

and with one or two exceptions, which we shall notice immediately, this was the case with all the pagan nations of antiquity, as it is the case among the heathen nations of to-day.

The exceptions alluded to are (1) the Jewish religion, which, however, was introductory to, and preparatory for the Christian; and as they are both so intimately connected; as both stand or fall together, and profess to have the same origin, this need not be viewed as an exception at all. (2.) There is the Mohammedan religion, or that devised by Mahomet, the great impostor of Arabia, about the middle of the seventh century. This remarkable man imagined himself to be the subject of divine inspiration and succeeded in convincing a few others of the truth of his assertions. By their assistance, in a brief period he formed a small army or rather band of robbers, who, proving successful in their predatory excursions, induced others to join them, through the hope of gain and the glory of conquest, until at length he and his successors triumphed over the whole of the countries lying to the south and east of the Mediterranean, and even extended their arms into India, where, at this moment, his followers are the fiercest and most subtle opponents of the British government. Mahomet seized the idea of committing his imaginary heavenly communications to writing from the books of the Old and New Testaments. He saw what an immense influence the religion of Jesus was capable of exerting over the minds of men, from the permanence inherent in his doctrines, because they were committed to writing, and he rightly assumed that his teaching would soon be forgotten, unless he adopted the same plan. We may fairly trace the origin of Mohammedanism to the enemy of mankind; and we may discover the same principle operative in his suggestions to Mahomet as actuated him in all his opposition to the Great Head of the Church. He parodies the works of God. If Jesus became incarnate, so did Satan take possession of the bodies of men. If there were true prophets, so also were there heathen oracles. If the good angels are ministering spirits, so does Satan transform himself into an "angel of light." And, if there is a true Religion of the Book, so also does he originate a false. Mahomet stole all the moral and religious truth, contained in the Koran or sacred book of his followers, from the Bible. But with this he mingled much error of the most gross and sensual description.

His success may fairly be attributed to three sources—(1.) The innumerable corruptions, that had crept into the Christian Church in eastern countries, at the time of his birth. (2.) The sensuality permitted by him to his followers, so well adapted to their natural dispositions. And (3), the military character assumed by him, so soon as the number of his followers permitted him to act in the capacity of a general. His religion, instead of being honored with the name of a book religion, might more justly be termed the religion of the sword.

The lower animals can, in some degree, com-

municate with each other, by means of signs and sounds sufficiently indicative of their wants; but they never improve. They cannot give permanency of material form to those instinctive expressions. Man alone has a hand and a soul to guide its operations. With regard to the human race, all history teaches the same lesson; that the possession of written signs of thought constitutes the first step in social progress. These signs may assume the form of Egyptian hieroglyphics, the rude paintings of Mexico, the varied characters of China, or the simple alphabets of other nations; but, where they exist not in some form, the condition of those destitute of them has never been greatly above the level of the brutes. An evident consequence of this is, that the degree of civilization attained by any people may be measured by the plausibility and copiousness of their language. Now we reckon an acquaintance with pure morality a far higher evidence of the progress of man, than familiarity with commercial or civil transactions; but, if the latter cannot be attained in any great degree without a written language, much less can the former.

It is by this mysterious instrument of thought that the foundation of human progress is laid. The heights attained by one generation form the base, on which is raised the superstructure of the succeeding; the past and the future are connected with each other by the pen.

We have stated with the brevity indispensable to our purpose and limits; (1) that, while the lower animals do attain that measure of development which is commensurate with their interests, in the ordinary course of nature, their further progress can only be accomplished by the agency of man. (2.) That, while the human race can attain the highest degree of intellectual culture by the assistance of each other, all experience teaches that morally they have never advanced of themselves; and that, therefore, they resemble the lower animals in their need of a training from a source higher than themselves. (3.) It is implied in our remarks that the improvement of any creature must be attempted in the line of its peculiar nature and by means of its characteristic endowments; and that the characteristic endowment of man for such a purpose is the power of employing written signs of thought, which, if necessary to his intellectual advance, must be not less indispensable for his moral culture. (4.) That the progress of a people may be increased by the copiousness and discriminative definiteness of their language; from which it follows, that a highly cultivated language would not be adapted to a nation in a low stage of civilization. Now the Bible, inasmuch as it consists of thought embodied in the form of written signs, appeals to that peculiar external faculty of man upon which all his progress depends. But to prove that it is from God, we must show first that it was, and is, adapted to the wants of man during the whole period over which its teaching extends; and then, that its means are adapted to its aim, which, we shall briefly prove.