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# ARTICLE V.

## THE NATURAL BASIS OF OUR SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE.[1]

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### *The Influence of the Hebrew Theocracy.*

In these Essays the words "evolve," develop," and others of like import, will be used in their ordinary, popular acceptation, with no reference to any scientific theories of development or evolution, either physical or philological. With the results claimed to have been reached by the latter science (which alone can have any bearing upon the subject of these Essays) the writer has not sufficient acquaintance to form a definite opinion. But even those who believe that the basis of reliable philological facts is too narrow and feeble to sustain the superstructure reared upon it, and therefore look upon such investigations with suspicion,— especially when carried into the domain of religion,— will find no occasion to distrust the application of such terms to the matter under discussion. There is, unquestionably, a sense true and safe in which development and evolution may be predicated of that verbal medium by means of which we acquire our religious knowledge. No one who has not derived his ideas from Milton, rather than Moses, will maintain that the spiritual nomenclature of Adam was as rich and varied as that of Abraham, or that the sweet singer of Israel did not add largely to the lexicon of the lawgiver, or that the evangelical prophet contributed nothing to the verbal wealth of David. We are told, by one who could not be mistaken, that there had arisen no greater prophet than John the Baptist, and yet that the least in the kingdom of

[1] This is the second Article of the Series, commenced in Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. xxix. p. 1.

heaven was greater than he. Thus development advanced from stage to stage, higher and richer, until Paul wrote his last Epistle, and John the divine closed the gorgeous visions of the Apocalypse.

It is along this line of evolution alone that we propose to carry our investigations, leaving scientific explorers to dig amongst dry roots of languages, dead and forgotten "before antiquity began," to find, if they can, how the "idea of God" first germinated in human consciousness, and, above all, who sowed the seed of it in the virgin soil of man's mental or moral constitution. There is no call upon us to search for the one or the other. We set out in possession of both. They constitute the first recorded facts in the Genesis of the universe — the most appropriate place possible for their announcement. All, except the few who exclude divine aid utterly and everywhere, admit that at some point in the long line of religious development such aid was actually superadded to that dim feeling after the Lord if haply they might find him which was merely human; and we see no reason, scientific or other, why the information so essential to man's spiritual well-being, may not have been communicated "in the beginning," when the Creator breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul, created in the image of God. We find here both the sower and the seed, and there is good evidence in history that this divinely-imparted knowledge was never wholly lost, by at least one branch of the Semitic family. Unhappily, those who emigrated eastward into the land of Nod gradually forgot, and then corrupted it, as they wandered farther and farther from the presence of the Lord. The religious history of all those peoples — Aryan, Turanian, Kanian, or by whatever name scientists designate the various families of mankind — is that of debasement and degradation lapsing into deeper and still deeper abysses of polytheistic superstition, down to the lowest forms of fetichism found in the savage tribes of Africa and in the isles of the sea. The process we propose to elucidate was the heaven-guided, happy reverse of all this.

The one ends in a dismal eclipse; the other is the steady oncoming of the glorious day of gospel light and life.

One other remark before we turn to the specific theme of this Essay. From their stand-point, and with their inherited knowledge of God and his attributes, the Hebrew prophets and inspired poets were not, and could not be, perplexed with speculations about the unknown and the unknowable, by which bold obstructive negations some of the great lights of modern science seek to push aside all inquiries in relation to the ultimate cause of all things. To them Jehovah was no vague abstraction, unknown and unknowable, but the greatest and most patent fact in the universe. In everything above, around, and beneath, they saw and heard and felt his presence and his power. Nor were they feeble intellectual children, misled by idle figments of imagination to "see God in clouds or hear him in the wind," like the poet's "poor Indian of untutored mind." They were not mistaken. There is a sense true and orthodox in which God is most immanent in all the works of his hands, —

> "Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees";

as we lads were taught to declaim half a century ago. And a far greater poet than Pope calls upon all created things to magnify and praise the Lord — "Sun and moon and stars of light, earth and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapor and stormy wind fulfilling his word, mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl. ..... Let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent." To the inspired poet all natural objects were transfigured into divine symbols, whose higher spiritual meanings, rendered into verbal equivalents, revealed phase after phase of God's mysterious and many-sided character. They were heaven's trained interpreters, set to translate into our dialect nature's ten thousand different tongues, which otherwise might have remained silent and dumb. To educate them for their mission, and aid them in it, they were born and bred in this land of

Palestine, crowded by divine forethought and skill with objects the most suggestive and phenomena the most instructive; and they were also brought into close personal relations with a vast system of pre-arranged institutions, social, civil, and religious, all contributing to the grand result. To the combined action of these things are we indebted, in large measure, for that spiritual language whose natural basis we are attempting to illustrate. In the present Essay the influence which the Hebrew theocracy has had in its development will be the prominent topic discussed.

The main results to be reached by a divine revelation — so far, at least, as our present inquiry is concerned — are three: To reveal God to man, man to himself, and the manifold relations of one to the other. A little reflection will convince any one that the first is not only the most essential, but also by far the most difficult. To find in human speech (or to invent) terms adequate to describe the infinite and the incomprehensible, to explain the invisible and the immeasurable, would seem to be a hopeless undertaking. And, indeed, it may be safely asserted that it absolutely transcends the unaided powers of the human mind. This was most impressively taught by Simonides to the tyrant of Syracuse. This poet-philosopher, as the anecdote is told by Plutarch, — when asked by Hiero to give a definition of God, requested a day to prepare an answer. On the morrow he demanded two days, and then four; always doubling the time. Finally, when the king expressed his surprise at this conduct, Simonides confessed that the longer he meditated on the problem the more incomprehensible it became. A similar conclusion was reached long before Simonides. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" said the Naamathite to Job (Job xi. 7) "Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."

The Westminster divines asked the question, What is God?

And, not being able to answer it, we are told that they sought divine aid in a solemn act of special prayer. He who led their devotions addressed the Hearer of prayer as a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. His co-laborers were so impressed with this beautiful and comprehensive exordium that they at once adopted it as the answer to the fourth question of the Catechism; and there it remains to task the memory and puzzle the understanding of the young by its formidable array of great words. I mean no reflection upon this answer. It is safe to challenge the literary world for a better, although each of the first four words is about as incomprehensible as the Being to whom it is applied. And what Christian, however unlettered, does not know and feel that his God is to him far more than this list of philosophical abstractions! Still, we cannot worship, like the Athenians, an unknown God; and if the end and aim of divine revelation is reached at all, the means must be found or devised by which the Lord can make himself known to his feeble children. And they have been. How this has been achieved is the exact point of our present inquiry; and we shall find that the course pursued by the inspired writers is totally different from that adopted by the Westminster divines. To confine ourselves to the course which we have marked out for these Essays, we shall attempt to show that this necessary revelation of the Supreme Being has been communicated not by formal, logical definitions, but by exhibiting God himself in an endless variety of acts, aspects, and offices, in each and all of which something of and about his being, attributes, character, and relations to man is made known. Human language is competent to set forth in intelligible terms these acts and relations, and by them to impart true and available information in regard to the infinite and almighty Author of all things. In this process divine wisdom has taken up and appropriated numberless facts and phenomena, natural, physical, moral, and historical, found in or connected with this land of the Bible, and so elevated

and transfigured the whole as to evolve from them a spiritual nomenclature adequate to reveal himself to us just so far as he designs to do and our wants require. The idea at the head of this Essay calls attention to one of these methods under consideration. And this particular one is selected now, because of the immense influence it has had more especially upon the practical and emotional domain of revelation.

It is not necessary to enter into any minute account of the theocracy. What is meant by it is, in brief, the fact that Jehovah condescended to assume towards the Hebrew people the office, attributes, and titles of Sovereign, Lord, and Governor, to accept the obligations and perform the duties of this office, and of course to claim and enforce the rights, authority, reverence, and obedience of the people as his servants and subjects. Out of this theocratic relation has been evolved a very large part of our spiritual language.

It will be well at the outset to meet an objection which may be raised against the specific use which is made of the fact under consideration. It may be said that the kingly office is in no sense peculiar to the Hebrew people, or to this land of the Bible; that it, in fact, was common to nearly all lands and amongst all nations, and is so to the present day. This, of course, is admitted; and, indeed, without this the theocracy would have been an unmeaning and barren bit of pageantry. It might be sufficient to our purpose merely to show that the kingly office was actually in existence in this land, and that the sacred writers were brought into such relations to it by an overruling Providence as would naturally suggest the thoughts, words, and phrases which owe their origin to this source. But this is far from the whole truth in the matter. Palestine, in ancient times, was pre-eminently a land of kings. Every district — nay, every considerable city — had its king and its court. However, the office was not then that pompous, but powerless abstraction, which it has become in modern times in constitutional governments. In most cases the king was an

autocrat absolute and irresponsible, lawgiver, judge, and executor, the source of all honors, offices, and emoluments, the commander of the army, the dispenser of favors, the awarder of punishment. The rights, claims, and prerogatives of royalty extended to every person and to every relation of life. The king was the master, the people were his subjects,—nay, slaves,—his property. In a better sense, he was the common father of the community, they his children, with all the kindlier duties and obligations implied and included in this most sacred of human relations. Royalty, thus constituted and administered, was selected by Jehovah as the synonyme and exemplar of his special relation to and with the Hebrew nation. And we shall have frequent occasion to call attention to the wonderful influence which this relation, thus assumed and enforced, exercised, not only on the national character, but especially on the moral and religious development of it, as manifested in their literature, and more particularly upon their emotional and devotional language. And we hazard nothing in saying that a very large proportion of our own could not have been learned in any other school, or under any other conceivable regime. This general idea can easily be brought down to the comprehension of the humblest Christian. Let him attempt to conduct even his most private personal devotions in thoughts, words, and phrases suggested by pure democratic institutions; for example, eliminating from his vocabulary everything derived from the theocratic idea, and he will find himself dumb in the presence of his Maker. He will not know how to come before the Lord aright—how to order his speech at the throne of grace; and if, instead of prayer, he lifts his heart and voice in sacred song, he will encounter the same difficulty. Names, figures, titles, thoughts, and emotions derived from or suggested by the divine theocracy meet him in every Psalm. I had the curiosity to examine a small portion of a book of psalms and hymns in reference to this matter, and in more than ninety the word "king" occurred; in some, repeated several times; and in nearly the entire selection,

and in every verse of them, thoughts, words, and phrases occurred, derived from this theocratic idea and regime, such as Lord, Prince, Sovereign, Monarch, majesty, throne, sceptre, dominion, kingdom, and others, of like import, without number. To eliminate them from our psalmody is quite impossible. Now, how was such an all-pervading influence introduced into our spiritual language? Simply by bringing the Hebrew people and the inspired writers into such actual relations to and with monarchy as suggested and even required such language; and biblical history tells us that such was the fact. The whole atmosphere of Palestine was pervaded with the display, the paraphernalia, and etiquette of royalty. The words representing it were in every child's mouth, as the power itself was everywhere visible, felt, and feared. When, therefore, Jehovah appropriated to himself the title and office of king, all understood its meaning at once. They had the visible, tangible thing before them and around them in just those forms that were best adapted to impress the imagination, affect the heart, and inspire the lips of sacred prophet and poet. Analogy is the basis of this spiritual nomenclature, and unless the thing had been there and familiar, no analogies could have been suggested by it. Divine wisdom had so arranged the social and political condition of Palestine that the people of God, and especially those of them who were to be their teachers, prophets, and poets, were necessarily brought into the closest relations with royalty, and were subjected to its ever-present and all-pervading influences. They must, of necessity, learn and practice the dialect of the court; and when called to write about spiritual things it was natural and inevitable that this should furnish their highest conceptions of majesty and might, and from it should be derived their most significant formulas for the expression of them in the service of their sacred vocation.

The correctness of the above general remarks can easily be illustrated and confirmed by almost numberless examples. Regarding Jehovah as Sovereign, Lord, and King, it would at once become natural to speak of God's throne, and to

invest it with every possible attribute of glory, majesty, reverence, and fear. Such was the fact, and no one needs to be reminded that from Hebrew prophet and poet the Christian church has learned the same dialect. It is as natural for us to sing,

> "Before Jehovah's awful throne
> Ye nations bow, with sacred joy,"

as it was to David or Isaiah. Hence, too, the august *court*, with its etiquette and ceremony; the *crown*, with what it signified and represented; the *sceptre*, with its dread prerogatives of power or favor, life or death; the attendant guards, ready executors of the royal mandates; the *footstool*, and those awe-stricken crowds who fell prostrate and kissed it, as they still do in this Eastern world; the *mercy-seat*, and the earnest petitioners for favors or for pardon. There is no need to carry this enumeration into further detail. It is only necessary to remind ourselves that all the religious phraseology derived from these and similar sources is a mere transference from things external and natural to things spiritual and divine. All the names, titles, and offices ascribed to royalty, all the expressions of honor, reverence, and devotion, all the acts and postures of suppliants before the dread tribunal of an earthly monarch and judge, were transferred by easy and natural analogy to the King of kings. Of course, in the process of thus transferring these things the ideas and emotions expressed were purified, expanded, and elevated. Nor was this at all difficult. Indeed, the analogy is so manifest that we constantly employ the terms under consideration without being conscious of the fact that they are all figurative, and in their primary signification had no reference whatever to things spiritual and divine. Who ever now pauses to inquire how he has learned to "come before the throne of grace," or to "bow around the mercy-seat," or to use a hundred other expressions derived from the theocratic regime established by divine wisdom in this land, and administered for many eventful centuries of miraculous inter-

vention and marvellous history? Nevertheless, though this large vocabulary has become familiar as household words — has, in fact, been learned on our mother's lap, — yet its basis and origin are found far back in time, and far away in this land of kings and courts, thrones and sceptres. With this thought in view, examine carefully any one of our Psalms, or study the devotional portions of the prophets, or read over the religious experiences of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, as recorded in their personal history, and we find the perpetual, unconscious use of words and phrases which could only have been derived originally from the source under consideration.

Our object in this Essay is to show in what way and to what extent a government with Jehovah as King, Lawgiver, and Executor actually had an influence upon the character of the Hebrew people, and more specifically upon their religious language. In prosecuting this inquiry, we shall at present direct attention mainly to the poetical portions of the Bible, because, whatever the nature and extent of this influence may be, it there finds its most vivid expression.

And, first, the ongoing and outworking of the theocracy led inevitably to the adoption of a certain tone of lofty and enthusiastic loyalty, and the observance of even a divinely-ordered court etiquette, if the expression may be allowed. The position of the sacred prophets, poets, and orators was, in this respect, wholly peculiar. It was so by providential arrangement, and for a specific purpose. This fundamental fact should be ever remembered and allowed for in attempting to explain, or even to understand, the extremely intensive language of many Psalms and other poetical and devotional parts of the Bible. The sacred writers have in mind, and do actually address not merely a present, personal Sovereign, but one of infinite exaltation, purity, power, and majesty. This, of necessity, not only exercised a controlling influence over their thoughts and emotions, but must also have suggested much of their language, and imparted a peculiar tone and color to their entire style. Thus, for

example, we should ascribe to this source much of that extreme sensitiveness to reproach, shame, and disgrace so often manifested by Hebrew poets and their heroes. As pledged and sworn soldiers of their august King, they were educated to the most punctilious sense of duty and honor. Everything that could add intensity to this feeling of loyalty was implied and included in the relations between Jehovah as King, and Israel as his servants and subjects. He was not merely their sovereign Lord, to whom allegiance was due, but, above and beyond this, their Maker, their Owner; they his property, his household servants. As members of his family they were participants in all that affected his honor, power, or happiness, or detracted therefrom. It is a fact well known and often commented upon, that servants and slaves in the East assume to themselves a large share of their Master's power and magnificence, take the utmost pride in his wealth and superior position, and most keenly sympathize with him in any misfortune or disgrace which may befall the family. Such, *in kind*, was the feeling of the loyal Hebrew towards Jehovah. Of course, it was greatly ennobled, exalted, and purified by the character of the divine Sovereign and the nature of the relations established between him and his servants. To a sincere and devout Hebrew these relations were more intimate, comprehensive, and potential than any which could possibly exist between an earthly sovereign and his subjects. The theocratic institution was no cold, barren abstraction, not a beautiful poetic fancy or fiction, but an all-pervading and momentous reality.

To reveal, inaugurate, and confirm the theocracy, and to derive from its ongoing and outworking the results contemplated, a gorgeous and complicated ritual, a vast and imposing machinery, so to speak, was devised and established. We shall have occasion to dwell on this more in detail in other connections, and introduce it here merely to elucidate the specific idea under consideration. Among the institutions or the machinery devised for the establishment

of the theocracy as a practical scheme of government, the first place must be assigned to the tabernacle, and to its successor, the temple. The tabernacle, erected by divine command, was avowedly their King's palace, prepared for this special purpose, that he might have a visible habitation in the midst of his subjects. There he promised to abide. There he did actually dwell, in solemn, mysterious, and awful seclusion; and thence he issued his divine commands and ordinances. To render this royal residence the more sacred and impressive, all possible arrangements calculated to inspire reverence and dread were gathered around those "holy courts." Even before this royal pavilion was constructed, a long series of stupendous incidents had been enacted, intended to impress upon the imagination and the heart of the nation that "Jehovah was a great King," and that carelessness, presumption, or heedless irreverence in approaching his presence would be punished with fearful severity. Such must have been the effect produced upon their minds by the plagues of Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the marvellous interpositions, deliverances, and judgments experienced during their journey, the strange and irresistible guidance of the reluctant, perplexed, and trembling tribes as they were drawn deeper and deeper into that dreadful wilderness, and led along those tremendous, rock-bound defiles up to the foot of that smoking, trembling, awful Sinai which might not be touched on pain of death. Most of all, the mighty physical phenomena which announced the presence of Jehovah when the law was to be promulgated, — the blinding lightning and crashing thunder and quaking mountain covered with thick darkness, and the voice of the trumpet long and loud, — so dreadful that even Moses was exceedingly terrified. All these, and other things innumerable had been arranged and enacted to awaken and deepen in the heart of the nation the profoundest reverence and dread of their great King. Again, the materials used in the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture were the most costly. It was surrounded by a grand inclosure,

and divided into outer, middle, and interior compartments; the approach to each being more and more sacred, until the last — the "holy of holies." Into this secret pavilion of their august Sovereign none could enter, on pain of death, except the high-priest, and he only once a year, and then "not without blood" and the most minute and scrupulous preparation. Now, Oriental monarchs have always sought by arrangements somewhat similar to surround their thrones and their persons with like reverence and awe. The best examples of this are furnished by the Pharaohs of Egypt, and by the kings of Babylon and Persia in the times of Daniel, Esther, and Mordecai. It was death for even the queen to appear uncalled before the king. With such awful court-etiquette, Moses, educated by Pharaoh's daughter, was perfectly familiar. He was also acquainted with the devices and architectural arrangements in the temples of Egypt, designed to render the precincts of the gods sacred and inviolable. Whether any — and, if any, how much — of all this machinery and contrivance was made use of in preparing the special dwelling-place of the Most High we need not now inquire. If there should appear to be certain resemblances between them, no one need be scandalized by it. Why should not Moses adopt — nay, why not be divinely directed to adopt — plans and arrangements which experience had shown to be most effectual? If the best possible for the end in view, it would have been folly to ignore or reject them. Without wandering into debatable territory, we may safely admit that, if Moses had been born and bred in Greece, instead of being learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he would not have constructed just such a tabernacle as that erected at Sinai, nor have provided just such furniture, arranged in just such typical and symbolic relations and positions as to render the whole structure and every part of it, with all the prescribed services and ritual observances, one grand visible embodiment of spiritual truth, of divine revelation. And — to revert for a moment to the specific aim of our Essay — had these things been wanting, or essen-

tially different from what they were, an innumerable number of religious and spiritual thoughts, words, and phrases now familiar to every Christian would never have found expression. They have grown out of, have been taught by, this educated feeling of profound reverence for the dwelling-place of the Most High.

As this courtly etiquette, divinely established and sternly enforced, resembled that of earthly monarchs, we should expect to find a corresponding resemblance in the external manifestations of reverence by those who approached the sanctuary of the King of kings. And such is the fact. The postures assumed by the worshippers — standing, kneeling, falling prostrate, and the like — are all conformable to Oriental usage before temporal sovereigns, even at the present day. It thus happens that much of our most common and familiar language comes down to us from the royal court, and in a costume devised by it. To such an extent is this true, that persons educated in our day, under circumstances widely different, cannot readily adopt as their own many of those very intensive expressions which fall naturally from the lips of Old Testament saints.

In illustration of these remarks, we might quote at random, and to almost any extent, from the poetical parts of the Bible. The sweet singer of Israel thus proclaims his vehement loyalty towards Jehovah: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee, and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies" (Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22). "Confounded be all they that worship graven images — that boast themselves of idols. Worship him all ye gods" (Ps. xcvii. 7. See also Ps. lxviii.; lxxi.; lxxii.; xcix.; c., and others too numerous to receive mention and too familiar to need it). The same intensity is seen even in a higher degree, in a different mode of giving expression to this absorbing loyalty. Jehovah was their pride, their boast all the day long, their joy and rejoicing. The utmost capacity of language is tasked to set forth his honor, glory, might, and majesty. There is nothing

equal to it, nothing like it, in the entire range of literature, sacred or profane, in prose or in poetry. Every name, title, figure, and comparison by which overflowing love, fear, devotion, trust, and triumph, adoration, and consecration could be expressed were eagerly seized upon and appropriated. One is strongly tempted to quote, in illustration, whole Psalms; but this our limited space will not allow, and we pass on, merely observing that there is nothing left for subsequent worshippers to add or invent. This great department of man's spiritual language is worked out and finished, and no pious mind ever attempts to address "the Majesty on High" in terms not found ready coined and sanctioned by biblical warrant. It would be impertinence and presumption to attempt it. We have already remarked, and shall have occasion hereafter further to show in detail, that this immense vocabulary has its natural basis in this land of the Bible, and could not have been invented, understood, or employed by persons born and bred under conditions essentially diverse from those in Palestine during the ages in which it was wrought out and perfected.

Again, it is from this same source that we derive the true and allowable language of spiritual desires and emotions; and, as this dialect of the heart was largely suggested by the theocratic relation and regime, it was inevitable that it should come forth glowing, and even exaggerated to a degree of intensity almost incomprehensible to persons not conscious of any such relation nor influenced by it. God was no distant, unconcerned spectator to the devout Hebrew, no hazy figment of the imagination, no impersonal force or energy diffused through an infinite and incomprehensible universe, but a present, living Person, endowed with intelligible human attributes, most intimately associated with his people in their daily life, taking cognizance of all their affairs, and constantly, visibly, and efficiently interposing in their behalf and for their good. He was ever at hand to protect, bless, and prosper them; pleased with their obedience and rewarding it; grieved with their rebellion and

punishing it. He was their Captain, leading them to victory. He gave them their inheritance, driving out their enemies. His eye was upon their land from the beginning of the year to the end of it; sending rain in due time, and fruitful seasons; filling their hearts with food and gladness. He was their Shield and Buckler in battle, their Fortress and High Tower, their Rock of defence; or he was their Shepherd, guarding, guiding, feeding them by night and by day. In a word, it was one main design of the theocratic regime to bring down the eternal, invisible, infinite Jehovah to the capacity and comprehension of feeble man. To secure this essential result, it was necessary to present him as a living, acting Person, endowed with human attributes. And this they do without reserve or hesitation. The same acts, emotions, and even imperfections are ascribed to him as would be appropriate to or expected from a temporal sovereign. In fact, Jehovah, in the language of these sons of song, is not only a *man*, but a *Hebrew*, and an *inhabitant of Palestine*.[1] To such an extent is this carried on, that they are led thereby to keep back, and hold in reserve, as it were, the spiritual, the unseen, and the eternal. Indeed, it has often been objected to the Mosaic economy, and to the Old Testament teaching generally, that the infinitely greater matters of eternity and the future life, with their tremendous array of relations and responsibilities, are entirely ignored. This is certainly not the case. There underlies the entire scheme of revelation the fundamental assumption that this life is not the whole of man. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "is not the God of the dead, but of the living." This is everywhere taken for granted, and this, in fact, even to the present day, is not the side of revelation which it is most difficult to present and establish. On the contrary, that which is most essential to man's religious life is just that conception of the Divine Being and of his relations to man

[1] This is of course to be restricted to the specific subject under consideration. There are numerous passages in which the anthropomorphism of the Theocracy disappears entirely amid strains of pure Theism of unrivaled sublimity.

that the theocratic institution was intended and adapted to convey. But, be this as it may, it is clearly demonstrable that it is to this that we owe a very large part of our spiritual language, and to the illustration of this fact we restrict our present Essay.

One of the marked peculiarities of the Bible is the large space devoted to the personal history of individuals. There is little of formal, dogmatic teaching — nothing, in fact, like systematic theology, especially in the Old Testament. The fundamental doctrines, even concerning the Supreme Being, are brought out, as it were, incidentally, in connection with the personal experiences of patriarchs, prophets, judges, generals, kings, and others, male and female, old and young, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, Jew and Gentile, good and bad. It was part of the divine plan to create, educate, and bring individuals possessing the needed qualifications and endowments into circumstances such as would suggest just the moral and religious lessons intended to be taught. The mere situations included the truths to be made known; the simple telling of the story suggested the proper words and phrases. Of course, only such acts, incidents, and experiences (amongst others innumerable) were caused to be recorded in the Bible as did contain or imply the teaching and the terms required.

It is in this selection that we are to find the guidance of divine inspiration, rather than in the things themselves. The acts, incidents, and experiences of patriarchs, prophets, and other biblical worthies were, at least in most cases, natural, not supernatural, as were also their motives, aspirations, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. They felt, spoke, and acted, in the main, as other men would in similar circumstances. But, standing in the divine record where and as they did and do, they include and proclaim just that spiritual truth which was needed and was contemplated by the Author of revelation, and they declare it in a style perfectly natural and human. Let any one examine carefully, and with this thought in mind, the sources whence

he has derived most of his ideas of God, his attributes, ways, and works, of man and his relations to God, of sin and salvation, of the life that is and that which is to be hereafter, of heaven and hell, of angels and devils, of morals and duties, faith and prayer, work and worship, and other matters of like nature and importance, and he will probably be surprised to find how large a part has been taught by the personal history of biblical celebrities. But the influence upon the *language* of inspiration from this source has been greater even than upon the *substance matter* of revelation. For example, the adventures and incidents in the life of David not only suggested most of the thoughts and awakened the emotions expressed in his Psalms, but in numberless instances the words, phrases, and figures are the direct product of those facts in his history. It has thus come to pass that the personal experiences of one man have exerted an immense influence upon the spiritual vocabulary of the religious world, and will continue to do so through all ages to the end of time.

Examples and illustrations occur in almost every Psalm. Thus to express his ardent love towards God, his longing to enjoy his presence and participate in his worship, he exclaims: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." Now, almost every sentence in such passages contains one or more figurative words borrowed from something in this Bible land. Again: "Rivers of water run down my eyes, because they keep not thy law. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. I am weary with my groaning. All the night make I my bed to swim. I water my couch with my tears. O Lord God, if I have done this, if there be any iniquity in my hands, ..... let the enemy persecute my soul and take it. Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honor in the dust." This, and much more of the same

kind, is the vehement assertion of innocence, as in the court and the presence of a personal lord and judge. So, again, the complaint and the prayer burst forth thus: "For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake; why sleepest thou? Arise; cast us not off forever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? for our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaveth unto the earth."

We may readily admit that a multitude of expressions, of which the above are but samples, are exaggerations, permissible only in poetry, and even then to be taken with due allowance for the circumstances of the author and the license of Oriental imagination and style. To appropriate, or even to sympathize with them, one must be brought into conditions of danger, trial, suffering, and anguish analogous to those which extorted such vehement language from the sacred poet. But, vehement as they are, there are states of mind and phases of Christian experience for which no other terms seem appropriate or at all adequate. They are then the natural and genuine exponent of the heart, and are employed without any abatement of this intensity. Thus, too, we must wait for conditions analogous to those which called forth such jubilant anthems as the following, or must imagine them before we can join in their lofty strains: "Oh, clap your hands, all ye people. Shout unto God with the voice of triumph. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises. Sing ye praises unto our God. Sing praises; for God is King of all the earth. Awake up my glory. Awake psaltery and harp. I myself will awake early. I will sing unto thee among the nations, for thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth."

Again, we owe to circumstances divinely permitted to occur in the lives and experiences of the sacred writers most of our language of penitence, confession, shame, and sorrow for sin. Many of the utterances — not to say all — which

appear to us unnatural and violent exaggerations are best interpreted in connection with the historic incidents which gave birth to them. For example, there is but one fifty-first Psalm, and there is no parallel to it in human literature. Nor could it have been penned by any other penitent than David, nor by him under any other circumstances. It is the outgushing cry of the greatest of criminals before his offended Sovereign and Judge. Amazed, confounded, overwhelmed, and crushed to the earth, with all his hypocrisy, treachery, cruelty, ingratitude, and unutterable baseness suddenly unmasked and staring him in the face; with the astounding history in mind, the expressions of his confession and prayer, even the most vehement and comprehensive, sound only natural, or rather seem feeble and inadequate. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Now, there is no presumption in maintaining that some of these utterances could never have been heard from any lips but those of David, nor from him on any other occasion. It required the antecedent, startling enormities perpetrated by one holding relations with the theocracy and its King wholly exceptional, intimate, and exalted, to give birth and being, color and costume to this Psalm. But pause, and mark well the result. This was the plan which divine wisdom selected to inspire the emotions and teach to man the language of deep and genuine repentance. And it has done it. The end has been accomplished. Unnumbered millions

have learned the lesson and the language. Every true Christian has the Psalm by heart, and, though not guilty of the same enormities, repeats without hesitation or reservation its most intensive and comprehensive terms; and such will ever be the case, so long as there shall be penitent sinners on the earth to plead for pardon and peace, for clean hearts and right spirits, before the throne of a sin-hating, but merciful God.

The same general remarks apply to numberless other expressions of a kindred character sown thickly over the whole field of sacred psalmody. "Mine iniquities have taken hold of me so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head. Therefore my heart faileth me." "I am a worm and no man." "Mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. ..... I am feeble and sore broken. I have roared because of the unquietness of my heart. ..... My heart panteth; my strength faileth me." Now, these and similar passages, scattered everywhere up and down through the psalter and through the emotional and devotional parts of God's word, were suggested by, or received much of their verbal costume from, the ever-present consciousness of the immediate personal presence of Jehovah, as established and guaranteed by the theocratic institution.

To this same source, too, such expressive verbal formulas as that oft-repeated petition, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us," is best understood and illustrated by picturing to one's self a royal sovereign and judge in his hall of audience, seated upon a low cushion, rug, or mat, according to Oriental custom. In this position, the accused or the suppliant, *standing* before him, could not see his face, especially when bent down in displeasure, as implied in the form of the petition. This relative attitude can be seen any day in the audience-room of Turkish pachas and judges. The petitioners are not allowed to *sit down*, but must *stand*, with hands humbly clasped together, and thus wait the

pleasure of him whose will is law. If the petition is accepted, the favor granted, or the suppliant pardoned, the man of doom and destiny lifts up his head, and with a benignant smile dismisses the rejoicing suppliant. But to turn aside the face, look down, and thus hide the countenance, has always been, and still is in this Eastern world, an alarming omen, foreboding rejection, imprisonment, or death, as the case may be. Moreover, these Orientals can, and do when they choose, wonderfully darken the countenance. I have seen it gather absolute blackness, like a portentous cloud, ready to explode in death-dealing thunderbolts. And, on the other hand, when greatly delighted, the whole face is overspread with a warm, brilliant glow, very beautiful and fascinating. This is what suggested the petition so oft-repeated in the eightieth Psalm: "Turn us again, O God, and *cause thy face to shine*, and we shall be saved." Imagine a suppliant for mercy, *standing* in an agony of doubt and fear before his offended sovereign, who hides his frowning face, and refuses to give one glance towards the trembling wretch, and you have the exact conditions which may have originated the peculiar costume of the prayer: "Lift thou up the light of thy countenance. Cause thy face to shine upon us."

Quotations illustrating this subject might be made to an unlimited extent; for in this respect there is nothing in the entire compass of known literature that can bear comparison with these songs of Zion. To account for this inexhaustible wealth and variety, we must remember that these divine poets and prophets had, as intimated elsewhere, passed through every school of human experience, and had thereby learned the language most appropriate for all possible emotions of the heart. The warmth of affection, the fervor of love, the frenzy of jealousy, the exhilaration of success, the abyss of despair, the dreams of ambition, the prostration of defeat, the triumph of victory, the repose of a good conscience, the horrors of remorse, the eagerness of pursuit, the miserable satiety and disappointment of possession, poverty

and wealth, honor and disgrace, glory and shame, peace and war, youth and old age, sickness and health, life and death, and all between these widest extremes they had known and felt, and could and did describe. Moreover, all was experienced and expressed in this land of the Bible, and in immediate association with this kingdom of heaven, the origin of whose peculiar language and literature it is the object of these Essays to explore and explain. It is presumption to hope that we can do justice to, much less can exhaust, a theme so rich and vast. So all-comprehending is it that the man whose spiritual condition and wants are so peculiar that they cannot be expressed and answered in the word and by the word of God is yet to born. And this boon so precious and priceless has been bestowed upon the world through, in, and by the land of the Bible, her people, her institutions, and her marvellous vicissitudes and exhaustive experiences.

This latter idea, being the hinge of our whole argument, will bear still further illustration. To many minds in this age of fastidious refinement, much of the poetic language and imagery seems forced, unnatural, or extravagant. But they were not so at the time and amongst the people who first employed them. Just here is to be applied an essential canon of interpretation by which we find the true equivalent of such terms in modern phraseology. *We* do not now vent our complaints in "words of roaring." No modern poet would venture to say, "Mine eye is consumed, yea, my soul and my belly. There is no rest to my bones. My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Nor, on the other hand, do we now give expression to our joyous emotions by leaping, dancing, shouting, and clapping hands. Our mental manifestations of all kinds are more subdued and, as we think, more decorous. But it is not thus in this Eastern world. The customs of the people have

undergone very little change in these things. At every genuine Oriental wedding, for instance, there is loud singing, shouting, clapping of hands, leaping, rude dancing, beating of kettle-drums, and other boisterous manifestations of hilarity, in exact accordance with ancient manners. At funerals the weeping, groaning, wailing, and verbal vociferations are loud and tempestuous as in the days of Job or Jeremiah. These exhibitions of both joy and sorrow appear to us unseemly, and often hypocritical. Still, it is certain that a large part of biblical imagery (transferred without change or abatement into the ordinary dialect of Christian experience) was derived from just these things. It could not but be so. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And this heart-inspired language is more impressive, easier learned, and is remembered with greater tenacity than any other. It is nature's dialect, common to all, understood by all. Those who first learned and spoke it were taught in God's school of personal experience. Had the individual conditions and experiences of David, Job, Jeremiah, and other divinely-appointed masters been essentially different from what they were, their thoughts and emotions could not have been the same, and the verbal costume in which they were clothed must have been equally different.

It is necessary to keep the above-mentioned canon of interpretation constantly in mind when dealing with the poetry of the Bible. Else much of it will appear to us false and fictitious, or sheer exaggeration. But, in fact, the words, phrases, and figures were the most natural possible to the times, the individual, and the attending circumstances and conditions. Thus David, the great exemplar and master, dwells continually, and in nearly every one of his Psalms, upon personal dangers from and conflicts with enemies. Now, he did this because, beyond almost any man that ever lived, he had enemies, and suffered most intensely from their causeless jealousy, cruelty, and treachery. Painting in poetic costume their character and conduct he naturally deals in words, figures, and phrases, even in his most direct

appeals to God, which we, dwelling in well-ordered commonwealths, where omnipresent law guarantees personal safety, dare not employ, except with great abatement, and then in reference to spiritual foes and conflicts. This transference, however, from the natural to the spiritual, is not mere fanciful accommodation — an after-thought, with no basis to rest upon. There was that about these divinely-appointed exemplars and patterns, and in their relations to the kingdom of God and its King, which included this other and higher domain.

We need not now pause to establish and illustrate this fact; but it is important for our purpose to show that the language under consideration owes its peculiar form and costume to a divinely-constituted condition of things in this land of Palestine. Thus, when David compares his persecutors to lions, leopards, and other ferocious beasts of prey, it is evident that he copied from life. The numerous, minute, and accurate references to their habits show that he was perfectly familiar with them, and with them had even been engaged in deadly conflict. And from his personal history we learn that such was the fact. The southern part of Palestine, where he spent his youth as a shepherd, and the adjacent deserts into which he was driven by the mad and murderous jealousy of Saul, were at that time greatly infested with these savage beasts. In justification of his request to be allowed to encounter Goliath, he said: "There came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him" 1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35). This was a very different encounter from that of modern lion-killers, with their deadly rifles; it was a desperate, hand-to-hand, personal conflict. And this imparts great additional force to such petitions as the following: "O Lord, my God, save me from all them that persecute me; lest they tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces while there be none to deliver." Again, describing

the conduct of his enemy, he shows the same intimate knowledge of the lion and his behavior: "He lieth in wait secretly, as a lion in his den; he croucheth and humbleth himself," etc., etc. Such, it is well known, are the exact attitudes and habits of the lion, and David and other biblical writers were brought into familiar acquaintance with them; and this continued to be so until the entire volume of God's word was written. Now, this was not accidental, but providential, and for a purpose — to enrich our spiritual vocabulary with important words and phrases, and our inspired literature with many noble moral lessons. "The lion," says the proverb, "is the strongest of beasts, and turneth not away from any." Hence he is mentioned symbolically, and with favor or otherwise as different aspects of his character become the subjects of comparison. Thus, in his father's blessing Judah is a lion's whelp: "From the prey thou art gone up. He stooped down; he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" This prophecy was strikingly fulfilled in David and his royal house, and symbolically in David's greater Son — the true Lion of the tribe of Judah. These and similar passages refer mainly to the more noble attributes of the animal. But, as he was also well known to be fierce, cruel, cunning, and terrible, his name became the synonyms of the devil himself, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Then, by natural analogy, the lion stands as representative of oppressors, tyrants, and wicked men in general. "My soul," says the Psalmist, "is among lions — the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows and their tongue a sharp sword."

It is certainly remarkable (something which our present knowledge of the chosen haunts of the lion would not lead us to anticipate) to find such constant and familiar allusions to this monarch of the woods in a land where there are no forests — a land, like Palestine, the highway of the nations between Asia and Africa. Yet Job and Jacob, Moses and David, and those that followed after, thus mention them, in prose and in poetry, — old lions and young, male and female,

— as beasts with which they were only too well acquainted. They could not have so written in this day. The terrible roar that shook the wilderness has long since died away in the far off desert — dwindled into the contemptible bark of the fox or the despairing wail of the jackal. The original basis of all this poetical imagery and moral symbolism has utterly disappeared from the land of the Bible. We must resort to the wilds of Africa or the jungles of India to meet and fight this king of beasts, whose presence and attributes suggested to sacred poet and prophet the most striking symbols of majesty and might, of terror and destruction.

As the biblical poets derived their thoughts, words, and imagery from life, must we suppose that there were in this land of Palestine, in their day, actual savage men, who literally dug pits, hid snares, and spread nets to catch human victims, just as trappers and Indians in the wilds of America now do to capture animals? Doubtless. Indeed, the literal must have preceded the figurative and the symbolical. Hence alone could have come such phraseology as the following: "The proud have digged pits for my soul, which are not after thy law. For without cause have they hid their net in a pit which without cause they have digged for my soul..... Let his net that he hath hid catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall. The heathen are sunk down into the pit that they have made; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me." Now, these are but specimens of many similarly minute and specific statements, which certainly refer originally to literal, material, not moral, snares, nets, and pits. In those ancient times, the means of destruction were far less efficient and fatal than our modern rifles and revolvers, and, consequently, men had recourse to trick and stratagem, to pits, traps, and hidden snares to capture or destroy their enemies, both human and brute. And no Bible reader needs to be reminded that from this source have come a multitude of words, figures, and phrases in our moral and spiritual vocabulary. We shall

refer to them in other connections, and merely add that they are not out of place here, since their most frequent occurrence is found in vehement complaints addressed to their King and Sovereign against those who employed such villainous artifices to slay the righteous. On this general subject, it is well to remember that there was in those ancient times a degree of treachery, ferocity, and brutality in life and manners which rendered possible deeds of revenge that would not now be allowed in any civilized society. Custom tolerated, and in some cases even legal enactments commanded, things to be done which must have tended to foster these terrible passions. Amongst these may be mentioned the law of blood revenge, which required for its execution that every man's heart and hand should be steeled and hardened up to the point of that bloody deed which is now only possible to the legal executioner. The effect which even a modified form of this cruel custom must have had on the character of the people is distressingly illustrated in our own time, and in this same land. We dwell amongst tribes many of whom walk about in open day, ostentatiously weaving into unshaven beards the stern purpose, the diabolical vow to murder certain victims of their revenge, whenever and wheresoever opportunity offers. Moreover, Orientals, even those nominally Christian, are addicted to envy, jealousy, treachery, and kindred vices, to an extent almost incredible. Against these odious characteristics and those who manifested them a large part of the Psalmist's most vehement denunciations is addressed. And we should not be scandalized if we find them clothed in language severe and even shocking to our milder and more humane institutions. They are simply true to the age and the conditions of society wherein they were uttered.

On the other hand, there is no display of triumph over a fallen enemy that is not matched in the present generation of evil-doers in certain parts of Syria and Palestine. In biblical phraseology, "They clap the hands, shout and hiss, shoot out the lip, wag the head, wink with the eye, and gnash

the teeth, crying, Aha! aha! Our eye hath seen. So would we have it; we have swallowed him up" (Ps. xxxv. 21–25).

To account for the extreme intensity in the imprecations of David and other sacred writers, it is but justice to remember that they could not but abhor the character and conduct of those men of Belial whom they denounced, and, whilst pleading the cause of justice and righteousness before the tribunal of God their King and Governor, they must describe them in their true colors. That was no place to conceal the plain truth, or to soften down their condemnation into the dulcet notes acceptable to the ears of modern refinement. Accordingly, they spoke out bravely what they knew surely and felt strongly. Some of their expressions may seem to us harsh, and even offensive; but they should be interpreted with due allowance for the circumstances, the customs of their age, and the peculiar capabilities of these rugged Oriental languages. Besides, these holy men were, in most cases, invested with solemn official responsibilities — acted as guardians of the law — the public, recognized prosecutors of transgressors. Generally, too, more is to be understood than what lies on the surface. There were wicked men and bad women, who dug moral pits and spread spiritual nets to catch and destroy both soul and body. Traitors to their country, their religion, and their God, they were far more than mere personal enemies and persecutors of those who denounced them. In a real and controlling sense the slanderers of David, for example, were the enemies of God and rebels against his government, in league with the grand adversary, the devil. Hence, when the Psalmist rebukes these sons of Belial, who plot against the just and gnash upon them with their teeth, he adds: "The Lord shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming. They have drawn out the sword, and bent the bow to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bow shall be broken. The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; into smoke shall they consume away" (Ps. xxxvii. 12, 15, 20).

In all such passages, and they are very numerous, the rebukes and denunciations were not hurled against mere personal enemies. The eye glances on beyond to those implacable foes of God and his law by whom David was assailed, hated, and persecuted — beyond even them to those principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this world with which they were in league. The mighty sweep of those divinely-inspired comminations falls, finally, on that hierarchy of apostate angels. There we find their ultimate significance and most perfect fulfilment.

In accordance with this line of remark, we suggest that not only has the Hebrew theocracy the realistic conception of the Supreme Being as a personal King and Governor, greatly enriched our religious vocabulary in the ways described and many others, but we are thereby guided to the right interpretation of much of this language. We feel authorized to restrict those terrible imprecations which meet us at every turn in the Psalms to special and exceptional cases and characters, and in general to tone down and modify their awful import. Thus, when David prays, against those flatterers whose throat was an open sepulchre, "Destroy thou them, O God! let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they *have rebelled against thee*," the spirit that dictated the prayer is indicated by this last clause. These persons were open, declared rebels against David's God and King. Death is the penalty for treason in all governments; and the Psalmist, as God's zealous servant and loyal subject, demands that the merited punishment should be inflicted. The language is, so to speak, official, and does not necessarily imply a cruel, bloodthirsty spirit of vengeance. The substance of the petition might be urged by a faithful officer of any modern sovereign. Indeed, the official prosecutor of dangerous conspirators and rebels does, in fact and in form, make just this demand. He might clothe it in words more mild and polite; yet the demand itself would be the same. But, adopting the style and language of the age, David, the

supreme executive officer of the theocracy, claims, in strict legal terms, that these incorrigible revolters might be destroyed out of the land. These considerations may not apply in all their mitigating force to every imprecation and commination found in the Bible. There are some which seem to require other explanations and a different method of treatment. Nor is it necessary to hold ourselves responsible for every outburst of indignation on record. But we do believe that very many passages in the Bible which give pain to sensitive minds are best understood when interpreted in connection with the Hebrew theocracy as the official language of an actual and august court.

Nor does this conception of the circumstances and relations of the speakers and actors merely serve to eliminate and moderate the intensity of that apparently vindictive language which disturbs many gentle and compassionate hearts. It also imparts a life-like simplicity and naturalness to that terrible earnestness and agony manifested so frequently by even good men in the presence of their offended Lord and King. Transfer the scenes, the actors, and the expressions to an actual Oriental court and judgment-hall, and there is no exaggeration whatever. Nay, we need not travel to the East, nor very far back in even English history, to find exact parallels. When conspiracies and rebellions were common, and multitudes stood arraigned for bloody treason, there is no form of denunciation found in the Bible more stern than was heard in every court, nor words of supplication more abject and agonizing than those urged with all the energy of despair, even by the high-born and most noble of the land.

Now, under the Hebrew theocracy, resistance to or violation of God's law was *rebellion*. Idolatry was actual *treason*. There was no place under this divine regime for that hazy sophistry which men now throw over such conduct, and thereby obscure the enormity of guilt. To a devout Hebrew, God and his government were tremendous realities, not vague, mythical abstractions, with no underlying basis of fact to support them. Jehovah was their actual King and Gov-

ernor, dwelling amongst them, visibly executing his own laws, and administering his own government. These facts and convictions gave tone to their feelings and color to their language. We are far, however, from maintaining that, by this exceptional order of things, emotions of contrition, of shame, of penitence, on the one hand, or of peace, joy, gratitude, love, thankfulness, adoration, trust, and triumph, on the other, were rendered so mundane that they are unfit vehicles for the spiritual thoughts, emotions, and desires of devout souls under our changed circumstances. Indeed, we only deceive ourselves by imagining that the conditions are *essentially* changed. Transgression is still *rebellion;* idolatry, spiritual *treason*. Jehovah has not abdicated his kingly office, nor withdrawn from the government of the world. All that is meant is, that the theocratic institution and regime rendered these things more realizable. Even the most pious amongst us acknowledge the difficulty of preserving this vivid consciousness of a present, personal, governing God. Many reject or ignore the doctrine, and of necessity they can neither appreciate nor appropriate the thoughts or the words which such consciousness inspired. The best among us walk through this field with feeble, faltering steps. We believe and accept, but use with many abatements and practical reservations, this fundamental doctrine of a personal God. Many set it aside altogether, or resolve it into hazy metaphor, or vague, Oriental symbolism. It is, in fact, the hardest of all moral problems — the stumbling-block of the age, over which the boasting sons of science seem to be drifting towards the bottomless abyss of sheer atheism. Our specific purpose, however, is not to elucidate and confirm the *teaching* of the word of God, but rather to discover and describe the *vehicle* through which, the *machinery* by which it is taught, and even this mainly in one department of the general subject. Our aim has been to show that the verbal medium of revelation (divinely selected and developed) was largely modified and colored by the theocratic regime, more especially in the domain of the

emotions, the true centre and core of all genuine religion. And since the best elucidation of this is furnished by the book of inspired Psalms, it is no departure from our chosen theme to dwell thus at length upon this topic. By this divine economy, and by the most intimate association of his people with it for long centuries of pre-arranged incidents and exceptional experiences, God designed to educate them for their mission — to teach them the peculiar language of his kingdom, and how to use it. The successful result is seen and felt throughout the whole religious world. His ancient people, in all their wide dispersions, still chant these divine odes, *literatim et verbatim*, and translations of them constitute much of the liturgy and hymnology of every Christian church on the earth. It is an interesting and significant fact that the people distinguished above all others for high spiritual culture are precisely those who cling with the greatest tenacity and love to these grand old Hebrew odes and anthems. In the closet, the family, and the public sanctuary they read, recite, chant, and pray them, year in and year out, and sing them in triumph as they pass through the Jordan of death to the Canaan of eternal peace and rest on high.

In the further conduct of our theme, and in many different connections, we shall be brought back to this inexhaustible field of illustration. But this must suffice for the present, while we turn to other topics whose bearing and agency in evolving and enriching our spiritual language require to be considered.