

LECTURE III.

NOACHISM AND ABRAHAMISM.

SIN has entered into the world. The race of man has fallen from uprightness. The leaven of evil has corrupted his nature. His development must now proceed under new conditions ; it does so rapidly and increasingly—downwards. Speedily the malign results are seen in the fratricide of Cain. Increasingly they are displayed in the rising tide of wickedness, which at last wearies the patience of God, and terminates in the destruction of the race by the judgment of the Flood. The part acted by man, and the part of God, are manifest in this era of man's history, so compendiously, disjointedly, and yet suggestively described in the history of the race subsequent to the Fall, leading up to the Deluge. Without entering into detail, we may gather that this is a period of no small significance ; a period when man was left to develop his fallen nature,

just as the previous period showed the development of his unfallen nature. In his first upright, sinless state, he chose transgression and fell. In his fallen state, he follows the bent to which he first inclined. The downward course is with accelerated rapidity. From uprightness he falls into sin and corruption, and from sin he finally comes to destruction. Yet all the while man's human powers of advancement are in full exercise. He is no mere unthinking savage, living an animal life, caring for nothing but animal wants. He is not so degraded intellectually as to be little above the beasts that perish. He cultivates the arts that minister to the wants of civilised life. He builds cities, a fact which implies no mean advance from the savage uncivilised condition in which we find the more degraded portions of the race. The whole narrative points to no utterly degraded or debased state of humanity. Rather the contrary holds good. But there is one conspicuous omission in the antediluvian narrative, and that is the absence of any reference to religious means and practices. Whether such special means were in use or not, we shall not pretend confidently to assert or deny. Read in the light of after

development, there would seem to have been little such. We are told of only one religious ordinance—that of the Sabbath—more for the unfallen than the fallen man, the profound spiritual meaning of which may easily be understood to have been gradually effaced. We read also of Cain's and Abel's offerings—the only other religious practice which seems to be referred to; and it is doubtful what is its full signification. Apart from these there is no special religion, no Divine provision for supplementing, elevating, correcting the human bias. May we not then take this antediluvian age as one of those periods which predominantly illustrate the action of a principle always at work, viz., that in virtue of which humanity, not specially controlled, is enabled to shew what it can do, and what it cannot do. It is that period in the history of time, when man, fallen, yet with every advantage derivable from the fresh reminiscence of primeval dignity, competency, and purity, is left to work out his own fate, with no more restriction or control than what is afforded by that natural conscience, which is never absent from him until it is quenched by the advance of sin. Natural, unhelped good strives with evil. On a fair and favourable battlefield

the conflict is waged. No habit of evil has grown up. No deteriorating traditions exert their influence in excusing or palliating wickedness. Yet, what is the result? Rapid declension, final demoralisation, over the particulars of which inspiration draws the veil of oblivion. "God looked upon the earth: and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Long had the Divine forbearance borne with the rising tide of iniquity. But there are bounds even to Divine long-suffering. "My spirit shall not always strive with man." The flesh strove against the spirit. The flesh, with every natural advantage on the side of good; the spirit without any of those special means of grace, which were afterwards appointed. The historical result is a fearful commentary upon the theory which would leave humanity to its own bias, as if it contained within itself means of self-preservation and self-elevation. So quickly and completely does sin prevail, that in the issue Divine justice rises up to vindicate itself by an awful catastrophe, and to sweep iniquity from the world.

Again the race of man is represented by a few, saved like precious seed for another trial under varied

circumstances. Having tried humanity by leaving it to itself, the Divine pity now sees fit specially to interpose for its help—yet not more than is absolutely required. An educative process goes on—man must step by step realize his incompetency, before God intervenes to grant the needful aid. Consequently we mark a distinct period in Noachism. After the great judgment upon mankind had been executed, and when Noah had come out of the ark and returned to the usual habitudes of life, his first act was one of devotion. It was a recognition of God's supremacy, as against man's sufficiency. "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord." It is the first recorded instance of such an act. We meet with it often afterwards in Patriarchal and Judaic times. It seems a proof of Noah's conviction that humanism is insufficient; that man cannot lean on himself alone; that he requires a higher power to supplement his own deficiency—in short, that the Divine element is necessary to the perfection of the human. Noachism may thus be said to introduce the religious era, specially so called. If it achieves no remarkable success, it at least preserves from utter ruin such as the Flood.

Noachism is a transition stage from naturalism in its purer form to a modified supernaturalism. It partakes of the character of what precedes and of what succeeds. It is a new departure. As has been already noticed, it provides a religious external means for preserving the religious sense in man. As yet there is no Bible, but there is the Sabbath, however the conception of it may have deteriorated; and now, also, the service of God is instituted or re-instituted, in the sacrifice and altar. Religion is made a part of man's external life, so as to help and preserve the internal and spiritual religious sense. The idea is introduced which afterwards grew into Jewish ceremonialism, fencing every avenue to religious indifference by making religious observance a part of the routine of daily life—the same idea afterwards spiritualised in Christianity, which dropped the externals so necessary for the old times, dispensing with the shadows when the substance had come, and restoring under better auspices the state of things which we seem to see in the antediluvian era.

We mark the period as transitional in other respects. The Flood had rebuked that human confidence in the permanence of the present condition of

things, which implies reliance on the unvarying order of nature, which dispenses with a God, and which is Atheism, denying miracle or special Divine interposition. It is the feeling reprobated in the New Testament, the feeling as alive now as it ever was, when the scoffers of the last days say—"Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation," willingly ignorant of or wilfully ignoring the fact, that God did once interpose miraculously to sweep the race into sudden destruction, and that the order of nature, therefore, gives no indefeasible security against the foretold destruction of the world by fire. The Divine element is vindicated, yet the human element is conserved, in the Noachian covenant of the seasons. It is matter of human experience that these seasons do observe a regular succession. The Noachian covenant bases this, not merely on the laws of nature, but on the fiat of Deity. "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

Further, the conjunction of the human and Divine is manifested in the sacramental sign and pledge (as it

were) for this continuance and permanency in the natural world: "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth." Of course the rainbow existed before, and must continue to exist, while optical conditions remain the same. But the natural is called in to illustrate the supernatural. A special Divine meaning is associated with that which did not contain or suggest it before. We do not say that before this Noachian period there was no such relation of the natural and supernatural, but unquestionably that is here first made conspicuous which afterwards developed into the elaborate symbolism of the Mosaic ceremonialism, and which even in Christianity is preserved in the two sacramental ordinances, wherein the common matters of water, and bread and wine, are invested with a special religious significance, and the natural is linked by a special bond with the supernatural.

Another characteristic of Noachism may be noticed in the permission now given by God to use flesh as food. Its prohibition previously is only an inference from the way in which it is mentioned in the Primeval Revelation. Considering the lawlessness of the ante-

lation agree in their practice and permission. In spirit, hands are joined across the gulf which separates early and late periods of time. We see a Divine consistency even where human conditions seem to introduce temporary inconsistency.

Noachism is an interesting transitionary development. It closed an era during which fallen Humanism developed itself into Atheism. It introduced a period when Humanism, from a new religious start, developed itself into Polytheism. The former period was one of civilisation, city-building, art-advancement, and the carnal security of human self-sufficiency. The new period is that of the rise of empire, of human combination, when hand joined in hand thinks it may defy or frustrate Omnipotence. The former period has its sin marked by an overwhelming destruction. The latter period is no less distinguished by moral and religious declension, but the way of God therein is not by destruction but by reformation.

Primeval religion was for the whole human race. Adam was the representative of all mankind. The Noachian period is similar, yet with a forecast (in the foretold fortunes of his three sons) of privilege and

preference to some over others. As it were, man feels himself no more self-sufficient but assailable, and gathers himself up for defence rather than aggression.

Such is the general aspect of Abrahamism. It retires within a smaller circle. It initiates a narrowing process. In regard to the great promise and hope of humanity, doubtless the race-embracing application is still present, but it is in the background: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii. 3); "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 18). General salvation is put into the background. The foreground is first occupied by Abraham personally, and then by one seed, Isaac, the seed of promise, who does not exclude, but include the seed Christ. And as the unfolding proceeds, the foreground is occupied by one family (that descending from the Son of Promise), by and by to grow into a nation, and finally, in a spiritual sense, to embrace all the nations of the world. There is contraction in order to ultimate all-inclusive expansion.

Abrahamism brings us within the period of history when there is at least a possibility of the inspired record being supplemented and corroborated by ex-

ternal information. As Revelation, in our view, specially and predominantly presents the aspect of events from the Divine side, it is all the more incumbent upon us to search for the human elements (little more than alluded to) which mingle in the action. And we shall freely do so, because the action is more brought down to the level of human interest, and we are enabled to feel that the circumstances are such as enlist our sympathy, and bear upon our condition. Before the purely Divine we tremble and stand in awe; in the presence of the more human (mingled with the Divine), we feel not less reverentially, but more naturally, more on our ordinary level, and therefore the conditions are more instructive, applicable, and edifying.

If we review the circumstances in which Abrahamism is introduced, they will be found to be to the following effect:—In the course of time, a great declension in religion had taken place. As before the Flood it took the form of Atheism, so now it assumed the form of Polytheism, in the land of Abraham's nativity, the basin of the Euphrates and Tigris—the Mesopotamian Valley. The researches of Assyriologists appear to

shew this beyond a doubt in the very earliest times to which the monuments carry us back. The Polytheism was most elaborate. At the head of the Pantheon stands the god Il or Ra. Next to him is a triad, Ana, Belus, and Hea, corresponding closely to the classical Pluto, Jupiter, and Neptune. Each of these is accompanied by a female principle, Ana by Anat, Belus by Beltis, Hea by Davkina. Then follows another triad, again accompanied by their female principles. And next in order to them is a group of five minor deities, representing the five planets—Nin or Nimp (Saturn), Merodach (Jupiter), Nergal (Mars), Ishtar (Venus), and Nebo (Mercury). These constitute what may be called the principal gods, after which are to be placed the numerous divinities of the second and third order.

This may suffice to shew the elaborate Polytheism of early Chaldea. Possibly there may have been esoteric explanations known to the priests and the learned, which, resolving the personages of the Pantheon into the powers of nature, reconciled the apparent multiplicity of gods with Monotheism, or even with Atheism. So far, however, as outward appearances were concerned, the worship was grossly poly-

theistic. In full accordance with information derived from the earliest monuments are the statements of profane writers. Nor is corroboration wanting in Scripture—"And Joshua said unto all the people: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac" (Josh. xxiv. 2, 3). Thus Abraham, as the champion of Monotheism, is the Protestant of the period.

Such, as we have attempted to describe it, was the religious condition of things. What was the political condition? For religion and civil policy can never be separated in that artificial way which has frequently been attempted. The position was this—Monumental records, and Scripture as well, testify to the rise of an empire in lower Mesopotamia. Many tribes and nations were brought under a common rule, whereas formerly they had a tribal independence. Beginning near the head of the Persian Gulf, this centralising

power gradually extended itself upwards along the Mesopotamian Valley. The necessities of such a political condition of things compel advance. Retrogression is fatal. There is no "Rest and be thankful." When aggression ceases decay begins. The episodic narrative of Nimrod (Gen. x. 8-12) evidently speaks of a growing, extending imperial power, which brings into subjection tribe after tribe, and adds territory to territory, annexing and consolidating what formerly were separate and independent elements. Now, we have seen that the religion of the dominant race was polytheistic, grossly so. The national or imperial religion was polytheistic. It was a political necessity to unify and consolidate so many discordant elements. No means were so obvious as that of imposing a common religious faith and practice. It may, therefore, be presumed that the national religion would be intolerant of those who differed from it. As a bond of imperial union, conformity would be required of all, since non-conformity was an element of national division and weakness. (Hence we see in Judaism afterwards the intention of a common national worship, although at a later period there was dissent on the part

of the kingdom of Israel from the religious practice and faith of the kingdom of Judah.)

Apply all these considerations to the case of Abraham, and we shall find him a representative example of such influences in all time. His religious convictions are diametrically opposed to those of the predominant race, to the imperial religion. If he would maintain them, he could not do so in his native land. His only alternatives are submission or migration—submission to the exacting fiat of imperialism, or removal to a locality where he might act according to his convictions. In far later times, when Christianity was introduced into the Roman Empire, Christians maintained their faith, and through suffering persevered in its profession and finally prevailed. Still later by far, the Pilgrim Fathers, like Abraham, migrated that they might enjoy the liberty of conscience which their native land denied. Mark then the conditions of the case—Abraham was either the conserver or the restorer of Monotheism as against Polytheism. Scripture does not seem to pronounce whether he was the one or the other. But the fact remains that he was the representative and champion of Monotheism. If he would

maintain his religious integrity, migration was the only resource. Whether the resolution to migrate was from a special Divine impulse, or from mere naturalistic motives, or from a combination of both, we need not dogmatically pronounce. Probably both elements were conjoined. Where men have eyes to see, the Supernatural and the Natural are seen to work in harmony and not in opposition. Presumably the Natural might preponderate, and in its view he might have clearly before him the destination which, in the second stage of migration, he wished to reach. This theory literally accords with the statement of Genesis xii. 5—"Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan: and into the land of Canaan they came." Or, supposably, he might, by the call of God along with the stress of circumstances, have only decided to migrate, leaving the course of the migration to be guided by circumstances yet to emerge. This supposition is in accordance with the tradition in Hebrews xi. 8—"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for

an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out not knowing whither he went." Whither we adopt the one theory or the other, or the combination of both, the Divine and human influences are both perceptible, as actuating and conditioning the movement. The Divine motive acts through the human conditions. Of this we have an illustration in the course which the migration followed. If Ur is that city of Southern Chaldea which became an early seat of empire, his route was up the Euphrates, receding before the advancing power seated on the lower Euphrates. Resting for a time at Haran, probably beyond, or at least on, the confines of the territory subject to the Chaldean Empire, he at last resolves to remove to Canaan, taking the route by which all subsequent invasions from the East were conducted by Babylonian, Assyrian, Arab, and Turk. But, according to the narrative in Genesis x., the migration of Abraham to Canaan did not free him from contact with the Hamitic races, whose seat of power was on the lower Euphrates. The genealogy in that chapter describes the native tribes of Canaan as branches of that ethnic stem. Our information regarding their religious system is very scanty. How far they had

declined from true religion it seems impossible to ascertain. One thing we may confidently conjecture, that hitherto they had retained their independence, and were not confessed tributaries of the great Mesopotamian Empire, though for a brief period they did own subjection, and that they were in that state of civilized progress when they had a tribal constitution— independent of each other, yet, as occasion required, confederating for defensive rather than for aggressive purposes. There was at least no such centralisation of power as was even then attained on the lower Euphrates. Directly, they were secured from attack by the long trackless desert on their east, being assailable only by the circuitous route from the north, along the very same line which guided Abraham's migration, and was the route of all subsequent invasions of Palestine from the East.

Supposing then that Abraham and the Abrahamites retired before the pressure of a mighty power, leaving their original settlements in order to preserve their racial and religious independence, how were they bettered by the course which their migration took, or by the point to which it was directed, and in which for

generations it ended? The answer seems to be this. They were now among those who were not strong enough to suppress them, who were too divided to prove their destruction and yet strong enough to make them feel that they held their place by a precarious tenure. In Babylonia the contest was hopeless. The odds were too great. In Palestine the conditions were more equal. Still they required to walk warily. The consciousness of power was necessarily combined with the consciousness of weakness, and this furnishes a key to much of Abraham's history in the land of Promise, as well as to that of Isaac and Jacob—to their alternate boldness and submissiveness. Though for long it was to them the land of the stranger, it still remained to them the land of Promise. They ever preserved the hope of being supreme, where they were now only tolerated. By ways which they knew not God at last brought them to the realisation of their hope.

Another circumstance worthy of consideration is the special adaptation of Palestine for the occupation of a race which was destined to be the depository of religious truth rather than of secular power, and to perform so unique a part in the conservation and develop-

ment of true religion. While religion and nationality were inseparably conjoined, it was necessary that nationality should be placed in conditions favourable to its preservation. No country could have been better suited for such a purpose, especially in the circumstances of the times of old. It was naturally a stronghold, a country fortified by nature. It afforded singular advantages for defence, while it was as singularly destitute of advantages for aggression. Too small and secluded to be a menace to the world at large, it was wonderfully adapted to be the seat of a defensive position, giving every advantage towards the preservation of a national existence and independence, which embodied a great undying principle. We may find a parallel in Greece, hemmed in by sea and mountain, able to repel the Persian invasions from the East, and illustrious on account of the glorious memories of Marathon, Thermopylæ, and Salamis, through which that minute point of European geography was conserved as the locality where the human intellect was to be developed to its highest pitch. We may compare Palestine also with that almost equally secluded Italy, and that Rome on the banks of the Tiber, which was

destined to reduce a world to its obedience, to be the great representative of law, system, and order, amid the political chaos of a much later age, and to exercise, like Greece and Palestine, to the present day a potential influence in the affairs of the world. So much does locality enter as a factor into that which produces great and permanent influence on the history of the race.* May we not see the conjunction of Divine and human in the country chosen by Abraham for the object of his migration? We can hardly attribute the direction of his route to a far-seeing human prescience. Such a theory would involve an anticipation scarcely conceivable, even in the case of a far more advanced social and political experience than can be imagined possible at such a date and in such circum-

*We may be excused in pointing to a similar instance in the case of our native Britain, secluded from the vast world areas, from the European, Asiatic, African, American, and Polynesian portions of the globe, yet possessing world-wide influence, either directly, or through that Anglo-Saxon race, which seems fated to preponderate in the present and in the immediate future.—France cast out Calvin, and he became a citizen of Geneva. From that centre came Presbyterianism, a Church theory of no mean influence throughout the modern world—the old controversy being revived as between canonical Scripture with its impregnable support of Presbyterianism, and Tradition with its Episcopal development.

stances. Nor is the hypothesis tenable which would resolve the result into that of favouring human or natural causes. If the locality conditioned the future importance of the race which occupied it, why did the primeval Canaanites fail to fill the places which the Jews afterwards filled? Why did the Phœnicians fail equally to fill a similar position? They were not without enterprise. They predominated in the commerce which joined the Eastern and Western worlds in the remote historical ages. They gave letters to the first civilised nations of the European West. They spread their colonies along the Mediterranean shores, in North Africa, in South Europe, and in the Islands which lay between the two. If natural locality be regarded as the principal cause of national importance, then certainly they might have been expected to take the first place. Yet it was not so. They had all the advantages, and more, of the Abrahamic race, and yet their history closed in discomfiture, notwithstanding a long period of prosperity and promise. On the other hand the Jewish race, in spite of periods of fearful adversity, made its world-long mark on human history; and, even to the eye which sees nothing but the natural,

seems destined to perpetuation and a glorious consummation. What can adequately account for such a singular state of circumstances except the Scripture theory of a special Divine Providence? The problem which history presents, finds its only satisfactory solution in a Divine factor, working through, and by, natural or human conditions of themselves insufficient for the explication of the results attained or expected. Phœnicia, with all its local advantages, equal at least to those of the Jews, and with commercial sources of national wealth and prosperity superior to what they, a rural, agricultural race, enjoyed—Phœnicia ran its course, and underwent its decline and fall, long before Jewish nationality succumbed to the power of external foes. In the preservation of the Jewish nationality, through so long a period, and in its undying vitality as a religious representative, we must see the finger of Jehovah, the Divine element in the affairs of the world.

But, while placed in a situation thus affording security for national independence and religious freedom, the Hebrews occupied also a position favourable for resistance to, and protest against, the greatest systems of false religion in the ancient world—

Babylonian Polytheism on the East, Egyptian idolatry on the South, and Phœnician religious perversion with its propaganda, on the West. No doubt for many ages the position of the race was defensive rather than aggressive. The Abrahamic and Mosaic system of exclusiveness was adapted more for the conservation than the propagation of true religion; but as ages rolled on, and brought new terrestrial conditions in their train; as Europe began, under Alexander the Great and his successors, to assert predominance over Asia and the East; and as the world-embracing empire of Rome extended its bounds so as to bring all the civilized world under its imperial sway, the locality of Palestine emerged into more importance as a centre of religious influence. That influence was not so much now political as religious—a leaven which leavened the multifarious views brought into contact and collision, preparatory to that great fusion of which Christianity was the consummation, and of which Judaism was the pioneer. Can Epicurean fortuitousness satisfactorily account for this? The human conditions, as the event proves, were favourable to this result. But is the fact explicable

by merely human considerations? Was Abraham so prescient as to forecast this great and glorious development? Shall we find any sufficient cause short of the Divine?

The great interest of Abrahamism is concentrated in Abraham himself. His personality so towers aloft as to make us forget that he was the leader of a tribe, as well as the founder of a nation. He established no new system of religion. He laid down no code of laws. He gave forth no detailed expression of religious doctrine. He was no prophet in the after-meaning of the word. He was no herald or preacher, labouring to bring over others to his views, and seeking to increase adhesion to his party. But one great religious truth he did champion, the existence, the power, of the one living and true God. And that he championed by his life, by his migration. One grand religious principle or feeling he impersonated and emphasised, and that was faith. His knowledge may have been vague, indefinite, and scanty even in regard to the most elementary truths of religion. Scripture is silent, or almost so, as to the details of his religious knowledge. That he was far from faultless the sacred narrative does not

seek to conceal. Many blemishes marred the purity and uprightness of his life. But through all, and in all that is recorded of him, faith shines forth as his distinctive characteristic, sorely tried, sometimes stumbling, yet never failing to gain the ultimate victory. His faith soared no higher, perhaps, than the expectation of a temporal inheritance for his seed in the land where he wandered as a stranger, while Christian faith looks to an inheritance incorruptible and unfading. But none the less is he the person from whom a new start is made in the development of religion. As Adam was father of mankind, upright, and retaining the image of God even when fallen; as Noah was found true and constant when all besides proved degenerate, degraded, and ripe for destruction, so is Abraham the "father of the faithful." As such he is not only embalmed in the traditions of the East, preserving there an undying memory, but he is so also in the pages of Scripture as the prototype of that religious faith which reaches its climax in Christianity, and shall only pass away when it merges into vision. He is especially illustrative of a faith, which not only includes his own race, "whose were the promises" in

a special sense, but includes the Gentiles also—all the families of the earth. He is not only Abram, the lofty father, but Abraham, the father of the multitudes, “who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken,—so shall thy seed be.” He is, therefore, not the hero of a race, but the representative of all mankind, of all who shall rise from the ruins of the fall, and attain the dignity to which restored humanity is destined.

So representative, so inclusive is Abraham. Yet the only religious institution with which his period is associated, the covenant of Circumcision, points to a contrary, narrowing tendency. The circumstances of the time demanded separation and exclusion, required a wall of partition to be raised between the truth and the influences which might wholly have overwhelmed and obliterated it. Here we see the Divine influence working through the human, God condescending to take account of temporary conditions. Yet when God’s final intention is fully displayed, it is seen that means pass away, and the end alone remains. The temporary gives way to the eternal,

the old man is put off, the new man is put on, and all ends in the abolition of distinctions, preferences, and partialities. Primeval equality is more than restored, and human equality is raised to that higher level, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, Circumcision nor Uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

diluvian period, we may presume that man used that unlawfully which is now accorded to him lawfully. It may be regarded as a temporary concession on the part of God to inveterate human habit, where no natural or essential ground existed to make it necessarily a sin; as when our Lord explains the grounds on which Divine authority seemed to countenance or permit a violation of the natural and Divine law of marriage—"Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." Of course there is no natural impropriety in the use of flesh for the food of man. The total (implied) restriction of primeval times and the partial restriction of Mosaism, are entirely removed by Christianity, at once the most Divine and the most human development of religion. It pronounces against all such restrictions—"Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." In Nature there is no prohibition. For a time, and for special reasons doubtless, abstinence was commanded; but, as we have seen in other instances, the first and the last stages of Reve-