

THE  
PRINCETON REVIEW.

APRIL, 1850.

---

No. II.

---

---

ART. I.—*The Life of Robert Blair, Minister of St. Andrews, containing his Autobiography from 1593 to 1636, with a Supplement to his Life, and Continuation of the History of the Times to 1680.* By his son-in-law, Mr. William Row, Minister of Ceres. Edited for the Wodrow Society, from the Original Manuscript, by Thomas McCrie, D.D. Edinburgh: Printed for the Wodrow Society, 1848.

ROBERT BLAIR was a remarkable man, and lived through a large part of a century, in very eventful times. His history has not, hitherto, been so well known, as that of other Scottish worthies; but by the exertions of the Wodrow Society, it has recently been brought to light. He was born at Irvine, in the year 1593, and was the youngest of four brothers; the names of the other three were John, James, and William: the two eldest rose to be chief magistrates of Irvine, and William was first a regent in the University of Glasgow, and afterwards minister of Dumbarton.

Robert entered the University in the year 1611, and took his degree of A.M. in 1614. After teaching two years in the public school, he succeeded his brother as one of the Regents

frequently sought as places of fervent preaching and delightful communion, than in the regions over which this wave of saving influence poured itself three score years ago. In these, therefore, the volume now introduced to our readers will have early currency and continued favour.

In comparing these Sketches of Virginia with the author's preceding work, we observe a decided improvement, in all that relates to literary ease and correctness. Numerous errors in trifles seem to be owing to the writer's remoteness from the press.\* Every chapter gives proofs of extraordinary caution in founding the narrative on unquestionable authorities: these have been collected with great labour, in frequent and toilsome journeys, over many States, not without tedious consultation and transcription, as well as recourse to living witnesses. If the thread of the story is broken by repeated citation of documents, it is not only pardonable but praiseworthy; as many of these are extant no where else in print. Notwithstanding the insertion of long and numerous papers of this kind, the narrative is never diffuse and never wearisome. We should do the respected author an injustice, if we did not add, that every part of the elaborate work is written in the spirit of the soundest evangelical doctrine, and with the filial ardour of a genuine Presbyterian.

---

ART. III.—*A History of the Hebrew Monarchy from the Administration of Samuel to the Babylonish captivity.* By Francis Newman, D.D., Oxon. London: John Chapman, 142 Strand. New York: George P. Putnam, 155 Broadway. 1849.

Many readers of the Bible will take up this book with the hope and expectation that it will satisfy a want which they have long felt. It might be fairly inferred, from the standing

\* One or two errors are such as affect the historical verity. On page 151, the charter of William and Mary should bear date 1692. On page 305, Havana is put for Fluvanna. On page 541, line 19, Mississippi should be read for Alabama; and on page 557, line 18, Parsons for Vanmeter.

of its author, that it would contain a serious attempt, at least, to gather up and arrange and harmonize the facts which now lie scattered through the historical books of the Old Testament; and which on the face of them appear to some conflicting, and to others irreconcilable. Such a work would be a valuable addition to our Biblical literature. Instead of this, however,—while it is the result of extensive reading, and is often acute and plausible in its suppositions, it must be characterized as a deliberate, and to the author himself apparently grateful attempt, to destroy the authority of a large part of Scripture; and if it have any force at all, as grounded upon general principles of criticism, to change throughout the very idea of inspiration.

The history of the book is somewhat interesting, both from its genesis, and from the position of the author. It is avowedly of German origin, and in part at least from the worst of Germany. We do not mention this at all as accounting for its character, but simply to note it, as a sample of the influence which that kind of study may exert upon a certain class of English minds. The author is or was a divine of the Church of England, the brother, we believe, of the Mr. Newman, who not long since went to Rome. The *Via Media*, like most other ways, has, it seems, two directions, and these diametrically opposite. We may walk in it until it leads us up to the gates, and indeed into the very heart of the Eternal City; or if we start with our faces in the other direction, we may never leave the beaten track, and still come out into the clear, but dreamy wastes of unbelief. It is instructive to observe the workings of different minds, and the apparently opposite results to which they come, when leaving the sure ground, and the only sure ground, of a firm hold upon God's word as the authoritative rule of faith. The result, as it is brought out in history, is no more than might have been predicted from the fact that different minds are working under these conditions. It is just such as it always has been, and always must be, when men trust to anything else than the word of God. For after all, tradition, or superstition, as distinguished from reason and scripture, by whatever name it may be called, is but another form of Rationalism. There is a hidden unity in the thousand forms of error, could we trace them back to their source, just as there is in all truth.

They cannot be reduced down to the strict dependence of a logical system, and each one assigned to his peculiar place and sequence; but they wear still common features, the ineffaceable marks of their one descent and common parentage. And thus there is a common origin for the opposite errors, which  make tradition or reason the highest authority, and last appeal in matters of faith. It is still the assertion of the individual right to choose what, in such questions, shall lie back of and above the word of God; in one case leading him to submit to the authority of his fellow-men, with its galling bondage; in the other shutting his eyes upon every thing beyond the reach and compass of his own understanding, with its bald and lifeless conclusions. It is but the difference between bowing down and worshipping at the altar of men, and the attempt to deify and then fall down and worship one's self. It is the primal sin of our race, that is, a refusal to credit God's word as the rule of our faith and practice, working itself out into widely different results.

The history of the Jews, differs from the history of other nations in this, that it is interwoven with, and indeed takes its peculiar character and form, from their religion, and as their religion reaches its end in the Christian faith, and involves its truth or falsity, the questions in their history becomes of momentous interest. It is true that the religion of any people must have a marked influence upon its condition, and must therefore be studied in its spirit and forms, before its history can be rightly understood or written. But religion has more to do with the history of the Jews than this. They owed their existence, as a nation, to their religion. Their periods of prosperity and decay were co-extensive with those of the purity or corruption of their faith. Their history ends with the end of their religion; or rather when casting away its bands and forms of separation and support, it expanded itself into the pure and spiritual and universal religion of Christ. In one sense they may be termed a religious people, rather than a nation, for it is this which distinguishes them from other nations and not any civil or social peculiarities, further than these were the fruits and outworkings of their faith. Their history falls, more properly to the ecclesiastical than to the civil historian. It

demands the same character and qualities of mind, the same spiritual insight into the plans of God's government, and the methods in which it is administered, which alone have accomplished any thing of permanent value in the history of the Church. This peculiarity of their history accounts in a great measure for the difficulty which is found in any attempt to form a clear, and connected statement, of the events in their national existence, from the records furnished in the Scriptures. For the religious element is there kept all-important. To bring this out prominently was the main object, for which these historical books were given us. It is never their design to record the outward history of the Jews as a nation. When they speak of the national growth and glory, it is always as the fruit of piety in the people or their rulers; when they record its decay it is as the effect of a general apostacy or flagrant sins. Wars and battles, treaties and leagues, every thing which belongs peculiarly to their political history, and forms a main element in other histories, obtains here only an incidental place; and even this often with an ulterior object which casts back its own shadows, and gives its colouring to the facts. Unless therefore we know the design of these books, and of course their relation to each other, unless we enter in some measure into the spirit of their religion, and start from that point, we shall constantly be liable to misinterpret the facts which they state. The various statement of the same event, and the different connection in which it stands recorded, may appear like contradictions, while the special end of the authors, if it were known and kept in view, would at once shew them consistent. This is only the application of the principle which alone gives any perfectly consistent and harmonious statement to the gospel history; a principle which would go far to explain every difficulty which is met with in the Old Testament history; if we except mere differences in numbers, which no sane and candid man, taking into account the facility with which errors of this kind are made in transcription, would ever urge as a serious objection. It is not intended to press this, as any excuse for apparent inaccuracies of statement or contradiction, these must be explained by special principles applicable to particular cases, but to urge as a general ground underlying this whole field of criticism, the



imperative necessity that the spirit and end for which these books were written should be well ascertained before we are fit to sit in judgment on their facts.

When, therefore, any one attempts to write the Jewish history he enters at once and necessarily upon a religious field. He must deal with momentous truths as well as with facts, truths not merely speculative, but in the highest sense practical, spiritual and in their results reaching on into eternity. The philosophy of his history runs high into the purposes of God. From the sources to which he goes, he must fall in with the fundamental question of revealed religion, that which comes next to the possibility of religion at all—that is, the question of inspiration. It lies in his way, and he cannot avoid it. He may not discuss it; but he must practically decide it.

He must use his authorities as coming to him with the seal of God's truth upon them; or he might use them as the mere word of man. The decision of this question will determine the spirit with which he writes. It is thus with the author of the work before us, and it is this relation which his work bears to the grounds and truths of religion that gives it a special importance. As a mere statement of facts, it is mainly well enough, and when wrong may be set right by a reference to the original records; but in its criticism upon the sources from which those facts are drawn, in its judgments upon the characters and actions which pass before us in the course of his narrative, in its allusions to other portions of the word of God, in its whole theory of the divine economy of the Old Testament, and its relations to the gospel, it is only evil and that continually. It could not well be more ruinous than it is. The author has evidently settled the question of inspiration for himself. He does not hesitate to deal with the scriptures as the writings of men only. The books of Kings and Chronicles are no more than a Jewish Tacitus or Livy. A Thucydides or Herodotus would be far more credible. He stops at no results of his criticism. He does not flinch at any consequences which it may draw with it. There is no shrinking back from the abyss which yawns before him. His own faith, the faith of the church, are cheerfully sacrificed to his pre-conceived opinions and theories. We do not remember to have read a work which

could claim with a better right, the merit of strict consistency; consistency we mean in carrying out his principles without faltering to their result; fearful as it is when thus starting from false assumptions as its premises.

The book of Chronicles is of later origin and priestly in its spirit; therefore the sacerdotal system and especially the Levitical side of it must be of recent growth, the work of ambitious men, little by little working itself as an element, into the constitution of the state, and outlasting the power of the king. The image of the brazen serpent was not destroyed until the time of Hezekiah, therefore "the Hebrews were habitual image worshippers," and this too of the worst kind, "as we have no means of learning whether in their worship they fancied they were pleasing Jehovah or not. The serpent is a well known emblem in various pagan superstitions." It was left for Josiah to break down the high places, therefore it was not till this time that idolatry was understood to attach to the use of images, even though Jehovah was the object, and of course all the condemnations of it, in the earlier history are after thoughts inserted to justify the requirements of the clearer knowledge of the later kings. Only one copy of the law was found in the rubbish of the temple, but the extreme improbability that there should be but one copy, and that unknown to the king, justifies, in the opinion of our author, the assertion that the work was partly a forgery of Hilkiah, and answers to what we call the book of Deuteronomy; and partly a collection of the other four books of the Pentateuch, which had previously existed in fragments and comparatively unknown. How well this agrees with the fact that the book of Deuteronomy is the only book quoted by our Saviour in his conflict with the tempter, is of course a matter of consequence. It is true indeed that the latter assertion is defended upon other grounds, but this seems to have called out the theory, the attempted defence follows necessarily, in order to sustain if possible so startling a conclusion. In the breadth of its sweep, as it takes away at once a large part of the Pentateuch, seems to have given the author some trouble; but it is from pure compassion for his English readers, who may be distressed at the assertion, and not at all from any fear or trembling lest he should be trifling with that which "was guaran-

ted to us by God himself." So again, because there were false prophets, therefore it is a fair inference that there was nothing in the character of Hilkiah which would make forgery and falsehood inconsistent. Since it is possible that he might have been a false prophet, it is probable that he was. Because God has chosen to execute partially his judgments upon the idolatrous priests of Baal and their idolatrous supporter, therefore we must conclude that those who were his instruments, were men of ferocious dispositions, who shrunk from no means however cruel and bloody, through which they might gain their ends. The prophets, whose whole lives bear testimony to their purity and goodness, who suffered want and persecution gladly for the truth, must stand out in history with blackened characters (to say nothing of the charge which rests impliedly upon God) because their conduct does not seem to fall in with our author's idea of justice, or rather because, as he believes God has no right to do what he will with his own. We shall see hereafter how this grows out of his principle of criticism. Ambition, or revenge, or state policy seem to be the only motives which find access to his mind as adequate to account for such conduct. He never reaches the conception that it may be, and often is the duty of men, to obey the commands of God, even as the ministers of his justice; that as he often makes us the channel of his mercies, so he may make us the channels of his wrath; that as the angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, and also the messengers of destruction to those who oppose the purpose of God, so it may be with men; that as the angel of death went on his awful mission through the land of Egypt, so men may not be called, and that consciously, by the same holy Governor and Judge, to execute the purposes of his vengeance. We give these as specimens of the objections and insinuations which come to our notice on almost every page of this work. We cannot however pretend to follow him as he advances in his task. At some of his objections we should be disposed to smile, were it not for the moral state in which they have their spring and source; while others break upon our ears like the harsh sounds of blasphemy, and we feel it difficult to restrain our indignation. There are many things which ✓ must shock every one, who has not in some way become ac-



quainted with the reckless spirit in which this modern criticism has been prosecuted, when in the hands of unbelievers. A special refutation of these objections would be impossible of course, within the compass of an article like this; and it might not be worth while to attempt it, even if it were possible, for the best refutation after all would be the careful and reverential study of the books themselves, with the aids which most intelligent readers now possess. It is rather the principle and spirit of the book, taken as a specimen of those which we may look for in the course of a few years, (for our author intimates that this is but the beginning of the end,) to which we wish to call the reader's attention.

There is, however, a preliminary point upon which we shall offer a remark. It is that these works come mainly from the professed friends of religion, and from those who are bound officially to defend its claims. It is perhaps a characteristic of the unbelief of this age, that it hides itself in the church. It clothes itself as an angel of light, and conceals its deformities under scriptural forms of expression and an earnest attachment to a purely scriptural religion. Hitherto the opposers of the Bible have for the most part been manly and open in their opposition. Its friends have known where to find them. It was thus with the Deists and infidels of the last century. There was too much honour and common fairness in the English mind to avail itself of the arts of the assassin, who gives the most deadly blow while greeting you with the warmest friendship. It was left for others to devise and act upon the distinction between an exoteric and esoteric faith. This is the fair growth of German infidelity. It required the ingenuity and depth of a Strauss to shew the honesty and consistency of preaching the gospel, or professing to preach it, and yet denying him who is its source and sum. The presence of such a man in the assemblies of the church, reminds us of a similar assembly of which we are told in the first chapter of Job. But the disease has spread, and with us as in Germany we fear that opposers of the gospel are found in the bosom of the church, and ministering at her very altars. There is always, as of old, the same pretence of a strong love for spiritual christianity. The same plea for freedom of thought and investigation, the same complaint against symbols and creeds and the subscriptions which the church has

To Address
Was the  
the same
 ever required of her teachers. There is something fearful in all this. It seems as if the church herself were drifting away from her moorings, and already far out upon the sea of unbelief; as if the very pillar and ground of the truth were shaking beneath us, from the perpetual heavings of an unbelieving world. As in every age, there have arisen peculiar forms of opposition to her progress, and she has been called to defend first one and then another fortress of the faith against the assaults from the world without; so in every age, there have been peculiar forms of strife within herself. It has ever been Satan's master policy to turn the church against herself, both individually and collectively. He makes the heart of a believer her worst foe. All the severer conflicts of his spiritual life are fought out and decided here. He has long had the parts of the church, the members of that one living body of which Christ is the head, warring against each other; frightful gashes and scars are upon every member; her voice as it "sounds to us through ages," has been sometimes the cry of battle, and at others the wail and lamentation over her bleeding body and wasted energies. The world has looked on with secret exultation, and refused to credit what the church was to proclaim and witness, that Christ came from the Father, and came into the world. Christ from his throne in glory has watched her strifes, and in the midst of them all, to the confusion of her adversary and when his scheme seemed most likely to prove successful, has appeared for her deliverance, healed her wounds and refreshed her exhausted strength; and more than this, he has out of all wrought clearer views of truth, a fuller comprehension of the cardinal points in her faith, and thus laid the ground, for the fulfilment of his last prayer, in a higher and more abiding unity.

The whole  
of the
 But now we have a new device; it is not so much the members striving against each other, as a part of them covertly joining with her enemies, and entering cordially into their plans and labours. From her very bosom, there have come forth vipers, who would pierce her very vitals, were not their fangs made harmless and their eyes blinded with the excess of their rage. They strike quickly, and with deadly intent and force, but their blows fall frequently upon themselves. It is no security however, against their influence, that the very intensity of their malice is thus overruled and made to frustrate their design.

Nor is this device of Satan likely to confine itself to any one land. It has accomplished too much for his ends for him to abandon it now. It is not in Germany alone that infidelity cloaks itself in the church, and from her altars, peers, with its sightless eyes, out into the darkness which it has created. For the tendency out of which her unbelief has grown is not peculiar to the Germans. It has its ground not in the mental habitude of a nation, but in that of the race. It lies deep in the nature of us all, and we do but deceive ourselves, if we trust to any thing which distinguishes us from them, as that which shall stem the tide coming in with its might upon us. It is true that the strong practical cast of the English mind may prevent in some degree the fearful ruins which we witness there; but unless our confidence rests upon something stronger than this, it will surely be swept away, and we too may be left to mourn over deserted pulpits, or what is far worse, over pulpits filled with men who preach any thing but Christ. This is not a bare conjecture. We can feel too well the beating of the church's pulse to doubt its significance. There is a feeble and unsteady hold upon the truth. There is a spreading theory of inspiration which permits the word of God to be held subject, in some respects, to the revelations of modern science, and the results of what is termed philosophical criticism, and a tendency to reconcile these where they may apparently differ, not by waiting until science shall become perfect, and by consequence perfectly consistent in its results with faith, but by a ready sacrifice of Scripture. There is a wide spread laxity of doctrinal belief which betokens any thing but good, and which discovers itself by sure signs to those who can see. When the truths of the trinity and atonement, the most fundamental in the gospel, can be called in question and submitted to a process of explanation which empties them of all life and power, by those who minister in the church, and enjoy the fellowship of ecclesiastical assemblies, it requires no peculiar perspicuity to see that there is a prevalent false liberality of sentiment, a breaking down and a breaking over the old forms of truth and the truth itself, among those whose office it is to teach. In the reach after charity, errors are made of little account. A fatal error obtains in too many minds, that because we are bound by every Christian feeling, to the exercise of charity toward those who may

differ from us in opinion; that therefore we are to cherish a charity which will compass in its embrace all opinions, from Popery to Unitarianism; that we must make a creed wide enough and loose enough to cover all forms of doctrines, because charity requires us to love the men who hold them. The lesson is needed with us that the largest charity, and the only thing which deserves the name, is strictly consistent with the firmest hold upon the truth, and that even as to its form, so far as those who teach is concerned. For if the gospel is any thing, it is truth as well as life, and the holding of that truth, with the most unyielding tenacity—provided we do not judge those who differ from us—cannot be incongruous with the spirit which it breathes; that spirit of love which sums it up, and which had its brightest example in him, whose lips dropped love, and who yet spake with the utmost distinctness and frequency, the truths which are now so unpalatable to men; who ever in his teachings mingled the sternness of inflexible truth, with the most boundless charity. Nor is this mistaken notion of charity all. Men are growing restless under the restraints of the church and her creeds. Some are ready to disown these altogether as the marks of narrow-mindedness and bigotry; the last hold and refuge of a lifeless orthodoxy. They would cast them away, as the shackles and unyielding forces, which have cramped and moulded the workings of a free mind, as bars to the progress of all enquiry and research, an effectual obstacle to the growth of spiritual Christianity. There is something deeply significant in all this, something which may remind some of our readers of the first steps in that course which Semler took in Germany.

But what concerns us most here is, that there is a plain reason for this anomaly of a ministry holding its position in the church, and yet actively opposing her faith and progress; a reason which is in itself a warning and a cause of trembling to those who may think their feet stand firm. A man may hold a merely speculative truth, though he may not know it to be true by any experience of his own; and yet after years have passed away, his faith may be as strong and as well-grounded as when he first professed to receive it. But it is not so with moral and religious truth. A man who professes to receive the Bible, and is not conscious, to some considerable degree, of its



power in his own experience, runs great danger, if he be an intelligent and reflecting man, of becoming an unbeliever. For as there is no evidence so convincing to the believer as that which grows up from his own experience of the truth, upon which he can say with the highest certainty, I know in what I have believed; so there is nothing which leads more directly to unbelief, than the want of that experience, while he still assents to, and even cherishes an outward faith in the truth which should produce it. There is more here than the influence of our moral character upon our convictions. The case is different with those who make no profession. They may stand aloof from the consideration of this question altogether, and look upon the experiment as it is tried in the hearts and lives of others with the interest of a mere spectator. If they have no evidence in themselves for its truth, they have none against it. If they have never felt its power, they know that they have never given it a fair trial. Years may roll over them, and their relation to the truth remains unaltered, so far as their experience is concerned. There is no greater obstacle in their hearts to the reception of the truth than before, if we except the natural growth of every unrenewed heart in sin. They have never felt themselves called upon to decide it, and if they have, it has been as a speculative and not a practical question. But when a man professes to hold a truth so practical, which proposes to change his whole heart and life, and at the same time is conscious of no corresponding effect, his mind is thrown into opposition to itself. A practical question arises at once out of this inconsistency, and he must either own his profession insincere, or deny that the Bible is what it claims to be. And as there lies in every one a predisposition to reject the Scriptures, the probability is, (and indeed the certainty, were there no influences at work upon us out of ourselves,) that the constantly increasing power of this want of conformity between his profession and his life, would lead him to the latter side of the alternative. He must have relief in some way from this flagrant inconsistency, (for men cannot long consciously be hypocrites,) and unless he find it, in a cordial submission to the truth, and a perceptible moulding of his life under its influence, he will find it, and must find it, in casting away his profession. Nothing less than this, if he is awake and thought-



ful, can relieve the difficulty. Nothing less than this will set him at one with himself. It is true indeed that some may avoid this question, or rather smother it, and find relief in ritual observances, by changing the Bible from a revelation of living and divine truths, to a mere ceremonial code. But the result here is still practically the same. For mere formalism is little better than open unbelief, and may be regarded as such. And those who are sincere in their observances, are either practising upon themselves a vast deception, through which they suppose that the whole power of the Bible, the end for which God has made a revelation, was to lay down and enforce a round of rites; or in the midst of their formalism, the truth has come to them in its real power, and they have the seal and witness of it on their hearts. And this brings them upon one or the other side of the alternative stated above.

Now, just in proportion as any one finds this inconsistency between his life and what it should be, if the truth he held exerted its legitimate effects, will the spirit of unbelief, which exists in every one of us, and which makes us conscious of its power, have the advantage over him. There are no doubts so fearful and almost overpowering to any one conscious of this short coming, as those which arise when he compares his life with the truth upon which he professes to form it. Compared with these all the arguments against the Scriptures, which skeptical ingenuity can devise, are comparatively powerless, mere withs of tow. He may silence them indeed by falling down, and confessing that the fault lies in his own evil heart; but this supposes that he has already known or knows in his present experience, the truth of the scripture doctrine of sin. The only other way is avowed unbelief, which silences them by yielding to their clamorous demands. A mind in this state would naturally resort to just those means, which we see in the cases around us, (and which appal us even in the distance,) have been resorted to. There would naturally be an attempt to invalidate its authority; for it would be no relief to deny the power of the truth, and yet admit that it came from God. There must be an attempt to justify this denial, by proving it an imposture. The first step would be to invalidate its evidences; then if this should fail, to impeach its histories and

facts; then to deny and explain away its mysteries; and then to turn the whole into a beautiful allegory or fable. And this must be the case, wherever there is an enlightened and thoughtful, but not a spiritually minded ministry; wherever the form is held without the power; wherever truth is professed, while the life is contrary to its spirit. This might be shown by an historical induction, so far as questions which concern the inward experiences of men admit of being argued on historical grounds; but our limits here forbid.

We proceed to mention some of those particulars, which characterise this unbelieving criticism, which betray its spirit, and upon which it may be met, rather than by a laborious refutation of its special objections.

It sets out with the assertion that the Bible must be approached and treated as a book of human origin; that its authors must be judged of, as we judge of living authors, as subject to the same biases, prejudices and errors. It is stated in the work before us as follows.

“In criticising we have no choice but to proceed by those laws of thought and reasoning, which in all the sciences have now received currency. We advance from the known to the unknown. We assume that human nature is like itself, and interpret the men of early ages, by our more intimate knowledge of contemporary and recent times; yet making allowance for the difference of circumstances. Much more do we believe that God is like himself; and that whatever are his moral attributes now, and his consequent judgment of human conduct; such were they then and all times. Nor ought we to question that the relation between the divine and the human mind are still substantially the same as ever.”

As thus presented there seems at first view little that can be objected to; and yet under this plausible exterior, there lies sufficient error, in its application, to sweep away a large part of the Scriptures. One of the first lessons they teach us, is to distrust their forms of expression, to gather their principles of criticism, from their application in the progress of the work, rather than from any statement of them, which they may make. It is no doubt true that as the authors of the Scriptures make use of the instrument of human language, they must be interpreted

by the same general rules, as the works of other men using this instrument. The principles of philosophy, grammar and logic, must be applied here as well as elsewhere; or we cannot take the first step towards any apprehension of their meaning. The mind must work under certain conditions and in certain fixed formulas or methods in all its reasonings, and if it work upon the Bible at all, it must work here, as upon all other subjects. But granting all this, we are not therefore prepared to admit the broad principle, as it is laid down and understood by those who avail themselves of it in their investigations, that the methods of modern science in its application to criticism can be applied without any limitations to the criticism of the Bible. It is neither fair nor safe to say, that, unless the same methods are strictly adhered to in the criticism of the Scriptures, as in mere human writings, the conclusions to which we arrive in our interpretations are unreliable. If it is safe to reason from what has taken place in nature, to what under like circumstances, will take place, it is not therefore safe to infer that men will act just as they have acted, or that the dealings of God with them will always appear the same. Neither does it follow, that because, so far as we have known men, they are subject to bias and liable to error in their statements of facts and truth, that therefore the authors of the Bible were liable to a similar bias and error. For although the Bible is the work of man, it also claims to be the work of God. If it has a human side, it has also a divine side, and comes to us with a presumption that it differs essentially from human writings. If indeed, there were men among us, who wrote under the same influences as the authors of the Scriptures, and we had formed our rules of criticism upon their works; then we might safely proceed from the known to the unknown, judge of their writings by those of recent times, and apply to their interpretation the principles which we had found sufficient to explain the writings of contemporaneous authors. But until this shall be the case, we cannot bring the two classes of works under entirely the same methods of criticism. There will remain an element so distinct and so peculiar to the Scriptures, that we cannot pass from our writings to theirs, in our reasonings; without involving a fallacy which vitiates our conclusions. We are not justified,

even prior to any examination of their subject-matter, in predicting the same things precisely of them, which we do of all merely human books. And if modern science has taught us any one thing with distinctness, it is that we should use the extremest modesty and caution in forming our generalizations; that we should confine them strictly to the class of things, or fields of truth, in which our observations have been made, and check at once all inferences from one thing to another which differ in kind, or have elements peculiar to themselves; and this even when we have no more than a suspicion that such a peculiar element exists in either. And it does not seem too much to insist upon the same scrupulous caution, in our reasonings upon matters which decide our destinies, and compared with which all questions of mere science are lost in insignificance. But if this principle be true, in the broad sense in which it is claimed, we are at liberty with all confidence, to pass at once in our inferences and generalizations from man to God, and from the forms of our thinking to the forms in which he thinks. And as this principle is neither safe nor reasonable, so in fact those who have gone upon it in their criticism, have never thrown much light upon the Bible. They are perpetually at variance with themselves, and to be consistent with their own theory, are driven to the most violent assumptions, which rob the Scripture of its richest meaning, and pervert its sense. Were there no other argument against this claim, the mere fruit of its workings, the vast amount of evil which has grown out of its unrestricted use, must convince any one that it needs to be limited, in order to be safe, and in order to produce any very beneficial result.

We cannot therefore criticize the scriptures altogether as we criticize other writings; and the very claim of inspiration, a claim which has all the presumption in its favour, growing out of the fact that it has been generally admitted from the time of their origin to the present, places them all at once out of the category of human works, and requires that so far as we may safely apply the ordinary laws of criticism, it should be done with a very different spirit than if they made no such claim. We do not mean of course that the question of their inspiration must be settled before all criticism; for the two processes must

intermingle and in a large measure be carried on together; the one grows up and decides itself in the prosecution of the other. But what we do mean is, that the claim that they are the very words of God, and the possibility that this claim may be true, ought to strike every one with a sacred awe, who ventures upon critical inquiry; that the work should be undertaken with a seriousness which would never permit him to trifle with hopes dearer to multitudes than their lives, and with a purpose to explain and vindicate where that was possible, rather than to find fault or search for objections. Such a spirit would lead to widely different results from those before us.

Again, as the Bible is a spiritual book, it demands as a prerequisite to any just appreciation of it, a peculiar moral and spiritual culture. A bad man stands scarcely any chance of reaching the full truth. For even if he should sincerely strive after it, as an intellectual exercise, his views must necessarily be warped and modified by his own internal state. We make ourselves, after all, however unfair it may be, the standard of our own judgments. This influence of our moral character upon our speculative judgments, though not easily defined is still freely admitted by most. Those who have made the effort know that as they become better men, in that proportion their views of moral and religious truth are clearer. And this again places the Bible upon other grounds, than the mass of human books, as to the requisitions it makes upon those who investigate or interpret it. It is true that this does not apply with so much force to the historical parts of Scripture; yet as history and doctrine, are so constantly interwoven in the Old Testament as well as in the New, we may not omit it here.

Closely connected with this, and yet distinct from it is the fact that the human and divine elements in the Scriptures so interpenetrate each other, that we cannot bring the one under the processes of our criticism, without at the same time sitting in judgment upon the other.

Now although this does not in any measure exempt the Bible from a free and fair criticism; although it does not at all conflict with the most searching investigations; yet it does clearly and strongly demand something in the purpose and spirit of those who carry on these processes, very different from that



which is demanded for the fair criticism of the works of men. While therefore it is true that we must follow the same law of thought in our investigation of Scripture, which we use in the investigation of other works; yet this is not true as it is understood and applied, by this unbelieving criticism; it is not true without the limitations which naturally arise from the distinctive divine element, claimed to enter into the constitution of the Bible, from the peculiarity of its structure and from the nature of the truth which it contains.

There is another concealed error in this principle as stated above, founded upon the assumed fact, that the dealings of God with men are always the same, and that the relations which exist between men are likewise unchangeable. This is by no means the case. God is indeed unchangeable, but in his works as they are seen by us there are changes. The same unchanging principles of justice and mercy are the habitation of his throne; yet as they work themselves out in the course of his providence, in the history of individuals and of nations, they appear widely different. In one case the one is visibly prominent, and in another the other. His purpose is one and absolute and yet under that unity of purpose there are a thousand diversities of operations. Nor is there any inconsistency in this. In God himself all these apparent changes are resolved into his one eternal immutable counsel, and could we trace them back to their origin, they would appear to us, as they are in fact, perfectly consistent and harmonious. It is through this endless variety that he ever brings out a real and substantial unity. It is thus that he works in nature, and we ought to expect that he would work thus in providence. We may as well demand that the mountains should be cut into squares or pyramids, or that every shore should be turned into an unvarying bank of sand, as to demand that there should be no diversities or apparent changes in the administration of his government. The one is no more inconsistent with the truth that "God is always like himself" than the other. There is no difference as to his absolute immutability, between his natural and moral attributes. Because as we see his works they are ordinarily marked with mercy and grace, it is not inconsistent with his immutable counsel, that he should at other times mani-

fest himself in wrath and justice. He may sweep away the world with a devouring flood, and he may spare it long to receive the influences of his grace, and yet be without variability or shadow of turning. He may smite the first-born of Egypt, filling the whole land with mourning and death, and yet be the same who sent Joseph to preserve it from death. He may call Abraham to sacrifice his own son, and yet be the God who calls to him from the heavens, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad." And so he may commission a Saul to smite and extinguish the Amalekites; an Elijah to call down vengeance upon the prophets of Baal; a Jehu to destroy the idolatrous Jezebel, and still remain the Lord God gracious and merciful. Otherwise how could there be that mingled work of mercy and judgment carried on, which every thing within us, our sense of justice, our guilty consciences, and our reason teach us to expect from a holy God, toward a world fallen, apostate and buried in sin.

Nor is it any more true that the relations of the human and divine mind are always the same. If we admit the idea at all, that God works in and upon his creatures, that the human and divine mind can have any communion or communication with each other; then it is natural to suppose, judging from what we know of God's dispensations towards men in other cases, that it would not always be the same here. As to their moral characters, men must stand in substantially the same relations to God; but as the organs by which he makes known his will, as the instruments in carrying out his purposes in the world, and as to the methods by which they may become conscious that he thus calls them, they may and do stand in very different relations to him. Unless we admit this we shall find ourselves, whenever we open the Bible, in a world of perplexities and strange anomalies. We meet with the record of deeds and actions which cannot be explained by the motives which ordinarily govern men; which cannot be explained as consistent with the characters of those who perform them; but which are perfectly consistent when we regard the agent as acting under the special influence and discretion of God; an influence declared by the narrative to be peculiar, but which this theory of the unvarying relation must deny. It is no sufficient explanation, for exam-

ple, of Samuel's conduct in the slaying of Agag, to say that he was jealous of Saul's alliance with foreign monarchs. It is in direct opposition to the whole of Samuel's character, as portrayed in the narrative, that such a deed should have been committed by him or commanded to be done, except under the supposition that he was thus directed to do by God, who, for purposes known to himself, had determined the destruction of the Amalekites, and chose the king of Israel as his instrument. It is no adequate reason to assign for the destruction of the descendants of Saul, when the kingly power of David was at its height, that it was jealousy of the remaining power of the former royal house. There is no evidence in the history that there was any popular attachment to the members of that family. Everything appears to the contrary. The whole previous treatment of the house by David lies against such a supposition. We are driven therefore to the conclusion, which is perfectly apparent in the account itself, that he felt himself in a peculiar relation to God as the executioner of his just judgments, upon the wicked members of a wicked race. We might bring other instances of this kind in the lives of the best kings and prophets, which are inexplicable on the supposition that they were subject only to the motives which ordinarily govern men, or if we deny the special interference of God by which he selected them as the agents of his purpose and righteous retribution. For it is always to be remembered, that in the requiring and authorizing such actions on the part of those whom he selects, God acts not purely as a sovereign (as our author seems to suppose,) but as a judge. And though he should appear sovereign to us, in those cases in which we cannot trace out the reasons of the judgment, it still proceeds in the mysterious depths of his own decree upon the grounds of justice. There are cases of an entirely different kind occurring throughout the period before us, which require the intervention of a special influence on the part of God to their harmonious explanation, to which we might fairly appeal, as proving that the relations of the divine and human mind are not always the same. But it is too clear to require any further illustration. The fundamental principle therefore of this criticism, without faith; that the Bible must be approached as a human book, and its investigation carried on by the application

✓

✓ of general rules of thought, though true in part, and safe in the hands of a spiritual and reverential man, is not true as these men apply it. And it follows clearly enough, that if this be so, the special objections and errors which spring from its application are likewise groundless and false.

possibly 2  
 A second point, which is fatal to this criticism, is that it does not seek truth as its end, and of course its theories or processes are not likely to be true. It carries upon its face indeed a deep and earnest love for the truth. Its very object, if we allow it to judge itself, is to save us from those doubts which arise out of the difficulties in Scripture; to remove the stains which it assumes to lie upon the pure and spotless character of God; to harmonize conflicting statements; to explain away the misinterpretations and glosses which in the course of ages have found a lodgement in the Bible. Its labour is professedly one of love. But some might prefer to be left in the gloom of doubt, and where they could not understand, still walk by faith and wait for the light hereafter, rather than be thrust forth into the utter darkness of unbelief, or where the light which shines around us, is but the last flickerings of a faith consumed, or the glare of the fires which have consumed it. It is not of course the part of any one to sit in judgment upon the motives of such writers. We would be unwilling to doubt their sincerity, except so far as the doubt is forced upon us by the course which they pursue. There may be many who are seeking the light with an honest purpose; who do not believe because they do not see sufficient evidence to convince; who find it hard to free themselves from the assertions and ideas of a false philosophy; whose doubts claim our respect, although it does not concern us the less to be on our guard against them. But there are some, who do not appear to be thus driven on to their ungracious work; to whom it seems not a necessity but a delight to unsettle if possible the faith of the Church; whose whole course compels us to believe, even in the exercise of the largest charity, that levity and malice mingle in their motives; who manifestly as far as actions can manifest motives, hate the truth; and who only profess an attachment to it, that they may injure it the more fatally and if possible destroy it.

To every well disposed mind, there is a solemnity attaching it-



self to all processes of investigation which have the truth for their end. Even where the results hoped for do not concern us practically as religious beings, there is still something about the truth itself which imparts a sacredness to all such investigations and forbids us to trifle while we study. No light-minded man, no one who allows any other end than the truth itself, to become his object, much less any one who disregards the truth or despises it, ever took a step in the progress of science. In a far higher degree is this true, when the line of our studies leads to those subjects which concern the destinies of our race and of ourselves. These problems reaching far over into eternity, which suggest themselves to every reflecting man, even aside from any revelation, and often force themselves upon his attention, and demand a solution, must ever rise into a majesty and grandeur, which commands the reverence of every spirit which ponders them. No one, it might seem, could trifle where he felt himself to be deeply concerned; and no one can fail to feel, or shake off the feeling at his pleasure, that he is concerned with problems like these. From the very condition of our nature, they take a hold upon us which we cannot escape. We cannot turn away from our own souls at will the seal and signature of our divine origin, and the end for which we were made. Reason teaches us, our nature compels us to believe that there is an awful truth somewhere in those questions, upon which the Scriptures profess to give us light, and we justly expect and require that those who treat of them should do it with an earnestness commensurate with their importance. We need not open the Scriptures to justify such a demand. It is an all sufficient reason that they speak of questions, which correspond to every man's wants, of man's relation to God, of the possibility of communion with him, and the methods by which we may now secure and maintain it, and of the world hereafter. No one who has reflected upon his condition and character; who has felt the painful conflicts and contradictions of his own nature, the earnest of his spirit, and yet felt that there was a truth lying beyond the reach of his own powers, which could explain the anomalies of the earth, and the conflicts of his own soul, and give him certain ground upon which to rest, needs any thing further to make him earnest and reverential in his enquiries, or to justify him in making the same demand upon



those who search and enquire for him. Under an influence like this, which a sincere love for the truth always imparts; there will appear a manifest effort to save rather than to destroy; difficulties will be forced upon the wise, not sought for or created; grounds upon which apparent contradictions may be reconciled will be brought out to the light, not concealed, and it will be confessed sometimes, that there is a propriety in waiting and believing, when we cannot perfectly explain. It would be scarcely possible for such a mind to array itself in opposition to the Scriptures. It would be a painful process by which open unbelief should be forced upon the soul. All along the path of these enquiries, light would arise and truth appear in her harmony and beauty. For it is true here, as in all other lines of study, that they who seek with the whole heart, and they alone, shall find. Truth does not reveal herself, or unveil her hidden glory, to those who have no earnest longing for her. It is given only to those who by patient continuance in search attain it, to stand upon the heights, and look over the broad fields and tracts, hitherto concealed from their view. The law that we shall reach results only by labour, and labour in the right spirit, holds in this as in all the departments of God's word. And if we violate that law in fact or intention, we necessarily reap disappointment for ourselves. Nor is it out of the analogy of God's requirements, nor inconsistent with the utmost impartiality to demand that all investigations should be prosecuted with a spirit thus conservative of the truth; and that consciously and purposely. To some indeed—in a world where truth at best is not intuitive, and does not force itself upon our convictions whether we choose to receive it or not, the maintaining of such a spirit, and a life of earnest search for the truth corresponding to it; may be (as Bishop Butler supposes) a large part of their discipline or trial. At all events, indifference to the truth, much less a secretly cherished opposition to it, is not impartiality. In hearts naturally prone to unbelief it is very far removed from it. As it concerns religious truth, it cannot exist at all. We must be for it or against it. The only other ground is absolute stupidity, and even that is a kind of lifeless opposition. When therefore it is professed it is consciously or unconsciously a mask for hatred. <All investigations starting from such impartiality end in open opposition.> The spirit of this

modern criticism has nothing of this love of truth. In the most charitable judgment it cannot even stand upon the assumed ground of indifference. The painful conviction forced upon us is that such inquiries labour only to destroy; that the restraints which religion imposes are odious, and the only way to escape from them is to loosen its hold upon the minds of men. It betrays throughout this desire to unsettle the foundations of all religious faith. There is a total want of the reverence which as we have seen, ever accompanies a truth-loving spirit, and which cannot be dispensed with in any Biblical investigation. Its strictures upon the characters and narratives and doctrines are reckless beyond belief. Its conjectures are purely arbitrary without the least evidence to support them, and oftentimes against the clearest evidence to the contrary. It deals with the books of Scripture, as no man would venture to do with the classics, who had the least regard for his reputation for learning or fairness. The strongest marks of unity, both in style and thought, are disregarded, and books which have come down to us as one, under the most unvarying tradition, and with the sanction of a well ascertained antiquity, are rent asunder, and the dismembered parts assigned to different authors, and at far distant intervals of time. No testimony however uniform has any weight against these conjectures. Every difficulty is held to be sufficient evidence either of ignorance or prejudice or deliberate fraud. Such criticism has no reference or regard even for any thing which has been done in the past. It proceeds as though nothing had yet been gained in the progress of theological learning or science, towards a consistent explanation. Old objections which have been answered a thousand times from the days of Celsus onward, are gathered up and repeated anew with all the assurance of fresh discoveries. Nor has it any faith in the future. The idea or the possibility that there may still be discoveries made, and new light gained in the progress of a patient criticism, that what appears dark to us, may be clear to the generations which come after us, never dawns upon their minds. So far as they are concerned, the world might have as well begun and ended with themselves. It is blind with looking at itself. It cuts itself off from all fellowship with those who have gone before, or those who may still come after them. It deals with the past only to rake among its rub-

bish for something upon which to support its own pretensions. It looks to the future only as the scene where its work shall be complete, and it can stand amidst the desolation it has made and glory over the shattered and broken fragments of a prostrate faith. Already we hear its shouts of exultation. It has not a single mark of those who are searching for the truth with honest hearts, and of course its vaunted conclusions are not only unreliable, but unworthy of serious regard.

(3) A third remark is that so far as the criticism of the Old Testament is concerned, these writers take no notice of the results which have been reached in the criticism of the New. The Bible comes to us as a whole. The Old and New Testaments are the complements of each other. They cannot be rightly understood unless they are thus viewed. We must fall in with the manifest design of God's plan, and look forwards with the Jew and look backwards with the Christian church, or we shall fail to comprehend either its doctrines or its history. For as the ceremonies of the Jewish church, were but the types of Christian truth, and are only rightly understood when thus interpreted, so it is true that the history of the Jews has its significance in its relations to the Christian church. In its relations to the nations around, and to the truth of God entrusted to it, it pointed forward to the time when it should give way to the spiritual church, which should in a far higher sense and on a grander scale, sustain the same relations. At the same time, it was an example of the modes in which God carries on the world, in its relations to the church, to the accomplishment of his designs. It is vain therefore to attempt a separation of these in the processes of our criticism. There are doubtless some things recorded for the church then existing, which have answered their immediate purpose and are less important to us, and which can be best understood in the records which contain their fulfilment.

As it concerns the question of the genuineness of the historical books of the Old Testament, with which the work before us mainly deals, it is very much decided by the decision of the question as to the genuineness and authenticity of the New. The latter must in the order of things come up for determination first. It is nearer to us. There are contemporary

historians who may confirm or refute its statements. All the conditions to a fair settlement of an historical question are at hand; whereas the other can be determined only from an examination of the books themselves. They relate mainly to a period of time of which we have no contemporary history. It is therefore a much more difficult question to solve. But the decision of the one includes the other. The books are inseparable, and must stand or fall together. The New refers to the Old as containing a true history. It makes use of its facts; it refers to its actors and events; it borrows its genealogies; it adopts the same chronology; and unless therefore it can be shown that the writers of the New quote fables as history, we must believe that the authors of the Old were reliable and authentic. This presumption is greatly strengthened by the manner in which the Old Testament is quoted by the New, as the Scripture, including all the present canon, under the three-fold division which had long been recognised among the Jews. Coming now with this presumption in their favour, we find nothing, on an examination of their records, in their style or spirit, which casts discredit upon their genuineness and authenticity; nothing which forbids their being held as a part of that truth which God has guaranteed to us by his own witness and seal; which is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and which is able through faith to make men wise unto salvation. There are doubtless some inaccuracies in figures, some verbal contradictions, which have crept into the text, in its descent through a long succession of ages, and almost numberless transcriptions. Most of these will no doubt disappear in the progress of further criticism; and should they remain as they now are, they could never be fairly urged as an impeachment of their veracity, or even seriously trouble the faith of an intelligent believer. And there is evidence enough in their essential agreement with each other, in the use of credible sources, and in the scrupulous care with which they have been guarded by the Jews, to confirm and place beyond cavil, this result of the study of the narrative. (A full enumeration of the objections would show how trifling and arbitrary most of them are.) Indeed it requires the diseased vision of this morbidly sensitive

Ezra 7

a/6H



criticism to discover them at all. But we have not the space for such a catalogue, and it would not be necessary to form one if we had. The book will work out its own remedy. It may at first shock the reader who has not become accustomed to the most irreverent use of Scripture; but in its progress it becomes so sweeping in its assertions, so reckless in its spirit, and so bold in its assurance, that his fears will give way to indignation, and this in turn to wonder and contempt.

- 
- ART. III.—1. *Ancient Egypt, her testimony to the truth of the Bible. Being an interpretation of the inscriptions and pictures which remain upon her tombs and temples; illustrated by very numerous engravings and coloured plates.* By Wm. Osburn, Junior, Member of the Council of the Royal Society of Literature. London; Bagster & Sons, Paternoster Row. 1846, pp. 242, 8vo.
2. *The Monuments of Egypt; or, Egypt a Witness for the Bible.* By Francis L. Hawks, D. D., LL. D. With Notes of a Voyage up the Nile; By an American. New York: Geo. P. Putnam, 155 Broadway. London: John Murray. 1850, pp. 412, 8vo.
3. *Egypt and the Books of Moses; or, The Books of Moses illustrated by the Monuments of Egypt: With an Appendix.* By Dr. E. W. Hengstenberg, Professor of Theol. at Berlin. From the German, by R. D. C. Robbins, Abbot Resident, Theol. Sem., Andover. New York: Robt. Carter & Brothers. 1850, pp. 300, 12mo.
4. *Nineveh and its Remains; with an account of a visit to the Chaldean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil-worshippers; and an inquiry into the manners and arts of the ancient Assyrians.* By Austen Henry Layard, Esq., D. C. L. New York: George P. Putnam, 155 Broadway. 1840, 2 vols. 8vo. pp. 326 and 373.

We have grouped together the works that stand at the head of this article, not merely on account of their nearly contem-