

sary, but this was the sort of general preliminary statement or protocol that formed one side of the covenant entered into at Sinai, between Jehovah on the one hand, and the people of Israel on the other. He promised them His protection and blessing, on condition that they enacted and enforced laws of that tenor. Listen to the assurance God gives to the people before announcing these laws. "Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is mine." (Exod. xix., 5.) Such was the agreement which they accepted. In terms of it the worship of Jehovah alone was to be tolerated, and all others forbidden. Jehovah's character was not to be degraded either by material representations of Him or by profanation of His name. The Sabbath rest was to be observed. Parents were to be honored. Life and property were to be duly protected, the rights of marriage guarded, justice faithfully administered, and even the beginnings of evil, as far as possible, checked. That covenant was made, not with the individual Jew, but with the nation as a whole. Individuals might break it, but so long as the nation enforced it and punished the guilty, it was regarded as keeping the covenant. Of course such an enforcement must always have been practically impossible, without a sympathetic obedience on the part of a large majority of the people, but the entire history of the nation is made to hinge on that covenant with them as an organized whole. In so far as these laws were carried out, the nation was made to prosper. Whenever their rulers neglected them and failed to enforce them, judgments were sent and disaster befell. This was particularly true of the statutes relating to the worship of Jehovah alone. It is the constant practice of the historians and prophets to complain of the toleration of Canaanite religions, and of the introduction of de-

graded forms of Jehovah-worship. Their kings are constantly rebuked and criticised for not repressing these, and the national misfortunes are attributed in large degree to their weakness in this regard. The constant test by which they estimate a king as good or evil, is his attitude on this fundamental question. David, though far from being a man of spotless virtue, is a King after God's own heart, because he is faithful to the national covenant. Jeroboam is chiefly condemned because he set up the golden calves, and his successors, because they walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in the sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

This national statutory character of the law of Moses explains some things that otherwise would seem strange and unaccountable. It explains, for example, the apparent harshness of some of the principles that are found in it. All criminal law must sometimes appear stern and harsh, if it is to do any good. It seems monstrous at first sight that Moses should calmly lay down the precept, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,"—a precept that is given three times over in the Pentateuch. But it becomes intelligible when we remember as the context plainly shows, that it was a principle to be observed by the judges in assessing penalties for wrong done to another. In the more general form that the penalty should be proportioned to the wrong done, it is virtually the principle observed in our Courts to-day. It was not intended as a justification for personal retaliation, but rather to secure such a firm administration of justice on the part of the authorities as would take away all temptation to personal retaliation.

This also explains the negative or prohibitory form of the decalogue. From the nature of the case, all criminal statutes must be prohibitory—a perpetual "Thou shalt not." It is only to a very limited extent indeed, that legislation can enforce the positive virtues. Its