

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VII.

THE KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS RESPECTING THE PROMISED MESSIAH.

By Rev. David Green, recently Associate Secretary of the A. B. C. F. M.

THE subject of inquiry is : What knowledge did the saints of the Old Testament possess concerning the promised Messiah, in his peculiar character as an *atoning Saviour* ? and what faith, if any, did they exercise in him *as such* ?

The question is not, whether the Hebrew nation generally, and especially the more pious and intelligent portion of them, as well as the good men of the preceding generations, both before and after the flood, looked for the advent of some remarkable person, who was, at some future time, in conformity with the Divine promise, to appear on the earth as a great teacher and reformer and comforter, and who would deliver the human family, in some measure, from the curse which sin had brought upon it.

From the time of Abraham, and onward through the whole history of the Hebrew nation, the promises respecting the Messiah, if they were not made, seem to have been received, in a more limited form, as applicable mainly, if not exclusively, to a Messiah who was to be, to the Hebrew race peculiarly, a deliverer from national calamities ; and, as a prince and reformer, to confer on them great and permanent blessings, and to distinguish them, above every other people, as the peculiar favorites of God. On this point, no careful reader of the Old Testament can entertain a doubt.

Neither are we now to inquire, what character, human, angelic, super-angelic, or absolutely Divine, the Israelites generally, or any portion of them, supposed the promised Messiah would bear. The discussion of this point is not essential to the present inquiry.

In prosecuting the simple inquiry first proposed, and obtaining a satisfactory answer, it is proposed to go to, and be

guided by, the Bible alone. No clear, no conclusive, no really valuable auxiliary testimony seems to be obtainable from any other source. All preconceived opinions, all conjectures, all probabilities, may as well be kept in abeyance, since they can avail little or nothing for our help, and may embarrass our progress.

Still, although it is not our object to go much into the literature of this subject, even if we had the means, it may be well to give a glance in that direction, that some opinion may be formed as to what would be the result of a more extended investigation.

Hengstenberg, in his "Christology of the Old Testament," goes into the subject of our present inquiry at considerable length; and one would think from his table of contents and running-titles, that daylight was poured upon the whole matter. But his pages, so far from meeting the reader's anticipations, leave him very doubtful what the writer's own opinions are, or to what conclusions he would have his reader come. So wanting in explicitness, so cautious of committing himself, is he; and so apparently inconsistent, one with another, are various passages scattered through his book, that the mind of the reader who takes him for a guide, must be led into inextricable perplexities. At pp. 200, 201, Vol. I,¹ we find the following passage: "But were the predictions concerning a suffering and atoning Redeemer sufficiently plain to be understood by those who possessed the requisite preparation of mind? In order to answer this question, we are led to an investigation which has been often pursued in modern times with various results, viz. Whether the doctrine of a suffering and atoning Messiah was known among the Jews in the time of Christ? After the example of all the older theologians, Kuinöl, Corrodi, Schmidt, Staudlien, Pölitz, Hartmann, Bertholdt, and others in recent times, have decided in the affirmative. On the other hand, besides Döderlein, Amman, Seiler, Bauer, Gabler, and Eschermann, we find De Wette especially maintains the negative, — *De*

¹ Keith's translation.

morte Expiatoria. Of the same opinion are Bretschneider and Baumgarten Crusius."

After wading through the prolix investigation, in which the writer might be expected to answer the question which he had raised, the reader finds himself just about where he was when he started, with only a denser mist around him.

In his chapters on a "Suffering and Atoning Messiah in the Old Testament;" and on "the Messianic Prophecies of Isaiah," Hengstenberg shows very clearly that the Old Testament contains a multitude of predictions, which could be fulfilled only in a Messiah who should suffer and die, and thus make atonement for sin; which it would seem that no candid reader of the Old Testament, enlightened by the teachings of the New, could deny. But this is a very different matter from showing that the pious Israelites did or could understand those predictions so as to have any distinct notion of such a Messiah, to expect such a one, or to rely upon his atonement for acceptance with God. This point he seems to me to fall very far short of deciding; and indeed I am not sure that he attempts to decide it.

From what he says respecting the nature of prophecy, and the mental condition of the prophets, while under the influence of the prophetic inspiration, pp. 217 et seq. Vol. I., it is clear that he does not suppose that the prophets themselves had any distinct, intelligent apprehensions of what they were commissioned and inspired to utter; and if they had not, why are we to suppose that those who heard or read their predictions, had any clearer apprehensions of their meaning?

Let us look at a few of his remarks, gathered from various parts of his work and see how they bear on the subject before us.

Vol. I., p. 21, he remarks: "The chief object of prophecy was to prepare the way for Christ; that when he should come, he might be identified by a comparison of the prediction with the fulfilment." On p. 23, he adds: "The majority of the people of Christian countries are in the same condition as the Jews, at the appearance of Christ: they

know him not, and have yet, for the first time, to become acquainted with him." "Even the Apostles themselves (p. 201), were far from entertaining the idea of a suffering and atoning Redeemer. The clearest and most explicit declarations of Christ upon this subject were either not understood, or soon expelled from their minds by their worldly hopes and forgotten." Again (p. 204), "When John the Baptist exclaims, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' it does not follow, either that he himself possessed a connected and particular view of this subject, or that he fully explained it to his disciples." "The Apochryphal books of the Old Testament (p. 203), as well as Josephus and Philo, are generally of little use, in ascertaining the opinions of the Jews respecting the Messiah, and they say little about his sufferings and atonement." Once more (p. 224), he says: "All individual predictions must be regarded merely as fragments; and we possess a complete picture only when we have collected and combined the several features."

These are specimens of Hengstenberg's researches; and it is believed that they fairly represent the state of his mind on the subject before us, so far as can be gathered from his "Christology."

His quotations from the Talmud and the Cabbalistic writers, whatever may seem to be their purport, cannot amount to much in the way of proof respecting the ancient Jewish view of the Messianic predictions, or their belief in any point relating to the character and work of the Messiah, since these writings were composed at a time too long subsequent to the predictions, to give any other than a doubtful traditionary history of the manner in which the Jews at the time understood them: and too long subsequent to the advent of Christ, and the full unfolding of the Christian system, not to be shaped and colored as this new light and new state of things seemed to require.

Hengstenberg, it should be remarked, seems, from the number of writers to whom he refers, to have aimed to give

a summary of all that the learned have written on the subject under consideration. How faithfully he has done this we have not the means of judging. He doubtless had access to about all the stores of information which the German language contains.

Assuming, then, that the Bible is the principal, if not the only source of reliable testimony on the subject before us, let us, before proceeding to inquire what testimony it bears, remark that not only must we take the Scriptures for our guide, but we must also place ourselves as nearly as possible, at the point of view from which the good men of the Old Testament looked at the promised Messiah. If we, enlightened by the teachings of the New Testament, having the Saviour, with his attributes, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension, embodied before us, and his doctrines all unfolded and illustrated by the apostles and the early history of the church, — attempt, with all this borrowed light, to go back and look at the Messianic predictions and types, they will appear all luminous with instruction, and with motives to thankfulness and joy; but we shall certainly greatly over estimate the knowledge which they to whom the promises and predictions were first made, had the means of acquiring. If we would arrive at a correct estimate of this, we must shut ourselves out from all the light shed on the subject by the New Testament, and go back and take the antediluvian, patriarchal, or prophetic position, with no more or other light than we find there. Then we shall be able more correctly to appreciate how much the Old Testament saints knew, or could know, on the subject before us. And thus disrobing ourselves of opinions and impressions firmly established, and heretofore unquestioned; especially when they are intertwined with some doctrinal views dearly cherished, is no easy thing; and probably for this very reason, not a few readers will dissent from the conclusions to which we may come, as being utterly inadmissible, whatever may be the evidence in their favor.

To open the way still more clearly for a candid and un-

biased prosecution of the inquiry proposed, it may be proper to make one further remark, viz., that the system of revealed truth which the Bible contains was progressively unfolded, as all careful readers must have observed. And it is not to be wondered at, if the fullest and most glorious displays of the Divine character, and will, and works, which are made in connection with the redemption and salvation of men, should not have been made to the generations before the flood, or to the patriarchs, or to the Jewish church in the days of the prophets. It would seem that such displays might properly be reserved to the last, as the great, crowning development of God's revelations to man. Kings and prophets desired to see the things which the twelve apostles saw, as Christ tells them, but were not permitted; and to hear what they heard, but could not. God, as Paul writes to the Hebrews of his time, had provided some better thing for them, than for the faithful worthies of former generations, whom he commemorates in the 11th chapter of his epistle to them. To the Ephesians, the same apostle writes that he had "a knowledge of the *mystery of Christ*, which, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." But besides the great truths pertaining to human redemption, there are other doctrines which were but partially and dimly, if at all, made known in the earlier stages of God's revelations to men. How much was revealed to the antediluvians, or even to those living during the later periods of the Old Testament history, — concerning the resurrection of the body, the general judgment, or the future endless punishment of the wicked? Some of these doctrines, Paul, in the 6th chapter to the Hebrews, represents as lying at the very foundation, or among the first rudiments of *Christian* knowledge, with which the merest novice in the church of that age should be too familiar to need further instruction upon them. Similar in purport is our Lord's declaration concerning John the Baptist, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he." The feeblest of the flock of Christ, living after the

gospel should be fully unfolded, would better understand God's plans of mercy and the way of salvation through the atonement, than that peer of the most eminent prophets who preceded him.

Scarcely, if at all, less was revelation progressive, when considered as a code of morals, than as a system of doctrines. Look at the subjects of polygamy, concubinage, and divorce, of slavery, the avenger of blood, and the *lex talionis* generally, as they are presented in the earlier periods of Old Testament history; and compare them with the teachings of the New Testament on the same subjects. All these, if not directly sanctioned in the Pentateuch, are at least tolerated, and without anything being said to show that they involved guilt. They are, moreover, regulated by laws, and spoken of in connection with the practice and habits of men highly commended for their excellence of character. It is unnecessary to ask how all these appear in the light of the more advanced moral code of the New Testament.

Yet we are not to understand that an act or practice which, at one period of time, is *per se* right, is, at another period, *per se* wrong; or that the views or will of God, in regard to these acts or practices, really change. The difficulty may, perhaps, be relieved by looking at the matter in this light. Some acts are wrong *per se*, and therefore always wrong and always forbidden; while other acts are wrong because of the evils growing out of them. And this latter class God may see it best to tolerate till men shall have time and opportunity to observe and experience the evils which they occasion. Then they will be better prepared to see the reasonableness of the prohibition and to yield obedience.

If we have succeeded in showing that the revelations of the Bible are progressive as a system of doctrines, and even as a code of morals, it cannot be improbable that the particular revelations made relating to the character and work of Christ, as a suffering and atoning Saviour, were progressive also; and that his character and work were not fully unfolded and understood till the Gospel dispensation was actually introduced.

Giving the foregoing remarks their due influence, let us now proceed to inquire :

I. What means of knowledge respecting the peculiar character and work of the promised Messiah, the saints of the Old Testament possessed ?

II. What knowledge, on this subject, have we evidence that they actually did possess ?

What had they the means of knowing, and what did they actually know ?

Since the faith of those holy men could not go beyond what was revealed for their belief and legitimate deductions from those revelations, what was the nature and object of the faith, for which many of them were eminent and highly commended (Heb. xi. and elsewhere), and which was reckoned to them for righteousness, or as a substitute, in the Divine economy of grace, for perfect obedience to the moral law, may be subsequently considered.

What revelations, then, were made before the advent of the promised Messiah, respecting his character and work as an atoning Saviour ?

To answer this inquiry, it might at first seem necessary to review at length the whole Christology of the Old Testament. But for the present purpose, it will probably be sufficient to take a more general view of the principal predictions or classes of predictions relating to the Messiah, which are scattered through the Scriptures of the Old Testament. This will enable us to form an opinion as to what the pious of those days could learn from those predictions, considered separately or collectively.

The first Messianic prediction, or, as Storr terms it, "the protevangelium," is found in Gen. 3: 15, "I will put hatred between thy seed and her seed ; and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." What notion of the Jesus Christ of the New Testament, of his character, sufferings, atoning work, or of the pardon of sin and final salvation of men consequent upon it, could Adam and Eve, or any other antediluvian, obtain from this ? Yet this, so far as the Bible informs us, was all the information that was given

them on the subject. They might possibly gather from this declaration that their offended God had some purpose of mercy, and would raise up from the posterity of this sinning pair some great Repairer of the evil done, arrest the current of sin thus let in upon the race by the subtlety of the tempter, and ultimately destroy his work. But they could, however well disposed and inquisitive, hardly learn anything beyond, or more definite than this.

The next of the Messianic predictions are those made to Abraham, contained in the 12th, 15th, and 17th chapters of Genesis, and especially Gen. 23: 18, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" a promise of much value, and esteemed highly honorable by men of such habits and views as the ancient patriarchs were, encouraging them to anticipate the raising up of some great prince, reformer, and benefactor of the nations from among their descendants. But what does this prediction foretel respecting the atoning Saviour of the New Testament? What materials does it furnish for forming any, the most indistinct, idea of him? Similar predictions, repeated to Isaac and Jacob, do not increase the means of knowledge respecting the Messiah, enjoyed by the patriarchs their contemporaries.

The next prediction requiring notice is that found in Gen. 49: 10. Jacob, blessing Judah, says: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." This, by fixing the advent of this remarkable personage to a period before the final breaking up of the Hebrew Commonwealth, is, in that particular, somewhat more explicit than the promises to Abraham, as these were in advance of that to Adam and Eve. But where is an atoning Saviour brought out here? or materials for forming a definite idea of any great spiritual prince and deliverer?

I pass over now, to be considered subsequently, the Levitical priesthood, with the rites and sacrifices connected with it, and also the whole subject of types; and go on with the Messianic predictions as they are found in the Psalms. Nor need I dwell on the fact that most of these are of such

a character that interpreters have ever found it difficult to discriminate among them, and determine which of them have reference to David and his successors on the Hebrew throne, to the prosperity and glory, or the trouble and depressions of their kingdom ; and which of them relate to the Messiah and the progress and glory, or the enemies and persecutions of his church ; which difficulty itself sufficiently shows how indefinite these predictions are, and how inadequate they must have been to furnish the pious of that age with distinct notions of the character and work of their anticipated Messiah. By this difficulty interpreters have been driven into all the absurdities of the double-sense.

Let any man now place himself at the point of view occupied by the pious Israelite of Solomon's time, and let him take such Messianic predictions as are found in Psalms 2d, 16th, 22d, 110th, and other similar predictions which are found scattered through this collection of sacred lyrics, and from them, separately or combined, let him attempt, with no real Jesus Christ before him, in whose character, and life, and death, and resurrection, the predictions are all realized ; from these fragmentary parts, so dimly outlined, so apparently inconsistent with each other, and so unlike what had ever before been harmonized into one person ; let him, we say, attempt to embody before his mind the Messiah and his great redemptive work, so that he shall be and do something nearly like what the New Testament records of Jesus Christ and his atonement. Must not his attempt be a failure ? Could he succeed in making out, in his imagination even, the Messiah who might be the object of an intelligent faith ? Did any one, having only the Scriptures of the Old Testament before him, ever do this ?

To spend as little time as possible on this part of the subject, we pass at once to the most explicit and circumstantial prediction which the Old Testament contains, that in the 53d chapter of Isaiah. If the character, work, and sufferings of the Messiah cannot be made out from this chapter, they cannot be from any other prediction, or ever from all others found in the Old Testament. So explicit

and circumstantial is this prediction, that, to the reader of the New Testament, it seems like history; and it would seem to be impossible that one living in the time of Christ, and comparing his character, life, miracles, teachings, persecutions, and death, with these predictions, should not see that they had their exact fulfilment in him, and that he was therefore the predicted and anticipated Messiah. But for the Jew living in the time of Isaiah, or any other age before the advent of Christ, with his not unreasonable biases, to gather up the scattered rays emitted from them and all preceding promises and predictions, and by means of them form distinct and correct notions of the Messiah, is quite another and more difficult task.

Were a machine, hitherto unseen and unknown, brought out to view, entire in its whole structure; it might be easy for one possessed of a discerning mind to see that certain parts, previously though very indistinctly described, were there, combining and harmonizing with others, to make up the whole mechanism; and he might also recognize in the machine the substantial realization of an object, some outlines of which had, in a shadowy form, been presented to his mind; while it might have been quite impossible for the same person, having only fragmentary and indefinite descriptions of parts of the machine, and only the most shadowy conceptions of it as a whole, to gather and adjust, each to the others, the scattered parts, and combine them into the symmetrical and efficient whole.

But the vague and fragmentary character of the Messianic predictions, viewed separately, does not, as already intimated, by any means constitute the whole difficulty which the pious Israelite of Old Testament times would meet in seeking to obtain from them an intelligent view of the Messiah. When looked at in connection one with another, they appear far more enigmatical and confused.

Let the Jew living five centuries before the Advent, however intelligent and candid he might be, compare Psalms 2d, 24th, and 110th and Isa. 9: 6 and 7 with Psal. 22d and Isa. 53d, and take the most distinct view he could of every fea-

ture of these predictions, and then let him attempt to combine them and conceive of a person in whom they should all meet and harmonize. Here he finds the Godhead united with humanity, eternity with infancy, on the one hand ; and death on the other ; omnipotence with infirmity and subjection ; supreme, eternal dominion yielding to persecution, suffering, and crucifixion ; the triumphant conqueror rising to glory from the humiliating and ignominious death of a malefactor ; the Son of God, yea, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, despised and rejected of men, reckoned with transgressors and a man of poverty and sorrow ! How is it possible that the Jew could, with no exemplification, no embodiment of these before him, combine and harmonize all these into the one person of the predicted Messiah ?

Here, perhaps, as well as anywhere, it may be advisable to notice a remark often made when this view of the subject is presented. We are to *suppose*, it is said, that much fuller communications were made to Adam and the patriarchs respecting the character and work of the Messiah, than those which the Bible records.

But why are we to *suppose* any such thing ? The Bible says nothing to that effect ; and what other evidence have we on the point ? What is recorded is recorded just as if it were the whole that was made known ; nor do we find those to whom the revelations were made, manifesting, in any manner, that they knew more than the record conveys. Any such supposition is, therefore, gratuitous and unfounded. Our object is simply to ascertain what could be known from the predictions recorded in the Bible. But, even admitting that this supposition deserves consideration, is it probable that those assumed communications, of which the Bible says not a word, were more explicit and valuable than those which it records and publishes abroad, and transmits to future ages ? Besides, who could have been benefited by them, except the individuals to whom they were made, and perhaps the circle immediately around them ? They were not to be recorded as a part of inspired revelation, nor to be read as a part of the public instruction given. How could

those living in remote districts, or in a later age, share in the benefits of the clearer light granted to the favored few on this point, most important to their hopes and their final salvation? If any communications were made to Adam, or the patriarchs, on this subject, beyond the Bible record, is there any reason to suppose that they differed in character and purport, or in explicitness, from those which we have in the inspired volume? These are, we must suppose, if not the whole, yet a fair representation and summary of the whole. To suppose that the more enigmatical, and, so to speak, more unavailable predictions, were gathered up and recorded, while those more intelligible and explicit were left out of the record and lost, is altogether improbable; and, if it were so, would make the Bible, on this subject, to be not so much even as some rationalistic interpreters affirm it to be, a "history of a revelation." But enough has been said on this point.

Having taken a view of the Messianic predictions, as a means of furnishing the pious Israelites with the knowledge of a suffering and atoning Saviour, let us now proceed to inquire: 2. What means of knowledge, on the same subject, were furnished by the Levitical priesthood and the rites and institutions connected with it? Allegorical and fanciful, and even some of the most sober interpreters of the Old Testament, have found the whole Hebrew ritual full of types of the Messiah and the Gospel dispensation; and it would seem that readers of the Old Testament generally, suppose that the devout worshipper at the temple altar had almost as definite notions relating to the character and sufferings of Christ, of his atonement and mediation, of the grounds of pardon and acceptance with God, etc., as Paul himself had; and apprehended the personal and saving benefits conferred by the atonement, almost as clearly and intelligently as the Christian of these times can by faith see them, while receiving the bread and wine at the Lord's table.

But what did the Levitical priesthood, with its rites and sacrifices, mean? What did they all teach the believing worshipper among the Jews? They were *typical*, it is said.

Admitting that they were so, that does not answer the question, nor advance a step towards answering it. Were they adapted to present, or could they present, to the mind of an Israelite, in the days of Moses, the Messiah and his atoning sacrifice? If a breviary or manual, containing a summary and clear view of justification for sinners through the atonement of Christ, such an one as could be made out from the New Testament, had been placed in the hands of such a worshipper, and had he been thus exhorted to see in the blood of bulls and lambs slain at the temple altar, symbols of the richer blood to be poured out on Calvary, and to run a parallel between the offerings, washings, and other ceremonies of the Jewish sanctuary, and the true heavenly things brought to view in the New Testament, between which a correspondence is seen and drawn out by Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, his sacrifices would, in this respect, with the light which his breviary cast upon them, have meant something, though they would, of themselves, have given him no *knowledge* additional to what he before possessed. But the worshipper at the Hebrew tabernacle or temple had no such breviary to enlighten and guide him; at least, the Bible does not inform us that he had it, or any substitute for it. And what could the types teach him concerning a person whom he had not seen, and of whom he had heard nothing beyond the fragmentary predictions of the Old Testament? In order that the typical rites might teach anything respecting the Messiah, as the Antitype, it must be presupposed that he, as such, was previously known. As an original source of knowledge, types preceding the antitype, are absolutely unavailing. They can, of course, teach nothing. To be significant and impressive, in any degree, it is requisite that the type and antitype be both before the mind, and compared together. The type, to one ignorant of the antitype, teaches nothing, predicts nothing, elucidates nothing. To say that the types of the Old Testament taught the Hebrew worshipper the character, work, and atonement of Christ, is, therefore, begging the question as to their knowledge of him.

The design and usage of a type, then, so far as it bears on the elucidation or establishment of any truth, seems to be, not for the instruction or benefit of those living in an age before that of the antitype; but, by its prophetic character, to confirm the faith of those living contemporaneously with, or subsequent to the antitype; and the latter alone can understand the typical character and meaning of the types themselves. To all others, a type, in its typical character, and bearing, is nothing. In many respects, especially as to their use, a type and its antitype are analogous to a prediction and its fulfilment, the intelligibility of the former depending on the light reflected on it from the latter.

If the sacrifices and rites of the Levitical dispensation did not point the devout worshipper to Christ, what, it may be asked, were their meaning and use to him?

We reply, They probably aided him in his worship in two ways. (1.) They were impressively symbolical of the feelings which he should exercise in his devotions, and well adapted to awaken and cherish such feelings: and (2.) they brought to his mind the great mercy of God in allowing and accepting a substitute, on which the marks of his displeasure against sin might fall, instead of falling on the sinner himself. So that when the victim of the penitent and devout worshipper was brought to the altar and slain there, his feeling and the language of the transaction, as his own, would be: "I deserve to be slain for my sins, as this lamb is." Thus most impressively was he reminded of his own ill desert, and of God's great mercy in accepting the sacrificial victim as a substitute for the offender himself. And when he laid his hands on the head of the scape-goat, confessing his sins, and then sent it away into the wilderness, with admiring gratitude, he would think of the mercy of God in casting his sins, as it were, behind his back. Less effective, indeed, were these symbolical transactions to produce such impressions, than is a believing contemplation of the great sacrifice itself; but the impressions made and the emotions awakened in the two cases, are in their character strikingly similar.

Having taken a survey of the means of knowledge respecting the peculiar character and atoning work of the promised Messiah, which were, so far as we can gather from the Scriptures, possessed by the people of God living in the times of the Old Testament, let us inquire :

II. What knowledge on this subject, so far as we can learn from the Bible, did the Old Testament saints actually possess? In pursuing this inquiry, I remark :

1. The promised Messiah is never held up by the prophets or other religious teachers as the object of confidence, faith, and love, nor are they ever called upon and required to believe on him or to rely personally upon his atonement for the remission of sins and acceptance with God. If they possessed any such knowledge, so that they could exercise an intelligent faith in him, why is he not thus presented to the Jews? Why are not this faith and confidence, and love required of them as well as of those living in the days of the apostles? But where, in all the Old Testament, do we find any thing of this? We are told repeatedly, in the recorded predictions which are interspersed through all periods of the Jewish history, that some remarkable person is to be raised up who will be a great national benefactor, to whose future advent the Jews, and perhaps all nations, are to look forward with joy and hope; and, as his advent draws nearer, the predictions become more circumstantial; certain events attending his life and death are introduced, and some of the results are briefly hinted; but all this is done in so fragmentary a manner, and in such connections, as to be ill adapted to embody before the Hebrew mind the atoning Redeemer of the New Testament. But where is he urged upon the people as the object of their faith and love, as though they personally were receiving, or could receive, any benefit from him? Where is relying upon, believing in, or being in any manner interested in his atonement proposed as the condition of their being pardoned and entitled to the favor of God? Is such an idea anywhere intimated, even indirectly and darkly, in any part of the Old Testament? The conditions of pardon and acceptance, before the advent of

Christ, are everywhere. "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins," etc. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord," etc. "Turn ye, turn ye," etc. To both the nation and to individuals, the call is, everywhere and uniformly, to repentance and reformation; and to these, when they are hearty and thorough, the promise of pardon is made. Nowhere, in the Old Testament, is faith in an atoning Messiah proposed or required as a condition, or pardon promised on the ground of it. Would this have been so, if the Jews had possessed, or had the means of acquiring, a knowledge of the Messiah in his atoning character and work?

2. Nowhere, in the Old Testament or the New, are the Jews, before the advent of Christ, charged with sin for not believing in an atoning Messiah, or indeed, for any want of faith in the predictions relating to him. The Jews who lived subsequently to the advent, and had opportunity to compare the Jesus Christ of the New Testament with the predictions of the Messiah in the Old, and by seeing them all fulfilled and realized in him, and thus of knowing that he was truly the promised Messiah, are, indeed, most severely rebuked and condemned for their unbelief—for rejecting, persecuting, and crucifying him. If, now, the Messiah had been so revealed to the Jews of the Old Testament, that they could intelligently apprehend their personal relations to him, as an atoning Saviour, would not individuals and the whole nation have been required to believe on him personally as their Saviour; and among their heinous sins, would not this, their not receiving and believing on this predicted Messiah, have been charged upon them as one of the most aggravated? They are charged with idolatry; with hypocrisy; with ingratitude in forgetting God's great goodness manifested in delivering them from Egypt, bringing them into Canaan, and subduing their enemies there; with cruel oppression towards the poor; with covetousness, extortion and unfaithfulness in their social relations; and with disregard of the Divine instructions, warnings, and gracious expostulations; and, indeed, with violating all

God's commandments. But where are they charged with the sin of not understanding and believing in the atonement of the promised Messiah, or of not being grateful for the wondrous mercy manifested in this unspeakable gift? How can this be accounted for, if an atoning Messiah had been brought before the Jewish nation so as to be understood as an object of faith?

3. If we take a view of the covenants which, more or less formal and explicit, God entered into with his people, with Noah, with Abraham, with Isaac and Jacob, with the Israelites on their leaving Egypt, and on entering the promised land, with David and Solomon, and with the later kings, we everywhere find that obedience to the Divine will, reformation of life, hallowing the Sabbath, devoutly and conscientiously performing and supporting the temple service, refraining from oppression and violence, impartially executing justice between man and man, faithfulness in the domestic relations, and, generally, keeping his statutes and walking in his ways, are the conditions on which the blessing is promised; while disregard of these is threatened with the Divine displeasure and ultimate punishment and ruin. But nowhere, in any such covenant, is receiving and confiding in an atoning Messiah made a condition on which individual or national blessings are to be bestowed, or the rejection of such a Messiah made the ground of abandonment and the Divine curse. Compare this with the manner in which receiving or rejecting the Saviour is regarded in the New Testament: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," is the language of the latter. No promises of any kind are, anywhere in the Old Testament, made to those who receive and believe on the promised Messiah; and no threatenings are uttered against those who fail to do this.

4. In the penitential Psalms and other portions of the Old Testament, where the burdened and heart-broken sinner pours forth his confessions of sin and pleads for pardoning mercy, and when the penitent expresses his hope of the Di-

vine favor, there is no mention of, not the slightest allusion to, the atonement, or the merits or the mediation of the promised Messiah, as the source of relief from the burden of guilt; no trust is expressed in any such sacrifice. When, as in the 51st Psalm, the confessing penitent felt assured that no ceremonial blood of beast could avail to cancel transgression, to what does he resort? what does he say? He cries out: "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offerings." Does he then add, as presenting an availing substitute for these: "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin?" No; but he goes on: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Where is there the slightest recognition of an atoning Mediator here? Again, in the 32d Psalm, when overwhelmed with a consciousness of guilt, so that his whole frame seemed crushed with the load, what an occasion was that for resorting to the sacrifice which was to be offered by the promised Messiah, and trying its efficacy to charm away sin! But what does the penitent do? He tells us: "I acknowledged my sin unto the Lord: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Then came the assurance of pardon. If the writer of these Psalms anticipated a Messiah who was to make propitiation for sin, and supposed that his own sins could be cancelled, and forgiveness extended to him only on account of that propitiation, how could it be that no allusion was made to him in these times of conviction and earnest cries for pardon? This single fact, the absence of any recognition of an atoning Messiah in these Psalms, is, in itself, it would seem, conclusive evidence that the writer anticipated and knew of no such Messiah; and if *he* did not, who, then, of the saints of the Old Testament did have such knowledge and anticipations? Hence:

5. The predictions of the Messiah, even the most definite and circumstantial, seem not to have awakened those strong emotions which the expectation of an atoning Redeemer, by whom alone there could be deliverance from sin, and recon-

ciliation to God, and final salvation, would naturally call forth. Neither the patriarchs, nor the prophets, to whom the promises were made, and who may be supposed to have had the clearest views on the subject; not the most devout of the Israelites, who may be supposed to have relied on this anticipated sacrifice most confidently; manifest any strong emotions in view of the predicted Messiah, as sustaining such relations. When the sacred writers touch on the subject, there is no inquiry, no remark, no enlargement of any kind, such as might have been expected on a topic so interesting, had they understood it in its bearing upon themselves personally. They utter the thought in a shadowy manner, sometimes insulated, and sometimes in connection with other, and even foreign matters, and then leave it, as if it was of no further concern to them. How unlike, in this respect, are they to the writers of the New Testament! Look at the epistles of Paul and the other apostles. How full their minds seem to be of Christ and his atonement! How they revolve the subject; look at it admiringly, in its various aspects and relations; expatiate upon it till the whole mind is engrossed with it, and they cannot leave it! They determine to know nothing else. The Old Testament writers have their attention turned mainly to the Messiah's kingly power and the glories of his reign; while those of the New Testament are occupied, almost exclusively, with his dying and atoning love, and the spiritual benefits which he confers on his people. Hence:

6. The themes of praise and thanksgiving to Jehovah are, in the New Testament, strikingly different from what they are in the Old. In the latter, the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, displayed in creating and governing the material universe, in delivering the Israelites from Egypt, in giving them the promised land, protecting them from their enemies, and in other similar manifestations of his attributes, are the themes which elicit the adoration, thanksgiving, and praise of the inspired writers. The Psalms and other lyrical portions of the Old Testament abound in such devout ascriptions. But where do we find in

them thanks rendered to God for the unspeakable gift of his Son?

But this topic thrills the souls of the apostles, whenever they approach it, and their emotions burst forth in thanksgiving and praise. It is Paul, not David or Isaiah, after, not before, the Advent, who exclaims: "Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins!" "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!" "Great is the mystery of godliness!" etc. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" So everywhere, through the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation, the apostles cannot restrain their expressions of gratitude and praise. Why should not Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Isaiah, when their minds turn towards the Messiah, if they had any knowledge of him as an atoning Saviour, and of their personal relation to him as such, manifest, in some degree, similar emotions? They were Orientals, men of imagination, of strong feelings and language, as is everywhere obvious in their history. But where do we find these fruits of the heart and the lips in relation to the promised Messiah?

But it may be said that the pious Israelites, although not favored with that full and clear knowledge of the Messiah, which was possessed by those living after the Advent, or on whom the unclouded sunlight of the New Testament shined, had nevertheless some dim, twilight views of his character and work, which enabled them to ground their faith and hope upon him, and to rely on his anticipated propitiatory sacrifice for pardon and acceptance with God. Now, without stopping to inquire where, in the Bible, evidence is found that even this dark and misty knowledge of the Messiah was possessed by those living before his advent; let us ask: What would be the value of such a knowledge as a

basis for faith, and as a source of comfort and hope in a case where the eternal well-being of the soul was concerned? Could it give the peace and assurance which Abraham, Job, Jacob, Samuel, David, Elijah, and others felt, when they were about to be gathered to their fathers? How much would the dying Christian of those times value such a knowledge of Christ and his atonement? If the view which the writer of the 32d and 51st Psalms had, was not distinct enough to cause him even to mention such a ground of reliance and hope, in his plea for pardoning mercy, how could that view be of any real value to him in the time of his deepest need?

On what, then, did these penitents rely? Whence came, it may be asked, their perfect peace and assurance of pardon and acceptance with God? It came, unquestionably, we reply, from their undoubting faith in the promise of God, that, exercising the required penitence, in connection with obedience and godly fear, they should be forgiven and saved. On the promises of God to this purport, they could rely with all confidence, leaving it for him, in his wisdom and mercy, to make such provision as to the meritorious ground of their pardon, as would best vindicate the honor and justice of his moral government. This meritorious ground of pardon, whether they knew what it was, or not, must be wholly of God's providing, and was really no concern of theirs, more than to call forth their adoring admiration and gratitude, when they should learn with what a ransom they had been redeemed and saved. In the mean time they could trust that the plan which his wisdom had devised would be safe for them and safe for his moral government; and thus they could rest in peace.

Again, 7. The New Testament furnishes something like direct, affirmative testimony that the prophets and other holy men of the Old Testament were in the dark concerning the great facts of the Gospel, to which their predictions related.

1 Pet. 1: 10—12 is a passage in point: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; search-

ing what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow ; unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; which things the angels desire to look into."

Heb. 11: 39, 40, Paul implies the same thing, when, after noticing the character and achievements of the faithful worthies of the Old Testament, he adds : " These all, having obtained a good report, received not the promises [the promised blessings], God having provided some better thing for us," etc.

Coll. 1: 26, 27, Paul expresses a similar sentiment, when he speaks of " the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints ; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles ; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." So Eph. 3: 5, 6, and 9. Gal. 4: 3, 4. Tit. 1: 2, 3.

What the prevailing opinion was, in the time of Christ, we learn from John 12: 34. The people said : " We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever ; and how sayest thou, then, that the Son of Man must be lifted up ? Who is this Son of Man ?

As further evidence that the predictions of the Old Testament relating to the Messiah were not understood by even the godly of that day, and were not intended to be understood by the generations before the Advent, something may be learned from the frequent use of the word *mystery* in relation to the person and atonement of Christ, and the way of salvation through him. E. g. 1 Tim. 3: 16, " Great is the mystery of godliness," etc. In a similar signification, the word *mystery* is used frequently in the epistles of Paul, and by Christ himself, meaning by it the Gospel scheme of salvation by the atonement of Christ ; a scheme not revealed to, nor understood by, preceding generations, but

fully made known to the churches to which the apostles ministered.

It may be further remarked that this darkness and ignorance respecting the atonement of Christ and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, continued down to the time of Christ's resurrection, and that too among his own disciples. With all their peculiar advantages for understanding his character and work, they seem, even to the last, to have expected that he was to be a deliverer from national calamities and bondage, and to set up a glorious kingdom, in which the civil and religious polity of the best days of their nation should be more than restored. As to his crucifixion, Peter says, "This shall not be done unto thee." Which of them should be the greatest, and sit on his right hand and on his left, in this kingdom, was the topic of repeated discussion and strife among them, renewed even amid the solemnities of the last supper; and after the resurrection, which was so unlooked for and strange, that they could hardly believe it, two of them, on the way to Emmaus, said: "We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel," (meaning no doubt, from the Roman yoke). These probably spoke the views of the eleven. And even just before the ascension, the disciples, who were so hopeless as to the resurrection, asked: "Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel?" There seems to be nothing to show decisively that the minds of Zachariah and Elizabeth, Mary, John the Baptist, Simeon and Anna, were not in a similar state of darkness and uncertainty as to the peculiar character and work of the Saviour.

Further, the apostles were not permitted to go forth and preach, till their minds were disabused and enlightened on this all important point, by the special Divine influences communicated to them on the day of Pentecost. Thus enlightened and set right, they could understand and expound the prophets, and prove from them that Jesus was the promised Messiah; and laying aside, never to be mentioned again, all their notions about an earthly kingdom, they could then preach remission of sins through his death, and

call on all to believe in him. Christ crucified and faith in his atonement were all their theme.

Even in Christ's commission to the twelve and to the seventy, he did not instruct them to make known the atonement which he was about to work out by his death on the cross, or to exhort men to rely upon that for pardon and reconciliation to God. They were sent forth to preach repentance and reformation, and to work miracles only, so far as the narrative informs us.

From all the forgoing considerations the conclusion seems unavoidable, that the generations living before the actual appearance of Christ upon the earth, and perhaps down to the day of Pentecost, and even the inspired prophets and teachers among them, had no sufficient means of acquiring knowledge of the predicted Messiah, in his peculiar character as an atoning Saviour; and really did know nothing of him in this character; and of course, exercised no faith in him as such.

How, then, it may be asked, were the devout Israelites saved? By their own good works, and their strict observance of the ceremonial law? No;—nor are we shut up to this alternative. God, in all ages, made known to men that he was merciful and ready to pardon sin. He also made known to them what feelings they must exercise towards himself and his law, and towards themselves and their sins, in order to obtain pardon; but *on what ground* pardoning mercy could safely and properly be extended to them, he did not make known to men till Christ actually appeared on earth and accomplished the work and suffering, which constituted this meritorious ground of pardon. Hence, in the Old Testament, we find only those conditions of forgiveness proposed which relate to the character, feelings, and conduct of the sinner; while, in the New Testament, we find, added to them, and even more prominent, those also which relate to the atoning sacrifice of Christ, as the *meritorious ground*, on which pardon is bestowed on the penitent transgressor. In the Old Testament, every where, the terms of pardon and salvation are, substantially, as in Eze-

kiel 18: 30-32, "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not prove your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, * * * and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and live." In the New Testament, under the full development of the gospel, the conditions of forgiveness are everywhere, substantially: "Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The repenting and reforming Israelite in the time of Moses or Ezekiel, and the repenting and believing Jew in the time of Paul were both saved; and both saved on the ground of Christ's expiatory death, as the meritorious cause. The former repented and had such a state of mind, that he would have joyfully relied on the atonement of Christ, had it been made known to him;¹ and the latter repented and believed in Christ, as he is presented in the gospel. In the Divine mind the availing ground of salvation to both was the great propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, according to the declaration in the Acts, 4: 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name, under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." We may have our theory, that to know and believe on Christ, has, in all ages, been indispensable to pardon and salvation. But the Bible nowhere says that it was so to those who lived before the crucifixion, or even to those now living where the gospel is not known. Is it not presumptuous for us to have opinions and theories on such a point not fairly deduced from the revelations of God?

While there cannot reasonably be any doubt that a knowledge of the grace of God in Christ, is instrumentally the best adapted and most powerful means of convicting and converting sinners, it does not thence follow that God cannot bring, or that he has not brought, them to repentance and salvation without such knowledge. Repentance is a saving grace, as well as faith in Christ. And where one of

¹ He had faith, too, a heart-moving, and life-controlling faith in all that God revealed to him to instruct and guide him.

them, genuine in its character, is exercised, the other infallibly will be, if the subject has the requisite knowledge. Abraham and Job were doubtless truly penitent, and were doubtless pardoned and saved; though not knowing of Christ's atonement, they exercised no faith in him: and John Newton, after his conversion, while gathering slaves on the coast of Africa, and the pious rumseller of the last generation, both, by believing in Christ, were in a pardoned and a salvable state; while yet, not knowing that their course of life was sinful, they were not for those sins penitent. So, probably, Abraham, Jacob, David, and other pious men of their times, never repented of their polygamy and concubinage, because that they never knew that these were great sins; while the general state of their minds in regard to right and wrong, holiness and sin, was such, that, had they been enlightened as to these practices, they would have sorrowed for them unto repentance.

God acts on the general principle which is involved in the remark of Paul, Rom. 2: 12, "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." And it seems to be reasonable, if not expressly scriptural, to believe that God never requires of any sinner of the human family, in order to his salvation, that which he has not the knowledge of, and the ability to perform; and that the penitent sinner may, so far as his own views, feelings, and character are concerned, be in a salvable state, though he may never have been informed on what ground God can, with propriety, bestow pardoning mercy. The state of the moral affections in man, — his aversion to sin and his desire after holiness — all that can be regarded as moral excellence in the renewed sinner, is probably not less clearly indicated by his godly sorrow for sin and his hearty striving against it, than by the simple act of faith in Christ.

With the conclusion arrived at in this Article, some passages in the Scriptures may seem to conflict. Some of these will be noticed.

Job 19: 25. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," etc. Job

was in deep trouble. Loss of property and friends and health, with the unfounded charges brought against his character, were overwhelming him. Nevertheless his faith in God did not fail him. He was confident that, though his disease should become still more severe, and vermin should consume his body, yet God would, at some future day, interpose for his deliverance from all these calamities and re-instate him in more than his former prosperity; which actually came to pass. There is no evidence that the word *Redeemer*, in this passage, is used to designate the Messiah of the Old Testament, or the Jesus Christ of the New. The same word is often employed to mean Jehovah, as the deliverer of his people from any kind of trouble; as Ps. 19: 25. 78: 35. Prov. 23: 10. Isa. 41: 14. 44: 6. 49: 26. 63: 16, etc.

John 8: 56. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Abraham, aided by the promise, saw with a prophetic eye that, among his posterity, a great teacher, reformer, prince, and deliverer would be raised up, to be a benefactor to all nations; and he rejoiced in the prospect. Christ himself was the subject of this promise. Luke 24: 24—27, "O fools and slow of heart to believe," etc.; seeming to imply that, in the Old Testament predictions, they had the means of learning that the promised Messiah must suffer, and that his kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom. But it must be borne in mind that this rebuke was administered to the disciples, not before Christ's advent, but after his crucifixion and resurrection; after they had witnessed his life and miracles, listened to his instructions, seen him betrayed, condemned, and crucified, and even been credibly assured of his resurrection; and had thus had opportunity to compare the predictions with the events, and see, in the latter, the fulfilment of the former. This placed their perplexity and unbelief in a widely different and more culpable light than that in which they would have appeared in Abraham's or Isaiah's time, or even at the beginning of our Lord's public ministry.

Mark 12: 36, 37. "David himself saith, by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said unto my Lord," etc. This seems to be of the na-

ture of the *argumentum ad hominem*. The Jewish scribes had said the predicted Messiah was to be the son or descendant of David ; as if he was to be merely a human being. Christ then asks them how, if this were so, David prophetically looking forward to this great deliverer and benefactor of his nation, could call him Lord ? Christ, in all this, implying that David, by the use of this appellation, manifested more veneration for the anticipated Messiah, than would have been proper had he regarded him as merely one of the lineal descendants of his family. But it does not necessarily imply that David had any clear view of the higher nature of the Messiah, or of his atoning work.

A few words may now be added respecting the faith of the Old Testament saints. For this grace some of them were eminent and highly commended by the inspired writers. Abraham was so preëminent in this respect, that, even in the New Testament, he is mentioned as the father of all believers. But what was the nature of their faith, and what its object ? There seems to be no reason to suppose that it was what is, in these days, meant specifically by that word—that is, belief in and reliance upon Christ and his atonement. On the contrary, we have proof that the word is not used in this specific, limited sense in the 11th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and in the 2d chapter of James, where the faith of the Old Testament worthies is more formally treated and commended, than in any other passages of the Bible. In the first illustration of the meaning of faith, as there spoken of, it means simply an undoubting historical belief of the Mosaic account of the creation. Noah's faith was a belief of the Divine declaration concerning the coming deluge, with the feeling and conduct to which such a belief ought to lead. Abraham's faith was a belief of God's promise relating to the birth of Isaac, to a great nation springing from him, to their possession, at a future time, of the land of Canaan, etc. His belief of the promise of the Messiah is not even mentioned in this eulogy. Jacob's faith was a belief of the promise that his sons

and their descendants would become a great people in the promised land. Joseph's faith was the belief that the Hebrew people would be delivered from Egypt and be settled in the promised land. Though not particularly specified, we may learn from their history, what was the faith of Moses's parents, of Moses himself, of Barak, of Sampson, and Jephtha and Gideon, of Samuel and David, and the prophets. It is somewhat remarkable that, in these chapters (Heb. xi. and James ii.), treating so formally on faith, belief in Christ, or in the promises relating to him, is not once mentioned, or, so far as appears, once alluded to. And yet the faith here described was *saving* faith. For it is said, at the end of the 10th chapter to the Hebrews: "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the *saving of the soul*. Then comes in a description of what faith is, and illustrations of its nature and effects.

From all this it is to be inferred that the faith of the Old Testament worthies was an exercise, or grace, of a more generic character, a belief of all which God revealed to them; such a hearty, undoubting belief as awakened appropriate feelings and emotions, and led them to the appropriate course of conduct, and secured obedience. It is to be inferred, also, that all genuine belief of what God has revealed, involving the yielding up of the heart and life to him, is *saving faith*, implying a state of heart and character in the subject of it which would lead to belief of, and acquiescence in, everything which God may reveal to them on any subject. All such faith is saving faith.

This state of mind, this yielding of the understanding, the heart, and the conduct to the control of the Divine word, implicitly and without reserve, appears to have been the faith of the Old Testament saints. And the exercise of this entire confidence in and submission to God, was a basis for, and would in them have led to, the New Testament faith in Christ, had they possessed the New Testament knowledge of him. Therefore it was accounted to them for righteousness; and was, subjectively, not objectively or meritoriously, the ground

of their acceptance and salvation. This state of mind in relation to God and his moral government, to themselves as sinners, to their duties and obligations, to their duties and ill-desert, may have been precisely similar to that of the Christian in the age of the apostles, except that in the latter the full revelation which he has of the New Testament method of pardoning sin, is better adapted to excite higher admiration and gratitude in view of God's wonderful love and mercy.

Perhaps, in the progressive revelations which God has made respecting his purpose to pardon and save sinners, the full development of the plan and meritorious ground on which pardon could be safely granted, was not made so much because a knowledge and belief of that were indispensable, as the decisive act of faith, to the salvation of the sinner, as because of the power which this transcendent exhibition of the Divine mercy has to arrest this attention, give him better views of God's character, and of his own deep guilt and helpless ruin, and to awaken in him godly sorrow for sin and love and confidence towards his injured Sovereign and Benefactor. If so, then the truths relating to the sufferings, death, and atonement of Christ are to be believed in the same manner as all other truths relating to the goodness and mercy of God are ; and, as mere objects of belief, operate, as to securing the sinner's salvation, no otherwise than other divinely revealed truths, except as they are adapted to affect the heart more powerfully. This seems well to accord with the view given Rom. 10: 13—15.

As has been already intimated, and perhaps with sufficient explicitness, it must not be inferred from the foregoing discussion and conclusions, that sinners of the human family, of any race, Jewish or gentile ; of any age, preceding or subsequent to the advent of Christ ; under any dispensation, that of purely natural religion, the Mosaic, or the Christian, have been and are pardoned and saved on any other ground than the propitiatory death of Christ. On this point the New Testament is decisive and plain. " Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under

heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, Acts 4: 12. Christ is the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world," John 1: 29. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John 2: 2. Paul's reasoning in the first five chapters of the epistle to the Romans, is designed to show that a gratuitous justification, through the atonement of Christ is, in regard to every one of the human family, indispensable to salvation. The doxologies of the whole redeemed company in heaven, as given in the Revelation, proceed on the ground that they have all, individually, been delivered from sin and hell, and raised to the blessedness of heaven, by the blood of Christ alone, "saying, Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, Rev. 5: 9—13. In God's view, Christ was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." No course of good works, as constituting personal merit; no system of sacrifices or penances, as constituting expiation; no acts of penitence or reformation, as making amends, have ever availed, of themselves, to secure to the sinner the favor of God and the pardon of sin. Of this, the propitiatory death of Christ has, in the Divine mind, and in all ages, been to all the saved, the sole meritorious and procuring cause. And at the final day, when the counsels and proceedings of God, in the great work of redemption, shall be fully unfolded and vindicated, all intelligent beings will, doubtless, see it to have been so.

Nor, again, must it be inferred that, because God, in the exercise of his sovereign power and grace, in ages and nations where no atoning Saviour was made known, has renewed and sanctified and saved sinners, without their having the knowledge of him, or having exercised faith in him, he will do the same in respect to sinners to whom the Saviour is clearly preached, and salvation through his atonement freely offered; while yet they will not believe in nor love him; but wilfully reject his salvation; and thus evince that they have no penitence for sin, or desire to be delivered from its reigning power, and none of that filial confidence

in God and acquiescence in the provisions of his mercy, which sinners in less favored ages manifested, and by which they were led to obedience and salvation; and who, had they been taught the Gospel scheme, would have heartily and joyfully cast themselves upon it. They who will not cordially embrace the atonement of the Gospel, do, by this very refusal, show that in their heart they are still estranged from God, and are not, as to their personal character, in a fit state to be pardoned and saved.

Nor, again, must it be inferred from this discussion, that it is of little importance whether the Gospel be preached to the unevangelized nations or not. The mere fact that the Spirit of God, by means of the truths which nature teaches respecting his being and attributes, and the relations of men to him, has renewed some individuals to obedience and holiness, who never heard of the propitiatory sacrifice for sin, by no means proves that the exhibition of those attributes, as they are far more gloriously and effectively displayed in the Gospel of his Son, is not a much more efficacious instrument for reclaiming and sanctifying the heathen. And because God, in his sovereign mercy, may have saved here and there one, out of the millions of the heathen, without their having had a knowledge of the crucified Saviour, it by no means follows that incomparably greater numbers would not have been made new creatures in Christ, had he been faithfully preached to them. The goodness of God leadeth men to repentance. Of course, the greatest and most affecting exhibition of that goodness ever made, God's having "so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die" for it, God's "unspeakable gift," must be, as Paul represents it, "the *power* of God unto salvation."

Another thought, bearing on this point, may be worthy of notice. As God has commissioned his people, the Christian church, to make known the atoning death of Christ and the consequent salvation to the nations, as a part of their discipline and probation; and has determined to make known, by the church, his manifold wisdom, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus, he may, for

wise reasons, not exert, under the Christian dispensation, that measure of sanctifying influence among the heathen ignorant of the Gospel, which he put forth previously to the full introduction of the Gospel revelation, when there was no Christian church to carry the news of the atonement, and no atoning Saviour revealed to be preached.

That in lands where Christ has not been preached, there are, at the present day, extremely few, if any, whose character and life furnish evidence that they love and obey, or even know the true God, the observation and inquiries of all modern missionaries, with great uniformity, bear testimony; while in all lands, where the love of God, seen in the atoning death of Christ, has clearly been made known, many, and in some lands great multitudes, have been converted and saved. Now, since he has fully unfolded the Gospel plan of salvation, God reasonably looks that his people should be so moved by the riches of the glory of his grace, as to go everywhere and spread it before the benighted, dying nations, as the fullest display of his power and wisdom put forth for saving them. He would have all know that the same Lord over all, both Jews and Gentiles, is rich unto all that call upon him. How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?