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ARTICLE III.

THE MORAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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NOTHING is gained, but much is lost, by unwarranted claims in behalf of any good thing. Such claims, it will hardly be denied, have sometimes been made even for the Holy Scriptures themselves; and in so far as this is true, its influence must have tended to weaken, rather than to strengthen, their authority. In fact, it has proved a fruitful source of scepticism and infidelity. For, just as the attempt to interpret all scriptural allusions to physical phenomena so as to express the results of modern science has been a great obstacle to faith, so the groundless assumption that the morality which is tolerated in the Old Testament must be regarded as precisely on a par with that of the New has loaded them both with a weight which they were never intended to bear. Hence the whole subject of the relation between these two parts of the sacred canon requires to be thoroughly reworked, if God would only send us a man capable of doing it any sort of justice. Meanwhile, all that we can undertake is to throw a little light upon it for the relief of our faith from some of those moral difficulties of the Old Testament which are deeply felt by almost all students and readers of the Bible.

But before entering upon this somewhat extended discussion, it seems necessary, in order to guard against misunderstanding, that we should declare the faith which we hold in common with all Christians, that the Scriptures, both of the old and new dispensations, are, in their substance and true import, and in a sense which can be predicated of no other writings, the word of God. For, beyond controversy, this has been the faith of the church ever since these books have been in her possession. Moreover, it is a faith which

has become so inrooted in the Christian mind, and so fully identified with the growth of civilization, that we have no fears of its ever being eradicated. It is like the granite which underlies the superincumbent strata of the earth's crust — like the great mountains whose foundations defy the earthquake. It will take a great deal more than even modern scepticism has ever dreamed of to overthrow it.

For the evidences upon which it rests are such as can never lose their force. The claims to divine inspiration which the sacred writers make for themselves with such unwavering assurance; the corresponding simplicity and elevation of their style; their moral characters and manifest aims to do good; the consciousness of God, in his holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, which they everywhere express; the character of the revelations which they represent him as communicating through them to mankind; the unity of purpose and of doctrine which runs through so great a number and variety of authors for so many ages; the spirit of prophecy which they breathe; the boldness of their almost innumerable predictions, such as no men in their senses, without the consciousness of supernatural illumination, would ever have dared to hazard; the wonderful fulfilment of these predictions, especially with respect to the advent and sacrifice of Christ; the experience which the church has had for so many ages of the power of the word to enlighten, comfort, and save from sin; the fulness with which it satisfies all man's spiritual wants; the influence for good which the Christian religion, as based upon revelation, has always exerted; the miracles of Christ and his apostles, especially his resurrection from the dead, as certified by unimpeachable eye-witnesses; the difficulty of imagining that all the sacred writers, including Christ himself, were either fanatics or impostors,—such considerations as these do constitute a body of evidence for the divine authority of the Scriptures, which, as it never has been, can never be without the greatest weight and force with reasonable people.

Together with all this, which is equally good for both the

grand divisions of Scripture, we have for the New Testament, all those full and unambiguous assurances of supernatural enlightenment which Christ gave to his apostles, such as the following: "When they deliver you up take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye ought to speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth he shall testify of me. He will guide you into all truth and he will show you things to come." Now, although these promises are not to be restricted to the apostles and writers of the New Testament, yet in reason must they be understood as applying to these chosen and commissioned teachers and evangelizers of the world in an eminent manner. Moreover, the inspiration thus guaranteed to them must be conceived of as of a superior order to that of the Old Testament, inasmuch as previously to the fulfilment of these promises on the day of Pentecost, it could be said comparatively that "the Spirit was not yet given." Accordingly they claim to speak and write with all fulness of divine revelation; and this claim is abundantly confirmed, not only by their miracles, but perhaps with even greater force, by the unparalleled moral and spiritual revolution which their writings and influence have wrought in the world.

On the other hand, the inspiration of the Old Testament is supported by all the authority of the New, so that both must stand or fall together. For but one meaning can be ascribed to such declarations as the following, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Besides these and other citations of similar import which might be added, Christ himself frequently appeals to the Old Testament as of divine authority, expressly

naming David as having spoken in the Psalms by the Spirit of God, and, together with Moses and Daniel, as having prophesied concerning himself. Hence the above-cited passages from the writings of John and Peter and Paul must be understood to express the views which the apostles were instructed by their divine Master to hold and teach. He therefore who gives up the inspiration of the Old Testament is logically bound to give up that of the New; he who loses faith in Moses and the prophets will hardly be able to maintain his faith in Christ.

With this summary statement of our faith, and of some of the grounds upon which it rests, we proceed to exhibit our method of dealing with the moral difficulties which it has to overcome, and to which we shall freely concede whatever force they can reasonably claim. The statement of these difficulties will come up in order as we undertake to grapple with them; but here, at the outset, it is necessary to lay down and establish the principle by which, in most cases, we propose to solve them. This may be stated as follows: The moral and spiritual light of the New Testament is superior to that of the Old; in other words, the revelations of the old dispensation were not complete or final, but partial, in great part provisional, and necessarily accommodated to the low intellectual, moral, and spiritual condition of the people to whom they were originally communicated. We shall find that this principle rests, not only upon the reason of the case, but also upon the authority of the apostles, and of the Lord himself.

There was, then, an unavoidable necessity for such accommodation of the revelations of the Old Testament to the capacities or susceptibilities of the people to whom they were made. For it is certain from all human experience, that truths, ideas, and even rules of moral conduct, which present no difficulty to people of developed and cultivated faculties, cannot be received, nor even comprehended, by those who are in comparatively a low state of intellectual culture, moral sensibility, and spiritual enlightenment, such as,

beyond a question, was that of the Israelites in the time of Moses. For they were a vast horde of emancipated slaves, just escaped from centuries of degrading and corrupting bondage, among a people wholly given to the grossest idolatries and superstitions. Consequently they were incapable of receiving those high and pure and spiritual revelations of God and divine things which we have in the New Testament. These would have made no impression upon their unsusceptible moral and spiritual faculties — upon what Christ called the hardness of their hearts — for which reason, as he explained to the Pharisees, they were accommodated by Moses, in one case at least, with an inferior rule of moral conduct — a significant case which will come up hereafter. A national education of fifteen hundred years in the doctrines of the unity of God, and of the expiation of guilt by a sin-bearer, as well as in many other things, was indispensable to prepare them for the reception of the gospel as revealed by Christ and his apostles. The proof of this is, that God actually subjected them to such a course of training and preparation, under their ritual and moral laws, the ministry of their prophets, and the discipline of their wonderful providential history. And thus, in the fulness of time, they were actually prepared for the superior light of the new dispensation. For, notwithstanding the rejection of their Messiah by the Scribes and Pharisees and the people who followed their lead, the apostles and first heroes of the Christian religion were all Jews, and certainly could not have been raised up from among any other people. The great apostle of the Gentiles himself was a Jew, and addressed his preaching in every city first of all to his Jewish brethren. The churches which he founded throughout the Roman empire consisted at first mainly of little communities of converted Jews; in proof of which we have only to observe that the most important epistles in the New Testament, namely, those addressed to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Hebrews, are filled with arguments against Judaizing errors. Everywhere the people of Israel, then, as now, scattered abroad through the world,

were, from the influence of their training and preparation, the first to receive the gospel; and from them it spread among the Gentiles.

But this principle does not rest exclusively upon the necessity of it as evinced by human reasoning, but finally upon the authority of Christ and his apostles, by whom we find it clearly stated, strenuously defended, and copiously applied in explanation of the differences between the old and the new dispensations. Thus, in general, we are informed by Paul that "Moses put a veil over his face"; that the people "were under a cloud"; that "their minds were blinded"; that "a veil was upon their hearts, so that they could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." Now, such declarations can hardly be understood otherwise than in the sense that Moses could not tell the people, and if he had told them they could not have received,—what nevertheless was plainly true,—that the revelations delivered by him were incomplete, provisional, and destined to be supplemented, or even in part superseded, by more full and perfect disclosures in the future. For if they had been informed that this was the nature of his communications, they could not have received and held fast to them as a complete and final exhibition of the character of God and of his salvation. Yet this was the great error into which they fell, and which, continuing to blind their minds long after it should have given place to the enlightenment of the gospel, opposed the greatest obstacle to the labors of Paul for their salvation.

We come now to exhibit, in several particulars, the incompleteness and provisional character of the Old Testament revelations, together with the manner and degree in which they are affected, modified, or even superseded, by the superior light of the New. In this procedure we may anticipate that the principle which we have laid down will be still farther confirmed, not only by its adequateness to the solution of our difficulties, but also by the use which was made of it for this purpose by the apostles and by the Lord himself.

First, then, the moral law itself, as delivered by Moses, although it embodied and represented the eternal truth of the divine justice, yet as a revelation of the character of God and of the way of salvation was incomplete, and required to be supplemented by the gospel. For in connection with it the grace and mercy and love of God were not exhibited with that fulness and plainness of speech with which it set forth his justice and severity; nor was the way of escape from its penalties — the way of salvation by grace and faith — represented otherwise than in obscure symbols and adumbrations, which it subsequently required the Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Hebrews to interpret and explain. The character and spirit of that law are expounded by Paul in such words as the following: “For Moses describeth the righteousness of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of this law to do them.” It is evident, from these quotations, that in the law there was set forth a way of salvation which was, and is, and ever must be, impracticable for sinners, and which was never intended to save them, but rather to convince them of the utter impossibility of their being saved by their own agency or works. Hence, also, it is elsewhere characterized as a “ministration of condemnation” and “of death,” whose chief object was to prepare the people for that ministration of life and peace by which, in its Old Testament relations, it was to be superseded and done away. Yet in all this God was revealed to the people of that dispensation in those traits of his character which were specially adapted to their spiritual wants in their low moral and spiritual condition.

The spirit of the gospel is altogether different, and in certain respects the reverse. For its general tone is not represented by curses upon disobedience, although these are by no means wanting, but rather by blessings upon obedience: “Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are

they that mourn. . . . Blessed are the meek. . . . Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. . . . Blessed are the merciful. . . . Blessed are the pure in heart. . . . Blessed are the peacemakers." Justice and severity are predominant in the law, love and mercy in the gospel: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. . . . When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. . . . God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Here now the grace and mercy and love of God, which were veiled under the law, are fully disclosed, and a way of salvation which is practical for sinners is laid open. For here God is revealed not as inflicting the curses of the law upon us, but as giving his Son to die that we might be delivered from its penalties; and by faith in this sacrifice, involving as it does this new revelation of the character of God, we are delivered from the claims of the law as a condition of acceptance with him, and are brought under the immeasurably deeper and stronger and more tender and effectual obligations of grace and love on his part, and of love and gratitude on ours. In what respect this way of salvation is the reverse of legality appears from this — that in the law God said to the people of the old dispensation, Obey me, and I will love and bless you; but if you disobey me I will curse and destroy you. Whilst in the gospel he says to us, You have already transgressed my law and incurred all its penalties; nevertheless, I still love you with an inalienable love, and have given mine only-begotten Son to redeem you from the curse of the law by bearing it himself; therefore love me, and keep my commandments.

But for this complete unveiling of the character of God and of the way of salvation by grace and faith, the people of

the old dispensation were not prepared; therefore it was not given to them. The gospel fulness and freeness of God's love to sinners they could not yet bear; therefore it was withheld from them. How, then, it may well be asked, was it possible for them to be saved? The answer is, that they had a refuge from the condemnation and penalties of the moral law in the sacrifices which God ordained should be continually offered for their sins. These were to them, in some sort, what the sacrifice of Christ, which they typified, is to us. For when they confessed their sins over the sacrificial victim, symbolically putting them upon its head, and that victim was either slain and consumed in the fire, or sent away into the wilderness where it could never more be found, they must have understood from these expressive rites that their transgressions would never more be brought up against them. This was the divinely ordained means of communicating to them the forgiveness of their sins, peace of conscience, and reconciliation with God. But it is hardly conceivable that these typical adumbrations should have taught them more of gospel truth than we ourselves could have gathered from them without the explanations of the New Testament. The incompleteness of the knowledge attainable by them is represented in the words of the Lord to his disciples: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Hence, also, Paul could declare, in words the significance of which is strangely overlooked by those who attribute New Testament light to the people of the old dispensation, that "before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." For in what conceivable sense could he say that they "were kept under the law," except that the legal dispensation over them was still in force? or, that they "were kept shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed," if salvation by grace and faith had been fully

made known? To the same effect, also, are the words of John: "For the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. . . . The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

Moreover, it is evident that all other communications, on whatsoever subject, which were made to the people of the old dispensation, had to be conformed to their imperfect knowledge of the gospel. Accordingly it appears that, in the Old Testament, especially in the writings of Moses, the motives of hope and fear are addressed by considerations mostly of a temporal character. His allusions to a future life are so infrequent and obscure that eminent Christian authors have been unable to find them. He never speaks even of the patriarchs as going to heaven, but simply declares that they were "gathered to," or "slept with their fathers." Consequently the faith of immortality, although it certainly had some influence, must have been comparatively a feeble element of spiritual life even in the saints of that day. In their darkest hours it seems to have failed them altogether, as where David praying to be healed of some threatening illness, adds: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the state of the dead, who shall give thee thanks?" Also the same sentiment is expressed by the pious king Hezekiah, in his song of thanksgiving for his miraculous restoration to health, as follows: "The dead cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the tomb cannot hope for thy truth; the living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." Hence, also, the words of Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"; and Paul declares that a superior light upon this point "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." For in what sense

could it be said that immortality had thus been brought to light, in connection with the appearing of Christ, and through the gospel, if it had been fully revealed before ?

Since, then, the gospel, as distinguished from the law, was thus imperfectly revealed to the people of the legal dispensation, and since all other revelations were necessarily conformed to their ignorance upon this point, it follows that these revelations require, in our interpretation of them, to be supplemented and modified by those which we have in the New Testament, and that if we take them without such qualification, our knowledge of God and divine things must be, as theirs was, extremely one-sided and defective. For so great and essential is the effect produced upon the incomplete by the complete disclosures of truth, that Paul could represent the one as, in some sort, abolished by the other : " When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away."

In the second place, the ritual law, with its priesthood, sacrifices, tabernacle and temple worship, and all its ordinances, was a typical, provisional, and temporary arrangement, which was destined, from the first, to be superseded and wholly done away by a subsequent revelation. Its priesthood, though ordained of God, had no inherent validity, nor other than as typical of the priesthood of Christ. Its sacrifices had no efficacy in themselves, nor otherwise than as typical of that one offering of the body of Christ, which alone could be a valid atonement, " to finish the transgression and make an end of sins." It is the chief object of the Epistle to the Hebrews to reveal this gospel truth, as in the following and many similar passages : " The first tabernacle was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience ; which stood only in meats and drinks and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. . . . For it is impossible that, the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. . . . We are sanctified through the offering of the

body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . . For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

But that this was the character of the ritual law was not revealed to the people of the old dispensation. For if they had been capable of this knowledge, they would not have needed its educating influence, nor could they have been induced to observe it. How is it conceivable that they should have borne so patiently as they did its vast expense and intolerable burden, for thirty generations of mankind, if they had known that it had no inherent efficacy, and that the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin? Consequently, Moses gave them no hint that it was of a typical or temporary character; on the contrary, he everywhere spoke of it as if it were to continue forever: "The Lord spake unto Aaron, Behold, I have given the charge of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel . . . unto thee I have given them . . . and to thy sons forever. . . . Their anointing shall be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. . . . This day of atonement shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins, once a year. . . . Ye shall keep the passover a feast to the Lord throughout your generations by an ordinance forever." Evidently it was to such unqualified declarations as these that Paul refers in the words, "We use great plainness of speech, and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." And no wonder they could not; for so thick and impenetrable was this veil that it required the labored Epistle to the Hebrews, and many other revelations of the New Testament, to let in the light of the gospel through it. Even Peter, after all the personal instructions of the Lord, and the Pentecostal illumination, had his mind so clouded by it that it was found necessary still further to enlighten him by a divine vision. It seems plain, therefore, that the people in general, whilst they were under this law, must have understood that they received the forgiveness of sins through its sacrifices in a

sense in which we, with our New Testament light, know that this was impossible.

Now such representations as these, understood as they must have been, carried with them, of necessity, very much lower and less spiritual views of the character of God, and of divine things in general, but especially of the nature and punishment of sin, than those which are brought to light in the gospel. For when it was revealed that God could no longer be acceptably worshipped with such sacrifices, a flood of new light was poured upon his character, and upon the spirituality of the worship which he required. When it was made known that the sacrifices of the law could not take away sin, that it could be atoned for by no sacrifice less costly or precious than that of the only-begotten Son of God, then and thereby was it declared to be a spiritual, abominable, and unfathomable evil, such as had never before been conceived of by the human mind. This it was which brought out "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and the awful punishment which in the sight of God it deserves, in such expressions as "the worm that never dies the fire that never shall be quenched and these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

Here, then, we have one of these moral difficulties, together with the solution of it which is, in part supplied by the principle we have endeavored to establish. For how, it must be asked, are such expressions as those which have been cited, and which represent the ritual law as "an everlasting ordinance," to be justified? And the answer is: first, that no special stress is to be laid upon the words "everlasting" and "forever," because they are as frequently used to express times of great length, the termination of which could not be foreseen, as they are in their literal import; secondly, those spiritual things of which the rites and observances of the law were typically significant, that is, its very substance, without which it really had no meaning, shall continue literally forever; thirdly, the educating influence of this law was indispensable to prepare the people for the gospel, and this

influence could not be brought to bear upon them — they would never have endured its intolerable burden — if they had been given to understand that it was of temporary obligation, and destined to be superseded by a future revelation. If it was right to put them under this preparatory discipline, of which there can be no question, then was it right to withhold from them whatever knowledge would have rendered it incapable of being enforced. The one must be held to justify the other as its necessary consequence.

In the third place, it was evidently regarded by God as indispensable to the great object which he designed to accomplish through the instrumentality of the people of Israel, that they should be called out of the world, and separated as completely as possible from the rest of mankind. This rigorous sequestration, as we now understand, was for the purpose of their education during what Paul calls their childhood and minority, in preparation for the advent of their promised Messiah, and the gospel dispensation; in other words, that the germs of divine truth, which God had planted in the soil of Abraham and his seed, might be protected and cherished, as in a sheltered nursery, until they should take firm root, and grow up into a tree of life, which the wild and brutal nations — the *goim*, or heathen — should not be able to uproot nor cut down.

Now this separation of Israel from the heathen, being indispensable to the accomplishment of the divine purposes of grace and salvation, must be accepted with all its necessary consequences, which are very numerous, and of great significance. For among them we have the commands given through Moses to exterminate the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, which have always and justly been regarded as one of the greatest moral difficulties of the Old Testament. These commands were such as the following: “When the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly consume them. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them. . . . Thou shalt consume all the people. . . . Thou shalt destroy

their name from under heaven. . . . Thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth. . . . Thine eye shall have no pity upon them." And the Israelites themselves were threatened with a similar destruction if they should fail to execute these injunctions: "It shall come to pass that I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them." We have, also, abundant evidence of their zeal in this work of general and indiscriminate slaughter: "They utterly destroyed all that was in the city of Jericho, both man and woman, young and old. . . . Joshua drew not back his hand wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed the inhabitants of Ai. . . . We took all the cities of Sihon, king of Heshbon, and utterly destroyed the men and the women and the little ones of every city."

Now the difficulty here is not whether it was right thus to destroy, root and branch, a people whose cup of iniquity was full. Of this there can be no question with any who believe in the providence of God. For it was under his providential government that these nations, like Sodom and Gomorrah, Pompeii and Herculaneum, were actually destroyed. But the difficulty is this: how the giving of such commands to his moral creatures—how his requiring of them to slay without pity such multitudes of their fellow-creatures, including, of necessity, the aged and infirm, parents and children, infants at the breast, nursing mothers, women with child, and in their travail sorrows—how all this is to be reconciled with the character of God, the teaching of Christ, and, especially, with his law of love to enemies, and pity for the feeble and suffering. We do not write for those, if any such there be, who cannot feel that there is any difficulty here.

It may not, indeed, be possible, in the present state of our knowledge, to give a solution of this difficulty which shall be perfectly satisfactory. For we are surrounded by mysteries in the providence of God—undeniable facts—which no created mind can fathom. But it is essential to the account here given us, that the agency of the children of Israel in

this destruction of the Canaanites should be regarded as a solemn judicial act, in execution of the judgment of God upon a people whose moral corruptions were such that their continued existence upon the earth could be no longer tolerated; whose extermination, moreover, was indispensable in order that the covenant people might be effectually separated from their corrupting influence; in other words, that the whole object for which Israel had been called out of the world, and consecrated to the work of making the necessary preparation for the coming of Christ and the blessings of the gospel, might not be frustrated. Hence its justification is placed upon this ground by God himself in the words, "Thou shalt consume all the people. . . . They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee to sin against me; for if thou serve their gods it will surely be a snare unto thee." And so it proved, wherever they failed to obey these commands, in all their subsequent history. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that the highest and most spiritual laws of morality had not yet been revealed, nor could be, as is proved by the fact, until the time should come when the necessity for this outward separation of the people from other nations should cease. The commands which were given to them upon this subject, as upon all others, had to be accommodated to the degree of moral light which they were capable of receiving, and could not go beyond it. Hence this whole transaction must be regarded as belonging to a lower moral condition than that for which it was intended to prepare, though doubtless to the highest which was possible in consistency with the necessity of thus keeping the covenant people sequestered from the influence of the heathen.

Here, also, we must take into consideration the words of Paul: "Moses put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished," as applied to this separation. For they remind us of what we can hardly fail to see from other evidence, that in this case, as in the preceding, Moses could not tell his people, and if he had told them they could not have received

it, that this separation was to be temporary, that the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, which God himself had set up, was destined to be broken down. The gospel truth that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs with Israel in the great salvation, could not be revealed to the people of the old dispensation, at least in the early stages of their history, whilst the necessity of keeping up the separation was most pressing. It is true, they had glimpses and adumbrations of it, as in the promises given to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, which were more fully unfolded by the later prophets; but these foreshadowings of the great truth, though clear enough to us from the light of the gospel and of the history of their fulfilment, the people of the old dispensation did not understand, nor was it intended that they should; for if they had understood them as we do, that would have effectually broken down this partition wall before it had ceased to be indispensable for the protection of the infant church. For it consisted, in great part, of distinctions between clean and unclean animals for food and sacrifice, and of a vast system of ritual observances, including circumcision itself, all having reference to ceremonial purity, by which, as far as they were observed, the people were prevented from eating and drinking, intermarrying, and otherwise intermingling with the heathen. If, now, they had been given to understand that all these distinctions and rites were of a positive and temporary character, and would be abolished in the light of a future and higher revelation; that unclean animals were not such in their own nature, but swine in themselves were as pure as lambs, is it conceivable that they could have been induced to observe this law of distinction, with all its burdensome inconveniences, for so many ages, and to abhor swine's flesh, as they do to this day? And what, then, must have become of their separation from the heathen, to maintain which these distinctions were established, after its principal support had thus given way, and they had come to understand that it also was destined to be abolished? Hence there was an

unavoidable necessity that they should not be informed of this gospel truth ; and that they were not, we have crowning proof in the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles himself, where he speaks of it as “the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”

Since, then, it was necessary that this truth should be veiled from the people of the old dispensation, all other revelations had to be conformed to their ignorance upon this point. Hence the evangelical command to go forth and disciple all nations could not be given to the church of that day. It was no part of her duty to preach the gospel to every creature. The gospel itself, as we have seen, was very imperfectly revealed. It is true that evangelical light—twilight rays from the Sun of Righteousness, heralding the brightness of his rising—did, from time to time, fall upon the minds of the prophets, and enable them to anticipate, in a manner, that God would gather a people unto himself out of the whole world. But, as they were understood by Paul, they did not foresee “that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body,” with the people of Israel. No communications from God, with respect to his character, attributes, purposes, or providence, could be allowed to withdraw this veil which Moses had put over his face. God could not be represented to the people of that day as the God of other nations, in any such sense as that in which he is so revealed in the gospel. Other nations must needs be spoken of as aliens and outcasts, as the enemies of God and of his people.

Now, in consequence of this necessary veiling of the truth for which they were not prepared from the people of the old dispensation, they did not, and could not, know God in hi

whole character, nor in all his relations to his moral creatures, as we know him; they did not, and could not, feel towards other nations as we are instructed and required to feel by the Lord and his apostles. In their eyes, as a matter of necessity no less than of fact, the uncircumcised heathen were impure and abominable, whom, in some cases, at least, it was a pious and godly work to exterminate from the earth. In no other way, as it seems to us, is it possible to understand some of the sentiments which are expressed in the maledictory Psalms, which do not always represent God as he is revealed to us in Christ, but rather that lower and partial view of his character, which yet was the highest and best which the people, in their necessary sequestration from the rest of mankind, were capable of receiving.

These maledictory Psalms, together with other similar portions of the Old Testament, constitute one of its greatest moral difficulties. We subjoin a few examples, taken almost at random from innumerable others: "Let them be confounded and consumed together that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonor that seek my hurt. . . . Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold upon them. . . . Let their table become a snare before them, and their prosperity a trap. . . . Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents. . . . Let their eyes be darkened that they see not, and make their loins continually to shake. . . . Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. . . . Let Satan stand at his right hand. . . . Let his prayer become sin. . . . Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow; let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg. . . . Let there be none to favor his fatherless children. . . . Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

Now, it does not seem strange that good men should often be troubled to know how to deal with such fearful maledictions. For the writer well remembers that when he was a student at Princeton College, the venerable Dr. Ashbel Greene, who

had previously been president of the institution, and whose orthodoxy was one of his distinguishing traits, whilst on a visit such as he frequently made, having read at evening prayers one of these maledictory Psalms, suddenly paused and exclaimed: "Young gentlemen, what shall we do with all this cursing? I will tell you: 'The times of this ignorance God winked at'; and that is all that can be said about it." This, however, is by no means all that can be said about it, nor even this, without severe qualification; but this full recognition of the greatness of the difficulty, and this wild dash at a solution of it, by such a man, could never be forgotten.

The true solution depends upon several considerations. For, in a vast proportion of these maledictions, there are no sentiments expressed in the original Hebrew but such as are in perfect accord with New Testament light. Instead of being prayers or wishes, they are simple declarations or predictions of the punishments which shall come upon the wicked under the providence and government of a just God; and such predictions are as full and emphatic in the New Testament as they are in the Old. In many cases, if we examine them attentively, we shall see that they express love rather than hatred. For even where the Psalmist prays that his enemies may be confounded and put to shame, he often gives us to understand that the burden of his prayer is that their enmity against God and his people may be frustrated, and not that their persons or souls should be destroyed. Some of his keenest maledictions upon them he follows with prayers for their conversion, as in the following case: "O my God, make them as stubble before the wind. As a fire burneth a wood, and as a flame setteth the mountains on fire, so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek thy name, O Lord." Now, if these last words had not been added, we might have understood all the rest as an unqualified malediction upon the prophet's enemies. But here we see that it is really a prayer for their conver-

sion — that God would bring them to the saving knowledge of himself, though by the infliction of such judgments upon them as we, with our New-Testament light, are not allowed to invoke upon our own, nor even upon the enemies of God. In other cases, however, sentiments are expressed which require to be interpreted by the principle that the revelations of the Old Testament were necessarily accommodated to the degree of moral and spiritual light which the people were capable of receiving.

Here, then, it is necessary to take into consideration one of the ways in which this accommodation appears to have been effected, that is, through the mediation of the prophets. For, except in the proclamation of the ten commandments, God never spoke directly to the people themselves. It seems that they could not bear to receive communications from him, without human mediation. For when they heard that mysterious "voice of words," as "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud," which "sounded long, and waxed louder and louder," proceeding out of the midst of the cloud and flame on the summit of Mount Sinai, they were filled with terror, and fled from the awful presence. This is explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, by the words: "For they could not endure that which was commanded"; that is, their spiritual state was such that they could not receive revelations immediately from God, such as became the mouth of Jehovah to utter. Hence they said to Moses: "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou with us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." And this request God himself recognized as a reasonable one; for he said to Moses: "I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said that which they have spoken." Accordingly, it was on this occasion that he established Moses in the office of a mediator between himself and them for the delivery of his oracles, saying: "But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will

speak unto thee all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them." At the same time, also, he promised to supply them with a succession of prophets, each like unto Moses, to stand in his place after his decease, in the words of that famous prediction which included the Messiah himself, who as the last of the series "should come into the world," saying: "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 command him." Nor is there anything in their whole history more wonderful than the actual fulfilment of this prophecy through so many centuries, from Moses to Christ.

Now these prophets, possibly with some exceptions, as in the case of Balaam, were doubtless the most exalted and pure and heroic souls of the times in which they lived. But all of them, except the last, by whom the series was crowned, were men of like passions with others; and the sentiments which they felt whilst delivering the word of the Lord to the people could not always have been those of perfectly sanctified hearts. Let us endeavor to comprehend the circumstances under which they spoke. Let us ascend, in imagination, the stream of time, and of the development of moral and spiritual light in the world, until we can take our stand where David stood, three thousand years ago, and look forth out of his eyes upon the church and the world in their relations to each other. Here, now, we behold the church, consisting of one small people, surrounded by great and mighty heathen nations who stand ready to devour her. The people of God and the people of Israel are one and the same. The enemies of the holy nation and the enemies of God are hardly distinguishable, even by the prophets themselves. The wars of Israel with the surrounding heathen are a life-and-death struggle of the truth of God against the principalities and powers of evil in the world. This deadly conflict between truth and error, good and evil, which is destined to take on hereafter a spiritual form, is now at an earlier stage of its

development, and is waged in an outward manner, with carnal weapons. "For that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual."

Now, in these circumstances, in order that the people of God might not be discouraged, but might be animated and strengthened to fight manfully the good fight of faith, it was revealed to them, through the instrumentality of the prophets, that their enemies should never be allowed permanently to triumph over them, but that the church and the truth should assuredly come off more than conquerors in the end. The prophets gave utterance to this assurance mostly in their own words, in their own figures of speech, and in their own various forms of expression and style; but chiefly, as was natural, in reiterated and tremendously emphasized predictions of calamity, disaster, defeat, overthrow, and utter destruction, to the enemies of God, of his people, and his truth. And such predictions in the mouths of the prophets naturally and inevitably took the form of maledictions; for how otherwise could they be sufficiently emphasized to assure the hearts of God's people, who were as sheep and lambs in the midst of ravening wolves?

These maledictions, therefore, are to be understood as the revelation of the judgments of God upon men and nations regarded as the incorrigible enemies of his church, his truth, and his salvation; and such judgments are as frequent and emphatic in the New Testament as they are in the Old. But if at times the human sentiments of the prophets, or even their resentments of personal wrongs and outrages, did color their forms of expression in delivering to the people God's assurances of the overthrow and destruction of his and their enemies, what is this but that they were men of like passions with those to whom they were sent? Was it not for this very likeness that they were chosen of God to be the organs of communication between him and their brethren, because he saw that he could reach the minds of his people more effectually in this way than he could without such mediators? What though, whilst they waited for the fulness of evan-

gelical light, and in the flame of their unrivalled patriotism, they felt, and sometimes gave expression to, a joy which was too near akin to that of revenge over the assured downfall of their proud and cruel oppressors, by whom their sacred country was ravaged, their holy city and temple burned with fire, and they themselves carried away captive among the heathen, — in fact, transported to penal settlements, — what does it all amount to, but that they had “this treasure” of God’s eternal purpose to defend his church and people, and to punish his and their incorrigible enemies, “in earthen vessels”? This, surely, ought not to weaken our faith in their deliverances as being in their substance and true meaning the very word of God.

Another of these moral difficulties is connected with the custom which prevailed among the Israelites, and all others of their time, to include the innocent children and families of criminals in the punishment of their parents. Thus, by the order of Joshua, “the sons and daughters” of Achan were put to death for their father’s sin. Jehu, also, in fulfilment of prophecies by Elijah and Elisha, slew all the family and kindred of Ahab, “until he left him none remaining.” His sons, to the number of “seventy persons,” were thus beheaded at one time, and their heads were carried in baskets and deposited in two heaps at the gate of the city of Jezreel. In like manner, David, in a time of famine, inquired of the Lord for what it had been sent; and “the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites,” that is, in violation of the sworn league which Joshua had made with them. By way of atonement for this crime, and upon a demand made by the surviving Gibeonites, David took the two sons of Saul by Rispah his concubine, and five of his grandsons by Michal his daughter (Michal being probably a clerical error for Merab) and delivered them up to the Gibeonites, who straitway “hanged them up [or crucified them] unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul.” And here, by the way, we have an incident of overwhelming pathos; for “Rispah, the daughter of

Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them from heaven, and suffered not the birds of the air to rest upon them by day nor the beasts of the field by night." Had not this poor mother some rights in her children? Would Christ have commanded that these seven innocent persons should be thus horribly done to death in expiation of a crime committed by their father or grandfather, probably before some of them were born?

We have no hesitation in answering that Christ would have given no such command; neither does the inspired record claim for this execution the sanction of divine authority. For the oracle which ascribed the famine to the guilt of Saul and his bloody house does not even suggest any such atonement. There is nothing to indicate that either David or the Gibeonites acted by the direction of God in putting these men to death. For aught that appears in the record, it was a judicial murder, for which there was no excuse; and this view of it is confirmed by the fact that all such punishments had been expressly prohibited by Moses, in the words: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for their fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin." It seems that this law was powerless against the universal custom of the times. Precisely the same view is to be taken of the execution of Achan's children. Nor is the case of Jehu different, although it is somewhat complicated by the prophecies which had gone before concerning the destruction of Ahab's house. But these prophecies cannot be held to justify the agency of those by whom they were fulfilled—least of all, that shocking spectacle of human heads which was exhibited at the gate of Jezreel. For the sufferings of Christ were equally a matter of prophecy; but that did not justify those who crucified him. All such cases must be interpreted by the principle contained in the following words of Peter, addressed to the crucifiers of the Lord: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge

of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Thus Jehu, notwithstanding his professed zeal for the Lord, was an idolater in heart and practice, and evidently had no other object in cutting off the whole house of Ahab than to secure his own possession of the throne. At the same time, the purposes of God as revealed by his prophets were fulfilled, and that great law of his providence expressed in the words, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me," was carried into effect. For this law, ordained for all times and dispensations alike, that the children shall be partakers of the evil as well as the good of their parents, simply represents a fact of the divine providence which is patent to all men, which is a necessary consequence of the organic unity of the family, and against which all objections are as vain and foolish as against any other fact of the constitution of the universe.

It remains now for us to consider after what manner our Lord himself recognizes and applies to these moral difficulties of the Old Testament the principle by which, in most of the preceding cases, we have attempted to solve them. For in his sermon on the mount, and elsewhere, he refers to a number of the enactments or allowances of the Mosaic law, and either completes or corrects them, as he judged that they required. It is true, indeed, that his criticisms and corrections have commonly been explained as applying not to the law itself, but to misunderstandings or perversions of it by its Jewish interpreters; but such explanations cannot be maintained without resorting both to misinterpretation and mistranslation. For the words *ἐβλήθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις*, which in the English Bible are translated sometimes "it was," and sometimes "it hath been said by them of old time," ought to have been uniformly rendered, as is now generally acknowledged, "it was said to them of old time." There is no reason whatever for this variation from "was" to "hath been." With respect to the rendering "it was said by [in-

stead of to] them of old time," the Greek will bear either sense; but the former is proved to be incorrect by the fact that in four out of six cases the statements of what was said under this formula are made in the precise words of the law, as delivered either by God himself in the Decalogue, or by Moses in his name, and in the other two perfectly fair and unimpeachable abstracts or summaries are given. Hence this rendering, "it was said by," requires that God and Moses, whose precise words are quoted under this formula, should be meant by "them of old time." But if Moses could, surely God could not, be fitly or reverently designated by any such expression. Now, if Christ had intended simply to correct perversions or misunderstanding of the law, no reason can be assigned for his exact quotation of its words, nor for setting his own teaching in contrast with them, under the strong formula of opposition: "It was said to them of old time, but I say unto you." In addition to all this, we shall see hereafter how totally inapplicable this view is to one case, at least, wherein he expressly prohibits what Moses undeniably had allowed.

The words which have been misinterpreted in support of this view are as follows: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Now, in this declaration the Lord evidently intended to guard against that entire misunderstanding of his relation to the law which would have been natural, perhaps unavoidable, from his subsequent treatment of its enactments; but he cannot reasonably be understood as affirming its absolute completeness in the form in which it had been delivered "to them of old time," nor that one jot or one tittle of it should never pass away. For he himself, in the same breath, states a condition upon which very much might and did pass from the law, namely, that it should be fulfilled; and this fulfilment to which he refers is his work, not ours. Consequently these words have no

bearing upon the question whether the law, in its requirements of us, was such that it could never have anything added to or taken from it. He fulfilled the ritual law, in consequence of which it ceased to be of any moral obligation, although it had been called "an everlasting ordinance"; also, the moral law as a condition of acceptance with God, in consequence of which its penal claims ceased to stand against the believers. Now, if the words "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled," are not inconsistent with these two great modifications of it, still less are they inconsistent with his giving to it, regarded as a rule of life, its final and perfect form, wherever it had been provisionally enacted, or incompletely made known "to them of old time."

We proceed, then, to exhibit these six cases wherein our divine Teacher completes by correcting or extending the provisions of the moral law as delivered to the people of the old dispensation. In two of these he refers to the decalogue itself, by quotation of its very words, and develops its spiritual import both with respect to the extent of its obligation and to the punishment of its violation.

In the first case he quotes the sixth commandment, and subjoins a reference to the judgment of God incurred by its violation, — in which reference he gives a perfectly fair summary of the general import of the law, — then he adds what he judged necessary to complete it: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Is it not evident that he here treats the commandment itself as not expressing the whole truth? For the condemnation of an outward act does not necessarily express condemnation of the state of mind from which it springs; neither does the prohibition of murder logically

contain a prohibition of injurious words. Consequently, he here proceeds to complete this commandment by unfolding the spirituality of its obligation, as comprehending the feeling of anger without just cause ; by extending it to all injurious and reviling words ; and by adding to it what it does not even intimate, and what cannot fairly be inferred from anything in the whole law of Moses, namely, that the punishment of its violation included the future torments of hell ; in all which it seems plain enough that he is dealing with the commandment itself, rather than with any perverse misunderstanding of it.

This, however, is still more evident, if possible, in the second case, in which he quotes the seventh commandment. But here we must take into view the impure relations between the sexes which were tolerated under the old dispensation, and which our Lord evidently contemplated in his treatment of this commandment. For in the law no restriction appears to have been laid upon polygamy or concubinage, both which, on the contrary, are regarded without censure or reproof. Except that kings were forbidden to multiply wives and horses to themselves, we find nothing in the law to restrain any man from having as many wives and concubines as he might desire. In fact these customs originated among the Hebrews in the very source of their life as a distinct people, and were authorized by their noblest examples. For Abraham himself, their great forefather and covenant head, although he restricted himself to one wife at a time, seems, from the following notice, to have had more than one concubine : " Unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from his son Isaac, while he yet lived." Jacob, also, the father of the twelve patriarchs, by whose God-given name of Israel his descendants have always delighted to distinguish themselves, was both a polygamist and a concubinish ; and if he had not been, there would have sprung from him but six tribes at most, instead of the sacred number twelve. What restrictions in this respect his posterity could have been induced

to accept, and what must have been the influence of these high examples, may readily be inferred. For these impure sexual relations, in the very fountain of their ethnic life, and these high examples, could not fail to influence their subsequent history. Hence the populous harem of David himself, and the one thousand wives and concubines of Solomon.

Now, with all this in view, together with much more which will require to be exhibited in the next case, under the head of divorce, our Lord here declares that, in the superior light of the new dispensation, such impure relations between the sexes could not be tolerated. He says nothing, indeed, expressly about polygamy or concubinage, but strikes directly at the impurity of heart from which they sprang, and which the seventh commandment, in the form in which it had been delivered to the people of the old dispensation, did not explicitly condemn. He places the stigma of divine condemnation upon the bosom sin from which all impure acts proceed; also upon its primary form of expression, the lustful eye; and he adds to the commandment what, in its original form, it did not even suggest, namely, that its violation incurs the punishment of hell: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee [in this way] pluck it out and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Such is our Lord's treatment of the decalogue itself, in order that it might be made fully to express what the perfect law of moral duty required, together with the spiritual penalty of its violation. Its previous insufficiency in this respect is to be explained solely by the fact, to which he subsequently refers, that the people of the old dispensation, by reason of the hardness of their hearts, were incapable of receiving it in any more searching or spiritual form. And we shall immediately see that he treats with still greater

boldness other enactments or allowances of the law of Moses, which were so far accommodated to the moral capacities of the people that they now required to be abrogated altogether.

Accordingly, in the third and most significant of these cases, Christ, by his own authority, totally abrogates that freedom of divorce which had been previously allowed. For we find nothing in the law to restrain any man from putting away his wife, or wives, at his own pleasure, nor from marrying other women, nor women so divorced from marrying other men. On the contrary, all these customs were tolerated in the following prescribed form: "When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it into her hand, and send her out of his house; and when she is departed, she may go and be another man's wife." And, from the manner in which such divorces are referred to by the later prophets, as also from our knowledge of human nature, we may be sure that they ultimately became very common, and an evil of enormous magnitude.

One reason for this toleration, however, may have been that it enabled the prophets to purify the people, from time to time, after they had corrupted themselves by intermarriages with heathen women. This, at least, was the most important use that ever seems to have been made of it. For, notwithstanding the stringent prohibitions of Moses, as in the times before the flood, the charms of "the daughters of men" often proved irresistible to the frail "sons of God." These prohibitions were a feeble obstacle to the tide of previous custom, both of the people and their princes. For the twelve sons of Jacob, and heads of the tribes of Israel, must have had alien wives. Joseph, we know, was the husband of an Egyptian woman, who was the mother of the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the former of which became so numerous and powerful that, throughout the subsequent history, it was the great rival of the tribe of Judah. Judah himself had at least one Canaanitish wife, and his

son Pharez, from whom descended the royal and sacred line of David, was the offspring of his involuntary connection with his daughter-in-law, who, also, probably was a Canaanitess. Farther on in the history, we find Salmon, a prince of the house of Judah, married to Rahab, a Canaanitish harlot, who was the mother of Boaz, who was the husband of Ruth, a Moabitess. All these were the immediate ancestors of David, and, remotely, of the Lord himself. David, also, had alien women among his numerous wives, one of whom was the mother of Absalom; and Solomon had many such, among whom an Ammonitess was the mother of Rehoboam, his successor on the throne; whilst his marriage with another, the daughter of Pharaoh, was, as it seems, the occasion upon which he composed his "Song of Songs." In fine, the captives who returned from Babylon, influenced, no doubt, by these high examples, immediately began to corrupt themselves by intermarrying with, and "doing according to the abominations of, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites." It was on this occasion that the prophet Ezra took advantage of this freedom of divorce which Moses allowed, to purify "the holy seed," by constraining upwards of one hundred heads of families to put away their heathen wives.

But the great reason why this freedom was tolerated must have been that which our Lord himself gives, in this passage, where he abrogates it in the most unequivocal manner: "It was said, Whosoever will put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; but I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is [so] divorced committeth adultery." Now, when the Pharisees objected to this doctrine on the ground that Moses had authorized them thus to repudiate their wives, he admits the fact as undeniable, and assigns as the reason for this toleration the hardness of their hearts, which rendered them incapable of receiving any better or more perfect

rule of moral conduct. At the same time he reiterates his own prohibition of what Moses had allowed, on the ground that it was not in accordance with the eternal laws of morality, — “from the beginning it was not so,” — and affirms on his own authority, as before, that if they should continue to practise it they would incur the guilt of adultery: “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so: And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is [so] put away doth commit adultery.”

Here, now, we have a case which clearly interprets all the others, not as directed against misunderstanding or perversions of the law, but as qualifying or completing, or even abrogating, those things in it which had been accommodated to the low moral and spiritual susceptibilities of the people, and replacing them with final and absolute revelations. Thus, we have established, on the authority of Christ himself, the main principle which we have applied to the solution of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament. And what can we possibly gain — do we not stultify ourselves — by denying that he opposes, in those cases, his own teaching to things which Moses had allowed, when he himself unequivocally admits the fact, and fairly shoulders the whole difficulty?

Hence, in the fourth case, he must, in reason, be under-

stood in a similar manner. For here he refers to a rule of morality many times reiterated by Moses in such words as the following: "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely. If a man swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, but shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." And, precisely as in the last case, he absolutely prohibits what is here allowed: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of the evil one." Our present purpose does not require us to touch the vexed question, whether this is to be understood as a prohibition of judicial, as well as private, oaths; but simply to show that the Lord here forbids what Moses had allowed.

In the fifth case, he takes up the *lex talionis* as given by Moses, quoting his exact words, which, whether so intended or not, the people were left free to understand as equally applicable both to private and to public wrongs. For in the whole law there is no intimation that these words were to be limited to the administration of public justice; nor were they so understood, as is evident from the regulations given concerning the avenging of blood and the cities of refuge. Now, to all this the Lord opposes what was altogether unknown to the people of the old dispensation, namely, his own doctrine of non-resistance to evil: "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if a man shall sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Again, we need

not inquire whether all this is to be interpreted literally, or by the common figure of speech called hyperbole.

In the sixth and last case, he lays down the New Testament law of love to our enemies, with a reference to what had gone before precisely similar to those in the other cases: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy." Now, it would seem that these preceding cases, especially the third, in which undeniably he revokes what had been previously allowed, ought, if other evidence were wanting, to govern the interpretation of this one. For, although the latter clause of what "was said" does not occur in the Old Testament, yet it does not seem to be a strained or unfair summary of such passages as the following: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee in the way when ye came forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, all the feeble ones behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven: thou shalt not forget it. An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation forever: because they met you not with bread and water by the way when ye came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor to curse thee Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their good all thy days forever." All this, no doubt, was indispensable to secure that rigorous sequestration of the covenant people from the influence of the heathen without which the great object for which they had been called out of the world could not be accomplished. But is it in accordance with New Testament light that they should be thus enjoined to cherish from generation to generation the memory of the injuries which they had received from these neighboring and kindred tribes? Is not the appeal here made to this motive in order to secure the result

as palpable an accommodation to their low moral condition which rendered them unsusceptible of higher and purer motives, as that freedom of divorce which Moses allowed, and which Christ abrogated? Hence he proceeds to deal with this case precisely as he had dealt with that, and with all the others: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust."

The practical consequences of the views which have now been presented are very numerous and far-reaching; but our prescribed limits exclude them. We can only add, in conclusion, that no objection to the method we have employed in dealing with these moral difficulties of the Old Testament can have any force or validity which does not offer a more satisfactory solution of them, and which does not invalidate the evidence here given that this was the method adopted by the Lord himself. Until this is done, we may safely rest in the conclusion that the moral light of the New Testament is superior to that of the Old, and that whatever there may be in the latter which is not in perfect harmony with the teaching of Christ is to be explained by the unripeness of the times, and is to be corrected, as he sets us the example of correcting it, by the perfect light of his own words and gospel.