

the *fruit of my body* for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah vi., 6 8.)

The ethical features in the Hebrew religion were developing. The truly religious life of the people was being stirred by such leaders as Amos and Hosea and Zechariah and Isaiah, during the century from 800 to 700 B. C., yet still another century finds Israel, as a nation, bound to the ancient creeds, slaves to the conservative teaching of the priesthood, for even at that late day we find Jeremiah referring to and condemning the fearful custom of human sacrifice which still prevailed in Judah. It seems incredible that despite the teaching of the prophets the great mass of the people should still maintain a religion of servile fear, should still believe that Jehovah demanded the sacrifice of their most beloved children, as an act of homage due to His name; and that the priests, their religious teachers and leaders, should still hold them to that belief. Yet it was this delusion and this influence that the prophets above cited, had to combat. "The children of Judah," says Jeremiah, voicing, as he believed, the mind of God, "have done that which is evil in My sight. They have built the high places of Tophet, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fires, which I commanded them not, neither came it into My mind." Such words were heretical; they were against the traditions of the Church; against the teaching of the priests; against the precepts of the holy law; against the ordinances of the ritual. Did not Moses, speaking in the name of Jehovah, command such homage? Did he not institute the holy law of sacrifices? No, says Jeremiah, God did not thus declare His will to your fathers. "For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of

Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices;—but this thing I commanded them, saying, "Hearken unto my voice and I will be your God and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you." (Jer. vii., 21-24.)

What a contradiction positive and direct, are these words to the elaborate directions given in the book of Leviticus, which opens with the claim that it is the instruction of Jehovah to his servant Moses. Compare the first five chapters of Leviticus with the declarations quoted from the prophets Micah and Jeremiah, and with the declaration of the Psalmist—not David in this instance: "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy fold. Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High."

Who is right? Whose "Thus saith the Lord" is the Divine message? Whom shall we believe? the priests or the prophets? Was Isaiah right when he assumed to declare God's will? "Incense is an abomination unto Me? To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord. When you come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hands?" Did the mind of Jehovah change during the centuries that intervened between Moses and the prophets? If so, how shall we determine what the Divine will is for us to-day? Will some later prophet show us mistakes of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Ezekiel and Micah? If we must look upon the Bible as inerrant, if we may not question its instructions in any part, if we may not bring its teaching to the bar of our own best judgment for interpretation, what are we to do with the contradictions it presents?

Suppose, however, we consider the Bible as the history of a *developing* religion. A history written under the influence of the Divine Spirit, but yet an imperfect expression of the mind of