

spiritual admonition through the medium of a parable that is to be found in the Bible. "There were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him and his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man that was come to him."

To fully appreciate this parable we must remember that it was written at least 700 years B.C., at a time and among a people when and where bloodshed and violence and pillage were almost constant occurrences, and the custom of war authorized the entire subjection of women to the will of the conqueror. In our study of the Bible a word-picture, such as this narrative presents, brings into definite perspective the moral and spiritual perceptions of the people that could not otherwise be portrayed. David was cruel in war, sensual in his court life, and in most of his deeds showed very little evidence of acute moral perceptions.

But Nathan's story aroused the indignation of the king, who little dreamed that the rich man in the parable was a prototype of himself. "And he said to Nathan, as the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." And Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man." Here we have an insight of the innermost heart of David. In the flush of his victory he had had no pangs of conscience. Were it not for this 12th chapter of Second Samuel we might infer that his moral perceptions were not refined, and we should thus fail to appreciate

the real ethical progress and attainment Israel had made at this early day. David was touched with a sense of his own sinfulness and his heart was filled with contrition.

The record states that Nathan foretold the death of the offspring of his guilty love as a fit punishment for David's transgressions. Let the reader turn to the 12th chapter of Second Samuel and read the 15th to 23rd verses inclusive. One is astonished to find such exalted spirituality in so early an age of the world. To fully appreciate the situation one must remember that according to the prevalent belief of the time all physical ills were attributed to the anger of an offended God. Thus the sickness of his child was felt by David to be directly caused by Jehovah as a punishment for his sin, and while there was a hope of preserving the life of the boy David ceased not to fast and pray that he might avert the dreadful evil. When the child died he ceased to fast, saying "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, who knoweth whether the Lord will not be gracious unto me that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

This faith of David in a righteous power that rewards virtue and punishes vice, was in strong contrast to the religious conceptions of the rulers of the surrounding nations, whose gods possessed little, if any, that is ethical in character. Not until religion was apprehended as being based upon morality and righteousness, and not until the moral nature in man was quickened and conscience developed can we find the germs of the pure spirituality that Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed. It is therefore a remarkable development of the Hebrew religion, when fear, as the basis of religion, is displaced by contrition and repentance, acts of self-condemnation in which fear has no part. The discernment of the development of