirituality and the exalted moral scheme of the Gospel are resplendently exhibited in every act of his life and every page of his writings.

To these eight testimonies some add a ninth, in the unknown author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Whether this epistle was written by Paul, or not, matters little:—it is the work of a contemporary, and of one fully informed respecting the scheme of revelation, and therefore qualified to address you, be he whom he may. To you, the excellence of the author's qualifications is all that is important; and to Christians it is equally satisfactory, whether the written records of their faith are the work of eight writers or of nine.

The records, and the facts they relate, are again attested by a series of subsequent witnesses. Clement, mentioned in the Epistle to the Philippians as the fellow-labourer of Paul, wrote an Epistle to the church of Corinth, some time after the destruction of Jerusalem. This epistle was held in such high esteem by the Christians, as to be publicly read, like the Scriptures, in many churches. As its object was to compose some dissensions which had arisen, it does not enlarge upon the facts of the Gospel; but it adverts to the resurrection of Christ, and thus describes the Apostles,—“receiving the commandments, and being filled with full certainty by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and confirmed by the Word of God, with the assurance of the Holy Spirit, they went out announcing the advent of the kingdom of God.”

The epistles of Ignatius immediately follow; with a letter addressed to the Philippians by Polycarp, who suffered martyrdom in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, replying, when urged to revile Christ,—“Fourscore and six years have I served him, and he has never done me any injury. How can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?” Papias, a hearer of the apostle John, a companion of Polycarp, a great collector of the sayings of the Apostles, left five books “On the Interpretation of the Divine Oracles,” which were extant in the time of Eusebius. Then followed Hegesippus, a Hebrew, who wrote a valuable ecclesiastical history as a continuation of that of Luke, but which has long been lost. Three other Hebrews, Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus, distinguished themselves by their translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek; their versions being quoted with great respect by all Christian writers. These (with the omission of many names of less note,) bring us down to the time of Justin Martyr,—i. e. to more than a century and a half from the appearance and prophesying of John in the desert. Justin Martyr was the author of many works which bore witness to the facts and records of the Gospel, though his partiality for the Platonic philosophy led him to corrupt the Christian doctrine in a manner the evil conse-

quences of which he little foresaw. It would have been well if Christians in after ages had been willing to accept the lesson offered by his controversy with your countryman Trypho, who had the advantage of him in the argument respecting the nature of Christ, however right Justin Martyr might be respecting the office of the Messiah. It cannot be necessary to pursue further the series of written testimonies. You need only refer to all the writings of that time now extant, to be convinced that in the very first age of the Christian church, when the witnesses for or against the Messiahship of Jesus were still living, the facts of his miracles, prophecies and resurrection were as confidently assumed by the teachers of the people, as by the same class of men in the present day. The writings of the Evangelists and Apostles were publicly read in the churches, and none succeeded in shaking their authority. Those yet living who had seen Christ between his resurrection and ascension, testified to this fact in their old age; while those who had died, left their testimony in the form of tradition, and it was never contradicted. While the evidence of the facts was still accessible to all, while enemies were fiercely active, while all the superstitions of the multitude were arrayed against the Faith,—that Faith stood its ground by an appeal to fact alone, till the records of facts had become so numerous as to render the overthrow of the Faith impossible.

It is interesting, though it may not be necessary, to observe how perfectly the traditionary as well as the written testimony is kept up till beyond the time at which we are resting. This happened through the friendship which subsisted between a few Christian professors who successively lived to a great age. Polycarp was educated by the Apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ. He had an attentive hearer in Irenæus, who suffered martyrdom in A.D. 202, and who in his old-age wrote to Florinus the letter preserved by Eusebius, from which the following is an extract.

“I saw you, when I was very young, in the Lower Asia with Polycarp. For I better remember the affairs of that time

than those which have lately happened,—the things which we learn in our childhood, growing up in the soul, and uniting themselves to it. Insomuch, that I can tell the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and his discourses to the people; and how he related his conversation with John, and others who had seen the Lord; and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard from them concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrines, as he had received them from eye-witnesses of the Word of Life: all which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures. These things I then, through the mercy of God toward me, diligently heard and attended to, recording them not on paper but upon my heart.”

Here is no doubt, no shifting, no chasm to be filled up by probabilities. Irenæus saw and heard Polycarp; Polycarp saw and heard the Apostles, who witnessed of Christ. Thus, while there had been five apostolic fathers, and a rapid succession of Christian writers, nine of whose compositions fill up the interval between Irenæus and Polycarp, the verbal testimony is carried down by two old men to 200 years from the birth of Christ.

A very powerful evidence appeals to you from the pages of the New Testament, which is lost upon the generality of Christians. Even the most learned among us can scarcely be so well able as yourselves to appreciate the exact accordance of the Gospel narratives with whatever is known of Hebrew antiquities; yet by a comparison of the evangelical writings with your Scriptures, and with the works of Hebrew authors of later days, enough may be ascertained to prove that the books were not only written by Hebrews, but in the time and place where they purport to have been written. Those of our scholars who devote themselves for a while to the study of your language, literature and antiquities, find, on their return to the Gospel histories, that they can almost imagine themselves set down in



Judea, eighteen hundred years ago. They can in imagination traverse the Temple, from the porticos to the treasury, from the treasury to the altar, and from the altar to the threshold of the Holy place; they can join the groups going up to make their offerings; they can behold the smoke rising from the morning and evening sacrifice. In private dwellings, also, they can recognise familiar objects in the apartments, the costume, the furniture, the modes of exercising hospitality, of practising devotion, of feasting, and of mourning. They can look abroad on the noonday glare, on the sudden sweeping storms of your land; marking how the herbs wither on the parched rocks, and how dwellings are washed down by the descending floods. They can go down the rugged and perilous way from Jerusalem to Jericho, or overlook the reedy banks of Jordan, or gaze on the mountains and groves reflected in the calm expanse of the Lake of Tiberias. They can look into the chambers of sepulchres, and pass the palace of the high-priest, and enter the judgement-hall of the Roman governor.—If this familiarity is so striking to them, how much more welcome must it be to you!

Let it be remarked, that not only are descriptions given and allusions made which are undoubtedly real, but much of the history, and many discourses, are so involved in these external realities as to be inseparable from them. In the first case, proof would be afforded that the narratives were penned by Hebrews:—as it is, we acknowledge the proof that the things related actually took place; that the discourses actually arose from the suggestions of surrounding objects. Any Jewish writer who wrote respecting Jesus, without having been a witness, i. e. without authority, might describe him as sitting on Jacob's well at Sychar, or in a boat on the lake, or lifting up his voice in the temple: he might relate how a woman came forth to draw water, in one case: how the multitudes assembled on the shore, in another; and in a third, how the temple was thronged with worshipers who came up to the feast. But

descriptions like these give no such impression of reality as is felt when those who understand the history and localities read what Jesus said of the widow who cast her offering into the treasury; in what manner the paralytic man was brought before him; how the temple was purified from the profane traffic carried on within its walls; how the great prophecy respecting the destruction of your state was suggested by observations on the magnificence of the temple; how the night-watches passed in that dark time when the Disciples forsook their master and Peter himself denied him. The history, as a whole, is so involved in political circumstances, as to fix its date precisely: the many narratives which it comprehends are so inextricably associated with scenes and circumstances elsewhere described and attested, as to be capable of strict verification; and the discourses are so interwoven with external realities of every kind, as to be recognised as true and faithfully reported wherever a competent knowledge of those realities exists. It is enough to have suggested an examination into this species of evidence; for its interest must surely prove a sufficient incitement to its pursuit.

#### SECTION VI.—*Conclusion.*

THE designs of the Supreme respecting the spiritual education of the human race have now been inferred from a survey of the history of the race, and a comparison of his Providence towards your nation in particular, with that experienced by mankind in general. The truth having been established that a revelation was given, the extent of that revelation was next ascertained; it having been proved that Christianity is the appointed continuation and consummation of Judaism. The evidence that it is so, springs from the clear connexion, from the obvious unity, of what have been commonly called two systems; from their unity of object and of plan; from the strict

analogy of the evidence by which each is attested, and by the results which have followed the reception of the last, especially by the subjects of the first. The evidence of prophecy (from the fact of its being the mode of evidence selected, as well as from its results,) has been chiefly insisted on, as that peculiarly appropriate to the mind of your nation. The continuation and renewal of prophecy under the later scheme has been pointed out, and the facts of its delivery and complete accomplishment established. What remains?

Only that which no human being can do for you, however pure his zeal, however ardent his love, however importunate the desires of his heart that you should sympathize in his deepest enjoyments. We have done what we can, in placing before you the grounds of our own convictions: and here we stop short,—not because we have nothing more to tell, but because a participation in our feelings can only be arrived at through an adoption of our convictions. If you were to believe as we believe, you would feel as we feel; and then would be the time to declare the multitude of benefits, of hourly blessings, which we know the enlightened and pure reception of the Gospel to bestow on its disciples. While you do not believe as we believe, such declarations cannot be welcome to you, or serviceable to the cause you oppose. Permit us, however, to advert to a principle which you acknowledge,—that it is an insult to the rational nature of man, and therefore to Him who constituted that nature, to be carelessly ignorant of any truth which He has not concealed, or wilfully blind to any light which He has appointed to be universally diffused. Since Christianity exists, nothing can excuse you from the inquiry whether it comes from God; and since Christianity is spreading by permission of the Almighty, it is your duty to ascertain whether you are to have any part in it. If, further, you should find that, owing to the dispersion of your nation, your institutions are less serviceable as well as more burdensome than formerly; that, in consequence, inconsistency of belief and

laxity of morals are spreading in your body; if you should find that the spiritual state of your people is no longer progressive, while your institutions are undoubtedly undergoing change,—the way is prepared for an inquiry, whether God has indeed appointed you to remain subject to the Old Covenant, in which He gives no sign of continuing to bear His part; and whether, if the promise of a Messiah indeed remains to be fulfilled, Israel is in a fit state to receive the blessing. Examine the changes in belief and practice which have already taken place among you; and see if whatever good you have added be not insensibly derived from Christianity; if your falling away be not owing to the circumstances which render the perfect maintenance of your institutions impossible. If it be found so, you will then become in some degree aware of the nature of the exchange of the Law for the Gospel; of the moral benefit as well as the delight which attends a release from such a ritual as yours; of the purity as well as ease which hallows a wholly spiritual worship; of the animation which vivifies the more extended faith of Christianity; of the loftiness of the hope which it authorizes; of the ardour and boundlessness of the love which it tends to generate and cherish.

Do not conclude this purity and peace to be a dream of the imagination, because your nation has witnessed all too little of the lustre of this hope, and experienced much that is inconsistent with this love. Judaism was long in working its perfect work, and Christianity must be yet longer. What it has already effected for nations and for society at large, you will perhaps be better able to judge hereafter, when you will make your homes in the several nations where you dwell, and be incorporated in society, than now. What the Gospel has done for individuals you cannot fully know, or you would long since have embraced it. This you may in some measure learn from the records of the past, from the observation of the present, and especially from confessions of individual experience, where they can be had pure, and sanctioned by the tenour of the life. One

of all the multitudes extant may be presented here. It is selected on account of its probable interest to you, being the declaration of a zealous and satisfied subject of the Law, of the state of his mind under the completion of the Law.

"We are the circumcision, who worship God with our spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh: though I might have confidence even in the flesh. If any other man seem to have confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; concerning the Law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; concerning the justification which can arise by the Law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for the sake of Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count that all things are loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse that I might gain Christ, and be found of him; not having mine own justification, which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the justification which is from God because of faith: that I might know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the partaking of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if by any means I might come to the resurrection of the dead. I say not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I follow after, if indeed I may apprehend that for which I have been apprehended also by Christ. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the goal, for the prize of the heavenly calling of God by Christ Jesus."

Thus testified Paul of Tarsus. Declarations of the same kind abound in his writings, accompanied with expressions of such holy and rapturous emotion that it is not surprising that many have supposed them to refer to the transition from a mortal to an immortal life. Those, however, who have in-

formed themselves respecting the Law, its requisitions and its subjects, see abundant cause for the gratitude and exultation of the Apostle. Still, none but those who have had experience of both dispensations can completely understand how far the latter transcends the former; and the day may be near when you may be conscious of even a closer sympathy than ours with Paul of Tarsus,—a more complete participation even than ours in the impulse of himself and his brethren to “rejoice evermore.”

THE END.

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