

and infinite perfections; and it is in the knowledge of this, that He, in his great condescension, and for the sake of his conduct being made intelligible to man's understanding, has allowed Himself to be set before him as moved by the feelings and passions which man himself experiences. In so far as we are enabled to realize by the later light of the Gospel, some faint notions of the perfections of the Divine nature, the more we are struck by the unutterable love, the tender consideration, the infinite condescension, which, for man's good, allowed, in ages of unrefined intellect, these humanized representations of himself to be set before men. The height of this condescension was reached, when, in the depths of the Divine wisdom, a plan was devised, perfect for man's salvation, but which required Him to assume the very nature of man, and as a man to live and suffer.

Still, then, what does the "repenting" of God really mean? It is clear that we are not to ascribe to God's immutable mind the fickleness of human purposes, or to suppose that he on any of the occasions specified really repented, or was grieved or disappointed. This is not possible to God—with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. These and similar expressions are taken from what passes among men when they undergo change of purpose, or are disappointed in their expectations and endeavors. As a potter, on finding that a vessel on which he has spent his utmost care, does not answer his purpose, regrets his labor, and casts the worthless object out of sight—so, at the deluge for instance, God is represented, in accommodation to our feeble apprehensions, as repenting and being grieved at heart that he had bestowed upon man so much labor in vain.

So also as a man, when he repents, changes his course of procedure—God, when he changes his procedure,

is said to repent, seeing that such change would be in man the result of repentance. Yet there is here a change, not as in man, of the will or purpose—but of the work of procedure only. Repentance in man is the changing of his will as well as of his work; repentance in God is the change of the work only, and not of the will, which in Him is incapable of change. Seeing that there is no mistake in his councils, no disappointment of his purposes, no frustration of his expectations, God can never change his will, though he may will to change his work. The decrees and purposes of God stand like mountains of brass. Always immutable, God is incapable of the frailty or fickleness which belongs to man's nature and experience. So also in that singular phrase, where, on account of the wickedness that brought on the deluge, God is said not only to repent, but to be "grieved at his heart"—the very phrase, emphatic as it sounds to our human experience, indicates the real sense in which such expressions are to be understood. In strict propriety of speech God has neither heart nor grief. He is a most pure Spirit—an uncompounded Being, far above the influence of human passion, He is impassible—and it is wholly impassible that any thing should grieve or work repentance in him. The cause is, in all these cases, put by metonymy, for the effect.

It has often occurred to us that all these expressions, whereby God is presented to the mind as invested with human parts and passions, involve a sort of looking forward to that period in which they would all become proper and appropriate, by our being permitted to view God in Christ, who has carried the real experiences of our nature into the very heavens, where he sits, not as one who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but as one who has been tempted like as we are, yet remained