

Sermons:

Apologetic

Doctrinal

Miscellaneous



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SERMONS.

SERMONS:

APOLOGETIC, DOCTRINAL AND
MISCELLANEOUS.

Comment and
BY
REV. C. R. VAUGHAN, D. D.,
OF THE SYNOD OF VIRGINIA.

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USES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

FIRST SERMON.

“Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”—JOHN v. 39.

THE recognition of a God is not merely reached by a process of reasoning; it is an intuitive act of the human understanding. There is a manifestation of power which presses instantly on the perceptions of sense which carries the assertion of the power manifested irresistibly to every sound intelligence. This mysterious fountain of manifested power, intelligence, and moral feeling is not directly apprehended by any sense; it is not immediately seen or heard, or felt, any more than the maker of a machine is directly seen in the work which manifests his workmanship; yet the intervention of a workman is irresistibly perceived in the work of his hands. In like manner the existence of a God is so affirmed and expressed in the grand structures of the universe that, from the most degraded to the most enlightened of the human race, his existence is accepted as an axiom. It is never disputed except where the intellect has been warped by false theories of philosophy or debauched by moral causes which have made the grand conception intolerable to the consciousness of guilt.

That such a being as the maker of the universe should be able to communicate with the intelligent creature he has placed here on the earth by distinct and definite verbal expressions, if he chooses to do so, has never been seriously questioned, except as a mere speculation, until modern days. It is now asserted with the deliberate and earnest purpose of finally

excluding the theory of any divine communication from all credit or influence in human society. Hitherto, to the strong common-sense intuitions of the human race, it did seem so absurd to suppose that God should create any creature of any kind, and not to be able to reach such creature under the conditions of his being, that few had the hardihood to dispute a proposition very nearly if not wholly self-evident. The old scornful reply of the Psalmist to the skeptics of his day seemed to be provoked by the reckless assertion, "He that formed the eye, shall not he see; he that formed the ear, shall not he hear?" In like manner, the inquiry might come back upon those advanced lights of modern wisdom, who have declared that the universe reveals force, but no origin or seat of that force, and those who have discovered and declared that the constitution of the human mind presents an invincible obstacle to any inspiration from God, and any communication of knowledge from him—he that gave man speech, shall he not be able to speak with him? How could he know that it was possible to give speech to man unless he knew what speech was previous to the grant? The denial of verbal inspiration in late years has assumed a variety of forms; but they all vanish when brought face to face with the simple fact that God can talk—that he is not a dumb being—and that whatever shade of meaning he may choose to impart, he is able exactly to express. It is humiliating to have formally to discuss such an issue. This power of verbal communication with his talking creature does not compel the Creator to any one mode of verbal manifestation of himself or his deliverances. His declaration guarantees the absolute truth of every statement; but so far as the method of his communication is concerned, it depends upon the purpose immediately in view. When he speaks to convey information for the immediate guidance of the creature he speaks in plain didactic phrase,

but the intentional obscurities of symbol and prophecy demonstrate his sovereignty over the mode and extent of his verbal communications.

So important to man, in his ignorance of the future and of the principles of the divine government in its dealings with the race as rebels against its laws, is clearness and sufficiency of information, that every form of religion which has obtained among mankind has provided for some verbal communication from God. The temples of the classic paganism uttered their oracles in words, and whatever of obscurity was involved in their deliverances was due to the ignorance of the managers of the scene which needed to be covered up as far as possible. The priesthood of old Egypt and Assyria brought the messages of the gods in formal phrase. It was needful that the communication should be in words; the inspiration must be verbal. There is something inconceivably striking in the conception: God speaking to man! Even more striking than all the old mystic ravings of the Pythoness on the steep of Delphos is the account given in the Old Testament scriptures of the mode in which God gave audible utterance to words intended for human ears. They speak of it as "a still small voice," low, distinct, sweet-toned, and full of mysterious power, before which the human receiver of the message bowed with covered head in inconceivable reverence and awe. No other attitude was apparently possible; surely no other attitude was becoming. Conceding God to have spoken, no presumption could mount higher than to be heedless of his speech. Conceding him to have spoken at large—at various times, in many forms, in all the accepted methods of expressing earnestness, solicitude for human attention, and profound apprehension of the importance of what he had to communicate—conceding God to have thus spoken, as is conceded in allowing, as thousands of utterly indifferent minds do, the scriptures

of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the presumption and the peril of refusing to obey the commandment of the text—"Search the scriptures"—cannot be over-estimated. The guilt of such an individual contempt is only surpassed by the far more presumptuous and deadly guilt which attaches to a formal attempt on the part of any church or state power to prohibit obedience to the command. Both these forms of this presumptuous sin are perpetually committed. There is nothing in which the ordinary man of the world feels himself endowed with a broader warrant to act as he pleases than in the contemptuous neglect of his Bible. While the Church of Rome has absolutely prohibited the use of the scriptures by the masses of the people, except to an extremely limited extent and under conditions determined by her own authority, and has, in addition to this prohibition of her own, added the prohibition of government police, wherever she has been able to secure it for the purpose. Both of these forms of resistance to the order of the text are clearly in open conflict with the will of Christ plainly expressed. He commands, "Search the scriptures." The worldling declines to obey, the papal body also declines, with many an elaborate argument to show the lack of wisdom in the command, and both stand convicted of resistance to the law of the King as laid down in the words of the text. To expose the guilt of this refusal to search the scriptures let us dwell briefly on a few plain considerations.

1. Let us look first to the position and character claimed for themselves by the holy scriptures. It is plain that their own definition of their own objects, uses and designs must be decisive. This is only to say that the God who gave them has a right to say what use he will have made of the revelation he gives, and who shall use the record of his words. The uses to be made of the inspired record are several-fold, and in each

use authorized to be made, the importance of so employing them is inestimable, and whatever party is warranted to use them possesses a right incapable of change or qualification by any power on earth.

The first of these characters ascribed to themselves by the sacred writings is their claim to belong to the appointed means of grace. God himself is the only Saviour: no power but his own is able to do this work. He might, if he had so pleased, have accomplished it simply by the direct and exclusive exertion of his own will and power, without requiring the concurrent action of any other being, or the employment of any concurrent instrumental means. If he chooses to adopt the latter scheme, he has the right to prescribe the means or instruments to be used, and to assign whatever function or effect he may see fit to each appointed ordinance. He may so condition the exercise of his own and only efficacious power on the instrumental means as that the use of the instrument will infallibly carry the employment of the power. Or, he may appoint the use of the instrument to be simply concurrent with the use of his own power, but as in no way so conditioning his power as to subject it to the will of the human user of the means and remove it from his own absolute control. But whatever function may be assigned to the appointed ordinance, the appointment of such ordinance and the positive requirement of its use forever settles the question both in regard to the ordinance itself and the question as to who is to use it. Any interference on the part of any other party, either to change an ordinance or to qualify the persons who are entitled to employ it, is the presumption and the inconceivable guilt of interfering with the legislative authority of the Almighty God himself. Now the scriptures say of themselves that "these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might

have life through his name." They say that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "Born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." "The law is a school-master to bring us unto Christ." Believers are exhorted to "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." These testimonies are clear, positive, and peremptory. Their meaning is so plain that it cannot be made plainer. They teach that inasmuch as salvation is by faith, and faith must be based upon truth, the Word of God, which contains all his testimony, is one of the chiefest of the means of grace. They teach that as faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, it is at the peril of faith, and consequently at the peril of salvation, to refuse the use of the Scriptures. To neglect them is to assume the responsibility of neglecting a necessary means of life; it is equivalent to self-destruction. To prohibit the use of the scriptures to any party or person who is entitled, under the grants of the divine law, to use the appointed means of grace is equivalent to wilful murder on the soul. It is a crime too fearful to be described in terms adequate to its guilt to take away even one bare chance of life from a drowning man. But who can conceive the criminality of taking away from the dying sinner one of the appointed means for his salvation? Such conduct is not only robbery of man, but rebellion against God. It is not only to interfere with man's right, but to prevent his duty. It is not only to diminish his chances of salvation, but it is the awful presumption of modifying and changing the prescriptions of God himself. No words can depict the color of this iniquity.

The second teaching of the scriptures in relation to themselves is that they are an all-sufficient standard of truth. "To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this it is because there is no light in them." "They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." All scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. "Search the scriptures: for they are they which testify of me." The appeal of Christ himself, in all his conflicts with the rabbis of Israel, was always to the scriptures. "It is written," was his regular formula. This procedure was absurd, if the scriptures were unintelligible and not an effective standard of truth. The apostles all preached, "reasoning out of the scriptures." When the apostles preached in Berea, those who heard them there searched the scriptures to see if the things told them were true. They brought even the teaching of the apostles to the test of scripture, and were heartily commended for doing it. They were not only praised, but rewarded for it; for they were not only pronounced more noble than the hearers in other places, but it is said in close connection with the account of their study of the Word of God, "Therefore many of them believed." The significance of all this testimony of the scriptures concerning themselves is unmistakable; it is the voice of God himself declaring that his word is an available and authoritative standard of truth, gainsay it who will.

This is the great fundamental principle of Protestant Christianity. It is impeached by Papists, Puseyites, Infidels and High Churchmen of many a varied degree. In whatever shape it may come it is a disparagement of the Word of God which carries with it an enormous responsibility. Some disparage the scriptures, because they would be pleased to see

their influence entirely overthrown; these are the infidels and free-thinking scientists. The religious classes who are engaged in the same effort to discount the value of the written word do it because they wish to exalt into a mysterious importance the function of the visible church, represented in the office of the ministry, or rather the office of the priesthood, as they delight to call it. The function of an authoritative interpreter would greatly enhance the power and dignity of the person holding the office. Such a function in the ministry would have made the conduct of the Bereans an offence or an impertinence instead of a subject of praise and reward. But the gratification of clerical ambition was too tempting a snare; and the Christian commonwealth has been disturbed for centuries by the arrogant claim of an imperious ministry to dictate the faith of the servants of God. The fundamental basis of this arrogant and most dangerous claim is the impeachment of the scriptures as a standard of faith. It does not matter at all that God has pronounced it sufficient. They assert that actual experience has proved it to be incompetent. They assert that the Bible is unintelligible; that it is hard to be understood; that men will wrest their teachings to their own destruction. Consequently an infallible interpreter is necessary in order to determine the meaning of scripture. They affirm that the scriptures themselves assert their own incompetence, and pronounce themselves hard to be understood. They declare the obscurity of scripture is confessed in the admitted appointment of teachers to instruct in it. Moreover, there can be no such thing as faith except under the official decision of a duly authorized expounder. The scriptures settle no controversy, but rather multiply divisions. The only way to unity of faith is by the absolute submission of the intellect and conscience of every individual to the guidance of the official interpreter—the ministry of the church ap-

pointed of God to arbitrate and determine the construction of the written word. This is the general line of argument pursued in this audacious attempt to defeat the legislation of God concerning his revealed will, and establish the tyranny of the ministry of the kingdom. Resistance to the Scriptures as the appointed standard of faith is necessarily the establishment of the clergy in supreme dominion over the faith of his servants. The whole base and unprincipled endeavor is founded upon a series of sophisms unworthy of a rational understanding. Let us expose them in a brief detail.

To the allegation that the Bible is hard to be understood it is enough to meet it as a general assertion with a pointed denial. It is true of some doctrines of the scriptures, considered in themselves; but the assertion of the doctrine is plain enough. Peter said that Paul had taught some things hard to be understood; but his teaching of them was clear and positive. It is easy to understand that vegetation grows, but it is impossible to understand the actual process of its growth. It would be a plain sophism to deny the fact of vegetable growth, because the mystery of its processes was impenetrable. The doctrines of the Trinity and the Divine predestination are plainly taught in the scriptures, but the mystery in the things taught is beyond our comprehension. Where is the justice or the sense of confounding the two things, and making the mystery in the one the same thing in the other? The prophecies of the Scriptures are in some cases made intentionally obscure; types and symbols are also involved in a degree of mystery; but both are penetrable by study and knowledge. It is false logic to attribute to any whole what is true and only true of some of its parts. It is one of the established instances of sophistry to impute to a whole what is only true of a part. It is equally a violation of candor to construe difficulties which may be met, just as difficulties

on any other subject are met—as requiring a supernatural and infallible agency to meet them. Difficulties in science or literature are solved by repeated study—by collateral knowledge—and by the aid of teachers who are not infallible. The difficulties of the scriptures, where such difficulties exist, are provided for in the same general way, and the provision is sufficient. The teaching office of the Christian ministry has a rational function, without assuming a supernatural qualification, and taking upon themselves a dangerous and tyrannical authority to dictate the views of all who seek knowledge at their hands. But in point of fact, so far as the greater part of the revelation from God is concerned, and all the matter necessary to be known—all that is necessary to be believed and done in order, not only to the essential thing of salvation, but to the refined culture of holy habit in the soul, and to its highest degrees—the Word of God is plain and clear. Even a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. From a child Timothy understood the scriptures, being taught, not by an infallible teacher, but by two women, his mother and grandmother, who also understood the writings of the inspired teachers. In the Old Testament, the priests were ordered to assemble the people, men, women, and children, and read to them out of the book of the law. Parents were instructed, under the gravest and most weighty responsibility, to teach the word of the Lord to their child, when they sat down, when they rose up, when they walked by the way, and when they came into their houses. All this legislation implies the judgment of God that his word was not too hard for men and women and children to understand and remember. The truth is, the objection of all the enemies of the Bible is, not that it is too hard to be understood, but too easy to be understood; so inconsistent are many of the cherished views of the objectors. The command to use the cup as well as the loaf

in the sacrament of the Supper is easy enough to understand: the trouble is that it is also easy to understand as condemning the theory and the practice of those who refuse the cup to the people, and reserve it exclusively for the priesthood. The law of God, that a bishop must be the husband of one wife, is easy to understand as approving and requiring the marriage, and condemning the enforced celibacy of the clergy. The command, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them," is easy enough to see condemns and prohibits the worship of images. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" is easy to comprehend as prohibiting the worship of the Virgin and the saints. These are samples of scripture teaching, and they are so plain that even a child can understand them. It is, then, very clear that it is a disingenuous subterfuge to carry over the obscurity which lies upon the symbols of prophecy, and the types of the ceremonial law, and impute it to the scriptures as a whole, and pronounce the whole record unintelligible.

Moreover, this assertion of the general and hopeless obscurity of the scriptures is really an outrageous insult to God himself. He is the admitted author of scripture. He gave it to reveal his will, and teach certain great and important truths for the benefit of the human race. To say that he gave a revelation which could not possibly reveal anything—that his communication was hopelessly unintelligible is to insult him. It is to accuse him of attempting to do a thing, and making a failure. It is to accuse him of folly, in miscalculating his own ability—undertaking to build a house without seeing whether he had sufficient to finish it. It is to reduce and destroy his government over his creature, man, because he was not able to communicate his will and make known his law to him. A doctrine logically involving such consequences as

these is not only silly, but blasphemous. It would be supreme folly to undertake a revelation under impossible conditions. To call such a communication a revelation would be a contradiction in terms. Such a folly is charged upon the only wise God by the necessary, logical structure of the doctrine that the Word of God is unintelligible to the creatures to whom it is sent.

To the allegation that the incompetence of the record to be understood by the masses of mankind is proved by the appointment of a ministry of instruction the reply is obvious. The relation of the private members of the church, or the masses of mankind outside of the church, to the ministry of the Word of God is that of a schoolmaster and his scholars—not that of a master of subjects, and an authoritative dictator of the views which are to be entertained. My right to learn mathematics may be perfect; it may be absolutely independent of the dictum of any party whatever; yet doubtless my progress in mathematical science, which I have a right to undertake alone and without their aid if I choose, will be greatly facilitated by the aid of a good teacher and a good text-book. It would be a monstrous logical blunder to construe such aids to my progress, as implying that I had no right to learn the science of number and figure except as a gracious grant of my mathematical instructor—no right to look into the text-books, except by his permission. A teacher has a useful function entirely apart from a claim to dictate as an infallible interpreter. The scriptures themselves settle the relation of the teaching ministry to the Word of God; they are to “preach the word”; they are to reason out of the scriptures; they are “the helpers of the faith” of God’s people, and not “lords over his heritage.”

Yet further, in refutation of this audacious claim of priestly power—the grant of the scriptures and the right to

use them is a grant to man as such, to man as a sinner needing salvation—not exclusively to man as a believer, not exclusively to the church as an organized body, still less exclusively to the ministry as an order in the church. All the means of grace are placed in the hands of the church, not to be given or withheld from mankind as the church may see fit. She is a trustee under fearful obligations to be faithful to her trust, not the proprietor and lord of the values in her charge. She is bound to carry the gospel and the ordinances to all for whom they are designed; the grant of the offer of pardon and the ordinances and means of grace is to the sinners of the human race; their right to use them is defined in the terms of the grant, and the church has no right either to refuse them altogether or to fix any restriction or limitation on the use of them, except what is restricted in the charter of the grant itself. Some of these means are restricted to the use of the believer, and are intended to promote his growth in grace; others are designed for the unconverted, to lead them to faith, and give them a place among the children. For the church to alter this arrangement, to place any restriction on the use of the means designed either for the believer or the unbeliever, or to refuse them to any one entitled to receive them is a criminal abuse of the highest type of moral iniquity. It is positive rebellion against the Almighty King. It is to betray her awful trust. It is to reach a robber hand into the treasury of grace, and to plunder the lost souls of the human family of their divine inheritance. No crime of the banded devils of the infernal abyss is superior, if equal, to the crime of any church which either refuses to fulfil her divine commission altogether or seeks to condition the use of the ordinances where the divine grant has made no condition, or attempts, by illegitimate assumptions of control over the means of grace, to establish a tyranny over the poor souls for whom Christ

died. That the grant of prayer, the right to attend on the preaching of the gospel, and the use of the scriptures was a grant to man, as such, and as the lost sinner whom the God of all grace was endeavoring to save, is perfectly clear from the text and its immediate connections. To whom were the words "search the scriptures" addressed, and who were bound by the command? The words were addressed, not to his own disciples of any rank or order in the church, but to the Jews—to the very enemies of Christ—to the sinners whom he was seeking to draw into belief in himself and into salvation through him. He was appealing to the various kinds of evidence which proved his claims. He appeals, first, to the testimony of John the Baptist, then to his own miraculous works; then to the voice heard when the Spirit descended upon him at Jordan, and concludes by appealing to the scriptures which they themselves had in their hands. He commands them to search those records; he reminds them of their own avowed confidence in their sacred books, and directs them to seek there for the proof of his claim. The attempt to make it appear that this command was directed to his own disciples is manifestly futile, for both the preceding and succeeding context demonstrates this fact. Concerning those to whom this order was addressed, Christ declares, "Ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believed not;" and again, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" certainly these are not the characteristics of his disciples. It is equally futile to attempt to abate the force of this text, by saying that Christ issued no command in this passage, but only stated the fact that the Jews were accustomed to search their scriptures. Allowing this to be true, and that our Lord did not use the imperative mood in the Greek language, it will make no difference in its bearing on the point at issue. If he does not give a command, he does give a complete

warrant to use the scriptures, and the grant of the warrant is still given to man as such, not to his own disciples; and he still testifies that the search of scripture was effective as a means of leading to faith in himself. Whether the words of the text issue a command or grant a liberty, what party on the broad earth has the right either to disobey the command or to abolish the warrant given by the Divine Head of the church? The presumption in the one case is scarcely distinguishable from the presumption in the other. The guilt in both is immeasurable. It is resistlessly clear that the command—or the warrant, if you will have it to be such—was given to the unbelieving multitudes, and settles the question as to whom the granted privilege or the commanded duty of reading the holy scriptures was given by Christ himself, the Divine Head of the church. Has the human head of the church, even allowing that there is a human head of Messiah's kingdom—has this subordinate official any right to repeal the command, or qualify the warrant of the divine Lord of his own house? Every loyal heart will give an indignant negative to such an inquiry. It is resistlessly clear that the grant of the scriptures, as well as the grant of prayer, and the grant of the right to attend on the preaching of the gospel, is a grant to man as a lost sinner, not exclusively to believers—still less exclusively to any official order in the church. Consequently, the asserted right in the church to restrict the use of this divine grant, or to fetter it with conditions, or to prevent it altogether at her own pleasure, is not only robbery towards man, but it is open rebellion against God. It refuses obedience to positive and plain law, or to permit privilege to be used which he has plainly given. The subterfuges of that audacious body which assumes the right to control absolutely the use of the scriptures are sometimes absolutely puerile. A number of years ago, while a pastor in Lynchburg, Va., I

heard a prelate of the Roman Church, the late Bishop McGill, comment on this text in a public sermon. He said that in these words, "Search the scriptures," Christ could not refer to the New Testament, for it was not yet written. Consequently, there was no command in these words to search the New Testament. He could not refer to the Old Testament, because without the New the Old Testament was an incomplete canon of revelation; and the Saviour was too just and good to refer to an incomplete standard. Consequently, there was no authoritative command here to search the Old Testament. Having thus excluded both books of the scriptures which contain them all, I waited eagerly to hear him explain what scriptures they might be which our Lord commanded to be searched. But no explanation came; he passed on without further remark, and showed how audaciously, even before an assembly of American people, a Popish priest dared to trifle with the intelligence and presume upon the submissive abnegation of common sense by an American audience. He had swept both Testaments out from the grasp of the commandment of Christ, and thus nullified the command; and the only inference left, if his exposition was sound, was that John had falsely represented what Christ did say. John says that he said, "Search the scriptures;" the Romanist prelate says, he did not say search either the Old or the New Testament—in other words, did not say search the scriptures. Who is to be believed, the prelate or the apostle? To say nothing of the poorly disguised design to evade the plain issue presented in the words of Christ, the logic of the adroit artist was surprising. The assertion that the Old Testament was disabled by its incompleteness from being a sufficient standard, and that Christ would have been unkind and unjust to have referred the Jews to it, is at once an absurdity in itself, and a slander upon the Saviour. It is certain that our Lord

did give either a command or a warrant to search the scriptures. The only scriptures recognized by the Jews were the Old Testament. Christ then did refer inquirers to an incomplete standard, and, according to the reasoning of the prelate, did do an unkind and an unjust thing. Such a sweep of his logic was fatal. But it was absurd in another direction: it assumes that no part of a canon is available to teach the will of God until the canon is complete. It may have been formed out of detached and partial communications, made at intervals for hundreds of years, and each portion of the revelation would have remained useless all through the long ages until the last communication was made. Such a conclusion—the necessary conclusion from the position of the prelatie reasoner—is obviously absurd. The command or warrant to read inspired writings was a command to read all inspired writings, even if some of them should be given after the command or warrant were given. A canon may be incomplete in the sense that other inspired books were to be added to it subsequently; yet every inspired book then existing is a complete witness for the whole truth it contains, and its testimony is as complete when first given as it ever can be. It is as good a witness at the beginning as at the end. The mere gathering of detached inspired writings into one collection, and the public endorsement of the whole as a revelation from God does not alter the content of any part of the artificial whole made by the collection, or add to the inspiration of any of the constituent parts. The appeal of our Lord, then, to the Old Testament scriptures was perfectly legitimate; he was nearer to truth and justice in referring the Jews to their own sacred books for proof of his claims than the artful servant of an apostate church in his endeavor to prevent obedience to the Lord's command.

The conclusion from the testimony of the sacred scriptures

is irresistible. The right of the whole human race to read the Word of God, and to hear his voice speaking directly to each individual soul in the very words dictated by the Holy Ghost, is an irrefragible and priceless right of the highest sanctity; it is the gift of the divine Redeemer; and woe be unto any party who attempts to nullify the grant, or to affix conditions to its use which do not appear in the charter of the gift itself.

USES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

SECOND SERMON.

“Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”—JOHN v. 39.

IN resuming the discussion of the right of man as such, or as a lost sinner needing the redemption of grace, to use the Word of God as one of the appointed ordinances, the first remark we submit relates to the indelible responsibility of man himself in the case. No matter what his decision may be in reference to the use of this ordinance, he will stand responsible for it in his own person. Man is a creature of reason and will, and as such he is a responsible being: he can never escape from his responsibility. He is responsible for himself and not another; we are expressly informed that “every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Whether, therefore any man determines to use his right to search the scriptures, or declines to do it, he is and will remain responsible for his decision, whatever it may be. If he decides not to obey the command of the Lord Jesus, and not to use the right conveyed to him by this command or warrant; if he determines to accept, without inquiry or question, the decisions of the church, or the views of any particular religious teacher, or the conclusions of any other party whatever, he does not thereby throw off his personal responsibility. Many are under a delusion upon this point; they are even taught that by thus surrendering their spiritual concerns into the hands of the church, the whole responsibility is thrown off from themselves, and the church as their factor or representative as-

sumes the whole. This hope is utterly delusive; and this traffic in the souls of men is declared by the prophet of the apocalyptic vision to be one of the articles of trade in the mighty Babylon of the apostasy. The transfer can not be made. Responsibility may be shared between two parties who are both under law; but it cannot be transferred from one to the other. When the church assumes to effect this release of the transgressor, and goes security for his ultimate deliverance, she assumes a responsibility of her own of the most appalling character. But the individual who enters into this bargain, and refuses at once to use his own right and to obey the command of the Lord Christ, does not abolish his own indelible responsibility. The interpretation of law and doctrine by the church which he accepts may be the ground of his decision, but that decision is his own: his responsibility for it is indelible. Upon this basis of indestructible personal responsibility, rests the equally inextinguishable personal right of free and uncoerced activity in meeting that responsibility. Since each one is to answer for himself, each one has the undeniable right to choose, under the best lights of his own judgment, the way in which he is satisfied that he can best meet his own liabilities. He has the right to examine for himself all that enters into his case—the law which binds him and the method by which he may escape from the consequences of his sin. No party or power under heaven has the right to coerce his action, and force their views upon him at the expense of his own deliberate convictions. The responsibility inseparable from the free moral personality of the man himself, who is alone to answer for his own liabilities, is, in itself alone, a full vindication of every man's right to obey the command of Christ, and to search the scriptures.

The second remark we submit is that this right to the use of the Word of God is what is called by the philosophy of

morals a perfect right—that is, a right which conveys its grants absolutely, and unrestricted by any grant to any other party. Other parties may have a similar right, and in the same thing: for there is such a thing as common rights. But the right of each tenant in common is good against all other tenants of the right, as completely as if the right was exclusive and not common. This feature in the property confirms the inextinguishable personal responsibility of each individual holder of the common right, for in the case of every such holder the right is under the jurisdiction of moral law. The right is to be used in full conformity with the requirements of absolute moral right. No man is at liberty to abuse the right which has been conferred upon him. The right to use the means of grace is not a right to abuse them. No man may wrest the sacred scriptures, or deal deceitfully with its statements, or pervert its teaching, just because they come into collision with his own prejudices and prepossessions. He is bound to the use of the record in all integrity. He must put no constrained meaning on its words, pervert no assertion, distort no statement, but in all simplicity accept the mind of the Spirit just as he has given it. Thus, and in this species only, is the right to use the scriptures restrained; it is restrained by moral law, and by nothing else. Both of these conceptions—the grant of a common right, and the jurisdiction of moral law over the use of it—are matters of high importance. Common rights are, and must continue to be, incapable of modification by any qualifying right in any other party. The common right to search the scriptures is vested in the unconverted sinner, in the believer, in the organized church as a whole, and in the ministry as an order in the church. All these parties have an equal right to use the scriptures; and as this is a right in common, it settles forever that there is conveyed to no party the faintest shadow of a

claim to abolish, limit, or condition the right of either of the co-possessors of the right. The assertion of the Church of Rome, that the right of the laity to the use of the scriptures is a grant subject to the grant to the church, is but a new form of reasserting a claim already shown to be unfounded. The right to the use of each and all the means of grace which have been designed to bring sinners to comply with the terms of the divine mercy inheres in every sinner to whom the proclamation and the knowledge of the gospel comes; it is a right incapable of restriction, change, or lawful resistance on the part of the church, or any other power in earth or out of it. The right vested in each party to the common privilege is the gift of God, and any claim of superiority in these parties touching the common right is an usurpation, and any interference of any party with any co-possessor is tyranny. The interference of any church or state with the universal franchise of the whole human race in the use of the holy scriptures is an abuse exactly parallel with a claim to prevent prayer to Almighty God, or to listen to the preaching of the gospel. All of these privileges are equally the grant of the eternal Father, and are equally beyond the jurisdiction and restraint of any power in earth or hell. Any attempt to coerce either carries an enormity of guilt which defies the utmost resources of human language to express. It is vain to raise hue and cry, as the whole papal body do, against the dangers of putting the Bible into the hands of the people; *God has done it*, and it is consummate wickedness as well as folly to impeach the grant.

It is objected against this free use of the Bible, that an interpretation by private individual judgment is incapable of giving any assurance of truth—that there is no standard for authenticating any interpretation of the record—and, therefore, that this private construction cannot give any

assured faith in any such interpretation of any passage of Holy Writ. That is to say, when I look into the record, and see that our Lord is repeatedly called God, and from this testimony I infer and accept the divinity of Christ, I can never be certain that he is a divine being. But if a priest tells me that it is so, if he assures me that such is the meaning of scripture when it calls him God, then I can be certain of it. In the one case, it is only my opinion, in the other it is an act of faith. The conclusions are identically the same—the very same truth is presented and accepted in both; yet they are pronounced so much unlike as to justify the profound discrimination which raises one into the dignity of religion, and depresses the other into a mere expression of human weakness. It is obvious that if any difference is to be made, the more dignified term is due to the acceptance of the truth simply on God's say so—not to the acceptance which makes the divine assertion wait upon a human endorsement before any acceptance is allowable. The simple truth is, that as faith is simply believing a thing to be true, faith waits upon that which shows it to be true—that is, upon evidence; and if the evidence reveals a thing to be true, there needs no additional testimony to ensure the truth. If the truth is revealed by any means whatever besides the endorsement of a human interpreter, it is as truly believed, and with as much dignity of faith, as if it had been certified by every pope in the calendar. If the evidence shows it to be true, to believe it requires no additional repeat by human lips to warrant faith. A human teacher may aid in developing the evidence, and thus be serviceable in disclosing the truth; but when the truth is revealed in advance of the testimony of the teacher, his testimony is superfluous. But a blind claim on the part of the teacher to determine by authority, independent of evidence, is not only an impertinence, but can really breed no faith because it

shows no evidence but its own arbitrary dictum. Such a decision may secure a dull, mindless acquiescence which has no intellectual value, and no moral quality except a quality deserving censure; it can breed no real and approvable faith. The only use of an interpreter is to display the evidence; he is a teacher, not a judge determining by authority; and if the evidence comes sufficient in force to reveal the truth without the interpreter, the interpreter is superfluous in certifying the truth. Finally, if the truth needs endorsement, or if the endorsement is a necessary part of the evidence, it does not appear why the endorsement of the Almighty God is not sufficient of itself, and why it must wait upon the imprimatur of a human interpreter before it is entitled to credit. If God is unable to make himself understood, then an interpreter is necessary; but when God commands, "Search the scriptures," and go "to the law and the testimony," it is clear there is no need for an authoritative interpreter to adjudicate and authoritatively announce his meaning.

Moreover, the assertion that there is no standard by which any interpretation by a mere private judgment can be authenticated, is entirely without foundation. There is a standard of authentication to which every interpreter is compelled to resort. Whether the interpreter be a private judgment or the official of a church, the standard of interpretation is the same for both, and is as good for one as the other. The standard for authenticating any interpretation of scripture, no matter by whom made, is, and can only be, the scripture itself; and to demand a standard outside of scripture to determine the teaching of scripture is obviously absurd. If one would know what Shakespeare taught, he must examine what Shakespeare said. To go to some outside publication—to some author who had nothing to do with the expression of Shakespeare's views

—would be absurd. For such an author to assume the right to settle, by his own authority, what Shakespeare taught, and to prohibit all reference to Shakespeare's writings would write himself down as Dogberry desired himself to be. No matter who the interpreter may be, an individual or a church—his object being to settle and certify the meaning of scripture—he is compelled to refer the decision to scripture itself. We must, therefore, take the ground that the inspired records are intelligible; for it would be ridiculous to refer the question as to their teaching to themselves if they were not intelligible. But if they are intelligible at all, they are intelligible to all for whom they were intended; and as they were appointed to be a means of grace to all who are entitled to believe in the Saviour of the world, the conclusion is resistless that they are intelligible to the race generally, and not merely to a certain official class. On the contrary, if they are not intelligible to the general mind, how can the church either authenticate its interpretations, or make them intelligible to the commonalty? The church is not merely to understand the record itself, but to authenticate her views to the masses of mankind. How can she do this, if the records are either kept from the people, or are unintelligible to them? How can they rely on the construction the church puts upon the record? Without imputing anything sinister to the church, how can they know that her views of what the records say are correct, when the masses cannot understand the record? They are compelled logically to take the word of the interpreting church, and that only. But the church fails to authenticate her interpretations when she decides merely by authority. How can she authenticate to another party her views of a record unintelligible to them? Unless the church is inspired to give a new revelation, which would discredit the old one, and logically introduce an absurd endless regressus, it has, on the theory that the scriptures are

unintelligible, become impossible for the church to make an unintelligible record understood of the people, and thus is utterly disabled from authenticating her interpretations. It is manifest that the record must be intelligible, or no constructions of it can be authenticated as certain. It must be intelligible to the common people, or no authentication to them is possible; they must accept blindly the dictum of the church. But if the record is intelligible to those to whom they were given as a means of grace, the only possible standard of authenticating any construction of its contents must be the record itself. No dictum outside of itself can possibly do it. Disputes touching the teaching of any author must be referred to the author himself. If the standard of authenticating the scripture be in itself, and the scripture is intelligible in its deliverances, the standard is as available to one party as another; it is as available to a private understanding as to a church official. Like other records, it will yield more to an understanding coming to its investigation with greater gifts or better facilities; but it will yield something to every inquirer, even to a child like Timothy. It will yield more to the better qualified, and this explains how it is that it may and sometimes has happened that a single mind may secure better results in the study of the scriptures than a whole synod of inferior minds. In such a case as this, the superior weight would justly be with the private personal judgment, and not with the court or council of the church. The idea that a dictum of the church is needful to determine the meaning of scripture is absurd; the church must refer its own construction back to the record in order to rest assured that they are agreeable to the record.

Moreover, there are certain laws fixed in the nature and usage of human words which are operative even in ordinary human minds unconsciously to themselves—operative in cul-

tivated minds consciously, and sometimes learnedly apprehended of themselves, which guard against fanciful and extravagant constructions, and compel a construction governed by the obvious intent of the record itself. For example, figurative expressions are not to be taken literally, nor natural impossibilities construed as possible; and these restrictions on construction are as fully recognized by the common as by the cultivated intellect. When Christ calls himself a door, both classes of intellect understand what he meant without any difficulty. To these rules the private judgment and the church, even the "infallible church," must alike submit; and under the guidance of these rules, when honestly followed, the constructions of either will be equally entitled to respect. But if the private judgment conforms to these rules, and the "infallible church" does not, the construction of the private judgment is entitled to the greater regard. Under these rules, there is no more difficulty in believing, and no more dignity of faith in receiving, like Timothy, the instructions of a grandmother than in accepting the decisions of the whole calendar of popes. Truth is truth, and not only worthy of credit, but obligatory upon faith, no matter what evidence reveals it.

But still objections are urged with persistent energy against the holy scriptures as the rule of faith, although God himself has endorsed it in many forms as both efficient and sufficient. We shall, therefore, confront these objections with the counter objections to the Romanist rule of faith. The Protestant Christian rule of faith is the Word of God alone, interpreted by each seeker of its instructions under the guidance of the usual fixed laws of the construction of human words, and with the aid of that indwelling grace which he is entitled, under the provisions of the covenant of grace, to seek and to expect in the discharge of all his duties, and in all the emergencies of his life and career as a servant of God. On the

other hand, the Roman Catholic rule of faith, instead of this simple and easily available standard of the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is so vast and complicated that it may be fearlessly asserted that probably not one single bishop, priest, or pope in all the long ages of the history of the papal body has ever read the whole of it. The rule comprises several distinct divisions, each of which, except the Bible, comprises vast numbers of documents and volumes, many of them of great size, the perusal of which would be a task beyond the rational energy of any one man. It first specifies, as a part of the rule, the holy scriptures; but not the scriptures as held by the Jews of ancient times, and recognized by the general scholarship of modern times; for, in addition to the old canonical books of the Jews, which make up what is known as the Old Testament, they have added several books never recognized by the Jews as belonging to their sacred inspired writings. The Bible of the papal body is disfigured and dishonored by the addition of whole books which have no claim to inspiration, and stood to the Old Testament, in the hands of the Jews, just as Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, or the *Pilgrim's Progress* stand to the Bible as Protestant Christians now receive it. The books of the Apocrypha, added to the Bible by the Roman Catholic Church, have no right to be there; and in placing them there that church has corrupted the standard of the inspired writings, and fixed upon herself the curse threatened, in the close of the Revelation of St. John, upon any who should add to the Word of God. So that the part of the papal rule which is the least objectionable—the holy scriptures—is so corrupted by unauthorized additions that its authority is seriously impaired. But to the Bible the papal rule adds “the sense of Holy Mother Church”—that is, the construction placed upon the Word of God by the general consensus of the church dispersed through the nations and

through the ages. To discover what this consensus teaches is a task which no man can accomplish. To this is added the rescripts, bulls, and decrees of the popes, numbering more than two hundred and fifty pontiffs, and extending through centuries of time. This enforces on the inquirer at the oracle of the Roman rule of faith, the examination of a mass of documents which makes his task ridiculous. To this is added the decrees of the councils, which are numerous, and the decrees of which give the inquirer another unmanageable mass of documents of enormous magnitude. To this is added the huge volumes of the canon law. To this is added the vast folios of the fathers, and to all these is added the distinct and final constituent of the rule found in the apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions. The rule prescribes that the *unanimous consent* of all these vast and varied testimonies is necessary to the establishment of an article of faith; and until he comes into possession of this unanimous endorsement of a given truth, the inquirer is not at liberty to believe it. The object of all this vast complication of impossible testimonies is to drive the inquirer to the authority of the priesthood, and make him willing to receive whatever they tell him to be the truth. To complete this tyranny over the faith of the people, within the last thirty years, this rule, while nominally it remains unchanged, has been so qualified that it may be considered as greatly simplified, improved, and made practically efficient. After a conflict of centuries in its own bosom over the locality of the composer of controversies—in our own day—the disputed seat of the infallibility, long claimed for the papal body, has been discovered and definitely settled. The Vatican Council of 1870 determined the long-disputed question, and decided that the infallibility of the church was located in the pope alone, who is now fully authorized to settle all questions of faith and morals. It is no longer necessary

to consult Bible, or the records of councils, or the discussions of fathers, or the decisions of dead popes. The Holy Ghost speaks through the Holy Father, and the matter is settled; any appeal to any other source of knowledge has become both cumbersome and needless. Just as the Almighty God would do, if he were now reigning visibly on earth before his ancients gloriously, the Vicar of God has only to issue a note, and all doubt vanishes forever.

It is objected to the Protestant rule that it logically imposes an impossibility on the Protestant inquirer before he can have any rule of faith at all. He must be able to authenticate the whole history and make-up of the canon of scripture before he can be sure that he is coming to a source of any real inspired information. He must be able to trace the origin and history of every book of the Bible, repel all doubts, suspicions, and questionable inquiries about each constituent treatise in the sacred volume, and be able to vindicate by a triumphant argument the right of each one of these treatises to a place in the canon of scripture. Otherwise, he may be receiving, as the lessons of Almighty God, the deliverances of some unknown, merely human teacher. To all this elaborate foolishness it is only necessary to reply that it is imposing a test which is not applied to any similar case in any branch of human affairs—a test which would be scouted as unadulterated nonsense if applied in any similar case. Must the purchaser of a copy of Shakespeare be able to prove all the history of the plays and poems of the great master before he can be rationally sure he is buying the works of the poet and not the works of some one else? Must every citizen of this country be thoroughly posted in the documentary history of the constitution of the United States before he can rationally receive that instrument as indeed the fundamental law of this land? Must every student of law be able to trace back to its

origin in the English Parliament every law in Coke upon Littleton, or in Blackstone's Commentaries, in order to be sure when he consults those celebrated books that he is becoming acquainted with the laws of England—before he can be sure he is not being imposed upon by a false statement touching the laws of that great empire? Assuredly not; on the contrary, the demand for any such preliminary information, in order to the rational acceptance of the constitution of this country or the laws of England, would be scouted as utterly irrational. In like manner the plain unlettered Christian may rely upon his Bible as he relies upon the constitution of his country, or the acknowledged writings of a celebrated writer. It is mere perversity to say that he cannot rationally rely on the universal and undisputed acceptance of such works as we have cited for illustration as an all-sufficient foundation for his personal acceptance of them. This is specially true of the Bible, for that sacred book has been subjected to the most drastic tests that any book in the history of the world has ever been subjected to, and has held its high place through a greater number of centuries, and with a more intelligent endorsement, than any other book. What is there irrational in the acceptance of such a book by the masses of the plain people of the race? Forgeries of such books are impracticable; and if a code of laws for England could be made, the obedience of the English people to those laws could not possibly be forged; and the credit of such a deception could not live for a day under the light of such a fact. The world is not easily deceived in relation to such matters, and where large bodies of men have been deceived, it is either because the compulsion of the sword has been used, or the doctrine taught has given license to passions which are delighted with a religious excuse for indulgence. On the contrary, the holy scriptures have borne high their banner over fields of strife

manned with every weapon of intelligence and learning, and bristling with the arms of governments and armies, and won its way by the irresistible might of truth and righteousness. On such grounds, it is entirely rational, in the plain, unlettered Christian, to trust in his Bible, though not posted in the history of its criticism, manuscripts and authentic sources. Behind him stands an all-sufficient mass of the noblest scholarship to support and vindicate his confidence.

Besides, the difficulty is equally formidable in its application to the opposing papal theory of the rule of faith. It will be just as difficult for a plain, unlettered man to authenticate the church as to authenticate the scriptures. He is told an infallible church will preserve him from all error. But how shall he satisfy himself that she is infallible, and what church is infallible? The Roman Catholic Church claims infallibility; the Greek Catholic Church also claims it; the newly developed English Catholic Church also claims it. Each of these churches charges the other with error in some form. How is a plain man to decide which is right, or whether all of them may not be wrong? Is he to take the mere word of any one of them? If not, how is he to decide? If he does not take the word of any of them, how is he to prove her infallible character, or demonstrate her infallible guidance against error? This will be found fully as difficult for the plain, unlettered man as to prove all the history and criticism of the Bible. Waiving all questions touching the unanimity of popes, councils, and fathers, who are about as unanimous as the voices of Babel, and taking the latest, improved, simplified, and easy-running modification of the infallibility scheme, the inspiration of the pope to guide into all truth: how can a plain man prove that claim of the Roman pontiff? There is not a word said about it in scripture. Peter was inspired, but not a word is said about his being the bishop of

Rome; not a word about the descent of his inspiration to his successors in that office. He was an apostle, not a diocesan bishop; he had, as an apostle, a roving commission, without a limitation of territory, while every diocesan bishop had a territory strictly defined. The promise to guide the church by the Holy Ghost is not confined to any one office in the church, even if it is admitted that the organized visible church is referred to in that promise. The sure pledge of the Holy Spirit is to the invisible church, composed only of regenerate believers—not to the visible church, which is composed of only professed believers and their baptized children. This inference is compelled by the fact that every branch of the visible church has been more or less infected with error, and not one of them so deeply as the Roman Catholic Church, while the promise has been fulfilled to every member of the invisible church, not one of whom has ever perished, or failed to be guided into salvation. To claim infallibility for the visible church, and especially to claim it exclusively for one functionary alone in the church, has not an inch of standing ground in the scriptures, or in the history of the church since the days of the apostles. The records of the eighteen hundred years since the death of John, the last survivor of the apostles, has shown everywhere in the actual career of the visible church that the pledge of the Holy Ghost was not designed to preserve the visible church from the least infection of error. Vast sections of it have been permitted to wander far from the great essentials of the gospel; other vast sections of it have been permitted to abandon much that was valuable to the symmetry of the gospel system, while retaining the essentials necessary to salvation; but even the purest have no reason to claim absolute exemption from error of every kind and degree. How, then, can the plain, unlettered man prove the infallibility of any part of the visible church? The infallibility of

the Roman Church must be proved before it can be admitted; how can the plain man prove it? Even if he could have access to the voluminous records in which the facts are to be found he could not prove it by the unanimous consent of popes, councils, and fathers; for wide and uncompromising differences have prevailed among them upon a multitude of points. Popes have differed from popes, councils from councils, and fathers from fathers. The idea of their unanimity is utterly false. Take, for instance, the question of the seat of infallibility. Some have contended that it was found in the pope alone, others that it was found in the councils alone, others that it was only to be found in a council acting in concert with pope; but differences have abounded between every one of these sources of authority, arranged according to each of these plans of organization. The Vatican Council of 1870, under the call and sanction of Pius IX., finally settled it in the pope. But who can say whether this council giving it to the pope, or more than one council in past times denying it to him was right? The possibility of infallible guidance in the visible church has been seriously questioned in the Roman Church itself: who can decide it? It may cut away a host of embarrassments to say that we cannot tell whether this council granting it, or that council denying it to the pope was right; but, inasmuch as it was of great importance to have the question settled some way, we have resolved to accept the decision of the Vatican Council, and abide by it. Woe to him who thus audaciously throws off his obligation to earnest and impartial investigation, and surrenders his immortal soul to the guidance of a party whom he does not know, but simply resolves to consider to be incapable of misguiding him.

To authenticate the papal rule of faith, whether under its former or its more recent modification, is subject to the

same difficulty alleged to be applicable to the Protestant Rule. In this respect they stand on an equal footing, and the Romanist who urges it is guilty of false reasoning. But, in point of fact, the objection has no rational application to either. It is not necessary that the unlettered papist should be able to trace out the claims of his church before he can rationally recognize its existence; nor has the unlettered Protestant to vindicate the history and criticism of his Bible before he can rationally accept it as the inspired rule of faith. The difficulty is the same to both, and injurious to neither. The one may rationally accept his church, and the other may rationally accept his Bible, although neither may be able to vindicate his confidence by the impossible mode of argument dictated by the Romanist controversialist to discount the Protestant rule of faith.

Finally, for the present discussion, it is objected that the Bible is an incompetent rule because it settles no controversies, and only multiplies divisions of sentiment. It is sufficient to remark that this is equally true of the Romanist rule: infallibility in the Roman Church has never been more effective in preventing divisions of sentiment than the Protestant rule. The causes why no rule has ever been able to prevent differences of opinion will be investigated hereafter, and they will be found as effective against one rule as another. It is certain that the Romanist rule has never prevented these divisions. There were divisions in the bosom of the church on this very matter of the seat of infallibility; divisions on many other matters—divisions between councils, popes, and fathers; divisions among the sects in the church—between Jesuits and Jansenists, Dominicans and Franciscans; divisions as wide and even more virulent in hostility than between any Protestant sects. Some of these divisions endured for centuries, and were never subdued by the infal-

lible power in the church, which sometimes had to appeal to the power of the state to do what it could not do itself. Is it said that this was owing to the unsettled question as to where the infallibility was seated? The crushing reply is, that when found by the Vatican Council in 1870, the announcement of it was at once followed by a new division—by the retirement of the old Catholic party—an event which showed the powerlessness of the new dogma to control the variety of opinion in the mental constitution of human nature. It was a drastic test; it showed that no infallible standard, or source of authorized decision, whether in the infallible Word of God or in an infallible church, has ever been able to produce absolute unity of sentiment. The apostles, though confessedly inspired, could not secure it in their day. This long and uniform experience yields a proof positive that the difficulty, the source of division and difference, does not lie in the standard, whatever it may be, but in something else. The difficulty is grounded in the constitution of man. There is, therefore, no impeachment of the standard when unity of view is not secured.

USES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THIRD SERMON.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—2 TIMOTHY iii. 15, 16, 17.

WE closed our last lesson in the study of the rule of faith by bringing to notice the unquestionable fact that no standard, however perfect or infallible in itself, had ever secured absolute unity of sentiment. The apostles never did it, although they were living, inspired, and authoritative men. The scriptures never have done it when they were admitted to be the rule of faith. The alleged infallibility of the church, whether exercised by the pope alone, or by a council alone, or by a pope and a council acting in concert, have never done it, even in the very church over which they bore rule. It is a fundamental part of the papal theory, not only that there must be an inspiration to construe the written record, but that this inspiration must be exercised by living persons in order to be effective. The apostles were living persons, inspired of the Holy Ghost, and no inspiration could be higher or better supported than theirs, yet divisions of sentiment and violent controversies existed in their day which they endeavored to quell and never completely subdued. Experience in the widest and most diversified extent has shown clearly that no standard, however perfect in itself, or logically complete in its adaptation to secure unity of senti-

ment, has ever been able to secure it in fact. This curious, but unquestionable fact plainly proves that the cause of this phenomenon is not in the standard, but in something outside of it altogether; and consequently there is no reflection cast upon the standard by the failure to secure unity. It also determines that any effort to relieve the situation is logically misdirected when addressed to the improvement of the standard. To charge the Protestant rule of faith with an essential defect, because it cannot suppress divisions of sentiment, is wholly illogical. The same defect applies to an infallible church, or an infallible pope, and if it proves the standard defective in the one case, it equally does it in the other. The truth is, the effect does not impeach it in either, for the simple reason that it is not referable to the standard at all. The cause or causes lie outside of all standards, and are found in more than one thing, but chiefly in the existing constitution of the human understanding and will, as they have been affected by the inward results of moral evil. The boasted rule of the papal body has failed as thoroughly as any other to control these causes, and has over and over again demonstrated the intrinsic weakness of her rule to meet the case by calling in the aid of the civil power to enforce a unity which existed only in appearance, and which she confessed by this appeal to military coercion that she could not secure in any other way. The true cause lies outside of every form in which a rule of faith has ever been conceived. To a brief consideration of the principal cause let us turn for a few moments.

1. A difference of view of the same object, existing in two or more persons, may be ascribed to more than one cause: it may be due to the difference in the point of view, or to a difference in the emotional states of the mental view, or to a difference in the light or evidence thrown upon the object,

or to a difference in the condition of the organs of vision, or to a difference in the medium through which the object is seen, or to a difference in the associations of idea in different minds; but the chief causes, which, indeed, may include some of the others mentioned, are differences either in the light in which the object is seen, or in the condition of the organs of vision by which it is seen. In the first of these causes, a change or an improvement in the light may be necessary; in the other, a change or improvement in the organ of vision. If the light is perfect and the same to each of the inquirers, it is manifest that there is no ground for impeaching the light as the cause of the difference. In this case, to seek a change in the light is at once illogical and superfluous. This is precisely the blunder of the papal body in their rejection of the scriptures alone as the rule of faith. They attribute the cause of divided sentiment to the light thrown upon the truth by the Word of God, and they seek to substitute it by another light—the dictum of the pope. But if the difficulty is not really in the light, but in the organ of vision, or in the medium through which the vision is taken, it is manifest that no mere change in the light will reach the difficulty. As long as that radical difference, either in the organs of perception or in the medium of vision, just so long will it determine a difference of view, no matter whether the light is altered or not. A number of persons may be looking at the same object through sheets of glass differently colored; they must necessarily see it under different coloration. The cause of this difference is not in the light, for the same sunshine may be pouring over the field of view, but it is in the different colors of the mediums of perception through which the parties may be looking. To bring all these inspectors to an absolute unity of view, it is clearly absurd to dream of changing the light on the landscape, or of impeaching its perfection; the

unity of view can only be achieved by altering the regulating colors in the mediums of perception. Or, if the conditions of the organs of vision are different—some short-sighted, some long-sighted, some color-blind—these organs must be brought into uniformity in order to secure unity of view. This illustration presents the difference between the papal and the Protestant Christian theory of the causes which underlie the differences of religious sentiment so widely prevailing. The one attributes the difficulty to the light, and would consequently alter the standard of faith from the Word of God to the dictum of the pope, and secure from error by providing an influence of the Divine Spirit to protect him from error in making his decision. The Protestant Christian, following the lead of the scriptures in attributing the proneness to error in the human mind to the blindness and the corrupting influence of moral evil on the understandings, feelings, and affections of individual men, postulates an influence of the Divine Spirit to regenerate the heart and illumine the understanding, and thus secures the guidance into all the truth necessary to salvation. The doctrine of personal infallibility in the pope is a misapplied and illogical travesty of the doctrine of the new birth taught by our Lord to Nicodemus. It provides an influence of the Holy Spirit to guide into the truth at a point where the influence of that Spirit has already been sufficiently exerted in the inspiration of the scriptures, while it ignores the real factor in the generation or error—that is, the blinding and distortion of faculty by sin in the individual who is to be guided—and makes no provision, or none adequate, to meet that part of the case in which the stress of the difficulty is to be found. It makes a superfluous provision to guard against error where it has already been sufficiently guarded against, and little or none to meet the real difficulty in the way, and to enable the effective use of the sufficient rule already provided.

Here, then, we see the reason in chief why differences of opinion exist among Christians. They are all equally honest in their constructions of the rule of faith; all true Christians, without exception, are led to the acceptance of all the truth necessary to their salvation; but, for wise reasons, in the counsels of God different measures of indwelling grace leave them to different views touching matters not essential to salvation. As greater effusions of the Holy Spirit are granted to the church, its divided parts will draw closer together. The day is pledged to come when the watchman will see eye to eye; but that grand triumph of grace and truth will be due, not to any communication of the Spirit securing an infallible and authoritative determination of truth, *ab extra*, but causing the mental medium of vision in his people to approximate closer and closer to uniformity of moral and spiritual coloring. The result will be unity of sentiment through growth in grace and the increase of holiness in individual souls. This is the only way in which it ever can come. Mere infallibility in the standard, without control over individual organs of perception, can never do it. It is, therefore, manifest that the objection to the Word of God, as the sole rule of faith and practice, drawn from the prevalence of divided sentiment among Christians, is really no impeachment of the standard at all, because those divisions are due to other causes than the incompetence of the standard. The scriptures, according to their own testimony in our text, can be understood by a child, and are able to make wise unto salvation; they positively assert that they are profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness.

2. To turn now briefly to the consideration of the competing theory of the rule of faith. We do not propose to discuss it in detail; we shall take it in its most comprehensive form, and, by one or two comprehensive considerations, show

the danger and the folly involved in the attempt to set aside the rule which God has established. A detailed discussion of the papal rule would lead into a view of the alleged consent of popes, councils, fathers, canon, law, traditions, and the consensus of holy church—a view of such vast compass as to make full investigation the work of years, if not absolutely impracticable. Yet this view, if it were practicable, is one which, by exposing the innumerable differences of opinion existing among these separate elements of the papal rule, would expose the utter unsoundness of the rule itself. But we will take the most general form in which the doctrine is expressed—a form including all these specific elements of the rule virtually, and giving voice to what is supposed to be involved in them all. This general form of expressing the idea is that, in order to secure unity of sentiment, there must be a seat of power competent to give authoritative definitions and determinations of doctrine and law. From such an authoritative decision there can be no appeal. What is settled by authority must be accepted as final. In order to convey this authority, it is claimed that the seat of the determining power must be infallible. Just as a judge must be placed to interpret the laws of the state, just so there must be a personal arbiter of religious law; and to give due force to his interpretations, the arbiter must be made incapable of error. As already stated, this supreme and infallible authority was supposed to be in the church; but for centuries the locality of this infallible authority was strenuously disputed. The dispute was settled in 1870, and the seat of infallible authority was determined to exist in the pope alone. The doctrine now is that the pope is empowered to settle definitely and forever every question of doctrine or duty for the whole human race, and in every relation of human life. There is no appeal from his decision, and no resistance to his author-

ity. To dispute his dogma or refuse to accept it is heresy, and rebellion against the authority of God himself. There is no liberty of opinion—no freedom of action—when the pope has spoken. In all matters whatever covered by his official declarations, there remains the one course of absolute obedience, under all the penalties, temporal or spiritual, which, by the ordination of God, support his authority. He is to the human race all that God could be, if he should condescend to arbitrate human controversies on matters of morals and religion. He is a sort of vice-God: he openly claims to be the Vicar of Christ, with authority over the whole habitable earth. Claims like these—so vast, mysterious, illimitable—assuredly ought to be able to show irresistible grounds upon which they rest. The will of God, in this awful delegation of his divine power, ought to be so clearly manifest as to leave no room for the shadow of a doubt.

The first objection to this remarkable theory is that it discounts, to a minimum, the value of the revelation which God has made, and discredits its principal utility as settled by itself. The theory implies that the revelation of God, given in writing, is powerless to teach and determine any truth. The whole value of the written revelation is conditioned on the use of a distinct inspiration from that in itself. But the scriptures declare that they are able to make wise unto salvation—that they are profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that even a child like Timothy could understand them; that even pious women like Eunice and Lois could soundly instruct in them. Such facts are utterly inconsistent with the papal theory, that an infallible and authoritative interpreter is necessary. A position which logically implies the utter inability of the infinite God so to express himself as to be understood by those whom he addressed, is a blasphemous absurdity.

Another objection to this astonishing theory is that it places the teaching office of the ministry in a false relation to the written Word. The commission of the ministry of the gospel is, "Go teach all nations." It is, then, perfectly plain that the relation of the ministry to the written scriptures is not that of a judge on the bench to the laws of the land, but of a teacher to his text-books. The decisions of a judge carry the authority of the commonwealth. The instructions of a teacher carry the force of evidence and truth only. His function is more analogous to the prelections of a professor of law than of a judge upon the bench. Even the official declarations of the teachers of the church in synod assembled are simply a testimony to the truth, not an authoritative decision; and especially not an authoritative decree carrying penalty in its support. The evidence that such is the true relation of the Christian ministry to the scriptures is found in two decisive circumstances: First, in the positive language of their commission, and, second, in the manner in which the inspired apostles interpreted and carried it out in their public work. They "reasoned out of the scriptures"; they appealed to them as evidence; they "preached the Word." The Son of God himself did the same thing: his constant formula was, "It is written"—"thus saith the law and the prophets." The scriptures were not only made the basis of instruction in the teaching of our Lord and the apostles, but they directed the people to whom they preached to search the scriptures for themselves as tests of their doctrine. In all matters already settled and embraced in the scriptures then written, they avoided dealing authoritatively, and appealed to the record. Touching all new truth not yet recorded, they did speak with authority, whether in modifying the old law or in the appointment of new ordinances; but both to Christ himself and to his inspired apostles the scriptures were a standard at once

intelligible and authoritative, both for themselves as teachers and for the people they instructed. Their commission, and the commission of all who took orders under them, was, "Preach the Word." It is a perpetual truth, then, of the Christian system that the function of the Christian ministry is that of a teacher, not the function of a priest or a judge; and until the function of a teacher is confounded with the function of a judge, and a commission to testify is identical with an authority to decree, it will remain impossible to claim the right of an authoritative interpretation of holy scripture for any human agency of the visible church, whether it be pope or bishop, or council in synod assembled. It is a bold perversion of a plainly defined function to alter the relation of the ministry to the scriptures, from that of a teacher, empowered to reason out of the record, to the function of an interpreter, with an exclusive authority to decide.

A still farther objection to the papal theory is, that this vicious alteration of the relation of the ministry to the scriptures involves a most dangerous assumption in the ministry of power to *condition* the means of grace. It affirms that the utility of the scriptures is conditioned on the manipulation and authoritative construction of the clergy: with it, the Word of God is valuable; without it, worthless—nay, dangerous. Now, the scriptures are one of the means of grace, appointed by God to be employed in seeking his favor; but if they are dependent on clerical use for all their efficacy and usefulness, their utility is not in themselves, but is suspended upon clerical function, and, in the last analysis, upon clerical will. That involves the reduction of salvation to dependence upon clerical will. God has nowhere given such fearful power—such a tremendous and subtle instrument of domination over his creatures—into the hands of his ministers. He has reserved that awful prerogative and power in his own

hands; he has said pointedly, "Salvation is of the Lord;" "of him are ye in Christ Jesus." If the clergy have the right to condition one of the means of grace, they have an equal right to condition all of them. They have as much right to condition prayer, or praise, or attendance on public preaching, or the sacraments, and to suspend their efficacy and good effects on clerical function, and consequently on clerical will. In other terms, this papal rule of faith logically involves the supremacy of clerical will over the whole series of the means of grace, and consequently over all the ends for which this series was appointed, including the absolute matter of personal salvation. It not only presumes to reverse the legislation of God in determining the position of the scriptures as a means of grace, but implies an equal power over the whole series, and still more dreadful, through this assumption of the right to condition the means, assumes control of the very issue of personal salvation.

Yet further, it is a legitimate and powerful objection to this claim to interpret authoritatively, that it necessarily defeats its own end, and renders any certain assurance of revealed truth absolutely impossible. Making its dangerous assumptions, with the avowed purpose of making the belief of the truth revealed from heaven absolutely sure, and claiming the power to do that very thing, the rule necessarily so works from its own logical nature as to make that very thing utterly impossible. Destroying all capacity in the Word of God to make its own declarations intelligible, and disabling the average human understanding from comprehending what the record states, the rule forever precludes the common mind from the possibility of discovering what God has said. To ascertain whether two things agree, both must be understood, at least so far as to judge whether they agree or disagree. The comparison cannot be made if one is understood, and the other is altogether unintelligible. The papal rule is intelli-

gible so far as what the pope says is concerned, but whether what he says is coincident with what the scriptures say has become impossible, because it is insistently asserted that the common mind cannot understand what the scriptures do say. The papal rule has forever destroyed the possibility of determining whether God and the pope say the same thing. No one can ever be certain of what God has really taught. No one can ever tell whether the pope has rightly rendered the Word of God or not. Whoever submits his understanding to this rule receives his religion from the pope, but not from God, for the revelation from him has been disabled, and the positive articles of the faith received are from the pope alone. The devout and loyal Catholic who receives the dicta of the church as the truth of God can be certain that he is in possession of what the church tells him is the truth, but it is impossible that he can ever be certain that it is the truth which God has revealed. His rule of faith disables God from being understood, and no comparison between what he has said with what the church says he has said is possible. The very thing which they charge upon the Protestant Christian rule of faith is the very thing which applies with tenfold more force to their own. No man who pledges himself to take the representations of another man, as to the views of a third party, can ever be rationally sure that he is in possession of the views reported, when the views of that third party are admitted to be unintelligible.

Still another objection to this papal rule of faith—an objection which comes down to men's bosoms, and the business of the present life—is that it involves an absolute supremacy of the infallible power over the whole scene of human affairs in the present life, as well as over the affairs of the world to come. It brings every relation and interest of human life under control. It is so wide and exorbitant in its reach that there is literally not one thing, not one relation or human

interest, not even one word, or thought, or feeling, or act of the human soul, which is not logically brought under the control of the infallible power, and the will which directs the use of it. The only limit upon it is the limit of priestly ability to put it into practical operation. The law of God extends literally over the whole sphere of human action or accountability; every possible thing to which the distinction of right or wrong can attach is under its jurisdiction; and the right to determine what the law of God requires, is the right to regulate and determine everything covered by the law. Let it be remembered that the papal claim is the claim to decide authoritatively all matters of religious or moral obligation. It is a claim, not only to define the truth, but to determine the law; not only to say what is true to be believed, but what is obligatory to be done. It is a claim to define what is moral, as well as what is religious. Now, inasmuch as moral law extends over the entire field of human energy—inasmuch as whatever man can do, or think, or say can be done, or thought, or said in a right or wrong way, inasmuch as the moral distinction can attach to every relation, energy, and interest of human life, to family and social, national and scientific interests and relations—it follows, by irresistible necessity of the laws of thought, that the unrestricted right to determine that distinction carries with it the right to determine all things to which that distinction belongs. This is the principle by which all the enormous assumptions of papal power to interfere with civil governments, educational, and scientific interests, social, family, and individual concerns have been based. As governments can do right or wrong, the papal rule of faith warrants the papal power to intervene and determine what the course and policy of civil governments should be. As family affairs can be conducted in a right or wrong way, the papal rule warrants interference with family affairs. As all human interests admit and neces-

sarily involve the moral distinction, all may be controlled by the infallible power, and whatever human will is found administering it. As the conduct of human individuals is under the regulation of moral law, all human individual conduct is brought under the domination of this vast principle, and of the human hands in which it lodges power to administer and enforce it. It develops a scene of concentrated power which has no parallel in human history, and before which the thoughtful mind stands appalled! If all the laws of all the nations on all the earth were determinable by a single intellect and a single will, it would be such a tyranny as the world never yet has seen. The terrible domination of Tamerlane or Ghengis would be the mildness of a summer shower to the rage of a tornado compared with it. If all the laws of physical nature in water, air, earth, and fire, the laws of germination, the laws of health, were all determinable by a single intellect and a single will in a human frame, it would be a still more fearful power. It would involve life and death and unspeakable suffering to all things living on the planet, in subjection to the will of one man. But either or both of these fancied accumulations of power would be tolerable compared with moral law, holding, as it does, in its grasp all the interests, the purity, peace, and well-being of the entire race of immortal creatures for all time and all eternity, determinable by a single human intellect and a single human will. No human interest can be safe under the legitimate operation of such a principle as the papal rule of faith—the authoritative determination of religious truth and moral law by an infallible human authority so-called. The personal character of the prophets and apostles reveals to us a rational committal of a true inspiration to them. The enormous prevalence of abandoned wickedness in many of the occupants of the infallible chair is fatally suggestive of a false inspiration. In these days of decayed

affections towards true and sin-restraining religion, there is a fatal ignorance, indifference, and false estimation of the real character of the principles of the Romanist system. The fair character and orderly deportment of individuals who hold these principles obscure the enormity of these principles themselves. But principles are to be judged by their contents and necessary logical implications, and not merely by the character of their adherents who may be under restraints entirely separate from their admitted creed. If there is any suggestion of future practical action in the principles which lay down the law and prescribe the conduct of men, no warning is more transcendently important than that which signals beforehand the unspeakable danger which is coiled up in the doctrine of a right to determine authoritatively the teaching of the Christian religion and the obligations of the moral law. This open Bible, with each soul free to use it as one of the appointed means of grace, and to inquire for the law of the Lord at his own mouth, and under full responsibility to him and to him only, is the foundation stone of all that is precious to mankind in this life and in the life to come. It conditions your civil liberties, your religious freedom, and your free political institutions. It conditions your sacred households, your social privileges, your scientific progress, your educational policies, and your intellectual advancement. It equally conditions your personal moral development and that of your children. It involves the moral principles which regulate the commercial and business interests of society. It controls your personal development and your personal well-being at a thousand points. Let the great right of free inquiry into the mind of God, with which he has endowed you, be taken away from you, by whatever artful ecclesiastical device or political manœuvre, and the funeral bell of all the fruitful liberties of mankind, and of all their prospects for a happy immortality, will resound over a world given over to the powers of the

abyss. "Search the scriptures," for in them there is eternal life to all that is good on earth and blessed in heaven.

It is the last consummate flower of blundering mischief in this papal rule of faith, that while theoretically confined to the pope alone, it is, nevertheless, logically and practically available only through the clergy in general—through the parish ordinary, or diocesan bishop, or some member of the hierarchy below the pope. To whom can the individual Romanist apply for the settlement of any of his doubts or difficulties in moral and religious matters? The pope in person is not approachable by one in ten thousand of those who have taken him for a guide. The only one practically within his reach is the priest or bishop of the vicinage, neither of whom are allowed by their own theory to be infallible. The decisions of the pope himself are often to be made known to the individual faithful through the same officials. The decisions of the pope are most frequently in general terms, whose import must be explained by fallible interpreters. Who can be assured that any deliverance whatever by these fallible intermediaries, whether explanatory of the pope, or a decision on their own part, is infallibly correct? If not infallibly defined, how can the definition be received as an article of faith, or placed in a position of higher dignity than a mere Protestant opinion? Suppose the inquiry brought to the parish priest involves the interpretation of a passage of scripture; the pope has not decided it; the church has never sent out a commentary covering the whole extent of the sacred writings. The construction must come from the fallible official to whom alone the application for instruction can be made. This is, in fact, what is commonly done. The pope does not, and the priest of the parish does, as a rule, determine all questions of doctrine and duty—a person, on their own theory, just as fallible as any Protestant teacher can possibly be, and who has no more power to raise the decision,

when accepted, to the dignity of an act of faith, and above the level of a mere personal opinion. Yet, practically, the parish priest or the diocesan bishop does wield the infallible power; their decisions are generally accepted as final, and the inquirer who accepts, as infallible, this decision of a confessedly fallible interpreter is satisfied that he has exerted an act of faith which yields him a measure of merit in the sight of God and the church. Hence in many papal countries the saying is common, that the only available method of getting at the mind of God is through the lips of the priest. This caps the climax of the dreadful usurpation. Making high claims to furnish an infallible determination of Christian truth through the infallible head of the church, when reduced to practice, their rule works out the determination of the difficulties of the faithful, in the overwhelming majority of cases, by officials confessedly not infallible. The rule is unworkable; it necessarily involves deceit and falsehood in settling the difficulties of seekers for instruction. It pretends to furnish an infallible rule of faith, and is compelled by the practical emergencies of human life to give them a fallible instruction, because only given by fallible instructors. The papal rule of faith, even when construed as usable by the pope alone, is a claim appalling in its audacious reach over all that is dear or valuable to the human heart; but it is ten thousand times more awful when administered by the universal hierarchy and priesthood of the church.

This tremendous mischief in the papal rule drives, with accumulated force, to the more profound veneration, to the more intense and resolute adherence, and to the more ardent employment of that rule which the infinitely wise and gracious God has given us—even those scriptures which our Lord commanded to be searched, even that Word of the living God, which is able to make us wise unto salvation, and which liveth and abideth forever.

USES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

FOURTH SERMON.

THE RELATION OF THE MINISTRY TO THE WORD.

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.”—2 TIMOTHY iv. 2.

THE relation of the ministry to the written Word, having been shown to be, not that of an authoritative interpreter and judge, but that of a teacher of the law and gospel, a series of interesting questions immediately spring up touching the true scope and significance of the teaching function of the Christian ministry. What are they to teach? In what does the authority of this teaching over conscience consist? In what manner are they to teach in order to secure the best effect of their instruction? What qualifications are suitable and necessary to the full quittance of their obligations under their commission? What is the nature, the source, and the extent of the legitimate influence of the ministry? What is the magnitude and limitation of their responsibility? What reciprocal duties are due from the people under their instruction? To some of these questions at least, we shall aim to give brief answers as time and occasion may serve.

1. The answer to the question touching what the ministry are to teach is found summarily, yet comprehensively stated, in the first member of the text, “Preach the Word.” God has been pleased to give a statement in writing of all that man need know in order to salvation. He has declared both what is to be believed, and what is to be done, to that end. The sharp limitation of the phrase, “Preach the Word,” is

not only positively imperative, but negatively prohibitory: it not only requires all that is in the Word to be preached, but it limits the preaching to the Word, and prohibits the preaching of anything but the Word. It is peremptorily prohibitive of all tradition outside of the Word, whether it be tradition in the church or out of it. It prohibits the official presentation of any teachings of fathers or councils as authoritative, or in any other form than any other testimony of any other uninspired writers, as merely confirmatory or illustrative of the teaching of the living teacher. Such teachings may be used on the same principle upon which profane history, legislation, or science, may be used to illustrate and aid in evoking the meaning of the scriptures; but they are utterly prohibited from being allowed any, even the least, cöordinate authority with the Word of God. They utterly prohibit all subjects of secular knowledge, political, scientific or literary subjects, from being brought into the official teaching of the ministry. These matters can only be used to an extent rigidly limited as ancillary, or briefly illustrative of the truth set forth in the sacred Word. To pervert this purely limited right of incidental use, for the mere purpose of making more plain the spiritual truth of the sacred books, into a general liberty to handle any kind of secular subject in the Christian pulpit, is an unauthorized and presumptuous trespass beyond the bounds of the ministerial commission, which is as dangerous as it is wicked. The official teaching of the Christian ministry is strictly limited to the doctrines and precepts and general contents of the written scriptures.

This limitation, however, leaves the teachers of the gospel a field whose dignity and extent is worthy of the highest gifts of the human understanding, and whose full legitimate boundaries can never be exhaustively reached by any one

man, or by any definable number of separate men. The ministry is set to preach the whole grand gospel of the divine redemption. It is to expound the scriptures, and the whole vast record is subject to their commission. These ancient writings, containing the earliest of all known history, legislation, philosophy, and religious exposition of doctrine and moral law—beginning their narrative with the story of creation, and the outset of the human race—embracing the only knowledge of the facts and religious faiths of the earliest ages of human history—written in at least three different languages—constitute by far the most important and interesting of all sources of human knowledge. The exposition of these scriptures, the narrative of their facts, the evocation of their sublime lessons, the illustration of their metaphors, statements, and moral principles, form a single department of the ministerial function, by itself calling for high scholarship and ability to do it even an approximate justice. But when the raw material, or virgin ore of the truth, is thus hewed out of the rich mine of the record, another grand department of the teaching function of the ministry emerges to view. It is theirs to work this material into orderly form; to draw out the logical coherence of the truth into a logical system, and to display the grand, orderly proportions of the divine philosophy contained in the revelation of God. No system of either ancient or modern thought—not the stateliest and noblest structure of the boldest and broadest of human thinkers—can bear comparison with the philosophy of man and the universe, contained in the truths touching both, set forth in the Word of God.

It is the function of the ministry, as teachers of the Word, not only to interpret the words and develop the theology of the scriptures, but to expound the law which the divine Word has prescribed, whether it be the law moral or statutory.

The things to be done, as well as the things to be believed, are contained in the Word. The commission to preach the gospel is also a commission to expound the law, for both are contained in the Word which they are commanded to preach. In the brief, but exhaustively complete, system of the ten commandments—in the specific precepts and positive examples scattered through the whole record—that law, which is to measure obedience or rebellion, and, by consequence, the acquittal or condemnation of every subject of the law, is laid down; and the teaching ministry are required to make it known to all over whom their jurisdiction extends. This section of the instruction committed to the ministry, considered even by itself, gives an aspect of dignity and grandeur to the ministerial office, of incomparable force. As correlative to this capacity to expound the law, there is another function of the minister as a teacher which legitimately involves great gifts and great responsibility, and that is the judgment and guidance of human thought and feeling as affected by the law and the grace of the divine Word. No office in human hands demands a deeper or a more complete knowledge of human nature. All of the grand truths of the scriptures lay hold upon some passion of the soul, and determine some energy of the will. It will excite love or hate, hope or fear. It will kindle desire or aversion. It will awaken conscience, convict of sin, and determine the will to obedience or resistance. The casuistry of an awakened and reluctant conscience—the objections to this or that form of truth, the artful evasions of a heart deceitful above all things, the complications of motive in all human action—give room for all the knowledge, keenness of discrimination, and resolute fidelity, of which the highest of human intellects is capable. The knowledge of the human heart, as affected by moral or religious truth or error, is a part of the field of instruction

allotted to the Christian ministry; and the gain of this knowledge determines the necessity of personal intercourse with the people in every regular pastoral charge. To all the various forms of truth which the Word of God contains and asserts, related errors are opposed, as various in form as they are presumptuous in their spirit. All these varied and subtle forms of error are within the province of the Christian teacher. He must understand, in order to refute them; he must refute them, in order to defend the truth.

But this is not all. The Christian minister is not a mere teacher: he is a teacher; but he is something more, or rather, his business as a teacher is to be done in more than one way. He is not a mere teacher, in the sense that his work is done when he makes known the bare fact of any truth, no matter whether of the law or gospel of God. He is a teacher under the modification of a preacher: he proclaims as he instructs; he teaches in his proclamation. He is a herald, a messenger, an ambassador, and a witness; and all these functions are discharged by making known or teaching the will of the King. He testifies by open outcry, and makes known the will and word of the Lord under this form of public address in order to reach as many of those to whom he is sent as he can possibly do every time his message is delivered. He is set, by argument and persuasion, not only to let the truth be known, but to urge it upon the acceptance and obedience of his hearers, as well as upon their intelligence. He is to exhort and persuade, as well as instruct. Hence he must have more than the mere natural or intellectual knowledge of the truth in order to discharge his function fully. He must be able to feel, as well as see the truth. He must be able to conceive the weight and power of the truth, as well as know it. It is not necessary that a teacher of astronomy should have the broad imaginative faculty, or the deep sensibility, by which

to conceive approximately the enormous size and distances of the planets, in order to teach those facts, although such powers would unquestionably add greatly to the interest and effectiveness of his instructions. But the Christian teacher, in dealing with such topics as the love of God, the grace of an atoning Saviour, the beauty of goodness, the excellence of the divine justice, and the worth of the soul, even the plainest man in the office must have some open sense of the truth which he is dealing with, and be able to handle them with some sensibility to the tenderness, or terror, or grandeur, or persuasiveness, which is inherent in these topics. How else can he expect to rouse the human soul to suitable action in reference to them? The power of the imaginative faculty, and all the affections of the heart, are as important to the perfect discharge of the function of a teacher of the Word of God, as is the mere knowledge of the truth revealed, or the power of rightly dividing or discriminating its boundaries and connections.

The preaching of the Word, the teaching and proclamation of the whole counsel of God, involves, as the subject-matter of the teaching function of the ministerial office, all the grand departments of law, doctrine, and fact contained in the revelation of God. The Christian teacher is to explain, defend, and enforce, by the utmost compulsion which there is in the powers of convincing and persuasive influence, all that God has seen fit to make known for the salvation of mankind. He is to explain and uphold the sanctity of divine law and the divine authority; he is to expose and rebuke the sins of men by pointing out their discrepancy with the law, and their violence to the authority of Almighty God. He is to open the great plan of redeeming love, and urge men to embrace its terms. He is to remonstrate with their delays and refusals to obey. He is to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,

and the day of vengeance of our God. He is to display fully the rewards of faith and obedience, and the perils of disobedience and unbelief. All this is embraced in the "preaching of the Word." This broad and powerful programme of truth is the substance of what he is to teach.

2. The manner in which he is to teach, inasmuch as it strongly qualifies the success of his teaching and the welfare of those whom he teaches, is another point of profound interest and concern. He has no commission to "lord it over the faith of God's people." He is the "helper of their faith," not the dictator of their creed. Their right and duty to examine the written oracles of God, and, like the Bereans of old, to test the conformity of his teaching to the standard of faith, is as perfect, complete, and unalterable as those growing out of his commission. He is their teacher, not their judge or dictator; and his teaching is not only to be conformed to the record, and to be governed by the rational laws of interpretation, but to be accommodated in its simplicity, or in its higher qualities, to the peculiar states and necessities of their minds. He is to take the meaning of the record according to the established sense of the words used. He is to compare scripture with scripture. He is to preserve the logical order and consistency of the truth itself, and to observe and preserve the proportions of the faith. He is, by prayer, by knowledge, and by incessant study, to show himself to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. By this method he is to gather the materials for his instructions; and when ready to expound his gathered treasure, the apostle has laid down the rules which are to guide the actual communication of his message.

In the first place, he is to instruct always with a deep and honest conviction of the truth which he inculcates. He is to "hold fast the faithful Word, that he may be able both to

exhort and convince the gainsayers." Nothing will more paralyze the energy and convincing force of the truth than unsettled convictions of the soundness and reality of the truth on the part of the public teacher. He must be, definitely, either for or against Christ and his teaching. One grand cause why so much religious instruction falls without effect, is the honest, but feeble, convictions of those who teach it. The grandest element of success in the boldest and most successful preachers of the gospel has always been in the force and sublime energy of their own convictions. They must speak as dying men to dying men. The subtle force of deep convictions gives a point, a power, and a reality to their testimony which propagates a like conviction. Men are far more insensible to the real force and meaning of religious ideas than sceptical of their reality. Men do not doubt the reality of death, sin, accountability, and the penal power of violated law, as much as they fail to realize them. The presentation of these, and all the rest of the grand truths of the sacred scriptures, invigorated into a due sense of reality by the force of powerful personal convictions on the part of the preacher, will break through that stupor of insensibility, and let in the truth upon the mind in something of its natural force. "Cry aloud and spare not," was the command of the Lord to one of the old prophets. Nothing can take the place of deep and passionate earnestness in presenting the truths of the holy scriptures; and nothing will breed genuine earnestness but deep convictions of the truth, and confidence in him who has affirmed it. Custom, habit, a mere conviction of the judgment that earnestness is necessary, may result in vociferation and incoherent exhortations; but it will be vain to expect this false enthusiasm and semblance of strong feeling to produce the effect of a true sensibility and a keen conviction of the truth proclaimed. Habit and the force of

an established custom in the manner of delivering the instructions of the pulpit, however sincerely they may be complied with, can never take the place of strong real convictions. A painted fire, no matter how skilfully delineated, will never burn.

In the second place, he must teach in the spirit of a teacher, not in the spirit of a gladiator. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men." The truths of religion, in part at least, fall with stern effect on the guilty conscience and the perverted affections of men. The charge of guilt, and the warning of danger, even when felt to be true, rouse the resistance of the heart. It is the worst of policies to attempt to win a man by fighting with him. To tell him of his sin and his danger with a spirit of genuine compassion, and a keen anxiety for him to escape, will lay hold upon his feelings. In all the regular instructions of God's house, the minister of the Word must "in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves." As he seeks to win or lead men to repentance, it is indispensable to show forth sin; but he must at the same time show the spirit of kindness and tender solicitude that the sinner should escape to the refuge set before him in the gospel. The utmost fidelity to the truth, which awakens and convicts of need for deliverance, is entirely compatible with the most unfeigned love and sympathy for the person of the sinner; and when this love is manifestly the ruling aim and spirit of the effort, it has every likelihood of final success. Patience is an essential quality in any teacher, but especially in a teacher of the gospel. Not only meekness in dealing with the passions and prejudices of men, but patience in dealing with their ignorance and inaptness to learn, is of the first importance to the teacher of the Word. Line must be given upon line, and precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little. Hence the emphatic prescript of the

apostle, "Aptness to teach," and patience in teaching. This gentleness of spirit is perfectly compatible with eagerness and intensity, both of mental action and energy of conviction. Nay, it is not incompatible with the keenest expression of honest indignation, where many lessons, given with meekness and patient toil, are with conscious and unconcealed malignity and want of integrity, resisted and openly scorned. It was the same voice which spoke to the woman of Samaria, with such faithful and yet compassionate tenderness, which broke in torrents of invective on the Pharisees and hypocrites. The fiery logic of Paul was driven by a heart full of tenderest pity and compassion. The ardent exposure of deadly error may spring from the truest desire for the well-being of the errorist. There is a radical distinction between zeal for the truth, and mere combativeness of temper, or thirst for vengeance. While the ministry of the Word are commanded to strive earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints, the spirit in which that command is to be obeyed, is entirely compatible with the meekness and patience with which the regular current instruction of the ministry is to be given, and specially obligatory when called upon to dissolve the difficulties of the candid and earnest seeker for the truth. The patient iteration and reiteration of the truth, the unfaltering and hopeful repeat of lessons which seem to fail of effect, is indispensable, both in the work of awakening sinners and edifying saints.

In the third place; another characteristic of successful teaching is candor and courage. The minister of the Word, especially in times of deep declension in religion, has often a dangerous task before him, to testifying to the truth, and against the errors and the sins of men. Some of the truths of the holy Word will at all times excite the pride and prejudices of the human heart. There will be strong temptation to hide or qualify offensive ideas, and thus to avoid the hazard

of fidelity. The symbol of the lion's face, in the apocalyptic vision of St. John, of the gospel ministry, was a true suggestion of the need of courage and straightforwardness in the discharge of the office. The whole counsel of God is to be declared, before the watchman will be clear from the blood of the slain. He is to preach the Word, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. If the Word speaks things either hard to be understood, or capable of being wrested to their own destruction by proud and insubordinate minds, or by those who handle them deceitfully, it is nevertheless at his peril, if he shuns to declare them. He is not responsible for anything in the record: he is responsible for the full and fearless repeat of his message. No matter how keenly the sword of the Spirit may cut into the pride of the intellect, or the passions of the heart, he must nevertheless bare the blade and strike. He is commanded to use sound speech, which cannot be condemned. This limitation does not refer to the condemnation of hostile hearers, who will condemn all teachings which contravene their views: it only requires faithful conformity to the sacred record, and the use of judicious and competent expressions, not adapted to excite unnecessary prejudice. Speech which may excite the condemnation of ill-informed or sin-distorted minds may nevertheless be approved by God, and all true-sighted understandings. So long as the teacher of the gospel honestly and faithfully repeats the mind of the Spirit as expressed in the Word, he may be sure that his speech will be sound, and not capable of just condemnation.

In the fourth place, he must teach prayerfully. The Word of God will not give up its true wealth to the prayerless intellect; nor will it prove the savor of life unto life, if its public proclamation is not accompanied with prayer and faith. So that neither in furnishing himself to instruct, nor in look-

ing for the fruit of his instruction, can the preacher of the Word discharge himself of his high responsibility without prayer. The sword of the Spirit, like the great brand of the lion-hearted king, can be wielded only by himself effectually; and the minister who desires to see it mow down the mailed ranks of the powers of darkness, must cry ceaselessly for the forthputting of his strength. All the means of grace are designed and adapted as tests of the desire of the heart; and the desire of the servant of the Lord for the success of his testimony, must make itself stand clear of all question at the throne of grace.

In the fifth place, he must preach the Word in faith—with the sort of faith which is not merely the strength of conviction and confidence in the truth which he teaches, to which we have already referred; but with that faith which is dependent on Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost to give it success—a faith which will give him success, and also a lively anticipation of success. “Without me,” says the Master, “ye can do nothing.” “I can do all things through Christ,” says the apostle of the Gentiles. “The Word is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;” but only through God. In times of spiritual prosperity, this sort of faith is comparatively easy; but in times of spiritual declension, and even in the ordinary course of the average Christian life, it is a test of a masculine faith to be able to do it. To stand upon the cliff which overlooks the valley of dry bones—which are very dry, as they lie in awful masses on the old field of blood and carnage, tangled and weed-hidden — and cry, day and night, in the ghastly desert, with no response but the whistling of the winds or the yelp of some beast of prey; and yet be firm, and cheerfully anticipate the life-giving breeze from heaven, and the upspring of the bones into an exceeding great army—this is verily a trial and a triumph of faith! Yet

faith, submissive, tender, firm, and true, is an indispensable element in the preaching of the Word.

But so preached, it will bear on the precious tide of its clear, strong instruction, all the blessings of a fulfilled and vindicated covenant. This is the species of preaching in which the real welfare of the church, the growth and comfort of the saints, the redemption of their children, and the salvation of sinful men, are all inevitably involved. This is the ministration of the Word which will yield peace to conscience, regeneration to the heart, complete victory over sin, death, and hell, and will send through the open gates of heaven the long ranks of the redeemed, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. These are the ends, and this is the ministry the church ought to seek. For the people of God to desire chiefly to be entertained and amused by the preaching of God's great gospel, will bring a curse upon the parties to such an intolerable abuse. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest" to send forth into all the world such teachers of the Word, and such helpers of the faith of his people, as will rightly divide the Word of his grace, and sanctify the world through his truth.

USES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

FIFTH SERMON.

THE RELATION OF THE MINISTRY TO THE WORD.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”—2 TIMOTHY ii. 15.

ANOTHER of the questions raised by the relations of the ministry to the written Word, as those relations are defined in the Word itself, touches the qualifications in the public teacher, on which the people of God can rely as the helpers of their faith. The answer is given in this exhortation of Paul to Timothy. It is implied in the character of the workman who needeth not to be ashamed, and in the right division of the truth. To explain what is meant by these expressions is the object before us at this time.

1. In general terms, the qualifications which go to make up the character of the gospel teacher who shall have no need to be ashamed must be such as truly adjust him to his work. A fundamental quality in any teacher is an adequate knowledge of the subject which he undertakes to teach. Without this he must be not only a failure, but a fraud. He cannot give what he does not possess; and to impose himself on others under the assumption of a fitness which he really has not is falsehood and fraud. The wide scope of the subjects imposed upon the office of the ministry by the Word of God necessarily gives room for the widest possible attainments of knowledge, and imposes the obligation of some suitable degree of it. An educated ministry is demanded by the most

obvious proprieties of the case. But the spiritual sense of revealed truth demands a peculiar form of knowledge which cannot be gained in the schools: it is the sole result of the tuition of the Holy Ghost. As this, after all, is the most important form of knowledge to the Christian teacher, it has sometimes happened that this species of spiritual discernment has laid the foundation of useful service in the pulpit, when few advantages of natural culture have been enjoyed. But these cases are extremely rare, and afford no legitimate precedent against a well-trained ministry, or against the utility of natural knowledge to the gospel preacher. The use which the sovereignty of God may have made of an untrained ministry under the circumstances of a freshly-settled country, where no other sort of provision could be made, is no precedent to be followed in the face of positive laws, when no such excuse can be pleaded. God may suspend his own statutory laws at his own good pleasure; but his servants, who are under law, have no alternative but to obey it, so far as obedience is not positively hindered. But the ill consequences of an imperfectly prepared ministry will not be checked, even when necessity seems to dispense with the letter of the law. The imperfect development of Christian principles, and the consequent spread of corresponding errors, must always be the result of failing to enforce the law, on no matter how plausible a pretext. The expediency of any departure from the strict letter of the law is doubtful, to say the least of it. To teach thoroughly and well, the whole counsel of God demands, under all circumstances, a knowledge of that counsel adequate to the purpose.

2. But while we must earnestly contend for the vast and far-reaching importance of an educated ministry, we must also lay an increased stress on the even higher importance of a converted and spiritually holy ministry. The spiritual

insight which is a part of this internal equipment is vital, even to the perfection of the intellectual knowledge, without which the teaching of the gospel becomes impossible. A holy heart is as necessary as a sanctified intelligence. The heart conditions and controls the energies of the understanding to a greater or less extent on all subjects amenable to moral reasoning, and especially on the subject of religion. A heart unenlightened as to its own moral and spiritual condition, will be apt to discount the teachings of the scriptures touching the depravity and true guilt of a fallen creature. A heart untouched by the experimental knowledge of the grace of the gospel, and by a real love to its provisions of mercy and to its glorious author, is not likely to be determined to a true zeal in the advocacy of his cause. Natural energy and party zeal can give no such results of permanent and all-devoted and unselfish enthusiasm for the propagation of a system whose true significance is hidden from view because of the lack of that spiritual insight which Paul pronounced indispensable to the discernment of spiritual things—a lack which will leave the natural affections of an unholy heart to revolt against the truth. The spiritual tone of personal character in the preacher will also necessarily condition the influence of his instruction by affording a practical commentary upon it. If his own life and character bear no testimony to the reality and the value of what he recommends to others, it is vain to expect them to accept the principles and rules of living which he advocates with his lips and discredits by his life. A godless ministry is the most unmingled curse which the judicial anger of God can inflict upon the church or the world. A loving heart, full of sympathy with the spiritual destitutions of mankind, is indispensable to relate the ministry aright towards man. A holy nature, a pure life, and a devoted spirit are equally indispensable to relate the

ministry aright towards God. It is a qualification in the ministry vital to all its true ends.

3. A candid and fearless spirit is another vital quality in such a ministry as is suitable and necessary for the work of the office and for the welfare of the people. The inexorable fidelity with which the Word of God exposes the guilt, lays bare the depraved passions, and affirms all the awful conditions of a fallen creature's status, unavoidably stirs up the hostility of the human heart. Every possible effort to resist and discredit truths so painful will be made, no matter how necessary a true diagnosis of a disease may be to its cure; and the man whose duty it is made to expose and insist upon these distressing but necessary truths is sure to encounter more or less of this hostility. This will try his fidelity; it will test his candor and courage—his candor in the consideration and estimate of the truth, and his courage in proclaiming it. "I hate him, for he always prophesieth evil, and not good, concerning me," was the expression of an ancient sinner of high degree, towards a faithful messenger of the divine will. The resolute and honest purpose to construe the words of the Holy Ghost according to their obvious meaning, no matter how menacing to conscious guilt, and to refuse utterly to tamper with its utterances by the arts of cunning misinterpretation, is essential to the true preacher of the Word. To proclaim all the counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear to hear, to convict of sin, though the demonstration may rouse the angry passions of those who do not know that conviction is essential to repentance, and repentance to salvation, demands firmness and courage to do this necessary, though painful, work. Courage is essential to integrity, to well-balanced character, and to real usefulness in every branch of life; and to no employment is it more essential than to the ministry of the gospel.

4. Aptness to teach is another qualification essential to the teacher of the Word. Any amount of knowledge will fail of effect unless the possessor is able to communicate it to others. Instruction is the main business of the ministerial office; and no ministerial service is of any true value which, deficient in instructiveness, seeks chiefly to entertain, excite, and gratify the taste. Facility in conveying information may exist on a wide scale of degrees in the Christian ministry; but some efficient measure of it is indispensable. A ministry will be really useful in proportion to this quality, which Paul made prominent in the description of what sort of a minister Timothy should be.

5. Meekness, patience, and faith—all allied qualities—are also necessary to the Christian teacher. To encounter the passion, prejudice, and injustice to the truth which will spring up in the unholy heart, when the gospel preacher is unarmored by the meekness of a holy heart, is to lose the object he has in view at the outset. To encounter the ignorance, feebleness of faculty, and slowness to apprehend, which will be found in many hearers without patience and forbearance, is also to invite defeat. To be filled with eager zeal, and yet to be patient and work under all the vast and protracted forms of resistance to the truth, requires faith in God, in the covenant, and in the promises of the King. All these things are indispensable qualifications in every workman in the gospel service, who will have no need to be ashamed.

6. The second part of the answer given in the text to the question, What qualifications are necessary to such a teacher as may be suitable to be a helper of our faith? is that he must be able rightly to divide the truth. This ability includes more than the analytical faculty which is able to develop the logical bearings of the truth, while it does emphatically include this gift. The Christian teacher is to reason out of the scriptures.

The exposition of the words of the sacred text calls for the exercise of the discriminating faculty. To enable the clear comprehension of the exact meaning and limits of the truth when drawn from the record demands the exercise of the same analytical process. The proofs of the truth drawn from the scriptures, and the confirmation of their teachings from any other source of evidence which may be available, demand the same energy to be employed. To point out the relation of one truth to another, and to preserve undistorted the beautiful proportions and symmetry of the faith, call for this right division and definition of the truth. The logical bearings, relations, and consequences of the truth all require it. To show the effects and uses of the truth, all demand the exercise of this discrimination, without which no clear and durable conception can be formed.

7. The ability rightly to divide the truth also embraces the duty of giving the proper degree of stress to the different truths contained in the scriptures; laying suitable weight on the more important, and keeping the less important from being unduly magnified in the conceptions of the people. We are taught that obedience is better than sacrifice, although both may be required. To tithe, mint, anise, and cummin, and neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, is to confound the natural importance of things absolutely different, though both may be required. Many of the prevailing errors in the church have sprung from laying undue stress upon matters of comparative unimportance. The teachers in these cases have not been able rightly to divide the truth. To be able to judge in such matters, exemplified by the case of David and the shewbread, where the lesser truth is clearly prescribed, yet may be lawfully postponed for a higher consideration, is of inexpressible value in a teacher of the Word. No more fruitful source of error is to

be found than in this want of clear and penetrating judgment on the relative weight of truth.

8. The ability to rightly divide the truth also includes the proper presentation of the different truths of the divine Word in that order in which their effect may be most wisely accomplished. The law is a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." The law is designed, with other important purposes, to convict of sin, and to thus impress a sense of the need of repentance and atonement. To refuse to teach and use the law, as many progressive moderns do, and rely only on the presentation of the grace of the gospel to awaken and win the careless mind, is to fail to divide the truth aright. The law must be taught in order to convince of sin, and the gospel in order to give peace to conscience. It is said that the apostles "so preached that many believed." It is a matter of solemn responsibility in the Christian ministry to know how to select, proportion, and adapt the varied truths of the Bible in their preaching. They are to know how to judge the differences in the case of different individuals, and how to apply the truth accordingly; they are to warn the unruly, to support the weak, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to give to each his portion in due season. To know how to divide the truth is to know how to encourage the timid without stimulating the careless and presumptuous to farther neglect. It is to be skillful in warning the secure without oppressing the feeble. There are phases of the truth adapted to every phase of experience; and to divide the truth aright is to be able to make the application of the truth suitable to the character and mental status of each individual. It demands a real knowledge of human nature, and a true soundness of judgment to be able to do this with effect.

9. The ability rightly to divide the truth also implies the

skill and knowledge needful to guide the private student of the scriptures, as well as to form the public judgment in distinguishing the character of different declarations of truth in the sacred books. Some of the contents of revelation are designed simply to illustrate what is true, but not to affirm the actual reality of what is employed in the illustration. To this class belong the parable of the trees choosing the bramble as king. Perhaps some, if not all, the parables of our Lord, and the symbolic scenes of prophetic vision, are of the same kind. Other prescriptions of the Word were designed only for a temporary obligation, more or less extended. Of this species the whole Mosaic ritual is an example. Other prescriptions were not designed to express the permanent moral law, but only an accommodation made necessary by the peculiar circumstances of a peculiar case; as, for instance, where the barbarity of a degraded people required a modification of the law in order to prevent greater excess. The government of a gang of roughs in a coal mine would require greater severity than would be just in an orderly community. Of this class was the Jewish law of divorce, which our Lord said was a permission on account of the hardness of the heart and the low type of moral sentiment among a people demoralized by centuries of remorseless tyranny. Of the same general character were the concessions to Jewish prejudice by the apostles, in permitting circumcision, for a time, among the Jewish branches of the Christian church. Some of the precepts of the Word were of temporary, and some of permanent design; and it is indispensable that the teacher of the Word should be able to discriminate between them. The enormous error of clerical celibacy grew out of a mistake of this description, confounding a temporary with a permanent ordinance. Paul discouraged marriage, both among the officers of the church and the masses of private Christians,

as a temporary expedient in a period of persecution; but commended and commanded it, as a general law for both classes, in all ordinary circumstances. Failing rightly to divide these qualifications of the law, great and desolating error has been developed. Without this discrimination of judgment, the parable of the unjust steward, who basely altered and sacrificed the just claims of his master for his own advantage, might be made the vehicle and pretext for the most demoralizing conceptions of duty. It was only the wisdom, not the integrity, of this unscrupulous trickster which is recommended to our imitation; his prudence in preparing for an inevitable emergency, not his keen-sighted and ingenious fraud in making that preparation. The right division of the truth implies the just conception of each separate truth of the holy scriptures, in itself, in its design, and in its relations to other truths of the same infallible and divine, yet most human, proclamation of all the truth needful to be believed and done, in order to salvation. The gift of a sound and discriminating judgment is as important, if not really more so, to the ministry of the Word of God than to any other class of men whatever.

10. We give, in conclusion, a brief answer to the question, "In what does the authority of the teaching of the Christian ministry consist?" Certainly not in an official authority to settle and announce dogmatically the sense of the scriptures. It is to be found solely in the truth itself. No man is bound to believe anything but what the evidence shows to be true. Every man is bound to believe what is true, and what the evidence shows to be true. The authority over faith lies solely in the truth; for faith is simply receiving a thing as true. Now the truth revealed in the scriptures is certified by God himself; and this truth does not cease to be his truth because it is repeated by human lips. The authority to bind the

conscience to believe and obey is the sole prerogative of Almighty God. The bond to believe is created by all truth; the bond to obey, run back into the last analysis, is created by his personal excellence. In the great class of religious truth, the immediate obligation to believe springs from God's own declaration and endorsement. When that truth is either read by a private person, or taught by an official teacher, it is still God's truth, and binds to belief and obedience. The relation of the Christian teacher to that truth is simply to tell what God says; and the authority of the truth will not be created, but only revealed by the teacher; and will become more apparent and bind more clearly on the conscience the more clearly the meaning of the record is brought out by the reasoning of the teacher out of the scriptures. The same rule of clear exposition of the mind of the Spirit applies to all the necessary inferences which are compelled out of the truths affirmed in the scriptures by the laws of thought. These necessary inferences are to be received as a part of the revelation given. All necessary inferences from scripture truth carry equal authority with those truths because they are compelled out of them by those laws of thought which God has impressed upon the process of thinking. For example, when the scriptures affirm that Christ our Lord is God, the inference is compelled out of this truth that it is our duty to worship and obey him. Those inferences, then, are definite expressions of his will, determined by his truth, and expressed in the laws which he has impressed upon his creature, the human understanding. But all the authority to bind the conscience is in the truth alone, and not in the official functions of the teacher of the Word, in any sense, or shape, or degree whatever. All his claim to be heeded is conditioned on his rightly dividing the Word of God; and the conscience can be bound only by the truth, which in all its

species is an expression of the intelligence, integrity, and will of God, as conveyed by his creative and providential power or by his moral and revealed laws. Truth binds because it is the expression of his excellence and the instrument of his administration over his moral and responsible creatures. Truth is the expression of his knowledge, his integrity, and his authority to command; it is a determination of his whole character, and, therefore, carries obligation upon conscience. Conscience can be bound in no other way.

As the authority of the teaching of the ministry does not depend upon his official function, neither does it consist in the clearness of the apprehension or the strength of the convictions which the teacher himself may have in the truth of what he teaches. These are personal to the teacher; they will give a certain weight and energy to the assertion of his views, which is often contagious, but they add nothing to the truth and consequent authority of his teaching. The same clearness of view, and the same intensity of conviction, may be, and often has been, concerned in the assertion of error. This fact shows that the authority of the teacher is not a mere incident of office, nor the result of energy of personal convictions, but solely of the truth. If he mistakes the truth and teaches error, his instructions carry no weight; but if he teaches the truth which God has revealed, he speaks with all the authority of God. This inference gives no undue magnitude to his office or his person, for the same authority would attach to the utterance if spoken by an idiot or a babe, or repeated by a machine. The authority is in the truth and in him who uttered it, and in them alone. The truth can only be known through its evidence; the evidence is in the Word which God has revealed; and the relation of the ministry is simply to display this evidence by repeating the testimony of the record, and reasoning out of the scriptures

which his hearers are to search, like the Bereans of the apostolic era, to see if the things spoken are so. But in proportion to the completeness with which he develops the evidence he will display the truth, and thus bind the conscience. He himself has no power to bind the conscience directly, either through his office or his personal convictions; he can only do it indirectly by developing the evidence which discovers the truth, and, through the truth, creates obligation.

USES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

SIXTH SERMON.

MANNER OF USING IT.

“Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.”—EPHESIANS iii. 4.

“Ye have not his word abiding in you.”—JOHN v. 38.

“Comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”—1 COR. ii. 13.

HAVING vindicated the right of all men as sinners, under a dispensation of grace, to use all the means and instruments appointed to be used in order to secure the salvation offered in the gospel—the holy scriptures among others—we now propose to draw from these sacred records their own prescriptions, touching the manner in which they ought to be employed, in order to obtain the blessing connected in the gracious purposes of God with their right use.

1. In the first place, there ought always to be an habitual recognition of their sanctity as the Word of God, given by the Holy Ghost. No habit of mind could be more disastrous than an established custom of sinking the sacred character of the Scriptures, in an estimate not specifically different from the estimate of all other books. The esteem yielded to an address from some high and important public character, who has entitled himself to the respect of his country by his service to the public, is felt to be due, and the refusal of it a breach of good taste, as well as of moral obligation. To place the farewell address of Washington on a level with the appeal of a candidate for constable would be a reflection on the intelligence and moral feeling of the community. A

reverent spirit, bred by the recognition that when we open our Bibles we are attending to the very words of Almighty God, is of the utmost importance to the right and profitable use of the sacred books. It is truly as if "the still small voice" in which God spoke to Samuel in the temple at Shiloh, and Elijah on the crags of Sinai, was sounding in our ears. The old pagan Greek, when he went up on the steep of Delphos to consult the oracle of Apollo, listened with unutterable awe to the cries of the Pythoness as she writhed on the tripod of the temple. Reverence was the logical demand from his point of view. The prophet wrapped his face in his mantle, when the still, soft notes of the awful voice fell on his ears. Something of the same spirit of reverence should animate all our conceptions of the scriptures. Nothing could be a fitter preparation for attending suitably to what the record may utter. Nothing could more effectively drive out the spirit of cavilling, and the disposition to question, qualify, or reject whatever statement might tempt the spirit of unbelief. To listen reverently is preparatory to listening with a believing and an obedient spirit. All trifling; all undue haste; all dispositions adverse to the grave, tender tone and lofty authority of the sacred books, should be put away when we deliberately put our minds in contact with the mind of God. To read the letter of a dead mother, full of the tenderness and solicitude of her heart for the welfare of her child, with a spirit of mockery or indifference, would shock us by its incongruous violence to all right feeling. The spirit of our reading of God's Word should be answerable to his dignity, and to the immeasurable importance of his communications to us.

2. In the second place, we should always come to the use of the scriptures with a suitable recognition of their function as a means of grace, and with an attitude of mind adjusted to this part of their appointed character. A feeling of our

personal need of the things which these words were written to secure; an intense desire to receive that blessing in rich degrees; an earnest purpose and determination to shun all preventives of its coming, and gain it in some good measure if possible, is a necessary and altogether a becoming frame of mind in which to open our Bibles. Great dearth of spiritual favor may often be traced to a careless handling of the holy book. This species of aspiration after profit in the use of the scriptures is marked in some of the utterances of the inspired writers. "O how love I thy law: it is my meditation all the day: it is sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honey-comb." It is well-nigh incredible that any soul should come to the use of the Word of God with this open, eager expectancy and hope of refreshment, and fail to receive at least a measure of fulfilled expectation and desire.

3. Yet further: as the states of our minds in handling the Word of God should be suitably adjusted, not only to the high character and claims of the divine revelation, but also to the various kinds of truth which it brings to view—a rule of use which is all-important to the right employment of them—we must distinctly recognize our dependence upon the influences of the Holy Spirit and the help of Christ, the Prophet of the Covenant, in our study of the sacred oracles. He can, and he must, open our understandings to understand the scriptures, as he did those of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Under the provisions of the covenant of grace, he has provided the influences of the Spirit to redeem his pledge to every believer, to open their blind eyes and enlighten them in the knowledge of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." There are two forms of knowledge, or ways of knowing the same thing: one the simple recognition of it as a fact; the other, the true compre-

hension of the real significance of the fact. By the one kind of knowledge we may know that fire will burn without touching it; by the other, we may know the very same thing, but in a very different way, by touching it. To know the immortality of the soul, under the one kind, is simply to know that the soul will never die. To know it under the other species of knowledge is to see into the significance of the grand fact until the flesh creeps upon the bones and the hair stiffens upon the head. To have the first kind of knowledge of the contents of the scriptures is possible without the aid of the Holy Spirit; to have the second is impossible. The first is competent to earthly scholarship and faculty on natural conditions; the other requires the aid of the supernatural grace of God for the reason Paul states, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." At the same time, it is also true that, even in the sphere of natural knowledge, the aid of Almighty God may be rationally sought under the general law of the dependence of the creature upon the creator. Lord Bacon says there is something accidental in all thought. By consequence, even in natural knowledge, there is a possibility of one man's being led to see things which another man, perhaps more gifted, may not see. Hence it is not either irrational or unscriptural to pray for the guidance and aid of our divine Guardian, even in studying the scriptures on the level of mere natural knowledge. He thus opened the understanding of the Emmaus disciples to take in the real meaning of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. But in reference to the other form of knowledge, the spiritual discernment of the spiritual sense of scripture, there is no possibility of attaining it, except through the influences of the Prophet of the Covenant and his Holy Spirit on the spiritual intuitions of the soul. Hence then, on account of both forms

of knowledge, and the important dependence on the grace of God for the perfection of attainment in either, it is a vital matter in the study of the Word of God to recognize our Lord in his office as the Prophet of his people, and look to him for guidance and enlightenment in the discovery of the truth. The more habitually and effectively this is done, the more will our profiting in the study of the Word of God appear.

4. As a matter of course, this dependence on Christ and the influence of his Spirit involves, as an indispensable concomitant of all successful investigation of the scriptures, the unceasing spirit and employment of prayer. It is one of those marvellous results which demonstrate the profound distinction between the Bible and all other books, that while a true and approximately complete knowledge in all the spheres of natural knowledge may be gained without prayer, the Bible will not yield its real treasure without it. A man may be a profound scholar in the natural knowledge of the scriptures; a learned commentator; an astute critic in its style, structure, and the idioms of its language; a profound philosopher in its logic, and yet have not the faintest conception of its true significance. Examples of this sort are on the records of the church. Such knowledge is always built up without prayer—without any real appeal to Christ as the Prophet and to the influences of the Holy Spirit. “The letter killeth: the Spirit only maketh alive.” Let it be a fixed principle to begin, accompany, and end all study of the oracles of God with earnest prayer that the Prophet of the Covenant would open our understandings to understand the Scriptures, and to give us the Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth. The well-nigh abject stupidity with which the disciples of our Lord failed to see the meaning of his plain premonitions of the coming event in his personal history, gives a lesson to all mankind

of the perpetual need of an influence on the individual mind in taking in the full significance of the truth. Note, too, that the truth which they so completely misapprehended was not drawn from a written record, but given them by the lips of a living and inspired teacher, which shows that the Romanist rule so persistently asserted against the scriptures is as powerless to lead into the correct conception of the truth without an influence on the individual, opening the understanding, as a written record could possibly be. Christ repeatedly told his disciples that he was to die and rise from the dead; but their minds were so completely dominated by their own preconceptions of a Messiah living and reigning in great earthly splendor, that they failed utterly to comprehend the plainest words he could use. Whatever the rule of faith may be, the necessity of an influence on the sin-blinded eyes of individual men cannot be evaded.

5. Yet again: while the scriptures are the Word of God, and a means of grace, it is also necessary to remember that the Bible is a book written for human understandings, in human language, in human forms of thought, under the guidance of all the ordinary laws of human language; and, consequently, it is to be studied under the same rules of construction as any other book. The necessity of recognizing it as the Word of Almighty God, and according it a suitable reverence, does not abolish the necessity to interpret it by the ordinary laws of construing human language. Its statements are to be investigated under the guidance of the laws of grammar and the usage of the language in which they are written. Its thoughts, when taken out of the words used to convey them, are to be formulated according to their logical relations and interdependence, and constructed into a system, according to the natural and universally prevalent laws of thought, just as every other system of ideas; and as any such

system will be discredited if it proves to be incoherent, and worthy of respect if found logically consistent, so will the theology of the scriptures be vindicated. To study the Word of God to any real and material advantage to our thorough knowledge of its system of doctrine, the student is compelled to the observance of several all-important maxims. The mere devotional reading of the sacred books will allow of a less strict observance of these rules of systematic study, though it, too, would be profited by some attention to them.

In the first place, the reading of the scriptures must be conducted as a real study. The record will yield a benefit to any kind of honest inquiry, but it will not yield its richest treasure to any perfunctory handling. The command is to "search the scriptures"; to "study to show our profiting in the Word of God." The prevailing habit of many Christian people, in the mere skimming of the sacred page, is really a habit full of danger. It is only a few degrees above no handling of the record at all. The notion which underlies the usage is utterly mistaken. It seems as if the Bible was construed as a sort of charm, an amulet of holy witchcraft, a spiritual battery which will discharge its mystic forces by mere contact. We are to be "sanctified by the truth," and the necessary condition to the action and effect of the truth is the grasp of the truth by the intellect. Other things being equal, the more the intellect comprehends of the truth, the more will its sanctifying power be felt. The more the significance and weight of the idea of moral accountability is comprehended, the more effective will be its influence upon character and conduct. The more every doctrine of the Christian faith is understood, the more will the power of each of them be impressed upon the soul.

This fact then suggests the second maxim, which is important in the use of the scriptures. It has been suggested

that the laws of interpretation must be applied to get at the meaning of the record, and some knowledge of these laws is indispensable. The characteristic of the scriptures which makes the application of the usual laws of construing human language so important, is the fact that they are written in human words and in the use of metaphors and figures which are characteristic of human language and modes of thought. The legitimate effect of applying the laws of construction to the record is the enforcement of definite conceptions of the truth stated. It is an evil habit to pass any statement of the record without having some definite notion of its meaning. This definiteness of conception is the necessary preliminary to the formation of those approximate conceptions of the weight and significance of the truth taught, of which we have just spoken. Many readers of the Bible are guided in their use of it by mere mechanical habit. They read such a number of chapters or verses by mere rote; and their consciences are not satisfied unless they complete the daily tale. The comprehension of what is read is altogether secondary to the quantity which is read. This is a false habit, which needs to be corrected. A certain dignity and deliberation, indicated by the avoidance of all undue haste in reading, is entirely appropriate, provided it is attended with the real and definite understanding of the sense. But far better, like Paul in the matter of prayer in an unknown tongue, take in five words with the understanding than ten thousand words which carry no light to the mind. It is a good rule to take up into the thoughts, morning or night, a single utterance of the Holy Ghost, and busy the mind about it at intervals during the day, as time and other duties may allow. This fearless formation of definite conceptions of the truths stated in the record read is very important to the moral, as well as the intellectual, handling of the scriptures. It is a strong help to that honesty

of heart in dealing with the truth which is so strongly urged by the sacred writers, and is so obviously proper. We are warned against handling the Word of God deceitfully, or wresting it to our own destruction. A true knowledge of the rules of interpretation will prevent all attempts to escape from hard and difficult things by ingenious constructions. The use of these rules is friendly to integrity of purpose, as well as accuracy of conclusion.

The third maxim growing out of the necessity of really grasping the truth, in order to realize its power to sanctify, is to form a habit of thought about the truth when it is extracted from the record. It is of great importance to learn to think out the relations, limits, and uses of the truth. We are commanded to "compare scripture with scripture, and spiritual things with spiritual things." The searching of the scriptures by the Bereans is commended. "Reasoning out of the scriptures" is warranted by the example of the apostles, and is absolutely necessary to completeness of view into the grand system of Christ. The logical structure of this divine philosophy of God, man, and the universe, is equal in its intellectual combination of its dependent parts to any system the world has ever known, and superior to them all in the certainty of its knowledge of facts, and in its moral and spiritual quality. It is of high value to understand the analogy of the faith, and the harmony of all its parts. It is due to the neglect of this mode of handling the Word of God, that the average Christian of our day really understands so little of the grand doctrines of the gospel, and, by consequence, derives so little comfort and personal satisfaction from his own cherished share in them. If the doctrines of justification and adoption lay in the minds and hearts of Christians in the simplicity and completeness with which they lie in the scriptures, there would be far more rejoicing and happy Christians than there

are. These great things delineated in the verbal descriptions of them which we call doctrines, reach down deep into the vital processes of Christian living and Christian comfort. Every follower of Christ ought to comprehend and hold fast the whole glorious system in which their hope and confidence are fixed. They can never do this without constant and active employment of all their mental energies upon it. None need fear ever to exhaust the interest or reach the limit of this knowledge. The grand scheme will expand forever before the opening intellects of saint and angel.

6. This necessity for study and thoughtfulness in the use of the scriptures suggests another condition for the most profitable employment of them; it ought to be a systematic and daily thing. The proportion of time allowable for this deliberate use of the sacred record will vary according to the conditions of life in the history of each individual. Some will find more time than others; but it may be laid down as a law of application, strictly universal, that no one who is seeking spiritual profit and growth in grace can under any circumstances of regular living entirely neglect the serious daily use of this great means of grace without serious loss. Even if only ten minutes can be given to it, the deliberate and earnest use of the daily scripture and prayer ought to be rigorously observed. It cannot be neglected with impunity. The real magnitude of the work not only illustrates the necessity of the firm daily use of small fragments of time, but also the infinite value of the Sabbath as a day reserved to sacred uses.

7. This necessity of real study of the Word also illustrates another important condition of successful Bible study; and that is the use of all such helps as may be available to the increase of information touching the teaching of the scriptures. The ministry are appointed as teachers of the law,

and the people are to seek their aid in their own study of the record. Certainly, if there were more of this earnest searching of the scriptures, there would be a far more interested attendance upon public preaching, and a far higher and broader teaching in the pulpit. Books, commentaries, and maps, illustrative of historical and geographical facts and metaphors in the language of the record, are very helpful in the study of the "Word of grace." In the daily use of scripture by the average Christian, male or female, the use of such helps must needs be scanty and imperfect. To this class of readers, a book partly expository and partly devotional, like Jay's *Morning and Evening Exercises*, would be of great value. The church and the world are richer now in a literature illustrative of the sacred books than at any previous period of history; none need be without cheap and valuable assistance in the study of the Bible.

8. This necessity of energetic study and active employment of the reflective faculties upon the matter drawn from the Word of God also involves, in a high scale of importance, the fixation of Bible knowledge in the memory. "Remember the words of Moses which he commanded you." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Fix in the mind something of what you read, every time you do it. Fix the order of the facts, as, for instance, in the life of Christ. Fix the logical order of the Christian doctrine with the arguments and testimonies of scripture in proof. Commit the words of the record to memory. There is great loss involved in the lack of this storage of the Word to both the private Christian and the teacher of the Word. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I sin not against thee." "The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit." Unless fixed in the memory, this sword is not ready to his hand when

he comes to the help of the believer in the hour of temptation. The digest in thought of the truths of the gospel is greatly dependent upon the consignment of that truth to memory. To read and not remember is the next thing to not reading at all. Accurate and well-stored knowledge is as valuable to the useful effects of religious truth as it is to every other kind of truth. It is a habit of mind of inestimable value in seeking to grow in the knowledge of the truth which it has pleased God to reveal for our salvation.

9. It is also necessary, to the full profit of reading the Word of God, that it should be read with a real faith in all its teachings. "The word did not profit a certain class of those who heard the preaching of the apostles, because it was not mixed with faith." Christ told the Jews they did not really believe the writings of Moses, to whom they were fanatically devoted; for if "ye had believed his writings, ye would have believed my words." The value of any statement is destroyed unless it is believed; refusal to credit it as true reduces it to a nullity. The suspension of all the benefits of the gospel upon faith in the receiver of the good news is not altogether a matter of a divine appointment; faith is necessary to give effect to the truth. Come to the Word of God with a lively sense of the absolute truth of all its grand revelations. Come to it, trembling at its warnings and menaces against obdurate impenitence. God is pitiful to him who trembles at his word. Fear is properly employed to bring men up to a watchful and guarded walk. Oversecurity is the ruin of thousands. It is a wise caution, "Be not high-minded, but fear." Come with real faith in all the provisions and promises of the Word. It assures us that the "blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin"; confidence in that statement will bring peace to conscience. All the promises are "yea and amen in Christ Jesus"; faith in them will fill

the heart with hope. The Word of God is true; coming to its study with this truth firmly fixed in our confidence, we can trust all its statements as guides out of error. "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." The sword of the Spirit is a deadly weapon against all error—against temptation and practical yielding to sin. Under the power of faith, count all scripture profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. Every part of the sacred record has its own purpose to serve, if we are wise enough to discover it. Faith in the word will also lead us to read it with a watchful care to obey its directions. It is a record of energetic universal truths; and we read it with loss of profit, unless we read it as the descriptive sheet of a grand living panorama of events and facts, developed and to be developed, by conformity or non-conformity, to the great living laws and principles which have been revealed from heaven. The historical fulfilment of the divine Word is not merely, or even mainly, the fulfilment of prophecy; but the verification of the eternal principles of moral law and revealed grace, as illustrated in the actual course of human affairs. Thus read, it will furnish a powerful current antidote to unbelief in all its forms, developed in the administration of actual events. Reading with faith will also create the wholesome resolve to accept all the affirmations of God in his Word, in spite of pride, prejudice and passion. The contact of a superior mind with an inferior will always yield something of mystery and difficult of comprehension to the intelligence of the inferior faculty. There are many things in the scriptures hard to be understood. What we know not now we shall know hereafter. It is wise to read God's word, as if it really was what it is—the utterance of an infinitely superior understanding; and thus not be driven from our confidence because we are not able to comprehend

all it is pleased to announce. We can accept the fact, even though we are not able to understand all that it involves. Lastly, faith will dictate another and final condition of profit in reading the Scriptures; this is, to go to the wondrous records anxious to learn the method of active service they prescribe. To study any record with a pointed and practical purpose in view—to learn what to do and how to do it—will always give definiteness to what we learn. Go to the scriptures resolved to do what we can ascertain to be his will, and anxious to learn, in order that we may do. “Ye shall do all the words of this law.” This keen-pointed purpose will always prevent any form of dullness or lack of interest in the reading or hearing of the Word.

10. Lastly, we shall allude briefly to the sin and peril of negligence or indifference in the use of the scriptures. It is a sin of extraordinary presumption. It says in effect, “God speaks to me, but I don’t care if he does; I shall pay no attention to him.” The neglected Bibles in our homes are the occasions of deadly insult to the Great King. The Christian Delphos is at our hearth-stones; but we contemn the oracle which speaks with infinitely more power and persuasive influence than the cry of the frenzied Pythoness of old. It is just the same sin, as if the still far-off voice which spoke to Elijah was sending its sweet-toned, thrilling accents through our chambers, and we should reply, “Shut up! I want to hear nothing you have to say.” A Bible is the articulate Word of God; a neglected Bible, wilfully prevented from speaking to us, is just the response, “I don’t want to hear a word from you.” It is needless to illustrate the presumption, folly and peril of such an audacious sin—so keen in its insult—so daring in its blasphemy. If God has seen the necessity of speaking to us in articulate words, it is obvious wisdom and reverence for us to hearken for our lives.

USES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

SEVENTH SERMON.

MANNER OF HEARING IT PREACHED.

“And he called the multitude and said unto them, Hear and understand.”—MATTHEW xv. 10.

ONE last question remains to be answered in connection with the rich subject of our relations to the written Word: the proper relation of the people to the official teaching of the Word by the Christian ministry. Their right and duty to search the scriptures for themselves, and the manner in which they ought to search them; and the relation of the ministry to the written word having been illustrated, the important question demands attention, “In what way the people should listen to the public exposition of the revealed mind of the Holy Spirit?” Man is so seriously damaged in all the powers of his spiritual structure that he is prone to error in apprehending the truth, no matter how carefully he may be instructed. He needs line upon line. He is prone to extremes; to over or underestimate; and it is a thing of the first and last concern to him that he should know how to hear, and how to handle the instructions of the official teachers of the gospel. Christ gave this explicit warning, “Take heed how ye hear; for unto him that hath, shall be given; and unto him that hath not, shall be taken even that which he hath.” That is to say, those who, in listening to the words of God, get some knowledge of his truth, and put it into practice, will gain a profit by it; but those who, after listening, have nothing, retain nothing, and turn nothing to

account, will lose even that which was given them, even the gratuitous lesson from which they derived no benefit, will be entirely lost to them. Therefore, take heed to the way in which you hear.

1. It is practically an important thing, in attending on the public teaching of the divine Word, that the mind and heart should be put into an attitude of preparation and expectancy. A season of prayer, more or less protracted, and the deliberate recognition of the work about to be done before going to the house of worship, is a consideration of real practical moment. The preaching of the gospel is not merely an exercise of the understanding, in giving and receiving instruction; but it is an ordinance and established part of divine worship. The difficulties in the way of the successful employment of this ordinance are not merely the difficulties arising from untrained faculty common to instruction on all subjects, but also the peculiar inaptness to receive spiritual truth growing out of the moral and spiritual condition of the soul, and out of the unseen, but positive, efforts to obstruct the light, made by spiritual enemies. Satan never meddles with any man learning mathematics or chemistry; but he always does with the man trying to learn the way of salvation. No ordinance of divine worship, no one of the means of grace, can be made effectual without the aids of divine grace in the motions of the Holy Spirit. To appeal for the help of that influence, then, and to order the mind and heart into some suitable preparation by prayer and meditation, is always of real and very great practical importance in the use of any and all the appointed ordinances. The apparent waste of so much strong and well-prepared pulpit instruction is no doubt due, in part, to the neglect of this preliminary preparation on the part of the people, and the general want of recognition of the importance and necessity for it. The house of God is entered

with no preliminary ordering of the thoughts; the mind and heart are not adjusted to receive impressions; and consequently, like the ill-prepared plate of a careless photographer, no perfect and abiding impression from the light of the divine Word can be made. The student of any science who enters the lecture-rooms of his school with the best preparatory furniture, both of knowledge and awakened mental energy, will gain more from the additional light thrown into the mind. The worshipper who comes to receive a new lesson in divine things, with the best preparation of prayer, and thoughtful recollection of the purpose for which he enters the sanctuary, will receive the most benefit, under the same law of mental action.

2. Hear the public exposition of the scriptures with real attention. The command of the text, "Hear and understand," is only a special application to the teaching of religion of a general maxim necessarily determined by the fundamental demand of all forms of instruction. If not understood, its whole purpose is defeated. The main object of teaching is to instruct, with a view to the increase of knowledge, and through knowledge, to determine action and modify character. If so rendered that for any reason it cannot be understood, its whole aim, or set of aims, is prevented. The object of the preaching of the gospel is to enable and advance the understanding of the truth which God has revealed in order to the salvation of mankind. The declaration of the scriptures, the exact meaning and limitations of each grand truth of the Christian system, the force of all the powerful inducements to accept it, must be understood in order to accomplish their ends. To understand anything the mind must attend to it; and so absolute is the connection between attention and clear understanding, that the progress in knowledge will be rigorously controlled by the degree in which the energies of

the mind are fixed upon the subject. The importance of attending to the preaching of the gospel with this roused and resolute energy of the intellect cannot be overstated. The voice of God has uttered no truth which is not of grave importance. "All scripture is profitable." Much of it requires concentrated force of mind to comprehend it. Its teachings take hold upon the most vital interests of human existence. Every consideration which has made it important for God to speak, makes it important for man to hear and understand what he has said; and the fixed energy of his powers of comprehension is indispensable to do this. Yet more: let it never be forgotten that there are special obstructions to the reception of the truth revealed from heaven, and, consequently, a special necessity for counteracting vigilance. Far too often is the deadly purpose of the tempter to nullify the gracious ends of the truth, accomplished by the skillful manipulation of the natural inaptness, or the moral stupefactions of the mind, just in this matter of attention. He distracts the thoughts; he deadens the sensibility which would give interest to the truth; he picks up the seed as soon as it is sown. The results are fearful. Many persons attend preaching for years, yet never hear it. They are utterly wearied under the grand illumination of the gospel of grace. Nowhere are they bored with such exquisite vigor and success as in the service of the sanctuary. The immortal cressets kindled by the finger of God to illumine the darkness, and reveal the most precious interests of the human race, fall in vain on the dull, horny eyes of the inattentive observer. The result is the same as if the gospel was never proclaimed to him; he never hears it; he is a self-made heathen; he places himself in the exact position of the pagan who has never heard the story of redemption; but with the one tremendous difference, of responsibility infinitely enhanced. Want of attention nullifies the

whole deliverance of the truth. It is as if one tried to rouse a self-absorbed muser to an approaching tempest of appalling wind, levelling all before it, and whose only response is a dull, vacant wandering of the eye in the opposite direction. Want of attention is saying to the awful voice of an articulate God, keenly remonstrating, persuading, and urging to action, "I am sleepy; let me alone."

3. It is a legitimate suggestion, distinct from attention, although they are always inseparably connected, to say that it is vital to all solid profiting under gospel preaching, to hear with intense desire to receive the full benefit of public instruction. As the leading function of the ministry is to teach, the leading obligation of the hearer is to learn. As the full development of the truth involves far more than the mere statement of the truth, and embraces the formation of just conceptions of the truth, with a view to affect the feelings of the hearer, as well as his judgment, just so the wise effort of the receiver of the double impression should lead him to adjust himself to both, and be ready to be impressed, as well as instructed. Such a discipline would lead him into a career of endless growth in the knowledge and conception of Christian truth, and into an endless increase of energy and of personal holiness. This possibility of unceasing growth in knowledge and spiritual strength is powerfully adapted to enkindle the desire of the soul. To take new views of the truth without departing from it; to have old, familiar ideas freshened, enlarged and intensified to our view; to form deeper and clearer, stronger and more complete notions of the blessedness of those who believe; to see more into the fullness and wealth of the promises; to gain larger apprehensions of the grace and power of the Saviour of sinners—all these great Christian truths are powerfully adapted to stir up the languid affections of the heart. This is the spirit

which will bring blessing in the hearing of the Word. Our highest interests are concerned in this revealed truth; by it we shall stand or fall in the judgment; by it the destinies for eternity will be determined. As this is the truth of Almighty God, the grand declaration he has been pleased to make to a world of sinning immortals, this fact alone is sufficient to proclaim the infinite dignity, weight and importance of what is contained in the revelation made by him. If it does not interest us, the fault is in ourselves—in our own blindness. A stupid lout may stand before a great painting, the masterpiece of an immortal artist, and see nothing but an unintelligible mass of forms and colors; but the blindness will be in himself, and this insensibility will infer no reproach upon the perfection of the work of art. Just so, any lack of interest in God's great gospel can only spring from a wholly incompetent apprehension of what it is. Let us elevate our conceptions of the grand truths revealed to us; and then we shall be able to do a higher measure of justice to the majesty of God, and to our own weightiest interests, by making our desires to know and appreciate his truth more adequate to the dignity and value of the truth itself.

4. Hear the Word with real candor; with a spirit bent upon obtaining the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This disposition is exceedingly rare. Men listen to what falls in with their own views with eagerness and delight; but to all statements which impeach their own convictions they listen with undisguised aversion. Many refuse to hear at all anything which grates upon their prejudices or awakens questioning thoughts. If anything is said with this result, they at once absent themselves from the worship of God. Others draw themselves up into a shell, more impenetrable than the shell of a tortoise. Others listen with an expression of contempt, sometimes offensively undisguised.

All this is a wrong way in which to receive teachings which are erroneous. It invariably indicates a defective knowledge, or a defective confidence in the views which are held as against the offensive error. If one has a clear and intelligent comprehension of his own accepted views and the evidence which supports them, and really confides in the grounds upon which they rest, no counter assertion will ever awaken a spirit of resentment when they are impugned. No one who holds the truth need ever fear to review the evidence of it, no matter how frequently. Nay, the doctrine of contraries, the philosophers tell us, is one; and, whatever that may mean, it is certain that we never see any idea so clearly as in the light of its contrast. It is often the very strongest confirmation of a truth to listen to an exposition of its antagonist error. While morally considered, looking to the effect upon our own disposition, and the fair judicial spirit which is willing, without prejudice or passion, to look at both sides of a question, is eminently healthful. There is, again, nothing more powerful, as an advocacy of the truth, than this candid and liberal spirit in holding our own views and in construing those who differ from us. The narrow bigotry, which can never hear a doubt of its own principles without resentment, or an uncharitable construction of the personal character and convictions of an opponent, is not only depraving to the character and a reproach to the understanding, but a hindrance to the cause of the misguided advocate of the truth. Remember that our allegiance is due only to God, and our obligation is only to the truth. The truth stands upon its evidence, and claims acceptance only as it is made manifest. It can only be refused by a misjudgment of the evidence. The most formidable obstruction to the view of the evidence lies in the states of our own minds—in the ignorance and prejudice which color the field of view in our own understandings.

Consequently prejudice, even in favor of the truth, hinders the just conception of the truth; and when not in favor of the truth, will altogether prevent the discernment of it. The other hindrance to the correct judgment of evidence—that is, ignorance—can only be removed by instruction. Consequently the acknowledged obligation to receive what is true absolutely demands resistance to whatever may hinder the right judgment of evidence; and the conclusion irresistibly emerges that both prejudice and ignorance must be compelled by an honest conscience to listen and fairly judge. As an adjunct to this spirit of candor in hearing the exposition of the holy scriptures, hear with entire independence. Without a full recognition of our personal independence of all human authority in forming the judgment and accepting the principles, for which we are to answer for ourselves alone at the bar of God, there can be no real candor in hearing, and without candor no real independence. This personal independence in the formation of our views is the necessary corollary of personal responsibility. The Holy Spirit puts the searching question, “Who art thou, that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.” Any just conception of this great truth, the absolute independence of every human soul of all powers and authorities save that of God alone, will put an end to all want of candor, to all reluctance to listen to evidence, to all unmanly weakness and resentment of differences, and poise the intellect on the basis of fairness and love simply of the truth. There is no power or authority outside of the truth and the evidence to compel assent. To construe the “compel them to come in” of the parable of the great supper to be the compulsion of physical force, is to contradict the whole spirit of the Christian institute, and the positive assertion that the kingdom of Christ is not a kingdom of this world. It is the compulsion of reason

and strong persuasion, based upon the infinite inducements of the gospel. Every man is distinctly empowered to accept or reject the offer of amnesty for his sins, on his own high and direct responsibility to God, and to him only. When really alive to his own divinely authorized freedom and independence in the formation of his views, a man will have no difficulty in exorcising the green-eyed devil of bigotry and intolerance. He is only responsible to God; to his own master alone he standeth or falleth. Truth alone binds his conscience, or has any claim to control his faith. No party has the right to construe the evidence for him. He alone is responsible for his acceptance or rejection of the truth, for his judgment upon the evidence. He cannot evade or escape from that responsibility; he had as well attempt to walk away from his own shadow. He may accept what guidance he pleases in his search for the mind of the Spirit, free of all human dictation; but will never cease to be responsible to God for what guidance he accepts, and for every step he takes to his conclusion, and for the conclusion itself. The dictum of the church, the opinions of friends, or the Word of God—no matter what his accepted rule or standard of faith may be, he will inevitably stand answerable in his own person for his conclusion, and for the means which he has adopted to reach it. If God has revealed his will, it is safe to follow him. The plain words of the scriptures, and all just and necessary inferences from the declarations of scripture, do bind the conscience; but even in rejecting these, a man is responsible to God only. The Almighty King does not interfere with the freedom of the human will, even in regard to sin. Man may sin, if he is mad enough to do it. If he rejects the truth as God has given it, God will judge and condemn: if he accepts it, God will judge and approve; but in neither case has any human individual or organization, civil or eccle-

siastical, been authorized to determine the judgment of God, much less to execute it when it is a judgment of condemnation. From all this aggregate of scripture teaching upon the relation of the individual to the reading and to the public teaching of the Word of God, the obligation and the right to read and hear the gospel preached with entire independence of all human dictation and control, stands clear in view. The obligation to candor in both reading and hearing is of plain and obvious moral force. To hear with genuine freedom and independence of judgment is essential to hearing with the highest spiritual profit.

5. It would be a beautiful combination, with this spirit of candor and independence, to hear the teaching of the gospel with unfeigned reverence. It is the word and truth of God which is proclaimed. It is the reëcho of that still low-toned voice which spoke from between the cherubic fires on the gate of the garden, and fell on the ears of the awed prophet, when midnight was on the gorges of Sinai, and the earthquake and the fire had passed. Not only when the words of the sacred record are repeated, but when its truths are transferred into equivalent phraseology, it is still the voice of God. Nay, more, when from the truths of the Word as premises, the laws of thought compel just and necessary inferences, it is still the voice of God speaking and determining what is true. When the conditions and laws impressed by the hand of the Creator compel to action, or guide and limit it, we know that such is his will. The law of life in the bird consigns him to the air, and the law of life in the fish compels him to energize in the water; and we are sure that it is in accord with the will of God. His will is expressed in his natural, as well as in his moral laws. The laws which he has impressed upon the human intellect are equally the expressions of his will; and whatever is truly determined

by the just action of these laws, is as much a declaration of truth by God himself as in any other mode in which he has expressed it. We are compelled to recognize the relations of number, and know that, when justly combined, a certain sum must be developed. We know that fire will burn; and the inference that it is dangerous to touch it is compulsory. We know that if Jehovah is God, we are bound to worship and obey him. This knowledge derived by inference from scripture premises is certified knowledge, because compelled by the laws of thought impressed by the hand of the Creator. Just exercise of human reason is not belittled by the institutions of Christ; on the contrary, it is highly, yea, boundlessly honored. He says to all, "Hear and understand." Just and necessary inferences of human reason, certified by the laws of thought, and drawn from premises furnished by the Word of God, are raised to the rank of absolutely reliable truths. To listen, then, to expositions of the Word which are truly conformed to the sacred record, and to inferred results which are truly deduced from its statements, is to listen to the voice of God as truly as Moses did when he was watching the strange fire in the wilderness of Midian, which burned the bush, but did not consume it. As the awed shepherd took his shoes from his feet, in token of his awful sense of the majesty which was speaking to him, a similar spirit should mark our attendance on the service where the worship of the same awful Majesty is conducted, and the same truths are repeated in his name and by his command. This spirit will blend beautifully with that spirit of independent regard to his voice alone, which he himself has required. There is no inconsistency in being independent of all but God alone, and in being full of reverence for all which he declares. There is no incompatibility between this commanded independence of all other authority and the utmost veneration

and reverence toward him who has ordered both to be observed in his worship. They are really only two sides of the same thing.

6. Lastly, it is a matter of high practical importance that we should hear the preaching of the gospel with a fixed practical purpose. All the teachings of the scriptures point to action; it requires energy in faith and activity in duty. We should, therefore, both read and hear in order to learn what we should first believe and then do. We should look to the marching orders with a settled determination to do what is discovered to be the will and law of the Lord. The gospel of God is not a joke, or a mere amusement. It is not a mere temporal expedient, like a system of banking or secular education, no matter how useful or important it may be. It is a revelation from God concerning the eternal interests of a race of immortal beings which has revolted against the government of their Creator and King. It tells them of their relations to God; it points out their departures from his laws; it shows their transcendent responsibilities; it unveils all the terrible and pathetic incidents of their actual condition; it unseals the grandeur of a future life; above all, it makes known a way in which the fallen race may escape from the terrible emergencies of a fallen estate, and rise into the endless felicities of an eternal life. It marks out the terms and conditions of this wondrous transition. It tells who are involved in the mighty issues, and before every individual human soul raises the awful certainty of his own implication. It fixes the dread responsibility upon each conscience of dealing with these issues; and, with a combination of tenderness, authority and pathetic remonstrance, calls every individual to instant and decisive action. Such is the scope and object of all gospel preaching. To this pointed and powerful, incessant and inexorable, personal demand for action, it is the

duty and the wisdom of every individual to adjust himself. As the demand is for action, he must resolve to act. As many forms of action are required to meet the varied demands of the service of God, and as no substituted action is allowed by the divine law in any particular, it is indispensably necessary to wait on the means of instruction and encouragement which are appointed to make known what is to be done, and encourage the doing of it. The true spirit of the gospel hearer is the determination to learn—to hear and understand the Word and will of God—to learn in order to do. To attend the instructions of the sanctuary merely to be amused; to make the house of the Lord a sort of sacred dance-house; to seek contact with the grand truths which God has revealed for the highest interests of dying sinners, merely to be tickled, is the lunatic excess of a godless and worldly spirit. Men should come to the sanctuary of God to learn, not to be entertained; to worship, not to coddle themselves; to seek for knowledge leading to repentance for their sins in dust and ashes; to faith in the Saviour of sinners; to the cleansing of the sanctifying Spirit; to readiness for death, judgment and a happy immortality. To gain these ends, something is to be done, as well as learned; and the learning is chiefly important in order to guide and animate the doing. The true attitude of the gospel hearer is that of the eager deerhound, straining on the leash, and eager to break into swift pursuit, when the horn of the huntsman sounds away. It is the attitude of the pale, resolute soldiers in the line of battle, waiting, with bent brows and iron lips, the order to advance into the deadly range of the guns. Go to the house of worship to learn; and learn in order to do. Ask yourself the question, when the subject is announced in the opening of the public lesson, "What is that to me? What use can I put it to? What does it call for at my hands? Is it a warning?"

Let me fix it in my memory; let me establish it in my conscience; let me take heed to it from henceforth. Is it a message of consolation, or a promise of privilege? Let me learn exactly what it is; let me learn how to receive, how to use, and how to enjoy it. Is it a doctrine? Let me try and understand it in itself, in its application, and in its value to me. Is it a duty? Let me comprehend its meaning; let me deepen my sense of its bond upon my conscience; let me estimate its usefulness to others and its value to myself; let me gather energy and strength to go and do it."

THE NATURE OF SIN:

IN ITSELF AND AS REVEALED IN ITS EFFECTS.

“Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate.”—JEREMIAH xliv. 4.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sin may be blotted out.”—ACTS iii. 19.

1. **T**HE indispensable requirement of repentance in order to salvation is clear on the very face of the record which contains the divine revelation to men. This requirement necessarily develops a demand for just views of sin. Man must see something in it to repent of before he can do it; the possibility of repentance depends on it. The nature of the act, and the concurrent feelings of the repentance awakened, will depend absolutely upon the perception and judgment of the evil involved. False views will result in a false repentance; true views in a true repentance. Just conceptions of sin are indispensable to salvation.

2. Another consideration leads to the same conclusion. Just views of sin are indispensable to a just view of the penalties of divine law; and without these no sinner will ever realize his need of a Saviour, or apply for his interposition, or humble himself before God. This is one of the dangerous errors of our day—insensibility to the justice of penal provisions in the public law, both human and divine, especially in the latter. If sin is not rightly judged, the penalties of law will seem to be the harsh expedients of mere *power* without *right*. The judgment formed of a violation of a law enforced by penalties recognized as intrinsically unjust may

lead to *regret* and *lamentation* for *consequences*; but repentance for the breach of the law itself is impossible.

3. The essential nature of sin is that it is something wrong. The English word *wrong* is derived from an old Saxon term, which means to wring or twist out of a natural or proper place. The notion is that of something out of place; where it ought not to be. It implies the obligation of a law deciding where it ought to be; and the dislocation implies a violation of law. The idea conveyed is the datum of an original intuition of the human soul. There are several of these fundamental distinctions in things. There is a distinction in things which we call the beautiful or the ugly. The mind cognizes this by an original intuition in the sphere of taste. We distinguish the differences which exist in form and color by this power of intuition. There is also a distinction in things which we call true or false, as when we see that two and two make four, and do not make six. This distinction is cognized by a similar intuition in the sphere of intelligence. There is a distinction of good and evil—natural, as distinguished from moral. By his relation to this distinction man is discriminated as a being of feeling, and capable of pleasure or pain. There is also a distinction in things, which is called right and wrong. This is the most important of all the distinctions inhering in things, and is irresistibly cognized by the same original and intuitive energy of perception in the sphere of morals. As man stands related to the distinction of the beautiful, he is discriminated as a being of taste, and becomes capable of feeling the difference between the beautiful and the deformed. As he stands related to the distinction of the true and the false, he is discriminated as a being of intelligence and capable of knowledge; and the more perfectly the mind is capable of perceiving the distinction, the higher it is graded in intelligence. As he stands

related to the distinction of right and wrong, he is discriminated as a moral being, and capable of virtue or criminality, the necessary object of praise or blame. This moral distinction is not only resistlessly cognized as real and true; but it is also resistlessly recognized that the human mind is capable of impressing that distinction on its own actions and upon itself. Thus man is seen, not only to be capable of moral government, but that the very foundations of that government are laid in the essential and indestructible principles of his own being. It is as absurd to deny man to be a being of intelligence, capable of perception and memory, and subject to the laws of intelligence, as to deny him to be a moral being, capable of moral energies and moral impressions, and subject to the laws of morals. This fact of the inextinguishable moral element in human nature is full of suggestions bearing upon all forms of speculative error, as well as of practical evil-doing; but we cannot pause to trace them now.

4. The order in which elements of the moral distinction are cognized by the intuitive faculty seems to be this: First, a perception of the distinction itself; second, a feeling of approval or disapproval, grounded upon the distinction; third, a sense of obligation created by it; fourth, a recognition of future consequences to grow out of it as at once just and inevitable—just that the consequences of right should be different from the consequences of wrong; just that the consequences of right should be fortunate, and that the consequences of wrong should be unfortunate; and, fifth, a judgment of the actor, as well as of the act, as a person deserving or undeserving, just as he has done right or wrong.

5. There being two distinct forms of evil involved in our intuitive judgment of wrong—one, the moral evil in the wrong itself, the other, the physical evil in the consequences justly and inevitably to grow out of it—it will follow that

the nature of the sorrow, anxiety, or repentance created by the evil perceived will be different, according as the one or the other of these two species of evil occupies the larger space in the view of the understanding. If the view is confined to the consequences, regret, remorse, and fear—all terminating on self—will be the result; and a false repentance is the final issue. If, along with the view of the consequences, there is the clear apprehension of the moral evil of the wrong, then a sense of criminality and just condemnation, a feeling of shame and ingenuous sorrow is the result. The foundation of all these exercises is the apprehension that just obligation has been violated: the intuitive faculty has discerned that the moral distinction carries obligation; the right is felt to be authoritative. Obligation is only another name for law. The law of right, impressed upon the nature of man by the hand of the Creator, is nothing but another name for the law of God. Wrong, then, can be traced through the phenomena of nature, and the data of consciousness, to the same conclusion taught by the holy scriptures: *wrong* is the violation of the law of God.

6. It settles, then, some conclusions of vast importance; it settles the essential nature of the law of God as the *law of right*; right is always the expression of the law of God. It settles the authority of the law and the authority of God as always essentially and absolutely right. It marks the essential nature of sin as intrinsic evil, and as involving necessarily a judgment of condemnation. It settles that the characteristic difference of sin is intrinsic opposition and antagonism to the nature and will of God, for the nature and consequent will of God is absolute right—the perfect expression of moral excellence. Crime is wrong considered as injurious to others; vice, as polluting and injurious to one's self; immorality and iniquity are general terms for lawless-

ness; disregard for moral law in different degrees, and from different points of view. But they all fall under a higher generalization as sin, which contemplates wrong purely in its relation to God. To judge the nature of wrong as it relates to God, we must look to the intense and necessary antagonism between the nature of God and the nature of moral evil. To judge the nature of wrong as it relates to any responsible creature, we must look to the nature of the obligation that binds him. Without obligation the notion of wrong could not rise. Paul unequivocally teaches that where there is no law there is no transgression. The moral sense always condemns according to the obligations which are seen to cover the case; and the greater the obligation the greater the condemnation. This obligation springs from the authoritative nature of right, which was impressed upon the soul by the finger of the Creator; that is, it is the law of God.

Now, to settle the question whether sin is, of its own nature, necessarily condemnable, we have only to look to the nature of the law—to apprehend it as essential right, and the essential expression of the nature of God; the intuitive power of moral perception, inhering in the very constitution of the human spirit, will instinctively pronounce upon its true character, and declare it to be essential wickedness. Men are often perplexed to understand why God is so much opposed to sin, and so firmly resolved to punish it. It gives him no pain; it breaks no bones; it exerts no physical effects on his personal well-being; and they are perplexed to understand his uncompromising resistance and hostility to it. But the difficulty is explained, when we comprehend the essential and uncompromising antagonism between the nature of sin and the excellency of God. So far as sin is crime, an evil against others or injurious to ourselves, it is easy to see the evil that is in it. So far as it is vice—that is, polluting and

degrading to ourselves—it is easy to see it as blameworthy. To clear the difficulty a little more touching God's concern in it: Suppose that sin had no force in it to bring evil to ourselves; suppose it only struck at God, set at naught his rightful authority, disregarded his law, disabled all his creatures, capable of sinning, from working out the ends and purposes for which he made them, what would be the just and compulsory judgment upon the real nature of such an energy? Unquestionably to condemn it as a wrong, as an injustice to God, as involving grave elements of wickedness; it would pronounce the actor, who had done this evil thing, to be positively guilty, in the sense of blameworthiness. Why is this? Just because the human soul is so made as to inevitably condemn that which is condemnable in its own nature. To refuse to do it is a breach of a high obligation, the obligation to do justice. Such an evil as we have supposed is utterly opposed to the nature and will of God. What is the obligation which binds us to obey the will and conform ourselves to the nature of God? The grand fundamental obligation to do justice, to render honor to whom honor is due, and tribute to whom tribute. Justice is binding of itself; and it as much requires justice to be done to God as to any other being, and even more sacredly. The censurable nature of any breach of the law of God depends on three considerations: First, on the supreme personal excellence and the absolutely rightful authority of the lawgiver; second, on the excellence of the law itself, and, third, on the necessity of the law itself to the good of the universe, including, of course, the good of the sinning actor himself. On each of these invincible grounds the right of God to give law to all moral and responsible creatures is surely founded.

First, the supreme perfection of his personal nature binds to supreme regard and reverence, and any refusal to render

it is intrinsic injustice and wrong. We feel bound to love excellence in proportion to its degree, and are stricken in conscience if we fail to do it. Second, God has the authority to give law. This results from his sole prerogative to create. He has the right to say whether he will make any creature or not. He has the right to say what sort of a creature he will make, what purposes it shall serve, what functions it shall perform, and under what conditions it shall exist and act. This is to give law to the creature. Consequently, it is God's right to give law to the creature; it is the necessary incident to his sole right and power to create. Authority differs from mere power to rule, inasmuch as it carries the notion of right with the notion of power. To resist mere power may be dangerous, but it may nevertheless be right. Authority corrupted or abused ceases to be authority; but to resist authority is to violate right and to do a wrong as well as a dangerous thing; it is to invade and do injustice to the right of the lawgiver. It involves the rebel in positive guilt or worthiness of censure. A violation of the rights of another is instinctively condemned; and the sanctity of right is felt to rise in proportion to the greatness and goodness of the person whose rights are violated. Sin, then, as a violation of the right of God to rule is resistibly seen to be condemnable in its own nature. God's right, growing out of his various and profound relations to his creatures, as Creator, Sovereign, portion of the soul, is violated by sin; but there is, secondly, an additional injustice done to God by sin. The intuitive power always recognizes an obligation to do justice to excellence, by esteeming it according to its degree, by conformity to its quality. The law of God is a transcript of his nature; it is the impression struck by it as a type; and the excellence of his nature, both in itself and in its expression in the law, claims the true regard of the creature. His

claim on the regard the highest love of the creature is absolutely just. To refuse it is to do a wrong to him; and the degree of the wrong is in an exact proportion to the degree of his excellence. In the third place, the excellence of the law itself is one element of its binding force, and is essential to the imputation of blameworthy guilt for its violation. Violation of a bad law cannot carry with it a judgment of moral guilt. Unjust and unreasonable law may involve peril, but not guilt. But the violation of a good law carries both guilt and peril. Now the excellence of the law of God is determined by the simple fact that it is the law of right—the embodiment of the eternal and intrinsic distinction of right impressed indelibly on the human spirit by the hand of the Creator. Whatever is of the nature of right is *ipso facto*, a part of the law of God. Hence the violation of right always induces a judgment of condemnation. It is the only judgment possible to be true to the fact in judgment. In the fourth place, the binding force of the divine law rests in part upon its indispensable necessity to the peace and order of the universe, and consequently to the happiness of the creature himself. The order of the whole creation depends upon the law; and the transgressor, by his sin, not only does injustice to God, but brings ruin on himself. Here the consequences of sin come into view, and the argument from them to the nature of sin is twofold. First, the evil of the fruit discloses the evil nature of the energy from which they spring; second, the deliberate hazard of such consequences involves again, and on distinct ground, the distinction of wrong, and the consequent necessary judgment of condemnation.

The sum of the whole analysis of the nature of sin, as far as we have brought it, may be thus stated: Substantively, or in its essence, it is moral evil; it is what we understand by wrong; it is a violation of intrinsic right, and necessarily

involves a judgment of condemnation. It makes the agent or doer of it necessarily criminal and criminally responsible. Formally it is against God—opposed to his very nature, in contempt of its authority, an injustice to his rights; and, if not weak in his malignity, inconsistent with his very being. Reflexly considered in its effects, sin is against ourselves, and against the peace and order of the universe.

From this analysis of sin two inferences of the gravest importance are inevitable: First, it is inevitable that God must condemn sin or sacrifice either his intelligence or his integrity; he must mistake its nature, or misrepresent its quality as essential evil. To do either is to undeify himself. Man is also bound to condemn it; and it becomes clear that repentance is the paramount duty of every transgressor of the divine law. The responsibility of all men, and their need of some relief is apparent.

THE EFFECTS OF SIN.

“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—ROMANS vi. 21, 23.

WE have considered the nature of sin in itself; let us now study its nature as revealed in its effects. The natural consequences and fruits of a thing are among the very best tests of its quality. It is indispensable to a just and complete cognition and judgment of sin, to see the true force—the real fruit-bearing energy which is in it, the native causative power of its intrinsic being or nature. These effects, if they can be shown to result, not from arbitrary legal penalties conventionally attached to sin, but from its own natural force, will not only strongly illustrate its own intrinsic evil, but will exhibit the ground on which the judicial condemnation of an individual judge may and must be based.

1. Its first inevitable effect is to make the actor guilty in a true criminal sense. Guilt involves two elements: one, the felt desert of penal retribution ensuing upon breach of law; the other, an actual liability to penal pains. We restrict, for the present, attention to the first of these determinations, the sense of ill desert. The first act of the mind upon an act of wrong-doing reveals a feeling of personal criminality on the part of the actor. The action is a voluntary violation of recognized right, and the necessary judgment is a judgment of condemnation. The soul passes upon its own act, and condemns itself. It recognizes that a change has taken place in its own status, and sees that it has passed into an abiding

state of criminal responsibility. This is a fearful condition in which to be implicated. The sense of peace has given way to a sense of exposure, and to the feeling of being justly exposed. The sense of richly deserving to have evil allotted to the soul as its portion is positively unendurable. Exposure to evil, when it is felt not to be the result of one's own responsible conduct, can be borne with comparative fortitude; but when recognized as the result of one's own act—still more, of one's own folly, still more, as the outcome of one's own positively criminal conduct—it cuts through all the nerves of mental energy, and the soul is utterly oppressed. The sense of ill-desert is a bitter pain, even if no ill consequences actually follow it at once.

But the second element of guilt, liability to penalty, now reveals itself as one of the inevitable results of sin. The sense of deserving penalty is only a just decision upon the actuality of penal responsibility. Law is violated, and its penalty at once adheres. Penalty is of the essence of law; and justice requires the breach of the precept to be vindicated by the prompt assertion of the penal power of the law. The effect of sin is not to expose to a penal liability which may be possibly escaped, to a mere contingent hazard: the full liability at once adheres to the transgressor. It may not be speedily executed; but the legal status of actual condemnation at once ensues as the inevitable effect of sin. How fearful is the thought! How fearful is the stern, pale light thrown on the legal status of all men! They are construed, not as condemnable merely, but as already condemned; and the sentence is taken as merely suspended by the mere good pleasure of the offended lawgiver! How astonishing is man's insensibility under his sin; he is asleep in the very grasp of the penal power of the law which he has broken!

2. A second necessary effect of sin is that it pollutes the

moral nature of the actor himself, with a stain as deadly as it is ineradicable. The reaction of sin on the moral nature of the transgressor is an inevitable law of the awful energy, which operates uniformly with each act of the wrong done. Each sin leaves its own injurious impress behind it. The first effect is on the nature of the agent; it is to destroy holiness, which is the vital principle of the spiritual life; the soul dies spiritually at once and forever. The second effect is to subject the soul indefinitely to the operation of the law of reaction just explained. The ultimate result is absolutely awful to contemplate: endless and irretrievable moral degradation; a result prefigured, and partially illustrated in the words, "Utterly perish in his own corruption."

3. A third necessary effect of sin is to bring the sinning actor under the punitive power of his own conscience. This faculty is one of the most extraordinary phenomena of human nature. It is a power of the mind which is capable of turning against itself: unbribable by self-love, ungovernable by the will, inextinguishable by the most strenuous efforts of hope or despair, it lashes the guilty soul with a lash of fire! It yields to no plea, it concedes to no excuse; it pours its irresistible torrent of accusation and foreboding over the very self of which it is a part. No courage can face it; no fortitude can bear it. Its fierce menace rings in the secret chambers of the soul the premonition and the earnest of coming doom. Skepticism would fain interpret the power of conscience as mere superstition, as the product of nothing but education. The notion is absurd; conscience is a part of the nature of man. Skepticism itself cannot stand before it; the intuitions of real guilt will overwhelm all the bulwarks of infidel philosophy. Whatever else may be false, the power of conscience is true; and it is madness to tamper with a principle so powerful and so uncompromising.

4. A fourth effect of sin is disorder, trouble in all the relations of life, unhappiness and misery wherever it prevails, and in an adjustable proportion to the degree of violence in which sin is manifested. Sin is a natural source of trouble: vice always ends in grief; law always stands for peace, and the breach of law always ends in trouble and sorrow. Breaches of moral propriety always lie at the root of domestic trouble. Dishonesty and other individual sins bring sorrow to the individual. Civil government, law and the administration of justice by public force, are all conditioned on the tendency of men to do wrong, and the resulting necessity of compelling them to do right. Not because civil government aims to qualify or reduce the moral evil in crime, but to restrain its outward expression. It thus testifies to the evil energy which is in it. Every institution of civil society, both in peace and war, is more or less directly conditioned on moral evil in society, or qualified by it. Disease, pain, and death, both physical and moral, are all due to it. It digs every grave; it heaves every groan; it starts every tear. Its wages is death, a term which includes many evils besides that last grand mystery of final destruction to man's earthly existence. Sin has turned loose all evil: pain is its natural issue; death is its final consummation.

5. Another striking effect of sin is found, not only in its disastrous domination over the present life, but in its plainly asserted dominion over the future. It always points to the front. It always hints significantly of evil to come; "wrath to come" is the burden of its cry, even when it is filling the soul with pangs of pain at the present. It always hints at a retribution distinct from itself, and separable from the incidental suffering created by the anticipation. It points to a judicial sentence over and above mere natural consequence, vindicating that consequence, and affirming its justice and

completing its claims. Sin, and the exasperated conscience which it awakens, will evermore point its threatening finger to the front. This extraordinary phenomena, that the wrath which follows sin, as the sleuth hound tracks its prey, will not only surely come, but will always be to come; it reveals, not only the certainty, but the endless succession, of penal pains.

6. The analysis has hitherto proceeded on the mere consideration of the facts as revealed to observation. But now, bringing in the notion of a God, as the administrator of a positive moral government over responsible creatures, and another effect of sin is disclosed; it inevitably secures the just displeasure of the King. His favor is life; his anger is the sure guarantee of immeasurable mischief. God is just; sin is essential evil, and God must judge it as it is. His judgment must be fitted to the fact before him; he cannot misrepresent it. He is holy; he must needs abhor all evil according to its kind; moral evil is a shock to his purity; physical evil is a strain upon his benevolence. He is infinitely good; he must abhor a principle which carries all manner of woe and sorrow in its womb. The anger of a perfect being is fearful; it is the expression of his excellence upon essential evil, and is in proportion to the greatness of his perfection, and to the degree of malignity in the evil. A great crime will excite no strong feeling in the heart of a hardened criminal, while it will rouse the fierce wrath of a compassionate and just man. The anger of a good man is an awful, but a true expression of his goodness, dealing with wickedness. Sin, as an evil, necessarily arousing the anger of a being so perfect in every excellence as the infinitely just and benevolent God, must possess elements of abomination inexpressible in human words.

7. Yet another effect of sin is to secure beyond a perad-

venture the condemnation of the sinning agent under the formal governmental acts of the divine government in its administration of justice. This result is an absolute certainty; it is already an accomplished thing. Hell holds a mortgage, guaranteed by the truth and justice of Almighty God, on every transgressor of his laws. There is no escape. The Lord is in awful earnest in giving his law; he approves all its claims, and he will honor its penalties, as well as its precepts; he will honor its penalties as the only mode of supporting its precepts. The condemnation and punishment of every transgressor is made absolutely sure by the very nature of sin; it must be condemned.

8. It secures the loss of heaven. The holy scriptures reveal a state and condition of inconceivable blessedness in the future life as the certain home of all who comply with the terms of the divine favor. Refusal to comply with these terms is sin in its highest forms. Nothing unclean can enter that region of serene and unspotted glory; holiness is the indispensable condition of a residence there. Holiness once lost is lost forever, so far as any restorative remedy in reach of the sinning actor is concerned. Heaven, then, is lost by sin; and that by which so vast a privation is effected is thus revealed as an evil beyond all adequate conception.

9. But its last effect, at once inevitable and intolerable to contemplate, is that it damns the soul. The loss is not merely negative, in the loss of heaven; it is the positive incurrance of all the horrors of an eternal endurance of the penalties of the law. It issues in the penal fire, in the lake prepared for the devil and his angels, in the society of its own place, in the supremacy of despair, in a measureless descent down through all the possibilities of moral corruption, in the loss of all in which the well-being of an immortal being is conditioned—a loss absolute, complete, unendurable, and without end.

The inference from all this analysis of moral evil is simple, but resistless. A principle creating such results of its own inherent energy is an unadulterated evil, an evil too dreadful to be adequately comprehended or expressed. For a responsible being to impress such a principle upon his acts, and especially upon his own nature, which is the ever-flowing and inexhaustible fountain of his acts for all the future of his existence, is not merely folly; it is a wickedness absolutely sublime in its energy of evil. Sin, as it is now apprehended in this world, and by the darkened intuitions of the sin-blinded human understanding, seems to be a small and comparatively insignificant thing. But seen in its advanced stages, even in this world, it begins to show its immeasurable mischief; but it can only be even approximately apprehended when it is seen in the full horror of its triumph over the myriads of lost immortals, in that scene of existence where all restraints upon its energy are removed, where crimes now inconceivable by human thought will be the ordinary traffic of life, and where the stroke of retribution will fall as promptly and as sternly as the enormities that provoke it. Then, too, will be comprehended the grace of that glorious redemption which is now so fearfully misapprehended and abused.

THE GUILT OF SIN.

“That every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.”—ROMANS iii. 19.

IT now remains to discuss the nature and degree of man's guilt as a sinner; and afterwards the relative ideas of his responsibility; that is, the nature, degree, locality, and duration of the penalties of the law. Our object at present is to examine the component elements of that guilt which sin imputes to the sinning agent.

From the analysis of sin we have seen that when law is violated, two forms of evil are involved: one, the wrong done; the other, the danger incurred. The first arises from the violation of the precept; the second is the consequence of the first, the just and necessary claim of the penalty of law. The actor incurs a personal status, suitable to both of these elements of evil. This status is expressed by the term *guilt*, which has a two-fold meaning, adjusted to the twofold elements of the sinner's status, one signifying *desert* of suffering, the other *liability* to suffering. The two notions, although always comprehended in the unity of sin, are always separable in thought, and constitute two distinct and inconceivably important rules in dealing with the question of delivering the sinner, if such a thing is possible. The *liability* of sin is transferable; the *desert* of evil consequence is not capable of transfer. The first of these contingencies makes an atonement for sin possible, the other makes repentance indispensable. The one makes salvation to a sinner possible, the other makes that deliverance necessarily a result of grace, on the

part of God, and shuts out the possibility of salvation by the merit of the sinner's own works of obedience to the law. To clear and intensify the all-important view of the true nature of sin, let us study these elements of the guilt involved in it.

1. Let us first take up the investigation of guilt as the desert of punishment. This is the feeling which always springs up when the element of criminality is discovered, whether in the acts or character of a moral and responsible being. It attaches instantly to the person who does a criminal thing. Just as we recognize a person as intelligent or not intelligent who is able to see or not see the distinction of true or false; just as we recognize a person of taste in one who can discern or create the distinction of beauty, just so we irresistibly judge him to be a criminal or blameworthy person whenever we discover the peculiar quality which we call wrong in the acts or disposition of the actor. The judgment of disapproval and condemnation is imperative and resistless; it is the natural and necessary determination of the understanding when contemplating the moral distinction which we call wrong.

(1) The analysis of this feeling of criminality implies, first, an obligation or law covering the case, laying down a rule to regulate the act. Where there is no law there can be no transgression.

(2) It implies freedom of action under this law. Compulsion to an act annihilates responsibility, and thus forestalls all sense of criminality, just in proportion to the degree of the compulsory force employed. Freedom of personal energy is essential to any true moral responsibility. The excuse of the sinner, so frequently made, that his act was the result of something different from his own causative energy, annihilates the sin if it is true. Real sin, an actual and just criminality, is, in its own nature, inexcusable; and if any

act can be truly vindicated as excusable, it is, *ex vi termini*, not sin at all.

(3) It implies the consent and concerted action of all those peculiarities of his nature which constitute him a moral and accountable being. These are, first, the rational intelligence to see the moral distinction of right or wrong which inheres in the action. Rational force is indispensable to moral responsibility. No idiot or wild beast is ever held morally responsible for acts of violence. True guilt always implies a sufficient degree of intelligence to understand the difference between right and wrong. Ignorance, when invincible and complete, extinguishes guilt and the sense of criminality; but wherever the sense of guilt is found, it demonstrates the existence of knowledge sufficient to establish responsibility. Another of the elements of nature involved in real guilt is the state of the heart, or the feelings and affections of the will indicated by the motive or design or object of the act. This is always considered a powerful element in modifying moral responsibility, because it reveals the status and true complexion of the voluntary powers as involved in the act. The feelings and affections regulate and determine action to a controlling degree. All responsible moral or personal action must be the product of man's voluntary powers. Another element is the positive volition, which is the last energy of the voluntary powers in the scale of will-acts leading up to action—the positive volition or determined purpose to do the deed. Obligatory or just law, liberty of action under this law, or freedom from coercion in the course pursued, intelligence to perceive the moral distinction involved in the act, the real affections of the heart towards the thing to be done, are the principal elements which enter into the notion of criminality, and create the irresistible conception of desert of punishment.

This feeling of blameworthiness, or the true desert of

punishment attaches to a variety of the component elements which enter into the action taken. It attaches to the positive acts done, the open and unalterable expression of the energies employed. This is universally admitted. Some err in confining guilt only to actions, to the positive results of positive volitions; but this is a mistake. Criminality is involved in some acts considered in themselves; other acts become criminal from their accidents; that is, from the separable elements of motive, time, place, manner, and circumstance. Whatever may be the cause of the criminal character attached to the action, man always feels guilty in the sense of deserving to be condemned whenever he does an act marked as wrong.

It attaches also to criminal or wrong motive, using motive in the sense of the intention or design with which the deed is done. Motive, in the sense defined, always strongly qualifies the moral judgment formed of the action. Even when the action is indifferent, even when it is good, and, still more strikingly, even when the action is *per se* bad, its character is subject to qualification from the influence of motive. Motive profoundly colors all moral action, whether good or bad.

It attaches also to those states of feeling which give force to motive in the sense of outward object or the inducement to action. The force of the outward object is effectively conditioned by the state of the affections of the heart, by the quality or character of the tastes and inclinations of the will. A bribe offered to an honorable man has no power to affect him; it is paralyzed by the high quality of his feeling and sense of duty and honor. Offered to a person of low moral tone, it is certain to carry his consent and regulate his conduct.

It attaches to the evil nature in himself of which the evil-doer becomes conscious when he reflects upon the evil thing

which he has done. He sees that he *himself* is bad; that a quality in himself has been disclosed by his act, which discriminates himself as being bad, as well as having done a bad thing. He not only recognizes the evil in the act, but recognizes the evil act as the disclosure of an evil energy in himself. An explosion of violent temper discovers a capability of violent passions in the permanent character. Men always interpret character from acts; they are manifestations of character, and often the greatest value of acts is found in this revelation of the abiding qualities of the man. Acts are the fruit of character, and consequently they are manifestations and proofs of the abiding moral qualities of the man. The human understanding always instinctively applies the law of cause and effect in all such judgments, and invariably grades the condemnation more heavily as the act appears to be the outcome of fixed or permanent energies of the moral disposition, and not the mere sudden effect of surprise or violent temptation. Whatever speculative difficulties may arise on the abstract question of holding a man responsible for his own nature, there can be no question that the common-sense judgments of the human mind do recognize the fixed qualities of a man's character as laying a necessary basis of a moral judgment of himself. The abiding moral traits of the disposition and character are not only allowable, but necessary elements entering into the formation of the moral judgment. The moral nature and permanent character of man is thus clearly discovered to be a legitimate ground for a moral judgment, and as such to be a legitimate object for a demand for repentance. All the expressions of penitent feeling recorded in the scriptures are strongly concerned with the state of the heart, and not merely with the acts of the conduct, or the words of the mouth. David, in the fifty-first Psalm, and Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, are

profoundly penetrated by the sin in their souls. An evil heart is as clearly recognized by the common sense of mankind, as it is by the Word of God, to be a necessary object for the emotions and acts of repentance.

The moral judgment attaches the sense of criminality distinctly to all moral energies, whether mere impulses, feelings, permanent affections, desires, determined volitions, or acts which are violations of the law, and as such are intrinsically *against* God. As we have already seen, this is the characteristic difference of sin; that is, the thing which marks all moral evil in its relation to God; it is a something, a reality, an energy of personal will which is intrinsically opposed, hostile, instinct with resistance and fixed discrepancy towards God. Right, which is cognized as in itself an authoritative law, is merely a determination of God's essential nature, an impression struck by the essential attributes of God as the type of imprint; sin is, therefore, in its own nature, essential opposition to the very nature of God. This fact develops another of its malignant energies: essential antagonism to the nature of God would alter or destroy that nature, if it could; sin is, therefore, an energy which strikes at the very being and life of the immortal God. It would destroy him if it were possible. But, though weak in its malignity, it is none the less malignant on that account. Men always judge the true nature of a force by what it would do if it could, and not by its actual results as determined by opposing forces. If it were possible to assail the very existence of God, the world would soon be one vast camp, banded together for deliverance from the hazards which would spring from the government of a Being too holy to tolerate sin; and the roar of artillery and the shouts of battle would reply sound for sound to the vollied thunder of Jehovah. Man had one chance at the life of the incarnate God, and we all know what was done on Calvary.

All energies, whether of spiritual affection or outward action against the will of God, as expressed in his providence, or in his statute laws, involve the guilt of rebellion against his rightful authority to govern his own dominions. The moral laws of God rest on an intrinsic basis of essential obligation; his statute or positive laws rest on a basis of rightful authority; his providential government and disposal of events rests on the basis of his supreme and unerring sovereignty. His will is consequently an absolute rule of conformity, obedience, and submission to all his rational and accountable creatures. Any disregard of his rightful dominion, whether expressed in statutory law, or in his providential administration, necessarily involves guilt in the sense of blameworthiness, as well as in the sense of liability or danger, and is, therefore, a true object of censure and a true subject of repentance.

Lastly, all the energies of the moral nature in man, whether of feeling, permanent affection, positive volition or outward act, which are concerned in resisting the grace and pardoning mercy of God, are recognized as peculiarly atrocious in the wickedness which they involve, and as such become a peculiar object of censurable guilt, and a peculiar subject of repentance. Unbelief, which is a brief, comprehensive expression of this despite and rejection of grace, is disclosed to us as a sin of peculiar and incomprehensible malignity.

2. Let us turn briefly to the second element of guilt, the liability to penalty involved in this just desert of it. This consequence is not only affirmed by the nature of justice, which, by the essential principles of his own nature, bind a just God to do justice to evil as it does to do justice to good, but is confirmed by the irresistible decision of the human conscience whenever it adjudicates a wrong. The desert of penalty is only another mode of saying, Justice demands

punishment; and a demand of justice is omnipotent in its appeal to a righteous magistrate. This is confirmed by the second step in the order of proceeding of the adjudicating conscience, which always follows the condemnation of a wrong, by the affirmation of suitable consequences to result. There is at once a looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. There is at once a gaze towards the future, an outlook for a coming retaliation, an eager listening for the long, stern bay of the pursuing ban-dogs. It is one of the broad blunders of modern speculation to make this doctrine of retribution for sin exclusively a datum of the Christian faith, and to consider it discredited whenever they judge the Christian faith to be discredited. But this is a fatal mistake; it is a datum of consciousness, which cannot be discredited; it is a datum of nature, whose laws cannot be violated with impunity; it is a part of the mental constitution of man, and a part of the universal constitution of natural law, which can neither be denied or extinguished. Some of the ancients formulated this retributive energy of natural and moral law into a divinity and called it Nemesis. Nature always asserts it. Remorse would be an impossible emotion without it. Even on atheistic principles, the fact of this retaliation of violated law would not be discredited; it would still remain an absolute and unalterable characteristic of the actual system of the universe. This retaliatory force of natural and moral law produces the indestructible conviction of responsibility which dominates every human soul. This retaliatory energy of law, and this sense of accountability, compel the recognition of another truth, which is the necessary logical consequence. It affirms a power to which that responsibility is due. It implies the resistless conviction that justice will be done. Peace in crime is only possible as the result of forgetfulness, ignorance, or deliberate attempts to obscure the sense of

responsibility, an obscuration which is and must be only temporary. The admission of an inextinguishable responsibility established in the system of nature, and in the very constitution of the human being, carries the idea of liability to penalty; for a responsibility which is never to be responsible is a contradiction in terms. The fact that only ignorance or deliberate resistance can obscure the sense of responsibility under the retaliation of natural law, irresistibly proves the reality of that responsibility. A thing which can only be hidden by ignorance or violence asserts itself in a way that admits of no compromise. But there is no obscuration of the consciousness of accountability for wrong-doing; it is a datum of nature, which can no more be denied than the existence of memory, or the feeling of reluctance to suffer pain. From all this analysis of human consciousness, and the laws of nature, the conclusion comes clearly into view, that the violator of right or the doer of wrong, whether in thought, word, or deed is truly and positively guilty; that is, he is both deserving of and liable to punishment under the law of God. No one can violate law with impunity, no matter what that law may be, whether it be the law which governs the physical, the mental or the moral nature in the human being, or whether it be any law which regulates the material universe at large. The violator of that grand moral law which is succinctly expressed in the distinction and notion of right—the most imperative and far-reaching of all laws—is justly condemnable; he is already condemned in every intelligent and just understanding, and the problem of delivering him from the complications into which his transgression of law has brought him is one which has taxed the wisdom as well as the grace of God himself. It is certain he is justly called to repent of his sin, the evil he has done. He is justly called to make good the mischief he had accomplished; and if he

is personally incapable of either of these healing processes, he is under an imperious necessity of finding a substitute who shall be able to rescue him, or to perish under the inexorable operation of violated law. As the notion of delivering himself is wholly impracticable, it becomes clear that the inexorable conditions of a sinner's standing under violated law is a Saviour who is mighty to save.

THE PENALTIES OF SIN.

“For the wages of sin is death.”—ROMANS vi. 23.

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”—ROMANS vii. 12.

HAVING seen, in the irresistible data of consciousness, as well as in the declarations of the Word of God, that a sinning agent is at once deserving of punishment, and inevitably exposed to it, it becomes a matter of supreme concern to find out all that is discoverable touching the penalties of the law. Let us turn, then, to a candid and thoughtful consideration of all the relative ideas of this solemn subject, and, in the light of reason and revealed truth, determine the nature, duration, locality, and degree of the penalties of the law.

1. The question of the existence of a state of penal pain in the world to come is important beyond all others, no matter what theory may be adopted about it. If the affirmative be true, its bearing on the interests of mankind is too obvious to need illustration. If the doctrine is not true, the revolution which would be created in all the relations of human society, in the influence and enforcement of human law, and in the securities of human life, would make the demonstration of

These sermons were first written in the year 1851; rewritten and published as two articles in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* in 1852 and 1853. They were afterwards again written in a form to be used in the pulpit at Raleigh, N. C., in 1876. The most complete and effective form of the discussion is in the *Review* articles; inasmuch as they are not likely to be seen in that form, and as it may be seen by some in the form of sermons, who may be benefited by it, I have ventured to offer the argument in this shape also.

its falsity, a matter of boundless importance in the present life.

It would seem to be reasonable that an idea of such transcendent importance would attract and maintain universal attention, and awaken the most cautious and profound inquiry. But it is dangerous logic to reason from the probabilities of propriety to the actual development of human experience. Men shun the question with intense solicitude. The prejudice it excites is invincible. It contains the essence of every other prejudice against the revelation from God. Men would cheerfully admit every other doctrine of the Bible if that book denied the doctrine of penal responsibility. On the supposition that the Word of God teaches the modern theories of universal salvation, the intense and persistent opposition it has encountered would be the most mysterious of all mysteries. The persecutions of the church, and the flames of the martyrs, are alone sufficient to refute every defence of universalism bottomed on the Word of God.

The sources of this prejudice are numerous and inexhaustible. It would only unduly protract the discussion to enumerate them all, but there is one of universal operation: this is the consciousness of guilt in every human breast. The universal dread of a future penal state is fully explained by the fact that every man feels that he is exposed, if the doctrine is true. Man is intuitively conscious of sin; that sin deserves to be punished, and that under a just and intelligent administration of law it is probable that provision has been made for that purpose. This is the explanation of that universal shrinking from the grand conception of a true moral government over the world of mankind under the administration of a holy and just God.

There are various minor sources of this prejudice, some of which we shall merely mention without extending a dis-

cussion of them. Narrow and incompetent views of sin, and of the nature and sanctity of moral law, arising from the paralyzing influence of sin itself upon the moral intuitions of the soul, are sources of this prejudice of wide operation. If such a paralyzed condition of the moral perceptions is combined with a temper of peculiar amiability, or with a peculiar nervous sensibility to physical pain, it is apt to breed distrust of this awful truth. Certain vices, particularly sensual vices, have a powerful tendency to the same effect. High and luxurious living, excessive gayety and dissipation, tend to the same result. Certain forms of literature also breed it. The same principle underlies all these causes, and gives the evil influence to them all. Whatever tends to soften and effeminate the mind, and, at the same time, fails to clarify the moral and spiritual intuitions, will intensify resistance to the holy and inflexible law of Jehovah. Men of speculative turn, whose natural skepticism, or aversion to receive anything whatever except on evidence overbearing in its force, may happen to be strengthened by a vice or by a peculiar pride of intellect greatly exposed to the rejection of this doctrine. The modern literature of England and America, France and Germany, abounds in tinctures of this species of infidelity. Poetry shudders at the notion of a hell; criticism openly hints at defect in the argument to prove it; social reform is indignant that the squalid objects of its active pity should be supposed to be liable to a worse perdition in the life to come; while the profound speculators in philosophy and moral science at once pronounce all such apprehensions to be superstitious and absurd. The reason of all this heretical tincture of modern thought is obvious enough. The pursuit of letters has a tendency to refine the intellect and the natural sensibilities, with no concurrent power to unseal the powers of spiritual perception blinded by sin; consequently, they are

keenly alive to the suffering endured, but are insensible to the evil which justly provoked it. No proportion can be seen between the offence and the penalty; by consequence, a wide discrepancy is thought to exist between the perfections of the Deity and the judicial infliction of such intolerable severity. One of these contrasted notions must be rejected; the perfection of God is a necessary notion, and consequently the doctrine of penal retribution is summarily set aside.

But this grand prejudice, no matter what its source may be, is hurtful, and ought to be controlled. No truth ought to be held merely on the tenure of a prejudice; the candor of the holder is necessarily more or less involved. Assuredly it is infinitely to our interest to know the truth on this awful subject. The innocence of error is a terrible delusion. There are many degrees of culpability in holding it, it is true; there are many differences in the degrees of danger in different species of error. Some may err in comparatively small matters, others may err in things which touch the very vitals of faith and hope; some may be wilfully wrong; some may err by mistake or misguidance; but in neither of these cases will the consequences of the error be prevented. A man may mistake arsenic for quinine, but the honesty of the blunder will not stay the effects of the poison. An honest delusion on this subject of penal retribution, which prevents all effort to escape the hazard, will not prevent it in point of fact, if all law is enforced by penal power. If the doctrine of penal pain is not true, it makes but little odds, so far as the future world is concerned, whether a man is deluded on the subject or not, or on what side of the question he is deluded. But if the doctrine is true, no language can describe the real value of a discovery which will reveal that truth, and explode the delusions under which so many human souls would be hopelessly subjected to its pains.

We propose to examine the question thoroughly in a brief series of discussions, and begin outside of the Bible, with an inquiry into the most distant presumptions which bear upon the subject, intending to pursue the question through the various ascending grades of analogy, by which the decision is reduced to a moral certainty. But we would premise at the outset that this is a question of fact in its practical bearings, which is only capable of an absolute determination by the testimony of a competent witness from the scenes that lie beyond the present life. We may prove, for instance, that man is made miserable by causes inherent in his own moral nature, determining his own moral energies, and if no change is made in this all-important determining moral nature, he must continue to suffer as long as he continues to exist. But whether such a change will be wrought, is a question of fact, to be determined by reliable testimony; that is, by the revelation of his will and purpose to effect such a change by the only being who can effect it. That will cannot be known until he discloses it; and thus the affirmation is made good, that the absolute determination of this question of retribution for sin can only be reached by a divine revelation. But while this is true, it is also true that there is an amount of significance in the presumptions and analogies created by the laws of nature, and the conditions of human character and human life in this world, which place the question in a position just short of absolute demonstration. Let us begin the study of these presumptions on the most distant view which the subject will allow.

1. In the first place, the consciousness of every human being creates a presumption of very striking significance. If there is any one fact unsusceptible of dispute, it is that there is misery now existing in this world. This misery is universal and constant. Now let us take the widest latitude of

view; let us extinguish the existence of a God; let us admit the theories of atheism or pantheism. This admission does not disturb the fact that misery exists in the world. Now what is the presumption which arises in this position of the question? Unquestionably that as we are unhappy now, we shall be so hereafter, in case our existence is continued, and the presumption, from our existence now, is that we shall exist then. Nor does the positive fact that we enjoy a certain degree of happiness now bar the inference. The facts do not conflict, nor do the presumptive inferences from the facts conflict. Combining the facts, and drawing a graduated inference from them, still gives us as the result a state of intermingled good and evil; it does not extinguish the existence of misery, but still affirms it. Taking the sum of the facts, we are sternly forced back on the unquestionable presumption of the reign of suffering in the world to come. But we are not permitted to amalgamate, because we cannot reconcile the utterances of nature. Both facts are true, both stand erect in their places; we are not perplexed to know what they say, but only to reconcile the substance of their statements. This only proves that the question is only susceptible of definite settlement by God himself. But the presumption from the existence now to the existence of suffering hereafter is undeniably true, and the sum of the whole calculation forces on us the menacing presumption of future wretchedness to all who continue to live in the violation of law.

But now let us advance a step, and introduce the notion of a personal God, the creator and governor of all things—a being endowed with the qualities which would make him competent to such a work. He must be supposed to be concerned in the career and conduct of his creatures. To deny this is to make him concerned to create, yet indifferent, whether his creature served the purpose of his creation or not. But such a suppo-

sition is contradictory and absurd. Any departure of the creature from his designed sphere of action must necessarily involve more or less of divine displeasure. Darkness and desolation must follow the refusal of the sun to shine, or the rain to fall, or the earth to clothe her bosom with grass or herbs. Introduce the notion of intelligence and a free causal will in the rebellious creature. The inference of the divine displeasure at a voluntary and designed departure of the creature from his appointed sphere of action will be powerfully strengthened. Now the presumption is very strong, that if God must feel displeasure, he may express it. No matter what may be the way in which he may do it, it is certain that if felt, it may be expressed. This expression of his disapproval may be given in deeds as well as in words. Deeds expressive of divine disapproval of any or all violations of his will are penal; and the discovery of any penal infliction takes the whole controversy from the ground of fact, and makes it a mere question of degree. The issue can no longer be whether there is any penalty for sin, but only how much punishment is just.

But again, there is another presumption entirely distinct from the principles just discussed. This is the universal agreement in the creeds of all nations and all ages in the assertion and belief of this awful doctrine. It is not an idea which men willingly cherish; and yet Jews, heathen, pagans of every type, Christians of every shade of difference, Mohammedans, deists, infidels of various schools, and even large sections of the universalist body itself, have affirmed the doctrine of some kind and some degree of punishment for sin, both in this life and in the life to come. Let it be remembered, the question at present touches the fact of penal responsibility, and not the question of the nature, duration, locality, or degree of the penal retribution. Now, how can this uni-

versal admission of a notion which all men would eagerly deny, if they could, be accounted for, except on the presumption of its truth? It is true, mere numbers do not prove the truth or falsehood of any doctrine. Allowing full force to this fact, it is also equally true that the more minds are engaged in an investigation, and are agreed in one uniform conclusion about it, the more likely it is that their conclusion will be correct. This presumption grows more powerful as you increase the numbers agreeing, and decrease the numbers dissenting, until, when we conceive an agreement so overwhelming, the presumption seems to mount up to the moral certainty of a view so universally taken by every diversity of age, nation, race, education, temperament, and fundamental differences on other subjects. The presumption is so powerful as to leave this universal agreement unaccountable on the supposition that the doctrine is not true.

But again, there is another and distinct ground of presumption upon this subject. That truth is more valuable than error is one of those plain dictates of both experience and intuitive perception which the most hardy skeptic would hesitate to question. The circumstances in which it would be even temporarily best to believe what is false are always transitory. Adherence to truth is not only right, but wise. Take this rule and apply it first to individual interests as implicated in this great question. We affirm that, even on the admission of the truth of universalism, the believer in the doctrine of future punishment has a solid advantage over the universalist. Allowing the truth of that fascinating, but dangerous theory, both are equally safe, while the rejector of the truth has a reversion in his favor in the event that the doctrine should be discredited. This is a real advantage. A military commander on going into action, counts it a capital advantage to have room for retreat, even though success in

the struggle may never lead him to use it. This reasoning becomes more and more effective as you withdraw the admission of the truth of universalism, and admit the possibility of the opposing theory, till, on the contingency of a real doubt, the advantage of the rejector of that theory becomes overwhelming. If universalism is true, both are equally safe; if it is doubtful, the rejector is safest; and if it is false, the rejector alone is safe. The advantage, then, is decisively and permanently with the rejector of the truth, for we are arguing on the supposition that universalism is true. The advantage is absolutely with the believer in the doctrine of a real penal responsibility on any supposition. Now conceding universalism to be true, when did it ever happen before that error was more valuable than truth, and that it was to the true and permanent interest of man to possess his mind with a lie? The case is prodigiously strengthened when the principle of the superior value of truth to error is applied to society at large. No principle in the administration of civil government is more clearly established than the necessity of a higher power to give force to human law, and to restrain the excesses of human passions in the larger concerns of human life, and to make up the deficiencies of public laws, in controlling those private and personal impulses which public laws cannot reach. This relation of the government of God to civil government is not a mere interested appeal of the teachers of religion to civil prejudice to sustain themselves or their doctrines; it is a fixed maxim of statesmen and legislators. So completely was the necessity of a divine Being and a divine administration over human affairs demonstrated by the events of the first French Revolution that Robespierre, the great leader in that unparelled tragedy, declared that if there were no God in fact, it would be necessary to invent one in order to make the laws effective. But the existence of

God is only valuable to human government on the supposition that he is the punisher of crime; his existence would be a positive disadvantage on the contrary supposition. If God is construed as the indiscriminate rewarder of all grades of moral character and conduct, and bound by the essential qualities of his own nature to place all his creatures on the same footing of absolute well-being, regardless of their own moral deserts, earth would rival hell in the compass of one lunar month.

Now admit universalism to be true, and what are the results? We should have, first, the grand anomaly of a great truth incompatible with the existence of society, and the direct producing cause of crimes and calamities of unexampled bitterness and horror. Second, we should have the development of the extraordinary fact that a lie, the conscious denial of an admitted truth is more valuable than the truth admitted. Third, we should have the anomaly of a tremendous fraud necessary to the providential government of Almighty God. Fourth, we should have it necessary for the existence and peace of society to keep this grand, perilous truth out of sight, and to train the teachers of religion in all the arts of fraud, in order to maintain the delusions indispensable to the protection of all the rights and interests of associated life.

The inference from all this process of reasoning is that there is presumptive truth in an idea so essential to the government of providence, and to the interests of mankind, that there is no reason to believe error to be more valuable than truth on this subject than on any other, and that the presumptive argument growing out of these facts amounts again to a moral certainty of the reality of penal pains in the administration of the universe.

But this is not all; we now approach a series of strict analogies, the force of which rises higher than a mere pre-

sumption. There can be no doubt that, so far as we can inspect the system of things in which we live, the violation of law is the invariable cause of disorder and suffering. It is true of the system in its minutest forms, as well as on its grandest scale of being. Penalty stands guard on every inch of the universe. It guards transgressions of all sorts; it threatens sins of omission as well as sins of commission. If man fails to provide food, shelter, and the means of improvement for the body or the mind, the results are unavoidable. The law of retaliation applies to physical nature, as well as to responsible man. Let man violate the laws of his material nature, pain and positive disease will assuredly follow. Let him omit to provide for his wants, suffering cannot be avoided. Let the agencies of nature rebel against the order ordained for them, confusion and loss are inevitable. Since then, penalty stands guard on every atom of the universe, the argument from the analogies of nature is as boundless as the universe itself, and the laws which govern every part of it. The grand matter of fact touching the penal responsibilities of violated law is determinable under three categories only: either man will be annihilated, and so made incapable of either pleasure or pain, or the nature of things must be so changed as to make violations of law productive of pleasure, and not of pain, which is absurd and impossible; or else man must be kept from violating law, a deliverance which can only be anticipated under a view of the divine character, which is irrational and impossible. Sin must so change its nature as to excite other than sentiments of aversion in the infinite mind, which is equally absurd and impossible.

Here, then, we stand, just outside of the Bible, with presumption after presumption, and analogy after analogy, aligned upon one irresistible conclusion, that the retaliation of violated law is certain. Let us now turn to the testimony of the revelation from heaven.

THE PENALTIES OF SIN.

“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.”—
PROVERBS xi. 21.

WE left the consideration of the subject under discussion as it was determined by the evidences of nature, outside of the Word of God; we now enter upon the consideration of its testimony. Let us, first, look at the effect of that testimony upon the presumptions which we have seen to be created by more than one phase of actual experience, and the intuitive judgments of the human mind upon the working of the laws of nature.

1. The first of these presumptions arose from the actual existence of misery in all the life and history of the human race in this world. If misery now reigns in one department of the universe, and during one segment of eternal duration, there is certainly no room for an inference from the general principles of the divine government or the attributes of God, denying the possibility of a similar state of things in another place and period of existence. The presumption assuredly is that like causes will produce like effects; and the testimony of the Word of God is perfectly clear that “he that sinneth shall have sorrow.” The connection between sin and suffering is affirmed by the Word of God to be essential and necessary; the one is the natural fruit of the other, and no power can change it. Omnipotence itself cannot effect impossibilities. Whatever is capable of change is an object of power; whatever is not capable of change is an object of no power at all; and sin, as an evil in its own nature, cannot be made the

source of anything but evil. Consequently, when the future existence of man is presumed, the presumption of his misery follows the presumption of his existence unless he can be stopped from sinning. The Bible makes this presumption a certainty: "as the tree falls, so it must lie forever" is its clear announcement. It teaches that the issues of the future life are determined in the present, and the presumption of future misery to man from the wretchedness of the present swells into a clear and resonant conclusion, plainly and positively affirmed of all who violate law, and die without repentance.

2. The second presumption arose from the intuitive perception, that the Creator must be concerned in the conduct and career of the creature, especially of any intelligent and moral creature. To deny this is to make God equally indifferent to the success or failure of his own arrangements, which is absurd. The conclusion is resistless, from the premise, that he is concerned in the actions of the creature; that whenever the creature violates the order determined by the divine will, that God will be displeased, and his displeasure is a nullity unless it is expressed. The expression of the divine displeasure for violations of the moral laws ordained for the regulation of moral and responsible agents is what is meant by judicial or penal judgments.

The Bible not only confirms this presumption, but restates it in far stronger and broader terms. It does this, not only by affirming that the divine being is concerned about the conduct of the creature, but by affirming that this concern is far deeper and more intense, and employed about more and minuter acts, than the natural reason had ever supposed. So far as mere natural objects are concerned, his interest and regard extend even to the fall of a sparrow. So far as responsible moral agents are concerned, it extends to the full degree of his regard for intrinsic righteousness, for his

authority as a sovereign, for the honor of his law, and for his own personal character as involved in the character of his legislation. To select only the last of these specifications for illustration: When a man violates the law of God in any particular restraint, his conduct implies that the law restrained him from what it was good for him to enjoy, and thus attacks its benevolence. He implies that the law mistook what was best for him, and thus impeaches its wisdom. He implies that this unwise and unkind interference with his interest is unjust, and thus impeaches its justice. Sin attacks the propriety of the whole law. In doing this, it goes farther, and attacks the character of the lawgiver; the character of every legislator is necessarily involved in his legislation. By the breach of his law, not only is his personal honor impeached, but his authority is despised; and when the Bible teaches that God's concern in the responsible activities of a human being involves all these grand elements of both his personal and official character, and is measured by his regard to them, it carries the presumption of the intuitive judgments of natural reason to the highest possible degree, and makes the inference touching the penal expression of his displeasure absolutely resistless.

3. The doctrine of the Bible upon the invariable, immediate or ultimate sequence of suffering upon sin, teaches plainly the doctrine of penal pains in the world to come. The history of mankind shows clearly this sequence here in this world, as we have seen. The presumption is that as sin produces misery in this world, it will continue to produce it in the world to come. If any stop can be put to sin, then its fatal power may be broken; if no arrest can be placed upon it, the conclusion is clear: man will continue to suffer as long as he continues to sin. This presumption also points, with fearful significance to the duration, as well as to the existence, of

future misery; it settles the rule that as long as man sins, he will continue to suffer. The doctrine of the Bible adds prodigiously to the force of this presumption. It not only affirms the invariable sequence of suffering upon sin to be naturally inevitable, but morally just. It affirms the proper penal nature of the connection. It declares that the essential link between violation of law and its painful results has been ordained in the nature of things, because a moral propriety demanded such an ordination, or, more properly, that the very nature of moral quality necessarily determines that connection. It affirms that even where suffering falls upon those who are incapable of overt acts of moral evil, it is still the result of penal liability, and proceeds to vindicate the principle upon which that legal liability results. It also explains the nature and relations of disciplinary suffering to penal pain, and clearly teaches that disciplinary suffering is merely an adjunct of a penal suffering proper; or, in other words, that unless penal pains were deserved, disciplinary suffering would be impossible. But, above all, it asserts over and over again the truly penal nature of the retributions of the law. Punishment is pain inflicted simply because it is just; it is pain holding a definite relation to criminal action; it is pain inflicted as a judicial determination upon the violation of law. The very term *punishment* shows that the pain is really punitive, and not disciplinary; its object is to do justice on the criminal, and not to secure his benefit. No human government executes a criminal sentence for the disciplinary benefit of the criminal actor; it does it because justice requires it of the criminal, and is necessary for the protection of society. "I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the Lord. They shall bear the punishment of their iniquity. He shall have punishment, in whom is sin." These are samples of the testimony of the Bible. They

confirm the intuitive judgment of the human soul that wrongdoing, not only will, but ought to, bring evil consequences on the wrong-doer; that he deserves it, and that justice will not be done unless he is made to suffer. Such is the confirmation and enhancement lent by the holy scriptures to the presumptive inference of human reason from the sequence of suffering upon sin. It confirms the inference by demonstrating that the connection between sin and suffering is moral, essential, and unchangeable; that it is fundamentally just and righteous, and as such it will be maintained eternally by a just administration of the divine government and law.

4. But the Bible influences the decision of this great question, to a decisive degree, by another and a distinct species of evidence. The unhappiness of man is occasioned, to an immense degree, by his own depraved and ungovernable passions: the sin in his nature exerts its natural influence, determines his active career in criminal actions, and invariably results in unhappiness to a greater or less degree. This cause of suffering, being attached to his own being, and a controlling complexion of it must be removed or it will secure his wretchedness in every theatre of his existence, in the future as it has done in the present life. Some radical change must be wrought in the very nature of man before he can be happy anywhere. This change the grace of God offers to effect in this world by the truth revealed in the gospel, and by the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit; but the determination of this change is distinctly suspended upon the acceptance or rejection of the offered mercy in the present life. Death settles the question; the indispensable change will not be wrought after that mystery is accomplished, and the soul which crosses the mystic line, into the bourne beyond, unrenewed, will be left hopeless of deliverance from the devouring energy of its own innate and acquired depravity.

That changeless subjection to the dominion of moral evil guarantees the unhappiness of the sinning actor for the full term of his existence; his misery will not only extend into the future life, but it will endure to the period of his being as an immortal creature.

5. The Bible doctrine of sin essentially implies the doctrine of a future punishment. The theories of universalism are the outcome of defective views of moral evil. Without just intuitions of sin, as a matter of course, no proportion can be discerned between the offence and the penalty. But when the true nature of the offence is discovered, all the insurrections of a rebellious moral judgment are subdued, and the soul reposes on the conviction that, awful as the retaliation of broken law may be, it is just. The intrinsic evil of sin is a mystery to the natural mind, because its intuitions have been darkened and disturbed by the very evil which it seeks to understand. But the mischief has been diagnosed for us by the infinite and unerring wisdom of God, who alone can fully comprehend it. The Bible pronounces it an evil absolutely infinite. The exposition of its malignity, and the righteous punishment of its guilt, seems to be one of the grand objects of the universe, and the divine administration over it. To assist in forming just conceptions on the subject, let us suppose that sin is not the malignant energy it is said to be. But now suppose there is an energy, of an incalculable power of evil, an insult to God, an injury to man, a disturbance to the whole universe, incompatible with peace and order everywhere, and, if left without restraint, deadly to the government, nay, to the very life, of God; the natural fountain of all manner of pollution, shame, and misery. Now let the common-sense, moral intuitions of any fair mind say whether such an evil ought to be condemned or not? If it is just to condemn and oppose, to the very uttermost, such an evil as

this which we have supposed, then the question before us is settled; for sin, moral evil—the breach and despite of eternal right—is just such an evil. If it is not just to condemn such an evil, then the absurdity is developed, that it is not just to condemn that which possesses every element of evil, every quality on which the notion of condemnation can arise in the mind. It is to say that it is not just to form a judgment which is rigorously true to the exact nature of the thing in judgment. It is to say that is not just which is just, exactly adjusted to the thing judged; which is contradictory and absurd.

Now we advance a step farther. If sin deserves condemnation at all, it deserves it to the extent and degree of the evil which is in it. The intrinsic demerit of sin is the measure of the justice in its condemnation. How do we obtain a just conception of the demerit of sin? As sin is the violation of law, either by omission or commission, its demerit must be ascertained by estimating the obligation to obey it. Obligation is the necessary basis of merit or demerit; without law there is no transgression. What, then, is the obligation of moral law? The answer is legitimately sufficient to say the very nature of moral quality carries obligation; right is intuitively felt to be binding on every moral being. The sum of the law is love. We feel bound to love excellence, and that, too, in a formal proportion to the degree of it. We feel bound to love a good man; more bound to love and esteem a better man, and most bound to love where most moral excellence is displayed. We are bound to love God on account of his excellence; his excellence is infinite in degree; the obligation to love him is infinite in force; and the breach of infinite obligation involves infinite demerit. If punishment is the answer of justice to demerit, it is clear that the infinite punishment of sin is capable of the strictest logical proof and expression.

6. Yet once more. The Bible doctrine touching the nature of justice involves the doctrine of future punishment. "Truth," says Milton, "is but justice in our knowledge, and justice is but truth in our practice." This is only to say, justice absolutely requires that a judgment of a thing must be truly fitted to the thing judged; a circle must be judged to be a circle, and a square to be a square. The judgment must be based on the thing judged; it must be conformed to the fact in the case. Any failure to do this can only spring from a want of discernment or a want of integrity. The character of the judge is involved in one or the other of the horns of this dilemma, when the judgment is not conformed to the facts in the case. The notion that God can let the sinner off from a judgment of condemnation, if he was only pleased to do so, is utterly false; his integrity binds him to a judgment of condemnation, if the thing in judgment is in itself evil and *per se* condemnable. If sin, then, is intrinsic evil, and as worthy of condemnation, God is bound by his own essential attributes to punish it. If it deserves to be punished by suffering, he must inflict it, or be unjust. No assurance could be higher that no transgressor will escape an atom of his just responsibility. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.

7. The Bible doctrine concerning the unequal allotments of this life also involves the doctrine of future punishment. The prosperity of the wicked, and the trials of the just, so often seen in the present perplexing system of existence, have proved a puzzle to the thinking minds of every age. The irresistible intuitions of the soul rebel against the justice of these allotments. There is an ungovernable flash of intuitive perception which rips through all the mists and mazes of skeptical metaphysics, and proclaims it as the deepest and most imperative judgment of the human soul, that criminal

evils ought to be punished, and virtue to be rewarded. The theory of the universalist itself admits this, whenever the exigencies of controversy forces him to show that the wicked do actually suffer more in this life. This admission involves the further admission that it is just they should suffer more; and this admission involves logically the whole doctrine of retribution for sin: it allows there is something in wickedness which deserves more suffering than well-doing deserves; and thus admits moral quality to be a just basis for a penal discrimination. Now, if justice is not done in this world, either to the righteous or the wicked, it must be done in the world to come, or remain undone forever. The Bible teaches it will be done to both classes, and this involves the doctrine of both reward and punishment in the life to come.

8. The testimony of the Bible takes another and distinct shape. All its principles involve the truth of the doctrine of penal liability for sin. The Bible doctrine of the divine government implies the existence and obligation of law; and law necessarily involves the notion of penalty. Without penalty, law ceases to be law, and becomes nothing but advice; it ceases to be coercive, and thus ceases to be law. The break-down of law is the dissolution of government altogether. The doctrines of repentance, atonement, human depravity, and regeneration, all imply sin; sin implies law, and law implies penalty. The whole scheme of salvation implies a danger from which deliverance is sought; it is an absurdity, on the contrary supposition. The whole work of redemption by Christ was absolutely without a purpose, if all the evil to which man is exposed actually exhausts itself upon him, and expires by its own limitation, for such a supposition leaves Christ without a function. The doctrine of future punishment underlies the whole system of Christianity, and the rejection of the one logically involves the overthrow of the other.

9. But the Bible testimony assumes yet another striking form. It is found in the perpetual contrast which it draws between the righteous and the wicked in a hundred points. Now, the contrast is between the moral character of the two, and the bearing of the difference on the peace and tranquility of the parties, and on the esteem felt for them during the present life. Then it is emphasized on the personal happiness, on the bodily health, on the worldly prosperity, and on the conduct and comfort of the two classes in affliction, danger, or death. In all these matters, the contrast is rigidly grounded on the differences in the moral character, and the moral conduct of the parties. This universal antithesis between the righteous and the wicked, in all the consequences of the distinction between them, points to the essential character of the distinction, and this absolute essentiality carries with it the perpetual nature, and the eternal operation of the distinction. If it is so essential, it must go over into the world to come, and display its peculiar energies for all eternity. The Bible confirms the inference in its pictures of the judgment day. The parties are placed on opposite sides of the Judge's throne; a different sentence is pronounced upon them; the execution of the sentence is made fearfully different; and the whole is made to turn upon the differences, the awfully fruitful and intrinsic differences in moral character and conduct of the classes judged. Some defenders of the theories of universalism endeavor to confine this judgment to the present life; but the sentence is after death; the judgment is after the present life is closed; and the whole process reveals clearly that the grand distinction is carried over into the future state and established as eternal.

10. Once more. The Bible settles the question by giving a local habitation and a name to hell. This fact is sought to be evaded by showing that the Hebrew word rendered *hell* is

sometimes used to mean the grave. This is admitted; but it is not admitted that it never means anything else. Such an interpretation would make nonsense of many passages of scripture. A single statement of fact, however, settles the question: it is after death, and after the resurrection from the grave, that the sentence of the Judge drives the wicked from the left hand of the throne into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, and leads the righteous from the right hand of the throne into the paradise of God. An assertion so plain and positive will and ought to settle the question with all candid believers in the Word of God.

11. Finally, we condense all the remaining features of the testimony of the scriptures into the statement that the sacred writings are full of warnings and exhortations—relative ideas of penal perils; they give examples of the pains of hell; they describe dimly the nature, and more clearly the duration of penal pains; and they make one plain and positive assertion of the fact after another, until it becomes absolutely inexplicable how any one can doubt the doctrine of the Word of God on the subject. It gives us the cry of the rich man to Lazarus and Abraham. It paints the lake of fire, and the damned cherubim on its rolling billows. It affirms “the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment.” None need doubt who is willing to believe a disagreeable and menacing truth. Let us be warned. The finger of God, in nature as well as in the Bible, has written his testimony in characters of menacing splendor, more appalling by a thousand-fold than the dazzling sentence which glowed over the banquet of the Babylonian monarch on the night when justice made inquiry for his crimes. Let us hearken to the warning of the ancient seer, who saw the wicked “turned into hell, with all the nations who forget God.”

THE NECESSITY OF REPENT- ANCE.

“I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—
LUKE xiii. 5.

HAVING considered, in previous discussions, the two great features of sin, first, as an intrinsic evil, and, second, as a natural fountain of disorder, pain, and pollution, involving the twofold element of guilt, as the desert and the liability of condemnation, two other related subjects of supreme importance come forward and demand our attention. Both are involved in the question, whether it is possible for the sinning actor to escape from the power and peril of his sin. The answer to this question is due only to the wisdom and grace of God, and constitutes the whole essence of what is known as the gospel of Jesus Christ. No angel could answer it. The affirmative seemed to involve insoluble difficulties, even contradictions. God was absolutely just, sin was absolutely evil, the transgressor was absolutely guilty, and God was bound by his own integrity to condemn both the evil and the doer of it. How, then, could he pardon? His holiness, justice, and truth seemed to bar the way to peace and safety to the offender, with a trio of flaming swords, to whose awful menace the whirling sword-fires of the cherubim on the gate of deserted Eden lost all menacing power. God's wisdom alone could solve the question how mercy and truth could meet together; how righteousness in God and peace for sinning man could kiss each other. The solution, when made, was found to lie in the double nature of

guilt, resulting from the twofold evil in sin. Guilt, as personal desert of condemnation, was incapable of change; it must remain forever attached to the person of the transgressor; but guilt, as liability to penal pain, was revealed in the discovery of the divine wisdom as capable of transfer, though not capable of absolute impunity. The wondrous conception of substitution and legal representation is developed in the grand doctrine of atonement; and the possibility of salvation to a sinner turns upon the obedience and suffering of the Son of God, the great High Priest of our profession, as the substitute of the transgressor. In this wonderful expedient, the regular action of the law is not interfered with; it is allowed its full claim in both precept and penalty. The sinner is saved by being moved out of the line in which penal justice seeks its righteous vindication, and Christ steps into his place, and pays the debt for him. The executor of the estate pays the full value of the bond, and is then free to give up the cancelled bond to the rescued debtor. The liability of human guilt is laid upon him, and is taken wholly away by his atoning sacrifice offered in the sinner's place. Thus salvation for a sinner becomes a joyous reality, by the wonderful grace of his representative substitute dying in his place. The full development of the principle, and result of this scheme of divine compassion, belongs to the doctrine of atonement. The liability element of human guilt being capable of transfer to a representative substitute makes atonement for sin possible, and by consequence salvation to a sinner. But the moral and personal desert element of human guilt, being unchangeably attached to the person of the transgressor, must be encountered by another expedient, and makes personal repentance, on the part of the offender, absolutely and permanently indispensable, at least for the whole period of his earthly life, and until finally and fully saved from

the inward stain of personal depravity, into the kingdom of final glory. This doctrine of repentance is the subject of our investigation at this time, confining attention at present to one single point—the necessity of repentance to the salvation of a sinner. The forgiveness of sin removes the liability to penalty, and qualifies the legal relations of the individual; but exerts no direct personal effect on his moral nature. His personal nature, which has been corrupted, and the personal criminality of his previous conduct, remain to be qualified. His personal attitude towards these elements of his responsibility must be altered. He has loved his sin, he has delighted in the indulgence of his unholy impulses, he has disliked the law which rebuked his self-indulgence. The course of conduct, which has been determined by these unholy and self-gratifying motions of his corrupt nature, has developed criminality in his whole career. He is rightfully required to alter his whole attitude towards these criminal elements, both in his heart and in his life. The past cannot be changed; past facts have escaped from the sphere of power; even the almightiness of God cannot obliterate a past fact. The only thing connected with past sin, except the liability just spoken of, which is capable of change is the attitude of the sinner towards the indelible facts in his history. This can be changed; this ought to be changed; this is indispensable to be changed under the revealed scheme of delivering grace. Such a change is what is meant by repentance, or, in other words, repentance is a necessary part of salvation to a sinful soul. It is not only necessary to introduce the outset of a Christian career, but, inasmuch as the struggle with sin will continue all through the natural life of the pilgrim of grace, the necessity of repentance will never cease until the strife with the law of sin in the members is over. The final full sanctification of the redeemed soul will put a period at last to

any fresh demands for repentance, by putting a stop to all sinning. But, even amid the unstained blessedness of heaven, it is likely that the sense of unworthiness to have had such a redemption granted will never depart from his thoughts, and will give an intense reality to his ascription of praise to the Lamb of God, who redeemed him by his blood, and purified him by his grace.

1. The necessity of repentance on the part of the transgressor is not modified at all by the consideration whether his repentance will qualify the question of his deliverance or not. He is morally bound to repent, no matter whether repentance will aid his escape or not; he is bound to repent in any event. He is necessitated to repent on the supposition of his salvation. Salvation in sin is a contradiction in terms. Repentance is at once a moral and an intrinsic necessity in the salvation of a sinning being. The moral obligation to repentance results from the essential proprieties of the case. Sin is an evil; it is an intrinsic wrong; it is in its very nature a criminal thing; and essential justice requires it to be condemned. Essential justice as much requires the sinner himself to condemn his own evil-doing as it requires any one else to condemn it. To refuse to condemn and disapprove an admitted wrong is to endorse and confirm it. Such a refusal is at once recognized, by the moral intuition of the human soul, to be a gross impropriety, to be an essential injustice, to be a vivid aggravation of the original wrong, a fresh act of transgression on the law of right. Every human heart instinctively affirms it to be right to repudiate wrong. To refuse appears to be a deliberate reënactment of the evil done; it is a conscious endorsement of it. To refuse to repent is to reaffirm and stand by the evil act. Such an endorsement is resistlessly condemned in the court of conscience. This is the first reason why repentance is indispensable to the salva-

tion of every transgressor of the divine law. The moral consciousness of the human soul dictates repentance as essential justice to the ill-desert of sin as the immediate and inevitable requirement of right when a wrong is committed. This judgment is altogether irrespective of any prospect of relief, or any idea that such relief is either logically or morally connected with this repudiation of his criminal act by the agent himself. No human tribunal accepts the repentance of a criminal as in itself entitling him to release from the penalties of the law. His repentance is judged to be simply justice to the act on the part of the transgressor, to be right and needful in the proprieties of the case. To connect the notion of a necessary forgiveness, as the moral and the intrinsic logical consequence of a confession and repentance of the criminal, as is done by the Socinian theology, is not only false, but absurd; it is to claim exemption from the just penal claims of the public law, simply because the criminal does justice to his own act. The sinner condemns himself; or, in other words, affirms the justice of his own condemnation, which logically excludes the obligation of forgiveness by affirming the just obligation to the precise opposite; that is, to condemnation instead of forgiveness. If it is just for the sinner himself to condemn his own wrong, it is just for any other intelligent and just judgment to condemn the evil done, whether God or man; and as the administrators of the law are under bond to execute the law, they cannot possibly be exempt from their obligation solely because the criminal has seen something in his offence to condemn. Repentance lays no obligation on the divine government to forgive, independent of a just satisfaction to the claims of the law. Justice is done to the evil in the act by the sinner by repentance; but it only meets one part of the case; it fails to do justice to the violated law, and the dishonored authority of the Law-

giver. Repentance is justice, so far as it can go, but it cannot meet all that justice demands; and, because it is just for the transgressor to condemn himself, repentance is absolutely demanded at his hands.

2. The second ground on which rests the indispensable requisite of repentance is found in the continued obligation of the preceptive part of the law. The sin of the transgressor has not abolished the jurisdiction of the law over him. He is bound in the same way, and to the same degree, as he was before his offence; he is still bound to render a perfect obedience. Sin does not abolish law. It would be an easy method to annihilate responsibility if it were possible. One violation of law leaves the law still demanding obedience; the demand of obedience prohibits any repetition of the evil done; it requires the instant cessation of sin. This quitting of sin is the essence of repentance. Repentance, then, is manifestly the very thing which the law requires by its continued obligation to obedience. It is the very thing which would result from compliance with the unrelaxed obligation of the law. This consideration clearly illustrates the demand of repentance, irrespective of any question of its bearing on the relief of the transgressor; it farther discredits the Socinian plea of repentance logically involving an obligation to forgiveness. Our Lord teaches that when full obedience is rendered to the law, the obedient servant has only done what his duty required him to do, and could claim no reward. Repentance, then, as indispensable duty to the broken law, can carry no moral or logical claim to forgiveness. The obligation to repent results from the perpetual obligation of an unchangeable and absolutely righteous law. So far we have proceeded on the supposition that repentance held no necessary connection with the release of the sinner; he is bound to repent, whether it has any such effect or not.

3. But on the supposition that he is to be saved, the necessity of repentance becomes still more strikingly obvious. This springs from several considerations.

In the first place, salvation in sin is a contradiction in terms; it is a positive impossibility in the nature of things. Salvation in sin is as purely a solecism in expression as to speak of health in disease, or rationality in insanity. Sin is a positive force which tends to mischief; it is in itself a fountain of pollution, and a natural cause of pain; it carries the seeds of death. To save a sinner at all, he must be saved from sin; he must be restrained from violating law. Salvation to a sinner is *per se* salvation from sin, or it is nothing; it can be realized in no other way. The hope of salvation in the unchecked indulgence and under the unbroken dominion and power of sin is an absurdity. That is to say, in other words, repentance is indispensable to the salvation of a sinner.

In the second place, the honor of God as the author and administrator of the law absolutely demands repentance in the sinner, on the supposition that he is saved from the consequences and from the stain of his sin. To save him while he continues in the undisturbed career of violence to the law is for the Lawgiver to discount his own honor, for it implies disregard to his own legislation. It implies that he sets no great value or esteem on his own commands. His laws are a part of his arrangements to carry out his ends and purposes, and indifference to his laws is the repudiation of his own plans. Yet further, the law is the law of right; to repudiate the law is to repudiate intrinsic righteousness. To do this, God must alter the very quality of his own being. It is eternally right that a righteous law should be maintained; to refuse to maintain it is to do an essential wrong. To suppose God to do this, is not only blasphemous, but absurd. It is fit and becoming in all moral beings to maintain righteous law;

it is inexorably true that the Lawgiver must and will do it; to refuse to do it is to deny and impeach himself. The law itself is unchangeable, and to allow the transgressor to escape the penalty of the law while steadily pursuing the course of his transgressions, is at once to impeach the law as wanting in excellence, and deficient in force. Both the claims of the Lawgiver and the demands of the law inflexibly require the sinner to quit his career of unchecked transgression, in order to make salvation possible for him. In other words, repentance is indispensable to the salvation of a sinner.

In the third place, still more does the honor of God, as the author of deliverance to the transgressor, require repentance at his hands. A good man may interfere to rescue an unfortunate child from distress or great want; but he will not feel that he has done his duty, if he introduces the object of his kindness into circumstances where his integrity will be assailed by influences which will be almost sure to result in his moral ruin. He will feel that his charity will be incomplete, and of doubtful moral value, unless he does all in his power to secure the being he has befriended from all special exposure to moral corruption, and place him where he will have a fair chance to lead an honorable life. God is under bond to his own integrity to save the object of his grace from moral ruin. The idea that God should pardon sin while the sinner continues to transgress is to charge the infinitely Holy One with criminal weakness. He can be no party to any enfranchisement to do evil; the notion is preposterous. He cannot pardon at all without a full contentment of justice by a competent satisfaction of its claims; and to do it while the evil is perpetually repeated would impeach him as unjust and unholy, as regardless of evil. This doctrine of the necessity of repentance is not the exclusive datum of the scriptures; it is also the datum of common sense. To see

the unbiased judgment of the human heart, see the tremendous sketch of the king's remorse, as drawn by the great interpreter of human nature :

"Oh! my offence is rank; it smells to heaven;
 It hath the primal, eldest curse upon it,
 A brother's murder! Pray can I not,
 Though inclination be as sharp as will;
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
 And like a man to double business bound,
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood?
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens,
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy,
 But to confront the visage of offence?
 And what's in prayer, but this twofold force,
 To be forestalled, ere we come to fall,
 Or pardoned being down? Then I'll look up;
 My fault is past. But oh! what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder!
 That cannot be; since I am still possessed
 Of those effects for which I did the murder,
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
 May one be pardoned, and retain the offence?
 In the corrupted currents of this world,
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
 Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above;
 There is no shuffling; there the action lies
 In his true nature; and we ourselves compelled,
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
 To give in evidence. What then? What rests?
 Try what repentance can? What can it not?
 Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
 O limed soul! that, struggling to be free,
 Art more engaged. Help! angels, make assay!
 Bow, stubborn knees! and heart with strings of steel,
 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe;
 All may be well!"

Unless God's character can be compromised in the indulgence of his grace, man must repent. The necessity is absolute.

In the fourth place, the natural and unalterable opposition between holiness and sin requires that one or the other must give way. They cannot coexist in the same personality; light and darkness, heat and cold, pain and pleasure, good and evil can as easily coexist at one and the same time, and in the same sensibility, as holiness and sin. Without holiness, no man can see the Lord; and if the sinner is ever to become pure, he must necessarily abandon sin; in other words, he must repent.

In the fifth place, the honor of the law, not less than the honor of the Lawgiver, equally requires it. To release a sinner who persists in denying that his acts of transgression are evil to any noticeable degree is to yield the law as wrong. If the violation of a law is a matter of little or no importance, as a matter of course, the law itself is of no particular consequence. If the breach is right or worthy of no regard, then the law is a wrong, because its demand is an impertinence. But such an imputation on the law is an absurdity, because the law of God is, in its very nature, the law of right; it is law just because it is the expression of that eternal distinction in the nature of things which is called right. The law is a transcript of the very nature of God, an impression struck by his own attributes as the types of imprint. To deliver a sinner in the persistent breach of the law is the supposition of his delivery in violation of right; that is, it is a necessary wrong. Moreover, all other moral and intelligent beings of every rank and class acknowledge the excellence of the law, and the consequent evil of its violation. Christ, in his work of delivering the sinner, confessed the justice and purity of the law; he came to fulfil it, in order to accomplish his purpose; not one jot or tittle of it was to pass until all had been

fulfilled. The angels who attended the giving of the law amid the thunders of Sinai approved it. God approved it. It is eternally fit and becoming that the sinner who is delivered from its righteous claims should not be permitted to deny what every just-minded being confesses to be true. The breach of such a law involves necessarily a wrong; and this essential excellence of the law demands repentance for the breach of its requirements, as simple justice to the wrong and justice to itself. The law proclaims it to be eternally and unchangeably right that a sinner should repent. It is but justice to his deeds. To say that every other being should do justice to evil except the criminal himself is an obvious absurdity. If it is right in itself to condemn wrong, it is binding on every subject of the law of right to condemn it, and the transgressor himself is no exception to the rule. The honor and claim of the law to esteem will be irretrievably compromised if it should consent to any other decision; both absolutely demand repentance at the sinner's hands on the supposition that he is saved. It is required of him, independent of any removal of his liabilities; it is demandable of him, with a thousand-fold more emphasis, on the supposition that he is saved from the just consequences of his criminality.

In the sixth place, the peace, order, purity, and happiness of the universe demand repentance of the sinner. Sin is contagious. If sinning creatures are blessed in their sin, not only is the law nullified, but the securities of holiness in the sinless creation are broken down. Contact with sin is always dangerous. To gratify the insane wish of the carnal heart to be made perfectly happy without the sacrifice of its favorite sins would be to throw open the universe of God to the universal spread and the unrestrained dominion of moral evil and its inevitable consequences. It would issue a charter as broad as the wide creation, and as durable as its existence,

for the supremacy of all manner of violence to the purity and peace of God's dominions.

In the last place, another reason vindicating the inexorable demand of repentance is that until the soul of the saved sinner has been taught to appreciate the evil of sin by the experience of a struggle with its disastrous dominion, it will never be able to appreciate the salvation of grace, and the grace of salvation. A sinner in love with his own lawless liberty will never be brought even to wish for deliverance from his fascination but dangerous self-indulgences. He never will, or can, understand the value of the redemption from sin until he has learned to understand its evil and to dread its supremacy. He will never understand or appreciate the grace of God in salvation until he can see how richly he has deserved his wrath. It is a wide-spread, if not an universal law, that contrast is needful to the completeness of knowledge and discernment. The love of God and the blessedness of heaven itself will forever be incompetently judged, even by the souls of the saved, except through repentance. It is alike demanded by the necessities of the case, and by the best interests of the sinner.

From this exposition one or two practical inferences become plain:

1. All men are bound to repent, or abandon the hope of salvation. No one is exempt: the rule is repent or perish. There is not one in a thousand, of those who hear the gospel preached, who does not expect and intend to comply with the condition. But they all with one consent postpone the actual compliance. If they were in possession of guarantees of life, and of assurances that protraction of resistance to the divine will would work no forfeiture or diminution of future chances, there might be some sense in this line of conduct. But it is foolish policy, because no man has any

guarantee of life, and privilege is often forfeited by abuse. The policy is contradictory and absurd. It is to firmly resolve upon an end, and to abandon all attention to the means of attaining it. No better assurance of failure can be given or conceived.

2. It is the duty and the supreme interest of every sinner to repent at once. The law of repentance prescribes instant action, as in the case of every duty. Besides, no guarantee can be given that time and space for repentance will be continued or be renewed in any part of the future. The opportunity will cease at death; it may cease before it.

3. The true dictate of prudence and conscience alike is not only instant action, but the most diligent and earnest use of all the means which have been appointed to be used in seeking the hope of eternal life. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. The refusal to obey the voice which calls to repentance may secure for us the bitter pains of Esau, who, as the final issue of his folly, found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully and with tears.

JUSTIFICATION.

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—ROMANS iii. 24.

THE position of a sinning moral agent under the government of God has been seen to involve him in two great leading responsibilities: one, guilt, under its twofold form of desert and liability to punishment; the other, depravity, or the necessary polluting influence of his sin upon his own soul. The way of relief from the first of these difficulties is through the atonement of Christ. The method of relief from the second is through the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The object of the present discussion is to explain this method of gaining relief from that element of guilt which involves liability to penal pains. The question is, how shall the iron link between sin and penalty be broken and the transgressor be allowed to escape? But this is not all. Not only does the great exigency require that the connection between sin and penalty should be broken; but also that the connection between obedience and reward should be reëstablished. A real salvation involves not only release from penalty, but a title to life. Unless this title to life can be achieved, conscience cannot be quieted, nor can any reliable hope of future well-being be enkindled in the human heart. To accomplish both of these ends, the sinner must be justified in the full sense of that term; and the most important inquiry which can be raised by the mind of man is, “How can man be just with God?” Man has already broken the law; the claims of the law are now penal as well as

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preceptive, and justification can only be predicated on the fulfilment of all the claims of the law. How, then, can these claims of the law, now become penal as well as preceptive, possibly be fulfilled? How can these inflexible penal claims be satisfied on any terms consistent with the deliverance of the transgressor? How shall the broken precept be now honored with an obedience which will not only meet the current demands of the precept, but establish and convey a title to a reward which has been already forfeited? Manifestly man himself can do neither. He cannot satisfy the penalty and yet live. He can satisfy it by enduring it; but this is a supposition which implies his ruin, and his salvation on this contingency is self-contradictory and impossible; he cannot be saved and at the same time lost. He cannot fulfil the precept; for his sin has so corrupted his moral nature that all the acts which flow from it are tainted, and he is disabled from rendering that perfect obedience which the law demands, and which alone can carry its rewards. How, then, shall a transgressor of law possibly be justified? The gospel gives the answer to the question in the words of the text, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Since man cannot effect his own justification, if accomplished at all, it must be done for him by some one else. The gospel answers the great question by the doctrine of a substitute for the hopeless transgressor undertaking to do for him what it was impossible for him to do for himself; and the development of that wondrous conception constitutes the essence and the chief distinction of the Christian religion. The development of this grand thought of a substitute for the sinner embraces the grand formulas of all the distinctive doctrines of Christianity: justification by faith, atonement, redemption, imputation, the divinity of the Redeemer, the infinitude of the divine grace

and the absolute effectiveness of the work done for the deliverance of the transgressors of the divine law. The doctrine of justification, which is the verbal description of the grand thing which was done by the great Substitute in order to qualify the relations of the undone transgressor to the law which he had broken, so as to admit of his escape from ruin, is the member of this category of revealed truth to which we are now to give our attention.

1. The first inquiry we raise is the question touching the meaning of the term "justification"; and the second relates to the use, or purpose, or object of the thing embraced in that term. In reply to the first of these inquiries, we may say that the term "justification" is one of a family of legal terms employed to denote the different actual and possible relations to the law of God. It has no relation to personal character; it carries no subjective significance whatever. It is a law term exclusively expressive of relations to law. To understand the peculiar relation to the law conveyed by the term "justification," we must first apprehend what the natural relation of a responsible moral agent is to the law of God, and the actual status of such a creature under law at the beginning of his career. All the rational, moral and responsible creatures of Almighty God come under the obligation of the law the instant they come into possession of their responsible being. The obligation is not the result of compact or agreement; it is the necessary datum of their creation. As a child is born subject to the authority of its parents, and this relation of subjection at once ensues on the birth of the child, just so God's creature comes into subjection to his law the very instant of his existence, and in the case of a creature like man, who is born with his responsible faculties incapable of use until their development occurs, the law suspends its demands until that occurrence. His status under the law is

that of a servant, bound to obey, unable to claim any reward for his obedience, because the law is endless in its claims, and his obligation can never be completed. When he has done all in a given series, he is still an unprofitable servant. While he can claim no reward, yet his happiness is perfect, and as full as his nature will allow. But this happiness is not of the nature of a reward of merit due to an unobligated service; it is the natural and necessary effect of obedience to the law.

Another striking incident of this natural relation of a servant to the law is a perpetual liability to fall from his obedience. Just as during the fulfilment of a human contract, and before the contract is completed there is a constant possibility of a failure to fulfil it, a liability which ceases when the contract is finished; so under the law of God, the liability to fall appears to be the natural and inevitable incident of the relation of a servant. At all events, this liability to fall appears to have attached to both of the only two great races of responsible moral creatures of which we have any knowledge—angels and men; a liability which not only existed, but actually resulted in the actual fall of a part of the one race, and the whole of the other. But this possibility of a fall remains a mere possibility, and so long as the creature actually obeys, his relation to the law is simply that of continued obligation to the precept of the law. He is under no obligation to the penalty as long as he is obedient to the precept. His obligation to the precept is unlimited, and his state of trial under the law is equally without a bound. The legal status of such being is defined under the term *innocence*. As long as he continues to obey the law, he remains innocent; but mere innocence is the only legal status which a servant can develop under his relation to the law; and this status of mere innocence will be perpetually attended with the

liability to fall from the state of innocence to a state of guilt. Let it be carefully and clearly noted that the obligation of the law on its original and natural basis is perpetual; it is indefinite and without limit as to time; and, consequently, that its claims can never be completed; that the legal status created by this state of the creature's relations to the law is unalterable, so long as those relations continue the same, the obedience of a legal servant can never be completed and finished as to time, no matter how perfect in degree his obedience may be. To alter the relation of a servant under law, to change the status of mere innocence with its perpetual liability to fall, and introduce a status of absolute safety, it is absolutely necessary that a limit of time must be fixed, beyond which a new legal status may spring up. Supposing such a limit fixed, and obedience successfully rendered up to that limit, it is clear that a new status will immediately result. This new status will be expressed by the term *righteous*, and the obedient creature will be in a state of *justification*, as distinguished from a state of mere innocence. This change of legal standing is of high importance. In the state of mere innocence no reward could be claimed, and a hazard of a fall or failure was perpetually incident. In a state of justification, a title to the promised reward is unalterably secured, and all liability to fall or fail is forever barred. The principle is identical with those principles of justice and common sense which regulate the business contracts of men. While a contract is being fairly carried out, the contractor is in a state of innocence; but he is not entitled to the reward of the contract until he has fully completed it. If, in the course of his work, he makes a mistake, and the other party chooses to overlook it, he is pardoned; but he is not yet entitled to the reward; that remains conditioned upon the fulfilment of the contract. If he is accused of having failed

to carry out some specification in the contract, and proves that he has carried it out, he is not pardoned, but acquitted; but acquittal, no more than pardon, entitles him to claim the reward of the contract; that remains absolutely contingent upon the one single and inflexible condition of fulfilling the contract according to its terms. All through the process of fulfilling the contract, and before its fulfilment, there is a possibility that the contractor may fail in some of the requirements of his contract; but when he has actually fulfilled and completed it, this liability is barred; all risk is forestalled, and he is justified from all impeachment or question under the contract. He is no longer merely innocent; he no longer needs pardon or acquittal; he is justified, and this legal state of justification releases him from all the hazardous incidents of an unsettled and unfinished series of conditions to be fulfilled, and entitles him to the promised reward. Justification is salvation, whether it be justification by works, as Adam would have been if he had stood fast in his integrity, or justification by faith as the grace of God has provided in the gospel. All who are justified by faith have eternal life.

It is perfectly clear that the possibility of justification depends upon the possibility of securing a limit to the time of obedience; it is the legal status which results from completing the claims of the law, just as the rewards of a contract wait upon the fulfilment of the contract. But such a completion would be impossible where the natural claim of the law, indefinite in time, was left unmodified by the Lawgiver. No man could fulfil a contract which required work to be done for an endless or indefinite time. The establishment of such a limit is solely the work of the Lawgiver himself; no one else would have any authority to modify the law in any particular; no one else could determine what modification was proper or possible. If the Lawgiver should order any such

modification, it would be an act of pure sovereignty on one side, and of infinite kindness on the other. Here, then, we see the reason why God has always dealt with man under the form of a covenant. We hear a great deal about "covenants" in the teaching of the scriptures—the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace: the one with Adam, the other with Christ. In order to mark the limitation of time which is necessary to the completion of obedience, and to render justification possible, God condescends to waive, for a time and a purpose, his right to demand obedience without conditions, and makes his law the basis of a positive agreement or covenant with his creature. He says, in effect, "I have a right to your obedience, independent of your consent; but I will waive that claim, and we will come to a voluntary agreement that you shall obey the law for a specified period; and if your obedience is perfect up to that time, I will bestow the specified reward upon you." The promise of reward was logically implied in the threat of punishment for disobedience; and both the promise of reward and the menace of punishment imply a limitation in the period of trial. Such was the nature of the transaction with Adam in the garden. Now let us suppose that he had obeyed instead of sinning. He complies with the law up to the limit of time affixed in the covenant. What would have been the effect upon his legal standing? His relation to the law would have been altered. He would no longer have been merely innocent, but righteous; he would have been no longer in a state of innocence, but in a state of justification. He would have been just before the law, not merely blameless. He would have been justified by his works; he would have been made just, or placed in this new state of justification by the good deeds of personal service which he had done. Other changes of vast importance would have taken place in his status under

the law. The justice and veracity of God would have been bound to him. The possibility of establishing such a claim of the creature upon the Creator originates in the mere sovereign goodness of God; it results in a bond upon his faithfulness. The appointment of the covenant and its limitation of time is the determination of pure sovereign kindness in the King; but he is bound by his covenant when he makes it, and when that covenant is complied with, it creates a bond upon his justice and his truth. This bond upon the covenant-fidelity of God reveals another grand benefit of this state of justification; it secures the absolute safety of the justified person; it bars the liability to fall, just as the fulfilment of a human contract bars the liability to fail under the contract; it secures the integrity and the consequent safety of the justified person. Adam would have been in no farther danger if he had succeeded in justifying himself by completing his obedience. It is one of the most inexpressible benefits of justification; it bars the liability to fall, establishes a guarantee of integrity, and thus secures the safety of the justified. It secures a title to indefectible holiness which will procure it inevitably in the end, although in the case of a sinner justified by grace, that holiness may be imparted at the end of a long struggle with the power of evil. Justification secures integrity. Yet another benefit of justification is that it opens the way, and removes all impediments to another grand change in the status of a justified person; it leads up to his adoption into the family of God, and to the alteration of the relation of a servant into the relation of a son. It leads up to an exaltation far above all the relations of mere nature—to the far higher and more precious relation of a Son and heir of the eternal King. On the mere basis of natural or creative relations, a devil or a pirate is as much a son of God as an apostle or an angel of light. The legal relation of a son by

creation is that of a servant, which is alterable; the natural relation of sonship by creation is unchangeable; a devil or a pirate can never cease to be a son or creature of the Almighty. But the legal relation of a servant, which is bottomed on the sonship of creation, is capable of change, and may be exalted into the legal relation of a son which finds its *logical* basis in the legal status of justification, and its *subjective or personal* foundation in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Another benefit of justification is the high and unimpeachable ground which it lays for all the joy of a lively and assured hope during the earthly pilgrimage of a justified person. The legal securities of a state of justification, and the grand insurances of the infinite love of an adopting Father, warrant a hope full of immortality, even when the justified and adopted son of God is toiling through the sands of the desert, whose farther boundary is the chill stream of death. It is impossible to enhance the blessedness of a real and reliable justification to any understanding which really comprehends what it means. The terrors of a state of condemnation are easily taken in; the blessedness of justification is embraced in all that is found in the exact and full antithesis to that dreadful state. The one is the consummation of evil; the other is the consummation of all that is good.

Mark the origin, and the only possible origin, of this state of justification, so rich in benefit to the justified person. It is the master principle of the whole notion of justification, whether by works or grace, without a clear and constant hold on which there can be no consistent or useful conception of the glorious doctrine. It springs from the completion of all the claims of the law, and cannot possibly spring from anything else. This is the feature which is essential to justification, and differentiates it from all other actual or possible relations of a creature to the law of God. Justification, with

all its blessed results, was only possible under a covenant, because no completion was possible to the claims of a law indefinite and perpetual as to time, until a limit of time to an obedience perfect in degree was fixed by a specific covenant agreement. The law binds perpetually; but a segment of that unending obligation may be segregated by a specific covenant to obey it; the law, without change, becomes the basis of the covenant; and when that covenant character comes to an end by the completion or rupture of its terms, the law simply resumes its original and natural character as law, unmodified by any voluntary compact to obey it. But so long as the covenant character is superinduced upon the law, justification becomes a glorious possibility, and all its happy results to a justified person will become a glorious reality. Notice that justification is possible to a sinless being, as the case of Adam proves. We call attention to this point, because we shall see, when the possibility of justification to a sinful being is discussed, that some confound justification with the mere pardon of sin. A sinless being is capable of justification, but is incapable of pardon, for pardon necessarily implies the existence of sin. Nothing could more clearly prove the radical difference between justification and mere pardon; every party to a business contract knows that overlooking a mistake in carrying out a contract is a very different thing from the fulfilment of the contract, which is the only thing which carries a title to the reward of the contract. The pardon of a blunder or a fault does not carry a claim to the reward. Such is the nature of justification; it is a relation to the law, a legal status created by the complete fulfilment of its claims.

2. The second inquiry in forming just views of justification touches the object of it. What are the special ends or designs of the benevolent God in seeking to secure a real justifica-

tion—a change in the relations of his responsible creatures to his necessary and unalterable law, which, while not at all affecting the law itself, would absolutely secure the safety of the creature? The nature and effects of justification which we have just seen are directly suggestive of its ends and purposes. It was legally and justly to remove the hazards necessarily attaching to the natural position of a responsible moral agent under the divine law of morals, and to secure his absolute safety. We have seen that the natural relation of a moral and intelligent creature under his law was that of a servant bound to obey, and incapable of altering his natural standing and relation to the law. This relation of a servant involved a perpetual state of probation, a constant liability to fall, the impossibility of ever rising above the mere state of innocence, with its perpetual hazards, and achieving a condition of righteousness which would have carried safety. The creature could never transcend his own natural limitations; never achieve a claim to any reward beyond the happy incidental results of his own obedience; never establish any guarantee, either of his own integrity or his own happiness. These seem to be the natural and unavoidable incidents of the natural and necessary relations of a responsible creature under the divine law. From the actual policy pursued by God towards the creature, and from some hints and inferences in the scriptures, his policy towards the whole universe of unfallen moral agents, as displayed in the covenant of grace in its incidental bearings, it seems to be clear that God was not altogether content with this state of things. He seems to have resolved to put a limit upon the probation of the creature; to make an end of the hazards involved in the situation; to provide for the eternal security of the creature, and to raise him from the risky position of a servant to the secure position of a son. In order

to accomplish this, justification under the law was the only method possible. The completion of all the claims of the law, if that was possible, would answer all these ends. The liability to fall would be forever barred, and the everlasting security of holiness and happiness would be guaranteed by the truth and faithfulness of God to his covenant engagements. All danger would be forever excluded; a positive title to an everlasting life would be secured, as provided in the promise of the covenant; and the justified person would be endowed with many priceless blessings, among which the elevation from the relation of a servant to the relation of a son would give an additional guarantee to his absolute safety. These grand ends were the object of justification—the purpose sought to be accomplished by our benignant Lord in all his contrivances to secure it. What inexpressible goodness is involved in the character of a covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God, whether as the God of a covenant of works with Adam, or the far more wonderful and glorious covenant of grace with Christ. This latter method of justification, not only accomplishes the justification of the ungodly among men, but also apparently secured the unfallen angels from falling, and laid the foundation for the security of all future races which it may please God to create, from falling from their innocent state in which they assuredly will be created, if created at all. Had man stood in the garden trial, he would have secured himself and his own race forever, being justified by his works. But in that case, in all probability all the rest of the unfallen creatures then existing or hereafter to exist, would have had to remain forever under the necessary risks of their natural relation to the law as only servants bound to obey, and through the whole course of their being exposed to the hazard of a fall. But man failed under the covenant of works. He not only did not

fulfil the covenant and achieve justification, but thereby rendered it impossible that he ever could justify himself by his own exertions. Justification is only possible on the complete fulfilment of the law, and man had actually broken it, and forestalled the possibility of justification by his own acts. But God did not forsake him; he contrived a wondrous scheme to secure his justification by grace; and in working out this justification of the ungodly, it seems as if he also wrought out a security for the unfallen universe through this same righteousness of God, by which he achieved the justification of ungodly men. We cannot go now into this branch of the subject; but we cannot well fail to see some lights falling, not clearly, yet not altogether dimly, on the great mystery of permitted sin and death in the universe. As the casting away of Israel was the enrichment of the Gentiles, so the permitted fall of the human race, and its subsequent redemption, appears to furnish the occasion, if it was not the necessary condition, to the security of the whole existing and future unfallen universe, and to the fixation of a final limit to the spread of moral evil in God's fair dominions—a terrible possibility, which is apparently essentially incident to the natural relation of the creature to the law of God, and incapable of being limited or altered in any other way than by this method of justification through the righteousness of God himself, wrought out by his assumption of the character of a Redeemer for the lost. The development of that strange and glorious conception is the exposition of what is known as the gospel of Christ.

3. Bearing in mind the fact that justification involves as its vital element the completion of all the claims of the law, and this only being possible by the law being made the basis of a covenant, a third inquiry springs up, involving a new presentment of the issue of the very greatest importance to

mankind, based upon the fallen condition of the human race. Is justification possible to a sinner—to one who has not only not fulfilled the claims of the law, but has actually violated those claims with every conceivable variety and degree of iniquity? This is the great question for a fallen race. No other can compete with it in importance, for it involves the possibility of salvation to a sinner or the certainty of his ruin. It is a question which seemed to involve a contradiction. It is a question which had engaged and baffled human ingenuity for ages, and all created wisdom was equally powerless to solve it. It was a question which only the very riches of infinite wisdom could determine. The answer is given in the gospel of the Nazarene, and the development of the plan by which it was accomplished constitutes that glorious revelation of infinite grace which makes the religion of Christ the confidence and the only hope of the sinning world. Let us look at the difficulties which had to be solved.

We have seen that as long as the creature obeys the law he is safe; he is entirely innocent before the law, and in no danger from its penal force. He is not justified; for the status of justification only emerges on the completion of the law's demands. But now let us suppose that he fails in his obedience and violates the law. What is the effect on his relations to the law? He at once becomes amenable to the penalties of the law; innocence no longer expresses his legal status; he has become guilty, and immediately passes into the status of condemnation. But his relation to the precept of the law remains exactly the same that it was before; he is still bound to the same perfect obedience, for no breach of law can possibly abolish law; but now justification involves the satisfaction of the penal, as well as the preceptive, claims of the law. The claims of the law have been enlarged; but all the demands of the law must be fulfilled to make justifica-

tion possible. Can a sinner possibly justify himself? Look at the constituents of the case. He is still bound by the precept which requires a perfect obedience; but his moral energies have become polluted by his transgression, and can only energize according to their own existing nature; the blackened hand taints all it touches. This circumstance alone renders justification impossible; for the corruption of the moral nature of the actor makes the required fulfilment of the precept of the law impossible. But there is another circumstance which still more clearly demonstrates the impossibility of justification to a breaker of the law by his own exertions. Mark that the law still binds him, because under no circumstances is it capable of change; it is the law of right, or essential morality, and as such is necessarily unalterable. But mark the effect of a single sin: the covenant character of the law, which alone rendered justification possible, ceases with either a fulfilment or a breach of the covenant; the covenant character of the law is necessarily limited by its own period, which is determined by either its fulfilment or violation. As soon as the covenant character superinduced upon a segment of the law's unchangeable demands ceases to exist, the possibility of justification ceases with it, and the law resumes its natural relation to the creature. The possibility of justification to a transgressor of the law by anything he can do in the way of obedience is wholly swept away by the *legal*, as well as by the *personal*, effect of his very first act of disobedience. But, more than this, the absurdity of a sinner's justification by his own agency is also demonstrated by his inability to cope with the penal claims of the law. They must be fully satisfied before justification can emerge. But to satisfy the penal claim of the law implies his destruction; and to postulate his salvation is contradictory and absurd. To suppose the fulfilment of

the precept which requires a perfect obedience by an unholy being, and the completion of a law in itself perpetual, and from which all limitations has been removed by the expiration of the covenant character superinduced upon it, is an absurdity equally glaring. The justification of a transgressor by human works of obedience, either by the transgressor himself, or by any other human being acting in his behalf is the very frenzy of folly.

From this view of the essential conditions of the question, we may see not only how inadequate are all schemes of thought which condition justification upon human works, but those also which confound justification with mere pardon of sin. No sinner, any more than any innocent person, can possibly be justified unless all the claims of the law have been satisfied; for this is the very nature of justification. Pardon is simply the dissolution of the connection between an offence and its penalty; it simply says to the offender, "You are released from your liability to suffer for your sin." This release cannot be arbitrarily done under a righteous government, because it would be unjust; it must proceed upon a sufficient reason; and in the case of a law like the eternally right and unalterable law of Almighty God, an atonement must be made to the divine justice before pardon is possible. The guardian of an infant ward has no right to release unpaid a bond of his ward's estate without paying it himself; then he may pardon the debtor by making him a present of his cancelled bond. Justice must be done before mercy is shown to the transgressor. Satisfaction to justice is indispensable to make pardon possible. But supposing pardon made possible, it has in its own nature as pardon exclusive and strictly limited reference to the penalty of the law; it only breaks the connection between the offence and the penalty; it cannot possibly carry with it a claim to the reward which is con-

ditioned upon the true fulfilment of the law. No human contractor could possibly claim the reward of his contract, just because his employer had been kind enough to forgive some blunder which he had made. Pardon cannot possibly have the effect of justification, or any other effect than that determined by its own nature. Even if pardon, either with or without satisfaction, could secure release from the penalty, it could not meet the other part of the claims of the law, the claims of the precept to perfect obedience. Yet all the claims of the law must be satisfied and completely met before justification can emerge. Pardon, therefore, cannot accomplish the legal status of justification, and to confound the two, and attribute to the one the legal effects of the other, is inadmissible.

Now it is unquestionably true that the real salvation of a breaker of the divine law involves not merely an escape from the penalty of the law, but a title to its reward. He needs not only deliverance from hell, but a passport to heaven. The inference is irresistible that he needs more than mere pardon; he needs justification. He needs something that will not only carry deliverance from danger, but a security for happiness. If, when pardoned, he is left to work out the other part of his justification by his own fidelity, he knows that he will fail; for the corruption still left in him precludes the possibility of that perfect obedience which alone can carry the rewards of the law. He needs a fulfilment of all the claims of the law, preceptive and penal, which will infallibly deliver him from the danger and establish him in security; or else there is no such thing as a reliable basis for an assured hope. It is irresistibly clear that all schemes of thought touching the gospel of Christ which confound justification with mere pardon, or deny any justification but mere pardon, logically strike at the very foundation of Christian hope and

leave it without stability, floating on mere contingency. Such theories leave the transgressor, according to their own terms, free from danger, and that only contingent upon personal fidelity, but with no achieved title to eternal life. This he can only receive at the end of his period of trial, as the reward of his own fidelity after pardon—a reward which, though contingent upon works, is still affirmed to be of grace in order to avoid conflict with certain stern declarations of St. Paul. The difference between the effects of a real justification and those of a mere pardon, with contingent results, are incomparably in favor of the first. The one secures deliverance from the curse of the law, and a sure title to its rewards; it secures a guarantee of integrity and an assured basis for personal hope. It provides a full satisfaction for all the claims of the law which is essential to peace of mind under a clear view of what sin really signifies, and under the near approach of death. The scheme of mere pardon only frees from the penalty, but secures no title to the reward, and that only contingently; it leaves one vast claim of a holy law unmet and unsatisfied, no title to life secured, and no rational or scriptural basis to prevent a lively hope during the present life from being a delusive thing, or incapable of a real comfort to the heart because resting upon an uncertain future personal fidelity. So important do we regard the possibility of a real justification by the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ, as compared with the effects of a mere pardon, with contingent promises of the rewards of the law, we shall dwell a little more fully on the differences between them.

First, an innocent creature is capable of justification, but is incapable of pardon, since pardon implies sin, and is only possible to a sinner. This fact discloses a radical difference in the very nature of the two acts which cannot be denied or altered. The justification of a sinner by grace, which is

a true justification in the strictest sense of the term, as we shall see hereafter, includes pardon; for by fulfilling the penal claims of the law it breaks the connection between the sin and its penalty; but it includes far more than this mere pardon. It is, therefore, perfectly proper to speak of the gospel salvation as securing the pardon of sin; it is as proper so to speak as it is in the systems which make pardon all that the gospel secures for the believing sinner. But far more than a mere pardon is secured to him.

Second, the two acts are in their own essential and unalterable nature fundamentally different, and cannot be confounded. One is a judicial act; the other is an executive act. The one is the act of a judge administering law, and basing his decision upon a question of fact, whether a contract has been fairly carried out or not. The other is the act of an executive, proceeding on the admission that the law has been broken, but remitting the penalty, by an act of executive will, for reasons esteemed to be sufficient. The one decrees the awards of the law on the demonstration that the law has been fulfilled in all its demands. The other relaxes and waives the claims of the law, while the breach of the law is confessed and not satisfied, by an act of executive will and power, for reasons constructively sufficient. The other adjudicates the claims of the law as really satisfied by a satisfaction to its penalty and an obedience to its precept, not constructively, but really, amply, and even excessively sufficient. Christ not only fulfilled, but magnified the law and made it honorable.

Third, the necessary logical and legal effects of the two acts upon the legal relations of a sinning creature shows the fundamental nature of the difference between them. The legal relation of one who has actually fulfilled all the claims of the law is necessarily different, with vital distinctions from

the legal relation of one who has simply been released from the penal consequences of a breach of the law, but has never fulfilled the claims of the precept. The difference is absolute, and is so recognized in all business contracts among men, and in the judicial proceedings of all human courts of civil justice.

Fourth, if justification is identical with mere pardon, there is no term which can express the legal status which results from compliance with all the conditions of a law or covenant. Under a covenant carrying a limit on the period of obedience, such a status is possible, for it is possible the covenant may be fulfilled; it is the very status sought by the establishment of a covenant. If justification to a sinner is nothing but pardon, there is no term to express the relation to law created by the fulfilment of its conditions. To confound the terms, justification and pardon, is to confound positive relations which are essentially and necessarily different.

Fifth, the use of the term "justification" in perpetual contrast with the term "condemnation," settles the question that justification is a forensic or judicial term, which carries the notion which is in direct contrast with the notion of condemnation. Moses says, "They shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked." Solomon declares, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." Paul says, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" He also declares that "the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." These terms are so clearly opposed that the meaning of the one may be determined by the other. Condemnation is a legal term expressive of a certain relation to law; it confers no personal or subjective depraving influence on the character of the condemned person. It simply declares that the law, or contract, has been violated, and formally decrees the subjection of the

law-breaker to the penalties of the law; but exerts no corrupting influence on his personal character. Justification, then, can only do the same thing in the opposite direction; it determines a legal standing without exerting a personal subjective influence on the character of the justified person, making him personally holy. This personal improvement which will inevitably follow justification as one of its effects is due to sanctification; but it is not a part of justification itself. It is not allowable to confound cause and effect. This overthrows the Roman Catholic doctrine that justification is partly forensic, and partly an influence on personal character. Acquittal of a charge is simply the affirmation that a charge of breach of contract has been disproved; but neither pardon nor acquittal declares that the covenant has been fully carried out, and a title to the reward has been achieved. As the exact judicial opposite of condemnation affirms that the covenant has been fulfilled, and decrees a title to its benefits, justification, whether by works or grace, can only possibly emerge on the active and full completion of the law; it is exclusively determined by action, full and perfect. "Not the hearers of the law are just before God; but the doers of the law shall be justified." If Adam had obeyed, he would have been justified by his own works of perfect obedience. Christ justifies by his perfect obedience to all the claims of the law, both preceptive and penal.

Such is the nature of justification; it is a standing before the law of God based upon the fulfilment of its claims. When a human sinner is justified by grace through faith, when the righteousness of a divine Saviour is made over to him, it has all the effects of a true and perfect justification. While the sacred and unchangeable law of God still requires his obedience, his relation or standing under the law is gloriously altered; his status of condemnation is changed to a status of

justification; his sin is pardoned; he is endowed with a perfect righteousness; his liability to a fatal fall is barred; his integrity is guaranteed; the Spirit of God takes up his perpetual indwelling in his soul to make good the promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," and he is raised from the relation of a servant to the relation of a son. Justification is an incomparable blessing, even to a sinless being. Adam would have been infinitely blessed, himself and his posterity, if he had kept his integrity, and justified himself, and those for whom he acted, by his works. If justification to an actual sinner by the grace and righteousness of God is possible of attainment, it secures all the beneficial results of a real justification, including, in his case, some additional benefits which a sinless person, when justified, has no occasion to possess; he is delivered from the curse of the law, and from the deadly stain which his sin has stamped upon his soul. Justification is eternal life.

JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS.

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”—ROMANS iii. 20.

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”—ROMANS iii. 28.

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”—JAMES ii. 24.

IT is clear, from the very nature of justification and its profound effects on the improvement of the standing of the creature in relation to the law, that it is matter of the first importance, especially to man as a transgressor, to be justified rather than to be merely pardoned; and that all theories of religion which confound justification with mere pardon, not only misapprehend the doctrine of the gospel, but logically unsettle the foundation of the sinner's peace. Justification, even to a sinless being, is a matter of supreme concern; for it puts an end to the hazards of his position; but to a sinful being it is a matter of infinitely more concern, for it is the only mode in which he can be rescued from the difficulties of his position and established in a state of safety.

Whether justification is possible to a breaker of law at all is a question which was insoluble to any wisdom but the infinite wisdom of God himself. It seemed to involve a contradiction in the very terms of the proposition. Justification implies the perfect fulfilment of law; it cannot emerge on any other basis; but a sinner has already broken it, and justification is already forestalled. Justification carries a title to the reward of a fulfilled law; but a transgressor is already subject to its penalty. How can the law utter a twofold and

contradictory judgment? How can it decree a sentence of condemnation for a breach of its demands, and at the same time a sentence of justification for a fulfilment of its demands? How is it conceivable that a man, or any other creature who has already sinned, can accomplish his justification by any work whatever which he can do? No angel, even, of the highest gifts, could solve the problem; and when solved for them by the manifold wisdom of God, they are represented as prying eagerly into the mystery, as if it presented an endless subject of investigation and interest. An apostle exclaims, in view of it, "O the riches of the wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." The difficulty would have remained insoluble if God himself had not appeared in the wonderful *role* of a Saviour justifying the ungodly, and wrought out a righteousness which fulfilled all the claims of the law, and is made available for lost men, on principles which meet every claim of justice, and not only satisfy every demand of the holy and inflexible law, but magnify and make it honorable. The development of the manner in which this great redemption was accomplished is the heart and essence of the gospel of Christ. The testimony of the word of God is clear and irresistible that the righteousness which is of God by faith, is the only way of deliverance for breakers of the law; that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified; and announces an universal conclusion, which is not impeached in the smallest degree by any other testimony in the sacred record, as we shall see clearly in the sequel, that "we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Yet, in spite of the clear and powerful declarations of the Holy Spirit on this subject, the conviction lies deep in the human heart that man can condition his deliverance by his own good works and his own excellencies of character. It

is felt that even if he cannot do all, and must refer to the righteousness which God has revealed to faith for some assistance in working out his salvation, still he can do something which will invite and aid the justification of grace, and so take a material part in the realization of his hope. Thousands rely upon their own moral excellences to secure a favorable verdict when called to the bar of God. Nay, the testimony of one or more large branches of the church of God, as in spite of grave departures from the faith of Christ they claim to be, does articulately affirm a merit and an efficacy in human works, to exert a decisive influence upon the forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God. Few human errors are without some tracery of truth to a greater or less degree; and it therefore becomes necessary to discriminate the element of truth in the doctrine of human merit, and disclose the dangerous influence which its allied elements exert in corrupting the doctrine of justification by grace.

The genesis of this error seems to follow the process now to be traced. The distinction between right and wrong is as native and fundamental a distinction, in the nature of things, as the distinction between true and false, or figure and size. The perception of right is always attended by a sense of obligation; the distinction has the force of a law. Compliance with right is always followed by a feeling of approval, and the violation of right by a feeling of condemnation. It is this feeling of approval when the law of right is complied with upon which the doctrine of human merit is founded, and which gives it all its plausibility. This feeling of approval is confounded with a claim to reward; and the desert of penalty for a breach of right or the committal of wrong is supposed to carry the contrasted notion of an answerable desert of a positive reward. The desert of punishment is construed as involving the desert of reward. Now, two

things interfere fatally with this conclusion. The first is the teaching of our Lord in the seventeenth chapter of Luke, and the second, the radical distinction between the observance and the violation of a previous and intrinsic obligation which does not rest upon compact, but binds by its own intrinsic and native force. Our Lord cites the example of a hired or bound servant coming in from the field, who is not permitted to sit down to meat until he has prepared the meal of his master, and girded himself and served him. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." A previous obligation to do a thing is only discharged by doing it, and carries no claim to reward. If this obligation to do the thing was the result of a previous purchase, all can see that the doing of the thing carried no farther claim to additional reward. The previous obligation to do it foreclosed any further demand. Now, if the law of God creates a perfect obligation to obedience previous to any action of the creature, and gave the right to direct that action, it is clear that any fair and just compliance with that obligation created no right to demand an additional positive remuneration for doing it. A human contractor who carries out his contract fairly and honorably is entitled to the consideration for which he undertook the work; he is also entitled to esteem and moral approval for the integrity with which he has discharged his obligations; but he is not entitled to demand additional pay on the ground of this integrity. Just so the fair and full obedience of a creature will incidentally result in his own well-being; and this well-being is a fair reward of his obedience; he can claim no additional positive reward. He has met his obligation, and found his account in doing it. But reward he cannot claim, for he has only done that which it was his duty to do.

One member of a family does his part, with the rest of the household, towards the support of the family; he deserves esteem for doing his duty, but he can claim no special reward; he has only done what a previous obligation required him to do. If one without any such previous obligation had lent his aid, there might have been some shadow of a claim to remuneration, which might be pleaded; but even that might be subject to the exception that the voluntary and unsolicited interposition created no obligation to repay anything more than hearty thanks, and to return similar services, if the emergencies of the future should demand it. It is the general common-sense judgment of mankind that where a previous and absolute obligation to do a thing exists, the actual doing of it creates no claim to reward for doing it. On the contrary, the breach of law inevitably carries with it a liability to the penalty, a demand for condemnation, and a censure for breach of right. The compliance with obligation carries with it a claim to approval, but no claim to reward; the breach of obligation carries necessarily a demand of censure and an exposure to punishment. A claim to esteem is not the same thing as a claim to reward, and to confound the two is to make a mistake. This is the first error in the doctrine of the possibility of human merit before God. Merit of reward is not possible, even to a sinless creature, under the natural operation of law; it is only possible under the operation of a covenant; and the logical foundation of that possibility is grace, and not justice.

But farther: the idea of merit in the obedience of a creature already guilty and depraved is still more decisively discredited by the impossibility of such a creature rendering any but an imperfect obedience. A tainted fountain must send out a tainted current. The merit even of approval can only be measured by the law which governs the case; for if

the law is violated, no approval of the action is possible. In other words, the law is the standard of measurement both of esteem and reward. Now, the law is perfect; whether considered as binding on its natural basis as law, or as the basis of a covenant, it can only require a perfect obedience. To require less would legalize just so much of sin, which is absurd. A nature whose moral energies have already been polluted can only energize according to their own nature, and cannot possibly yield a perfect obedience to a perfect law. A depraved being cannot possibly develop merit under the law of God. Whatever qualified merit may be possible towards men, as judged by human standards and human comparison with human examples, merit in a fallen creature before God, and under the standard of his judgments is altogether impracticable.

Yet more: it is an admitted principle in the formation of moral judgments that even when an action is substantially good, the motive, end or object for which the act is done enters into the moral quality of the act and profoundly qualifies it, both for good and evil. An act of charity done from pure benevolence marks a good act; the very same act done from ostentation marks the Pharisee. A good deed, done from real regard to the will of God, is as good an act as an imperfect being can do; the same act, done to make merit for one's self and accomplish one's own salvation, is an offence instead of an acceptable service. A patriotic act, done to serve one's country, is an act morally good and approvable; the same act, done to serve one's own political advancement, is of a far lower moral quality. The rule is universal; all men judge all other men by it. Now, it is obvious that in settling a question of personal merit, it is not enough to look at what men *do* merely; their motives and ends must be also apprehended before the question of merit, even in the sight of

men, can be determined. In settling the spiritual or religious quality of any action, or series of actions, or of any system of religion which prescribes such series of actions, it is indispensable to investigate the motive, the object, or the principle which animates the energy employed. If this principle is religious, the question must be settled whether it is the principle of a true religion, before the true religious character of the act or system can be determined. A system both false and deadly in its effects may present a charming appearance. The personal character of a Unitarian, or a Romanist, or a cultured and high-minded Jew, may present a beautiful aspect to the observer; and many an uninformed and unreflecting observer can discover no difference in the religious quality of such specimens of moral and religious culture and the highest type of evangelical piety. But when the question is concerning the Christian quality and the real merit in the sight of God of these various forms of personal character, the test must be applied of their conformity or non-conformity to the requirements of Christ himself in the standards of his holy faith. If the Unitarian, the Romanist, and the Jew, by a cultured process develop their moral characters with a view to lay a basis for their own salvation, with so far a distinct repudiation of the redemption work of the Son of God, it is obvious that a very different moral and religious value must attach to their moral and religious development from that which attaches to the development which grows out of conformity with the evangelical system of the Founder of Christianity. No merit in his eyes can emerge, whether merit of approval or merit of reward, from the system of the Unitarian, which repudiates the redemption of Christ, and establishes a system of mere moral culture as the ground of human salvation. No merit in his eyes can emerge out of a system which discounts the value of his work by mixing

with it, as a necessary addendum, the merits of virgin, saints, angels, and of the seeker after safety himself, as necessary to make up what is lacking in the provision made by a divine Redeemer. There can no merit emerge when the Jew repudiates the whole system which the God of Israel has revealed as the sole foundation for human hope. Yet the beautiful characters of James Martineau, Blaise Pascal, and Sir Moses Montefiore illustrate the beauty of moral culture in a high degree, and reveal all that can be accomplished by human works. But when their works are compared with what the high and holy law of the Almighty God requires, these works show far below the requirements of a rule of action absolutely perfect. When the motive, the object, the end in view which animated these cultured schemes of moral development is tested by the pure and humble spirit of the evangelical system of a divine redemption, they exhibit the difference between a marble statue, exquisite in its grace, and the living form of a beautiful human being, animated with the glorious mystery of life, and glowing with the crimson and crystal which the cunning hand of God's own grace laid on it. Merit in the eyes and under the measurements of the infinite and holy One can never develop from the imperfect motives and the imperfect actions of any being who has already defined himself and his career as fallen away from the standards of the divine will, both in character and conduct. No man can serve God and self. When the heroic efforts of the Jesuit missionary and the patient and self-sacrificing labors of the Sister of Charity are done to work out their own salvation, and recommend themselves for a share in the redemption of grace which is offered to them freely, without money and without price, as the sole unpurchasable gift of the divine benignity, their conduct will present a beautiful and attractive aspect to the observer. But the motive which ani-

mates it all, and especially the unbelief which discounts and discredits the grace and the infinite merit of a divine Redeemer, and his offered gift of eternal life, strips the heroic record of self-righteous energy, of all the spiritual glory which is supposed to be in it. It involves the inconceivable folly of seeking to gather together a ransom price in discredited bank-notes, when the benignity of the Lord of the universe offers as the free gift of his own grace a merit whose value would be only faintly shadowed out by the image of a flawless diamond as large as the solid earth. The riches of Christ are unsearchable.

1. But to a more specific and orderly statement of the complete argument against the theory of justification by works of human obedience. The first obvious consideration, showing the absurdity of the justification of a sinner by his own works, lies in the fact, that justification, involving a complete satisfaction to all the claims of the law, requires of the transgressor a full satisfaction of those penal claims which his sin has developed. That penalty is death; it is spiritual and eternal, as well as physical death; and it is a contradictory predication to assert that a sinner can satisfy it and yet be saved. He can satisfy it by enduring it, according to its terms of time and substance—that is, by enduring it forever; and in no other way. But that sets the hope of salvation entirely aside. That is to say, the justification of a transgressor of law by his own works of endurance and obedience is an intrinsic contradiction and absurdity. So impossible is the sinner's satisfaction of the penalty of the law, the effort has been strenuously made to set up the theory of a substitute for the penalty, under various modifications. But to suppose a substitution for the penalty, not only involves a change in an unchangeable law, but prevents the possibility of justification altogether. That status under law cannot emerge except

by the fulfilling of the law; and of necessity is wholly prevented by any substitute for the law. Moreover, the substitute must be equivalent to the substituted claim, or justice is sacrificed by the substitution; and there seems to be no reason why a sinner might not satisfy an infinite penalty if he could satisfy a fair equivalent for it. Obviously he could satisfy neither. Yet more: the penalty is just, and it is inadmissible to suppose any substitution for intrinsic justice. Substitution of persons is possible; substitution for justice is absurd. Justice is set aside when anything is put in the place of it. Christ satisfied justice before he undertook to release the transgressor. Hence if man, undertaking to justify himself, is not able to satisfy the penal claims of the law, on any principle compatible with his own deliverance, justification to a sinner by his own works of endurance is manifestly impossible. Eternal endurance is the only form of the penalty applied to finite beings, because no finite being can satisfy an infinite penalty in a limited period. Satisfaction to such a penal claim by any sinning creature, consistently with his own salvation, is manifestly impossible.

2. The second consideration showing the impossibility of a sinner's justification by works, is that justification as already shown, is only possible to any creature, on the supposition of a covenant. But man by his sin has already broken the covenant; and it has come to an end by the incurring of its forfeitures; it no longer exists. The law now binds as law, not as covenant; and the removal of the covenant character superinduced upon the law, and the return of the law to its natural basis, has swept away the possibility of justification. The broken covenant asserts its penal claims, just as a human contract exacts its forfeitures, although the contract has come to an end by the failure of its terms; the penalty has been incurred, and must be satisfied; but as a

conventional compact carrying the possibility of winning the specified reward, it is wholly abolished; and justification under it has become utterly impracticable.

3. Yet another consideration determines the same conclusion. Admitting that a being who has sinned and corrupted his moral energies with an indelible stain is capable of a perfect subsequent obedience—a supposition grossly absurd—yet even on this supposition, justification, even by such a perfect obedience of a depraved soul, is still an absolute impossibility. He has already sinned before his perfect obedience began. Those sins must be cancelled by some species of satisfaction; but the present current demands of the law, although by the supposition he is able to meet them perfectly, exact all that he can do to meet them. He is bound to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength, at every moment of his existence; and, even on the absurd supposition conceded, his perfect discharge of current obligations can yield no surplus service to cancel or affect in any way the sins which he had already committed. Doing all that it is possible for him to do to meet the obligations of the present, he can do no more to qualify the sins of the past. Justification by his own works is by consequence impossible, even on the supposed possibility of a perfect obedience. How much less, then, by an obedience less than perfect, which is an obedience marred by fresh transgressions? This imperfect obedience is, in fact, all that the advocate of justification by works has the face to claim; he dares not claim a perfect obedience, which, nevertheless, would fail to accomplish his purpose, even if it were attainable.

4. But going farther yet in concession to this consummate folly of a sinner's self-justification, we may admit the extravagant absurdity that a depraved being can not only render a perfect obedience to the law, but do surplus duty, still the

possibility of his justifying himself by his own works is as hopeless as ever. Preceptive obedience can never satisfy penal claims. The debt to penalty is an obligation to suffering which cannot be paid by obedience to precept. No obligation to suffering can be paid by anything but what the obligation demands. The debt of a transgressor is the twofold claim of precept and penalty; and the debt to the precept cannot be paid by obedience to the penalty, nor the debt to the penalty by obedience to the precept. Both are data determined by intrinsic justice; each is absolutely distinct from the other; and they cannot be commuted or exchanged one for the other. Even works of supererogatory preceptive obedience cannot satisfy penal claims, which have an intrinsically righteous force; and the utter impracticability of justification by works receives another superfluous demonstration.

5. But, in point of fact, so far from a sinning moral agent being able to render either a perfect or a supererogatory obedience, he is not able to render any obedience such as the law prescribes. All his actions fall short in some regards of what a perfect law requires. This is the inevitable result of even a single sin; for sin in act always recoils at once on the moral nature of the transgressor. The fountain of his moral energies becomes defiled, and nothing but a stream of defiled action can flow from it. The more sin in act is multiplied, the more the personal moral nature of the sinning actor is depraved. Now, bring into the calculation the real extent of the law which measures sin. The law is spiritual, requiring not only conformity in outward action, but in all the activities of the soul. The law is universal, extending its jurisdiction over every movement of the soul to which a moral quality can attach. It requires holiness in every thought, feeling, affection, desire, impulse, and permanent trait of character. The law is complete in its embrace of all the

energies of the creature subject to it. It requires the obedience it demands to be perfect in degree, as well as universal in its scope. It legalizes not one single departure from its prescriptions under any circumstances whatever. It makes no allowance for infirmity, or habit, or violent temptation; and whatever it requires, it requires always, without relaxation or end. Now, when we consider that a sinner, with an unholy nature, can only energize in unholiness; when we remember man's proneness to evil, his blindness, weakness, and positive depravity of will; when we reflect on the power of the evil influences all around him, the temptations of the world addressed to the senses, and the tremendous subtlety of wit and cunning by which all these seductive elements are manipulated by Satan and his trained seducers—the supposition that a sinful man could work out his own justification under the law, is the veriest madness that ever deluded the brain of a lunatic.

6. If justification by works were possible, then the whole scheme of redemption by the work of Christ is superfluous, and by consequence, false. Paul tells us in so many words, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;" and asserts, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." It is certain if man had been able to secure his own justification, there was no real necessity for the intervention of Christ. It is a fixed law of the divine administration to do nothing for man which he is able to do for himself. The doctrine of justification by works, making the work of the Saviour superfluous, makes it false. Both the wisdom and the love of God is a guarantee that his Son would never have been subjected to such trials had not the necessity for it in the accomplishment of the gracious purposes of God been absolute and uncompromising.

7. Once more: the justification of a sinner by his own works is a natural absurdity. No law can justify any but the doers of it; but the doctrine under investigation makes it possible for the law to justify its violators. No law can utter a contradictory judgment. Such is the logical nature of Paul's argument in the Epistle to the Romans. He presents it in several slightly differing forms. He says in one place, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." This is the same thing as to say, "That which reveals the fact of sin already committed, does, by that very disclosure, demonstrate the impossibility of justification under the law." It reveals a breach of the law; and justification, which presupposes a fulfilment of the law, becomes impossible. A law which condemns, affirms its own incapacity to justify. Again, the apostle declares "the law worketh wrath." How can it work wrath, and at the same time work peace and reconciliation? Again, he affirms to the Galatian church, "They that are under the law are under the curse." He infers, in the same oblique but resistless manner, that it is impossible for us to be justified by the same instrument by which we are cursed.

8. The whole tenor of the gospel, as a deliverance by grace, is conclusive upon the doctrine of justification by works. Paul tells us that by the salvation of the gospel "all boasting is excluded." But if a man, by his own wise and resolute virtue, is able to resist the mighty combination against him, and win the prize of eternal life, by the strong hand, out of the utmost endeavors of Satan and his mighty legions, he will be entitled to boast. He will be a hero, in comparison with whom the greatest heroes of human history will sink into insignificance. But no discordant song will mar the exclusive ascription of praise to the Lamb of God, as the sole author of salvation to the sinners of the human family.

9. In the last place, we meet the grand objection which the pride and self-righteousness of the human heart makes to the doctrine of justification by grace. It is asserted with persistent energy that the divorce of human salvation from works of personal obedience is to unsettle the basis of moral action, to destroy the necessity for good works altogether, and to establish a liberty to sin. The expression, "Divorce of salvation from good works," is misleading in the highest degree. No body of Christian people separate salvation from good works; such works are made an indispensable part of the salvation of grace. Good works are the necessary fruits of salvation by grace, according to the evangelical view; they are the *ground and reason, the root and cause* of salvation, according to the unevangelical school in all its branches; and the difference between them is not that one of these parties disowns goods works, while the other maintains them; but the difference lies in the virtue and efficacy assigned to works in procuring salvation by the one theory, and in the development of a salvation already freely bestowed by grace on the other. The difference touches the position assigned to works, not to the necessity for them, which is equally demanded by both, though for a different reason and end. We therefore reply to this objection, in the first place, that one of the inevitable effects of justification is to secure a guarantee of integrity, by securing a legal protection against a fall and a positive title to the reward, which title carries the assurance of all things necessary to put the title into practical effect. We reply, in the second place, that the removal of a thing because incompetent to produce a given result, is by no means to remove it altogether, as incompetent to effect other results of undeniable importance. Paul says that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,

condemned sin in the flesh." This incompetence of the law to work out a special effect, because it was weak, not in itself, but through the weakness of fallen human nature, is simply set aside as an impracticable basis of justification; and the obedience to the law, which never could be relaxed, was sought, for the attainment of other purposes, for which it was not disabled of its usefulness by human weakness. The law is not abolished; it cannot be abolished or altered; its removal as a special covenant, which made justification possible, leaves the law still in its natural and unchangeable relation as a rule of action, although it has ceased to be a basis for justification. The law, therefore, asserts its claim to obedience; and at the same time denies and repudiates what is so persistently asserted of it, any claim to be a basis of justification. We have seen repeatedly that the law, as the basis of a covenant, rendered justification possible; but the law, simply on its natural basis rendered justification impossible. The change, then, of the covenant character superinduced upon the law, by the failure of the covenant or the introduction of a new covenant on the basis of grace, restored the law to its basis as law; and thereby the law utterly repudiates the possibility of justification by works of obedience to its precepts. The law, as well as the gospel, repudiates the possibility of justification by works. But the return of the law to its natural claims is fully vindicated in its usefulness, although it has ceased to be a basis for justification; its authority, the extent of its jurisdiction, the necessity of obedience, and the stimulus to holy living are unimpaired. Man is, and must ever be, bound to righteousness of life; but not with a view to the impracticable end of securing his justification. Every creature must conform to the law of its being in order to secure its well-being. *The object*, but not *the obligation*, of obedience is changed. The

law serves many a high and noble end, even when no longer practicable as a basis of justification. It is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith; it defines duty; it binds to its discharge; it threatens sin; it discloses the defects and the spiritual needs of the soul; it expounds to the dull sense of the sin-deadened soul its perishing need of a Saviour. Surely the utility of the law is not discredited when it works such beneficial results, even though, through the sinful weakness of man himself, it is wholly incompetent to admit of the justification of the sinner by his own faulty obedience to the law.

Yet again: the development of good works is not at all dependent upon any theory of their necessity to justification. They are amply provided for in the theory of justification by grace. Salvation by grace is in its very nature salvation from sin; the very name of the Saviour marked him as a Saviour from sin, and a salvation from sin is a salvation to obedience or good works. It is absurd to deny good works as the inevitable fruits of a salvation which is a salvation from sin. This deliverance originates in grace, and is wholly accomplished by grace; but the *very end and purpose* of the whole design is to lead the transgressor back to obedience to the law, which inexorably conditions his well-being; or, in other words, the end and purpose of salvation by grace is the development of good works. Its formula is believe and then do; the formula of salvation by works is, first do, and then trust. Would any one be so venturesome as to say that there was no necessity of grapes to the vine-grower, because the cluster cannot serve the purpose and the functions of the roots of the vine? The vine is rooted in the soil; the roots are very different in appearance from the cluster; one unacquainted with the mysteries of the vine could scarcely comprehend the relation of the golden and purple cluster to the

unsightly root and the dirty soil. Yet there is no cluster without the root and the soil; and the production of the grapes was the end in view in the whole endeavor. What an absurdity to say there was no necessity for the fruit, because it was impossible for the cluster to perform the functions of the root and the soil? Good works are the cluster; grace is the root and the soil. A ticket on a railroad is not the price paid for the privilege of travel; but it serves an excellent purpose in showing that the price has been paid, for the ticket could not be procured unless the money had been paid. The ticket is the product of the money, and, therefore, proof of payment. Good works are the ticket; grace is the money that buys it; and without the money the ticket could not be procured. The work of Christ pays the price of human redemption; good works are the certain results of that redemption when it takes effect on any particular soul—"by their fruits ye shall know them"—for the inevitable effect of his salvation is salvation from sin; and where the fruit is wanting, it is proof that the remedy has not taken effect. The apostle tells us we are "justified freely by his grace," in order that "we may be holy and without blame before him in love," according to the election of grace. So long as a sinner stands on legal ground, and all his hopes are conditioned upon the purity and perfection of his own obedience, anxiety and fear of coming short, and the perpetual complaint of conscience make it impossible for him to love God with really affectionate feelings, or to regard him with any other feelings than dread and secret dislike. But when he is justified freely by the grace and the righteousness of God himself—a righteousness which is perfect in its power to justify—his fears are removed, his affections are excited, and his obedience flows freely and affectionately, unrestrained by terror and undimmed by selfishness. He breathes the spirit

of adoption, and draws near to his once offended Sovereign, saying, "Abba," "Father."

The rule of judgment by which many men think to escape a judgment of their characters and conduct by a strict rule of law is that of a supposed balanced estimate of their faults and virtues; and if, on the whole, the virtues overbalance the faults, they will be pronounced good men, and released from all condemnation and danger. But this is not the way in which human justice deals with breakers of law. It is never admitted, as a legitimate defence of a forger or the defaulting official of a bank, that for many years the defaulter had been honest, and that his honest acts were greatly more numerous than the few acts of dishonesty which he had committed. One murder is not esteemed to be condoned by many years of regard for the life of neighbors. It is felt that the many acts of conformity to law were only what the law continuously required of him, and that the single act of crime was a breach of law, for which answer must be made on peril of setting aside the law. Law can only look to its requirements, and to the fact of conformity or violence to them. If a man commits an offence against law, it is no rational or legal plea that in many instances he had obeyed it. Preponderating good character may be a plea in some cases in mitigating a judicial sentence, or in appeal to executive mercy, by creating the presumption that the crime was not the product of permanent evil dispositions, but of great or sudden provocation; but it is not equivalent to a plea of justification; it cannot bar responsibility under the law for a specific criminal action; and the reason is that the only rule of judgment for the magistrate to follow is the positive prescription of the law, and not a rule of balanced judgments on the view of the whole life of the criminal. Neither will the Almighty Judge proceed on this rule of balanced judgments; he will judge by the

law and the facts. If man is a sinner at all, the justice of the Judge must judge according to the fact in the case; it must call a spade, a spade; a circle, a circle, and a lie, a lie. The judgment must be graduated by the fact in every case, and the fact measured by the law; and nothing can either qualify the judgment or set up an offset. Now, when we call up the other ingredients of the case; when we remember that all human virtues, so called, when judged by the real law which is to govern the judgment—the absolutely holy, spiritual, and perfect law of the Almighty God—are faulty, the absurdity of an offset of faults by such virtues becomes perfectly transparent. There can be no offset of criminal acts by acts of a real but lesser criminality. Such a rule of judgment upon character and conduct necessarily takes the case out of the operation of law, and is wholly incompatible with a just administration of law. It is a far higher relief which the infinite grace of God provides when it provides for a real justification through the righteousness of God which is by faith.

Finally, it is said that there is a positive contradiction between the teaching of Paul and the teaching of James on the matter of justification. Paul teaches at great length, and with unequivocal precision, that “we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” James teaches with equal precision that “we are not justified by faith without the works of the law, and that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” The verbal opposition is plain enough; but there is no real opposition between them. Faith is the only instrument of justification—this is the doctrine of Paul; but this faith which justifies also produces good works—this is the doctrine of James. If the faith which justifies does also produce certain other effects as invariably as it does the effect of justifying, this faith may be truly

said not to justify without works. If it fails to produce good works, it will also fail to justify. The justification will not take place without the works, because the twofold effect of the faith is never found separate. Consequently James says, "If you show me your faith without your works, I will show you my faith by my works." A liquid manure poured round the roots of a fruit tree may kill the grubbs which may be threatening the life of the tree; it may be the only thing which will kill them speedily, and at the same time it may greatly stimulate the growth of the tree and the perfection of its fruit. It would be perfectly true and proper to say that the application alone killed the enemies of the tree, and at the same time to say that that destruction was not the only effect produced by it. There is a subtle play upon the word "alone"; it is properly applied in the one case to faith as a cause; it is properly denied in the other to the effects of faith. Faith, as the instrumental cause of justification, is alone in producing that effect; but it is not alone as producing that effect only; it produces other effects also, and it is never found separated from these incidental effects. If separated from these effects it is dead, being alone; and as dead, it fails to produce justification whenever it fails to produce good works; all its effects are found together. It is a fact of wide application that causes designed to produce a given effect, and alone capable of producing that effect, may nevertheless produce other effects designed or undesigned. It would be truly and justly said of such a cause that it only produced the chief effect; yet did not produce that effect only; it produced other effects also. So much for James' first presentation of the relation between faith and works. In the second presentation, where he says, "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only," the relation of faith and works in the matter of justification is more pointedly and even paradoxically stated. It may be

illustrated by a business transaction. A man is sued for debt; he pleads payment. If he can prove that, the court will justify him for not paying it again. But he must prove payment. If he does prove it, the evidence which proves it does exert an important influence on his justification, not because the evidence pays any part of the debt, but because it proves that the debt has been paid. The evidence takes a part in the justification, but a totally different sort of a part from that taken by the money paid on the debt. Faith alone conveys the money which ransoms the sinner, which is the righteousness of Christ; but works prove that the payment has been made, and thus exerts a valuable influence on the justifying sentence of the judge, though of an entirely different character, both in legal and moral value, from the consideration which paid the debt. Common sense draws a vital distinction between the money that paid the debt and the evidence which proved that the payment had been made, although both are valuable in their place. Faith justifies by paying the debt: works justify by proving payment. Separate from works, which are its inevitable effects, faith is dead, being alone; and a dead faith is as incapable of justifying as it is of producing good works; but a faith alive enough to justify will inevitably produce good works or holiness of heart and life. Without works faith secures justification by conveying the righteousness of the Son of God; faith alone carries this great result; but it at the same time conveys other results—the sanctifying influence of the Word and the Spirit of God, thus securing holiness of heart and life. It is, therefore, perfectly consistent to say, with Paul, “We are justified by faith without works,” and to say, with James, that “we are not justified by a faith without works.” The paradox is purely verbal; there is not the slightest opposition in the logical substance of the statements.

The force of this whole argument against justification by works of personal obedience to moral law, as asserted by all classes of objectors, is so irresistible that the Unitarian, or rather Socinian party, are compelled to resort to the idea of a pardon by a high act of supreme executive power to release the sinner whose personal obedience is not complete enough to effect his acquittal. That is to say, the guardian of a ward's estate, by an act of power, confiscates a part of the estate for the benefit of the creditor without paying the confiscated value to the estate. Had he done this, his gift to the creditor would have been a noble action; but as it is, it is an act of fraud and gross injustice. No such action can be imputed to the sinless God. The whole theory as held by this class of opponents of justification freely by the grace of God is not only illogical, but involves the character of the supreme Lord of the universe—that great Judge, who will do right—in grave reproach. It is altogether inadmissible.

The theory of justification by works, as held by the large class of prelatists, sacramentarians, and adherents to a human priesthood are compelled to enlarge the boundaries of the human merit which is brought in to supplement the convicted deficiency of individual fidelity to the law. Consequently, they postulate a great treasury of complex merit, under the control of the church, on which drafts can be drawn for the benefit of the individual who is so fortunate or so faithful as to merit and gain it. The merit of the divine Redeemer is not altogether excluded from this complex; it is construed as a part, and an efficient part, of it. Any just or approximate estimate of the merit of the Son of God would take it as by itself all-sufficient to secure the justification of the lost sinners of the human race. Any attempt to qualify it by the association of the merits of any other being, human or angelic, would seem to be as impertinent as it would be superfluous. Never-

theless, the merits of the saints, the Virgin, the apostles, the martyrs, the heads of some religious orders, a nondescript rabble of consecrated females, are all mixed up with the transcendent merit of a divine Saviour, to make up a reliable bank on which to draw. Then, to crown the whole infamy of the betrayal of the great gospel ground of hope, the grant of a saving draft upon this mighty accumulation of merit to any individual sinner who would have an interest in it, is conditioned to a controlling extent upon his own personal merit, developed by his own good works, which are measured, to a vast extent by his compliances with churchly observances, as well as by his acts of moral obedience. All these human merits which are thrown into the great church treasury are absolutely incompetent when brought to the measurement of the divine law; or, in other words, are absolutely defects, instead of being able to support the weight laid upon them, and any dependence on them will prove a broken reed; they only reflect dishonor on the redemption of Christ, and gravely hinder its application to the lost sinner. The association of such grounds of hope with the merit of Christ, in point of fact destroys the redemption of grace; for Paul expressly testifies that if salvation be of works, it is no more of grace; and if it be of grace, it is no more of works. The broad conclusion is inevitable that the two theories of justification by works and the justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ are utterly incompatible; and that whosoever risks his soul on the merits of any mere human being, or beings, whatever, will perish in the day when the divine Judge shall lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet.

SUBSTITUTION AND REPRESENTATION.

“But how shall man be just with God?”—JOB ix. 2.

OUR last discussion settled the question as to the possibility of a sinner's justification by his own works. Since man cannot justify himself, it is clear that if he is to be justified at all, it must be done for him by some one else; he must find a substitute; some other being must take his place under the law, and do for him what he could not do for himself. But a number of questions at once spring up around this suggestion. Who can say whether a substitution was allowable in the first place, or possible in the second place, or whether it could be made so available, in the third place, as to meet fairly and fully all the demands of the case? Certainly the natural reason of no creature, man or angel, could say whether any substitution was in justice permissible. All that natural moral intelligence could decide upon such a question would be to decide it in the negative, for natural reason can only see the unchanging liability, in justice, of the wrong-doer to answer without relief for his own wrong-doing. It was a question for the supreme power alone to determine whether substitution was in justice allowable at all. But supposing it allowable in theory, who could possibly put the theory into effect? Who could take a sinner's place for such a purpose, as working out his justification? A friend may take the place of a contractor who is failing to carry out his contract, and finish it for his benefit on just and legal principles. But this implies the ability of the interposing friend

to meet the case. But who can take a sinner's place under a broken law, encounter its penal curse, and fulfil all the preceptive requirements for a perfect obedience? No man could do it—no combination of men could do it. No angel in heaven; no legion or cohort of the choicest chivalry of the heavenly hosts could do it; and for the same reason. No creature could bear the pressure of the penalty; it would wither him into a devil or crush him into annihilation! No creature could meet the preceptive any more than the penal claims for the benefit of any other creature, for the very clear and imperative reason that all the rational and morally responsible creatures of Almighty God are bound by the same law of moral obligation. That law binds each and all to his own service, with all his mind, and all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength. All that they can do is indispensable to meet their own obligations; they can do no surplus duty for the benefit of others. No creature, and no combination of creatures, can fill the function of a substitute.

The inference then moves to a startling conclusion: since neither man nor angel could serve as the substitute to work out the justification of the ungodly, the inference is resistless, either that the whole scheme is impracticable, or else the Almighty God himself must undertake it. The very idea is startling beyond expression. How can this be? Who could dare to make such a suggestion? What awful paradoxes seem to start up to reflection at the bare notion! That the infinite and holy God, the offended sovereign against whom the innumerable sins of a rebellious race have been committed, should appear as the legal substitute of the lost victim of his own folly, and undertake to deliver him, not by the strong hand of sovereign power and by the waiver of justice, but by redeeming him from the curse of the law—by paying down such a ransom as would satisfy all claims against him. How could

such a thing be done? It involved a series of the most astounding conditions. The divine Substitute must for the period of his redemptive work lay aside his matchless glory. He must become identified with the fallen creature for whom he undertakes. He must assume the legal liabilities which he came to satisfy. His work must be real, and completely effective, to meet every just claim upon his clientile. He must endure the penalties of the law. He must become obedient to his own commands. Sin must be laid on him; he must bear it—oh! awful thought—in his own body on the tree; and by making a full satisfaction of all the demands of justice and the law, to work out that righteousness which alone could ground a decree of justification. It is obvious, from the very statement of the case, that none but God could ever have originated such a thought or entertained it as a possibility. The very conception is as exclusively the product of God's own thought as its execution was of God's own will. Yet as soon as the idea is framed, we can see how complete is the logical sufficiency of the expedient; how fully the mighty issue is met by a mightier energy. The revealed plan of salvation is not less a masterpiece of wisdom than of grace.

But supposing justification made possible so far as it is involved in a competent substitute, how could it be made available for a justification, dependent upon the fulfilment of all the claims of the law upon the transgressors who have already broken it? The penalty had already been incurred, and that claim must be met. This imposed the necessity for such a combination with the divine Person as would make suffering and actual death possible. The precept must be fulfilled, and the divine Substitute must become subject to his own laws. Justification is the determination of the regular administration of law by the judicial decree of a judge. The

divine Substitute must, therefore, come under such a legal relation, both to the law and to the condemned subjects of the law, as will allow of his official action in their behalf being a real representative action on their part and for their legal release. That release must be decreed by the sentence of the law itself, pronouncing its claims to be fulfilled and satisfied, or no justification can be developed. These essential incidents attached to the work which the divine Substitute must do, give us a strong impression of the extraordinary nature of that work and the difficulties inherent in it. It is easy to see the grace involved in the substitution of another in the dangerous place of a condemned breaker of law; but it is not so easy to see the conformity to justice and the law itself which is, and must be, involved in it. How, or on what principle, can what is done by one person be made, in strict justice and rigorous conformity to law, imputable to another person? It is clearly just to impute his own acts to an actor—that is, to hold him accountable for them. But it is not so easy to see how it is just and may be necessary to hold one accountable for the acts of another. It is plain that it is not just to hold one person accountable for the acts of another when there is no connection between them whatever. But when there is such a connection between them as will justly or necessarily involve both in the consequences of the act of one of them, it is just. There are two principles upon which this distribution of responsibility can occur: one, which is based upon the law of nature, and is more properly a general interchange of *mutual liabilities* within certain bounds; and the other, a strictly legal responsibility, limited strictly to the parties legally united in one common legal liability. These will be explained and compared in the course of time. It may be remarked here, in illustration of the latter of these two principles, that no law, or just administra-

tion of law, can, on the ordinary independent relations of business life, exact the payment of one man's debts from another. But there is a principle upon which it would not only be just to make one man pay the debts of another, but on which it would be positively unjust not to do it. It is the principle which lies at the foundation of security for debt, of all agencies in civil and political life, in all diplomatic and governmental relations—in short, in all transactions in which one man acts as the agent or representative of another. It is the principle universally recognized in the administration of law and civil justice which is expressed in the legal maxim, "*Facit per alium, facit per se.*" It is the principle of representation; and it is universally recognized that the act of a just and legal representative would be unjustly construed, if it was made exclusively his own, and not recognized as mainly the act of the party for whom and by whose authority he acted. A substitute, clothed with the character of a representative, can act for another, and so bind the party represented, that every just civil court would decree the full liability of one man for the acts of another. A government agent does not act himself, or in a private capacity; he acts for his government; he acts in a public character; he is the representative of his government, and the responsibility is not personal to himself, but lies upon his government. An agent for an insurance or any other business company binds his company by his official acts; and injustice would be done if the agent alone was held responsible, and not the company for whom he acts. It would be unjust to compel one man to pay the debts of another when standing in no relation to each other; but it is not unjust when one is the legal security of the other; for in that case both are bound for the debt. The legal relation of security exists between them. In all these cases, a lawful relation exists between the parties; and

without this relation, and this representative character, no just responsibility could exist. But if such a relation does exist, it is not only consistent with justice, but demanded by justice, to make one party responsible for the acts of another. Let it be noted that this effectual representative relation, which creates an obligatory bond upon one person for the acts of another is a positive creation, the creature of a positive compact or agreed covenant; that it includes in its scope and consequences only the parties to the compact, and no others than those who are embraced in the scope and purview of the arrangement. The most perfect form of this covenant by which the actions of one person are imputed to another, is the personal choice of the representative by the party represented. A less conspicuously, yet substantially equally just form of it, is the appointment of counsel for a prisoner, or the guardian of a ward, or the administrator of an estate by a civil court. But whether the creature of a voluntary personal choice, or the appointment of a just authority, the representative character is of legal force; and the just official acts of the representative are binding on the party represented. This species of arrangement is the basis of what is called perfect imputation. As embodied in the divine administration, this species has been subject to very serious criticism; but it is as just in the divine administration as it is in the administration of human affairs, and as capable of vindication.

The second principle on which some are involved in the acts of others is subject to the same criticism to a certain extent, and with less obvious and more difficult, but with the same substantial capability of vindication. This is the basis of what is called imperfect imputation, and is founded upon the laws of nature, and not upon a personal compact or an authoritative appointment. It is verbally described in the second

commandment of the Decalogue in the words, "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." It is practically described, in many instances developed, in the actual administration of the divine providence. As, for instance, the children of a drunkard, and all other members of his family, are involved in the consequences of a father's vice. The family of a thief, or a murderer, or a spendthrift, or any other disgraceful criminal, are involved in the consequences of his criminal acts. He is not the chosen or appointed representative of the family, or else their implication in his acts would be clear, and the justice of their concurrent suffering would be approved to the sense of justice in every observer. As it is, there is a very qualified sense of the justice of their implication in the unhappy consequences of faults in which they had no causative concern. But it is felt that the result is determined by the laws of nature which have bound them together; and however it may be regretted, and however it may perplex the sense of justice, it is unavoidable. This is true; but the human understanding sees a more satisfactory solution. It is to be noted that this implication of doubtful propriety is by no means confined to the criminal acts of the head of the household alone; it is equally effective in the criminal acts of a mother, or a brother, or a sister, and even of more or less remote collateral relations. A spendthrift son, not properly restrained, often reduces a family to want, and all the other members of the household suffer the consequences of a folly in which they had no part. A criminal daughter often brings shame and loss of social privilege on the rest of the family. Let it also be noticed that the suffering produced by criminal conduct in a single member of a family extends

into the collateral connections of the household, and widens through the families of relations more or less remote, and even of friends who are not relations by blood or affinity, until it loses its painful effects along the distant boundary which shades off into a distant public too remote to feel any touch of the distress. It is clear that this principle of implicating others in the acts for which they are not at all morally responsible, is very different from the principle of representation. It is based, not upon agreement or appointment, but upon the law of nature. It does not proceed upon the inflexible requirements of the natural headship only, which is necessarily developed in a procreative race of beings; for it is evident that not only are children implicated in the sins of their fathers, but fathers are often implicated in the sins of their children; and that the wave of distress is not confined to the immediate circle of the criminal's household, but spreads over collateral connections to a greater or less degree. It is the result of a certain general interlock of mutual liabilities growing out of the procreative constitution imposed upon the human race of creatures by the wisdom and will of the Creator. If the principle of representation is at all involved in this constitution, it would appear to be a mutual or reciprocal representation, extending from the fathers to the children, and from the children to the fathers, and intertwining itself through the social unit created by the natural or voluntary connections of the family. The same principle extends to larger aggregations of localities, nations, and races of men, and to the human race as a whole in some respects. It has been a question keenly disputed which of these two principles on which, on both of which, it is evident that some are implicated in the sins of others, on which of them the divine administration proceeded in regard to the fall into moral evil and the redemption of grace. Two great

schools of theology are based, respectively, on these two principles—the one adopting the basis of the imperfect imputation, the other the basis of the perfect imputation. We do not intend to go fully into the question thus raised; we shall state very briefly the chief considerations on which it appears that the scriptures place the covenant with Adam and the covenant with Christ on the principle of a strict representative substitution, and consequently on the basis of a perfect imputation.

In the account given of the transactions in the garden, it is plain that a positive verbal arrangement was made. There would have been no need or propriety for formal stipulations in words, if the connection of Adam with his descendants was to rest solely on the laws of nature; a bare statement of the fact that such would be the case would have been sufficient, even if such a statement was necessary. But more than that was explicitly settled. Formal requisitions were made; distinct action was required and forbidden; explicit conditions laid down; positive menaces were uttered on one condition, carrying a positive promise on another condition. A specific action, the eating of a fruit, was made the test of obedience; on the mere unqualified basis of moral law, no such specification was appropriate. One of the old prophets calls it a “covenant.” It is made the logical parallel of the covenant with Christ: “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The covenant of grace was not a natural determination of natural law, but a positive personal compact between the Father and the Son, and as such reveals the same character in its parallel, the covenant with Adam. An arrangement based exclusively on the laws of nature, and the natural headship of Adam, would have established the test of obedience in the indiscriminate and miscellaneous duties of morality in general, and not in the one positive prohibition

of eating, or not eating, a particular fruit. The proof is decisive that the principle of the covenant with Adam was not based upon the mere laws of nature, and the mere natural headship of Adam, but on a positive covenant; and that the implication of his posterity in his sin was based on the perfect imputation determined by the principle of representation, and not on the imperfect imputation grounded in the social unity and community of interests created by the necessary incidents and implications of a procreative race of creatures.

Let it be distinctly noticed and discriminated that in all these cases, both in the civil and religious spheres, in which responsibility of one party for the acts of another is asserted, it is an implication in the *consequences or legal liabilities* of the act, and not in the moral qualities of the act, that this vicarious responsibility takes hold. The securities of a defaulting bank officer are justly held responsible for his liabilities to the bank; but they are not held to be participants in the moral iniquity of his fraud and theft. The legal consequences of his act can be justly imputed to his bondsmen, but not the moral nature or quality of his act. The agent of an insurance company, acting in his official capacity, can and does bind them by his official act; but if the agent has made false representations in order to secure business, the moral iniquity of his falsehood does not attach to the company, though they are bound by the legal obligations created by the official act of their representative; it attaches solely to the agent himself. The immoral quality which has been infused into an official act is solely the creature of the unscrupulous agent's own will, without the warrant of his employers; they have authorized him to do business for them, but not to lie or cheat for them, and any fraud on his part is exclusively his own responsibility. His company are bound by his official acts, and are justly held to the consequences of those

acts, though guiltless of any share in his sins. This plain distinction, which is universally recognized in the common-sense judgments of mankind, is of immense importance in understanding the gospel plan for the justification of the ungodly. The moral character and quality of actions are incapable of transfer; they remain attached to the person who has committed them; but their consequences and legal liabilities are capable of transfer; and in this fact lies the possibility of salvation to a sinner. To impute sin is simply to make accountable for it; and when we speak of imputing sin, we do not mean that the moral stain of sin is transferred, but only *responsibility* for the sin, or *liability* for its consequences. When we say that sin was laid upon Christ, we do not mean that he was made personally unholy, but simply that he became answerable for the consequences or liabilities of those sins which he bore in his own body on the tree. When his righteousness is said to be imputed to the believer, it does not mean that his moral excellence is conveyed, but the legal consequences of his obedience. Imputation, whether of sin or righteousness—whether the imputation of one's own act to himself, or of that same act to another who was represented in the act—always has exclusive reference, whether in matters human or divine, to the consequences, and not to the moral character or quality, of the act imputed.

This distinction is of boundless importance in the effort to comprehend the principle upon which God has been pleased to deal with the human race, both in regard to the fall into sin, and to the redemption of grace. It cuts up by the roots all the objections which have been made to the doctrine of salvation for sinners by an imputed righteousness. Let us look, first, at the real nature of that theory, and then at those objections. One of the great parties to these objections seem to have no objection to the imputation of the merits of saints

and martyrs to a sinner, nor even to the imputation of the merits of Christ, when they are properly mixed with the merits of inferior beings; but they raise a most emphatic protest when his merits alone are construed as sufficient to justify.

Having seen that there is a principle by which it is possible that the acts of one can be justly, and in strict process of law, accounted to another, we can now see the plan by which God has so wondrously contrived the possible justification of a breaker of law. Bear in mind that justification is a status of law based upon the fulfilment of its requirements. When the actor has done his work, the law passes its sentence upon the facts of the case, and judicially declares the law, or covenant, to be fulfilled. The successful actor is then placed in a state of justification. The claim of the law upon a transgressor of its prescriptions is twofold, penal and preceptive; both must be met in order to justification. The sinner himself can do neither; and the God of all grace furnishes a substitute. The appointment of a substitute illustrates the infinite *grace* involved in the contrivance. But to make this substitution available in a strict administration of law, the substitute is invested with the legal character of a representative, thus forming a strictly legal relation between the sinner and the substitute. Consequently, when the substitute begins to act, he acts in the whole of his official work, not for himself, but for those whom he represents. The legal effects and consequences of his acts, though morally his own, are those of his constituents; and a court of justice will so decree. It is just so in a human transaction. A contractor fails in carrying out his contract; but a friend comes and takes up the contract and carries it out. If the friend takes up the contract for his own personal behoof, the original contractor has no claim upon the result; but if the friend takes up the

contract in the place and as the recognized representative of the failing contractor, then his interest in the contract is still effective, and a court of justice will maintain his right to the rewards of the fulfilled contract. His representative has acted for him, and he is entitled to the results of his agent's action in his behalf. Thus the divine Substitute for sinners becomes their legal representative; he takes their place under the law; he assumes their responsibilities; he takes their place under the penalties they have provoked; he undertakes the fulfilment of the precept for their benefit. He succeeds in fulfilling all these claims of the law, not for himself, but for those whom he represents. The justification which he has made possible under a strictly legal process is justification for them; it is a real justification for sinners, for the righteousness on which it proceeds was wrought out by their representative agent. His acts are justly imputed to them, on the same clearly just and equitable principles on which the acts of all representative agents are imputed to those for whom they act. This is the necessary effect of the legal relation between the parties. "*Facit per alium, facit per se.*" The sinner answers the demands of the law by pleading the payment of his debt by his representative. The infinite righteousness of a divine Saviour is founded on the satisfaction of all the claims of the law. It delivers from the curse of the law by his bearing the curse on his own body on the tree; it secures heaven by his fulfilling every jot and tittle of the precept. The function of faith is to form the representative relation between the sinner and the Saviour. With this ground to stand on, the conscience of the sinner has no longer anything to fear from the menace of the law, for the law ceases to menace. He no longer fears that God will sacrifice him to the just penal claims of the law; for the claims of the law against him have been satisfied. He no longer dreads

the loss of heaven; for a sure title to eternal life has been secured by the perfect obedience of his glorious substitute. His sole anxiety now touches his own faith; for he knows that whosoever believes in Jesus will be saved. It is a scheme which logically meets all the conditions of the question, "Can a sinner be justified by the righteousness of God which is by faith?" More than this, it experimentally meets the demands of a guilty and anxious human conscience.

The objections to this doctrine of imputation are chiefly four, and all are based upon radical mistake in the conception of the doctrine. The first is that it is radically unjust to hold one person accountable for the acts of another. This is true in one sense; but it is only true when the parties are entirely independent of each other. The idea which lies in the minds of some, that imputation is a purely arbitrary process, making one person accountable for the acts and liabilities of another at the mere will of an authoritative power, and without any sufficient and just cause for the imputation, is a total mistake. There must in all cases be a true ground for the imputation. When one's own act is imputed to him—that is, when he is held accountable for it, there is no difficulty in seeing the reason and justice of the imputation. When the act of one is imputed to another, for which he was in no sense answerable, the imputation is sure to be altogether unjust. But when there is such a connection between the parties as to justify the imputation, that act is absolutely just. That connection may be defined by the principle of representation or the natural interlock of mutual dependencies established by the necessities and laws of a procreative race; but the connection and relation must exist before the imputation can be made. But where that relation does exist, especially when defined by the principle of representation, it would be positively unjust not to hold the party represented accountable

for the act of the agent appointed to act for him. The distinction which vindicates the holding of one party responsible for the acts of another, is vital and clear to human intelligence, and is incessantly employed in the ordinary transactions of human affairs. A legal and just relation between the parties is indispensable to such vicarious accountability; but where that relation exists, it makes the imputation or accountability absolutely just. The objection under discussion fails to recognize this radical distinction in accounting the acts of one party to another, and, as a matter of course, falls to the ground.

The second objection is that the doctrine of imputed righteousness involves a merely constructive satisfaction to the law, under a legal fiction, by which one is construed as the representative of the other party. But the relation between an insurance agent and his company is not a fiction of law, but a reality of law. It is a *legal* relation, but a *real* one. If the law should attempt to construe an individual as the agent of a company, when he was not so in fact, this would be a fiction of law, and would soon be shown to be without power to bind the company. A legal relation is not a thing which can be seen with the eyes, or touched with the fingers, any more than a binding promise or an honorable sentiment can be; but it is equally real. It is not a fiction, or an arbitrary decretal of law. No law has the right to construe arbitrarily one man to be the security of another man's debts; unless he was so in fact, previous to the decree of the law, and altogether independent of it, the law cannot make him so. Such a decretal would be a fiction of law, and would involve, not only a violent exercise of power, but would annihilate the possibility of any real satisfaction to justice. A mere supposed satisfaction, rendered under a fiction of law, would be only constructive in the purpose of the judge so to construe

it; it could not be a real satisfaction in itself. Justification under such a fiction and constructive administration of law would, of course, be rendered impossible, inasmuch as it depends absolutely on the real fulfilment of the actual law. But if a real relation of a real legal representation actually exists, then the decree of the law, recognizing this legal relation as already and truly existing, accounting the acts of an agent to the party for whom he acts, is strictly just. The satisfaction rendered by the representative is real in itself, and not merely constructive in the decree of the court. The gospel basis for the justification of a breaker of the law is a *real legal and representative relation*; it is in no sense a fiction of law, and the most sensitive or timid conscience can rest upon the satisfaction made for sin by the great High Priest of our profession, as being so real and complete as to extinguish his perilous responsibility; it takes sin away, and presents a ground of hope full of immortality.

The third objection is that the doctrine of imputed or vicarious righteousness involves the impossible absurdity of making the moral acts of one person, the *bona-fide* moral acts of another person. This, of course, is absurd and impossible. But it has been repeatedly explained that the doctrine of imputation has sole reference to the consequences and legal effects, and not to the moral qualities of actions. We have repeatedly seen that sin involved two distinct elements of guilt—the moral desert of punishment and the actual exposure to punishment—the one determined by the moral nature, the other by the liabilities of sin. The moral character of sin, or its intrinsic ill-desert, attaches inflexibly to the person of the transgressor, and cannot be transferred. But the liability of sin, the exposure to legal consequences can be justly transferred when a just ground of responsibility exists. Imputation does not involve an impossible transfer of moral

character, either of sin or righteousness, when either are imputed; it simply means that one is held accountable for the evil or the good imputed, for the consequences which legally flow out of them, evil consequences from evil deeds, and happy consequences from good deeds. Imputation has sole and necessarily limited regard to the legal consequences of moral action. It is simply holding firm the connection between an act and the results which the law has attached to it. It may have reference to either sin or righteousness—that is, one may be held accountable for evil or for good deeds. To impute sin is to hold a man accountable for it; it subjects to penalty. To impute righteousness is to hold a man accountable for it; it entitles him to its benefits. It is not to transfer moral character, but legal responsibilities. It has sole reference to the results of an act in law, and not to the moral quality of the act itself. The objection that the doctrine of imputation involves the impossible absurdity of making the moral acts of one person the actual, *bona-fide* acts of another person, is completely set aside by the very nature of imputation. The bondsmen of a defaulting bank officer are guiltless of all share in the moral criminality of his defalcation; but they are justly held responsible for the consequences of it; they are bound to make good the loss his crime has occasioned, without sharing in the crime.

The fourth and last objection is that the actual satisfaction of justice makes salvation a matter of justice, and not of grace. When the guardian and executor of a ward's estate pays out of his own pocket the bond of a helpless debtor of the estate, and then makes a present of the bond to the relieved debtor, the act does not cease to be an act of grace because justice was done to the estate before the act of grace was done to the debtor. The gospel proceeds on the very same principles; justice is done to the claims of the divine

government, in order that grace may be shown to the sinner; and the grace is magnified by the satisfaction of justice. Justice and grace are both conspicuously joined together in the scripture analysis and description of the great redemption. "By grace are ye saved, through faith: and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God." This is one side of the testimony. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; that God may be just in justifying the ungodly." This is another side of the testimony. Justice and grace are united in every step of the process, and grace is only the more exalted, the more justice is honored. The very circumstance which puts the diadem upon the head of grace, which exalts the wondrous reach and energy of pure sovereign love, is that in seeking to save the sinner, it makes a provision so powerful as to completely reverse the situation, and not only rescues him from the grasp of justice by satisfying its claims, but by that very satisfaction giving him a claim upon justice, and guaranteeing his title to eternal life, not only by the truth and faithfulness of the divine promise, but by the security of the divine justice. God was in no way bound to make a covenant of Salvation; it originated in pure uncompelled sovereignty of infinite grace. But when he graciously makes a covenant, he is bound by it; and when its terms are complied with, his truth and faithfulness are bound by his own gracious pledges. When those terms require the satisfaction of justice, the satisfaction of those claims gives also a bond upon his justice. When his covenant is made with the sinner, which is done the instant he believes, and by his faith is brought into the representative relation with the great Redeemer, God having illustrated his grace in giving him this faith, which is the "fruit of the Spirit" and "the gift of God," reveals another conspicuous signal of that grace by coming

under covenant bonds to the soul which trusts in him. His faithfulness, truth and justice are bound by his own gracious pledges when his terms are complied with. Nor is there the faintest inconsistency between the justice and the grace. The claims upon the justice and faithfulness of God come after the work of grace has been done; grace gives the claim upon justice and truth. Grace originates the covenant; grace magnifies itself in its splendid provisions to meet every emergency in the case; grace executes all the terms which make the covenant as effective in force as it was perfect in its conception; and grace alone leads the sinner into the covenant by personal acceptance of its terms. But when the covenant is entered, the truth and justice of God then step forward, and stand guard over the closed covenant, and guarantee its promises to the uttermost. Where is there the least inconsistency between the grace which so works its gracious deliverances, as to make the justice and faithfulness and truth of God the guarantees of its promises? Nay, this is not all: as already intimated, this very circumstance is the most powerful demonstration of the exceeding glory of the divine grace, that it grants as a free and gracious gift the guarantees of faithfulness and justice to the believing sinner. So that God becomes, as the scripture declares, "faithful and just in the forgiveness of sins," just as he had been before, faithful and just in the condemnation of sin. The common-sense, intuitions of natural justice in the human understanding make a similar decision, and pronounce that the actual payment of a man's debt by a friend who comes to his assistance is a higher expression of kindness than a mere effort to secure better terms from his creditor. The payment of the debt secures the protection of justice against the claim of the creditor, and this is the very circumstance which exalts the kindness of the interposing friend. No objection was ever

more unfounded than this, that the satisfaction of justice changes the basis of salvation from the basis of grace to a basis of justice. A man is in debt; a friend comes forward and says, "I will give a bonus to your creditor; perhaps it may induce him to relinquish his claim, or, at least, deal generously with you. But this is uncertain; he may not qualify his claim at all; he may refuse to accept the bonus altogether." Certainly such an action on the part of the friend would be a kindness, although it would not afford much relief to the debtor. It would not compare with the kindness exhibited if he should say, "I will pay the debt; your creditor cannot refuse legal tender of payment; and the payment will extinguish his claim and give you the protection of justice and law against any farther demand." Would the extinction of the claims of justice, and the erection of a barrier of justice against any farther demand, extinguish all character of grace in the action of the friend of the debtor? Surely every sound understanding would determine that the kindness which extinguished the debt, and threw the protection of justice around the debtor, was a far higher exhibition of kindness than that displayed in the mere offer of a bonus—a mere inducement to favor, without any force to compel the release, or even the modification, of the terms of settlement. Just so the grace of God makes its highest manifestation, instead of losing its character as grace altogether, by giving the believing sinner the benefit of a satisfaction for his sin which places his promised title to eternal life under the protection of the justice, as well as the truth and covenant faithfulness of Almighty God. The satisfaction for sin by the blood of a divine Redeemer is so powerful that it reverses the situation completely, and makes the very justice whose awful menace filled his soul with dread, the guardian of his security. It is the peculiar glory of grace that it "justifies

the ungodly," and summons all the bright and awful shapes of the divine holiness, truth, faithfulness, justice, and power, and marshals them in one grand body-guard around the believing sinner's title to eternal life.

Let us now briefly consider some of the beneficial effects of this grand scheme for the redemption of sinning man.

First. While it arrests the curse of the law, and rescues its guilty subjects, it does so at no loss to the law. So far from it, it magnifies the law and makes it honorable. The dignity of the law, the sense of its sacred claim to reverence and love, is infinitely enhanced, when, before one jot or tittle of its claims is suffered to be compromised, the divine Son himself, assumed all its obligations upon the guilty objects of his infinite compassion, endured and exhausted its penalty, fulfilled its precepts, and wrought out a righteousness which avails to the justification of every believing sinner. The law is not evaded; it is not compromised; it is completely fulfilled. The breakers of the law are rescued from its penalty, but not by violence; they are redeemed from it. The moral attributes of God, as the administrator of the law, are not only not shorn of a single beam, but exalted immeasurably in the view of the universe. All schemes which lower any claim of the law of God, set aside the notion of the full contentment of all its demands, all of which are intrinsically righteous, or find substitutes for them, dishonor the law and dishonor God.

Second. This plan of justification by means of a representative substitute, magnifies the grace as much as it does the justice and integrity of God. It is more glorious to the energy and tenderness of grace to pay the debt than to commute it; to give a title to eternal life, than a contingent promise of it; to secure indefectibility in holiness, than to make a mere provision for a possible sanctification, contingent

upon right use of grace already given. It is more glorious for grace to grant a sure salvation than merely to make salvation possible to fidelity in service. It is more glorious to the friend of the helpless debtor to pay his debt and secure his full release, than to make an arrangement by which the debtor only secures more time and better terms, but no certain and full relief.

Third. It magnifies the blessedness of a sinner justified by grace beyond all words. It places him where Adam would have been, had he obeyed and fulfilled the covenant in Eden, instead of breaking it; it places him in a state of justification—he is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. It bars the liability to fall; it secures indefectibility in holiness, not complete on the instant, but in a guaranteed ultimate possession. The sureness of his title carries with it the pledge of fitness to enter upon possession. It secures provision for all his necessities during his pilgrimage on the earth. It secures heaven. It identifies with Christ; it unites to him; it makes his life the assurance of the believer's life; for the promise is, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It makes him an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, in an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Fourth. It invites the unjustified sinner to a sure confidence and hope. It offers him a righteousness which is absolutely perfect in its power to justify. It offers it as a free gift of the infinite grace of Almighty God—a righteousness which is perfect to accomplish its own ends without any mixture with the righteousness of any other being whatsoever. The good works of the justified person which are inflexibly demanded of him, are not demanded of him *for this particular purpose* of securing his justification; they are the results and fruits of his justification, which secures

indefectibility in holiness, but not the causes of it. His good service is the golden cluster, but not the root and stock which make the cluster. "The gift of God is eternal life;" salvation through Christ is *given*; and a perfect title is conveyed by the grant. Upon this foundation, on this blood-bought righteousness of God, the human breaker of divine law is freely justified by grace; and it is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure. If conditioned ever so remotely upon his own works, the pledge could not be sure. But on the gospel ground of confidence, the whole superstructure of hope is securely raised. Who would not trust it? It is higher than heaven; it is deeper than hell; it has purchased the one, it has confounded the other; nor shall life, or death, or things present, or things to come, not even the flaming face of the infinitely Holy One, appal even a sinful soul which has obtained a part in the righteousness of God without works.

This is the method of the great gospel redemption. This is what is included in the offer of the Lord Jesus to every hearer of the proclamation of the divine mercy to the sinners of the human race; it is the justification of life. Grace is reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. Can you better this way of life, O sinful soul? Can you rely upon it? Is it worthy of your confidence? Believe on the Redeemer and test it. Faith brings you into the representative relation to Christ; by it you accept him as your security, and he goes on your bond to the divine law and justice; your sin is accounted to him, and his blood pays the debt; righteousness is accounted to you, and you receive the reward his righteousness has purchased. Reject this grand righteousness of faith, and you must justify yourself by your own; or, failing that, you must abide the condemnation which is the inevitable alternative. But only believe on the Redeemer of sinners, and the assurance is perfect, "Thou shalt be saved."

THE FUNCTION OF FAITH IN JUSTIFICATION.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—ROMANS v. 1.

IT now remains to develop the exact relation and function of faith in the matter of justification. We are said to be “justified by faith”; we are taught that there is a “righteousness which is of faith”; a “righteousness of God which is by the faith of Christ”; a “righteousness of God without the law”; a “righteousness which God imputed without works.” We are said to be “justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” In a manifold variety of ways, faith is held up to view as sustaining vital relations to the whole matter of salvation, and specifically to the justification of the ungodly. Faith can have no special function in the justification of a sinless being under a covenant of works; such a justification is conditioned solely on personal obedience. Faith may possibly have a function in the justification of the unfallen angels, who, as some reasonably suppose, were kept from falling, and secured in life by an interest in the work of Christ. But if this were so, the justification secured was not the result of a covenant of works, but of a covenant of grace; and if so, it was mediated by faith, and it is thus manifest that there may have been a function of faith in the security of sinless beings, as well as of sinful beings. However this may be, it is certain that faith sustains an absolutely vital relation to the justification of every human sinner. This function of faith in justification is unique and

special in its relation to the development of this peculiar status under the law; it sustains an all-important relation to the whole matter of salvation; it gives effect to all the ordinances; it is vital to Christian comfort; it is vital to growth in grace and usefulness of service; but it is exclusive in its effect on justification. It shares all its subjective influences on the person and soul of the saint with other graces of the Holy Spirit; but not in the determination of the outward and forensic relations of the transgressor to the law and justice of God. In these purely legal matters the function of faith is represented in the sacred record as peculiar and exclusive. We are repeatedly and pointedly said to be "justified by faith," but never to be justified by regeneration, or repentance, or hope, or love, or any other grace but faith. Why is this? What is the peculiar office of faith in justification which gives it this unique and exclusive influence in securing justification? This emphasis upon faith has led the self-righteous heart to the formation of several theories about faith, which are important to be understood, lest some fatal misapprehension should take place. There ought to be no mistake in a matter so vital.

It has been repeatedly seen that the possibility of justification to a breaker of law, turns upon the discovery of a substitute, and the formation of a legal relation between the sinner and the substitute by means of the representative principle. They must be one in law before the sentence of the law can adjudge the acts of the substitute to the party for whom he acts. That relation, as between Christ and the sinner, is constituted in the counsels of God by "giving him a seed," and in making the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. But this only provided for the indispensable relation on one side. It remained incomplete and ineffective until accepted and closed up by the accession of the

sinner to its terms. This accession is made when the sinner believes, accepts Christ as his substitute, appoints him as his own chosen representative, and risks his soul on the intervention of this great redeeming Saviour. This, then, is the first grand function of faith; it constitutes in full effective form the legal relation between the sinner and his representative Substitute, upon which the possibility of justification depends. From that relation all the benefits of the great redemption flow, justifying righteousness, personal sanctification, adoption into the family of God, the joint heirship with Christ, love, hope, joy, peace, and all other fruits of the Spirit. To the evolution of all these legal and personal blessings, faith sustains a various but indispensable relation. But our present concern is exclusively limited to the relation of faith to the matter of a sinner's justification.

There is a second function of faith in mediating justification. That righteousness which is the legal result of fulfilling the law must be imputed or accounted to the person receiving the benefit of it, and to make the imputation true in the view of the law, it must be accepted or received by such person, or else the representative relation will not be formed, because the person refuses to consent to it, and declines to appoint or accept the Substitute as his representative. Faith is necessary for this purpose; it is the instrument by which the beneficiary concurs in the appointment of the Substitute appointed by the Lord of the covenant, and receives the righteousness which secures justification. It is the hand which takes all the gifts of the Infinite Benignity as they are freely offered. It is simply an instrument of reception. It is in no strict or true sense a condition of salvation; but merely the instrument, or means, of simply receiving what is offered freely and without condition. It is not a condition which constitutes the reason why a thing is done. It is not a

condition in the sense that it furnishes the effective power by which a thing is done. It is not a condition in the sense that it constitutes the morally meritorious consideration, on account of which a thing is undertaken to be done. Faith possesses no special or distinctive moral value in itself superior to other graces of the Spirit; it involves logically a complete renunciation of self. Faith is placed by Paul on a level with hope, and both below charity or love. It is only a condition *sine qua non*, or a condition *a quo*—one an active, the other an unintentional, but both occasioning, not causative, conditions—that is, it only affords the occasion for another, and the only effective, power to act; but does nothing directly efficient itself. Consequently it is not, and cannot be, a condition effective of the end, and therefore prescribed, and therefore binding when performed. So far as it is a condition in any recognized sense of the word, it merely creates the occasion for another power to act; but in the sense in which it is itself active and efficient in bringing about a result, it only receives a free and unconditioned gift, and binds on fulfilment, first, as such an instrumental condition, and secondly, and chiefly, because it receives, as a part of the free and unconditioned gift which it freely accepts, a positive promise of eternal life, which binds to the uttermost; and thus becomes the all-sufficient security of all the blessings offered by grace and received by faith. Such is the simple function of faith in justification; it first consummates the necessary legal relation between the sinner and the Substitute; and, second, receives the free gift of the righteousness which fulfils the law and invariably mediates the justification of the ungodly. It is of faith, that it might be of grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed. This way of relief to the lost sinners of the human family is so rich in grace, so powerful in all its provisions to meet

every emergency in the situation, so adapted to human weakness, that presumptively it would be received with transports of delight by all to whom the glad tidings of great joy should come. But the human heart is so full of pride and self-righteousness, so averse to feel and acknowledge its own faults, so reluctant to accept a salvation so completely of grace, so anxious to have a part of its own in a deliverance which is wholly the gift of God, that it has put forth every effort to discredit or qualify in some way the salvation of God. Among other efforts, it has struggled sternly to pervert the office of faith in justification, and to ascribe to it something which will leave room for human merit or human efficiency in securing the result, and for the indulgence of the pride and self-complacency of the carnal mind. Faith has been dangerously misconstrued, not only as to its effects, but as to its very essence as a term of salvation. We shall only notice those misconceptions which have special reference to justification. These are mainly three in number. First, faith is so construed by some as to make it actually the matter of justification—the justifying righteousness by which the claims of the law are satisfied, thus making the faith of the sinner take the place and serve the purposes of the righteousness of the divine representative Substitute himself. Second, faith is construed by others to be a comprehensive term, including all moral actions and all forms of evangelical obedience. Third, faith is construed by others to be a strict condition precedent of salvation, in such a sense that it becomes the determining reason why salvation is granted.

1. Touching the first of these perversions of the office of faith—that is, faith construed to be the matter and substance of the justifying righteousness—it may be remarked, in the first place, that the notion proceeds upon an assumption which, as a preliminary effect, makes justification impossible.

Justification proceeds only on the full completion of all the demands of the law; but faith is not all that the law demands. The theory, therefore, assumes that the law is relaxed from its natural exactness and perfection of claim, by a gracious act of sovereign power, and the law is considered to demand nothing but faith; and, by a similar act of power, faith is construed as a sufficient righteousness to satisfy the reduced or abated law. This, of course, annihilates the possibility of a real justification. The law is not fulfilled, but abated, which is absurd, since the law is the determination of essential moral right, and is incapable of change. Yet more, the righteousness ascribed to faith is only constructively, not really sufficient. We can only rapidly group the objections to this misconstruction of faith. First, to make faith the substance of the righteousness which justifies, is logically to supersede the righteousness of Christ; it is left vacant of a function, and thus discredited as useless. Second, it ascribes a virtue to faith which it does not possess; it construes it as equivalent to obedience to the whole law. Third, faith, on the most extravagant construction of its moral excellence, is not all that the law requires, and, therefore, it is in itself incompetent to justify. Fourth, it avowedly makes the merit and efficiency of faith constructive in the purpose of God so to construe it—not real in itself. It assumes a power in God to dispense with justice and law which logically implies his ability to save sinners by mere power altogether, and thus discredits the necessity of redemption. It thus constructs a foundation for human hope which will not sustain it under the pressure of clear intuitions of sin, even in this life, and at the near approach of death and the realities of eternity. Nothing will answer, then, but the support of a real and sufficient atonement; nothing but the power of an actual redemption. No human heart can appeal to the merit or the

efficacy, to the intrinsic excellence and the supporting power of its own faith, when the intuitions of personal sin grow keen, or the rushing movement of the eternal realities begin to beat distinctly upon the ear. Then the soul wants something out of self altogether to lean upon. One of the lifetime troubles of the true believer is the weakness and vacillation of his faith, even when he is clearly instructed, and knows that his safety is conditioned, not directly on his faith itself, but on the objects—the blood and righteousness of a divine Saviour—which faith illustrates and realizes to his view. He knows that the foundation of all true Christian hope is not in his infirm faith, but in what faith trusts in; and that the more completely he can lose sight of his faith in the things which faith presents to view, the stronger his ground of confidence and hope appears. The sole argument in favor of the notion of faith as the substance and component matter of the justifying righteousness is based upon a mistaken construction of the assertion, "Abraham believed God, and his faith was counted for righteousness." This form of expression is nothing but an instance of the common figure, or transposition, of speech, by which cause is often put for effect, and effect for cause. Faith is the invariable instrumental cause which brings the redemption work and righteousness of the Son of God into effective application to the condition of the believing sinner; and consequently that righteousness is often called "the righteousness of faith," not because faith creates or composes that righteousness, but because it conveys it. Money is often called food and clothes, not because money can be eaten or worn, but because it can procure them. Steam commerce is so called, not because steam is the matter or substance of the commerce, but because it is the power which transports it. The expression, "righteousness of faith," is the equivalent of the expression, "faith

counted for righteousness;" and if the first is expressive of conveying, but not of creating righteousness, the other cannot fairly be construed to make faith the matter and substance of the righteousness which it only conveys and applies. Faith is counted for righteousness, because it always carries righteousness; cause is put for effect; but the righteousness which justifies is wholly distinct from the principle which conveys and makes it available. The justifying righteousness is called the righteousness of God, as well as the righteousness of faith; righteousness of God is a thing achieved by God, a righteousness of faith is something achieved by man; for faith, though it is a fruit of the Spirit, is also an act of man, and as such is essentially distinct from a righteousness achieved by God alone. The distinction between the righteousness of God and a righteousness of faith—that is, a righteousness embodied and developed by an energy in man—is compulsory, and cannot be confounded. The real righteousness of faith—that is, the righteousness conveyed by faith—is identical with the righteousness of God. But the righteousness supposed to be created by faith itself is radically different from the righteousness of God; and if the righteousness of God is the real matter and substance of the righteousness which justifies, the conclusion is resistless that the faith of the believing sinner is not and cannot be.

2. The second perversion of the function of faith is that the term "faith" is a comprehensive term, which includes all kinds of moral obedience and all kinds of evangelical service. If this be so, justification is the result of works, in spite of all Paul's positive asseverations to the contrary; and to talk of justification by faith without the works of the law is not only false, but deceitful. Such a construction of faith involves the positive rejection of Paul's doctrine, without an attempt to disguise it.

3. But the most important misconception of faith is that of one of the great schools of evangelical Christian theology. This theory disclaims all idea of an intrinsic merit in faith as conditioning its effects in mediating salvation under the gospel system. It equally disclaims all intrinsic efficacy, or power in faith itself, in producing its results. But it construes faith to be a condition precedent of salvation in such a sense that it enters into the reason why the salvation is given, and constitutes the determining element of that reason. It thus makes salvation, to a certain material extent, a matter of debt, though not of merit. God is construed as foreseeing that the sinner will make a right use of all the advantages and gifts of grace to him; he exercises faith; and on the foresight of that faith, as the reason and determining cause of the grant, salvation is granted. Now, faith is not a condition of salvation in any such sense. There are various kinds of conditions. There is one condition which furnishes the effective power by which a thing is done; another furnishes the consideration meritorious why a thing is undertaken; another the reason, or design, of the thing undertaken; another simply opens the way for another and an efficient power to act, but takes no part in the production of a thing. Faith neither furnishes *per se* the power, nor the merit, nor the reason or object of the salvation of grace; it simply furnishes the open space for the effective power of grace to do its work. It furnishes the occasion, but not the cause, of salvation. A man takes a walk into the country; he is attacked and murdered. If he had not taken the walk, he would not have been harmed; but the walk was not the cause why he was injured. The walk was merely the occasion; the malice of an enemy was the cause of his calamity. The walk merely opened the way for the real cause to act. Just so, faith furnishes the occasion for grace to save; without an

occasion or opportunity to act, the cause cannot act; but the occasion is not the cause, and is not to be confounded with the efficient power engaged in the transaction. Faith, then, is not a condition at all; it does not supply the merit, or the power, or the reason, but simply opens the way for the real power that saves. It is simply the instrument by which salvation is received when freely and unconditionally offered. It is the hand of the beggar outstretched to receive an alms freely and unconditionally offered him. The distinction between these two conceptions of faith is important, though not vital. Let us carefully study the differences in them. A condition proper constitutes the term or consideration on which a given issue turns. It may control by power, or merit, or rational consideration. It may influence and strongly qualify by regulating occasion, designedly or undesignedly. Let us look carefully into the distinctions between these two conceptions of faith. Both constructions may be called a condition; but they are so widely different in mediating the result that they are totally different in their significance. One is technically called a condition *propter quod*—"on account of which;" the other is technically called a condition *sine qua non*—"without which, nothing." The one furnishes the rational consideration, the reason why a thing is done; the other furnishes the occasion, but not the cause, of its being done—merely opens the way and creates the opportunity for another and an efficient power to act. When a condition supplies the reason and the determining consideration on which the thing is done, it constitutes a strict condition precedent. A mere occasioning condition, a condition which merely opens the way for an efficient cause to act is a mere instrumental condition—a mere instrument by which another power acts. It is simply necessary in order that a thing may be done, but takes no part in doing it. It

is not the reason why the thing is done, but merely affords an opportunity for it to be done. It is obvious that the two species of condition are very different in themselves, and in their effects on the resulting product; and is equally obvious that the conception of saving faith will be very different, according as it is construed to be a condition in the one sense or the other. A condition in the strict sense of the term, whether as affording the reason, or the meritorious consideration, or the effective power by or on account of which a thing is done, is a something prescribed to secure a certain result. It must be complied with; compliance with it precedes any effect from it, or any obligation to grow out of it; and if the condition is complied with, the obligation becomes due *in advance* of the promised grant, and the grant becomes a matter of debt. The compliance with the condition is the reason why the grant becomes due or a matter of debt. This was the principle which underlay and distinguished the covenant of works; and wherever it is found it discriminates and carries the spirit of that covenant. It is in its essence legalism; and when it so construes faith, it is making the terms of evangelical service the terms of a legal obedience. But a mere instrument of receiving a free and unconditioned gift is widely different. When pure and sovereign grace bestows the gift of eternal life on the believing sinner, the obligation, to make good the promise and the conveyed title to that inestimable blessing, logically succeeds the grant, and consequently does not in any degree form any part of the reason why the gift is given. On the construction of faith as a strict condition precedent, the promise and the obligation it creates precede the gift, and constitutes the determining consideration why the grant is made. A free and unconditioned gift may carry a sure title guaranteed by the faithfulness of the promiser, and this assurance will be as strong

and reliable as that created by compliance with a strict condition precedent. Both will create a bond upon the promiser; but that bond will be of a very different character. The obligation created by compliance with a strict condition precedent is a matter of debt, which ensues prior to the grant, and binds that the grant shall be made. The grant made on this ground is the payment of this debt. On the other hand, the obligation carried by a free gift does not precede the gift, and is not a compliance with an obligation created previous to the grant; it is an obligation carried by the gift; it is a part of the gift, and forms no part of the reason why the gift was given. The obligation developed by the use of a mere occasioning and instrumental condition is not in any degree a matter of debt; it is altogether a matter of grace. A man may freely assume the obligation of another man's debts. This would be an act of pure, unqualified grace alone. But if he engages to assume these debts, on condition that the debtor render him certain services, his offer to assume the debts is no longer a free, but a conditioned offer; and if the debtor complies with the condition and renders the service specified, the honorable compliance with the engagement to assume the debts is no longer a pure matter of grace, but a matter of debt. It is now so much a matter of debt that if the promiser should refuse to assume the debts, a civil court would enforce it. Salvation given to faith, construed as a strict condition precedent is a matter of debt, and a payment now due; it is in its logical nature legalism, although earnestly repudiated as such. But grace, simply given as a free and unconditional gift, and accepted as such, may also convey a claim on the fidelity of the promiser; but in this case the obligation is grounded in grace, and not in debt. The obligation of the covenant, under which God freely comes to the believing sinner, is the result

of grace, not the reason why it is given; it succeeds the gift, or is carried with it. Consequently it does not precede the grant, as it would have done if it had been the result of compliance with a prescribed condition; nor does it constitute any part of the reason why the gift was given. Take a familiar illustration. It is easy to conceive a person, in a whimsical mood, saying to a beggar who asks for alms, "I will give it to you, provided you will sing me a song." This would be a condition in the strict sense of the term; and this is the Arminian idea of faith in its relation to the covenant. Mark the distinguishing features of the act. The offer is free in one sense, and not free in another. It is free in the sense that the maker of it might not have made it at all unless he chose to do it; but when he makes it, he makes it with a condition annexed. In this sense the offer is not free, but conditioned. The beggar is not entitled to the alms until he complies with the condition. But when he complies with it, he is entitled to receive it *in advance* of his actually receiving it. His title to it ensues immediately upon his compliance with the condition. The maker of the promise is now in debt to the beggar and to his own honor; and when he honorably meets the obligation and gives the alms, the gift is no longer the gift of pure grace, but the honorable compliance with an obligation previously developed. The beggar is entitled to pride himself on the wisdom and promptitude with which he complied with the condition—a condition freely established by the whimsical kindness of his benefactor, but which, nevertheless, enabled his sagacity to secure a title to the benefit in advance of receiving it. His compliance constituted the chief part of the reason why he got it; for if he had refused to comply, he would not have gotten it at all. But now let us suppose that no condition was made, no song called for, and the person applied to, simply extends the

alms asked, for the beggar to take it. This is a very different offer from the other. It is a free and unconditioned offer. It presents no opportunity for the beggar to create a claim to the benefit in advance of receiving it. His prompt and prudent compliance has no chance to enter into the reason why the gift is given, for the offer is made freely and without condition. All that the beggar has to do is to simply take what is simply offered him as a free and unconditioned gift of pure and sovereign kindness. He must take it in order to come into possession of it; but the extension of his hand is merely the instrument by which he receives it—the occasion which enables kindness to effectually do its work. This is the Calvinistic notion of faith; it is a mere occasion, not a cause, of the grant of grace; it is a mere instrument of reception, not an efficient condition of salvation. As a mere instrument of reception, the beggar's taking the alms was not the condition of the gift, for the gift was offered before he could take it. It was not the reason, nor any part of the reason, why the gift was offered, for the offer was made before his purpose to accept or reject it was signified; he might have refused it. The sole reason of the gift's being given was the kindness of the giver; and the reception of the gift was not the condition precedent of its being given, but was simply necessary to coming into possession of it. Just so, sovereign grace alone is the reason why salvation is given to any sinner; faith is necessary simply to receive it; and when received, the gift carries a title to eternal life as a part of the gift, which is as sure as any title won by compliance with any prescribed condition precedent possibly could be. Faith, construed as such a condition, makes salvation to a material degree a matter of debt; and Paul testifies emphatically that if it is of debt, it is not of grace, and that if it is of grace, it is not of debt.

In farther exposition of faith as the instrument of salvation, it is to be said, negatively, that it is not an instrument because it has any peculiar merit in itself, determined by its conformity with moral law; nor any obligatory force, created by compliance with prescribed condition, developing debt; nor because faith has any intrinsic power in itself, making it an efficacious cause of salvation. Faith is made the instrument of salvation, because of its own nature, which makes it capable of receiving things, and a natural adjustment to anything to be received. If faith possessed an intrinsic merit, salvation would be of merit, and not of grace. If faith possesses merit in itself, salvation, as mediated by it, would be of merit, and not of grace. If faith created debt, then salvation would be of debt, and not of grace. Grace, according to Paul, stands opposed to both merit and debt. The difference between merit and debt lies in the distinction between moral and prescribed law. Merit is the positive desert of reward, springing from compliance with moral law; it is supposed to involve a claim upon justice, not merely for approval, but reward, arising from compliance with moral law on its natural basis as law. Debt arises from compliance with prescribed law—with law as a covenant, or with any prescribed condition. The papal idea of merit is founded upon the confusion of the merit of reward with the simple merit of approval; it construes any and every moral act as *per se* carrying a claim to reward, as a matter of justice, and attributes special merit to all acts of supererogatory obedience and suffering, which it supposes to be possible. Merit develops a claim solely on the justice of God; debt creates a claim on his faithfulness and truth, as well as on his justice. It is evident, from what has been said, that the merit of reward by any creature, sinless or sinful, is an impossibility, simply because the law prescribes all that he can do, and when

he has done it, he has only done that which was justly required of him; and he can only say, "I am an unprofitable servant; I have done that which was my duty to do." A man who pays his just debts is worthy of esteem and approval, but not of a reward for doing it; he has only honorably fulfilled a previous obligation. Grace, as already stated, stands opposed to both; it gives freely, without money and without price; but it gives nothing as a matter of justice to merit, or of faithfulness to debt as the ground of its gifts. Merit is out of the question, practically, and the chief conflict of grace is with debt. Paul says, "What is of debt is not of grace; and what is of grace is not of debt." Since debt arises from compliance with prescribed conditions, if faith is really and truly, in the strict sense of the terms, a prescribed condition precedent of salvation, then salvation by faith is a matter of debt, and not of grace. But we are told that it is of faith, that it might be of grace; it is therefore of faith, that it might not be of debt; and any construction of faith which makes salvation of debt must be a mistaken construction. Faith, construed as a mere instrument of reception, is exactly suited to the grace which is to be received: "therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace; to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed." Compliance with any real and true prescribed condition, whether with or without grace to enable the performance of it, is the essential and differentiating feature of a covenant of works. However sincerely repudiated, it is in its own nature legalism; and this undesigned or unconscious change of the evangelical terms of divine mercy is effected by the perversion of faith from a simple instrument of acceptance into a real condition precedent. To make this change is to make the covenant of grace, in a most material degree, into a covenant of personal obedience, and salvation under it, a matter of debt, and not

of grace. The true relation of faith to justification is that of a simple instrument or method receiving the free gift of the righteousness of Christ, which alone grounds justification. Faith is not the meritorious or the procuring cause of salvation. Faith is not an efficient condition of it, nor in any sense the reason why it is given. The beggar's outstretched hand is not the condition of the alms given, nor the reason why it was given; it is simply the means by which he comes into possession of what is given him freely and without condition. Faith is just the instrument of justification, and nothing more.

But why is faith necessary as an instrument? It is necessary equally, but in a different sense and for a different purpose, with repentance, regeneration, love, joy, and good works. We are never said to be justified by repentance; we are said to be justified by faith, although repentance and faith are inseparably conjoined together, like the inside and the outside of a cup, or the inside and outside surfaces of a door, the one of which always moves as the other moves. When the soul turns towards Christ, it turns from sin, and *vice versa*. Yet, although thus inseparably correlated with each other, the effect of justification is exclusively mediated by faith, and not by repentance. Repentance is indispensable to the salvation of a sinner; it is necessary in the same sense and for the same general reason as regeneration, good works, and all the other personal graces of the renewed nature; but it has no function in the matter of justification. Faith is necessary in the adjustment of the legal relations of the saved sinner, called justification, in a peculiar sense and for a peculiar reason. The peculiar sense in which faith is necessary to justification is that, inasmuch as we must receive the righteousness of Christ in order to enjoy its legal benefits, we must have an instrument, or means of receiving it; and faith is

that instrument. The peculiar reason why faith is necessary, and no other grace is available, is found in its own nature as adjusted to the work of receiving things. It is not because of its superior moral value to other graces of the Spirit, for Paul makes it equal in this respect to hope, but inferior to charity. It is exclusively related to justification, because it is a natural gesture of acceptance. The hand is the bodily organ for receiving things; it is naturally adapted for that purpose. It would be absurd to require one to receive an offered gift on the back of the head, because it has no natural adaptation for the purpose. Faith, and not love, joy or hope, is the instrument of justification, because of its adaptation as a natural gesture of acceptance, to receive the free gift of the righteousness of Christ, which carries justification and all the other elements of salvation with it. The peculiar sense in which faith is necessary to justification may be illustrated by a contract for a building, and also the different necessity for all the other graces of the renewed nature. The money to be paid for the work is necessary in one peculiar sense; it is the reason why the contractor undertakes the job. This money represents the fundamental necessity for the righteousness of Christ; his blood and righteousness is the price paid for redemption; without that, God would not have undertaken to save. But to execute the work, various materials, tools, and workmen must be employed. This necessity represents the necessity of repentance, regeneration, hope, love, and all other graces of the Holy Spirit. But yet again, it is necessary to the fulfilment of the contract, that the money pass from the owner to the contractor; and this develops the necessity for some means or instrument by which the money may be conveyed. If there were no possible way in which this conveyance could be accomplished, it would defeat the whole enterprise; for if the contractor could not get his

money he would not undertake the work. This necessity for a means of transferring the money represents the necessity of faith to justification; it is the check, or draft, or extended hand, by which the righteousness which justifies is received. The method of conveying the money is not the indispensable condition of the work's being undertaken, for more than one method may be employed. The money is the sole condition of the undertaking, and the method of conveying it is not material. There must be some method or instrument for conveying it; but this method is a variable incident of the payment, and no one method is an essential part of it. The illustration reveals the necessity of faith, and shows that necessary as it is, it is no part of the price paid for redemption.

This distinction between faith as an instrument, and faith as a strict condition precedent of the gospel salvation, though not so vital as to affect the safety of true believers who construe it wrongly, is yet a matter of importance. It enters deep into the experience of divine grace, both in the seeker after salvation and in the actual believer. If faith is a real and strict condition precedent, then it must be complied with before any hope can be indulged; and this hope is dependent altogether on the degree of certainty that the conditions have been performed; hope will vacillate with the clearness of the evidence on that point. All legalism is troubled with the same uncertainty whether the work required has been satisfactorily accomplished; and if the period of testing the compliance with the condition is the whole lifetime of the man, then it is inevitable that more or less uncertainty must overlie the whole period of trial, and a sure and lively hope cannot be indulged without a degree of presumption. Weak faith, on any construction, will yield the same result in experience; but it is materially different where weakness of faith is the

cause, and where the nature of the construction put upon faith is answerable for the result. Uncertainty of hope grounded upon uncertainty of personal compliance with a prescribed condition, is different from an uncertainty grounded upon weakness of faith in a sure ground of confidence. The righteousness of Christ is a sure ground of reliance; but a weak confidence in it will yield small comfort. But where the ground of confidence rests upon the uncertain personal equation whether a prescribed condition has been sufficiently complied with, the space for anxiety and doubt is quite seriously enlarged. A comfortable Christian hope is more difficult on this theory of a strict condition precedent. But grace, offered as a free and unconditioned gift, leaves no room for a doubt whether the condition has been complied with; for no condition has been prescribed. Such an offered gift, simply received as a gift, irrespective of conditions, will lay a less perplexing basis of hope. Yet a gift, free and unconditioned, may carry with it, as a part of the gift, a sure title, based upon the faithfulness of the promiser—a title as reliable as any title based upon compliance with prescribed condition can be made. Both will bind the promiser; but the debt or obligation to give the grace sought *precede* the grant, in the case of compliance with prescribed condition, and binds that the grant be given; but in the case of a free gift, simply received as such, the debt or obligation to grant the grace sought, follows instead of preceding the gift, and is a part of the gift. But this freely-given bond upon the faithfulness of the gracious giver will yield a surer foundation for hope than an uncertain compliance with a prescribed condition can do; the ground of hope is better in itself, and more easily discovered; and the believer may rejoice in the Lord always, and through the whole course of his life. The ground of hope, at least, gives this better warrant. The dis-

tion is clear, and reaches both deep and wide, between salvation as the result of compliance with faith as a prescribed condition precedent, which is legalism; and salvation as a free and unconditioned gift, through faith as a simple act of acceptance; this is the gospel of God.

It equally qualifies the offer of salvation and the obligation to instant acceptance. Now is the accepted time. The offer of an earthly estate, or a free pardon for a crime, may be instantly accepted, and ought to be. Such is the offer of the divine grace; it demands instant acceptance. But if there is a condition first to be performed, compliance must first be made with it. This interposes a period of time before the offer can be accepted. The beggar must sing his song, and an interval of time, more or less extended, must intervene. How long that interval may be, there is no deciding; but it logically defers the acceptance of the offer for a greater or less period. Not only is the condition to be performed, but certified as competently done; and both defer logically the closure with the offer. But a simple acceptance is logically, as well as practically, consistent with instant action. The more the sinner is reduced to nothingness, and the more Christ and the Father's grace is exalted in the matter of salvation, the better it will be for both saint and sinner.

MIRACLE.

FIRST SERMON.

“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.”—HEBREWS ii. 4.

THE present age is assuredly one of the most remarkable in the history of mankind; and in no respect more remarkable than in its religious developments. On the one hand, never since the age of the apostles, has there been so much ardor and steady enthusiasm in the propagation of the Christian faith. Millions of money are yearly contributed without compulsion to the revenue of the kingdom of Christ. The press groans under the incessant issue of millions of Bibles, books, papers, defences, explanations, recommendations, and incitements to the propagation of Christianity. The pulpit all over Christendom is filled by multitudes of able and zealous teachers. Multitudes of the highest and most cultured minds outside of the pulpit are devoted friends of the gospel. Once a year, for one whole week, the Christian body on the whole earth gathers for united prayer to Almighty God, showing no decay in the belief that he is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. On the Christian side, the signs of vital faith and energy are irresistibly clear. On the other hand, the old war of resistance to Christian claims is maintained with a renewed ardor under manifold forms of hostility. In the middle of the nineteenth century, in the heart of the American Republic, two new religions, both as radically opposed to Christianity as Islamism or Judaism,

have been proclaimed, formulated into public organizations, and embarked upon a scheme of active and widespread propagandism. Mormonism has for years taken formal shape, defined its doctrines, organized its forces to extend its views, and shocked the moral sense of Christian nations by the formal introduction and endorsement of polygamous institutions. Spiritualism is rapidly crystallizing into order, both of creed and organization. For years scepticism and positive infidelity have thrown themselves into the boldest attitudes of doubt and positive renunciation of the religion of the gospel. Paganism has in one sense been restored in parts of Christendom. In some respects the manifestations of this sceptical spirit have greatly improved, in the elements of respectability, since the days of Voltaire and Tom Paine. The shallow learning of these early leaders of modern infidelity, their bitter hate and superficial reasoning, excite the contempt of the far more learned and candid doubters of the present century. While traces of embittered feeling are sometimes discernible, there is also an unquestionable manifestation of candor and earnestness. Nay, more; some of these sceptics display a deep and pathetic sensibility to those evils of human life which condition the demand for some form of religion; evils, the existence of which they fully recognize, and for which they passionately desire a remedy. These words of one of them are full of pathetic earnestness, and even of a touching humility: "The writer is conscious only that he is passing fast towards the dark gate which will soon close behind him. He believes that some kind of sincere and firm conviction on these things is of infinite moment to him; and entirely diffident of his own power to find his way towards such a conviction, he is both ready and anxious to disclaim 'all rights of private judgment' in the matter." From such a spirit as this the church has no right

to turn away with a condemnation, however just, of the secret moral elements which may possibly lie responsibly at the bottom of such painful doubts; her business is to solve them, and to bring, if possible, the cordial and the balm of faith to soothe the anxieties they create. Not only is this element of sensibility and candor to be found in the sceptical speculations of the day, but the amount of solid learning, profound analysis, and critical skill is real and imposing. There is often to be seen evidence of shallowness, hasty inference, and indications of too great eagerness to find proof hostile to Christianity. But the evidences of culture, scholarship and profound investigation are also frequently clear to view, and the spirit of scientific candor is likewise frequently beyond all question. The speculations of such minds are consequently exerting a great amount of influence all over the reading world, taking hold upon the more independent, adventurous and thoughtful minds in almost every community, and breeding influences which are only the more dangerous from the elements of candor and intelligence which are interwoven in their final results. It is asserted by Froude that "the truth of the gospel is now more widely doubted in Europe than at any time since the conversion of Constantine."¹ The apparent discrepancies between the theories and conclusions of science, and some long-accepted interpretations of scripture; the speculations of philosophy; the doubts raised by the critical study of ancient MSS.; the attempts to eliminate all the elements of the supernatural from the gospels, and at the same time to preserve the historical and moral elements, which are confessedly impregnable—all these causes combined with the increase of luxury, the growth of vice, the intensification of the opposing spirits of humanity and materialism—many causes of totally opposite moral character-

¹ *Froude's Short Studies*, p. 226.

istics, all coöperating to the same result, will explain this wide prevalence of the sceptical and of the more positive infidel spirit.

How to encounter this radical opposition is sometimes revolved with perplexity and distress by the friends of the gospel. Some suppose that total silence in the pulpit is the best policy; otherwise, that many will be informed of existing doubts, concerning which they would have never heard; and in this way the church itself may be made the instrument of propagating infidelity. To this view it is sufficient to reply that the widespread influence of the daily press, and the constant publication as news of the various movements of modern thought, bring these religious speculations of the day in contact with almost every reader in the course of time. The mischief will only be aggravated by the silence of the pulpit; that reticence will be construed into inability to answer and fear of the issues. It will thus, by its silence, be warped into an instrument for intensifying unbelief. The only way to prevent such a result from both of these directions is for the church to teach the truth according to her commission. There is no cause for alarm. Christ declared he came to send a sword on the earth; and there is always need for such an instrument in a world full of error. The church pays a poor compliment to her Head, and to the glorious system of truth which has been placed in her charge, when she trembles at the sounds of war. No Christian need fear the result of the conflict. The gates of hell shall not prevail. The church of God and the system of gospel grace stand upon facts; a past fact is incapable of change by any power in the universe, even by the power of God himself. Power is the ability to produce change; whatever is incapable of change is not an object of power; and it is no impeachment of even infinite power that it cannot change what is *per se*

incapable of change. A fact accomplished is a fact forever; it stands with all its inferences and influences immovably attached to it; and if the power of the infinite God is unable to alter it or its consequences, moral and inferential, no other power, whether of science or human wit, can possibly do it. All the discoveries of science will never be able to obliterate the past facts in the history of Jesus of Nazareth, any more than the facts in the history of Napoleon. Standing on this unalterable foundation of past fact, the gospel and the church of God can well afford a candid and calm consideration of all that can be imagined or proposed in opposition to their claims to confidence.

In the modern assaults upon Christianity, miracle is attacked with a special energy of assault, but with no unity in its method. The old ground developed by Hume is strongly occupied by one class of sceptical thinkers. It asserts that miracle is an impossibility; that the order of nature is inviolable—so fixed and unchangeable as not to admit of miracle; that universal human experience certifies this inviolability; and that no evidence, however imposing, can prove what is *per se* impossible. By this convenient generalization all questions of fact are summarily set aside. Another class simply affirm that miracle is not proved; and they allege that the miracles of St. Ignatius and St. Francis of Assisi stand on evidence as clear and strong as the miracles of the New Testament. Others, again, attempt to combine both of these grounds, and object to miracles, first, on the ground that they are impossible; and second, with superfluous energy of argument if the first assertion is true, on the plea of defective evidence. Still another class admit the facts in question, but dispute their miraculous origin in the power of God, on the plea of their production by occult natural causes. The attempts of Strauss and Renan—the leaders of modern

infidelity in the sphere of literature, as distinguished in science—to protect the general credibility of the gospel narratives, while they turn all that is supernatural and divine—the one into myths, and the other into poetical legends—are, rightly considered, powerful testimonies to the unassailable basis of fact on which the gospel rests. The attempt to retain the facts, and yet explain them away, is suicidal and absurd; but it certainly discloses the powerful foundation which they desire to unsettle. These leaders of modern scepticism are far from holding consistent grounds; but they do distinctly concede the basis of facts, while they endeavor to explain away their nature and account for their origin on purely natural principles.

The Christian faith is ready to meet investigation. It requires every man who accepts it as it claims to be, “to be ready to give a reason for the faith that is in him.” It appeals to evidence. It denies no right of inquiry. If it is not true, no man is bound to receive it as true, for that would be a falsehood, and no man is bound to believe a lie. If it cannot be proved to be true by evidence of the highest credibility, no one is bound to believe it. To affirm anything to be true, in the absence of anything to show it to be true, is to make breach upon the law of veracity. Evidence is the ground and measure of assent, because it is the only way in which the existence of any truth can be known; and to affirm the existence of a thing without any reason to believe or know of its existence is falsehood. The absence of evidence disables the possibility of belief and exempts from responsibility. The presence of competent proof makes a refusal to accept the truth a matter of will, of mere reluctance to accept it, the result of moral causes controlling the judgment of the evidence; and, of course, carries responsibility. We propose a brief series of discussions upon the evidences of Christianity

as implicated in the miracles and the prophecies which are alleged to support its claims to be a revelation from God. To this, Strauss, Renan, and the *Westminster Review* challenge the church. We will endeavor to meet it.

In order to meet the case as stated by the different classes of sceptics who dispute the miracle of scripture, we shall discuss:

First. The possibility of miracle.

Second. The capability of proof in miracle.

Third. The actual proof of scripture miracle, compared with the evidence of papal miracle, and the proof of mesmeric and spiritualistic phenomena which are alleged to rest on equal testimony.

1. The speculations, both in philosophy and morals, of that unquestionably great and profound thinker, David Hume, have exerted a more extensive influence upon all modern speculation than those of any other man since the days of Aristotle. To refute him, the founder of the modern Scottish school of natural realism or common-sense—a worthy antagonist of the great sceptic—began his labors. The philosophy of Kant, in Germany, was a revolt against the extreme tendencies of Hume's scepticism, and Kant's philosophy was the occasion of the renewed excitement of philosophical speculation on the continent, resulting in the various schools of German and French philosophy. Hume's connection with French scepticism was even more direct; and to this day his view of the miraculous evidence and divine claims of Christianity is the controlling element in all modern sceptical speculation. The ground he takes is that miracle is an impossibility. He does not touch at all the evidence alleged in support of the facts asserted. He simply says, no evidence can prove a miracle, simply because a miracle cannot happen; it is an impossibility; the order of nature is fixed and inviola-

ble. He rests his whole polemic on the fixed and inviolable character of the laws of nature, which renders such a disturbance as miracle impossible. He rests his assertion of this alleged fixity in the laws of nature on the asserted universal experience of the human race. To this ground taken by Hume, many of his successors heartily agree; but some of them not consistently. Others concede the possibility, but deny that this possibility has ever passed over into a fact. Strauss scornfully refuses to discuss seriously any fact alleged in violation of what he affirms to be the universal law of the natural world. This view is the warp and woof of all speculation which rejects the supernatural, not only in Christianity, but in the whole material universe.

2. The question now before us is simply whether miracle is possible? The argument against this possibility is that it is a violation of the order of nature, which is fixed and inviolable; and that we know this order to be inviolable from universal human experience. This argument involves two distinct points: first, the inviolability of the order of nature; and second, the universality of human experience in yielding proof of that fact. The argument in reply is an absolute denial of both points in the sceptical contention.

3. The remark obvious to be made on this plea of the sceptic is that it assumes the very question in dispute upon both of these points. The assertion of a miraculous fact is an assertion that the order of nature is not inviolable; the inviolability of the order is brought into question by the assertion of such a fact; and to deal imperiously with the fact by asserting the inflexibility of law, and refusing to consider the fact which disproves the alleged character of natural law, is not only a breach upon the laws of all just reasoning, but a breach of that law of justice and moral integrity which extends its jurisdiction over all the activities.

of a moral and rational being. To concede the major premise of Hume is to concede the question in dispute before any proof is admitted and considered. The major premise of the sceptic is a bald *petitio principii*. The second premise in the sceptical contention is subject to the same fatal impeachment; it, too, begs the question at issue. To say that universal human experience testifies demonstratively to the absolute inviolability of the order in nature is to make a second assumption of the point to be proved. It is the very gist of the Christian contention that miracle was displayed in the experience of thousands in the age of Christ. This celebrated argument is grossly vitiated by two glaring violations of the laws of reasoning; it begs the question in both branches of its statement of premise. That the course of nature, as a general rule, is fixed and inviolable, is not only admitted by the Christian casuist, but it is asserted by him to be essential to the authentication of miracle. Miracle would have no significance of divine interference, no testimonial force, unless the course of nature was ordinarily inviolable by any power subordinate to the Deity. Miracle implies not only the exertion of divine power, but the insufficiency of any other power to produce the effect which is called miraculous. It implies a control over the laws of nature entirely beyond all other power but the power of God; and, therefore, becomes demonstrative proof of divine interposition. The inviolability of nature is properly asserted as a general rule, and as against all other beings except the infinite God. But to assert that this uniformity of nature, and this inviolability of natural law, is literally absolute, and as completely beyond the power of the Almighty God, as it is beyond the power of any other being, is to beg the question, and is wholly without warrant. To this argument we reply, first, that it is unphilosophical to appeal to natural law against

fact. Fact is the basis of law; the law is inferred from the fact; all natural law is inferred from the facts of nature. Whenever a fact is discovered, in the teeth of a law previously supposed to be a true law, the fact is not cashiered; it is either allowed to modify the law, or is held as an isolated but admitted truth, whose place in the system is not yet settled, and is held for further investigation of its true relations. To insist upon a law, no matter how widely and truly generalized, from facts, as discrediting a new fact, is to violate the fundamental principle of inductive science. The law of gravity is a true law of nature. Suppose one should appeal to it against the fact of an Indian juggler walking up into the air, and seating himself, without any discoverable means of support. Would the appeal to the law of gravity be a legitimate proof against such a fact? Home, the celebrated spiritualist medium, is said to have so far improved upon this trick of the Hindoo fakirs as to float round in the air. If true, it would be hopeless to discredit the fact by an appeal to the law of gravity, a true and recognized law though it be.

The natural and just law of inquiry is to investigate the facts, in advance and independent of any assertion of law; and if the allegation of fact is proved to be actually true, any appeal to law in order to discredit its existence is altogether illegitimate. The ascertainment of the fact either compels the modification of the law by restricting its extent, or possibly overthrowing its authority as law altogether. No man has a right to assert impossibility against fact; and when the Christian casuist appeals to fact and proffers proof, Mr. Hume and his followers are bound to investigate the facts, and make themselves ridiculous in claiming to be too rational even to discuss the issue raised. They are entitled to appeal to the uniformity of nature to a certain extent. The presumption is against the assertion of miracle; and

the assertor of such an event must take the burden of proof, and not only demonstrate his facts, but show a sufficient reason for such an extraordinary interposition of the Supreme Being. The uniformity of nature is a general truth, and is fully entitled to recognition as such; it is a general, though not an universal law. Consequently there is a legitimate appeal to it in many cases of alleged fact. Many things are alleged to be fact, when there is no fact in the case. We do not hesitate to reject as incredible the assertion of a dead man's being brought to life by a mesmeric process, or of St. Martin's crossing the Mediterranean floating on his cloak, simply because the laws of nature are violated by such events without any evidence that they occurred at all, or any emergency in the divine administration sufficient to call for the divine interference. False miracles have been repeatedly alleged; but they are no more entitled to discredit true miracle than false allegations of historical fact are entitled to discredit all historical facts. The various distinctions between false and true miracle raise an impregnable wall of differences between the two classes of events, which will leave no room for any confusion of the two, as will be seen hereafter. It is enough to say, for the present, that we are not only allowed, but required to stand upon the uniformity of nature until the evidence of an alleged fact in opposition to that uniformity is sufficient to establish the fact, and to demonstrate the necessity for it. While we have no right to appeal to law to discredit a demonstrated fact, we have no right to qualify the law on anything less forcible than a fact. A striking illustration of the real absurdity underlying Hume's celebrated argument against miracles, drawn from the impossibility of their occurrence, is furnished by the early history of steam navigation on the high seas. Shortly after the demonstration of the entire practicability of river and

along-shore navigation by steam vessels, a numbers of English capitalists conceived the notion of attempting it upon the ocean. The subject was new; the venture was hazardous to capital; no data were in reach; and they referred the subject to Dyonisius Lardner, the first practical scientist of his day. He was a man of splendid talents, vast acquirements, a real encyclopedia of vast and various scientific knowledge. He undertook the calculation, and finally presented a report, full of subtle and learned estimates, in which he demonstrated the impossibility, in the nature of the case, of crossing the ocean by steam. In the meantime some English ship-builders built a steamship and sent her across the Atlantic. They could not have answered Lardner's argument; probably could not have understood it; certainly could not have matched it by a counter demonstration. But they broke the demonstration to pieces by developing a fact. Had Lardner's argument been made after the steamer had completed its voyage, it would have been an exact parallel with Hume's demonstration against miracles. He aimed to demonstrate impossibility in the teeth of facts already accomplished, refusing, like his disciple, Strauss, to consider the evidence at all, on the assertion of an impossibility which those facts disproved. Our right to assert the proof of the facts which broke the alleged impossibility to pieces will be vindicated when we come to the exposition of the evidences of the gospel miracle.

To proceed with the vindication of the possibility of miracle. The next proof of the possibility of miracle is drawn from the character of a perfect being, which is the definition of God. Infinite excellence in every quality that enters into the notion of excellence composes the conception of a God; moral excellence in every quality, wisdom and power in infinite degree must be attributed to him, or the notion of a perfect being is marred. One of the false assumptions in

Hume's argument is that the inflexible character of natural law places it beyond control—all control, even beyond the control of God himself. It affirms the order of nature to be fixed and inviolable in the most unlimited sense of the terms. That which is absolutely fixed and unalterable is unalterable by any power, even infinite and divine. The assertion is, not that God will not, but that he cannot, change or modify it. If it can be modified by almighty power, the possibility of miracle is proved. If he has actually done it, the fact of miracle is proved, and the proof of the fact settles the question of possibility. Now, is it possible for God to modify the order of nature, supposing him to desire to do so? The answer to this question will turn on the nature of God as a personal or an impersonal being. If he is an impersonal being, he is a necessitated being; and is incapable of any energy, except what is determined by the unalterable quality of his own constitution. He can do no miracle, because he can do no voluntary or designed thing. To account for the myriads of adjustments in nature will then become an insoluble problem. But if God is a personal being of intelligence, will, and boundless power and perfection of every kind, his relation to the universe is settled; he is its creator; and the universe is the product of his will and power. To admit such a deity is to allow him creative power and a limitless capacity of self-manifestation. To deny to a being of infinite perfection the power to certify his own existence—to do things which will exhibit, not only his being, but the energy and qualities of his nature—is absurd. If he exists, he can manifest his existence, else his existence could not be known independent of its manifestations. But if God is able to create, his power to control, modify, or change the order of nature is proved, for the power to work miracle is nothing more or less than the power to create. To deny the power to

create is simply atheism. There is no logical middle ground between the admission of God's power to work miracle and the denial of his existence. Hence most modern impugners of miracle take refuge in pantheism, and deny the existence of God as a personal being. The only God, many of these speculators admit, is a blind force, with no more qualities of personality than the force of gravity or magnetism—a force perpetually developing itself under fixed laws, along a line of endless action and reaction. The universe is a development, not a creation. This theory involves the denial of man's personality, the data of consciousness, and the most obvious facts of the human constitution. Every proof, therefore, of human or divine personality, intelligence and will is a proof of the possibility of miracle and a refutation of pantheism. The possibility of miracle is proved by the unquestionable fact that the power to work miracle is nothing but creative power. To create *ab origine* is one of the highest acts of power. To admit a creative energy in the first cause, and to deny it the capacity to work miracle, is self-contradictory. Deism is absurd, but pantheism, which is the only logical refuge of the impugner of miracle, is still more absurd. To admit a creator of the universe at all, is to admit that the actual constitution of the universe is the result of will. What are called the laws of nature are nothing but selected energies impressed upon the constitution of things by the will and power of the Creator; and they remain subject to his control. The laws of nature are assumed, in Hume's argument, to possess a character which places them out of his power. This makes creative power self-destructive; the exertion of it determines a limit upon itself in things capable of change. To say that God will not alter the system he has ordained may be true; but to say that he cannot alter it, is logically to deny creation as an act of will, and to admit a power to

produce, and to deny it capacity to control its product. Creation, then, becomes an abnegation of sovereignty, and omnipotent power is exhausted by its own exertion. God dies in the act of creation. Whatever is capable of change is an object of power, and carries with it the admission of possibility. A power capable of creation is capable of miracle; for creation is miracle, and proves the power in dispute by the actual exertion of it. Modern scepticism sees clearly what the old deists could not see—that the admission of a supernatural and divine agency anywhere in the universe, and at any period, really closed the question. It is a matter of sincere congratulation that the long battle for the supernatural in Christianity has developed, at last, the unmistakable fact that there is no resistance to miracle, except by the denial of divine power in creation; no resistance to the supernatural in Christianity, except by the denial of the supernatural in the universe; no escape for the impugner of miracle, except by the denial of the personality and perfection of God, and a retreat into the absurdities of pantheism.

4. The other branch of the error in Hume's argument is equally vulnerable; he appeals for proof of the inviolability of natural law to what he asserts to be the universal experience of mankind. This claim not only refuses to consider the experience of thousands in the days of Christ, but implies the modest assumption of a full acquaintance with the experience of the whole human race; it also implies the measurement of possibility by actual human experience; it implies an acquaintance with the possibilities of change in the universe, and this implies the knowledge of the possibilities of infinite power. All this amounts to the assumption of infinite knowledge on the part of the objector. To deny the possibility of miracle is to deny the possibility of change in the operation of natural law. To deny the possibility of change in the

operation of natural law is to assert to human experience the knowledge of all possible changes in the operations of law—which is absurd. On this obvious absurdity—the measurement of possibility by human experience—many modern sceptics have articulately abandoned Hume's ground, that miracle cannot be proved, because it is impossible to happen; and, while admitting the possibility of miracle, only deny that it is a possibility which has ever passed over into a fact, or else impugn the sufficiency of the evidence which is cited to prove it. Froude¹ distinctly impeaches the sanity of any man who would raise "his narrow understanding into a measure of the possibilities of the universe"; and charges the Protestant controversialist with systematic misrepresentation of the issue as one touching the possibility of miracle, and not merely a question of proof. His censure is justly laid on those who have denied that possibility, but not on those who have charged them with that denial. When Hume denies miracle, on the ground that the order of nature is inviolable, he certainly does deny the possibility of miracle; it is only another form of expressing the idea; the idea is the same. When Strauss scornfully refuses even to discuss, as a matter of fact or history, any departure from the order of nature, the same denial of possibility is implied. When Froude denounces as insanity the measurement of possibilities in the universe by a human understanding, he confesses the utter destruction of Hume and Strauss' ground by the Christian casuist; testifies that the charge of impeaching possibilities in the universe is true, contrary to his own previous assertion; and is not only self-convicted of self-contradiction, but exposes his own want of charity and candor in accusing the friends of miracle of misrepresenting the point at issue. Yet this ground of Hume's is the strong point of the impugner of

¹ *Froude's Short Studies*, p. 186.

miracle. As long as he can stand on the broad issue that miracle is impossible, and appeal to the uniformity of nature, he sweeps away all troublesome questions of evidence, and by one stroke overturns the whole system of supernaturalism. He compels his Christian antagonist into a cautious and discriminating method of defence and assault. To yield this point, as Froude does under the stress of the Christian argument, is to yield the key to the whole sceptical position.

To recapitulate and present in brief the argument of the sceptic and the points of the answer: Hume argues that no amount of testimony can prove a miracle, because a miracle cannot happen; it cannot happen because the order of nature, or the laws of nature, are inviolable. He asserts that no human testimony can prove a miracle, first, because the miracle is impossible; and second, because the human testimony is discredited by this absolute uniformity of nature and its laws. He asserts that this uniformity of nature is demonstrated by universal human experience.

The answer is an absolute denial of both the premises in this sceptical argument; miracle is not impossible, and human experience is not universal against it. The sceptical contention is impeached—First. Because the argument begs the question, assumes both the points to be proved, and stands discredited by the laws of reasoning as a sophism—a *petitio principii*. Second. It violates the law of inductive science by appealing to law, to discredit a fact in advance of any consideration of its evidence. Third. It assumes a character in the laws of nature which places them beyond the control of the Almighty God himself—a conception not only not proved, but disproved by the nature of creative power. Fourth. The possibility of miracle is positively proved by the personality and perfection of God. There is no logical middle ground between denial of miracle and atheism. Fifth.

The possibility of miracle is proved by the absurdity of supposing that an infinite being may be incapable of self-manifestation, and the display of his qualities. He can do things which are peculiar to himself, and which consequently reveal his qualities. Sixth. It is proved by the fact that there is no limitation upon infinite power in reference to things capable of change. To deny this is to be guilty of the self-contradiction of fixing a limit upon unlimited power. The system of nature as the product of will is capable of change. If it was the result of an inherent necessity, it would be incapable of change. Seventh. Miracle is simply an instance of creative power, and is necessarily possible to a being capable of creating. Eighth. It is presumptuous folly to make the human understanding, and even universal human experience, the measure of possibility. Hume had no right to deny the possibility of miracle, except on the supposition that he knew all that was possible in reference to the laws of nature; they may admit of causations and uses, possibly of combinations which would yield miracle. The argument, in its logical structure, modestly assumes what the good sense of its author would no doubt have disclaimed, omniscience of possibility.

With a brief definition of what a miracle is, we close the discussion of the first point in the classification of the subject. We shall resort for this definition simply to the scriptures, which give one which accords with the intuitive judgments of common sense, and carries the signature of the divine endorsement. The Old Testament scriptures furnish one, the New Testament scriptures furnish another; and both are identical in defining the discriminating feature of the thing defined; both accord with the intuitive judgment of the human understanding. The magicians of Egypt, when overwhelmed in the conflict with Moses before the court of Pha-

raoh, exclaimed, "This is the finger of God." The object for which those wonders were done is said to be that "the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt." The two elements of miracle as here discriminated are, first, the immediate exertion of God's power, in order to accomplish the second—that is, to furnish testimony. The nature of the energy employed is defined and asserted to be divine power; and the purpose for which this power was exerted is set forth—to give testimony to a divine interposition—that the Egyptians might know something, and know it as coming from God. In the New Testament, it is said that "Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Here the same characteristics of miracle are set forth; the nature of the power as divine—something God did; and the purpose of its exertion—to furnish testimony to Jesus of Nazareth. The passage from Hebrews which we have used as a text is equally clear and a little more full. "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will." Here the same characteristics are affirmed; God as a witness bearing testimony, by the exertion of his power, and that, too, as the result of his own will. A miracle, then, is an act of immediate divine power, exerted by a direct volition of his own will, for the purpose of giving a testimony to some truth or to endorse some messenger claiming to come from him. This divine power may be exerted in different modes, for all we know; but it must clearly certify itself as the power of God; or it will fail of its purpose. The general mode in which this manifestation and certificate of divine power is made is mainly by some action cognizable by human senses, which exhibit such a control of

the laws of nature as God only can exert. The order of nature being a product of the divine will, is controllable by the same power which established it; he can modify it at will by the same power which established it. But God alone can do this; and, by consequence, any such energy exerted upon the order of nature is a demonstration of an interposition of the divine will and power which cannot be mistaken. Miracle, then, becomes the personal testimony of God, bearing witness to the truth which he has taught by some inspired messenger sent by him; it certifies the messenger as sent by God. The method in which God may exercise his power in working a miracle may defy scrutiny, but the trace of his finger must be clear. Whether he employs a combination of higher natural law, competent only to himself, or whether he accomplishes the result by fiat power directly exerted, suspending, reversing, or positively violating the order of nature, is really immaterial to the just conception of miracle. Some speculators, hypothetically admitting miracle as fact, impeach its value as testimony to a divine interposition, on the allegation that the conceded miraculous fact is the product of higher natural laws, and as such is no proof of a divine interposition. But if the bringing of those higher natural laws into play, superseding ordinary natural law, is only possible by the divine power and will, the actual energy of those laws is still proof of the interposition of the divine will. A great chemist can combine natural law in a manner that will certify his superior abilities in chemical science; a chemist of still higher ability can make combinations of natural law which the other cannot make; and the superior combination will be a reliable register of the superior power concerned in the result. The Duke of Argyle formed the theory on this ground, that all miracle was the result of combinations of natural law by the divine power, and contended that the

proof of a divine interposition was not diminished by the use of natural law to work out the result. The only objection to this theory is that it is too broad. It is doubtless true in some cases of miracle; it is not proved of all. The evidential power of miracle is not discredited when the divine worker sees fit to employ a higher natural law to reverse the action of a lower, because the combination is only possible to Almighty power. The result shows that the sphere of Deity is invaded, and thus becomes proof of a divine interposition. The grant of life is solely within the sphere of divine energy; whence the raising of a dead man to life is accepted as a true miracle. In raising from the dead, the ordinary laws of life are immediately set in motion; but the renewed action of the forces of nature are due to will and power divine, and not to the undirected energy of some natural law. All the results of natural law in human hands are due to the interposition of human will and human knowledge; and it does not appear why the divine will and knowledge cannot be credited with the ability to combine natural law to produce results which will certify the interposition of his will. It is apparent that God has used more than one method in working miracle; he has employed even the lower natural laws in some cases; he has employed his fiat will in others; and both have served the great purpose for which he has intervened. That purpose is to place God in the attitude of a witness to man—to give his sanction to the truth he has sent—and to sustain the credentials of the human messenger he has employed to proclaim it. This purpose of miracle, so clearly asserted in the scripture definition of it, is of immense value in more than one way; and among these is the presentation of a test to discriminate between true and false miracle, as we shall see hereafter. It is plain that any one coming with the claim to be a messenger of God,

bringing his commands and instructions, must prove his commission; he must authenticate his credentials; God must certify him. Until he is so certified, men have no right to receive him as a divine commissioner, or his message as a communication from God. Hence the inseparable correlation between revelation and miracle. Even in those cases where a prophet is sent with a message of warning, or a call to reformation of manners without the power to work miracle, his appeal is always to the previous law, which was sustained by miracle, as the ultimate basis of his own fresh announcements. But in all cases where a new system was to be established, or a new development was to be given to an old divinely-appointed system, the miracle appears with the new revelation of the divine will. In the one branch of this correlation, truth from God is revealed; in the other, God certifies that it is from him; and whenever a messenger announcing a truth from God is able to appeal to the power of God in proof of his claim, the deepest convictions of the human soul bow to the irresistible demonstration, for it is God who bears the witness.

MIRACLE.

SECOND SERMON.

“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.”—HEBREWS ii. 4.

THE two points to be investigated at this stage of the discussion are—

First, the possibility of proving a miracle.

Second, whether the miracle of the gospel is actually proved, and by a species of proof which draws an ineffaceable line of distinction between the miracle of the gospel and the miracle of the calendar.

1. The assertion of Hume, and many of his successors, is that no amount of proof can establish a miracle, because it is contrary to the course of nature, and therefore impossible. This alleged impossibility has already been discussed, and the unsoundness of the allegation has been shown. The settlement of the question of possibility carries with it the settlement of the question of proof. If a thing is possible to be, it can be proved to be; otherwise there is no right to assert its possibility. If a thing can happen, it can be shown to happen; the possibility of being carries the possibility of proof. This connection between possibility of being and possibility of proof is intuitively obvious, and it is alone sufficient to settle the question.

But, in addition to this inflexible connection between being and proof, the analysis of a miraculous fact will lead to the same conclusion. Take the case of the man born blind,

restored to sight by a word of Christ. The fact of a man's being born blind can certainly be proved. The fact of his application to a certain person for relief in the presence of many people, some friendly and some unfriendly to the person applied to, is also capable of proof. The fact of a word being spoken commanding the restoration of the eyesight presents no difficulty of proof. The fact of the man's actual ability to see immediately after the word of command was spoken, is as capable of proof as that any other man sees. These are all the parts of a miraculous fact, as a simple physical event subject to human inspection. What part of it is incapable of proof? The nature of the power employed is not a part of the fact; it is an inference from the fact, and may be more or less clear; but the fact itself is capable of proof, because each separate element of the fact is capable of proof. The blindness from birth, the incapacity of the physical structure of the eye, the word spoken — the only apparent secondary instrumentality employed, the restoration of the structure of the eye, and the actual power of vision instantly after the word of command was spoken, are all plainly capable of positive proof. If any one is disposed to doubt the significance of the fact, so far as our present point is concerned, let it be so; that is a matter which may be relegated to subsequent investigation. Our inquiry for the present is simply the possibility of proving the fact itself, whatever may be its significance — by whatever power the result may have been produced. Such a fact will authenticate itself and demonstrate its origin; but that authentication is an inference from the fact, not a part of the fact itself; and even allowing it to be of doubtful origin, the fact itself is unquestionably capable of proof, which is the point we are now discussing. Supposing such a fact proved, the fact would be proof of its origin in a divine interposition, because it

manifestly involves the exercise of creative power, and is clearly beyond the power of any other being. The mind intuitively recognizes in such an act the exertion of the same power which originally made the eye, for it is the making of an eye. An act manifesting an energy of creative power certifies its own origin, and demonstrates the presence and the power of God. The wonder is a sign of his will, for no other being is capable of creative energy.

From these two considerations then,¹ first, that the possibility of miracle carries the possibility of its proof; and second, from the analysis of a miraculous fact as a simple physical entity, every part of which is clearly provable, the capability of the miracle to be proved is sufficiently established.

So clear is the demonstration of the possibility of miracle on the datum of a personal God, and so resistless is the truth that if possible it is provable, that many of the later sceptics have openly receded from Hume's ground, and take up a new position. They concede the possibility and the provability of miracle, and now assert that the miracle of the gospels is not proved. The possibility of miracle is simply admitted as a bare possibility; but they deny that that possibility has ever passed over into fact. They admit that miracle could be proved, if it should happen; but deny that it has ever been proved to have actually happened. Renan says, in so many words, "We do not say a miracle is impossible; we say only no miracle has ever yet been proved." Froude takes the ground that the evidence of the New Testament miracles is of no more force than the testimony of the miracles of the Roman calendar, or of mesmeric or spiritualistic wonders. He says, "On human evidence, the miracles of St. Teresa

¹ Quoted by Froude, *Short Studies*, p. 190.

and St. Francis of Assissi are as well established as those of the New Testament.”¹ This clearly makes up the issue for our present inquiry.

The question now is whether the miracle of the gospels is, or is not, proved in point of fact, and whether it is not proved by a species of evidence which draws a broad line of distinction between it, on one side, and the alleged miracle of the Roman calendar, and the wonders of mesmerism and spiritualism on the other. The case is thus stated by Froude, “The lives of the saints of the Catholic Church, from the time of the apostles until the present day, are a complete tissue of miracles, resembling and rivalling those of the gospels. Some of these stories are romantic and imaginative; some clear, literal, and prosaic; some rest on mere tradition; some on the sworn testimony of eye-witnesses; some are obvious fables; some are as well authenticated as facts of such a kind can be authenticated at all. The Protestant Christian rejects every one of them—rejects them without inquiry; involves those for which there is good authority, and those for which there is none or little, in one absolute, contemptuous and sweeping denial. The Protestant Christian feels it more likely, in the words of Hume, that men should deceive or be deceived, than that the laws of nature should be violated. At this moment we are beset with reports of conversations with spirits, of tables miraculously lifted, of hands projected out of the world of shadows into this mortal life. An unusually able, accomplished person, accustomed to deal with common-sense facts, a celebrated political economist, and notorious for business-like habits, assured this writer that a certain mesmerist, who was my informant’s intimate friend, had raised a dead girl to life. We should believe the people who tell us these things in any ordinary matter; they would be admitted in a court

¹ Froude, *Short Studies*, p. 180.

of justice as good witnesses in a criminal case, and a jury would hang a man on their word. The person just now alluded to is incapable of telling a wilful lie; yet our experience of the regularity of nature on one side is so uniform, and our experience of the capacities of human folly, on the other, is so large, that when people tell us these wonderful stories, most of us are contented to smile; we do not care so much as to turn out of our way to examine them."

Upon this statement we have only to remark that, so far as Protestant Christians who understand the ground of the Christian faith are concerned, they are not at all solicitous to deny any fact well authenticated upon any subject whatever, whether miracles of saints, or phenomena of mesmerism, or facts of spiritualism, or wonders of Hindoo jugglery. A fact is a fact; it is an actual occurrence which cannot be disputed; and one fact cannot possibly damage any other fact or interfere with the consequences, logical or practical, which grow out of it. The admission of these alleged facts of mediæval miracle cannot possibly discredit the miraculous events of the gospel history. All we should require in order to secure their full admission is proof of the facts asserted. Whether we should agree to the inference from the facts, and accept the alleged origin of the fact, is another question. Nor do we feel it to be at all necessary to impeach the general credibility of the witnesses of legendary miracle, or even their special credibility in reference to the facts alleged. The facts, when proved, may be admitted, without admitting any special theory of their origin or significance, or at all shaking the supreme authority of the gospel miracle. We are fully prepared to admit all such facts of saintly miracle as may be fairly proved. If there were no such wonders developed in the history of the church, prophecy would be falsified. The Apostle Paul distinctly foretold that a power designated

as "the man of sin" should be revealed, "sitting in the temple of God," "whose coming should be after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." To admit the alleged facts, when truly proved, is not only candid and honest, but is needful to vindicate prophecy. The admission of the facts does not carry the admission of their alleged miraculous origin, nor of any doctrine which is claimed to be sustained by the facts. We are ready, on fair proof, to accept any given fact which may be proved by respectable evidence; we will accept it as a mere physical event; but the facts must be such as to authenticate its origin before we will admit it as a true divine miracle. We shall only admit such inferences from the fact, either touching its origin or the doctrine which is supposed to be demonstrated by the event as may be legitimately drawn from it. To suppose, as Froude does, that the Protestant Christian finds it necessary to discredit all the alleged wonders of mediæval saints is a mistake. When no sufficient evidence sustains an allegation of fact, we do apply the fundamental law of nature to support our refusal to accept the allegation. When sufficient evidence is furnished to prove the fact, we apply the same test to ascertain the nature of the fact as far as the test may be applicable. But our chief reliance for the detection of false or mistaken miracle are the scripture tests of genuine miracle. The principles upon which Protestant Christians justify their firm adherence to the miracles of the gospel, and impeach the alleged miracles of saints and pagans, even when they admit the facts alleged, will be explained and vindicated as we proceed.

It is asserted by some sceptics that time weakens the force of evidence, and that the evidence of the gospel miracle has been so far obscured by the lapse of ages that it cannot now command a rational assent. It is true that the lapse of time does have a tendency to obscure evidence, but whether it will

actually succeed in obliterating the evidence will depend on the means adopted to preserve the transmission of the evidence. This position of the opponents of miracle raises the inquiry, What are the conditions on which a reliable account of events can be safely transmitted through long periods of time? This is the first point to be settled. If the history of the facts can be safely transmitted, it is manifestly a confusion of thought to impeach the evidence solely on the ground of time. A thing true, an actual occurrence, is forever true. The proof of its truth at the time of its occurrence is forever reliable proof. The only thing to be done, in order to secure the rational acceptance of the events through time indefinitely protracted, is to provide a reliable method of transmitting the evidence. If that evidence did once really prove the facts, it will prove them forever; and it is absurd to talk of the lapse of time obliterating or discrediting evidence. If the evidence can be reliably transmitted, it will remain good proof forever. What, then, are the conditions of a reliable transmission of evidence, particularly in ages before the improved method and guarantee of printing was available for the purpose? How could we, for example, transmit for twenty centuries any given facts of our contemporary history?

1. Obviously, among the first things to be done would be to form a record of the facts by persons thoroughly informed of them. Such a record will be indispensable; first, as a permanent repertory of the facts; and second, to give full force and effect to another set of guarantees of vital importance, and to prevent their being robbed of their testimonial force by the lapse of time and events.

2. One of these guarantees is found in the second expedient necessary to the reliable transmission of the facts. This is simply the formation of an organization of men, permanent

in its existence, capable of an endless succession from generation to generation, like a civil state or a Masonic order, with an order of officers to take charge of the facts and the record of them, and by perpetual teaching from day to day, and from week to week, keep the facts perpetually before the public from generation to generation. By means of such an institution, founded at the time when the facts occurred, and charged with the official duty of keeping them perpetually alive before the public mind—with the written record to prevent misapprehension and misstatement of the facts—the possibility of a reliable transmission of any events, through any conceivable length of time, is demonstratively shown. Such an endless organization and order of men, guided by the written record, can give the needed guarantee against the erasive power of time and events.

3. A third expedient to transmit evidence through long periods of time is to establish monumental memorials of the events—at least, of one or more of the most prominent or important of the series—in formal commemoration of them. This is another effective method of transmitting evidence. These memorials may be of two kinds, stationary and moveable. A granite shaft erected in memory of a great man or a great event is a testimony to the fact it commemorates as long as it shall stand. A contemporary record explanatory of the purpose for which it was erected will not only be a testimony additional to the testimony of the shaft itself, but may be of great value in preserving the testimonial significance of the monument. The pyramids of Egypt disclose only a part of their significance as the tombs of the Pharaohs; it is obvious that a contemporary record explanatory of all their designs would greatly enhance their power and value as testimonies. The second class of memorial monuments are not confined to one place; they are moveable; they consist

of simple actions and days, or months, or years, to which significant meanings are attached; and are equally powerful as memorials, and less destructible than stationary monuments, and are not confined to any locality. The month of July is a memorial of Julius Cæsar. The bread and wine of the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the death of Christ. The first day of the week is a memorial monument of his resurrection. The living organization of the church is a grand memorial of the influence and the doctrine of the Nazarene, just in the same way that the Mormon Church is a memorial monument of the influence and doctrine of Joe Smith. Anything to which a significance can be attached by statute law, by custom, or conventional agreement, can be made a significant memorial; and as long as it lasts it will carry the meaning of which it has been constituted a vehicle. The influence of a contemporary record in preserving the testimonial significance of such a monument is obvious in producing such an effect and in illustrating the value of such a record.

4. Another powerful agency in transmitting evidence of facts is the interweaving of the facts themselves, or of the doctrines and institutions based upon the facts, with the public civil history or the governmental institutions of nationalities existing at the time the facts occurred; first, historically as a part of the national annals, and second, into the national legislation. The testimony to the facts is thus widened, from the basis of a personal and propagandist testimony, to that of public and entirely independent evidence. The legislation of the United States Congress in relation to Mormonism will be forever a resistless testimony to the existence and peculiarities of the Mormon sect. Equally decisive will be the history of the country, a testimony to the same facts. Many persons who seem to be insensible to the evidence

of the institutions and doctrines of Christianity as set forth by the apostles are impressed by the history and legislation of the Roman Empire in relation to the subject.

Facts and evidence thus transmitted—put upon record by eye-witnesses of the facts—placed in the hands of an endless organization of men, for the purpose of a perpetual daily and weekly proclamation of the facts from generation to generation, certified by memorial monuments in various forms, universally recognized as such and confirmed as such by the record made by the witnesses, and at once and increasingly interwoven with the public history legislation of nations—facts so certified can be reliably transmitted through any period of time, however protracted; and the sceptical pretence that time has weakened the proofs of Christianity is seen to be without foundation. The simple truth is that no facts of human history have ever been transmitted by arrangements so elaborate, complete and effective as the miracles of the New Testament.

We are now ready to enter on the question of the actual proof of the Christian miracles, and to point out the powerful line of distinction which discriminates between them and the wonders of paganism and of the mediæval legend.

1. The first grand mark of genuine miracle is the fact which draws the first grand line of distinction between the miracle of the gospel and the “lying wonders” of the man of sin, which Froude pronounces equally proved and equally credible. This fact is one which is unquestioned by any party, that the canon of revelation is closed. Divine miracle is inseparably correlated with a revelation from God; the miracle of the calendar is invariably dissociated from a revelation from God. The close of the canon is clearly proved by the last words of the sacred writings, pronouncing a curse upon any who should either add to, or take from, the words of

the prophecy of this book. We have already seen the direct and inseparable connection between revelation and miracle. The testimony of the scriptures, which is authoritative as between Protestants and Romanists, clearly settles that the use and purpose of miracle is to make God a witness to truth which he himself has ordered to be made known to men. This is the character of miracle as defined in both the Old and New Testament scriptures. The necessity of such a divine testimony is obvious. The mystery of the conditions of human life has always created a demand for information touching the future life. Imposters have found in this condition of human feeling a wide field of operation for their arts of religious deception. The whole value of their teaching is conditioned upon its being a revelation from God; no testimony of any other being is considered worth anything, simply because men know their destinies are to be controlled by the supreme power, and they are, therefore, only concerned to know from him the terms and conditions of future well-being. All is dependent upon his favor, and no one is competent to speak for him but himself, or one sent by him. Whenever, therefore, an agent comes with the claim that he has been sent by God to announce his will, God must certify him. His claim must be proved, or it is absolutely inadmissible; and as he claims to come from God, no other witness but God himself is possibly allowable. God must testify to his official character as his ambassador, or else no man to whom the message comes can rely upon what he says as really the mind of God. Hence the inseparable correlation between revelation and miracle. When revelation is found, miracle is found; they stand in a fixed logical relation to each other. Nor is the sceptical sneer that the Christian argument is a gross sample of the sophism—reasoning in a circle, proving the revelation by the miracle and the miracle by the revela-

tion—at all founded in fact. The Christian polemic proves revelation by miracle, and miracle by its own independent and appropriate evidence. The correlation between miracle and revelation is a correlation like that between husband and wife, or between father and son; the one notion carries the other, because they are inseparable. When God would reveal his will, miracle is seen; when miracle is seen, revelation is seen; and when revelation ceases, miracle ceases. Here, then, is the first fatal objection to the alleged miracle of the Roman calendar. The canon is closed; revelation from God has ceased, and real miracle has ceased with it. We may admit the alleged facts of the calendar miracle; but they cannot be true divine miracle, whatever else they may be. They may be the result of the interposition of other beings, human or even supernatural; they are certainly not the result of divine power. We do not assert the actual truth of legendary miracle, nor yet their origin in the intervention of supernatural beings other than the one supreme divinity; we only say that, hypothetically admitting the facts as they are claimed to be, they stand discredited as true miracle wrought by the power of God, by the irresistible warrant of the scriptural and inseparable correlation between revelation and miracle. The canon is closed, and true miracle has ceased. What revelation from God, additional to the closed canon of the sacred books, did St. Ignatius and St. Francis bring to the world? If they brought one, the words of St. John in Patmos are falsified. If they did not bring one, their alleged miracles are discredited; they are not true signatures of the Almighty, whatever else they may be. This mark of true miracle also vindicates the exercise of that sound common-sense which Protestants have always applied to the miracles of the Roman Catholic body, by applying promptly the uniformity of nature to all such events, in advance of inquiry,

and thus rejecting them as divine miracle without the least hesitation, while at the same time standing ready to accept all of fact in the allegation which may be proved to be true. They promptly discredit the miraculous character imputed to the alleged event because the close of revelation and the consequent end of divine miracle leaves the uniformity of nature to the undisturbed operation of natural law. It also leaves the facts of legendary miracle to be explained in some other way than the predication of divine power. Our appeal against the miracle of the Roman calendar rests firmly on the close of the sacred canon on one side, and the general uniformity of nature on the other. Froude¹ sneers at the distinction, but as we shall further see, it is capable of a complete vindication. The miracle of the gospels and the miracle of the calendar rest on very different foundations, and there is no inconsistency in accepting the one class and rejecting the other. Mere miracle of benevolence, apart from revelation, finds no countenance in the Word of God. The dictum of the scriptures is uniform; Christ did many benevolent miracles, but they were all done that his works might bear witness of him. In all the long and splendid series of his wonderful works, the relation of the act of power to a revelation from God was conspicuous. That relation must always appear; and where there is no revelation, there is no true miracle. This test sweeps wholly away the long list of legendary wonders, and entirely discredits them as divine miracle, whatever else they may be.

2. The second grand mark of true miracle, discriminating it from false, is that true miracle is never done in favor of a religion already established; it always has either a constructive or a revolutionary purpose. It is always the signature of a fresh revelation from God, and is designed either

¹ Froude, *Short Studies*, p. 192.

to give an original statement of truth from heaven, or to authorize the development of an old, already divinely established, system into a new form. God alone has the right to do either, and for either his power may be displayed to authenticate his will. All the miracle of the Old Testament was done to confirm the successive revelations to the ancient church. The miracle of the New Testament was to authorize the changes in the old law and the old function of the kingdom made necessary by the alteration of its character from a symbolic and non-propagandist institution, into a non-symbolic and positively active system of aggression. This test again sweeps away the miracle of the calendar; they are all miracles of mere benevolence apart from revelation, and in favor of a faith already established, but which is conceived to need the support of perpetual miracle. True miracle always possesses an original or a revolutionary purpose. The miracle of the Roman calendar is purely conservative, according to their own theory; they are done in the presence of witnesses interested in the established faith, and under circumstances which cannot possibly lend any additional or independent weight to the allegation of the fact or to the support of the faith.

3. The third grand mark of true miracle is that the act wrought must be one in keeping and consistency with the dignity of Almighty God, and that the act must authenticate itself, both in its intrinsic dignity and in its definite demonstration of divine supernatural power. That any act performed by the direct energy of the divine will, for the purpose of certifying truth involving the eternal interests of an immortal race, must possess a suitable dignity, is intuitively obvious. This test alone discredits the so-called miracle of the Apochryphal New Testament. In that book, which is a collection of spurious writings of the early ages of the

Christian era, an attempt is made to delineate the supposed incidents in the childhood and unrecorded period of the life of Christ. He is represented as exercising miraculous power in his early youth for puerile purposes—turning dirt-pies into food, making birds of mud, and causing his to fly, which those of his companions could not do, and withering the arm of a comrade who had angered him. Such allegations are discredited upon the bare statement of them. An immense proportion of the millions of alleged miracles which are said to be constantly performed in the bosom of the Papal body are of little or no more dignity. Two crows were long exhibited in Lisbon which were said to have saved a ship from wreck and guided it into port. An image found by 'a dog in a hole is alleged to have wrought miraculous cures. A hole is said to have been made in a marble slab by the fall of the Host upon its surface, in order to convince an infidel. The Bambino of Ara Coeli, an image of the Virgin, about two feet high, is represented as walking to the convent, where it usually remained, ringing the bell, and finding admittance late at night. The Virgin is represented as mercifully interposing, when a mule or donkey, overtaken with a heavy load, met with an accident. St. Dennis once walked after his head was cut off, carrying his head in his hands. St. Martin crossed the Mediterranean, floating on his cloak. St. Scholastica raised a storm to keep St. Benedict one night in her convent, that she might enjoy the benefit of his conversation. Impressions of the five wounds of Christ are not unfrequently made on the bodies of favored individuals—a feat recently done in substance, in the city of New York, both by a spiritualistic medium and by an ordinary juggler. The Roman Breviary—the standard of papal devotion, constantly in the hands of the priesthood—is full of assertions of just such puerilities. With no disposition to be harsh in the judg-

ment of such things, every candid, common-sense mind must at once perceive the incongruity between such acts and the ascription of them to the infinite God. Yet these seem to be the highest forms in which the disciplined intellect of the Roman priesthood can conceive of the form of miraculous acts. How vast the difference between these conceptions and those of the Apochryphal New Testament, on the one side, and the simple, but grand, delineations of the prophets of Israel and the fishermen of Galilee! It can only be accounted for on the supposition that the Hebrew teachers simply related facts in the history of Israel and in the life of the Nazarene; and that the grandeur and majesty were in the facts related, and not in their conceptions of the possible in miracle. The miracles of Moses and the old prophets, of Messiah and the apostles, were all on a scale of sublimity which the human understanding intuitively recognizes as worthy of God the Almighty. The judgments on Egypt, the passage of the millions of Israel through the sea, the fire falling from heaven on the drenched altar of Carmel, the camp of the Assyrian, with its 185,000 dead soldiers, lying in the pale moonlight, under their unlowered banners; the chariot of fire whirling down on the travelling prophets, the raising of the dead, the storm bridled as it rushed over the midnight lake, the earthquake and mid-day darkness at the crucifixion, the healing and feeding of thousands—to compare these grand acts with such puerile follies as the Roman calendar affords, is to shock every sensibility of the soul. Yet Froude says these small and grotesque inventions “resembled and rivalled” the awful glory of the miracle of the scriptures. To make the comparison in serious and good set phrase is an infinitely greater degradation than to compare the drivelling chatter of an idiot with the awful, majestic eloquence of an angel, reciting some grand epic of Jehovah’s deeds! All such

actions as the miracles of the scriptures carry their significance on their face; no power less than divine could produce such effects. True miracle authenticates itself. False miracle, even if the fact claimed is admitted, is not above the power of subordinate beings and natural agencies; and they are, for the most part, utterly discredited, even as facts, by the mixture of absurdity and extravagance which they carry on the very forefront of their claim to credit.

4. The fourth grand test of true miracle is that the miraculous action must be something plain, definite, clearly cognizable by the human senses, instantaneous in its effect, and performed without the use of second causes which might possibly be sufficient to account for the result. The object of miracle is to authenticate a message from God—to give the credentials of his ambassador. It must be public to accomplish its end by affecting the convictions of those to whom the message is sent. It must be plain and easily apprehended, cognizable by the senses of the average man, and incapable of misapprehension. It must be all these, or it will fail of its purpose as testimony. This test is fully met by the miracle of the scripture; it is altogether wanting in the overwhelming majority of the miracles of the calendar. The few of those latter events which were, and still are, exhibited in anything like a public manner, are manifestly not beyond the power of skillful management and of natural forces. The miracle of St. Januarius is frequently repeated in view of a crowd of spectators. A small ball of a red color, said to be the blood of a martyr kept in a glass vessel, is made to liquefy in the presence of the people. The result is not beyond the reach of chemical arrangements, and fails utterly to impress any beholder who is not already a believer in the miracle with any, even the least, apprehension of the presence and energy of divine power. It was once performed, after a positive

refusal, at the command of a red-capped Republican general of a revolutionary French army, who threatened to burn the church building to the ground unless the miracle was performed. It was promptly done; and no circumstance could have illustrated more keenly the absurdity of the pretence that it was genuine miracle. Such an impression of the presence of supernatural power could not fail to be realized in the face of such an act as the raising of Lazarus or the feeding of the multitudes in the wilderness. The celebrated miracles performed at the tomb of the Abbe de Paris in 1789, the cures at St. Winifred's Well, are not without discount on several serious considerations. But it is not necessary to deny every asserted case of relief to disease at such places, however justly we may impeach the allegation of a general or even a frequent realization of the hopes of the devotees who resort in crowds and at frequent periods to such mystic localities. It is altogether safe to admit all such instances of relief as can be proved to occur. They can all be accounted for on natural principles. The power of excited expectation, of faith and roused imagination, is medicinally very great—so great that a great German school of medical practice—the school of Stahl¹—was actually founded upon it as leading principle. The authenticated cases of cure at St. Winifred's Well, and at similar places of resort in the papal territory, are not greater, probably, in number, or more wonderful in effect, than the authenticated cases of the cure of scrofula by the kings of England, when the practice of touching for the King's evil was an usage of the English crown. In both cases the same natural force was to be credited with the result; the same principle utilized by Stahl in his theory and practice of medicine; the same principle by which every treatise upon mental science illustrates the power of the

¹ Sir William Hamilton's *Discussions*, p. 252.

inagination over the states of the body. Miracle, to effect its purpose, must stand clear of all such possible discounts; it must authenticate itself; it must authenticate itself to the public view—to the senses of the average man; and leave no room to account for the result accomplished from excited expectation, from shrewd arrangements, from inferior supernatural beings, or from skillful legerdemain or the artful combination of natural law. It must show the “finger of God,” or it is worthless.

MIRACLE.

THIRD SERMON.

“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.”—HEBREWS ii. 4.

WE resume, without preliminary, the test of true miracle, and its discrimination from false miracle. Our last test was that the act must be plain, cognizable by the senses of the average man, and done without the intervention of second causes which might possibly be sufficient to produce the effect.

5. The fifth grand test is that the act must be performed openly, in public, in the presence of witness of indiscriminate character, as friendly or unfriendly, undesignedly brought together, and the act incidentally done, and without any formal preliminary preparation. It is not necessary that every individual miracle should be able to pass this test, and one or two more which will be mentioned, especially when a given miracle is a part of a system of miracle marking some grand transition in the divinely revealed form and ordinances of the kingdom. But the system, as a whole, must be able to stand this test; and the authority of those which are done in the public view will uphold the few isolated instances of less publicity and in the presence of chosen witnesses. The object of miracle being to authenticate a commission from God which is concerned with men generally, must be addressed to the public mind. This publicity is necessary to the end in view, which is to command the confidence of those

to whom the divine message is sent. Publicity is also important to the support and perfection of the evidence, when it is transmitted beyond the age of the eye-witnesses of the original act of the supernatural power. The incidental and undesigned performance of the act, without formal preparation, in the presence of witnesses, indiscriminately and undesignedly brought together, is needful to repel all suspicion of craft and artful management, both in the production of the result and in the packed and prearranged proof of it. This test is met by the gospel miracle; it is altogether unmet by the miracle of the calendar. The vast bulk of the latter class consists of actions done in private, often with no witness whatever, often only in the presence of a few witnesses interested in securing belief for the act, or disqualified as witnesses by personal defects as such, or by the circumstances in which they became acquainted with the alleged occurrence. The miracle of the calendar is often performed in apartments of religious houses, in which the possible facilities for the management of a scenic display are without assignable limits. They are witnessed by devotees, either weak, and as such easily deceived; or bigoted in favor of the expected demonstration, and as such ready to receive any desired impression; or else unable to penetrate the whole of the case, and thus unable to testify to the case as a whole, no matter how generally intelligent or worthy of credit. The miracle of St. Januarius' blood is not only discredited by the fact that the liquefaction is not beyond the reach of chemical reaction, but by this test of incompetent scrutiny by the witnesses who are otherwise, it may be, worthy of confidence. No doubt can exist touching the fact of the liquefaction; but the prearranged scene, the place, the actors, and the entire want of opportunity for a competent preliminary and concurrent investigation, all discredit it as an exhibition of divine power.

On the other hand, the miracle of the gospel was done in open daylight, on public streets and highways, in the crowded temple and on the densely-thronged mountain side, in villages and towns, in houses filled with an indiscriminate multitude of eager, but non-partisan beholders, before Scribe and Pharisee, priest and doctor of the law—jealous, watchful, and filled with the keenest and most vehement desire to disbelieve themselves and to discredit to others all that was done. There was no secret preparation, no formal discrimination of interested witnesses, in whose presence alone the wonder was to be done. The objection to the proof of the resurrection of Christ, drawn from his not showing himself to the Jewish public, but to selected witnesses after his rising, is wholly removed from suspicion, and left to be vindicated by its own sufficient reasons: First, by the number of the chosen witnesses, amounting, according to the statements of the record, to between six and eight hundred persons; second, by the effect produced on the character of the disciples; third, by the line of conduct adopted by the Jewish and Roman authorities; by the tremendous movement produced on the Israelite public, bringing multitudes into the church of the Nazarene, including many of the hostile priests; and, fourth, by three years and a half exertion of miraculous power by the resurrected Christ himself. Surely it was a consummation in keeping with the awful glory of such a life as he had led! Year after year, in every part of the land, in the face of the whole public of the day, in street and market, in the crowded temple, amid the innumerable masses which thronged his journeys through the country, before Scribe and envious priest, in every possible circumstance which could discredit the notion of art or deception, collusion or fraud, in the glorious actor, or of interest, undue credulity, or incompetence of any sort in the witnesses of his mighty acts. Surely, if for three

years and six months before the present time, in every part of this State of Virginia, in her capital and chief towns, in her villages and country districts, on her mountains and her plains, before the thronging thousands of her people, before her rulers, civil and religious, her lawyers and her educated intellect, before persons hostile, friendly, indifferent, and simply curious, a thousand actions, like the curing of the blind, the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, and the feeding of the multitudes, had been done by one man—surely there could be no possibility of disputing the facts or of impeaching the proof of them. To compare a publicity like this with a scenic show like the display of St. Januarius, is to mock the simplest dictates of intelligence in the human understanding. To make the proof equal in both cases, as Froude does, is absurd. The resurrection of such a person from the dead is nothing less than a suitable ending to a career so amazingly different from any life ever passed in the whole history of the world. The publicity of the thousands upon thousands of miracles wrought by the Founder of the Christian faith, makes a line of distinction between them and the miracle of the Roman calendar so deep and wide that any comparison of the two is an outrage upon human intelligence.

6. The sixth grand test is, that not only must miracle be performed openly in the face of the public, but that in some cases public tests must be applied—examinations made by public authority and by the enemies of the new system. This is another of the tests not needful to be applied in all cases; science never deems it necessary that the entire body of the facts in any given subject of investigation should be examined. A sufficient number of them to fairly represent the force employed in their production is deemed altogether sufficient for scientific investigation of their significance. Renan, in

his treatment of this point in the Christian theory, is singularly unfortunate. He claims that the investigation—the only reliable one, according to his view—should have been made by an assembly of scientific savans; and denies positively that any investigation was ever made at all into any act performed by Jesus of Nazareth. It is obvious, as a reply to the first allegation in his objection, that he has confounded an examination into a fact, for which other than scientific men are fully competent, with an examination into the cause of the fact, for which scientific men might possibly be only competent. In this whole war upon miracle, the proof of fact is perpetually confounded with the proof of cause. The nature of the power employed is perpetually confounded with the fact which is developed. The nature of the power employed is an inference from the fact, but cannot logically be employed to discredit the fact, or to be confounded with the fact. A fact is a fact, no matter what causes it; and the apologetic power of miracle is that the fact warrants no other assignment of cause but creative energy. A congress of savans is not necessary to the proof of facts; a convention of average men is fully competent to the proof of facts. Moreover, Christlieb has justly remarked that the French Academy, which at one time rejected all faith in lightning rods, vaccination, and the existence of meteorites, might have proved no more trustworthy in their judgment of miracles. A scientific body is far from infallible, even in its own sphere—the search for causes—and cannot command confidence upon their scientific character merely, and apart from their rendered reasons. But in a system of facts, and in a question of fact and not of causes, it is obviously inadmissible to deny the value of all investigation and testimony except what is purely scientific.

Renan is even more unfortunate in the second allegation

of his objection, in which he denies that any investigation was ever made into any reported miraculous fact in the life of Christ, at the time of its occurrence. He deserves the curt rebuke of Christlieb for want of candor or want of memory. Two cases underwent examination—one on a single, deliberate scale, and the other on a repeated scale. The case of the man born blind, restored to sight by a word from the lips of Jesus, was examined at length by an assembly of the eager enemies of Christ, and the examination is reported at length in one entire chapter in one of the gospels. The parents of the man were examined on one part of the case, the congenital blindness of their son; the man himself was examined on another part of the case, and was vigorously cross-examined as to what was done to him—and both in public. Bethany was visited by thousands from Jerusalem, over and over again, to see Lazarus after he was raised from the dead. The facts were of such a kind as to admit of no dispute; and the result was so powerful on the public judgment that the enemies of the Nazarene actually plotted against the life of Lazarus, to extinguish the influence of that wonderful event in his history. No such open and free canvassing of the facts by the general public, and by the enemies of a system, has ever marked a miracle of the calendar. There has been a laborious travesty of the marks of true miracle by the architects of calendar miracle; but they have not been able to contrive any of a character to command the confidence of a candid and impartial understanding. The miracle of the gospel, in true test cases, was submitted to the open and unrestrained investigation of the best educated and the most hostile intellect of the time, as well as to the repeated scrutiny of the general public; and the facts were not only proved, but admitted. The very enemies of the gospel testified to the facts when they attempted to account

for them by Satanic agency. Something must have been done, by the admission of the Pharisees themselves, which Satan, in their judgment, alone could do.

7. The seventh grand test of true miracle, which profoundly discriminates it from false miracle, is that the alleged miraculous acts should be generally recognized, not only by the partisans of the new system, but by the universal public of the day as actual occurrences, known to the public, not by the testimony of individual advocates, by their own knowledge of the facts. It is a remarkable mistake to suppose, as many do, that the facts of the history of Christ stand only on the testimony of the twelve official witnesses; they were the official, but not the only witnesses. They give us the detailed statement of the facts; but indisputable facts, outside of their official testimony, make all the public of the time witnesses of the truth of their statements. It is historically demonstrable that out of the career of Jesus of Nazareth, and by the teaching of his doctrine, a new institution then came upon the stage. It won thousands upon thousands of the Jewish people into its discipline; even a great company of the hostile priests were obedient to the faith at last. The apostles boldly appealed to the miracles of Christ as the ground of their claim to the faith and obedience of the people. They boldly appealed to the knowledge of the people themselves about these wonders of divine power. They boldly proclaimed that "Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." They did not pretend or attempt to prove these events merely by their own testimony; they appealed to the knowledge of the people themselves as to the facts. They declared, as matter of fact, that those things had been done in the midst of the people, and that they knew it. This was absolute madness—it could

not be called lying—if the statement was not true. Let us suppose a parallel case; let us suppose that a group of men should appear in this State, with the design of uprooting Christianity, interwoven as it is with the highest interests of the existing civil order, and entrenched in the affections and prejudices of the people. Suppose this group of propagandists should appeal, as their warrant to make the new development which they desired, to miracles alleged to have been wrought for the last three years and a half, all over the State, in city and village, in town and country, in the presence of well-nigh the whole population of the Commonwealth. Suppose that these propagandists should allege that these wonders were known to the whole people; not upon the say-so of these agents, but upon their own knowledge. Suppose, now, that there was not one word of truth in the whole allegation. What effect would be produced by it? Why, it would scarcely excite a smile; the allegation would be so transparently absurd.* Perhaps some of the more humane among the listeners to the grotesque absurdity might think of providing a place in a lunatic asylum for these poor victims of mental hallucination. But it is absolutely certain that not a ripple of effect would appear upon the surface of society. But, now, suppose that the allegation was true, and that in every part of the State, in the face of well-nigh the whole population, for three years and a half, in town and country, in street and market-place, in temple and highway, the asserted facts had been done in the midst of the people, and they knew it of their own knowledge, and not merely on the testimony of the group of propagandist agents. Suppose, now, that these agents should proclaim, on the basis and warrant of these miraculous facts, thus universally known, that a revelation from God had made known certain truths and issued certain commands, to be received and obeyed by

all the people, what would be the effect? It is absolutely certain that society would be stirred to its foundations; the new institutions would grow rapidly into a power in society and appear everywhere upon its surface; and this effect would be the testimony of the whole public to the facts—and a more impressive testimony cannot be imagined. The overthrow of the existing institutions, and the establishment of the new system as the result of an appeal to their own knowledge of the facts, would make the whole people witnesses to the facts. The existence of the church of Christ, the actual renunciation of the old Judaism of Israel by thousands of the Jewish people and many of their priests, is the embodied testimony of the whole Jewish people to the miraculous facts which mastered their powerful attachment to the institutions of Moses, and enabled them to see in Christ the messenger of God to develop the Mosaic institutions into that higher form which the covenant with Abraham had promised and the prophets had foretold. No general public, out of their own independent knowledge, have ever given such testimony as this to the miracle of the calendar.

8. The eighth grand test is found in the public and organized arrangements made to permanently preserve these great facts of miraculous energy, and the great system of truths which they support; and to secure their constant daily and weekly proclamation, and thus to secure their safe transmission through all coming time. We have already seen the conditions of a reliable transmission of facts and evidence through indefinitely protracted periods of time. A record of the facts, and a statement of the doctrines and duties of the Christian system, was made by eye-witnesses and others fully informed of them. An organization of men, capable of an endless succession, with an order of officers whose function was appointed to keep the facts and doctrines committed to

their custody before each successive generation as the ages passed, was promptly established on the old foundation of the Abrahamic covenant, and endowed with the character of an universal propagandism. Memorial and symbolic monuments of various kinds were established; and the interweaving of the doctrines and institutions of Christ with the history and legislation of the existing nationalities immediately connected with the gospel history at once began, and have gone on with increasing complication ever since. All these elaborate arrangements give a guarantee of reliable transmission of the miraculous facts of the gospel history, which stand absolutely alone in the history of the world. No facts in the past history of the whole world have ever had anything like the elaborate and methodical arrangements made for their safe transmission as those made for the transmission of the miracles of the Christian faith. The voice of the living teacher has never ceased to be heard; the living organization of men has never failed; the memorial monuments have always borne their testimony, while the history and legislation of nations has continued to broaden their testimony. The combined efficiency of these sources of evidence has carried down, unimpaired, the divine basis on which the Christian faith rests, impregnable against all assaults. We know that these grand truths were proclaimed one, three, five hundred, ten, fifteen, eighteen hundred years ago, because the daily and weekly proclamation has never ceased, and that all the other sources of transmitting evidence have never failed. A change in the Sabbath day from the seventh, observed for two thousand years, to the first day of the week, is an indestructible monument to one event in the history of the Nazarene—his resurrection from the dead. Bread and wine, symbolically significant, make a memorial monument of another event—his death in atonement for the sin of the world. The

grand organization of the visible church is a living monument to his kingly authority. A regular series of acts of worship is likewise an inextinguishable memorial of the divinity of this wonderful Being. In a very brief time Christianity not only became prominent in the history and legislation of the Jews, but was speedily linked with the historical and legislative records of the greatest empire of human history—the old Roman State. Tiberius, in less than twenty years from the death of Christ, formally proposed to the Roman Senate to admit him among the gods of Rome. Tacitus, the greatest of the Roman historians, spoke with stern contempt of the rapid spread of the *exitiabilis superstitio* of Chrestus. In no long time, and then for the long period of three hundred years, in ten distinct persecutions, the whole power of the empire under Nero, Diocletian, Decius, and Galerian, was exerted with remorseless energy to extinguish the victorious faith of the Galilean. In no long time, within fifty years of the death of the last apostle, a Christian apologist could say to the Roman Emperor, “We are but of yesterday, and we have filled all that belongs to you, the cities, the fortresses, the free towns, the very camps, the palace, the Senate, the forum; we leave to you the temples only.” All that tremendous energy of faith by which old men and maidens, senators and noble ladies, soldiers of the legions, and plebians of the imperial city, triumphed over the persecuting power of that remorseless government, testifies to the power of the truth as it is in Jesus. From that time until now, three-fourths of the human history, and a vast proportion of the legislation of the most important nations of the world, is the history and for the interests of the church and the doctrines of Christ, all of which are avowedly based upon the three and a half years of miraculous energy in his brief life. On the supposition of the truth of those facts, the result is

natural and somewhat proportionate. On the denial of the facts, the record, the endless organization, the memorial monuments, and the tremendous movement of human history are absolutely unaccountable anomalies. Where can the miracle of the calendar begin to show such an arrangement to demonstrate its reality, and prevent the erasure of the divine sign-manual by the rush of time and events? No facts of human history can show any parallel, or even comparable provisions to secure their transmission. No facts in human history can trace back to their origin by a line of transmission so complete and so powerful.

9. The ninth grand test of true miracle is prophetic announcement beforehand. The sceptic must deal with the historical and literary fact of a record confessedly many hundred years in existence before Christ, which, after describing many minute circumstances connected with his person, distinctly announced that the remarkable individual of whom the prophets spoke would do many wonderful works of miraculous power. The blind would see, the deaf hear, the dumb sing, and the lame man leap as the hart. Isaiah's prophecy is extant in the Septuagint version, which is as well known to have been made near two hundred and seventy years before Christ as that the Bible was translated into English in the time of James the First. It is also extant in the Hebrew scriptures centuries before the Septuagint. Moses foretold his miracles to the Pharaoh of Egypt; Joshua was foreinformed that God would put forth his power to throw down the walls of Jericho; Christ told the seventy, when he sent them out, that they should exert a miraculous power. In fact, prophecy generally goes in a closer or a more distant relation to miracle. This test discredits utterly all the miracle of the calendar. The only prophecy connected with them completes their confusion; it is the prediction of them

as the "lying wonders of the man of sin." This test is of correlated force; the prophecy challenges attention, awakes expectation, and challenges fulfilment; it adds force to the miracle when it occurs as an example of miraculous knowledge added to a miraculous action, while the miracle demonstrates the prophecy to be true foreknowledge. In the light of this close and apparently regular connection between miracle and its previous announcement, we have a right to discredit all miracle which cannot disclose its correlated member in a prophetic advertisement of the coming wonder. This test sweeps away all the miracle of the calendar; it confirms the miracle of the gospel. The apologetic worth of this test is great. The previous announcement awakens expectation and discriminates the act when accomplished. It challenges fulfilment, as well as expectation. It confirms faith, because it not only challenges the divine power, but positively asserts its exercise—a power which can never be the instrument of deception; and when the power of God answers the challenge, the demonstration is complete on both sides of the correlation between the miracle of knowledge and the miracle of power.

10. The tenth grand test of true miracle is variety and wealth of action. Impostors in religion economize in this species of proof, and sink the dignity of the event in the interests of practicability; they never undertake anything of special dignity or greatness for fear of failure in the execution of the conception. The miracles of the calendar, which, taking the full period of their history as a whole, are countless in number, are all graduated on a narrow scale of variety, as well as of dignity in the actions. The healing of disease, the elevation of the human body in the air, the visible appearance of the Virgin and the saints, victorious combats with the devil revealed to the physical senses, winking images, and mys-

terious marks upon the human body, are the principal forms of miracle in the conceptions of the architects of the calendar. Of the gospel miracles, only about forty are on detailed record. There is something of conscious power in this stern economy of recital. This specific detail is no index to what was really done. Incidental allusions are made to multitudes of these wondrous acts. Great multitudes are represented as resorting to the Nazarene, bringing the sick from far and near; and the record says "he healed them," and that he "healed them all." Several distinct allusions of this description, at different periods of his history, are suggestive of a wonderful multiplication of individual acts of miraculous energy. The three and a half years of Christ's public ministry glow like the star-fretted midnight with his wondrous works. The apostolic age resounds with the echoes of God's footsteps, walking among men. The apostles wrought miracles; but at what time the miraculous energy closed it is not easy to say with precision. Doubtless they followed the law of correlation between revelation and miracle, and ceased when revelation from God no longer needed his signature. When the canonical records were complete, and a sufficiency of evidence was laid up in the hands of the endless order of the church to secure a rational ground of confidence to all the coming ages, it is probable the miracle of the gospel ceased. It is not incredible that in the far outlying districts of the world, the energy was sometimes displayed in the hands of men who had been eye-witnesses of apostolic miracle, to confirm their testimony as to what they had seen the apostle do.¹ But it is certain that when the apostles and the eye-witnesses of their works had passed away, then the miraculous energy was withdrawn. But during the miraculous age, there was no stint in the manifestation of the

¹ See Dabney's *Theology*, p. 752.

miraculous power. Not only was there a suitable breadth of production, but a noble variety of sublime conceptions was realized in the miracle of the gospel. The raising of the dead; the cure of disease in manifold and, to human art, incurable forms; the feeding of the enthusiastic and fainting multitudes in the wilderness; the repair of disabled senses and useless limbs; the mastery over animal nature, over storms and the agitated sea, over the light of the sun and the stability of the earth, and over the constitution of water, bread and wine—indicate at once the wide range and the grand conception of the gospel miracle.

This, perhaps, may be the best place to answer the objection to the test of true miracle as found in the dignity of the action. A recent number of the *Saturday Review* excepts to this test, on the ground that it does not discredit every individual instance of the calendar miracle, nor apply to every individual instance of the miracle of the scriptures. This objection assumes that no objection can lie to a general rule without making it absolutely universally destructive to the rule. A general rule may exist, even though particular exceptions may be found. Admit the allegation of the *Review* to be true of particular instances in both classes of the miracle under discussion, that does not destroy the unquestionable prevailing character of both; the one as marked by lowness, and the other by sublimity of conception. Nay, in some of the favorite instances on which scepticism most frequently dwells with scornful pleasure, it is clear that the full significance of the action is overlooked. Take, for example, the rod of Moses turned into a serpent, and devouring the serpent rods of the Egyptian priests. It is well known that the animal and reptile creation afforded symbols of the divine powers to the old Egyptians, and were worshipped as such. It is also known that the Egyptian priesthood had in their

possession either a peculiar serpent, which could be stiffened, or a peculiar process by which any serpent could be stiffened in the semblance of a rod or wand, and restored to animation and movement at will. This religious veneration of serpents, and the power of the priests over serpents, gave a peculiar influence over the multitude to the artful priesthood of Osiris. It was, therefore, a noble and rational policy, worthy of the divine dignity, to discredit the false gods and the deceitful priesthood of the Egyptians, by showing how powerless they were in conflict with the true and living God. The method of this miracle was admirably adjusted to the purpose in view. The aim of Moses was to secure credit to the word of command which he brought from God to the Egyptian monarch; and it was germane to his purpose to overthrow the influence of the gods of Egypt over his mind. The speech of Balaam's ass is another stock instance of sceptical merriment. The use of the organs of an animal to convey intelligence from a spiritual being unembodied to another intelligent spirit in a body, and confined to bodily organs as the means of his communications with other beings, is certainly not irrational in itself, provided it is practicable. That it is practicable cannot be disproved; and why a thing not obviously irrational, and not capable of being proved to be impracticable, should be construed as an obvious subject for contempt, is not so easy to be accepted as an irresistible dictate of reason. If men can draw articulate speech from a parrot or a raven, it does not appear why the infinite power of God should not be able to draw it from the organs of an ass. If we knew all the circumstances surrounding these miracles of the scriptures which are supposed to be deficient in dignity, it is altogether probable that they would be quite as capable of vindication as the miracle of Moses in the palace of the Pharaoh. In an age not far removed from barbarism,

especially among a people among whose scanty virtues a profound reverence for old age existed, there may have been a peculiar degree of wickedness in the mockery of Elisha by the reckless boys of a Syrian camp, which would justify a judgment of God in the shape of wild beasts, or the spears of a hostile tribe. The axe raised from the water may have sustained a peculiar relation to the training of the school of young religious teachers which the old prophet was instructing. The accidental touching of a dead body by the bones of a dead prophet may have sustained relations to some previous teachings of the prophet, which would make a miracle through the unconscious agency of his bones important to the purposes of the divine government. Certainly, in the absence of any knowledge to the contrary, a candid and impartial spirit will be disposed to give these forms of miracle the benefit of a presumed sufficient reason. It may be that the analogy of God's works of providence, and of the mode of teaching he has adopted in his word, may be carried into his miraculous acts. In general, he speaks to be understood; occasionally he speaks with studied obscurity. His providence is generally benevolent to sinful men; occasionally he does his strange work—vengeance. There can be no doubt that the general character of divine miracle is grave, elevated, and even sublime; occasionally he may exercise his sovereignty of will in an action familiar and common. The purpose to test the temper in which men construe his ways is a ruling element in his administration; and he may design a test of candor and justice to himself in these forms of miracle. Even admitting the instances to be all that the sceptic construes them to be, they do not discredit the general character of gospel miracle for a dignity worthy of their author and their end. But properly and fully understood, they may sustain this character all through the series. Cer-

tainly the miracles of Moses in the court of Pharaoh do not belong to any class of miracle discredited by want of dignity, and all the rest of the series attacked on this ground are capable of vindication, if all the surrounding circumstances were fully known.

11. The eleventh test of genuine miracle is the infrequency of their occurrence, combined with the wealth and varied dignity of the acts when they do occur. The miracle of the calendar is graduated on a principle just the reverse—on the assertion of a perpetual system of miracle, coëxistent with the life and progress of the church, and alleged to be necessary to both. As already illustrated, this species of so-called miracle is distinguished by lowness of conception, and, as such, fairly within the ability of the church to furnish to order as exigency may demand. This supposed necessity for perpetual miracle is discredited by the actual effects of the system; instead of confirming faith, it breeds infidelity among all considerate people. This result is legitimate. The theory reflects dishonor upon the previous provisions of Almighty God to secure the rational confidence of his creatures, by implying their insufficiency. It reflects upon his moral and providential administration—on the one for providing superfluous proof, in deference to unreasonable unbelief; on the other, as allowing perpetual interruption of his regular system of administration through natural law. The miracle of the gospel, while making an ample display of power during an epoch of miraculous intervention, does not permit such an epoch to appear, except at rare and occasional periods of great importance. It appears only when some revelation of truth of infinite importance to an immortal race of sinful creatures is to be made. As the providential ruler of the universe, God guides his administration by a general system of natural laws. These laws are the effects

and expression of his will; they declare it to be his will that effects should follow causes in a certain regular sequence, capable of being known and complied with by creatures of intelligence and will. To allow of a constant reversal of those laws would be equivalent to a contradiction of his will. To allow of a perpetual contradiction of his will in the stability of natural law would undermine the very ground on which a revelation of truth from him can be certified, for a regular system of disturbance would leave it uncertain whether a given so-called miraculous action was the result of the natural operation of law or an expression of the personal will of the Almighty. In other words, a perpetual system of miracle would destroy the value of miracle altogether. To allow of miraculous intervention at rare periods, for a great and vitally important moral purpose, involving the eternal interests of an immortal race, may be allowable; human reason can see nothing unreasonable or incredible in such a conceivable emergency. But perpetual reverse of natural law at the discretion of human intelligence and will, is not only morally exceptionable, but is, logically considered, a contradiction in itself, and involves it in the will and government of God. Such an imputation is altogether inadmissible; and its logical sequence, from the theory of perpetual miracle, sweeps away the very foundation of that dangerous error. The notion is at war with every just conception of the divine government, physical and moral.

12. The twelfth test is found in the character and work of the official witnesses. As before remarked, the claim of Christianity to the confidence of the world does not stand alone upon the testimony of the twelve apostles who were appointed to be the official witnesses to the life and teaching of Christ. Only a part of the twelve were concerned in the construction of the record. The apostles are the official wit-

nesses, but not the only witnesses. All Jewry were witnesses; and the changes in the society of the day are the demonstration of their testimony. But certain men were selected to proclaim the facts in the history and the doctrines in the system of the Great Teacher, to extend the legislation of God, and to organize the institutions established by the new revelation. The testimony of these men is threefold in character: first, in what they are; second, in what they said; and third, in what they did. Their credibility is unimpeachable on all these grounds. They were men of sound minds; this is clear from their writings, which are full of surprising merits, considered as literary compositions. They were men of transparent candor and integrity, as evinced in their whole narrative of the facts, by their self-sacrifice, by their resolute confidence in their own statements, by their loss of all things for the testimony they bore. In plain and unlettered men of a low rank in society, ambition and the *eclat* of establishing a new religion would not overbalance the loss of all things which such men would be likely to value. Conscious impostors, in founding a new religion, always provide for securing their personal interests in this world, and a sure part in the promise of the future. These men encountered the loss of all things in this world; and the lofty system they taught condemned all liars, and themselves, if they lied, to endless wretchedness in the future which they proclaimed. They gained poverty, persecution, imprisonment, the scourge and vengeance of the established faiths which they sought to overthrow, endless wanderings over sea and land, and finally death itself; yet they never flinched from testifying the facts and doctrines of the gospel. A refined and intense ambition might tempt a single intense and resolute intellect to hazard much to establish a new religion, in the success of which he might indemnify himself for the risks and sufferings incident

to the attempt. But it is wholly incredible that twelve plain men, giving no one of them any indication of any peculiar ambition, should sacrifice home, friends, ease and safety, for danger, suffering, incessant labor, and death itself, in order to propagate a lie, of which they were the conscious authors. They did evidently believe themselves, with intense conviction, what they taught others to believe. That they were not deceived is resistlessly clear from their appeals to the knowledge of the facts by the Jewish people, to whom they first went with their message. Those people did not question the facts; but their leaders hated the doctrine based upon the facts, and hence the violent resistance which was developed on one side, while the adhesion of thousands testified to the truth of the gospel claim. No self-deception on the part of the official witnesses could have given them any hold on a people acquainted with the facts in the case. If ever witnesses were worthy of confidence, the official witnesses of the facts and doctrines of the gospel are amply entitled to belief. But independent of their personal claims to confidence, the work they did is overwhelming in its proof of the truth of their statements. These men delineated a character so unique, so simple, so grand, so beautiful, that on any supposition except that they simply described what they saw and heard a living person do and say, is as great a miracle as any they relate. The delineation of the Christ of the gospels was impossible unless it was true. The fishermen of Galilee could not have drawn it out of their own conceptions of a possible Christ. It was as impossible as the supposition that a dozen small negroes, whose only instruction in art had been sketches in charcoal on a cellar door, painted the Transfiguration of Raphael, or that the rough carpenters of a Virginian plantation had builded the dome of St. Peter's. The notion is preposterous. The only possibility of the

achievement lay in one thing only: the rude peasants of Judea told what they had seen and heard; and the wonderful portrait they drew was drawn from a living being, and not from their own conceptions of the grand and the beautiful in human character. Yet the character of the Christ of the gospels is as real a work of literary art as the character of Hamlet or Othello. The sceptic is as much bound to account for it as any other man. Add to this the other work of these men—the purest and loftiest system of morality, the grandest theory of the universe, the most profound and original system of doctrine, and the founding of the most remarkable institution in human history, the reorganized church of the living God—all these are the work of the Galilean fisherman! How can it be explained? On the sceptical theory its causation is wrapped in impenetrable darkness; on the Christian theory all is plain. On the sceptical theory, the fishermen did it out of their own genius; on the Christian theory, they did it under the inspiration of God. On the Christian theory, the cause is adequate to the effect; on the sceptical theory, the cause is so utterly inadequate it discloses a naked and absolute impossibility. Yet, more than this demonstration, these witnesses, as commissioned to enlarge the revelation from God, did themselves work miracles; God himself bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. This fact is not only affirmed in the New Testament records, but is supported by the testimony of the Jewish writers and by the Talmud. If true, the fact draws an ineffaceable line of distinction between the miracle of the gospels and the miracle of the calendar. Where can the latter find such a corroboration as miracle wrought by their witnesses?

13. The last evidence and test of the miracle of the gospel which we shall mention, by which it is honorably distinguished from the miracle of the calendar, is the testimony

and assent of the enemies of the Christian system. For seventeen centuries these facts were not questioned, even by the infidels of the day. Celsus and Propyry, Hierocles and Julian, all admitted the facts and ascribed them to magic. Jewish writers join in the same testimony. Josephus, in a passage so clear that no refuge is left to the sceptics except an attack on the genuineness of the writing, says, "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews, and also many of the Gentiles. This was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the instigation of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the first did not cease to adhere to him. For he appeared to them alive again, on the third day, the divine prophets having foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe or sect of Christians, so named from him, subsists to this time." The Talmud, which is a collection of old Jewish traditional doctrines, first committed to writing about the middle of the second century of the Christian era, probably not more than fifty years after the death of the Apostle John, amid many hostile sentiments toward the Christian system, openly acknowledge that Christ did many wonderful works. They ascribe them to his having acquired the right pronounciation of the Shemmaphoresh, or the ineffable name of God, which they say he clandestinely stole out of the temple. They also ascribe them in part to the arts of magic which he learned in Egypt. The Talmud also gives instances of miracle wrought by the apostles. Another remarkable testimony is to be found in the proconsular reports of Pontius Pilate to the imperial government at Rome. It was the custom of the imperial administration to require regular reports from all the provinces of the empire; and in this

way all the notable occurrences in the distant parts of the empire were laid up in the archives of the government. Under this rule, it might have been expected that Pilate would transmit an account of the marvellous transactions in Judea during his administration. These reports from the provinces were called *acta*; and while no more intended for general circulation than any other official papers, they were accessible to scholars and inquirers, and furnished material for the historian. That Pilate did send such reports to the Roman government is clear from a single fact, and that is, that for more than two centuries the early Christian apologists appealed incessantly to the *Acta Pilati* in the public archives as confirmatory of the teachings of the church. Even in their public documents, petitioning for mercy, addressed to the Emperor and the Senate, they appeal confidently to this documentary evidence in the national archives. Thus Justin Martyr, in an address to Antoninus Pius, about A. D. 140, follows his narrative of the crucifixion, by this bold appeal, "And that these things were so done, you may know from the acts made in the time of Pontius Pilate." After relating some of the miracles of Christ, he appeals to the archive documents again, as containing the same statement. Tertullian, about the year 200 A. D., after speaking of the crucifixion, the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven, adds this statement, "Of all these things relating to Christ, Pilate himself, in his conscience already a Christian, sent an account to Tiberius, then Emperor." The fact that Pilate did report the facts in the career of Jesus to Rome, is not only proved by the fact that for many years the Christians, even in their direct appeals to the Roman government, made the *Acta Pilati* a perpetual reference, but also by the unquestionable historical fact that the Emperor, Tiberius, very early—about A. D. 52, within nineteen or twenty years from the death of Christ—formally proposed to the Roman

Senate to decree Christ among the gods of Rome. On what information did he proceed? If we suppose the official report of the Procurator of Judea was in the hands of the Emperor, it is easier to account for the Emperor's proposal to the Senate than to suppose that he proceeded merely on the general rumor of the events in the Judean province, though without doubt the bruit of the wonderful story was widespread. The same Tertullian goes on to say, "There was an ancient decree that no one should be received for a deity unless he was first approved by the Senate. Tiberius, in whose time the Christian name had its rise, having received from Palestine, in Syria, an account of such things as manifested the truth of his divinity, proposed to the Senate that he should be enrolled among the Roman gods, and gave his own prerogative vote in favor of the motion. But the Senate rejected it, because the Emperor himself had declined the same honor." There can be no doubt that the *Acta Pilati* were for many years in the archives of Rome, and were perpetually appealed to by the Christian apologists to deprecate the persecuting fury of the government. Those official reports of Pilate confirm the narratives of the New Testament, and probably led to the proposal of the Emperor Tiberius just discussed. It is also known that the Emperor Alexander Severus kept the image of Christ in the chapel of the palace, and was only restrained from erecting a temple in his honor by the oracles, which foretold that if this was done all other temples would be forsaken.

The early outspoken infidel and pagan enemies of Christianity, Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles, and the Emperor Julian the Apostate, never pretended to question the miracle of the gospel history. Celsus openly admits the facts, and ascribes them to the magic arts which Christ learned in Egypt. Julian says, "Jesus did nothing worthy of fame, unless any one can suppose that curing the lame and blind, and exorcising

demons in the villages of Bethsaida, are some of the greatest works." He acknowledges that Jesus had a sovereign power over impure spirits; that he walked on the surface of the deep and expelled demons. He acknowledges the facts, but endeavors to depreciate them. Strauss and Renan admit a basis of fact, but endeavor to explain away all that is miraculous in them. The transfiguration was only the beams of the new-risen sun shining upon the eyes of witnesses suddenly roused from sleep—a purely natural phenomenal mistaken for a supernatural transformation. To all such canvassing of the facts the plain Anglo-Saxon intellect refuses to consent. The facts are true as they are related to be, or we have no reliable evidence to the real nature of the occurrences, or even that anything at all occurred. Witnesses who are deceived, or who lie about matters of fact, are not to be believed at all. If they are reliable at all, they are reliable in all they say.

These are the proofs of the Christian miracle, which not only establish the wondrous history of the apostolic era, but render it forever impossible for any really well-informed and judicially impartial understanding to confound them with the miracle of the calendar, which are the fulfilment of prophecy touching the "lying wonders of the man of sin." Let us heed the wondrous display of the finger of God; let us deal with the glorious history as for our lives. God would not thus visibly thrust his hand into the order of nature unless for a purpose of incomparable importance. We shall not err in putting our confidence in the Man of Nazareth, the most glorious figure in all the galleries of time, the one incomparable image of perfect virtue, the greatest in power, the most perfect in wisdom, the most beautiful in moral excellence, the theme of prophecy from the dawn of human life on the earth, the most commanding figure in the future destinies of the human race. It is as safe to rely on the

integrity of Jesus as on the genius of Shakespeare or the patriotism of Washington, considering the founder of Christianity even as nothing but a man. Considering him as the worker of miracle on a scale of incomparable splendor, it is a species of madness to distrust such power or to refuse to rely on such integrity and such infinite benevolence. He has been approved of God by signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and deserves to be approved by the living trust of all the race for whom his wonderful works were done.

The phenomena of mesmerism and spiritualism must be very briefly discussed and dismissed. The first does not pretend to be anything more than the energy of an unknown principle in the wonderful constitution of the human body. It has, therefore, no legitimate place in the discussion of the signs and proofs of the divine will and power. As to spiritualism, admitting its fundamental principle—that is, that its phenomena are due to the agency of disembodied human spirits; or, conceding what is not easy of disproof, on the spiritualist's own standpoint, that they are due to the agency of spirits other than human, it is irresistibly clear that men cannot take their testimony touching the future life, because it is divided. Some testify one thing, some another. The spiritualist admits that as human spirits lie here, they may lie, and do lie, in the other scene of existence; and we are consequently compelled to try their declarations, and separate the true from the false. The trouble in doing this is, that apart from the guidance of God's Word, and on the plane of nature to which spiritualism relegates us, we have no means of knowing which of two conflicting statements is true and which is false. So far as our means of judging is concerned, both may be unreliable. Our safety is to stand firm on the Word of God, and by it try the spirits, whether they be of God or not.

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE NATURAL.

FIRST SERMON.

“Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”—
2 PETER iii. 4.

IT will be no unfitting sequel to the discussion of miracle to consider the supernatural under its wide and permanent relations to the natural system. It is not easy to define the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. There is a class of thinkers who aim to exclude the supernatural from the universe altogether; nothing is real except what is visible to the senses and regulated by law. They make everything material, and refuse to allow the existence of anything except matter, or what is grounded in matter. There is one sense in which the natural and the supernatural may be said to merge into the unity of a common basis, that of existence; and as the materialist is bound by the fundamental principle of his system of thought to admit whatever exists, the proof of a God, and of scenes of actual being other and apart from the visible universe which he now excludes as supernatural, would compel recognition at his hands, and probably would be construed by him as simply an extension of the realm of nature. This would be very inconvenient to him; for it is the chief desire of his heart, and the object of all his laborious attempts, to limit the sphere of real being to what is material. He would hardly accept it as consola-

tory, to grant him his definition of nature, and then proceed to trouble him with a demonstration of a scene of existence, a whole scale of real being, embracing a deity, angels, and a sphere of existence suitable to their existence, but wholly distinct from the materialist's chosen and his only acknowledged sphere of nature. These spiritual existences, by the force of their real being, may compel him to admit a supernatural as distinguished from the natural, or to extend the sphere of the natural and make it coëxtensive with the sphere of real being, neither of which will be agreeable. With this warning that by accepting the materialist's definition of nature we do not make it synonymous with real being, we consent to the definition of nature as confined to the visible and material universe and the forces apparently inhering in it, and the laws which regulate those forces. But let it be noticed that we accept this material universe, with all that is in it—creatures, signs, indications of variety of force, hieroglyphics of intelligence, its symptoms of design—in short, of all that is in it. The issue raised is whether this visible universe, thus recognized as nature, is all that there is; or whether there is not a sphere of being distinct from this nature, which may be distinguished by the name supernatural. It has been the doctrine, not only of all Christian theories, but of every form of what is called natural religion, that such a distinction as that between the natural and the supernatural does, and must, exist. The Christian theorist not only admits the distinction, but defines and asserts a relation between them which he variously grades as creation, miracle, providence, and a general coördinate scene of spiritual existences coëxisting along with this scene of nature. Creation is the origin of the system of nature in the will and power of the supernatural—in a power above nature. Miracle is the energy of the supernatural in its divine form, under an occasional and peculiar

manifestation, in which the divine energy is displayed under such conditions as to disclose the presence and will of the Deity immediately. Providence is the perpetual support and guidance of the system he has created by his power, veiled from the open vision of his intelligent creature by the laws which he has established. Both are manifestations of the divine supernatural; but they differ in the mode of manifestation. Miracle is a result of will manifesting its energies in a mastery over law; providence is a manifestation of will more remotely signified through the agency of law. The supernatural is too frequently confined to the divine supernatural; but it also embraces beings, scenes and energies of life less than divine, and discriminated as a part of the universe, real and actually existing, but not subject to the same visible and sensitive conditions established in the present visible and material scene of existence.

The discovery of modern science—that regulated action is the universal character of all visible things, has exerted an unfortunate influence in some of its bearings. It has made the impression upon many intelligent and candid minds, more familiar with science than other branches of human knowledge, that nothing reigns but law; that there is no force except in law; and that there is an incompatibility between the recognized laws of the universe and the universal human conception of a divine administrative Providence. It is supposed to be essentially a contradiction to postulate a system of nature under a divine administration—the supernatural coincident with the natural. It is supposed that the natural—*ex vi termini*—supersedes the supernatural; and that, too, not merely to a certain extent, and for specified ends indicated by the natural system itself, but absolutely and altogether. It is supposed that the will of God (where God is allowed at all) expressed in law, is exclusive of the will

of God as a person administering law. This total exclusion of the supernatural excludes miracle as an occasional supernaturalism; it excludes providence as a perpetual supernaturalism; it excludes prayer as an instrumental agency of divine favor and human assistance; it excludes regeneration and grace in all its manifestations. It logically unsettles the whole base of Christianity, and also of all natural religion whatever, for it excludes all intercourse between God and man. This broad exclusion of the supernatural excludes it from the universe, as well as from Christianity, and logically extinguishes not only a providence, but a creator. A being so completely cut off from the possibility of any intercourse with a system which he is supposed by some of his excluders to have brought into being, is really a superfluous predication, and, in point of fact, he is generally deprived of his existence, as well as of his government. All this serious and far-reaching disturbance of all the natural and instinctive convictions of the human race is bottomed upon the inflexibility of the laws of nature which are supposed to exclude all interposition of personal will; and that, too, while the relation of personal will, and its ability to make the laws of nature the superserviceable ministers of personal will, are obtrusively pressed upon human conviction by the universal experience of every human being.

Several theories touching the relation of the divine supernatural to the universe have established a position in the speculations of different schools of philosophy.

1. Among the Greeks, the theory of Epicurus gained ground against the prevailing notions of the popular religious beliefs. This theory makes God a creator, who, having placed the machinery of the universe in motion, retired into the solitudes of his own divinity, and left it entirely to itself.

2. The theory of the English freethinkers of the time-

of the Stuart princes admits a general, but excludes a special, providence.

3. The theory of pantheism confounds God with the universe, extinguishes all other beings but God, and makes all things mere forms into which Deity has condensed himself by an evolutionary process continually in movement.

4. The theory of the modern positivist school of scientific scepticism insists upon the order of nature, as excluding all interference or concurrent action of the Deity with the natural system, disallows as much of providence as the free-thinkers of the seventeenth century accepted, and substantially agrees with the old Greek system of Epicurus. The conclusion is the same—that is, the entire exclusion of deity from the system of nature. They only substitute for the power of God, a more definite system of laws than the old Greek sophist had conceived. Both enunciated the same conception of the universe as a finished machine, set in motion and left to itself.

5. The Christian theory is that it is a system created by the will of God, regulated in its whole action and in all its energies by a grand system of laws, and at the same time upheld, directed, and controlled by the will of the Creator. There is some difference of view among Christian teachers upon the exact nature of the powers impressed upon the natural system by the creative fiat. Some theologians, both Protestant and Romanist, Augustinians, followers of the Cartesian philosophy, and some of the more rigid of the early Calvinistic reformers, affirmed that, inasmuch as matter is altogether passive, there is no real power whatever in natural physical cause. All physical power—the resistance of a stone when struck, for example—is due to the power of God acting immediately through matter, and not to the hardness of the stone itself. This scheme is untenable and of no great

currency. The theory most generally accepted by Christian thinkers is that God has endowed matter with certain properties which will act in uniform methods under given conditions, but only under these conditions. Change the conditions, and the same energies will work out a different result. Fire will melt lead; it will harden clay. The difference in the conditions of the metal and the earth will explain the difference in the effect of the same cause. Wood has a natural capacity of combustion; fire has a natural capacity of burning; but the energies of both will remain inert unless they are brought together; they are conditioned upon contact. In the free combination of these conditions, the system of nature gives free scope for the activity of personal intelligence and will. This we know from an abundant human experience. The relation of personal intelligence and will to natural law is hereby discovered; it is as open to the divine will as to any other will; and the logical basis of the active intervention of divine Providence to any extent agreeable to the divine will, is too clearly disclosed to be rationally resisted. This is openly admitted by Professor Tyndall. He declares, "It is no departure from scientific method to place behind natural phenomena a universal Father, who, in answer to the prayers of his children, alters the currents of these phenomena. Thus far, theology and science go hand in hand." He then excepts to the verification of answers to prayer, as a matter of fact, alleging that a mere theoretic conception is a mere figment without verification. But this is an attempt to escape from the logical force of his own admission by raising another and a different question. Certainly the possibility of a fact is one thing, and its actual occurrence is another. The verification of an alleged occurrence may be legitimately sought on its own evidence. But, in admitting the logical possibility of a divine intervention in answer to prayer, there is a dis-

tinct admission of the logical basis of the Christian doctrine. In recognizing the opening for the interposition of intelligence and will in the system of nature, the distinguished scientist enters a protest against the general impeachment of the possibility of such an interposition, drawn from the alleged stability of that system. He shows that that stability does not exclude all manifestation of personal will, and consequently it is legitimate to prove that possibility as one question, and the actual use of the possibility as another. We are discussing the question of possibility as against a denial of it, on the ground of the inflexibility of natural law. Dr. Tyndall admits it; and then diverges to the discussion of another question altogether—a question proper to be raised, but not in the debate of the question of possibility. It would be altogether legitimate for me to assert that a tree could grow on a given spot of ground, even if I could not show one actually growing there. A question of fact is distinct from a question of possibility; but the admission of the possibility of the fact removes all resistance to its occurrence, grounded on natural law. A question of power is distinct from a question of fact, and must be separately dealt with; each question must stand upon its own evidence. It will not do to confound them. A rough analogy of the Christian doctrine of Providence may be found in human machinery—not exact in all its parts, but sufficiently so to disclose the relation between the natural system and the agency, superintendance, and personal will of God. Machinery of human construction is not only consistent with human management, but dependent upon it. The laws of cohesion and attraction, the laws of motion, the laws of lever, wheel and axle, are not interfered with or superseded by the human energies of the machinist or engineer; they are employed by them. Why, then, is it inconceivable that a divine intelligence should work

out special results, not only without any disturbance of natural laws, but by means of them? This is the Christian doctrine of Providence—his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creation and all its activities—employing its laws to work out special designs of his will, just as his human creatures do.

On one side the doctrine of the scriptures is substantially identical with the doctrine of science. Both predicate the reign of law over all the universe. According to one, law reigns; according to the other, God reigns through law. Neither attempt to explain what these laws are in their essence. The nature of the force in the laws of nature is left inscrutable by both. The method in which this force works when disclosed by its manifestations is called by science a law of nature; but it knows nothing of the nature of this law; it is merely an unknown force under methodical regulation. This should never be forgotten in the perpetual reference to law in nature, that it is merely the observed method—the formulated conditions and limits of manifested force in an energy whose actual nature is as inscrutable as the supernatural possibly can be. May it not be allowable to suggest, that in a discussion looking to a result so serious as the exclusion of Deity from all practical connection with the universe—a result fraught with inconceivable changes in human affairs—there should be some removal of the obscurity which rests upon the nature of those laws which are supposed to exclude him? If the nature of the force in natural law is absolutely inscrutable, who has any right to dogmatize about it? Who has any right to deny it to be one thing or to assert it to be another? Why may it *not* be a manifestation of the supernatural more or less direct? In the face of such a truth as the absolutely inscrutable nature of the force in natural law, no dogmatism is allowable; and

the believer in the supernatural can claim consideration for his theory, that it affords at least a competent explanation of an unaccountable thing, if not the true one; and he can properly remand his theory to proof upon its own evidences.

The object of this discussion is simple and direct. It is not to discuss the doctrine of Providence in its content and limits; but simply to meet the objection that the supernatural is excluded by the natural, and to disclose the logical basis in the system of nature for the intervention of God as the hearer of prayer, and a practical refuge of his trusting children. Our aim shall be to show, if possible, that there is a supernatural which exists coincident with the natural, and is both connected and correlated with it. If either of these predications, and especially the latter, can be shown, the truth of the Christian doctrine of Providence, and the falsity of all theories which exclude him from the government of his own dominions, will be established. If an actual correlation like that between parent and child can be shown, the one side of the correlation will demonstrate the other. If we can prove the supernatural to any extent, it may be logically admitted to any extent within the limits of possibility. If creation can be proved, the supernatural is proved; and its variously graded manifestations, as divine or subordinate supernatural—creation, providence, miracle, message, vision, dream, deliverance or destruction in the earthly sphere, regeneration and grace—all become logically possible, and may be remanded to proof as fact whenever any case of either is alleged to have occurred. If creation can be proved, miracle can be proved, for creation is miracle; if miracle is proved, Providence can be proved, and any manifestation of the supernatural becomes intrinsically credible. The supernatural demonstrated in the universe anywhere closes all questions as to its possible manifestations.

1. The first argument bearing on the relation between the natural and the supernatural which proves that the one cannot exclude the other, is that on any theory from creation by the sovereign fiat of God down to atheism itself, the natural is the fruit of the supernatural; and if so, cannot possibly exclude it. The human mind revolts against the dogma that something can come out of nothing; the intuition of cause and effect is imperative in the human understanding. This assertion is not which is the bringing of something into existence by the will and power of omnipotence; it presupposes the existence of first cause, which, as first cause, is itself uncaused. In this theory the intuition of cause and effect is fully met. With the compulsory exception of first cause, wherever the human mind sees a result it intuitively perceives it as the result of some cause. The visible universe presses upon the sense of every living thing. In forms vast, living, beautiful and sublime, earth with its contents, and the sky with its planetary splendors, obtrude upon our vision. Whence are they, as Napoleon asked of his atheist officers? They cannot be self-derived, for their adjustments are too perfect to exclude all ideas of intelligence and indescribable power; and matter, no matter how grand in its forms, is incapable of intelligence and will. To this question of origin, the answer of all human kind is that they come from an originating force commonly called God, which works under manifestations which are variously construed. The predication of this force back of the phenomena is compulsory, and the nature of it obtrudes itself upon the inquiring intellect. Various theories have been proposed in explanation. Take the theory of the pantheist: he tells us nature is the development of Deity; the wild, blind God of the infinite is condensing himself; and the natural is the fruit of the supernatural. On any theistic scheme the supernatural is affirmed;

and even on the conception of a non-creating and a mere formative God, working on material existing from eternity, still the natural in its actual forms is the fruit of the supernatural. But go one step further: deny all deity, and even on atheistic principles the universe is to be accounted for, and that, too, with a competent consideration of all its excellencies of force, variety, adjustment, size and multitude, beauty and grandeur, laws and utilities. The marvellous scene must be the result of some marvellous force; and if you refuse it the name of God, still it is something that exists; and it is something as wonderful as its effects, and distinct from its effects. It is substantially the supernatural, and the natural is its effect. But all the instincts of the human understanding refuse the doctrine of the eternity of matter—of two independent first causes, one of them inert, unintelligent, incapable of self-movement or design; they demand a creator as the cause of all things, himself necessarily uncaused—a living Deity—and the supernatural, inextinguishable on any theory of nature, stands invincibly revealed in his person. Given a Creator, and the natural is not only seen to be the fruit of his power—which is the doctrine of creation—but the conception of the supernatural excluded from his own domains by the perfection of his own work—which is the doctrine of Providence—becomes an obvious solecism in thought. Creation, as the result of will, must logically remain subject to will, and providence is a necessary corollary of creation. Omnipotence cannot exhaust itself by any exertion of its energies.

2. In the second place, the doctrine of Providence is an irresistible logical necessity from the character of God—from the conception of a perfect necessary being. First cause exists necessarily; the predication of it is compulsory; it is a necessary postulate in thought, as well as in the physical

universe. A being of necessary existence must be everywhere—an omnipresent existence. Necessity is determining in its force. What cannot but be, cannot be in one place more than in another. What cannot but be, must be; what must be in this naked and unqualified sense of absolute necessity, cannot be conceived as excluded from any point. Now, given God's omnipresence, the datum carries all his perfections to every place. He must be in every part of the universe, in all the realms of space, intelligent, all-powerful, ever active, a complete God. To exclude such a being altogether from the universe; to shut him out from the natural system which he made for his own ends and purposes; to exclude him from the exact knowledge of all events which necessarily occur in his presence; to exclude him from the direction and control of these events and the forces of nature, if he should choose to assume it, is absurdity gone moon-struck; it is the very wrath and fury of folly. The personal perfection of God determines his providence. The exertion of his creative power determines his providence, as a corollary necessary to the ends and purposes of creation.

3. The third proof that the natural does not exclude the supernatural is drawn from the allied, yet distinct, facts that both are connected in one line of succession, and definitely correlated to each other in another line of facts in the universe. As illustrative of the first of these suggestions, take that unquestionable and most bitter mystery—death. What is it? It is one of two things; it is either annihilation or transfer of being. If it annihilates the individual, it does not destroy the dreadful mysterious mill in which the generations of mankind are ground up; its tremendous machinery grinds on, and hints fearfully of some malignant supernatural, the mill-owner and taker of the toll. But that conception of death—annihilation—cannot stand against the lights which stream, like the meteors of the frozen north,

from all nature, in which nothing is annihilated, and from the constitution of the human soul, which asserts its accountability. Analogy, reason, conscience, and the broad laws of a patent moral administration in this planet—all protest against such a construction of death.

But suppose death is a transfer of being. As such, it may exist in two forms; but in both, death is only the unfolding of the connection between the natural and the supernatural; the natural merging through its advancing stages into the supernatural.

If it is transfer, it may be such on pantheistic or on Christian principles. If it be on the former, it may take place according to the view of a German philosopher, who exulted with the most hideous glee that ever fell from human lips at the prospect of laying down an existence which had become a curse to him, and in having his consciousness forever buried in the evolution into deity. Still, even on this theory, the natural must pass over into the supernatural. Or we may take a more joyous pantheistic view; and, according to the theory of that most brilliant of American poets, most subtle of American analysts—Edgar Allan Poe—that personal consciousness will not be extinguished by the evolution into deity, and that the time will come when we shall awake to the consciousness that our consciousness is the consciousness of Jehovah. Still, on this theory, too, the natural emerges into the supernatural, and throws a flood of strange, brilliant light on the connection between them.

But, now, make a supposition more accordant with the moral intuitions of the mind and with the teachings of the scriptures. Let us suppose that death is a transfer on the Christian principles, and that the personality of man passes over unimpaired into the future state. Still the same unimpaired and indestructible relation between the natural and the supernatural emerges to view. Suppose an unveiled angel

should stand revealed before us now, would not he be taken as a positive revelation of the subordinate supernatural? Assuredly. Now, suppose a human spirit which had passed through death should appear; would it not be considered equally a specimen of the supernatural? Assuredly; yet at the same time it would also be a specimen of the natural; it would be a born denizen of the earth; but it would be more. It would be a demonstration of the connection between the natural and the supernatural, and show how we ourselves, a part of the natural, will emerge into the supernatural. Given the doctrine of the soul's immortality, and in our own persons we are demonstrations of the inextinguishable connection between the natural and the supernatural. The time will come in the history of every human being when we will be amazed at our own blindness on the subject of our relations to a future state.

4. There is another line of facts which not merely connect, but positively correlate the natural directly with the supernatural, and, therefore, develop the inference with great increase of power. These facts are found in the mental and moral constitution of the human being. These facts are a part of the existing system of nature. It will not do for the student of this system to occupy himself exclusively with material phenomena. He has no right to ignore the characteristics of the human creature who forms a part of the system of nature, and which correlate him to that system. He has no right to avoid the study and the full recognition of those mental and moral facts which are discoverable in this creature, and which correlate him to something higher than mere physical or material connections. He must take all the facts of the human constitution—facts which, as facts, are as much a part of the system of nature as the human hands or feet. Man's constitution, mental and moral, determines him as a being of intelligence, conscience and will,

capable of mental and moral action. It determines him as a subject of moral law. It determines him as a responsible being. From these facts, the laws of thought point to the correlations of the facts. An accountable being, who is never to be brought to account, is a contradiction in terms. Conscience ever more points to the Law-giver; and the natural revealed in the constitution of the human creature is disclosed in an indestructible correlation with the supernatural.

To give this argument a little more breadth: if the natural was designed, and consequently adapted, to exclude the supernatural so completely as the scientific champions of an exclusive natural affirm, how is it possible to account for the universal recognition of some sort of supernatural by every tribe and kindred of the human race? How account for the powerful and pervading moral and religious instincts of the human being? If the real system had been designed to exclude the supernatural, every part of the system would have been harmoniously adjusted to that purpose. Man would have had no more thought or desire towards the supernatural than a beast. Cattle exhibit no solicitude for comfortable relations with a supernatural; but man's soul is irresistibly determined towards these high thoughts; they evermore wander through eternity. His religious instincts, though capable of being corrupted, misled and enfeebled by his own criminal moral action, are inextinguishable. His whole nature correlates him with the supernatural. But if there is no supernatural, his nature is a lie; the exquisite system of adjustments in nature is disrupted; there is no adjustment whatever for the highest parts of the human nature. His being is so falsely contrived that he is determined by it to seek for a God who does not exist; to pray, when an answer to prayer is a natural impossibility; to feel a responsibility which is an utter delusion. Religious desire in any shape is as absurd a passion of the human soul as a perpetual yearning after wings would

be—a species of insanity. There would be, of course, no guidance in life, no comfort in sorrow, no deliverance in danger, no help in trouble; in all life's emergencies, in the nameless horror of death, no refuge—and none wanted! If the system of nature was designed to exclude the supernatural, no desire and no conception of it would have ever entered the human soul. Man, with all the sorrowful conditions attached to his existence on earth, would have wandered through the vast deserted scene of a universe, aimless in its ends, unguided in its energies,—both the scene and its inhabitant a curse to themselves in their beast-like want of thought, and a riddle, full of tears and perplexity, to every intelligent knower of the facts. But the adjustments of nature are truly ordered; every passion and principle of human nature has its allotted adjustment under the moral conditions appointed for their regulation; and the higher elements of that nature are no exception to the rule. The correlations of nature in man stand on a basis so firm that it is invincible logic to reason from one branch of the correlation to the other; and if the inference is compulsory from the notion of parent to the notion of child, or from the notion of husband to the notion of wife, it is equally imperative from the actual constitution of nature in the human being to the supernatural, which dominates all nature wherever it is found in existence. Man's nature is not a lie; and it correlates inseparably the natural and the supernatural. Annihilate God, either by atheism, pantheism, or by a system of law excluding him from the universe, and you leave man an anomaly and a riddle out of all assignable relations to the profoundest and most powerful elements of his being, with no adjustments in the wide realms of nature which can account for his constitution or minister to his well-being, with no possibilities of use or employment, utility or happiness from the noblest and the most commanding parts of his being.

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE NATURAL.

SECOND SERMON.

“Having no hope, and without God in the world.”—EPHESIANS ii. 12.

5. **A** NOTHER proof that the natural system does not exclude the supernatural is that without the continued presence and energy of a powerful presiding intelligence there can be no guarantee of permanent energy and right action in the natural system. It is not available to appeal to the actual appearance of steadiness and uniformity in nature as proving a reliable self-sustaining force in the material universe, without first proving, on distinct and independent grounds, the non-existence of a supporting Providence, separate from the system, because the steadiness and uniformity of nature may possibly be the result of such a support, and not of an independent force in the system itself. The one explanation must be excluded before the other can be accepted as certain. It will not do to say that the original arrangements of the originating power, whatever it may be, was so perfect as to exclude all need of a subsequent interference. Two considerations bar this inference. It is barred by the historical development of our own world and that of the starry universe around us. Science tells us that the record of our own planet is a record of successive catastrophes, involving all life then existing in absolute destruction. Stars are discovered burning up on the far distant skirts of the universe. Change reigns in every direction, and change run-

ning into ruin as far as can be known. Now, dismiss altogether the idea of a governing intelligence, and where is the guarantee of stability anywhere? Who can predict the results of blind and unguided force? It may be constructive, as we know it sometimes is; but it may be destructive, as we also know it is; no sure calculation can be made upon it. Now, conceive a God, competent to manage the amazing scene, but absolutely withdrawn from all control or support of the energies set in motion by the original act of creation. The result is the same. The notion of the original impulse being a guarantee of continued orderly energy, is impeached by the convulsions and the absolute destruction apparent in many quarters of the marvellous scene. No one can safely appeal to the perfection of the original arrangement made by the Creator as excluding all necessity for subsequent manifestations on his part, as long as such facts belong to the history of the universe. The apparent law of progress or development also vitiates the inference; it impeaches the premise of perfection in the original arrangement, and discredits the conclusion.

But there is another distinct consideration which illustrates the impossibility of construing the system of nature as standing on its own inherent force, and no longer dependent upon the will of its Creator. Creation logically carries providence. If the original energies of nature were impressed by the will of the Creator, the whole character of those energies is the result and manifestation of will—their duration as well as every other characteristic. They are sustained by that will for the whole period of their action, because the original grant and the whole scope of those energies was a result of will. The operation of will is seen throughout the whole mass, and the whole operation of those granted powers. It may be but one grand act of sovereign will, but

it energizes forever; and the whole progress of all the forces brought into play by that will is a continuous expression of that will. The steady and permanent energy of the impulse is as much the result of will, and as much a manifestation of will, as its original endowment. To conceive of the support of that will as withdrawn or suspended is a contradiction; it is to conceive of a will to secure permanent energy, yet a will withdrawn after a limited progress has been made and no permanence has been realized, which is absurd and contradictory. To conceive of a will to secure permanent activity, yet willed at the same time to yield non-permanence, is a positive contradiction; it is to conceive of an energy, in its very nature dependent on will, made independent of will—which is absurd—a *quasi* deification of an energy absolutely dependent. A force in itself absolutely dependent, conceived as made positively independent, is an assertion which is about as near a contradiction in terms as can well be conceived. The continued support of the natural system is a necessary result of creation; being the result of will, its whole career is expressive of will at every stage of its movement. The whole difficulty springs from confounding the mode of the divine volition with the mode of human volition. All man's schemes are the determinations of repeated acts of will; the will of an infinite being is but one grand fiat, infinitely comprehensive, which energizes forever. The whole energy of the divine mind is one eternal act—successive in its manifestations, but not in itself. All his purposes are embraced in one energy of will, which is the source of the continued, as well as of the original, energy of the forces of nature. This does by no means confound the forces of nature with either the being or the will of God; but it does leave those forces dependent upon his will—entirely under his control—and demonstrates the doctrine of the divine Providence.

Furthermore, so far as the human understanding can see, all material energies are self-consuming; and not only self-consuming, but are wholly devoid of intelligence; they are not capable of self-support; they are blind forces, incapable of comprehending their own decay, or the modes of redintegration. It is incompetent to appeal to the restorative processes of nature as demonstrating a self-sustaining force in the system, as against a supporting providence, until that providence is independently discredited, because the restorative forces of nature may be the effect of the action of that providence. The argument touching the restorative processes of nature is the same with the argument for the continuity of nature. Two forces may be conceived as concerned in those processes—their own energy, or the power of God; before one can be certainly affirmed, the other must be discredited. What we affirm is that, on the supposition of the entire withdrawal of intelligence and will from the ordering and maintenance of material forces, there can be no assurance of the support of the system, no guaranteed adjustment of the restorative forces to repair waste and prevent destruction. Conceive of the superintendence of an infinite intelligence energizing all through the system by its own infinite power, effective during the whole period of its allotted existence; and this conception determines the continued existence and energy of nature, and removes all suspicion of its stability. But to conceive of the entire withdrawal of that sustaining intelligence and will, is not only a solecism in thought, but the destruction of all guarantee of stability in nature, and the ascription of self-sustaining power to a blind and unintelligent force, incapable of comprehending or supplying its own waste, or providing for its own support. Conceiving of a will underlying all the forces of nature, giving effect to the adjustments needful to supply waste and sustain the energies of the

system, this concept makes all plain, and the stability of nature passes beyond the region of doubt or fear. Withdraw that notion of a sustaining and guiding will, and all rational basis for the support of the mechanical system of nature is destroyed.

A favorite theory of modern science is what is called the doctrine of evolution. It teaches that all the forms of nature are evolved out of a few simple substances, or perhaps one substance originally created, under the operation of regular laws of production, working through immense periods of time. It is held in atheistic connections by some; by others it is held, not only as wholly consistent with the theory of creation, but as vindicating more powerfully than any other merely physical argument, the doctrine of a perpetual Providence. The *Saturday Review* of April 29, 1876, says: "The fact is that the doctrine of evolution has not only made it incumbent on the upholders of miracles to reconsider their arguments; it has also undermined the ordinary arguments of scepticism. The doctrine of evolution implies that the Creator of the universe is energetically present through all the operations of nature." For to quote again the writer of the article in the *Church Quarterly*, "According to evolution, nature has no permanent mechanical constitution, confining it within certain limits. It is rather conceived as a series of progressive events, or individuations in time. Now, if we consider that the series of events which make up the succession of nature in time is, and must be, a history—that is, a contingent series—the impossibility of throwing back design under evolution is manifest." If we do not misapprehend these not very lucid words, the meaning is this: it institutes a comparison between the universe conceived as a machine, and conceived as a mass of self-moving forms of being. "If the universe were a machine, set a-going for a certain time,

the result of its movements would be constant and invariable—effects following rigidly from constant mechanical causes. But evolution has to do with living forms, and these, according to that doctrine, are essentially variable. Granting that protoplasm is chemically the same in the germ cell of a man and of a fish, this only makes it all the more certain that a presiding mind directs and shapes the very different results. But if we admit that a supreme mind is behind the frame-work of nature, directing and controlling its forces, we shall recognize that a miracle is only an instance of the same control, charged with a more manifest purpose. The will of God acting on brute matter, and controlling its obedience, is not different in kind from the will of man energizing through the material organism of the body; and the one is no more than the other a violation or suspension of physical law. If the process by which the loaves were multiplied, or Lazarus restored to life, were laid bare, a man of science would probably be able to analyze and explain it as easily as he now explains the processes which are now going on in the laboratory of nature.” Whether the system of nature be strictly a machine in the strictest sense of the term, or a mass of self-moving forms, makes no difference to the absolute necessity for a presiding intelligence to work out the best and intelligent results. Both are without intelligence of their own; and the knowledge, judgment, and labor of a human workman is as needful to grow a crop of grain as to run a machine. The sphere of intelligence and will is as clearly defined in the case of a mass of living forms as in the case of a machine. Under no conception of the universe can the conception of a supporting and guiding intelligence be rationally dispensed with. Miracle is the result of the personal will of God, disclosing a manifest purpose immediately, through a mastery over law which is only rationally attributa-

ble to divine power; and this signature is equally indispensable and equally clear, whether the divine will is exerted independently of all law, or whether it is exerted through a combination of law possible only to God. The immediate expression of the divine will is one thing; the mode of this expression is another. Providence is the same will of God, more remotely expressed in its ordinary administration through the agency of law. It is impossible to confound the two, or to discredit either.

6. The Christian theory is in accord with all the known facts. It explains the religious instincts of the human soul by showing their correlations in the existence, claims, and character of an everywhere present and all-powerful moral intelligence and will. It explains the catastrophes of nature to be, not the ungoverned explosions of unintelligent natural forces, but as the chosen expedients of a perfect intelligence for development of a vast plan of administration, on unknown but guaranteed principles—principles incomprehensible by human wisdom in its present attainable stages of discovery and knowledge, but guaranteed by his character. It explains the laws of nature, not as original and self-derived energies, but as energies selected and impressed by the will of the Creator, and made to work in regular methods, and thus under the direction of intelligence and will to work out designed results. It explains the relation of God, as the administrator of the vast complex system: first, as sustaining its energies in unabated force; and second, in directing and controlling them in their relations to each other, and to any designed result, whether designed by divine or human intelligence and will. It affirms the stability of natural law as the impressed will of the Creator; and defines the relation of his intelligence and will to the system after its inauguration as analogous in kind, though infinitely more perfect in degree, to the

relation of human intelligence and will to natural law. It teaches that since human intelligence and will can discover and combine the laws and conditions of nature in order to work out special designed results, the sphere of will in relation to law is clearly disclosed, and that it is as competent to one species of intelligence as another, according to the degree of the intelligence; to divine as well as to human, and even to animal intelligence and will. It thus lays a rational and strictly scientific basis for prayer, for religious affections in the human heart, and for all acts of religious and moral obedience from man to God. It places supreme moral goodness and intelligence, as well as boundless power, at the head of all things. It gives the glorious assurance that evil is not master; that the dreadful energies of moral and physical evil are under control, and are working out the purposes of infinite excellence. It shows, in the supreme practical providence of the Almighty God, the broad basis for the confidence and hope of the creature. The scripture doctrine and the actual administration of divine providence are not without their dark and mysterious elements. Clouds and darkness are about the throne—thick clouds and flashes of fire;—but the throne stands; and it gives the assurance that righteousness and judgment dwell with the King upon it, and will reign forever and ever.

The single purpose of this discussion has been to indicate the basis upon which rests the claim of personal service which the Word of God exacts of men. It has been to bring God nigh unto us in all our multiplied necessities; to show the supernatural, divine and subordinate, in its relation to the natural; and to vindicate the claim of the Eternal Father to the steadfast and affectionate obedience, the habitual trust, the real and heartfelt affections, and the use of the whole series of positive activities which are rightfully demanded,

in order to secure the rights of the author and governor of the universe, and at the same time to secure the highest development and well-being of the intelligent and responsible creatures. What can there be in such a conception to raise fear or excite reluctance in any just understanding or in any guiltless bosom? It is only the presence and unlimited supremacy of supreme excellence which is affirmed in the doctrine of Providence. It is God, the Father of all mercies, who is brought nigh to needy man. If the human heart dreads or dislikes such a character, it can only be accounted for by a perverted condition of human feeling; by a conscious want of conformity to his laws, and a consequent want of sympathy with his glorious perfect nature. In itself this ever-living and supreme providence of God is a thing to create boundless joy. It not only assures us that perfect excellence is in perfect control, but, more especially consoling to human affections, that perfect excellence in every lovely and trustworthy moral quality, in an indissoluble combination with perfect power, is brought close to every human heart. The administrator of providence can see every circumstance; he can hear every cry; he can aid in every emergency; he can save to the uttermost. He can judge with perfect knowledge; he can make every allowance and determine every element which may enhance or alleviate responsibility. He can do true justice, as well as show mercy, to whom he will. All the pledges of the glorious gospel are thus made practicable, and as such commended to our confidence. Regeneration and grace, in all its provisions and offers, are rendered credible as possibilities. The supernatural of the scriptures, in all its modifications as supreme or subordinate, gives to man all he needs of a religious refuge in every time of need. To turn from this gracious and profoundly moving doctrine of divine Providence, is to despise our own sweetest mercies, to trample

upon our richest inheritance, and to forfeit in life, in sorrow, and in our own transition into the unveiled supernatural, the only possible resource for comfort and hope.

But now let us turn to the logical and practical results of the opposite theory. The extinction of the supernatural involves the eternity of matter, an absurdity which makes a necessary and consequently unlimited being of a substance which never exists except under limits—in which form inheres as one of its indispensable and native qualities. It consequently makes everything that exists material, and excludes all traces of intellectual and moral reality—which is absurd. It excludes all room for intelligence and will in the natural system, all design in its formation, and all space for intelligence and will in the use and administration of the system; which is contradicted by all human experience, that of these speculators themselves included, by the manifest provisions for the interposition of intelligence and will in the natural system itself. It leaves the myriad evidences of design in nature, divorced from all designing intelligence—which is absurd. It gives to matter the attributes of mind, without the nature of mind—which is contradictory. It gives to passivity or inertia the powers of activity; to blind, unguided force all that could be attributed to the highest intelligence and will. It introduces intellectual confusion, and unsettles confidence in the intuitions of the understanding. It involves absurdities at every step, and bristles all over with anomalies unaccounted for and unaccountable. It banishes God to a distance, even when his existence is allowed—a distance which renders him as useless as if he did not exist at all, and, for the most part, incontinently deprives him of his being, as well as of his functions. It practically weakens, and logically destroys, the authority of moral law. It seals up every grave. It destroys the gospel. It makes Christ, the sinner's friend, a deceiver—

the one spotless human being a liar and a cheat. It leaves sin to prey unresisted upon conscience. It overturns the revelation from God, with all its grand doctrines, its precious promises, its prospects of a splendid immortal existence. It storms the crystal battlements of heaven, overturns street and dome and the palaces of the unfallen dominations. The Arcadia of the sainted dead, to which the finger of the Nazarene pointed, vanishes like a dream—dissolves like the pageant of crimson and golden clouds upon the western arch as twilight deepens. It extinguishes the terrors of conscience only by extinguishing the consciousness of the sinning soul. It annihilates heaven; but it only modifies hell by transferring it from the sphere of the supernatural to the blood and tear-stained earth, rich with the sepulchres of a most miserable race; and keeps it burning there at least as long as that accursed and orphaned race shall dwell on the accursed planet. It leaves the mill to grind on, though it denies the mill-owner and taker of the toll. It delivers the individual, by completing his destruction; yet abandons the race to indefinite endurance. Moreover, it extends as far as appears the fearful law of earthly life over all the universe—for a blind necessitated development will be likely to determine similar results everywhere—now constructive for a time, but with a speedy end in view; now destructive utterly in its ultimate results, after a career of variegated misery. It leaves all the high spiritual elements of the human constitution out of analogy with all the rest of its passions and propensities, all of which have their adjustments; and leaves them mere blind anomalies in the nature of man out of all assignable relations. It robs human nature of its dignity as immortal. It robs life of its best comforts, as well as of its noblest inspirations. It crowns death with the horror of a hopeless and final extinction. It blots out forever the Christian vision of endless

personal glory and blessedness. O life-loving human heart, what an exchange is this for the splendid prospects of the Christian gospel and the heaven of the living God! The denial of a supernatural of grace and deliverance does not destroy the supernatural altogether; it cannot be destroyed; on any theory of the universe, it stands, and will stand, and must stand. The musing sceptical thinker himself is a part of the supernatural; he is unchangeably correlated with it; he must finally emerge into it in some shape. This cool natural man, with all his mental states colored and controlled by the impressed influences of this visible and tangible scene—this man of trade and politics, of law and railroads, of gas and cotton, is simply absorbed by the circumstances and conditions of a single section of his existence. He must pass out of it into another, which is now the supernatural to his view, but which is as truly a part of his allotted sphere of existence, as the different periods of infancy, manhood and old age are allotted developments of his nature here on earth. It is as much the necessary dictate of wisdom that he should open his eyes to these grand elements of his existence, and live with a wise reference to that coming period, which is of boundlessly greater dignity and importance than this brief span of earthly being, for which such wise and resolute provisions are made. Otherwise he will be like the man who built his house on the low-lying flat upon a living stream, which sank in ruin when the hill-floods sent the waters raging over bank and barrier, a devouring torrent. Nothing could give more dignity to human life than an infusion of a real regard to the supernatural into the processes of human thought and habitual human feeling. Man would no longer be without God in the world. A perpetual presence would infuse purity, dignity and the spirit of pious obedience into every mind so alive to its glorious companionship. Faith

would give substance to things of hope, and throw the splendor of the coming glory over the sordid and sorrowful present. It would purge all the common-place out of human existence, and fill it with the powers of the world to come. Man would live as seeing him who is invisible, and as a pilgrim seeking the city whose builder is God.

To sum up and briefly recapitulate the whole discussion: the broad objection is made that the natural *ex vi termini* excludes the supernatural; and thus by one summary movement excludes alike all manifestations of the excluded phantasy, whether constant or occasional miracle, Providence, the utility of prayer, except its subjective influences, and all acts of worship and moral obedience rendered as positive acts of homage to the Great Supreme, are all comprehensively set aside. It sweeps away the whole basis of practical religion; for even its subjective influences are for a great part conditioned on the conception of a personal God, upon whom the affections may be lavished, and from whom benefits may be obtained. It would be as practicable to develop the cultus of art, with the intuitions of form and color paralyzed in the intellect, as to develop the sensibilities of religious affection towards a deity, either impersonal or banished out of all possible communion with man. The most ornamental worship of the law of gravitation would exert but a slender influence in uplifting the character of a worshipper.

To meet the objection that the supernatural is excluded by the natural, it is only necessary to give some proof that the supernatural exists. The proof of the supernatural in any form, logically carries with it the possibility of its manifestation in any form. Logically, to exclude the supernatural at all, it must be excluded altogether. The argument was embodied in these points.

First, the supernatural was shown to be concurrent with

the natural in an habitual coëxistence, by the fact that, on any theory from creation to atheism, the natural originates in the supernatural, and is the fruit of it. The whole power of the argument for a real creation bears conclusively upon the demonstration of a concurrent supernatural. If the natural is the fruit of the supernatural, it cannot exclude it; they must coëxist, or else omnipotence destroys itself by its own exertion.

Second, the natural is inseparably bound up with the supernatural, so that no theory of atheism, deism, pantheism, or scientific affirmation of supreme natural law can possibly eliminate either or discredit both as coëxistent. Death, on any theory—emphatically on its true theory—is but the advancement of the natural into the supernatural. The natural and the supernatural are disclosed by death as the connected parts of one common whole—as a connection which is a positive conjunction between the two.

Third, it is still more strikingly illustrated by the positive moral correlations, binding the natural to the supernatural. The indelible facts of man's moral and intelligent constitution correlate him with the supernatural. All his powers are adjusted to the system in which he lives; every passion and principle of his nature has its correlated adjustment to which it is suited, and by which it may be pleurably employed. The grand energies of his moral and spiritual nature correlate him with a divine supernatural, and point resistlessly through law to a law-giver; through all its yearnings for a boundless communion with things suitable to elicit a full and ever expanding employment and growth of his capacities and his happiness, to the resources of an Infinite Being. If there is no such supernatural, the analogy of the human constitution is rudely violated, man's nature is a lie, and the highest principles of his nature—those that raise him highest

above the brute and give most of dignity to his being—are aimless anomalies, mere blind possibilities without any sphere of action, powerful only to curse the heart with desires and aspirations which have no space for action, and are incapable of gratification. But this cannot be; the adjustments of nature are truly ordered; the nature of the human being correlates him with the supernatural, both divine and subordinate, and thus demonstrates its reality.

Fourth, the divine supernatural is necessary to guarantee continuity of unimpaired force and of orderly action in the system of nature. Facts in the historical progress of the universe, and the natural incompetence of mere blind force to discover or provide for its own waste, alike demand the support and guidance of a supreme intelligence and power. No other rational basis for the natural system can be conceived.

Lastly, the Christian theory of the universe is in accord with all the known facts of the case, and meets all the conditions of the mighty issue. It enthrones God absolutely. It brings him near to the sinning and suffering human heart. It opens his ears to the cry of the soul in its sorrow. It places his open hand in reach of faith. It makes him mighty to save even to the uttermost. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth be glad; and let the nations shout for joy; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

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