

## LECTURE IV.

### MOSAISM.

WE now come to consider the process of religious development from Abrahamism to Mosaism. In order to a rational appreciation of the new, it has to be regarded by comparison with the old. And this comparison must not be confined to the finished results of either. It must include the processes by which these are severally reached. Our subject invites us to contrast the outward conditions of Mosaism with those under which Abrahamism was formed. Only by following such a method can we form an intelligent opinion as between the one and the other. Only by such a method does the human mind accept satisfactorily the new position to which the old has led, and which becomes itself a starting-point for future development. The historical method demands continuity in the action. It puts us in a position to understand

the process by which the conclusion has been reached. We may accept a finished system, round, compact, and complete, apart from its historical evolution. But we accept it more rationally, and hold it more firmly, when we understand the process of its formation, and trace the course through which it has been reached.

Before considering Mosaism, therefore, abstractly and without reference either to its rise or its decline, we must view its historical preparation and the circumstances under which it came to pass. We must view it not only as completed, but as in process of formation. Thus only can we compass the general principle of a Divine and human co-operation, which we have sought to present as a leading idea in the treatment of religious development. Thus only will fall into their respective positions the human influence—variable, yet varying within certain limits, varying, yet recurring—and the divine operation, seeming to change, yet truly changeless, steadily through the ages working with unity of purpose towards its destined end.

The halting principle which solves historical variations by a polytheistic theory of many causes is supplanted by the Monotheism which can find a satisfac-

tory solution in one Great Cause, out of whom is evolved an infinite variety, while at the same time there is involved a perfect unity.

## I.

1. We left religion in the Abrahamic, and now take it up in the Mosaic stage. How many years elapsed between the former and latter we shall not pretend to say, where chronological data are so uncertain. But there is no doubt about one fact, and that is—the chosen people were in the Abrahamic era a nomad tribe, and in the Mosaic they had grown into a nation. A vast change had come over their social condition. The process by which that change had come to pass need not be detailed from point to point. Historical Scripture furnishes a means of tracing it, and human experience outside of Revelation corroborates its probability. What suffices for a primitive, simple condition of society, does not meet the requirements of a more complex social state. The chieftain of a wandering tribe circumscribed in numbers, a sojourner among more settled tribes, who can move his tent from place to place, as the exigencies of a day or a season may

require—who can now be in Mesopotamia, then in Canaan, and then in Egypt—here or there, as the circumstances of the time may render it expedient—such a one is in a very different position from him who has to administer the affairs of a settled nation, no longer able to meet danger and straits by the simple resource of fleeing from them, but stationed firmly, and bound to encounter them without quitting the field. Conditions vastly altered suffice to account for the marked contrast between the simplicity of Abrahamism and the complexity of Mosaism. The family can be ruled without an elaborate code of laws applying to the minutest relations of life. The nation imperatively demands an elaborate system, pronouncing on the multifarious interests which have come into existence. The spirit which suffices for the family or clan would be found totally unsuitable for the nation. The progress must be made from personal authority to that of impersonal law or system. The advance must take place from the simple to the complex.

Thus, the difficulty which has been found in the sudden legislation of the Mosaic period is to a great extent removed. The impulse was Divine; the action

was anticipatory. There is a spontaneousness in it which enables us to accept it as a natural thing, while at the same time it is so unique as to imply the action of the supernatural. As a rule, it may be said that public law regulating the relations of complicated social life, is the growth of time, the outcome of long experience, the ripened fruit of time and trial. Thus it is that we have our statute and our common or consuetudinary law in church and state. Admitting the difficulty of accounting for the complex and complete legal system, social and political, which we find in Mosaism, we should, to lessen the difficulty, not only remember what has been adduced, the altered conditions of the Hebrew race, long grown up from a family to a nation, and passed from the nomad to the settled life, but also the fact that during the period of transformation they were in intimate connection with a people (the Egyptians) long civilised, among whom those complex social relations which national life implies had long existed and been the subject of legislation. Thus they had a model from which to copy, with the necessary and advisable alterations. Without for a moment excluding the Divine influence, there was a

human mould in which their institutes and institutions might be cast. God reveals His will to men, only as they are able to bear it. He goes before, but not so far in advance that they to whom He speaks shall lose sight of Him.

The family of Jacob were growing up in Egypt into a nation, and were gradually passing through a transition, of which Scripture gives no detail, and the progress of which we are thus left to imagine. They were a nation within a nation. Among them consuetudinary law must have grown up, accommodated to their gradually altered circumstances. Of that law Scripture records no particulars. We see it, not in its formation but in its completion. Yet a general survey of the position may lead us to the conclusion that not only a divine impulse, but also human circumstances co-operated in bringing about the final result. The Sinaitic and Wilderness legislation was Divine, yet not so wholly Divine as to eliminate all human considerations. Various provisions in the Pentateuch testify as much, such as that for the postponed celebration, in certain cases, of the Passover, and that for securing inheritance to females, under circumstances which must occasionally occur.

We have been pointing to the difference between the Abrahamic and Mosaic eras. The former was simple, the period of faith; the latter was complex, the period of law and system. The former was distinguished by an object of hope—vague, indefinite, temporal. The latter initiated the realisation of that hope. Faith, dim and undefined, upheld the Abrahamic Israelites during their unsettled wanderings. Jacob, in the passage from the old to the new, said, “Lord, I have waited for thy salvation.” Abraham—strong in faith, but dim in knowledge, seeing afar off, as through a glass darkly—was without possession of the inheritance; so were his son and grandson. Pass over more than a millenium. Privileges have been abused. Promises have been misconstrued. Christ came—was rejected. We find the race again cast forth on the world, scattered among the Gentiles. Yet in their unbelief now, as in their faith of old time, they preserve a nationality and manifest a permanency, which are among the most remarkable historical phenomena in the world, and among the most striking testimonies to the inspiration of Scripture. The hope of Abrahamism, and its narrowness, preserved the separate identity of

him and his, while as yet a wandering tribe in Canaan, and while growing into a nation, though in the bondage of Egypt. That hope was realised eventually in the possession of the Land of Promise. It was a true hope, if it was also essentially a temporal hope. The hope of a Messiah to come, of a temporal ruler and conqueror—a false hope, yet humanly combined with a special heavenly Providence—preserves a dispersed people as a distinct nation, perpetuates them, and to all appearance will continue to do so, until the veil is removed from their minds, and they shall recognise their Messiah in Him whom the nation rejected—until their hope shall be realised at last in their being brought into the fold of Christ with the fulness of the Gentiles.

2. Abraham was a majestic figure in the age justly called by his name. Moses is no less conspicuous in the stage of development which succeeded. In order to realise the true conditions of Abraham's period, we ventured to borrow information outside of inspiration. Nor shall we pursue a different method in the period now under review, while still employing the Scriptures as our principal and most reliable historical authority for fact and event.



Regarding Abraham's early personal history we have the most scanty information. Of the political and religious conditions of his native land we endeavoured to form a definite opinion, from all available sources, sacred and profane. From these we sought to realise the state of matters with which the inspired record deals, so that we might see the mutual action of the natural and supernatural, of the human and divine. As, then, the Abrahamic period is in a measure associated with Abraham's personality, so, in no small degree is that of Mosaism with Moses. But the parallelism of personality leads us rather to the future than to the past. That is, personally Moses may be much less suitably compared with Abraham than with Christ. Nor does Scripture forbid, but rather invite, the comparison. The great bond of union between all ages and stages of religious development is the promise of a Deliverer in primeval times, the seed of the woman; in Abrahamic time it is the seed of Abraham; and in Mosaic time the most important declaration of the nation's and race's hope is, in the words of Moses himself, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee,

of thy brethren, like unto me : unto him ye shall hearken.”

Now externally the likeness between the two is great, even while the differences are marked and significant. Let us trace the similarity and the difference, as illustrating the interaction of the divine and human.

Of all the personages connected with the pre-Christian development, Moses most closely resembles the Christ. Not only in greater particulars does this hold good, but even in those abnormal and apocryphal legends which have gathered around the inspired and historical narratives of their life and mission. The Gospels (two at least of them) contain a few disjointed descriptions of the birth and infancy of Jesus. Then there is silence until he enters on his public ministry. So the Book of Exodus describes the wonderful incidents connected with the birth of Moses. In both the inspired narrative shews the special interposition of Divine Providence. The child Jesus is traced historically through infancy, till his miraculous preservation from the massacre commanded by Herod, then in the repose of Egypt, the return to Palestine, and the upbringing in remote, secluded

Galilee. There is no lifting of the veil which shrouds the Saviour's history after infancy, except the one incident of the visit to Jerusalem when he was twelve years old, until he formally presents himself as the long expected Messiah—the Redeemer and Consolation of Israel. How parallel to this is the Exodus narrative of Moses' infancy—equally adverse providences, equally providential preservation. The circumstances are too familiar to require recapitulation.

A distinction may be marked between the closing notices of the early history of the two,—the One, the carpenter's son, labouring at his father's trade, making ploughs and yokes (as Justin Martyr testifies) in meek humility—dignifying for all time honest labour; the other, the son of Pharaoh's daughter, brought up in the highest worldly position to which an Egyptian, native or adopted, could aspire. But then and thereafter descend on both alike equal darkness and silence, so far as inspiration is concerned, until the Greater is about thirty years of age, and the first in historic order is forty years old. Fancy and tradition have rushed in to fill up the blanks. In the greater case we reverently withdraw

from the sensuous conceptions, with which a carnal spirit has loaded the God-man's infant and youthful biography. In the case of the other we are not called on to be so exclusive, but may assume something of the history in the extra-scriptural independent traditions regarding the life of Moses, before he is presented to us in the biblical narrative as the divinely called actor in the deliverance of the chosen people from Egyptian bondage.

Chronology is so uncertain at this period that an argument can scarcely be hinged on a date. Taking the probable, where we cannot have the precise, for a guide, we gather that the period during which the immigration and exodus may most probably be held to fall was from B.C. 1867 to B.C. 1652, giving 215 years as the actual duration of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt. So far as can be made out, this period included one of the most divided conditions of government in Egypt. Before the 18th Dynasty (B.C. cir. 1525), we have nothing like detailed or continuous history of the various Egyptian dynasties, and particularly there is almost an entire want of monumental record regarding the 15th and 16th Dynasties, viz.,—

those of the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings. The two dynasties of Shepherds, with a mixed Theban and Shepherd dynasty (the 17th) lasted, approximately, from B.C. 2080 to B.C. 1625. Remembering that all dates and chronology of this period are constructive and conjectural, the general conclusion may still be considered as very probable that the government of Egypt at this period was divided and distracted. If so, the political situation was favourable for the vindication of their liberties by the enslaved Israelites, and would naturally suggest attempts in that direction. If the bulk of the people bare their burdens patiently, and without a thought of endeavouring to improve their state, at least some of the better spirits of their nation would entertain aspirations after deliverance and freedom. Even two centuries can hardly have extinguished utterly the instinct of liberty which possesses the nomad mind. If we read between the lines of Scripture, we shall find no ambiguous corroboration of such a supposition. The subtle and unscrupulous policy of destroying the Israelitish male children, entered upon by the Pharaohs before the birth of Moses, points in this direction. The mission of his elder

brother obscurely alluded to in Exodus iv. 14, when he went from Egypt to Midian, seems significant of concerted action. Without straining the text we may conceive Aaron as a messenger from those of the people who could be trusted to carry out a policy where failure was ruin—from those of the people who could conceive the idea of national freedom, and who were impelled to summon to the cause the instruments most likely to be efficient. Even the first offer of Moses to lead the national movement (as we suppose it to be) points towards the same conclusion. Forty years before the period of Exodus he offered himself to the people as the vindicator of their liberty, or at least the lightener of their bondage. If there be any truth in extra-scriptural traditions (and there is no good reason to discredit them), the rejection of Moses when he first presented himself as the national deliverer is humanly quite intelligible. He had been brought up an Egyptian. He had led the armies of Egypt to victory in Ethiopia. He was identified with the oppressing race. He was, therefore, distrusted and rejected. All this is natural. And equally natural is the turning of the national hope towards the exile, who had

descended from the steps of a throne to the menial occupation of herdsman, who possessed qualifications which no other individual of the nation possessed—literary culture, political experience—and who had also purged himself (as it were) from all the disqualifications which led to his first rejection. He whose honesty might at first be doubted is now in a new position. Suspicion of complicity with the oppressors could no longer attach to him. He had finally and long broken with Egypt. He was now more like one of themselves, and thus more likely to inspire their confidence and obtain their adherence. If we could recover with certainty the exact position of political affairs in Egypt at that time, a flood of light would be thrown upon the human circumstances attending and promoting the Exodus. Such light would in no degree derogate from the influence of the Divine element in connection with this remarkable event, but would shew the co-operation of the human conditions, in and through which Divine Providence acted.

3. The development from the Patriarchal to the Mosaic stage is significantly marked by the statements in Exod. vi. 2, 3—“And God spake unto Moses and

said unto him: I am the Lord, and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty (El-Shaddai), but by my name of Jehovah was I not known unto them;" and Exod. iii. 13, 14—"And Moses said unto God: Behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses: I Am that I Am, and He said—Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you."

Nothing is more significant of development in religious views than such change in the name of Deity, or such new prominence given to the attribute which the name expresses. The Divine perfection of Omnipotence was the favourite and usual appellative in Patriarchal times, and naturally so. Their position as strangers, the natural jealousy of the native races, and the consciousness of their own weakness, led the Israelites to dwell on the strength of their unseen Protector. Now they are a nation. They are encouraged to look forward to a long history in the future. They are power-



ful enough to ward off aggression. The national hope would fix itself on permanency, and so, that idea of the Divine One which expresses His unchangeableness—His fidelity to covenant and promise—would attain a prominence greater than before. There remained but one other great stage in religious development, which was reached when Christianity was promulgated, and when the Divine conception was formulated by the beloved disciple in the phrase “God is Love.” “God is mighty,” would bring strength and courage to the soul of the nomad. “God is faithful” would carry a glow of security to the heart of the nation. “God is Love” fills with joy unspeakable the breast of the Christian.

## II.

Passing now from means, ways, and signs—from an external view of Mosaism—let us study it as it presents itself in its essence.

1. Like the Abrahamic period, with its ordinance of Circumcision—the sign of that separation from the world and of dedication to God, which marked the exclusiveness of religious development—the Mosaic period is distinguished by the ordinance of the Pass-

over, commemorative of deliverance from bondage and plague. We must not omit to notice that this ordinance is the only one of the complicated Mosaic Ritualism which passed over to Christianity, changed indeed in form and enlarged in meaning, yet still not so altered but that the general correspondence is preserved. Circumcision first marked separation from the apostate races of mankind and union with the now chosen race of Abraham. Its Christian analogue rises to the higher spiritual conception of separation from sin, engrafting into Christ, and sharing in the privileges of that great family in heaven and earth, of which He is the Head, and believers the members. The conception of the Christian Passover equally rises above that of the Jewish. It signifies and seals deliverance not merely from temporal bondage, but from the dominion of sin and corruption, and our admission into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Thus as we go down the stream of time, and as Revealed Religion unfolds itself to our view, we are incited to think of it, not so much as recovering the lost and better past, but as looking forward to the better future. Our thoughts

travel not backward to primeval happiness—the golden time of the world's youth—but forward to that glorious consummation which is initiated by Christianity, and which prepares for “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” The law was not a reminiscence of the past, but a shadow of good things to come (Heb. x. 1). It sets our faces still forward.

2. Mosaism was a system, elaborated to meet every conceivable case, and to regulate all the relations of man to God and to his fellow-man. It carries out great principles to the minutest detail. Now, one part of Mosaic legislation stands by itself, we mean the Decalogue—the “Ten Words.” It involves a great principle, viz.:—that privilege is inseparably connected with duty. The foundation charter of the new relation between God and His people is based on the solemn moral foundation of the Ten Commandments. Although laws—ceremonial social and political—were promulgated with great minuteness of detail, yet these moral precepts, this moral summary, was recognised as occupying a position different from and higher than all the other legal provisions. It was the first to be proclaimed. It is the basis on which the

others repose. It was unchangeable : they might alter.

The only apparent exception to this inherent and unchangeable obligation — unchangeable while God and man are as they are—is the Fourth Commandment enacting the duty of observing the Sabbath—the middle term, the keystone of that arch which bears up in the Decalogue our duty to God and man. Much ingenuity has been expended in shewing the meaning and significance of this exception ; especially has it been adduced as a remarkable testimony to the duty of observing the Sabbath, that an institution liable to alteration in details should be assigned to a central position in a code of unchangeable obligation. All this is quite legitimate. But does the Fourth Commandment require any such excuse for the position it occupies ? In dealing with Primeval Revelation, we pointed out how the first creation narrative leads up to the creation of man, and past him to the institution of the Sabbath, raising him, as it were, to the highest level, illustrating his likeness to God in work and rest, foreshadowing an eternal Sabbath of which the Sabbath of time was but the faint forecast. On this

ground we decline to regard the Sabbath Commandment, in its highest spiritual sense, as any exception to the unchangeableness of the moral law contained in the Decalogue. Moses, the legislator, needs no excuse. "The foolishness of God is wiser than man." If the Fourth Commandment, in its Decalogue wording, has a flavour of earth and time, it has such in common with the Second Commandment, which essentially prescribes how God is to be worshipped acceptably, and yet utters its warnings against the contrary in language suggested by the circumstances of the Israelites at a time when they had been newly separated from the gross idolatry of Egypt.

In the Decalogue we have the first formal recognition of relative duties as co-important with those due directly to God Himself. There is clearly implied what our Lord so pointedly taught, that the first and great commandment of the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God," &c., and that the second is of co-ordinate importance with it—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In the Decalogue is the germ of that which Christianity fully unfolds. "This is the commandment which we have from Him, that he who

loveth God should love his brother also." "He who loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" Burckhardt has remarked that the code of the Beni-Israel is the declaration of the indivisible unity of morality and religion. And long before his days, Josephus expresses himself to a similar effect, boasting that whereas other legislators had made religion to be a part of virtue, Moses had made virtue to be a part of religion. For a Jew and a Pharisee of his period, Josephus made no mean approach to the Christian conception of the relation between religion and morality.

3. The Mosaic ideal, then, drew not only religion, but morality and relative duty, out of God, placing the latter not on grounds of expediency, but on the eternal basis of the Divine. Its theory was that of interpenetrating with religion man's daily social life, the administration of public affairs, and the whole circle of human conduct in the world. It carries religion into his action not only as a worshipper, but as a man, a husband, father, master, servant, and as a citizen—into his public as well as individual and social life. It takes care of him, and guides him in

everything. We mark how it treats him almost as a child, incapable as yet of mastering great principles, able only to follow explicit details.

In this respect Mosaism is in striking contrast to the simplicity by which it was preceded in the Patriarchal, and followed in the Christian era. Though the heir of the glorious promises, Israel was yet as a child, under tutors and governors, until the time appointed. The law was his "schoolmaster to bring him unto Christ." And this principle is developed in all the legislation with which the Mosaic period is identified.

4. The ceremonial laws enter into minutest detail. Morning and evening, daily, weekly, monthly, annually on the great festivals, and at the still longer cycle of the jubilee, the Israelite is taken by the hand, reminded of his duty, constrained to it, has it made an habitual part of his ordinary life. What could be a greater contrast to the almost entire absence of such religious incentives (we were almost going to say, mechanical incentives to religion) in the previous Antediluvian and Patriarchal periods! In these earlier periods man declined into utter religious indifference, or worse, into absolute atheism, foolishly saying in

his heart, "There is no God," and still more foolishly acting as if there were no God, filling up the cup of iniquity, until the full cup of judgment had to be drained to the dregs. In the Mosaic period (including therein the Judaic, which wrought out practically the Mosaic principles) it was different, and yet we hesitate to say that it was better. Formalism took full possession of the Jewish mind—or of that portion of it which made the highest profession of religion. The most vehement denunciations of the gracious Saviour—the dark shadow to the light of His love for the erring and sinful—are launched not against the godless Sadducees, but against the hypocritical Pharisees.

The education of mankind was going on through the ages, for a long time with little, and again for a long time with much provision for his religious needs. The result of neither process was favourable—in the one case irreligion, pure and simple; in the other formalism, hollow, hypocritical, hateful. Does Christianity, ceremonially considered, hit the happy mean? Perhaps so; but certainly not unless we take into account that Divine factor, the Holy Spirit, the vivifying principle of Christian religious means. As He was the energis-



ing principle of creation, so He infuses life into the dead. We may have all the form and outward seeming of Christian life, but "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His;" "As many (only) as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

5. Religion was not only carried into its own sphere (strictly so called), but into all the details of private and social life. It regulated every relation in which man could stand to man socially—the relations of parent and child, of husband and wife, of master and servant, of citizen and stranger. It prescribed with the utmost minuteness laws of property, of debt, and of taxation. It had its criminal code distinguishing crimes against God and man, and assigning the punishments proportioned to the offences. It included also judicial and constitutional laws bearing on the administration of justice and on civil government, on the functions of local judges, and the duties of supreme rulers. It extended to every conceivable case which might arise in a settled state of society. Its complexity meets at every point the complications involved in an advanced social condition. It was the greatest possible contrast to the simplicity of the preceding Patriarchal

era, so destitute of detail, and no less a contrast to the succeeding Christian stage of development, when all detail (almost) is dropped, and a few terse but pregnant maxims sum up the pages of precepts in which Mosaism regulates the conduct of man. Ceremonialism is dismissed with the maxim—"Neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem shall men worship the Father: God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." Places, modes, times, rites disappear into the darkness out of which Mosaism temporarily called them. The vast variety of social injunctions are compressed into a sentence in the Gospel of Christianity—"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." The public duties of the citizen to the commonwealth, of the subject to the ruler, who is pronounced to be the ordinance of God, are no less tersely set forth—"Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's"; while an Apostolic maxim suggests that our citizen aim as Christians should be to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," conjoining the two principles of duty to God and to man.

6. Mosaism appears to separate, but really does not separate, the Divine and human. Like some great river which flows downward in one channel, and then in its course ramifies into many for a time, but reunites these temporary branches into one stream before its waters are poured into the ocean, so the single, simple stream of primeval and patriarchal religion divides itself in Mosaism into many branches, to be reunited by Christianity into one great current, bearing on its bosom the fortunes of the race through time into eternity.

The race was undergoing a particular course of education—the minute in detail as against the general in principle, the code as against the life, the letter as against the Spirit. Mosaism was the lowest descent towards man. It put its arms under him to bear him up. It took him by the hand, firmly, to lead him on a right way. Its successor rather drew him than drove him. It did not so much shout in his ear, “Do this and live,” “Do that and die.” The Gospel is the law of love and not of ordinances. The Gospel brings us back to the Abrahamic era of faith, as the great inspiring principle of human conduct. “This is the

work of God, that ye believe on Him whom God hath sent." Man is thrown back on himself, enlightened by the Word and inspired by the Spirit. Identified with Christ, imbued with His spirit, he receives a spiritual life and perception from the second Adam, analogous to, but higher than, that natural life which he derives from the first Adam. Life comes from the one, quickening from the other.