

Mutual Relations of Old Testament and New Testament.

BY REV. WM. CAVEN, D.D.

It is most confidently charged against the Old Testament that its spirit and morality are in many places inconsistent with those of the New. The New Testament, we are told, breathes love and mercy in every page, whilst stern, relentless justice is the characteristic of the Old. Nor is it merely that love is less prominent, for the Old Testament frequently presents conceptions of God, and ascribes to Him acts which are quite at variance with the character and doings of the God of the New Testament. In the Old Testament God repents, is wrathful, jealous, and revengeful, instigates men to do evil, and then punishes them for so doing, orders the destruction of whole tribes and nations that He may put His favorites in possession of their houses and lands. There is no species of bad morality characteristic of the times which the God of the Old Testament, we are told, has not approved or winked at.

In past times this conception of the Old Testament was often affirmed by avowed opponents of revealed religion and of the Scriptures, but in our day large numbers of persons who profess to regard the Bible as the Word of God, and as inspired, endorse almost everything which the enemies of revelation were wont to allege against the earlier portions of it. The presence of the *human* element in Scripture is supposed to account not only for innumerable inaccuracies—greater or less—in matters of fact, but also for the imperfect morality of the early ages, which is expressly approved, or related without any disapproval.

That there is a provisional element in the morality of parts of the Old Testament may be freely admitted. The Lord has told us that Moses "suffered" certain things in the Israelites owing to "the hardness of their hearts." They were allowed to do what was not *absolutely* best, as a concession to the times and circumstances in which they were placed. But the Lord never said—the New Testament never says—that Moses ever enjoined anything which was not best under existing conditions. God leads His Church gradually forward, and reveals himself more perfectly, as the knowledge of spiritual truth can be appropriated; and even when Christ was about to ascend, He told His disciples that He had many things to say to them which they could not yet "bear." The development of morality has often been set forth in a way to which we cannot subscribe, but there is a sense in which the ethical development of a people conditions the instruction and the laws which are suited to their improvement.

A general vindication of Old Testament morality cannot be here attempted, but, in addition to what we have just stated regarding a provisional element in morality, the following positions must be kept in remembrance,—that the Old Testament records, without accompanying words of disapprobation, many things which it cannot be held to approve, and which its ethical teachings in other places clearly show to be wrong; that in order to fulfil its purpose as a preparatory dispensation—as a schoolmaster to lead to Christ—Mosaism sets forth with terrible emphasis the righteous judgment of God against wickedness; that under a theocracy many things which are not now visited with temporal penalties were necessarily so visited then; and that only in cases of fearful and incorrigible wickedness, were severe measures sanctioned against nations and communities,—the alternative being whether these people should be cut off or whether the infection of their depravity should imperil the future of the Church and of human society.

Nothing can be more unjust than the comparisons which are sometimes instituted between the spirit of the Old Testament and that of the New. It has been said, *e.g.*, that we see the temper of the Old Covenant in Elijah's calling down fire from heaven upon the captains of fifties and their fifties, whilst the Lord rebuked James and John for desiring to call down fire from heaven. But surely this is to forget that if the soldiers who would apprehend the prophet were destroyed, it was the God of Israel and not Elijah who sent down the fire. Had Elijah, from pique or peevishness, prayed for fire to descend, there would have been no answer from heaven. Whosoever reads the Old Testament without prejudice will find in it nothing regarding God inconsistent with the proclamation of His name to Moses: "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and in truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and who will by no

means clear the guilty;" and in the New Testament, spoken by the lips of the Saviour, are the most awful words that have ever been uttered regarding the punishment of the wicked. We must not make too strong the antithesis between the Scriptures of the Old Covenant and those of the New.

But the vindication of the Jewish Scriptures from unjust charges of misrepresenting the character of God and lending sanction to immorality will not prevent us from thankfully recognizing the superiority of the New Dispensation and of the Christian Scriptures. God has in these latter days spoken to us by His Son. We see what kings and prophets desired to see and were not permitted. The law made nothing perfect: it was only the introduction of a better hope. The moral code is now perfected—so far, at least, as the earthly state allows. In the person and work of His beloved Son, the Father is fully revealed. Perfect love in union with absolute justice shines forth in the life and death of Jesus Christ. The more carefully we study the Old Testament as the great evangelical preparation, the better shall we comprehend the work of the world's Redeemer. The more thoroughly we study the New Testament and imbibe its spirit the less difficulty we shall find in the spirit and morality of the Old.

Scotland Before the Reformation.

BY REV. ALEX. KING (PHILOS.) M.A., B.S.C.

Christian missions were planted in Scotland in the end of the first century just when the first wave of Christianity was rolling over the habitated world. The earliest was founded at Whitchom in Galloway, which county in covenanting times became the slaughter-house of the bloody MacKenzie. Another was founded at Glasgow then a small hamlet on the banks of the Clyde, but now the second city in the British Isles, and for religious and commercial enterprise and municipal government, second to none in the world. Another was founded at Melrose, a pretty place not far from the river Tweed and the Cheviot Hills, and whose atmosphere enjoys much of the sunshine and cloud of Sir Walter Scott's genius. Melrose became the mission centre of a very extended influence reaching many parts of Northumberland. Other mission centres were founded but do not deserve the same historic notice as those mentioned, on account of their weakness or short duration. The foundation of the Scottish Church proper was the mission at Iona founded by Columba in 563 A.D.

So well did Columba and his co-Presbyters carry out the programme of their new Church that in a short time the whole west of Scotland was converted to Christianity.

The polity of the Columbite Church was essentially Presbyterian and its doctrines were purely those which constitute the Confession of Faith. The pastors or Culdees taught the depravity of human nature, the vicarious death of Christ, Justification by Faith without works, and that the Sacraments were merely signs of the grace which is through Christ.

The Presbyterian Church remained in a pure state until the 12th Century when the Romish Church began to vitiate its doctrines and change its polity. And so well did the darkest and cruellest enemy of the human race do her work that in the end of the Century she poised herself as the Church of Scotland and held her seven edged sword of ignorance and superstition and blasphemy and adultery and fornication and blood and death over the nation until the beginning of the 15th Century when God's freshest of mercy began to cleanse the religious and moral and civil and social haunts of corruption. Scotland was never so dark as were other Romish countries: for the Presbyterian Church, began from an early date to establish elementary and grammar schools and Universities, which were the moral and intellectual aurora borealis in the Romish dark winter sky until the morning light of the Reformation filled the homes and the hills and the woods and the lakes and the glens of bonny Scotland—the land of our covenanting forefathers much of whose blood, under the shot and sword of that Romish-born the so-called Scottish Episcopal Church, reddened the mountain streams and cried aloud to the patient God in Heaven to spare a remnant and give to their beloved country religious, civil and social liberty; and He heard their cry and made Scotland to become the world's pioneer of freedom. Romanism and Episcopacy are not indogenous to the Scottish soil; and Scotland has had more than enough of