

ARTICLE IV.

ADVANCE IN THE TYPE OF REVEALED RELIGION.

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THERE is not, and never has been, it may safely be assumed, a grander history in progress among men than that of true religion. All other histories centre in it, and are of value as they relate to it. The monuments of art, science, government, and humanity, are taken up into it or are its attendant ministers. Its sweep bridges over all time,—its two abutments resting in the two eternities, the one in the original and eternal purpose of God, and the other in the everlasting bliss of heaven. And if one could take his stand on some eminence commanding this world and the next, and have the disclosures of both fully before him, he would also see that, while the developments of time find their unity in the lines of subordination which bind them to true religion, and while true religion has from the smallest beginnings swept on by a succession of marches, laterally through the earth and downwards through the centuries, it has at the same time been undergoing a series of advances of far more moral grandeur and beauty; advances in its own revealed nature and character. He would see that, while historically, true religion has been progressing externally, it has, historically, been progressing internally also, revealing ever and again fresher beauties and higher perfections or elements of perfection.

Everything pertaining to a movement so sublime, and relating so directly to the highest interests of humanity, deserves careful study. We propose, therefore, in this Article, to discuss, rapidly, the *Advance discoverable in the Type of Revealed Religion.*

In treating this subject, it may exhaust the points of useful examination if we consider the *Necessity of Advance,*

its *Nature*, and finally some of its *Illustrations and Verifications*.

I. The *Necessity* of progress in revealed religion lies in the fact that God, in dealing with the race to bring it to the knowledge and love of himself, has chosen to work in accordance with man's *mental and moral constitution*. He might have disregarded this, might have shivered it as a potter's vessel, and then, by a single touch of his almightiness, reconstituted humanity and given it, at once, a perfect religion. But he was not dissatisfied with man's original constitution. He made him, in reference to the fundamental laws of his being, as he desired him to remain. He did not repent of his work. Accordingly, the problem was: How to join Divine interposition on to what was already in man, so as, by working through him, and not on him, to make him a thoroughly religious being. This could only be done by coming down to his capacity, adapting a system of religious training to his religious state, and elevating the tone of that system as his religious culture would bear it; and this is progress in the type of religion.

And the necessity of this will be still more apparent, when we consider the low spiritual condition of the race when God began to deal with it to recover it from the effects of the fall and educate it for himself. For, as Dr. Harris remarks (*Man Primeval*, pp. 431-2), "the supposition that man was not merely potentially, but actually perfect, from the earliest moment of his creation, besides controverting the true theory of human nature, is out of harmony with the inspired narrative," which represents God as dealing with him "with a first lesson in moral obligation, morality made easy," and "impairs our view of the Divine goodness." And hence, when this mere undeveloped and potential perfection was dashed into fragments by sin, the ruins, after reaching the bottom of their earthly descent, whether that were at once or after a lapse of ages, must have been complete and in themselves hopeless.

Imagine, then, a community sunk by a fearful moral convulsion in depravity; its intellect rude; its knowledge lim-

ited, for the most part, to a narrow circle of sensible experiences ; all insight into the spirit-world interrupted ; God forgotten or crudely conceived of ; immortality a mystery ; worship the product of conjecture and caprice, or reduced to its most elementary form ; with no spiritual leaders far in advance, already the depositaries and dispensers of a perfected religion, or the ready organs by means of which Heaven could hand such a religion over to the rest ; but all alike, though not equally, sunk and bewildered and groping among the first elements. Now, how shall God deliver among them a perfect religious system, a perfect religion, and do this, not by violating or re-creating their spiritual being, but by acting in accordance with it? This is the problem. Shall he inculcate it all at once, and in its perfect form? Impossible. It would go over their heads. It would find no point of contact in them. Neither the mind nor the heart could fasten on it. It would hang as a garment, or drag as a chain, on the outside of humanity. The truths and doctrines would be dreams, not faiths ; the duties bondage, not obedience ; the issues and rewards spectral visions, not certain realities. God must fit a casket before he has a place in which to lodge the heavenly jewels. A developed and mature religion cannot be let down into humanity, till humanity has a preparation for it ; and this it gains by a process of slow and gradual culture, beginning with the rudiments. For this purpose, the Eternal must come down to the weakness of man. The Infinite Teacher contract to the dimensions of the human ; the Most High put himself in contact, and thus in communication, with the lowly. The Elisha must lie upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and stretch himself upon him, that the flesh of the child may wax warm, and that he may infuse into him life.

And the same necessity that existed for an original adaptation, exists for a parallel and progressive adaptation corresponding with the advance of the race. The Great Teacher must, however, ever keep in advance of the learner,

never interrupting his connection with him, but not so far in advance as to daunt his zeal, nor so near as to fail to rouse and fire every faculty.

To lift up the race thus, and fit it for a pure and spiritual religion, is indeed a slow work, the work not of centuries, but of thousands of years. What a tedious process it is, in this age, for God, acting as he has chosen to do, through man and in accordance with the laws of the human mind, though we now have religion in a comparatively developed state and amply illustrated in Christian lives, and enforced by manifold appliances, to hand it over to a people debased and destitute of spiritual conceptions and of a language capable of lodging them in it! How, through human agency, he must supply them with words, with thought, with intellect! How ply them with all the enginery of the Gospel, not in its advanced but most simple and elementary forms, to effect an entrance into their souls and arouse a sense of immortality and duty! How his servants must toil for generations, and then are amply rewarded and deem it a triumph of grace, if they can see them even babes in Christ! But how much more difficult and slow the process when God, according to his plan, wrought alone with no helpers save such as he could select from the community itself; with no living exemplars of the truth, no teachers standing on the summit of the religious growth of a long and matured past, pressing forward, stooping down to the lowly he was dealing with, and trying to lift them up to their elevation; having everything to work out through them and from within them; having to teach the teacher, with no one to assist, before *he* could teach others; to evolve mind and heart and piety *out* of them, before any impressive illustration of godliness could be brought to act *on* them; and to make them, after the tedious training of centuries, the messengers of a passably advanced system of faith to themselves! And this is the protracted and toilsome work which God has undertaken with humanity; a work which, doubtless, will stretch over the whole earthly history of man before its completion; requiring hereafter, indeed, no new reve-

lation, but successive and higher unfoldings and uses of the one we have.

A matured religious system cannot, therefore, be bestowed on fallen man, in accordance with the laws of his being, save by the progressive method, and that extending over long periods of time.

Besides this natural necessity, there is also a *moral* necessity for adopting this method. God aims to develop the spiritual powers, to train them in virtue, to bring out moral character. His object is to bring his Divine flame in contact with man's in such a way as not to put it out and substitute his own, but to enkindle it. He would work up the crude and ravaged soul-material of man into a living image and embodiment of himself, by giving him so much, and only so much, help as shall cause him to put forth the most strenuous efforts to work up himself into it. He cares less that he should have an advanced religion, than that he should be a sign and promoter of advanced worth. Accordingly, in his religious training of the race, he does not prefer a fixed and invariable system. For let him devise what one he might, if it were stationary, it would have but limited power as an educator in virtue. If it were high, it would not take hold on them to elevate them; if low, it would soon be inadequate to stimulate to higher achievements; and if at medium height, it would incur, at different times, the objections to both, being at first too high, and at length too low. There is no other way, therefore, to make an objective religious system an instrument of the highest virtue, as it is intended to be, than to make it progressive.

II. We pass from the necessity to the *nature* of progress in religion.

There are two radically distinct theories on this point. According to the one, all religion is the product of a certain Divine principle in man, and all progress in religion a natural development. According to the other, all true religion is the gift of God, and all advance in it, by the introduction of essentially new elements, traceable to the same source. According to the former, the latent seeds of every high re-

ligion, of the highest, lie concealed in the lowest, ready, under propitious circumstances, to begin a vital movement and grow up into it. According to the latter, every seed of a higher true religious life is planted afresh by God. By the one, it is supposed that the lower religion, by some throef of latent and reserved forces, gives birth to the higher ; as, according to an ancient fable, the barnacle-tree dropped its fruit in the water and out jumped a gosling. By the other, it is claimed that religion never changes its type, has no faculty to outgrow its kind, save as the Creative hand touches it and gives a higher and more royal birth. In the one case, we have development according to a law of nature from a germ of nature ; in the other, gradational creation according to a law of rational sovereignty — one sovereign interposition linked to another, in a series regularly advancing towards the perfect.

Now, it is the misfortune and the destruction of the former, that, regarding all religions as an erection out of nature, instead of finding any that have leaped clean out of it into the region of the truly supernatural and Divine, that have developed themselves till they have strained and snapped the line of their earthly paternity and rushed among the heavenly-born,—it in fact drags them all down to the sphere of the natural. The development theory, instead of developing any up to the Divine and the authoritative, develops all down to the human and earthly. The Christian theory, on the other hand, the theory of revelation, represents religion as starting above nature, and keeping above it, by an impassable interval, — ever advancing in the supernatural ; and this only furnishes a religion which comes down to man, it is true, but comes down to him to bear him up to itself, and pillow his restless heart on the Divine. The one makes all religions but a winding-sheet, however richly decorated and beautiful, around man in the grave of nature ; the other presents a heavenly messenger at the grave's mouth, ordering the stone to be rolled away, calling him to come forth to a spiritual life, and giving him power to do it.

Assuming, then, that the Christian theory is the true one, that theory which alone presents a religion worth having, or at all adapted to the cravings of the soul for the supernatural, — the question arises, In what way, by what law, has God added the new elements to true religion? Has he done it by slow and almost imperceptible additions, or by great and distinctly marked ones? Are the increments small and continuous, as in growth, or in bulks, separated by intervals of time? He might, no doubt, have adopted the former course, and caused the new elements to descend, like the dew or the gradual and imperceptible layers of growth in the oak. But he has chosen the latter, and made their introduction a series of signal Divine interpositions drawn more or less widely apart. He has rolled one section after another of the perfect or ideal religion into history and incorporated it with the existing historical religion, thus carrying it up one creative stage after another towards the Divine pattern. Every now and then, when "the fulness of time" was come, new features of the original Divine idea suddenly beamed forth amidst the old, not destroying them but giving them a new expression, and marking a new era in the advance of religion. Accordingly, the history of religion presents, in its inspired record, not an uninterrupted and gradual progress, but a succession of creative elevations, of leaps and breaks, of fresh heavenward strides and pauses; the pauses, however, not periods of inactivity, but of movement on the same general plane, of development on the existing level, aided only by the ordinary Divine energy. It reveals, as it were, a succession of terraces, thrown up back of each other, by a series of extraordinary Divine interpositions; and over these, in a continuous procession, the pious, from the first generations down to the present, have travelled, now mounting the abrupt ascents, now stretching along the levels, but ever guided and headed towards the ideal and perfect religion.

And there is nothing unusual in the fact that God should adopt this method. He adopts the same in other cases, when he wishes to interrupt nature by introducing some-

thing into it, or joining something upon it, above nature or one side of existing nature. In such cases, he proceeds, not by gradual and imperceptible advances, but by marked creative stages and epochs. The soul is not regenerated by a long continuous application of regenerative Divine energy, but by a gush of it. And the Christian is carried upward in piety, not by regular steps, but through a succession of crises and victories and new births. A very perfect illustration, in the sphere of nature, may be found in geology. The different orders of being, that have occupied the earth, and that still occupy it, appear to approximate very nearly to each other at their margins, and may be so classified as to constitute almost a continuous series; but geology shows not only that they have not been developed, by virtue of some inherent inner law, out of one another, the higher from the lower, but also that the Creator has not introduced them by graduated and easily transitional acts of creation, corresponding to their apparent gradation on the scale of being, but in boldly and broadly marked creative epochs. Hugh Miller, speaking of the connection between them, as shown by his favorite science, says (Old Red Sandstone, p. 41): "There is no progression." If one rose into another, "it must have been by a sudden transformation. It must have been as if a man who had stood still for half a life time should bestir himself all at once and take seven leagues at a stride. There is no getting rid of miracle in the case. There is no alternative between creation and metamorphosis. The infidel substitutes progression for Deity; geology robs him of his god."

And, again, tracing the different creative epochs, he says (Footprints of the Creator, p. 330): "Nature lay dead in a waste theatre of rock, vapor, and sea, in which the insensate laws, chemical, mechanical, and electric, carried on their blind, unintelligent processes; the *creative fiat* went forth; and, amid waters that straightway teemed with life in its lower forms, vegetable and animal, the dynasty of the fish was introduced. Many ages passed, during which there took place no further elevation when the elevating fiat

again went forth, and, *through an act of creation*, the dynasty of the reptile began. Again many ages passed by, marked, apparently, by the introduction of a warm-blooded oviparous animal, the bird, and of a few marsupial quadrupeds, but in which the prevailing class reigned undeposed, though at least unelevated. Yet again, however, the elevating fiat went forth, and, *through an act of creation*, the dynasty of the mammiferous quadruped began. And after the further lapse of ages, the elevating fiat went forth yet once more *in an act of creation*; and with the human, heaven-aspiring dynasty, the moral government of God, in its connection with at least the world which we inhabit, took beginning."

It must not, however, be inferred, because Divine energy displays itself in introducing a perfected religion, in gushes, and starts, and stages, one rising above another, like the waves of the ocean during an incoming tide, that there is in fact any violence or rudeness in the way in which the one is joined on to the other. Here Deity manifests his wisdom and skill. Each lower stage is contrived so as to have, in addition to its predominant idea and purpose, hints and prophecies of the one that is to succeed it, perhaps of all that are to succeed it — certain elements not very clearly understood at the time, it may be, but prefigurations and preparations for the glory to follow. And these may be regarded as its *prehensile* organs, feeling forward for their object, for a while vaguely and uncertainly, without finding it, but ready, as soon as the higher stage is ushered in, to fasten on it and bind the two together. And each higher stage takes up all the truth of the preceding ones, not obliterating it, but infusing a higher meaning into it, and enveloping it with higher truth. The forms by which it was expressed may be changed or dropped, but the truth is retained and lives in every succeeding system. Thus the lower reaches forward towards the higher; and the higher unites with the lower by a vital union; and the two are, in this sense, continuous. God sees the end from the beginning, and travels towards it by successive steps; but each step is

to prepare the way for the next, and brings him so much nearer the end. Accordingly historical religion, in the current of its spiritual truth, not of its rites and forms, has been, and will be, through all the ages, a continuous stream, not marked by a regular enlargement, but by sudden expansions here and there, where the windows of heaven have been opened, and its contents poured out afresh upon it; and these new waters ever after mingle with the old in undistinguishable community.

III. In proceeding to some of the *illustrations* and *verifications* of such a progress as we have considered, it may furnish a simple method, if we allow them to fall into three natural groups: those relating to the central *facts and doctrines* of religion, forming the first; to the *standard of required morality*, the second; and to the *spirituality of piety*, the third.

1. An examination of some of the *facts and doctrines* of religion will show that they have dawned on the race like a light approaching from afar through thick darkness, at first dimly and uncertainly seen, then advancing a distance and pausing till the eye could become adjusted to it; then advancing again and pausing; and, with every successive advance, becoming brighter.

The doctrine of *God* shines, in the *patriarchal* age, with great feebleness. Jehovah reveals himself, whether to the outward or the inward sense, in an anthropomorphous manner. He is, to his people, the *great mysterious MAN* who rules the world. The aim is to impress on them a sense of his personal existence and authority; and, to this end, a demonstration must be made to their senses.

In the time of *Moses* there is a decided advance. The Theophany is, for the most part, abandoned; yet God appears in symbols — in burning bushes, and pillars of cloud and of fire; no longer communicating with the people directly; only through Moses; but allowing him to argue with him; and, on one occasion, crying out in these thrilling words, as if in pain at being overpersuaded, and trying to shake him off: "*Let me alone!*" (Ex. 32: 10.) The

main effort is to enforce his strict unity in opposition to polytheism, and to put down idolatry — a result which is not fully reached till after the captivity — and this can be best done by not withdrawing too far from men.

Under the *prophets*, the culmination of the Jewish system, who first took their place as a separate and permanent order or element in it under Samuel, a far more exhaustive moral conception of God appears; a conception which takes up all the previous conceptions, and adds that of a higher spirituality. Not till their time do we hear, nor was the race prepared to receive, such spiritual announcements as these: “*Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*” (Isa. 57: 15.)

Thus, according to the current chronology, nearly four thousand years are required to instal a faith in the existence, unity, and spirituality of God among men. And all this while, the problem is not embarrassed by introducing the elements of the Trinity, though there are, scattered along, dim hints and prophecies of it. This crowning feature of the doctrine of God, only comes out; and then not by bold and dogmatic announcement, but by a diffused, gentle, unstartling presence underlying the whole structure of the revelation, and only here and there cropping out in the definite logical elements of its truth, in the New Testament. And this in no way destroys the previous conception, the product of the culture of centuries, but supplements and perfects it.

The doctrine of a *Saviour* comes into the world by similar progressive strides. First, the blind enigma in the garden — something about *the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head*; then the mysterious promise to Abraham, that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*; then the clearer prophecy of Jacob, that *Shiloh should come, and unto him should the gathering of the people be*; then the inspiration of David, catching from afar the glory of the Mes-

siah and reflecting it in his song ; then the exact portrait-ure of Isaiah ; then Daniel rising up and pointing to his definite place in history ; and finally the eternal Logos himself, manifest in the flesh, dying for sinners, and inviting all to come unto him and be saved.

Through a similar and nearly parallel movement, we might trace the successive stages of the doctrines of the *atonement*, the *resurrection*, and *immortality*, from their rude beginnings down to the time of Christ, who "hath brought life and immortality to light," — clear light — "through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1: 10).

But these may, in our rapid survey, be passed by, to consider the remarkable manner in which the doctrine of *rewards and punishments* has been ushered in, and lodged in human faith. The first object was to impress on men a sense of the *certainty* of retributions ; and to school those into this belief who are ignorant of it, the retribution must for a time follow close after the deed. To locate it only, or mainly, in the future world, would make it powerless. Hence, in the *patriarchal* age, all disclosed retributions are in the present world and hurrying upon the act. God will have those see, whom he is dealing with, that their deeds shall be rewarded or punished according to their character, and that speedily. To meet this necessity, he extemporizes — so we would express it — a transient system of special present rewards and punishments. He deals with them as a judicious parent would with a child ; holding at first the motive close before them, and intending, when they have become sufficiently schooled in its certainty, to enlarge its area and take in the other world also. But for the present, all hints of such enlargements are rigidly withheld. In this fact we find the explanation of the *perplexity* which is wrought out, in so wonderful and artistic a manner, in the book of Job. This book is a picture of the patriarchal life ; and it is, as we have remarked, a distinctive characteristic of that dispensation, that the good should be rewarded and the wicked punished, in this world. When, therefore, Job is overwhelmed by a series of gigantic and unequalled calamities,

humbling him from the summit of prosperity to the depth of misery, the perplexity of his *friends* arises from the fact, that they must either be infidel to the government of God under which they live, or believe him they have loved and revered to be a hypocrite and secret villain; and they hesitate not to choose the latter. And the perplexity of *Job*, who was conscious of innocence, arises from the fact, that to him God seems to be at war with Himself, violating by his providence the avowed principles of his own government. Both parties are true to the revelation God has given them; they err by supposing it to be complete. One ray of light from the future world would have dissipated their perplexity. Yet they were not prepared for it; and when Jehovah comes in to settle the controversy, it is not to give that light, but to awe them into silence by the rehearsal of his almightiness, and to make them submit in trust to his dealings, even when they cannot understand them. And subsequently he vindicates his government, even according to its patriarchal type, by bestowing on Job greater prosperity than he enjoyed at first.

Under the *theocracy*, retributions began to head off towards the future world; but they get no further than Sheol, the intermediate state. And there is still an extraordinary and miraculous allotment of rewards and punishments in this life. This is seen, on the one hand, when in the path of obedience, in the promise, the standing miracle, that no enemy should assail their deserted homes when they were gone up to their religious festivals; that the year preceding the sabbatical year should produce a double harvest, and every seventh of these years — the one before the Jubilee — a treble one; and in the assistance bestowed on their arms in war, and on their labors in peace; and, on the other hand, when disobedient, in the sudden judgments which burst on them, in plagues, and famine, and defeat, and temporal ruin.

In the time of the *prophets*, the doctrine took another advance. There was then a slight relaxing of extraordinary temporal retributions, and a more distinct pointing to eter-

nal ones. Indeed Daniel says, expressly, that "some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (12: 2).

But not till we come to the *gospel*, is the race prepared to have temporal and immediate retributions fall to a subordinate place, and to be thrown on the influence, for the most part, of those of eternity. Accordingly Christ is the first to throw the future world broadly open, and to point humanity thither as the place of final and perfect awards. He puts a new horoscope in man's hand, that in it he may read his destiny for eternity at least, if not for time. He gathers around us the diverse issues of immortality, the centre and heart of retribution, as springs to virtue. He shows us that, travelling here in time, we are on enchanted ground, and tread on trains of causation that let off results and retributions which will roll through our endless being. He teaches us to walk as if our heads were among the stars, and to have plans and purposes, even while attending to the affairs of earth, larger than the orbits the stars swing in.

In like manner, the organization and theory of the *church* grew up by successive starts of Divine interposition. At first, it was stretched around, and lodged on, the framework of the family; the patriarch being its head, priest, and prophet, and the household its body; and its rites and requirements were few and simple. Afterwards it took enlargement, majesty, impressiveness, solemnity; and now it was hung on the framework of the State. Its priests and prophets were sacred classes; its institutions and rites complicated and imposing; and its Temple the centre of a grand system of external glory. Finally, the New Testament takes the ideas of the sacredness, majesty, and beauty of the church, wrought out under the Old Testament, in connection with external things, and transfers them to spiritual things, at the same time stripping the church off from the framework of the State, and putting it around all the true disciples of Christ, of every nation and tongue, and leaving them to organize and combine and worship according to the motions of a free Christian spirit, under a revela-

tion which strikes at principles and motives, rather than forms and outward acts.

These are illustrations of the method of successive lessons, each in advance of its predecessor, by which God has educated his people in the knowledge of the facts and doctrines of the gospel. We, as we look back on the track of revelation, are constrained to note these climacteric stages of its advance. Much more must the race have experienced them, as they travelled through them. To them each new revelation of a truth, or element of a truth, must have been a burst of light from heaven, thrilling the blood and rejoicing the heart.

2. A similar advance may also be traced in the *standard of required morality*; and to this we turn. We say *required morality*, for absolute morality does not vary, neither does its standard, for that is perfect virtue. We have glimpses of this ideal standard in the Old Testament as well as the New, set up in the back-ground, over against the standard of required morality, as the sublime goal towards which all the good should strive. And this is announced, equally in the earlier and later declarations of God to the race, in the terms of a perfect requirement: *be holy, as I am holy; love God with all the spiritual powers.* But God by no means makes the attainment of this the condition of his sympathy and favor; and what he does require for this purpose, is a variable standard, which he raises higher and higher from one era to another, as the moral culture of the race will bear it. He does not give the same standard of practical morality to the infantile race and the race when educated for thousands of years in virtue. The absolute standard he holds up in the back-ground, infinitely high and grand and glorious, the attainment of the millennium — nay, not of that, but of heaven. But this practical and practicable standard he holds down within the reach and compass of human infirmity, to bring up man, by degrees, to perfect manhood. He joins his requirement — we speak not of the eternal law, but of what we may call the social legislative demand —

on to the conscience and ability of the race as he finds it; in such a way, however, as to elevate it.

Some of these junctions seem to us, when looked back upon from our point of view, exceedingly low down. Take the matter of polygamy: how dark it seems that God should have tolerated it! Then the freedom of divorce: how trivial the causes leading to it, under a system of Divine legislation! And then the institution of slavery: how thoroughly opposed to an enlightened modern conscience! Then the permission of revenge, as a legal regulation: how unlike the gospel rule: "Resist not evil!" And the principle of love, once to extend to one's neighbor—that is, any brother Jew—and stop there: what an enlargement under Christ, when it is required to compass the race, even one's enemies and persecutors! And the binding nature of an oath, no matter what its character or contents; an expedient designed to develop and secure truthfulness, in one form at least, among a people, like all other Oriental nations, notoriously indifferent to it: how much below the Christian code, which requires that we should not back our statements with oaths, but be truthful at all times, and make our yea, yea; and our nay, nay!

Yet these descents to the moral condition of the race were necessary in order to carry it up to something higher and better. These lowerings of the moral code, not of morality, but of the morality required and enforced, were the best way to educate men to true views and practices relating to the singleness and sacredness of the marriage relation, the rights of man, and the benevolence, and veracity which should mark all human intercourse; and when they had fulfilled their preliminary office, they naturally gave way to the purer codes of the gospel.

Thus, without tracing in detail the separate stages of advance, but broadly contrasting the standards of required morality in the Old and the New Testaments, we see that the latter is a wide leap above the former. In passing out from the one to the other, we pass with a glad surprise from the regimen of the weak and lowly, prepared with Divine

skill and adaptation, to the regimen of the more advanced, prepared with the same wisdom.

The standard of required morality is, therefore, ever advancing, stage beyond stage, towards ideal and perfect morality. We, who live under the gospel dispensation, are far from having reached the highest stage as yet, though no new revelation is needed to carry us higher; the seeds of a pure and heavenly morality, perfecting the individual and perfecting society, being contained in the one we have. Indeed, the whole system of salvation by faith is a standing monument to man's existing moral weakness and inability to reach a standard of perfect virtue, and to the fact that God deals with him on a lower platform. It is a way of carrying sinners to heaven, who do not keep a holy law; and hence an evidence that the morality required of us now, is something far short of the perfect standard required; we mean, not as the ideal of character towards which we should strive, but as that amount of practicable virtue without which we cannot have the sympathy of God nor be heirs of heaven.

It follows from the advancing types of required morality, that what was the standard for one age, under one set of circumstances, is no standard for another age under another set of circumstances. What in the one case were moral, might in the other be immoral. The ancient Jew could not be thrust forward into Christian morality; the system would not have been coarse and palpable enough to take hold of him. And the Christian cannot be turned back to Jewish morality, without rolling back the wheels of providence and dwarfing the style of virtue to its primitive dimensions. Accordingly those who defend questionable modern usages on the ground that God tolerated them in legislating for man in the infancy of the race, employ a suspicious argument and one that is against them. It is based on the fallacy that there is no advance in required morality, and that it is right to chain a modern people down to the tolerated weakness of a people three thousand years ago on the stage. It is the blunder of those who see no difference between infancy and manhood; between moral weakness and thirty or

sixty centuries of moral culture. It is the logic of those who abandon what is, or should be, the morality of the nineteenth century, and leap down and back, through all the intermediate centuries, to the platform of morality of remote ages, and stick there as their only hope. It is the resort of those who attempt to justify or excuse their own or other men's sins, by expunging the moral growth of the race, and throwing it back to its rude beginnings. It is the presumption of those who drag forward some of God's rudimentary lessons to the race, as the text from which we, in modern times, should learn to regulate our conduct.

3. The third group of illustrations relates to the *spirituality of piety*; for piety, in its contents and exercises, has made several marches onward; and the line of its march has been towards the *spiritual*. It would be easy to trace the successive starts and advances, beginning with primitive piety, which revealed its unspiritual character in the devout observance of a few external rites, and therewith being content; passing to the secondary stage, where a far higher and more spiritual conception of the Divine claims is revealed by the fact that the few simple rites give place to complex and interminable ones; thence on to the tertiary, the era of the Prophets, where the external ritual is, indeed, no less complicated and voluminous, but where it is subordinated to the "internal ritual," and so made spiritual; and thence to the Christian, where the external complications are dropped and the spirituale merges as the predominant characteristic of piety. But it will better suit the rapidity of our survey, and throw the outlines of our thought into bolder and more vivid contrasts, if we show the advance in spirituality of the piety of the New Testament on that of the Old, in a broad and general manner, dealing only with the distinctive characteristics, and omitting the minor and separate stages.

It is, then, one of the leading features of Jewish piety, that it busies itself in reverently copying forms. It has a rule for everything. It has a chart of duty, and shows its genuineness by sincerely threading its lines and never crossing them. It is always looking at its map, and trying to steer its

course according to it. It is a leading feature of Christian piety, on the other hand, that it aims to be true to Christian principle. It is not copying a form, but living a spiritual law. It thinks less of the deed than of the heart. It varies the act at pleasure, provided that it be a true expression of a true spirit. Under the one system, the design was that the observance should draw the character after it and mould it; under the other, the design is first to secure a right character, and then allow right observances to flow from it. The one looked more at what man *does*; the other, at what he *is*.

Again, in the one case, true piety was exclusively to be looked for within a single visible national community, and true worship to centre around a single temple; in the other, piety is not confined to communities but dispositions, nor worship to temples but hearts. Hence, in the one instance, much was thought of an uninterrupted line of outward descent; in the other, much of this, and only of this, a fresh and personal spiritual birth and life.

We may also see the greater spirituality of the gospel piety, in the greater spirituality of the gospel revelation. Truth is the food of piety. And the truth of the Old Testament, taken as a whole, is far less naked, concentrated, spiritual, than that of the New. In the one case it appears in the shell; in the other, in the kernel; in the one, thrown into outward and concrete forms; in the other, having a purer and more faithful expression. Even the moral law, which, in the Old Testament, is broken up and expanded into ten concrete bulks, is, in the New, condensed and brought out in two simple spiritual elements, love to God and to man. In the former, one finds truths; in the latter, Truth.

Moreover, the piety of the earlier and ruder period was largely dependent on symbols and helps addressed to the senses. God instructed men in righteousness with sensible illustrations. The Mosaic was emphatically the pictorial dispensation, addressed to piety in its childhood; and the designs were impressive, forcible, thrilling, rather than delicate, chaste, artistic. But during the gospel period, such

symbols are not relied on, and piety is left to go over to, and rest on, spiritual supports. God has carried it beyond the primer dispensation. Faith has little to aid it, short of the unseen and eternal. It has lost its material wings, and can fly only as it has spiritual ones.

And, again, the ideal future that fills the mind of the Christian, is far more spiritual than that which filled the mind of the Jew. The latter had in view a scene of earthly splendors, the pageantry and magnificence of an earthly Messiah, under whose realm all other nations should hide their heads. And his religious aspirations and experiences dropped down to a kindred level. But the ideal future of the former takes in the spiritual triumphs of the cross in this world, and the spiritual glory that is to follow in the next. Its reaches are spiritual, heavenly, divine. And hence his aspirations and experiences, swinging in a kindred orbit, rise to the spiritual, heavenly, and divine also. The church is far, yet, however, from having exhausted the spirituality of the gospel. Higher and ever higher attainments, in this direction, lie before her. And here, again, we remark that, to make them, she needs no new revelation, only a higher reaching after, and possession of, the spiritual elements of the word of God already in her hands.

In this way, then, we answer the question: How has God proceeded to give religion to man? What wisdom is here displayed by him! What adaptation! What benevolence! And how wise, too, to select a single people, in the first instance, isolate them, and carry on a process of religious training with them alone, undistracted by foreign interference, till they had reached sufficient maturity to allow the removal of all restrictions and receive the commission to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth! And how encouraging to the modern church, on whom this commission is devolved, to consider that, when she carries the gospel to the heathen, it is not elementary religion she gives them, but religion with thousands of years' growth upon it! It may require a century for her to give it to them; for them to receive it; but when it is received, they do not get the baldness and sim-

plicity of the Patriarchal faith; they do not get Judaism, or the controversies of the Augustinian period; they do not get Monasticism; nor the superstitions of the Middle ages; nor the intolerance of later times. They get the spiritual and living religion which we have. They step at a stride across all the distance traversed by the race in religious growth. They emerge at once from the moral region of the flood, or beyond it, to the summit of the nineteenth century.

We close our rapid survey by remarking that it becomes the modern church to remember her true historical position. The ages have been struggling for her. The victories of the past are hers. All time has been in travail to give her birth. Her proper place and attitude is to stand on the summit of the religious achievements hitherto made, with her eye gleaming with Divine light, fixed on higher achievements in the future. Let her not turn backwards. Let her not take to her bosom any of the old and lower types of religion, nor hold to them with clutched hand. Let her live more in the future, and for the future, than the past, obeying the Divine direction which Moses was commanded to communicate to the ancient church, but which contains the spirit of God's perennial call to the church in every age: "Speak unto the children of Israel, **THAT THEY GO FORWARD.**"

ARTICLE V.

THE THEOLOGY OF DR. GILL.

By Rev. Daniel T. Fisk, Newburyport, Mass.

ONE of the most noticeable and hopeful features in the present condition of the theological world, is a revived and increasing interest in the department of ecclesiastical history. This interest has been gradually manifesting itself,