

A HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE
TO THE GALATIANS.

XXVIII. "COVENANT" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.¹

THE idea is exceptionally important in Biblical language. But the Greek term *διαθήκη*, which was taken to represent it, is so obscure, and it is so difficult to find any trustworthy information about the Greek usage, that the attempt must be made to treat the subject a little more accurately and less vaguely than the ordinary books. Most writers on "Covenant" discuss the theological and philosophical side very elaborately, and confine themselves to a few vague words about the Greek use of the term *διαθήκη*, though it occurs nearly three hundred times in the Greek Old Testament, and thirty-three times in the New (almost entirely in Paul and Hebrews, or with reference to the blood of Christ in the Last Supper).

I touch upon the subject with reluctance and diffidence. It lies beyond the sphere of my knowledge, among the obscure mysteries of Greek law, and I shall be very grateful for any corrections of, or apposite additions to, the statements made in the following paragraphs.

The Septuagint translators found themselves confronted with a difficult problem, when they had to select a Greek word to translate the Hebrew *berith*. The Hebrew word, denoting primarily an agreement, private or public, among

¹ The final corrections for my last article reached the printer too late to be used. The most important may be made by adding in p. 298, l. 4: "compare *δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*, Gal. v. 5"; in p. 299, l. 6, "*πνεύματι*, Gal. v. 5"; and in p. 296, note, "p. 118 f." Also in p. 299 the footnote refers to l. 22.

men, guaranteed and confirmed by weighty and solemn oaths on both sides, had become almost a technical term to denote the promises made, and confirmed by repetition, by God to the ancestors of the Hebrew people, especially Abraham, and, in a much less degree, Isaac and Jacob. As Professor A. B. Davidson says,¹ it "had become a religious term in the sense of a one-sided engagement on the part of God." This sense was peculiar and unique. Nothing like it was known to the Greeks, and therefore there was no Greek word to correspond to it. Accordingly, the translators were compelled to take some Greek word, which hitherto had denoted something else, and apply it to their purpose. The word selected must necessarily be encumbered by associations connected with its recognised meaning, and, therefore, must be to a certain degree unsuitable. The problem was to find the least unsuitable word.

A word which in some respects corresponded well to the sense required was *συνθήκη*, which brought out the binding force and legal solemnity of the idea. But it was unsuitable because it implied so pointedly that two persons standing more or less on a footing of equality (though not necessarily on perfect equality) are concerned, each of whom joins in the act with a certain degree of power and voluntary action. But in the Biblical idea the power and the action lie entirely on one side. God gives the assurance, binds Himself by the promise, and initiates alone the whole agreement. The other side merely accepts the agreement, and has simply to fulfil the conditions, which are often unexpressed, for God foresees the course of events, and knows how far the future action of the chosen recipients will fulfil the conditions. But the history of the Greek rendering of the Old Testament shows that *συνθήκη*

¹ In Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, i. p. 514.

must have been felt to have some claim, for the later translators, Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus, use the word *συνθήκη* in a number of cases, where the Septuagint version has *διαθήκη*.¹

The word *ἐπαγγελία*, promise, might also have been used. It has the advantage of expressing strongly that the action and the initiative proceed entirely from one side. But it lacked entirely the idea of bond, of solemn guarantee and the binding force of oaths and religious sanctity, which was absolutely indispensable. It was used, for example, to indicate the public promises, made by a candidate for public office, as to what he would do when elected; there was no binding force in these promises beyond the unpopularity likely to accrue, if they were not carried out at least to some extent; and it was recognised that they were the stock-in-trade of a candidate, which might be broken as far as was safe. Hence the word is very rarely used in the Old Testament, and never to represent *berith*.

In the New Testament, on the other hand, it is rather common. Paul seems to have liked it, as expressing the perfect voluntariness of the act of God. It made the "covenant" an act of God's grace, wholly undeserved by any previous desert on the part of the recipients. Hence he even speaks of "the covenants of the promise" (*Eph.* ii. 12), *i.e.* the solemn, binding, holy engagement of God's voluntary grace and kindness.

It is characteristic of the change of spirit that the Old Testament uses only the word indicating binding, inexorable legal force, the New Testament prefers² the word indicating free, undeserved, kindness and grace.

The word *Diatheke* was fixed upon by the Septuagint

¹ The Sept. version uses *συνθήκη* in a few cases to represent other Hebrew words, and, in one case, 4 Kings xvii. 15, one of the texts uses it to represent *berith*.

² Paul uses *διαθήκη* 9 times, *ἐπαγγελία* 25 times. In *Hebrews*, *διαθήκη* occurs 17 times, *ἐπαγγελία* 14 times.

translators to represent *berith*. This resolve must have been formed at the beginning of their work. They took the word in spite of its associations with human business, on the ground of its character as a whole. Now the word *Diatheke* went through a rapid course of development during the period 300 B.C. to about 100 A.D.; but the Septuagint translators, taking the word about 285 B.C., found it without any of the connotation derived from the changes that affected it after 300 B.C. It had such marked advantages for their purposes that their choice could not have been doubtful.

In the first place, the *Diatheke* was a solemn and binding covenant, guaranteed by the authority of the whole people and their gods. It was originally executed verbally before the assembled people as a solemn religious act, the people being parties to it; and even in the late third or second centuries B.C., when it had become a private document, the reigning sovereigns were made parties to it, and named executors of it: this was, of course, a mere form, a sort of legal fiction, substituted for the old fact that the public authority was actually a party to the *Diatheke*.

In the second place, the *Diatheke* was primarily an arrangement for the devolution of religious duties and rights, and not merely a bequeathing of money and property.¹ The heir was bound to carry on the religion of the family, and was placed there for that purpose.

In the third place, the maker of the *Diatheke* had the full power in his hands, and the party benefited by the *Diatheke* exercised no authority in the making of it. The latter had only to fulfil passively the conditions, and he succeeded to the advantages of the *Diatheke*.

In the fourth place, while the noun *διαθήκη* is confined almost exclusively to the disposition of one's property and

¹ See above, p. 303.

duties by Will,¹ the verb *διατίθεσθαι* is used also in the sense of "to dispose of one's property by sale," and in various other senses of the term "dispose"; but in every case one party disposes with authority. The Scotch legal term "disposition" best translates *Diatheke*.

Finally, the central idea expressed in *διαθήκη* represented fairly one important side of the Biblical conception. The *Diatheke* was the concrete expression of individual authority over property, and embodied the reaction against the former system of family authority. The tradition is that Solon passed the first law in Athens permitting the owner of property to bequeath it by a *Diatheke*, whereas previously the family to which the owner belonged inherited in default of children. Solon, however, gave the right of bequeathing only in default of male children, only under the form of adoption, and with the obligation of marrying the daughter if there was one. Gradually the freedom of making *Diatheke* was widened, the individual became more and more master of his property, and its disposition and the claim even of his children became weaker. He was permitted to bequeath legacies to strangers without adoption; but these legacies seem to have been classed as gifts (*δωρεαί*), not as inheritance, and were restricted in certain ways (Mitteis, p. 336); by common Greek custom and feeling the son must inherit, and an heir was called a son. In the cases which are most familiar to us in inscriptions legacies took, as a rule, the form of religious endowments intended to perpetuate the

¹ That such was the sense of *διαθήκη* in ordinary Greek is attested by the lexicons and by many inscriptions (see p. 300). The only exception quoted from Aristoph., *Av.* 439, is not very clear. It contains a joke founded on some unknown popular story of the ape and the woman (or his wife); the story is explained by the scholiasts in the usual Aristophanic style, but little value attaches to their evidence. Dr. Hatch, *Essays in Bibl. Greek*, p. 47 f., exaggerates the loose expression of Lightfoot (quoted on p. 300, n. 3), thinking that *διαθήκη* means "covenant" several times in Classical Greek, and regularly in Hellenistic. But neither quotes any example except under Biblical influence.

cult and the memory of the deceased; they are on the same footing as gifts made by a living person to keep up the religion and the worship of his deceased child or relative;¹ and are sometimes by consent of the heirs, *i.e.* the sons (above, p. 204).

Thus the Diatheke expressed strongly the absolute authority of the disposer, who in the Biblical "Covenant" was God himself.

The owner could even disinherit his son. But the act of disinheritance must be performed by the father publicly, during his lifetime, and for good reasons.² Even in the fifth century after Christ the principle remained in force in Syria, persisting from Seleucid custom and law, that the father could only put away his son on good grounds. On the other hand, in Greek law, a daughter was not strictly an heiress. She had an indefeasible right to a dowry; but she was styled an *ἐπίκληρος*, not a *κληρονόμος* (as a son or adopted son was); and her dowry must not encroach seriously on the son's portion.

Further, the owner and disposer could affect by his Will the disposition of his property for generations. Thus, in an unpublished Greek Will found in Egypt,³ a man leaves his property to his wife for her lifetime, and thereafter to the children of his concubine, who on their part are not free to alienate it, but must leave it to their own family.

Thus, even after the Greek Will had lost its original character of being open and public, immediately effective, and irrevocable, the word Diatheke still retained many characteristics which fitted it to be used as the rendering for *berith*. But the change in the character of the Greek

¹ A good example of this is given in *Inscriptions d'Asie Mineure I Amorion* in *Rev. Ét. Gr.* 1889, p. 18.

² Mitteis, p. 336; so certainly in Seleucid (South-Galatian) law.

³ Communicated (like the other unpublished Wills quoted below) by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt (to whom I am much indebted): period of Trajan.

Will tended to make the word less suitable. The steps of the change, and their dates, are obscure; and in regard to the following notes, I should be especially grateful for correction. To describe the development of the Greek Will would require a treatise; but some points bearing on the New Testament usage of *Diatheke* may be put together here. The new evidence gained from the many Wills of Greek settlers found in Egypt, from inscriptions, and from the Græco-Syrian Law-Book¹ of the fifth century after Christ, has never been collected and arranged. The obscurity in which the subject is involved may be gathered from the words used by such a high authority as Dr. W. E. Ball: "It need hardly be said that St. Paul, in any metaphor based upon Will-making, could only refer to the Roman Will. The Romans were the inventors of the Will." He speaks on the assumption that there was no Greek system of Will-making. But, as soon as we realize that in Tarsus, in Syria, in South Galatia, and at Ephesus, Paul was in the region where Greek Wills had been a familiar fact of ordinary life before a single Roman had set foot in the Eastern land, and where Greek Wills were still customary when Paul was writing, the case assumes a different aspect.

The subject is complicated by difference of custom and law in different Greek countries, and by the way in which Roman law affected Greek law in the Eastern Provinces. For example, a Greek Will of A.D. 189 in Egypt is expressed quite in the Roman style and after Roman custom,² and the Græco-Syrian Law-Book, while retaining many points of Greek law,³ uses many Roman ideas, and observes the rule of the *Lex Falcidia* B.C. 40, that three-

¹ Bruns and Sachau, *Ein Syrisch-römisches Rechtsbuch aus dem fünften Jahrhundert*, 1880.

² Mommsen in *Berlin Sitzungsber.*, 1894, p. 48 ff.

³ See above, p. 302.

fourths of the testator's property is at his own disposal, but one-fourth must go to his children.¹

In the history of the Biblical term, it is clear that it was affected by the development in the meaning of the legal term. In *Hebrews* ix. 15 the writer is troubled by the fact that a *Diatheke* has no validity except after the disposer's (*i.e.* the testator's) death. Such a difficulty evidently was not felt by the Septuagint; and Paul, writing to the Galatians, iii. 15 ff., does not feel it, and assumes that they will not feel it. To them, clearly, *Diatheke* (though it did not actually operate to cause division of the property until the disposer's death) was valid from the moment when it was executed (publicly, of course) and deposited in the Record Office, through which all Greek Wills, so far as our knowledge extends, had to pass.

The passing through the Record Office took the place of the ancient execution before the public assembly.² "In the Record Office were preserved public documents of all kinds, as well as copies of important private documents, title-deeds, wills, records of the sale of real property, mortgages, loans, etc. Before a copy of any such deed was accepted in the Office, its legality and validity were verified; and thus the official in charge of the office played an important part in the business of the city. The existence of a certified copy of a deed in the Record Office was accepted as proof of legal right; and this simple guarantee facilitated the borrowing of money on the security of property, besides making the transfer of property and the verification of titles very simple."³

The Greek Wills in Egypt went through a peculiarly

¹ The form was that the heir inherited the whole, but was obliged to pay out of the property such legacies as the testator ordered. The *Lex Falcidia* provided that these legacies could not exceed three-quarters.

² Compare also the statements in Wills found in Egypt (all by Greeks and in Greek) that the Will was executed *ἐν ἀγυῖαι* or *ἐπὶ ἀγορανόμῳ*.

³ *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, Part ii. p. 368 f.

rapid development. The soldiers who settled there were separated from their family, and sole masters of their fortune. The family influence on the Diatheke, and family rights over the property of the individual, therefore, had no existence. Everything concurred to give the individual owner absolute right to dispose of his property as he pleased. The development would go on continuously through the centuries, for Egypt was a battlefield for Greeks and Romans. Hence in a will dated in the year 123 B.C.¹ the testator leaves all his property away from his two sons, except two beds: all the rest he bequeaths to his second wife. In the wills in Egypt of the first two centuries after Christ there is often contained the provision that the testator is free to alter or invalidate.

But in Lycaonia and Southern Phrygia, as was pointed out,² the Greek influence was strongest under the early Seleucid kings, and then grew weaker (so far at least as the existing form of government was concerned). The Will in the Galatian Churches was likely to retain more of the early Seleucid type, and to be regarded (as Paul says) as an irrevocable document, which had to be taken up and observed in any subsequent Will (*ἐπιδιαθήκη*), as seems to be the case even in an Egyptian Will of the second century B.C., quoted in a note to p. 303.

The Greek Diatheke came to the East with Greek settlers and soldiers and colonies, in the third century B.C., or earlier, and therefore with the associations of its past history. The Roman Will came much later, as a fact in the law of the conquerors, and without any associations from its past history: it appeared in the East as a document which had no standing and no meaning until after the testator's death. Now the Epistle to the Hebrews moves entirely in the atmosphere of Roman law. "The

¹ Gizeh no. 10388, unpublished, communicated by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt.

² See above, p. 294.

Rabbinical Will was unknown before the Roman Conquest of Palestine, and was directly based upon the Roman model."¹ Even under the rule of Herod in Palestine, as of Amyntas in Galatia,² the new law introduced was almost certain to be Roman, not Greek. The pleadings in Rome about the comparative validity of Herod's last Will are of the Roman character: the last Will is tacitly acknowledged to be the only one valid, unless it could be shown to have been executed in a state of unsound mind.³

Even if the Epistle was addressed (as some think) to the Church in Rome, not to that in Jerusalem, that would only show more clearly how Roman is the atmosphere in which it moves. The writer of the Epistle was probably a Jew, resident in Cæsarea, for it was, as I believe, written by the Church of Cæsarea during Paul's imprisonment.

Throughout the difficult passage *Hebr.* ix. 11-22 *Diatheke* means Will or "Disposition"; but the writer finds the same difficulty that we should feel in speaking of God's last Will and Testament. He tries to solve it by saying that God's *Diatheke* needs always a death before it becomes valid, once the death of calf or goat, now the death of Christ. This is really a conceit, forced on the writer, because in the law familiar to him *Diatheke* had lost much of the sense which it had in the Septuagint, and still had to the South Galatians.

XXIX. THE ARGUMENT IN GALATIANS III. 16.

He saith not "And to seeds," as of many; but as of one, "And to thy seed," which is Christ.

It is necessary for Paul's argument to show that all nations, and not Jews alone, have the right to share in the

¹ Dr. Ball, *Contemp. Rev.*, Aug., 1891, p. 287. He is undoubtedly right in this statement.

² See above, p. 292.

³ Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* xvii. 9, 5.

blessings promised to Abraham. He finds the proof in the fact that the various promises made to Abraham were made equally to his seed.¹ Now, as Lightfoot says, "with a true spiritual instinct even the Rabbinical writers saw that 'the Christ' was the true seed of Abraham: in Him the race was summed up, as it were; without Him its separate existence as a peculiar people had no meaning." In "the seed of Abraham" all nations were to be blessed (*Gen.* xxvi. 8). It cannot be doubted by those who regard the evolution of Hebraic religion and the coming of Christ as a series of steps in the gradual working out of the will of God, that this interpretation of the "seed of Abraham" is justified.

But, instead of using this way of reasoning simply, Paul seems to have been tempted to aim at the same result by a verbal argument. The Greek philosophers were often led astray by an idea that mere grammatical facts and forms contained some deep philosophical or mystical truth. Plato's *Cratylus* is sufficient evidence of this. Paul, therefore, argues that as the singular, "seed," is used, not the plural, the single great descendant of Abraham is meant, and not the many less important descendants. This is, obviously, a mere verbal quibble, of no argumentative force. Paul sees clearly and correctly the result to be aimed at, but he reaches the result by a process of reasoning which has no more force in logic than the poorest word-splitting of any old Greek philosopher or Hebrew Rabbi.

The attempt which Lightfoot makes to defend the character of the reasoning from "seed" and "seeds" cannot be pronounced successful. It amounts practically to this, "the theological result aimed at is right" (as we fully admit), "therefore the reasoning can hardly be wrong."

¹ *Gen.* xiii. 15, xvii. 8.

If we set aside the verbal fallacy, the argument remains complete and correct.

The promises were made to Abraham and to his seed.

The true "seed of Abraham" is "the Christ."

"Christ" is the whole body of true Christians.

The promises were made to all Christians.

That is to say, the promises made to Abraham are the heritage of the whole Church of Christ, the whole multitude of those who are justified by faith in Christ.

The argument is one more of the many ways in which Paul reiterates the fundamental truth that he has to drive home into the minds of the Galatians, or rather to revivify in their memory.¹ It is specially obvious here that Paul is appealing to familiar doctrines, already set forth to the Galatians, and not arguing to a circle of readers on a topic new to them.

XXX. GALATIANS III. 19-22.

In this passage Paul guards against a possible misinterpretation of his words, which might be dangerous. It might be said that he was representing the Law as being in opposition to the Promises made to Abraham and his seed. He must therefore define clearly what he conceives to be the function of the Law. The same person, the one God, gave both the Promises and the Law. The Promises were to be fulfilled, not immediately, but after a long interval, not to each individual of the human "Seed of Abraham," but to and through "the Seed," *i.e.* the Christ. The Law is the preparation for the fulfilment of the Promises. There must be a clear and peremptory forbidding of sin, before the sin is made emphatic and beyond

¹ See § XIII.

palliation or excuse. "The times of ignorance God might overlook," as Paul said to the Athenians; but none who sinned against the clear Law could try to shelter themselves behind such a plea. Moreover, the Law was necessary (as has been said, p. 201 f.) in order that the overwhelming consciousness of sin, which is a necessary preliminary to true faith in Christ, might be produced in the minds of men.

The Law would have been contrary to the Promises, if it had been intended to produce the same result as they by a new way, and therefore had rendered them unnecessary. The Promises are promises of life and salvation; and if a Law such as could produce life and salvation had been given from Mount Sinai, then this Law would really have interfered with and nullified the Promises.

But, on the contrary, the Scripture¹ declares that the effect of the Law is to "shut up everything under the dominion of sin without means of escape" (Lightfoot), in order that men might be forced to look forward to "the Christ" as the only means of escape, the only hope of life.

The expression "by faith to them that believe," *v. 22, ἐκ πίστεως τοῖς πιστεύουσιν*, is rendered very strong by the repetition. As has been pointed out on page 298, *ἐκ πίστεως* must be understood as emphatically denying the opposite doctrine of the Judaizing Christians—the source is *ἐκ πίστεως*, not *ἐκ νόμου*.

XXXI. THE MEDIATOR.

"The Law was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not of one, but God is one."

We have here, as is recognised in the translation, re-

¹ Notice the vagueness of the reference; Paul's words become clear only if taken as referring to a previous exposition, made orally in his former preaching to the Galatians, of the combined effect of several biblical passages.

peated by Zöckler and others, and not disputed by Lightfoot (but, seemingly, recognised by him as the obvious sense), a clear and apparently undisputed example of a participle used in the sense of *καί* with a finite verb: "The Law was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the Promise had been made, and it was ordained through angels, etc.," where the Greek has merely the participle "being ordained." But, distinctly, the giving of the Law by God is the first step, and the carrying into effect by means of angels is the following step. This is one of the many examples justifying the construction *διήλθον . . . καλυθέντες* in *Acts* xvi. 6 in the sense which I have pleaded for, "they traversed . . . and were prevented." That loose usage of the participle belongs to the later language, in Greek and in Latin, beginning in the early Empire.¹

The precise meaning of the argument that lies in the words of iii. 20 is very difficult to catch; and I shall not attempt to add one to the 250 or 300 interpretations that have (according to Lightfoot) been proposed for this passage. We have in section xxix. seen a case where Paul sees the right result, and yet attains it by an argument founded on the generally accepted (though mistaken) view of that period, that grammatical forms had a deep philosophical meaning (usually assigned on arbitrary and capricious grounds to suit some individual instance). Is that not the case here?

Paul is evidently emphasizing a certain contrast that

¹ See EXPOSITOR, April, 1894, p. 298. At the same time, I think with Lightfoot that this reading, found in the great MSS., is a later one, and that this is one of the cases in which B is wrong, as in *Acts* xi. 20; *Luke* iv. 17 (where *ἀναπτύξας*, "unfolding the roll," was clearly the original text, while *ἀνοίξας*, "opening the book," is an alteration belonging to the third or fourth century, when the book form had been generally adopted for Bibles, as more convenient for frequent use, instead of the roll form): *St. Paul the Trav.*, p. 195 f.

exists between the free grace of the Promises and the indirect character of the Law, as being merely a means to an end beyond itself, as not being the direct and ultimate gift of the grace of God. The distinction is undeniable and of immense importance. In this paragraph, therefore, he does not use the word *Diatheke* to indicate the "covenant" made with Abraham. In accordance with the distinction drawn in section xxviii., it is necessary for him to use *ἐπαγγελία*, in order to emphasize the character of freedom and grace in the covenant made by God with Abraham and his seed. Accordingly the word Promised or Promises occurs three times in the short paragraph (*vv.* 19, 21, 22); the Greek text has the verb instead of the noun in 19, where the English translation, if literal, would be "the Seed to whom it hath been promised."

The Law did not come immediately and directly from God to men. It was conveyed by angels from God; and a mediator, viz. Moses, carried it down from the Mount to the Hebrew people. This method is far less gracious and kind than the direct communication from God to Abraham; and brings out the consciousness of an impassable gulf separating God from even the chosen people. The allusion to the angels seems founded more on Rabbinical interpretation and later tradition than on the text of the Books of Moses; but the words of Stephen (*Acts vii.* 53) and of Herod in Josephus, *Ant.* xv. 5, 3, quoted by Lightfoot and others, seem to imply that the common belief of the time supposed the ministry of angels.

A mediator implies one who goes between two parties to an agreement, and therefore to a certain degree might seem to diminish the absolute authority and completeness of the one party in this case. Can this, then, be the sense of the last words of *v.* 20, "but God is one"? So Lightfoot thinks, and so it may be. But it seems an unsatisfactory form of expression; and I cannot avoid the suspicion that

Paul here is betrayed into a mistake, and is thinking of the other and infinitely more important sense of the words, "God is one"—as in *Rom.* iii. 30—"He is one and the same God in all His acts, one God makes both the Promises and the Law." The argument would then be a fallacy, "a mediator implies (two parties), but God is one." I may be wrong; but, if one speaks, one must say what one thinks. Here, while Paul aims at a great truth, he reaches it, I think, by a mistaken argument.

W. M. RAMSAY.

*THE REVELATION OF THE SON OF MAN
TO NATHANAEL.*

ONE clear glimpse, and one only, of the character and inner life of Nathanael is given us in the Gospel narrative. The occasion is that of his introduction to Jesus. The story, as told in the opening chapter of St. John's Gospel, overflows with interest. And yet we feel that something is lacking. Our wonder is aroused, and we are eager to know one thing that is not told us. What was it that had taken place underneath the fig tree before Philip found his friend?

Now such wonder may be something better than idle curiosity. For we inevitably feel that this is an essential part of the whole, and that if our wonder were gratified we should have a key that might unlock the inner meaning of the incident. If we knew what Nathanael must have known, then the revelation to him would be also a revelation to us. Without that knowledge we can have but a partial understanding of the occurrence.

Earnest endeavours to perceive what is not definitely expressed in terms of sense must be made if the gospel is to be to us an unveiling of the eternal. The incidents recorded by the Evangelists are successive revelations,