

it as gold tried in the fire, more effulgent because of the trial it has endured.

God's plan of revealing Himself in His word is in many respects analogous to His way of revealing Himself in His works of creation. He could, at one moment and with one volition, have called into mature existence the world and all that it contains, but He followed another plan. In like manner He could have all at once given a perfect and completed Bible into men's hands. He preferred to give it "*in many parts and many ways.*" The world is not less perfect, nor does it less manifestly show forth God's wisdom because of the lapse of ages during which it was in course of preparation for man; and the Word is not less truly inspired, the Bible is not less certainly the Word of God because it was written and compiled in the course of many centuries. The Spirit of God speaks in it throughout: in all its variety there is a divine uniformity: it is one, and unique, speaking of God's truth in men's words.

Our critics ask, Why is not the Bible ideally perfect? Why should it be so much a record of human depravity, of crimes and cruelties? The reply is obvious: it reflects truly the real condition of man: it deals fairly with the dreadful malady which afflicts humanity: it conceals nothing, minces nothing: it gives voice to the wail of anguish as well as to the shout of ecstatic joy: it exposes the corruption of the human heart as well as the spotless holiness of God.

Again, there are things which (to quote from Dr. Candlish) "it is impossible for God to do from his very nature." "He cannot lie." "He cannot deny himself." These are Scriptural statements. God, in dealing with his creatures—especially his fallen creatures—may resolve to lay himself under restraint; or, in other words, may accommodate His procedure towards them to their state and circumstances. Perhaps, if He is to deal with them as still rational and free agents, He must do so. That at all events, seems to have been our Lord's opinion, when He told the Jews of His day that Moses allowed their fathers a liberty of divorce, inconsistent with the original ideal of holy marriage at its first institution, "because

of the hardness of their hearts." (Mark x. 2—9.) I firmly believe that God was the author of the Mosaic law of marriage, as well as of the Adamic and the Christian. And I explain the admitted imperfection of the Mosaic law in this particular by the consideration that God having thought fit to assume the character of civil and political ruler and legislator over the Jews, did not scruple to adapt His law and policy, not always to His own perfect standard, but sometimes and in some respects to their state and circumstances; and that He must needs do so, if He was to rule them and legislate for them as rational and free agents. Is this limiting God? Is it at all derogatory to His absolute sovereignty and infinite perfection? Is it not rather a simple assertion of His unlimited power and discretion, as being at liberty to do always what, in the view of the case before Him, He judges to be right?

"It is precisely the same principle that I apply to the Bible as the infallible record of an infallible revelation. In determining the manner in which He is to reveal Himself to men, and to have His Revelation recorded, God must, of very necessity, lay down a plan, and, in accordance with it, lay himself under conditions. And it is a perfectly fair and legitimate subject of inquiry—what is that plan? and what are these conditions? Once, in giving the law from Sinai; God spoke the words himself, and wrote them himself on tables of stone. Even then He must needs adapt His Revelation to circumstances. He gave the law otherwise than He would have given it to angels, or to a man in Paradise. He gave it as "made for the lawless and disobedient." (1 Tim. i. 9.) Nay, more; when some forty years after He gave it again by the mouth of Moses (Deut. v.), He gave it, as it were, in a new edition, somewhat modified, at least in one of the commandments, to suit the condition in which the new generation of Israel was placed. May not this example show that God reveals His mind and will, not as realizing His own perfect ideal of optimism, but as an important sense restrained from doing so? And, in truth, is He not necessarily thus restrained if He is to deal with men and