

man, and however excellent in its characteristics, it has not the perfection which ensures to it perpetuity : it serves its purpose—perhaps a valuable purpose—and then passes away. But let us not in speaking of the Scriptures be content to use, in a careless way, words of general praise ; rather let us reverently enquire what is precisely meant in those epithets of commendation which we find in passages such as that before us. What is the “perfection” here ascribed to the “Law of the Lord ?” The perfection affirmed of Scripture is not a perfection which excludes progress in the revelation of Divine truth. Such progress the Word of God certainly exhibits. Compare the Old Testament with the New, compare the earlier with the later portions of the Old ; and who can fail to observe that God reveals His character and His ways with increasing clearness ? The course of revelation, like the path of the just, shines more and more unto the perfect day ; or, to employ another illustration from Scripture, we have first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The great design of revelation is to make known to men the plan of redemption, and the grace and mercy of God therein displayed. How obvious it is that in the Old Testament this place is progressively unfolded. The first intimation of deliverance is conveyed in the sentence pronounced upon the serpent : “I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed and He shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel.” Here indeed we have a deliverer, who is human,—here a contest—here a complete victory ; but whilst faith has thus a basis on which to rest, how dark and enigmatical are the words ! But, as the history of the Church proceeds, the person of the great Redeemer stands out with increasing distinctness ; the nature of His work is more and more fully declared ; the incidents of His course are detailed ; the glory of His Kingdom grows in brightness. We learn that the Coming One shall be of Abraham’s seed—of the tribe of Judah—of the house of David ; that His birth shall be miraculous ; that he shall be divine as well as human—the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. The Spirit shall rest upon Him without measure. He shall reveal the Father’s will. He shall fulfil the purpose of all sacrifice in His atoning death. He shall vanquish death, and, entering upon full possession of His Kingdom, reign gloriously with His Saints for ever and ever. All this, and much more, we learn regarding Him before Malachi closes the Canon of the Old Testament.

In like manner we find in the New Testament, progress in the revelation of the laws and doctrines of the kingdom of God. The Lord had things to say to His disciples which they could not “hear ;” but He promises after His ascension to send the Holy Spirit, who should lead them into all truth. Nor was this promise forgotten ; and in the writings of the Apostles we have clearly elucidated many questions of high import regarding which little was said by the Lord in the days of His flesh.

Scripture is ever consistent with itself. No subsequent revelation throws discredit on what preceded ; but we can have no hesitation in admitting that the perfection of the “Law” is a perfection which allows, nay, requires, progress in the discovery of the ways of God. Dimly, in the first instalments of the Holy Word, is the path of life indicated ; but, by the gospel, Jesus Christ has illuminated life and immortality.

Again, the perfection of God’s law does not imply that the Bible, even in its completion, entirely reveals the nature and administration of God. The Bible is a revelation for us. It is such a revelation as we require. It declares to us the will of God for our salvation, and clearly sets before us all that God has deemed it necessary that we should know. But, in the present life, we still see through a glass darkly : we still think and understand and speak as children. There are secrets of the spiritual world which it is not lawful—perhaps—not possible—to disclose to inhabitants of Earth. There are high problems of the divine administration with which our faculties in their present estate are not qualified to deal. And the time is to come, the apostle tells us, when we shall see face to face and know even as we are known.