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## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### Thoughts on Theology.

No. VIII.

#### THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION.

##### Historical Notes.

My Dear Sir,—

Before proceeding to the discussion of the peculiarities of the Mosaic Dispensation, I propose to furnish some historical notes.

1. The deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt was an illustrious manifestation of the divine faithfulness, power, and mercy; and the miracles by which it was accompanied were worthy of the event. The introduction of new arrangements in the moral administration of God not only warrants but requires miraculous attestation. This is the only preservative from imposture.

2. All the circumstances attendant on the journey through the "great and terrible wilderness" were admirably adapted to instruct and impress the Israelites, and to fit them for the novel situation in which they were placed. They were God's host, travelling under his immediate guidance, sustained by his direct and daily interposition, honoured by the constant presence of the symbols of his Providence, and favoured with opportunities of receiving divine directions on all occasions of difficulty and danger.

3. The new order of things was established by God himself, when he descended to Sinai amid awful thunder and lightnings, and "the whole mount quaked greatly." The law given through Moses comprised the following particulars:—1. A compendium of religious and moral duty, called the ten commandments. 2. Ordinances of divine worship. 3. Rites and ceremonies of various kinds. 4. A code of statutes for national use. 5. Precepts relating to personal conduct, and the relationships of domestic and social life.

4. The dispossession or expulsion of the inhabitants of Palestine, and the location of the Israelites in that country, displayed the justice of God in the punishment of sin, and his faithfulness to his promises. Centuries before, the Lord had said to Abram, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates;" but the fulfilment of the word was delayed, because "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." When the measure of that iniquity was complete, judgment took effect, and the righteousness of God was vindicated.

5. The subjection of the ancient possessors of Palestine was not fully accomplished, however, till the time of David. The history of the times of the Judges indicates a rude, unsettled state of affairs, and very imperfect obedience to the laws of God. The exact sequence of events is uncertain, and the chronology is clogged with difficulties.

6. Entire possession of the land was obtained by David. His reign was not only distinguished by military glory, but also by firm and prudent management of the affairs of state, and by sundry additions to the forms of divine service and the ecclesiastical arrangements (if they may be so called), for which, it is to be presumed, he had special authority, being himself a prophet, and having other prophets associated with him in the work. See 1 Chron. xxiii. 5.; 2 Chron. xxix. 25, 26.; Nehemiah xii. 36.; Amos vi. 5. The ark was removed by him to Mount Zion, and placed in a tabernacle erected by him there; but the Mosaic tabernacle was pitched at Gibeon. 2 Sam. vi. 12, 17; 1 Chron. xvi. 39; 2 Chron. i. 3. What became of it afterwards is not known.

7. Solomon's reign glowed with unexampled splendour. The erection of the temple, under the express sanction of God—the marvellous wisdom of the king—the extent of his dominions—the profound peace enjoyed—the flourishing commerce—and the honour paid to the monarch by other sovereigns—conspired to invest that epoch with glory which was never surpassed in any subsequent period of Israelitish history.

8. Solomon's last days were beclouded by sin. A sad reverse occurred under his son and successor, Rehoboam, whose outrageous conduct provoked a rebellion, which issued in the separation of the ten tribes. The apostasy of those tribes was the natural consequence, and that issued, as naturally, in their punishment, by transportation into Assyria. Previously to that event they had been governed by a succession of wicked kings, whose reigns were for the most part short and troubled.

9. But even in Judah the tendency to declension was constantly manifest. The people loved the revellings and licentiousness which have been always connected with idolatry, and were perpetually forsaking the service of Jehovah, or endeavouring to maintain an unhallowed combination between his worship and that of idol-gods. Prophets warned them, and they professed repentance. Pious kings induced them to renew the covenant with the Lord, and their efforts were followed by remarkable revivals—as in the times of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah; but at length the flood of iniquity burst every barrier, and "the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

10. The Babylonish captivity was a public manifestation of divine justice, and proved an effectual cure of the disease under which the people had so long laboured. Idolatry disappeared from Palestine. In the restoration at the appointed time, the rebuilding of the temple, and the re-establishment of the worship, laws, and institutes of the Jewish Commonwealth, the truth and mercy of the Most High were gloriously displayed.

11. During the whole period, from the time of Samuel to that of Malachi, the succession of prophets was maintained, so that the people enjoyed the advantages arising from the constant presence of an inspired teacher. With Malachi, the gift of prophecy ceased. The following is the order of succession, adopting Dr. Hales's chronology:—

| Name                        | B. C. | 1152—1072 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Samuel                      |       | 1152—1072 |
| David                       |       | 1070—1030 |
| Nathan                      |       | 1057—1030 |
| Gad                         |       | 1032      |
| Solomon                     |       | 1030—990  |
| Abijah (1 Kings xi. 29.)    |       | 995       |
| Iddo                        |       | 990—970   |
| Shemaiah (2 Chron. xi. 2.)  |       | 990—973   |
| Azariah (2 Chron. xv. 1.)   |       | 956       |
| Hanani (2 Chron. xvi. 7.)   |       | 934       |
| Elijah                      |       | 923—907   |
| Elisha                      |       | 919—850   |
| Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 8.)  |       | 909       |
| Jahaziel (2 Chron. xx. 14.) |       | 908       |
| Jehu (2 Chron. xix. 2.)     |       | 911—904   |
| Jonah                       |       | 840       |
| Hosea                       |       | 793—725   |
| Amos                        |       | 785       |
| Isaiah                      |       | 760—709   |
| Obed (2 Chron. xxviii. 9.)  |       | 740       |
| Micah                       |       | 750—700   |
| Nabum                       |       | 711       |
| Joel                        |       | 696—660   |
| Zephaniah                   |       | 630       |
| Jeremiah                    |       | 626—583   |
| Huldah                      |       | 621       |
| Habakkuk                    |       | 610       |
| Obadiah                     |       | 599       |
| Ezekiel                     |       | 593—572   |
| Daniel                      |       | 569—534   |
| Haggai                      |       | 520       |
| Zechariah                   |       | "         |
| Malachi                     |       | 420       |

Nameless prophets are referred to in the following passages:—1 Kings xiii. 20, 22, 35—43, xviii. 4, xix. 1; 2 Kings xxiii. 2; 2 Chron. xxv. 15.

12. The Jews endured great sufferings and violent persecutions on various occasions, during the period between the return from Babylon and the coming of the Saviour, especially under Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. The accounts of their valiant resistance, under Judas Maccabæus, and of the subsequent events, form highly interesting chapters in the world's history.

13. The progress of religion cannot be spoken of so satisfactorily. By the establishment of synagogues the word of God became more extensively known among the people; but "the traditions of the elders" obscured its glory, and almost destroyed its influence. Long before the advent of the Redeemer, the number of the truly pious had become distressingly small. The bulk of the people were plunged in formalism and indifference.

14. Great numbers of the Jews remained

in Babylon, some of whom travelled to the farthest East. A Jewish colony had existed in Egypt from the time of the captivity.—Commerce attracted many to different parts of the Roman empire. These circumstances connected with the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, occasioned the knowledge of God, so far as it was then revealed, to be spread abroad to a wide extent, and prepared the way for the introduction of Christianity.

15. Having rejected the Messiah, and endeavoured to destroy his church, the Jews exposed themselves to the just displeasure of the Almighty, and "wrath came upon them to the uttermost." The design of the Mosaic dispensation also was accomplished. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, the abrogation of the old economy, which occurred virtually at the death of the Saviour, actually took effect, since it was no longer possible to carry on its services, the temple being demolished, and the sacred vessels and utensils carried away.

16. The following is the chronology of the Mosaic Dispensation, according to Dr. Hales.

| B. C.     | Event                                    |
|-----------|--|
| 1728.     | Birth of Moses.                          |
| 1648.     | Exodus of the Israelites.                |
| 1603.     | Death of Moses. Entry into Canaan.       |
| 1582.     | Death of Joshua.                         |
| 1406.     | Deborah and Barak.                       |
| 1359.     | Gideon.                                  |
| 1253.     | Jephthah.                                |
| 1182.     | Samson's death.                          |
| "         | Eli.                                     |
| 1152.     | Samuel called to be a prophet.           |
| 1110.     | Saul.                                    |
| 1080.     | David killed Goliath.                    |
| 1072.     | Death of Samuel.                         |
| 1070.     | Accession of David.                      |
| 1030.     | Solomon.                                 |
| 1020.     | Dedication of the temple.                |
| 990.      | Revolt of the ten tribes.                |
| 719.      | Captivity of the ten tribes.             |
| 586.      | Babylonish Captivity.                    |
| 553.      | Belshazzar's feast.                      |
| 536.      | Return of the Jews under Jerubabel.      |
| 516.      | The second Temple finished.              |
| 457.      | Journey of Ezra to Judæa.                |
| 444.      | Nehemiah's first visit to Jerusalem.     |
| 424.      | Nehemiah's second visit.                 |
| 420.      | Nehemiah's reforms.                      |
| 163.      | Judas Maccabæus.                         |
| 63.       | Jerusalem taken by Pompey.               |
| A. D. 70. | Jerusalem taken by Titus, and destroyed. |

Yours truly,  
J. M. CRAMP.

Acadia College, May 12, 1868.

For the Christian Messenger.

### The Power of the Pulpit.

No. 2.

Two causes have been assigned for the alleged decline of the power of the pulpit. The first is that it had almost ceased to use any direct influence in relation to politics.—But it has been already shown that the indirect influence of the pulpit, from the character of much of its teachings, must have a powerful effect on every department of life including politics. Without dwelling upon another particular, which gives great additional influence to ministers, the confidence they enjoy, and the freedom and frequency of the domestic visits they pay through the extensive circles with which they each come in contact, I shall proceed to facts in support of what some may think the startling assertion that as regards the great political changes of the last fifty years, the pulpit has had more to do with their origin and consummation than the press. Of those political changes the two most important ones effected in Great Britain have undoubtedly been the Emancipation of the slaves and the repeal of the Corn Laws. It would not be difficult to show that there was a time in the history of the agitation of each of these measures when nearly the whole of the press of the united kingdom was opposed to its being enacted, and that with the exception of a few leading men, their only public advocates were ministers. The writer of this article is not old enough to recall, though he is well convinced of the tone

of the press at the time Clarkson was mobbed in Liverpool, and Knibb lampooned in London. But he can distinctly remember what was the spirit of the newspapers when early in the history of the League, Cobden assembled at Manchester, nearly five hundred ministers of all denominations to give their public and hearty endorsement of free trade. In the United States perhaps no subjects have agitated society and put to the test the strength of political parties and institutions more than the Slave question and the Liquor traffic. The former culminated in civil war and the establishment in the minds of the victorious of a purpose that will not dally with a recreant President, but thrusts him out of its way by impeachment. Who can forget how unanimously at the inception of the late conflict a large part of the press in the States denounced with more truth than elegance, Exeter Hall as the great primary cause of the trouble that had come upon their country. However false to its duty, much of the pulpit in the neighboring Republic was, and is, in this matter, it has been chiefly owing to the influence of the faithful part of it that the public sentiment and law of the nation have at last recognized the colored race as human beings with human rights, and not mere chattels.—As respects Temperance legislation it is still opposed by the whole press with the exception of that portion of it which is under ministerial influence, and its slow but sure march to the victory it is destined to win will yet prove another great demonstration of the power of the pulpit.

The second cause given in explanation of the alleged decline of the pulpit is, that oratory has ceased to influence men as it once did; that it is no longer what is said, but what is written, not what men hear, but what they read that now guides their opinions and actions. A more gratuitous assumption, or one more utterly opposed to both philosophy and facts, can scarcely be conceived. It is not too much to say that, while human nature remains what it is, oratory will never lose its power. The world has doubtless seen greater orators than any now living, but it is doubtful if public speaking ever influenced public opinion more directly and powerfully than at the present time. Oratory is one of the few things that have survived all changes. Nor is there any reason to believe it will lose its attractiveness and importance, while the sympathetic influences that man exerts upon man through personal presence, mind, character and conviction and all the indefinable charms of eloquence remain what they are and ever have been. So long will an interview be more than a letter, a lecture than an essay, a speech than an article, and oratory than reading.

There is another element in connection with public speaking besides that of the speaker, it is that of the audience. A congregation or assembly is something more than the sum total of the individuals who compose it.—Strange as it may seem the same thing will produce a totally different effect addressed to the same persons privately from what it would in a public assembly. Stranger still, we read what we know to have been a public speech with a very different feeling from what we do anything that we are aware was not spoken but written. So far from its being true that printing has supplanted public speaking. Never before was the latter so abundant and popular both with the public and its teachers. Some of the ablest writers of the age such as Froude and Professor Goldwin Smith have taken to the platform to obtain increased facility and power in reaching the minds of their fellow-countrymen. In no age of the world has oratory achieved more marked triumphs. A single speech of Webster's postponed civil war for a quarter of a century. A single speech of Bright's decided that England should not recognise the Southern confederacy. A single speech of M. Thier's compelled the despotic emperor of France to re-shape his policy. A single speech of Mr. Gladstone's has settled the fate of the Irish Church. What articles, essays, or books have in our day achieved triumphs like these. Neither can it be said that the oratory of the pulpit has sunk into inferiority compared with that of a secular nature. No living layman can command such audiences as assemble weekly on both sides of the Atlantic. Nor is it difficult to name sermons whose effect has been