

form to those who most needed to be informed of the existence of a God, and to speak to them in language suitable to their condition? Because we are subjected to divine restraints by the action of conscience, by the action of physical law, by the action of human society, by the action of the church of which we are members, must therefore the transgression of Adam be visited by no chastisement of an open form, but be confined to the simple action of only one force—conscience? I say when you read these narratives bear in mind that you have to do with life in its beginnings; and therefore, expect to meet with what you will never find when society is organized, disciplined and enjoying the advantages of ample instruction from the experience of ages, and the voice of God in His Word.

3. *The early narratives are to be looked at in relation to subsequent events.*

The Bible is not a history of the world; but a history of man in his relation to God. It does not pretend to give us all details that may be needful to see some of the related events in a clear light. It comes to us with authority, as from God—and we are bound to receive it on the assertion of that authority and not on the ground of independent enquiries. If our reasoning powers are to be exercised in relation to this subject—it is first in the examination of the evidences that exist in support of such authority having been asserted. If in the result, we find that God has never claimed to be the author of these books, then we can approach and examine them just as we would any others. But if we find, by the exercise of our reason, that He has claimed authority of a certain range here, then our duty is to read subject to the influence of this fact, and to use our reason to find out the interpretation which He would have us put upon His Word. That interpretation may be more or less free, as we comprehend the scope and character of the sanction which God has given to the narratives recorded; but the Bible will be regarded as God's version of the history of man in relation to Himself.

Approaching the early portions of the Bible under this light, you will find a principle of selection, in the choice of the events recorded as distinguished from those events that are passed by in silence. The ruling design in the account of creation, is clearly to set forth the truth that the Creator of all things is the being with whom man has to do in his obedience and disobedience. Man's life in the garden of Eden and during the subsequent years of sorrow and toil, is only depicted in those few points which bear upon his relation to God as holy and as sinful. The ten thousand matters of human earthly interest which affected Adam and Eve and their children are not mentioned. The allusion to the family quarrel which issued in the death of Abel, seems to rest on the fact that the portentous development of sin, on the one side, and the growth of domestic piety on the other, must be recorded. At a time when the human body was free from the numerous ailments which the diseases and struggles and sufferings of hundreds and thousands of years have handed down to us, men attained naturally to a very fine old age—an arrangement of Providence, no doubt, that men might multiply very fast and not allow the earth to be pre-possessed by the brute creation. But