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## I. NATURAL RELIGION AND THE GOSPEL.

ASSUMING that theology is a science, and that it pursues the method of definition adopted by all sciences, that is to say, one derived from the object-matter about which they are concerned, we define it, with others, to be the science of religion. But religion, comprehensively taken, is easily distributable into two kinds: natural religion and evangelical religion, or, briefly, redemption. The latter member of this division is the gospel. These are the only two schemes of religion that God has given to man. The first was communicated to Adam in innocence, the latter to Adam and his race in sin. The gospel, specifically considered, has been developed in great dispensational forms contradistinguished to each other, not as to their essential, but as to their peculiar and distinctive, features; but, generically considered, it is as a scheme of religion contradistinguished to natural religion. It is, therefore, interesting and important to ascertain the relations which subsist between natural religion and the gospel; and we propose to indicate their points of similarity and difference. What are the elements of natural religion? How do they come to be incorporated into the gospel? And what are the peculiar and differentiating elements of the latter scheme?

### I. Their points of similarity.

1. Some of their contents are alike. Taking it for granted that the articles which will be enumerated are, in some sense, embodied in the gospel, the question will be whether they were component parts of natural religion.

(1.) The doctrine of God's existence. It cannot be supposed

that man at creation was ignorant of the Being who created him. To suppose that he was, would be to suppose that he was destitute of all capacity for religion, and as we are not pursuing the mere investigations of natural theology, but follow the guidance of the Scriptures, which speak definitely upon the subject, there is no necessity for a discussion of this point.

(2.) The doctrine of God's triune existence—of the trinity. We would conclude that man in innocence was acquainted with this doctrine on two grounds: first, from the nature of the case, that is, rational considerations antecedently to any direct statements of the Scriptures as a new, supernatural revelation. For, if God made himself known to his creature, he must have revealed himself to him as he really is, otherwise the information communicated would have been deceptive and misleading. Idolatry would have been the result. But, secondly, we know from the Scriptures that God is triune, and, putting these two sources of proof together, we must infer that the doctrine of the trinity was an article of natural religion.

(3.) The moral government of God. It is needless to enforce this position. For, if Adam knew himself to be a creature of God, he must have equally known himself to be a subject of his moral government. His reason and conscience, with their fundamental laws of belief and rectitude, would necessarily have led him to this conclusion; and in addition to this, he was privileged to receive from his **M**aker the immediate revelation of the fact, through oral instructions delivered in the converse held with man in the walks of Paradise. Our first parents "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." In short, if man at first had any religion at all, it must have contained so fundamental a principle as that of accountability to moral government. He must have known, he did, in fact, know, his relation to law, and that involved the knowledge of a Law-giver, Ruler, and Judge.

(4.) The principle of grace. Considering the benevolence or goodness of God as generic, it is manifested in the two specific forms of grace and mercy: grace being favor shown to the undeserving; mercy being favor to the ill-deserving and the wretched.

Whatever obligations God may be conceived to be under—so to speak—to himself, to his own faithfulness and honor, resulting from the fact of his creating intelligent and moral beings, it is clear that, from the conditions of their existence, they could demand nothing at his hands. Their creation is the product of a free determination of his will, and it is certain that previously to their being created they could not, as non-existent, have merited anything at their Maker's hands. When, then, our first parents were created, their existence was a result of grace, and every rich endowment of their nature, with the delightful circumstances and relations in which they were placed, were the fruits of the same unmerited goodness. They could have earned nothing; all was given.

While this is true of the natural elements of man's first estate, it is still more conspicuously evident of that supernaturally revealed covenant which was superadded to the simple relation of law. Such a federal arrangement was obviously a free product of the divine will, in no way necessitated by the natural relations which man sustained to him. When, therefore, instead of leaving man under a naked dispensation of law, in which the retention of the divine favor would have been suspended upon the condition of obedience for ever contingent, God instituted an economy in which the race was collected into the person of a representative amply qualified for the high trusts reposed in him, limited his time of trial, so that the probation of himself and his constituents may have been finished in a definite period, and perhaps restricted the field of temptation, making it possible that the representative should be tempted only in relation to the positive command touching a single tree, it is plain that the principle of grace was exhibited. The covenant, consequently, was the offspring of grace, although, on account of its embodying legal obedience as the condition of justification, it assumes the character of a legal compact, and has properly received the denomination of the covenant of works. Hence, we do not characterize natural religion as a religion of grace. We justly designate it as a religion of law. We confine the title religion of grace to the scheme of redemption; for however true it is that both schemes originated in grace

as their source, they receive their respective denominations from the fact that one specifically proceeds, and the other does not, upon the principle of acquiring self-justification on account of one's own conscious, legal obedience.

Had Adam, as a representative under a legal covenant, stood, his posterity would have been freely justified through the imputation of another's conscious, subjective righteousness, and in that case the religion of nature would have been *to a justified race* a religion of grace. But that case was not historically realized. Adam fell. The whole case, under the first covenant, was exhaustively developed in him, so far as possible justification was concerned. To him that covenant was one of works, and its failure to secure the end contemplated by it warrants its exclusive appellation as a legal, and not a gracious, covenant. Still, as that whole federal economy originated in grace, and supposed the possibility of justification by grace for the constituents in case the representative had secured the reward on the ground of legal obedience, we are entitled to affirm that the principle of grace was one of the elements of natural religion.

(5.) Federal headship and legal representation. There is no need to elaborate the proof. It is sufficient to know that both Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism affirm the fact. It is true that the mode in which it was actualized is differently conceived in the two systems, the latter viewing federal headship and legal representation as concreated with man, as necessarily implicated in parental headship; the former, as instituted by God after man was created, and freely added to the parental constitution. But this does not militate against the position conceded by the *consensus* of the church, that the doctrine of federal headship and legal representation was one of the articles of natural religion.

This view is clearly sustained by the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul, in the fifth chapter of Romans, draws a parallel between the case of Adam and that of Christ. In that comparison the real, if not the only, analogy described as between the two consists in the fact that they both stood, in relation to their respective seeds, upon the footing of representation. It was precisely

because Adam was a representative that he was "the figure"—the type, pattern, or resemblance—"of him who was to come." That is, he was not an instituted type, as was the high priest of the Jewish dispensation, of Christ; but he acted in relation to his posterity upon the same principle as that upon which Christ acted in relation to his. In the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, Paul brings out the same principle: as all represented in Adam die, so all represented in Christ shall be made alive. And in the second chapter of Hebrews, the chapter which proves the necessity of the incarnation, the writer, if we mistake not, shows that the Son of God, in becoming the representative and substitute of his people, must have been conformed to the Adamic law of a race-connection, a blood-tie, between the federal head and the members, between the representative and the constituents. Not that the great principle of representation must always proceed upon that condition in its application; it may be capable of being employed wherever a number of individuals can be collected into unity upon a basis of classification. Similarity of nature, as among the unfallen angels, might constitute such a basis; but when the principle was applied to man, the old basis, which had been recognized from the first in the history of God's dealings with the race, behooved to be adopted. The second Adam must sustain the same blood-relation to men that the first Adam had sustained. Adam knew his solemn position as the federal head, representative, and trustee of his posterity, with all the weighty responsibilities which attached to it; and this fact, as it ought to have contributed to deter him from sinning, stamped, on the side of his human relations, the peculiar aggravation, the fearful enormity, of his transgression.

(6.) The doctrine of the immortality of the soul. It hardly needs to be said, that the question here is in regard to the perpetual existence of the soul, considered not morally or spiritually, but physically, that is, as to its natural essence as an entity. Was the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in this respect, an article of natural religion? It ought to be remarked, too, that in this discussion no sharp distinction is emphasized between the soul and the spirit.

*First*, On the supposition that the *rational* arguments in favor of the soul's immortality have any validity for man conditioned by sin and imperfection, they must have had at least equal, and, we may confidently hold, greater, validity for man in innocence. What these arguments are, it is not necessary to state here. They are familiarly known. The most formidable objections to these arguments have been urged by the materialist and the pantheist. The "mortal deists," in the age of the famous Apologies for divine revelation against English deism, assumed materialistic ground. They were answered by Bishop Butler, in the opening chapter of the *Analogy*, by a powerful argument, based in the probabilities furnished by analogy, in support of a future life, which he justly terms "the foundation of all our hopes and of all our fears; all our hopes and fears which are of any consideration." That argument, reinforced, strengthened, and amplified by other writers, amounts to a probable proof so convincing as to have satisfied nearly all theists. At least, it may safely be said that it never has been refuted. It may be asserted that this argument against the materialist goes no further than to establish the continued existence of the soul after the dissolution of the body; its immortal existence still remains a question. But the argument avails to prove the soul's independence of its connection with the body for existence; and as it has been shown that the soul survives the shock of its separation from matter, and passes undestroyed through the tremendous crisis of death, it may, with a probability amounting practically to certainty, be inferred that no other change will destroy it; in other words, that it will continue to exist immortally.

Here we encounter the more modern agnostic, who is radically a materialist. He contends that we cannot know what lies beyond the sphere of phenomenal observation. It would follow that, as the continued existence of the soul after death is not phenomenally observable, we cannot know it. The question, however, is given up by the admissions of Herbert Spencer, the philosophical leader of the school. In holding that the various forces operating upon the phenomenal system of the world infer a central force upon which they may be collected into unity, he passes

beyond the limits upon the mere observation of facts. For he characterizes this central force as "an infinite and eternal energy." Most certainly infinity and eternity are not phenomena falling under the scope of scientific observation. We are, then, according to the admission of the agnostic, justified in pushing an inferential, mediate knowledge beyond the contents of empiricism. We postulate an occult force, which Mr. Spencer denominates the Absolute, that not only collects into unity the special forces operating phenomenally in nature, but furnishes the fundamental ground of a reconciliation between religion and science.<sup>1</sup>

Upon the same principle, necessitating inferences from phenomena, we are warranted in concluding that back of the conscious phenomena of thinking, feeling, willing, and passing moral judgments, lies an occult force which thinks, feels, wills, and passes moral judgments. And as force implies power, and power is an attribute, we necessarily infer an essence or substance to which it belongs, for a quality without a thing qualified is utterly inadmissible. We reach an inferential and mediate, but valid and trustworthy, knowledge of the soul. Granted this, the further inference to its immortality is justifiable, and it is actually justified by the unanswered argument against the materialist which has already been noticed. If we may infer the existence of the Absolute without knowing the mode of its existence, we may equally infer the continued existence of the soul, however ignorant we may be of its supersensible mode. And if we may do this in our imperfect and crippled condition, the first man may have done it in his innocent and unimpaired estate.

But we are told that all things, according to the general law of evolution, proceeding by the special laws of dissipation and equilibration of forces, are destined to absolute quiescence, and it would follow, one may infer, that along with all else the soul will be reduced to absolute quiescence. Well, is that the final outcome? No, we are further informed that, by some unaccountable maggot of restlessness, the whole quiescent mass begins to rotate, under a law, the name of which may, without intermeddling presumption, be suggested to the learned speculator—that of circum-

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<sup>1</sup> See his *Synthetic Philosophy; First Principles*.

gyration, or, in plain English, roundaboutness. How now? All forces are, according to the supposition, quiescent, that is, they cease to operate. They are no longer dynamic. Whence, then, this incipient circumgyratory force, which performs the wonderful office of starting the whole resting mass into a whirling motion again? We have a remarkable instance of an absolute commencement. But granted the marvel, as the quiescent soul is a part of the system, one would naturally conclude that it begins again to circumgyrate. It still manifests motion and life. And as the ground is taken that this law of quiescence and successive restoration of energy is an eternal one, the immortality of the soul is conceded. Add to this the assertion of the agnostic school, that no elemental force is susceptible of annihilation, and the admission of the soul's immortality is complete.

But the pantheist here comes on the field, and it would be disrespectful to his philosophic pretensions not to endeavor to meet his arguments. The strongest of them in opposition to the immortality of the soul which we can conceive is the Aristotelian. So long as we are encompassed with a mundane environment, the soul possesses an individual existence. When the bodily organism dissolves, the soul continues to exist, but not as individual. It is reabsorbed into the general fund of being, the soul of the world. It is immortal as that general soul is immortal, but as an individual entity it is mortal. This is equivalent to a total denial of at least the intelligent immortality of the soul. It punches out its I.

There is a single line of argument which will be adverted to, as it seems fatal to this view, notwithstanding its distinguished parentage. The soul is conscious of personality. Of course, it must lose this personality if reabsorbed into an impersonal divine substance. Now, either the personality is destroyed, or not. If destroyed, as it is claimed that God comes to consciousness in the person of man, God loses the climax of his manifestation, and to that extent suffers degradation; and this must occur in the innumerable instances of absorption of souls. But this is absurd. If these personalities are not destroyed, they are lost attributes, divorced from the essences to which they belong, incapable of re-

suming their attachment to them, or of being transferred to individual souls already personal, or of being taken up by a confessedly impersonal God. Like feathers plucked from birds, and floating in the air, they wander about in the vacuity of space, lamenting that they are qualified to do duty in connection with substances, but can find no substances to employ them! Conscious personality is the *pons asinorum* of the pantheist. How it came to be evolved from an impersonal substance, and what becomes of it when the soul ceases to be an evanescent manifestation of that substance and is refunded into it, are questions which he cannot answer. How different from the doctrine that the soul immortally advances in personal communion with a personal God!

*Secondly*, God communicated the revelation embraced in the Scriptures. They therefore teach true religion. But they definitely declare the doctrine of the soul's immortality as naturally belonging to man. For, those who will not be saved through the atonement of Christ are represented as continuing forever in conscious existence. Immortality, consequently, was not conditioned upon the redeeming work of Christ.<sup>1</sup> It is involved in the sanctions of religion, as such. If now God had not made known to the first man the immortality of his soul, he would have taught him a mutilated religion. The supposition is inconceivable, and the conclusion follows that the scheme of natural religion contained this as one of its elements.

*Thirdly*, That the immortality of the soul was an article of natural religion may also be collected from the testimony of the Scriptures, that man was made in the image of God, and that his Maker was pleased to enter into a covenant with him, the reward of which was eternal life. Divines have properly regarded the image of God in which man was created as natural and moral. It may fairly be inferred that he was made immortal so as in some measure to shadow forth God's immortality, at least to believe with greater clearness in God's immortality from the analogy of his own being. The covenant which promised a confirmed and indefectible life of holiness and happiness on condition of obedi-

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<sup>1</sup> A happy immortality is to sinners a result of redemption, but that is not the same with immortality.

ence during the specified time of trial, for in no other way could justification have been attainable, proceeded on the pre-supposition of a natural immortality. This consideration could only be rebutted by proving, as certain writers like Bishop Warburton have essayed to do, that the natural immortality of the soul was a gift conditioned upon man's maintenance of integrity. When he fell, consequently, they contend that it was forfeited, and is only restored by Christ. But apart from the scriptural declaration that the gospel brings life and immortality to light, which implies that they are not for the first time created by it, the view under consideration is refuted by the teaching of Scripture that the immortality of the soul exists *notwithstanding* sin, and will exist as a fact in spite of the greatest of sins—final unbelief in Christ. This is enough to settle the question. The truth is, that reason itself is able to see that annihilation, either under the scheme of natural religion, or that of redemption, would render punishment for sin impossible, such punishment as implies suffering—and no other is strictly punishment—inasmuch as it would defraud justice of its dues. The transgressor of law would break jail and avoid the infliction of the sentence. A threatening of annihilation would be a promise of escape.

2. Natural religion and the gospel are alike in the fact that they were both revealed.

The distinction between natural and revealed religion is a mistake. There is one often taken betwixt natural and revealed theology, but the terms theology and religion are not convertible. As it is on all hands admitted by Christian writers that the gospel is the product of supernatural revelation, the only question that here requires discussion is whether natural religion was also revealed. This need not detain us long.

The first religion of man consisted of two elements—a natural and a supernatural. The supernatural embraced those articles which the natural and necessary progress of the unaided reason could never have evolved. They were probably the doctrine of the trinity, certainly that of the covenant of works. The latter may be confidently spoken of. A federal economy could never have been thought out or suggested by man. It was the result of

a free, unnecessitated determination of the divine will, and consequently man could only have become acquainted with it through a supernatural revelation. To this extent, therefore, natural religion must have been a revealed religion. The natural element of this first religious scheme was the internal constitution of man, as a being furnished with intelligence, feelings, a will, and a conscience, adapting him to the knowledge, service and worship of God, in connection with the lessons of external nature. The heavens and the earth, which declared the glory of God, illustrated his invisible natural perfections, and conducted him, as by the rungs of a ladder reaching to the skies, to God their Creator and providential Governor. These constitute a natural revelation of God to man. He could not have endowed himself with his religious nature, and it is equally certain that he could not have inspired the teachings of the glorious universe above, around and beneath him. The instructions derived from both these sources were divine gifts—in other words, they were a divine revelation. This is the testimony of Scripture, which affirms that man contains in him a divinely implanted law, that the heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament manifests his handiwork, and that the earth in her manifold works proclaims his existence and his government.<sup>1</sup>

There is still another view that may be added. The Mosaic record informs us that God held oral converse with Adam in the garden. It is true that this fact is stated as having occurred after the commission of the first sin; but we irresistibly infer that the personal intercourse which his Maker condescended to hold with man did not then begin; and this inference is confirmed by the express statement that God delivered to Adam the command touch-

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thornwell, speaking of the gospel and natural religion, says: "They are both *revealed*. The difference between them is radical and essential, not accidental or contingent. They are different *religions*. One is the religion of our nature before the fall; the other, the religion of grace after the fall." (*Coll. Writings*, Vol. II. pp. 61, 62, note. See also Vol. III. p. 210, note.)

Dr. A. A. Hodge, in his *Outlines of Theology*, is very explicit: "The natural revelation which God makes of himself to man, in the constitution of the human soul, and in the works of creation and providence, would unquestionably have been sufficient to lead him to the knowledge of God, if man himself had continued in his natural moral condition and relations." (Pp. 13, 14.)

ing the forbidden tree. If so, God orally communicated to man a knowledge of his relations and duties; and then it would follow that the two religions we are now comparing did not differ even as to the circumstance of *immediate* revelation. God himself verbally communicated the promise of redemption to the guilty pair, and, according to the testimony of the evangelists and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the gospel was "spoken" by the Lord Jesus. So God himself orally imparted instruction to Adam in innocence in regard to his religion.

The question now arises—and it will be but briefly touched upon—What relation does the gospel sustain to natural religion?

In the first place, if what has already been said is true, it is evident that it is not the peculiar office of the gospel to originate the doctrines of the divine existence, the trinity, the moral government of God, grace as favor manifested to the undeserving, federal headship and legal representation, and the immortality of the soul. They were created by the revelation of man's first religion.

In the second place, the gospel employs these great pre-suppositions of nature as fundamental. They constitute an impregnable natural basis upon which the superstructure of redemption is erected. Hence they are not so much articulately and formally proved as taken for granted. They lie necessarily at the foundation of all religious obedience and worship.

In the third place, the gospel takes up and republishes these old articles of natural religion under new relations and sanctions. Obscured by vain speculations, corrupted by wicked imaginations, and buried almost out of sight under the accumulated rubbish of sinful passions and conduct, they needed to be revealed afresh. This is done by the Scriptures in general, and by the gospel in part. The Bible is to sinful men what magnifying glasses are to the eyes of the old, and the dim vision induced by disease. The objects may be there, but the sight is wanting clearly to descry them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nempe sicuti senes, vel lippi, et quicumque oculis caligant, si vel pulcherrimum volumen illis objicias, quamvis agnoscant esse aliquid scriptum, vix tamen duas voces contexere poterunt, specillis autem interpositis adjuti distincte legere incipient: ita Scriptura confusam alioqui Dei notitiam in mentibus nostris colligens, discussa caligine liquido nobis verum Deum ostendit.—CALVIN, *Inst.*, Lib. I., cap. vi.

Adam knew distinctly the truths of natural religion, Socrates groped after them like a man partly blind, and Paul reannounced them from the *bema* of the Areopagus with glorious clearness and power. The Scriptures as a whole, even in those parts which are not identical with the gospel, state and enforce anew these ancient and venerable principles of religion; but the gospel republishes them in their bearing upon men in new relations, the relations induced by redemption, and urges them upon the heart with new motives and new sanctions springing from the mercy of God and the cross of Christ. This leads us to the last head of this discussion.

II. Let us consider the points of difference between the gospel and natural religion. What are the differentiating features of the gospel? What its characteristic and distinctive province?

1. These two schemes of religion differ in regard to their *relations*. Natural religion was related to a party that had not fallen, the gospel is related to a party fallen. The former was a religion of the innocent; the latter, the religion of sinners. Adam in holiness needed no redemption and no incarnate Redeemer; his sinful descendants must have both, or perish eternally. Innocence and guilt designate the respective parties on whom these different schemes of religion terminate.

2. They differ in important respects with reference to their *sources*. Both sprang from God, but natural religion had its origin partly in his justice and partly in his grace, considered as unmerited favor to his creatures. Its fundamental principle, as it came under the scope of moral government, was justice, and hence it was dominantly a religion of law. Personal obedience to law was its matter, and legal justification on account of it its reward. At least, this was true of the first man, regarded both in his individual and federal capacity. But at the same time some of its provisions originated in grace, as has already been pointed out in these remarks. On the other hand, the gospel had its source in the mere mercy of God, considered as favor shown to the guilty and miserable. To say that the gospel originated in law, as is done by certain popular scientific writers on religion, is a profound error. In its origin it was extra-legal and "super-

legal," although in its execution it conforms to the most rigid exactions of law.

3. They differ in regard to their *ends*. Natural religion had for its end the conservation and establishment of man in holiness already existing; the gospel contemplates as its end, first, the recovery of man as guilty to God's favor; secondly, the restoration of man as polluted to God's image; and, thirdly, the conservation of man in holiness thus secured by the provisions of redemption.

4. They differ as to some of their *contents*. A great theological thinker has observed, that the gospel has introduced no new original principle into the moral government of God.<sup>1</sup> If by an original principle is intended one which was an element in the moral government of God, conceived in its widest sweep as extending to angels as well as men, of which we derive our information only from the Scriptures, it would seem to be true that the gospel has introduced no new principle unknown to the procedures of that government. In this wide view of the case the gospel incorporates into its scheme, and proceeds upon, the old principles of the religion of nature. While, however, this is so, the applications which the gospel makes of those original principles are so novel and wonderful, they lie so completely beyond what the hopes of sinful man could have dreamed of realizing, or the reason of sinful man could have dared to suggest, that they stamp it as a wholly new scheme of religion, entitled to be called "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." It is chiefly these new applications of recognized doctrines, these fresh and unexpected forms of administering primitive principles of moral government, that attach to the gospel its distinctive marks, and differentiate it from the religion of nature. While, therefore, in these remarks there will be an undertone of comment on the fundamental likeness of the two religions, their main office will consist in signaling the distinctive peculiarities of the gospel. What are they?

(1.) The relation which God sustains to man. The existence of God and the relations he naturally sustained to his creatures, together with those which were instituted in connection with the

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<sup>1</sup> See Thornwell, *Coll. Writings*, Vol. II. pp. 71, 74.

covenant of works, were, as we have seen, part of the doctrinal matter of natural religion. It is not, therefore, a peculiar characteristic of the gospel to announce the doctrine of God's existence and his relation to the race as creator, providential ruler and final judge. This it assumes as part of its natural foundation. But it *is* a distinctive office of the gospel to reveal God as a redeemer. Natural religion made, could have made, no provision for redemption; when its requirements were infringed naught remained but the infliction of its penalty. The reason of fallen man could no more have furnished a prophecy or hint of redemption than hell could of heaven. It pleased God in the freedom of his infinite sovereignty to take the attitude of redeemer, and this fact it belongs to the gospel alone to declare. It begins with redemption, and the redeemed church will forever celebrate the theme.

(2.) The redemptive relations of the trinity. The doctrine of God's trinal existence was an essential component of the first religion. Its revelation, therefore, it is not the peculiar province of the gospel to make. It alone, however, reveals the redemptive relations and offices of the divine persons. It is its prerogative alone to make known the Father as ordaining salvation, the Son as purchasing it with his blood, and the Holy Spirit as applying it by his grace. But this is not all. It embodies in itself, as a scheme of salvation, a fellowship with the Father and the Son in these tender relations, through the communion of the Holy Ghost, on the part of the believing and penitent sinner—a communion which restores to him a lost God, constitutes a channel through which he derives holiness from the fulness of divine grace, and fills his soul with a happiness which is the rich foretaste of heavenly bliss. This is a constituent element of the gospel, and constitutes not the least of its singular glories.

(3.) The mercy of God. It has already been shown that God manifested his goodness to Adam in the form of grace, which is goodness conceived in relation to those who can merit nothing. But mercy could not have been exhibited to man in innocence, inasmuch as it supposes the object upon which it terminates to be ill-deserving and miserable. Grace may, of course, be shown to sinners, since they are emphatically undeserving, and hence the

gospel is denominated the gospel of the grace of God. We are saved by grace, for by meritorious works of our own none could be saved. But while this is true, it is a peculiar office of the gospel to reveal the redeeming mercy of God to sinners. Man in innocence may have known something of it by description, but he could have had no experimental acquaintance with it. Indeed, until the sin of man occurred, we have no information of its ever having been exercised in the concrete. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." The pity of God, when there was no arm to save, and we lay down despairing under our guilt, helplessness, and misery, it is the beneficent office of the gospel alone to manifest.

(4.) Election. The Scriptures seem to intimate that the angels who maintained their integrity when their brethren fell were elected to be preserved from sinning. They are expressly alluded to by Paul as "the elect angels." But man was not elected to be kept from falling, for, had he been, he would most certainly not have fallen. After the fall—we speak now of the case as presented to the divine mind in eternity, that is, God foreknowing the fall as the result of man's free decision to sin—he was pleased, in his mere sovereign mercy, to elect some of the guilty mass to be saved. It is obvious, then, that in revealing this electing purpose of God the gospel is conspicuously distinguished from man's first religion; and although the principle of election may have been employed in relation to the unfallen angels, its application to human sinners was seriously modified, for the former, on the supposition, were elected to be saved from sinning; the latter, to be saved from sin.

(5.) The federal headship and representative character of the Son of God, his mission, mediation, incarnation, and person. Here we have the old principle of federal headship and representation as employed in natural religion, but with what a vast modification! In the first place, the federal head and representative is divine, as contradistinguished to one who was human under the covenant of works. In the second place, he was appointed the

head and representative of the elect, who were by the Father given to him to be redeemed, whereas Adam was the head and representative of all mankind. In the third place, he was the federal and the spiritual, but not the natural, father of his seed; he has no descendants according to the flesh. On the other hand, Adam was first created the natural parent of the race, and then, by a free, separate, subsequent constitution, was made their federal head and representative. In the fourth place, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, but not created, was sent into the world; but Adam was created a human being, and constituted a trustee of the race on the spot where he originated. In the fifth place, the federal head of the elect was appointed a mediator between God and men. Adam sustained no such office. In the sixth place, the Son of God became incarnate and assumed our nature by a free act, in which, as divine, he consented to the mediatorial commission. Adam existed as a human being, by necessity springing from God's creative act. Further, the incarnation was a miracle in a sense in which Adam's creation could not have been; for the creation of the latter contravened no law of nature, and attested no revelation from heaven. The incarnation traversed the law of ordinary descent by generation, and was evidential of the supernatural scheme of which it was a constituent element. In the seventh place, by the incarnation, in which the eternal Son of God contracted a new relation by assuming human nature into mysterious union with his divine person, he became a federal head who was not, like Adam, merely human, but divine and human, the God-man. In consequence of this transcendently wonderful fact, no contingency attached, as in the case of our first father, to the fulfilment of his engagements as the covenant head and representative of his seed. The question, whether an intrinsic mutability inhered in his merely human will, as the law of probation might suggest, need not now be discussed. It is sufficient to know that the stipulations of the covenant of grace, the union of his human nature with his divine upon his eternal personality, and the immeasurable unction of the Holy Ghost with which his humanity was endowed, placed him absolutely beyond contingency in the discharge of his stupendous trust.

(6.) The priesthood, atoning death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We meet here again a modification of the principle of federal headship and representation. Adam in innocence was as the federal representative of his posterity, and as the interpreter of nature's homage to its Maker, and in that sense its representative, a minister of worship; but he was not, strictly speaking, a priest; for a priest is a public minister of worship officiating at God's altar for guilty men by the offering of expiatory sacrifice. In this respect, Christ differed from him. He presents priestly worship to God for his people through sacrifice, and through the sacrifice of himself. Adam's death was the judicial result of his own conscious sin, and was a solemn sentence of violated law, which from the moment that it began to take effect in the loss of spiritual life and the mortality of the body, laid a dreadful arrest upon his functions as a representative. On the contrary, the death of Jesus, as the priestly substitute of his people, was the meritorious consummation of his expiatory work and sufferings on earth, and grounded the continuance of his sacerdotal office through intercession in the heavenly holy of holies. So far, in this case, was the death of the representative from being the evidence of his own failure and the signal of doom for his constituents, that it furnished a perfect ground for the remission of his people's guilt, and for their acceptance before the divine tribunal. His cross, which was an outward symbol of shame, became his glory, and the glory of the gospel scheme. Adam could only have wrought out righteousness as a living representative; Christ completed his righteousness as the dying substitute of his seed. The atonement, therefore, is justly regarded as the central fact and the peculiar glory of Christianity. It is this which more than all else stamps the gospel with its own individual genius. In nothing else is its difference from natural religion so illustriously exemplified. The paradise which had been lost in Eden was regained on Calvary.

When Adam died, he could have had no hope of rising from the grave except through another, who was his federal head and representative under a different covenant from that which he had ruthlessly broken; but Christ, having died, rose again from the dead as the representative of his people. In his resurrection God

the Father set his seal to the fulfilment of his covenant engagements, and publicly proclaimed to the universe the acceptance and approval of his finished righteousness. He was proved to be a priestly representative, made not after a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

(7.) Justification from guilt. Justification was the promised reward of the first covenant, alike for the representative himself and for his posterity. But the moment that guilt was contracted justification was made impossible to him on account of his conscious sin, and it was rendered hopeless to his seed because of the imputation of the guilt of that sin to them. His endurance of the penalty could not be federal, and could justify neither himself nor them from guilt. But the Lord Jesus, the glorious representative of his guilty people, having, in the mysterious economy of redemption, voluntarily assumed their guilt, and the Father having judicially imputed it to him, was enabled, on account of his conscious, subjective innocence, and the infinite dignity of his divine person, to take their place in law, and, by his peculiar sufferings vicariously endured for them, to exhaust its tremendous penalty, and render perfect satisfaction to the vindicatory justice of God. He thus won for his people justification from guilt. The blood of atonement "cleanseth from all sin." Here then we discover another distinctive feature of the gospel which signally discriminates it from natural religion.

The ascension to heaven of the risen representative, his intercession there, and his session on the mediatorial throne, it is scarcely necessary to remark, constitute other new and glorious applications of the principle of federal headship and representation.

(8.) On the supposition, which to us appears just, that Adam in innocence was a son as well as a servant of God, he would, had he fulfilled the probation assigned him, have been confirmed in the filial relation. In like manner, when a sinner is by the new birth made a child of God, he is, in consequence of the finished obedience of Christ his representative, and through the exercise of faith,<sup>1</sup> confirmed as a son in the divine family. But here the

<sup>1</sup> John i. 12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Gal. iii. 26: "For

difference emerges between the two cases. Adoption takes place. The sinner is formally translated from the family of Satan into the family of God.

(9.) The supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification. In the first place, regeneration is a new and peculiar application of creative power. An existent being is created anew in Christ Jesus. In the second place, sanctification is the continued application of the blood of the great representative, purging the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, cleansing the soul from the polluting stain of daily defilements, arresting the sentences of fatherly justice, and averting the temporal consequences of sin. To this the Holy Spirit adds his dynamic influence, strengthening the believer for the discharge of duty, the resistance of temptation, and the endurance of trial. In the third place, Adam was endowed with grace, with sufficient, but not determining, grace. But under the gospel scheme the believer in Christ is determined to holiness by the efficacious grace of the Spirit. He is confirmed in his standing by the merit of his representative and the continued infusions of grace. In the fourth place, there is a basis in nature for the supernatural graces of the Spirit. As, in regeneration, he creates no new faculties, so he creates no new original powers. The graces of the new man are natural powers born again. The unregenerate sinner has natural faith, love and hope. When he is regenerated, these original powers are pervaded by the spiritual life which had been exsiccated by sin, and become new-born habits of the soul.

(10.) Consolation. This was not needed, it is true, in natural religion, and no provision, consequently, was made for it in that scheme. It supposes sin and the retinue of afflictions which follow in its train. But the representative of the elect passed through the furnace of trial for their sake, and, having been made perfect by disciplinary sufferings, extends the cordial of his sympathy to them, as they walk through the fiery ordeals of life and through

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ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." It is clear that faith cannot condition regeneration, but in these passages it is said to condition sonship, which must, therefore, be adoption.

the valley of the shadow of death. This consoling sympathy his Vicar, the ever-blessed Spirit, applies with his own soft hand of love to the souls of his afflicted people.

(11.) The brotherhood of believers. Had not Adam sinned the human race, as it came into existence, would have been bound together by the tie of a brotherhood resulting from a common relation to the same progenitor. And even now in our poor, sinful world there lingers a shadow of it, faint and imperfect though it be rendered by the strifes of wicked passion. Superinduced upon this original principle by the grace of the gospel is the brotherhood of believers in Jesus. A new and supernatural relation is constituted, attended by corresponding affections and duties—an inner circle within the general community of men, the centre of which is the elder brother of the saints. United to him by the vital influence of his Spirit and by their own personal faith in him, they are his brethren of whom he is not ashamed, for his Father is theirs. "A new commandment," said Jesus to his disciples, "I give unto you, that ye love one another"—a new commandment, not because it was an eleventh added to the Decalogue, but because it was a new and peculiar modification, induced by the gospel, of the old commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Lastly, the resurrection of the dead. Singular and glorious as will be this fact, of which we are assured by the express testimony of Scripture, it will involve a new and peculiar application of the old principles of creative power, federal representation and the moral government of God, which were embodied in natural religion. It will afford an instance of the exercise of creative power, for no power short of that could accomplish so amazing a result. It will constitute a new application of the representative principle, so far as the saints are concerned, for the great argument of the apostle in its favor is founded upon the union of believers to their head: "Now is Christ risen and become the firstfruits of them that slept." The resurrection of the representative necessitates that of his constituents. It will furnish a new illustration of the moral government of God as modified by the mediatorial rule. For if the wicked be not raised, the sentences of justice will not

be fully executed, the demands of a violated law not fully met, and the threatenings of the gospel not fully enforced. Held as prisoners in the grave, they must when the hour of judgment is sounded appear, in their whole personality, at the bar to give account of all that they had done in the body. An instrument of the soul's sin, the body will be an instrument of its punishment.

This then is the distinctive peculiarity of the gospel—redemption from sin, death and hell. Jesus incarnate, Jesus living and dying, Jesus rising, ascending to heaven and sitting upon the throne, Jesus interceding and sending the Spirit of all grace, Jesus coming again to raise the dead and dispense the final measures of mediatorial rule,—this is the burden of the gospel, this its glory and its crown.

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