

THE NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT.

A

S E R M O N ,

PREACHED

In the Chapel of the South Carolina College,

ON THE 1ST DAY OF DECEMBER, 1844.

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## S E R M O N .

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ROMANS I: 16.

“ FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.”

THE exultation and triumph with which the Apostle was accustomed to contemplate the provisions of the gospel show, that, to his mind, the scheme of redemption unfolded the perfections of the Divine character in an aspect of benignity to sinners, equally unexpected and glorious. The freshness of interest and intensity of enthusiasm, with which he habitually dwelt upon the Cross, were such as are wont to be elicited by a combination, in objects, of novelty and importance.— From it he had received full satisfaction upon questions which had awakened a deep curiosity and baffled the resources of his wisdom to resolve. A light had been reflected from the Person and Offices of Christ, which dissipated doubts that had painfully perplexed him, and revealed a prospect which might well endear to him a crucified Redeemer and change the current of his life. Discarding the refined system of licentiousness which renders the happiness of man a more important object than the moral government of God, and makes the distinctions between right and wrong mutable and arbitrary to save the guilty from despair, he assumes, in the masterly exposition, which

he gives us, of the economy of grace, as the fundamental principle of his whole argument, the inseparable connection between punishment and guilt.—“The wrath of God,” he informs us, “is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”—“who will render to every man according to his deeds—unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”

If sin be, in every instance, the object of Divine indignation; and such we perceive is the statement of the Apostle; it would seem to be impossible even for God, consistently with the perfections of His Own nature, to save the guilty from its doom. If *every* man must receive according to his deeds, and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, the universality of guilt would seem to close the door upon every prospect of hope. Nature, at least, left to the resources of her own strength, must always entertain distressing apprehensions, that perfection of government and the power of pardon are mutually destructive of each other, and that whatever, consequently, might be the mercy of God, He could hardly be expected to yield, to its impulse at the expense of justice, holiness and truth. To those who are impressed with the magnitude of sin, the purity of God and the stern inflexibility of the divine law, the *possibility of pardon* is a question fraught with the profoundest interest and veiled in impenetrable gloom. It is the glory of the gospel to re-

move the perplexities of unaided reason, and to explain the method by which God can be just and, at the same time, justify those who are ungodly. On this account it is styled by the Apostle the *power of God unto salvation*. This expression he seems to have employed as an exact definition of the scheme of redemption. The gospel is not to be regarded as a simple *revelation* of the mercy of God and His ability to pardon; *it is itself* His *power* as a *Saviour*. The implication is irresistible that by the rich provisions of its grace and by them alone can the Lord deliver from going down to the pit; that, apart from the righteousness revealed to faith, Jehovah Himself, has not the *power* to receive the guilty into favour; that the mediation of Christ was the wonderful device of infinite wisdom to *enable* the Almighty, in consistency with justice, to *save* the *lost*. The phraseology of the text is a favourite mode in which the Apostle describes the mystery of the Cross. "For the preaching of the Cross," he declares in his first Epistle to the Corinthians—"is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the *power* of *God*. The Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the *power* of God and the wisdom of God." To the same purport is a passage in Isaiah, in which Jehovah Himself solemnly refers to the grace of the gospel as constituting His strength to save from death. The disobedient and unprofitable, addressed under the symbol of briars and thorns, are exhorted to make their peace with God and

what is remarkable they are directed to do so by "*taking hold of His strength.*" Now as faith in the Divine Redeemer is the only means to tranquillity of conscience; as there is no peace to those who are strangers to the blood of the covenant, Jehovah's *strength*, is evidently the same as the atonement of His Son. There lay His power to save; and independently of that, He could only be as a devouring flame to briars and thorns. "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together; or let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me."

The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, seems to me directly to assert, that no scheme *could have been* devised, independently of the work of the Son of God, by which salvation could have been effected. "If there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law; but the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." No method, in other words, could have been adopted, even in the plenitude of infinite power, by which God could acquit the guilty without the righteousness which His law demands; and as such a righteousness is wholly impossible to human obedience, it must be secured by the mediation of a substitute. God cannot dispense with the claims of justice. His power to save is moral in its nature and cannot be exerted, cannot, in truth, be said to exist, while the law pronounces the sentence of death. The reasoning here is precisely analogous to that which

succeeds the declaration of the text. The Gospel he pronounces to be the *power of God unto Salvation*, because "*therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith ; as it is written, the just shall live by faith.*"

Such language must appear to those enigmatical and strange who view Christianity as little better than a republication of natural religion. Unaccustomed to the awful convictions of the malignity of sin and the holiness of God, which the enlightened understanding, through the pressure of conscience, is driven to adopt, they can perceive no difficulty in absolute forgiveness, and cannot consequently comprehend the mystery that restraints should be taken from the power of God, by the incarnation and death of the Redeemer. The necessity of atonement, as assumed by the Apostle, is to them inexplicable jargon. The low views in which they indulge themselves, of the whole work and offices of the Saviour, are to be ascribed to imperfect apprehensions of the government of God. Their fundamental error consists in denying the *need* of satisfaction—in contemplating the Gospel in any other light than as "*the power of God unto Salvation.*" It is but a single step more, and the atonement itself is either formally discarded, or else frittered away through the subtle distinctions of *philosophy and vain deceit*. To appreciate aright the death and sufferings of Christ we must have a proper, if not an adequate, conception of the "*needs be*" into which He Himself resolved His undertaking ; a *needs be*, which extended much farther than the fulfilment of prophecy ; which had itself given rise to the predictions, in having given rise, in the depths

of eternity, to the "*counsel of peace.*" We must enter into the meaning of the great Apostle when he measures the ability of God as a Saviour, by His power to provide a justifying righteousness.

The two great principles, on which the doctrine of atonement rests, are the inseparable connection between punishment and guilt, and the admissibility, under proper restrictions, of a surety to endure the curse of the law. The unpardonable nature of sin; the practicability of legal substitution, these are the pillars of the Christian fabric. In the first we acknowledge the indispensable necessity; in the other, the glorious possibility of an atoning Priest. In the first, we are taught the wages of sin; in the other, that they need not be reaped by ourselves. If the first were true to the exclusion of the second, eternal darkness would settle on the minds of the guilty; it is the second which opened the door of hope and furnished a field, magnificent and ample, in which God might display the resources of His wisdom and unfold the riches of His grace; be at once a *just* God and a *Saviour*.

The contemptuous confidence with which Sophists and Sceptics have denied the propriety of vicarious punishment, has evidently proceeded from the foolish apprehension that God, like ourselves, is bound to forgive upon a confession of the fault. If these arrogant disputers of this world could be brought to feel the truth and severity of the first great principle on which the atonement has been stated to rest, they would cling to the second as the only anchor of hope; and instead of expending ingenuity in abortive efforts to undermine its strength, they would probably lay their

learning under tribute to defend its fitness, while they permitted their hearts to rejoice in its benignant aspect on the family of man. Let the position be firmly established that God can, by no means, clear the guilty; that sin must necessarily be punished, and all objections to the doctrine of suretyship would be given to the winds. To cling to them, under such circumstances, would be, with deliberate malice "*to despise our own mercies.*" The expectation of an easy pardon, secretly cherished, if not openly avowed, is the real source of pretended difficulties with "*the rightcousness of faith.*" Hence, in discussing the doctrine of atonement, the foundations should be deeply and securely laid, in developing the Scriptural account of its necessity. Clear apprehensions upon this point would serve, at once, to define its nature, determine its extent, and put an end to cavils against its reality and truth.

The necessity of the atonement, it may be well to remark, is only the necessity of a means to an end.—The end itself, the salvation of the sinner, is, in no sense, necessary—that is the free and spontaneous purpose of Divine grace. Had all the tribes of men been permitted to sink into hopeless perdition, no violence would have been done to the nature of God, no breach been made in the integrity of His government. But the end having been determined, the death and obedience of Christ were indispensably necessary to carry it into execution: God could not receive the guilty into favor while the demands of His law were unsatisfied against them.

That the object of the atonement was to generate mercy in the Divine Being, to beget the *purpose* as

well as the *power* to save, is the gratuitous caricature of those who have assailed the work, in order to deny the Divinity of the Redeemer. As well might it be pretended that the channel, which the torrent forces for itself among the rocks and declivities of the mountain, is itself the source of the impetuous current it conducts; or that the air, which daily transmits to us light and heat from the sun, is therefore the parent of these invaluable gifts. The mediation of Christ and the mercy of God are related to each other as cause and effect; but in an inverse order from that which is stated by Socinians; it is mercy that gives rise to atonement and not atonement that gives rise to mercy. The scriptural statement is: "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His Only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." It was not, therefore, the design of the atonement to *make* God merciful—He was merciful before; it was not to generate the *purpose* of salvation; that had existed in the bosom of Deity from all eternity. Its object was to render the exercise of mercy consistent with righteousness, to maintain the stability of the Divine throne and preserve the integrity of the Divine government, while outlaws and rebels were saved from the fate which their transgressions deserved. It is not in the nature

of God to take pleasure in the death of the wicked ; it is equally remote from His nature to disregard the distinctions of moral conduct and treat the wicked as the righteous. The atonement, therefore, was necessary, not, as Socinians slanderously report that we affirm, to touch the Divine Mind with compassion for the miserable ; but, supposing the compassion to exist, to prepare the way by which it might be freely indulged with honour to God and safety to His Law as well as blessedness to man. The Gospel springs *from mercy* ; and all its mysterious arrangements are only the contrivances of infinite wisdom, instigated by infinite grace, to acquire the *power to save*.

It is no impeachment of the perfections of Jehovah to deny the possibility of unconditional remission. On the contrary, a full investigation of the whole subject will conduct, I apprehend, to the firm conviction, that, under all the circumstances of the case, it is infinitely more glorious *not to be able* to forgive without a satisfaction, than to relax the severity of law. The *power of God* is only an expression for the *will* of God ; and to say that there are things which cannot be the objects of Divine volition may, in one view, be as much to His honour, as in another, it would detract from His supremacy. The purposes of Deity are not lawless and arbitrary. His will is determined by the *perfections* of His nature. To say, therefore, that there are things which He cannot *do*, is simply to affirm that He cannot *will* them, and to say that He cannot will them, is just to assert that they are inconsistent with the perfections of His Being. In such cases, consequently, we do not *limit*, we only *define* the power of God ; all

things are possible which He *wills*: His will is the measure of His power—but as moral excellence is the measure of His will, it is only to vindicate His character from the charge of weakness and ascribe to Him the highest conceivable praise, to deny that He can will what comes into collision with justice, holiness, wisdom, or truth. When we speak of impossibilities in reference to God, the impression is likely to be made upon the minds of the thoughtless that there is a limit to what may be called physical omnipotence; that there are purposes which God may *desire* to accomplish and yet find Himself *unable* to effect them.—This, however, is a gross mistake. He can do whatsoever He pleases in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. His *pleasure* is nothing different from His might. His volitions are *always* followed by corresponding operations of His hands. So inseparable is the idea of power from the will of the Almighty that it may, without extravagance, be asserted, that the *only efficient cause*, which exists in the Universe, is the fiat of the Deity. All other phenomena are *produced*, they are strictly and properly *effects*; this alone *produces*; speaks and it is done; commands and it stands fast. Physical causes are only dependent events in the great chain of contingencies fastened to the throne of God and differ from the appearances which are usually described as their effects in nothing but the order of time. Both alike are destitute of *power*, and we can never detect the presence of that mysterious and undefinable agent until we ascend to the throne of the Eternal. His *will* is the spring of universal motion; the cause of every effect.

If he should *will* the unconditional pardon of a sinner, the pardon would not only be possible, but would most certainly and infallibly take place. Whatever He *can* will, is possible, whatever He *does* will, is fact. His will is power.

When it is affirmed, consequently, that God cannot receive the sinner into favour, without satisfaction to His justice, the meaning is, that *He will not*; that however true it is, that He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, there are qualities of His Being, moral perfections of His nature, which make it as incongruous that He should will an unconditional pardon, as that He should deny Himself or forfeit His veracity. The impossibility is of the same sort as that which is asserted, when it is declared that "*He cannot lie.*"

The proof, therefore, of the necessity of atonement, must consist in showing, that the glory of God, especially the integrity of His moral character, indispensably demands that sin should be punished. To make it appear that any essential attribute of Deity would be seriously, or even at all, infringed by remitting the penalty, apart from the righteousness of the Law, is to furnish a complete demonstration, that arbitrary pardon can never be the object of the Divine volition; that whatever purposes of salvation may be cherished in the bosom of God, include the design of exacting the demands of justice from the person of a substitute, and that any other course, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, would involve as gross a contradiction as that the Strength of Israel should repent or lay aside His supremacy.

The common delusion, that the power of arresting

the sentence of a judge, is an essential element of sovereignty, has arisen, perhaps from the deceptive analogy of human institutions. The Chief Magistrate of every nation possesses the prerogative, in a certain department of cases, to commute, relax or dispense at discretion, with the punishment which the laws of the land have pronounced. This feature of human governments is nothing more than a contrivance to mitigate the evils which, under peculiar circumstances, that may often happen and yet that could not be defined in the terms of a statute, might result from the inflexible operation of general rules. To foresee the countless contingencies which control human conduct, to adjust the law to all the modifications of which crime is susceptible—to estimate, before-hand, the varieties of motives—of palliating and aggravating circumstances, which determine the malignity of guilt, is, evidently, a task, which, however important for the strict administration of justice, it is beyond the compass of human sagacity to achieve. The laws of men must consequently be general and extensive—grouping crimes by compendious descriptions into large classes and affixing the same penalty to each separate species, without respect to the individual differences that must necessarily obtain among them. Human Legislation, for the most part, must confine its view, to the *external expressions* and not to the *real character* of motives themselves. The outward acts being the same, but little allowance can be made for constitutional infirmities, violence of temptation, and the delicate shades of feeling in the inner man, which may impart very different degrees of malignity to the same action, as perpetrated by differ-

ent individuals. The consequence is, that civil punishments must sometimes transcend the sense of justice and the conviction of expediency, which should regulate the severity of the penal code. The imperfection too, of human tribunals may sometimes pervert the law through prejudice, weakness or corruption, and involve the innocent in the doom of the guilty. To correct these evils, arising from the necessary defect of human legislation, *the power of pardon*, as it is commonly denominated, though it is more properly a *check upon injustice*, is generally lodged with the Chief Executive Officer of the State. It does not belong to him as a prerogative of sovereignty; but simply as the guardian of the laws, who is bound to enforce them according to the letter, with an occasional discretion according to their spirit, when the letter would kill and the spirit would spare. The object is, *not, that he may pardon at discretion*, but that, under circumstances which could not have been foreseen by any human Legislature, and which, in the moral sense of the community, essentially modify the crime, he might prevent a result which was never really intended, but which, from the general terms of the law, seems to have been contemplated. If human governments were perfect; if rules could be framed with an exact adjustment to all the varieties of individual cases that could possibly come under them; if those appointed to administer them could be exempted from prejudice, partiality, weakness and corruption, no injustice could ever exist to be corrected; the dispensing power would be felt to be an evil; the moral sentiments of the community would in every case sustain the law; nothing could

plead for mercy, if indeed that can be called mercy, which, in the disguise of pity to an individual, is often the bitterest cruelty to the State; nothing could plead for mercy but a squeamish tenderness which it is effeminate to cherish and to which it would be wicked to yield. As the probabilities of occasional injustice under the inflexible operation of general rules constitute the true ground of arrangements for pardon in the State, no argument can be drawn from analogy in favour of a similar provision in the moral government of God. There error, mistake, partiality and corruption can have no place; there every case is determined upon its own individual merits and each man is rewarded or punished according to his conduct under laws adapted to all the varieties of motive and temptation. Such, in fact, is the consummate perfection of the Divine administration that actions are never tried in the mass, but estimated according to their minutest details.

The checks and balances which experience has suggested to adjust the inequalities of human constitutions are more than supplied; the need of them is completely obviated by the knowledge, wisdom, integrity and foresight which belong in infinite and unchanging proportions to the great Monarch of the Universe. The very reason *that justice may be done or injustice prevented*, which mitigates the sternness of human law, renders it equally important that the decisions of the Almighty should stand. *Our laws are flexible*; because we are liable to error. *God's laws are inflexible*; because, as judge of all the Earth, He must infallibly and always do right. The power

of dispensing with the law is no part of the conception of Sovereignty. To rule by arbitrary will, without reference to a fixed standard of moral distinctions; to change the law or its sanctions at pleasure, according to the dictates of caprice, prejudice, partiality, or expediency; to infuse uncertainty into the administration of justice, exciting expectations to day which shall be mocked to-morrow, and awakening imaginary fears only in sport; is the description of a despotism and not of Government; and he who sits supreme at the head of such a moral chaos or anarchy is not a *Sovereign*, but a *tyrant*. The true idea of sovereignty is that of power which is responsible *to none*, whose decisions *must* stand on the simple ground that there is no tribunal to reverse them. God is sovereign, not because He rules without law or can set it aside at discretion, but because He is supreme and irresponsible, giving none account of His matters to any above Him. In the fact that He accomplishes His pleasure among the armies of Heaven and the inhabitants of Earth; that none can say unto Him what doest thou, or demand the reasons of any of His dispensations—lies the true ground of His Sovereignty. His counsel *must* stand; from His decrees there is no appeal. He sits supreme at the head of the Universe; and, therefore, is truly and properly a Sovereign. To say that the power of pardon—that is, the power of changing the operation of the law—is an essential element of such a supremacy, is equivalent to saying that He cannot be Sovereign without being *fickle*—it is, in other words, to degrade His perfections in order to make Him the Disposer of events. The error has arisen from the partial atten-

tion to the fact that the prerogative of mercy in human institutions is generally committed to the representative of Sovereignty. The ground, however, of this arrangement is convenience and despatch. There is no reason, in the nature of things, why it might not be entrusted to an officer selected for the sole purpose of possessing it. To the Chief Magistrate it belongs, not in virtue of His office as a Ruler, but as a solemn trust from the community, which, for obvious reasons, can be more available in his hands than in any other depository.

The doctrine of the atonement has been defended upon principles, which, according to my apprehensions—and I would speak with profound respect of the opinions of such men as Grotius, Rutherford, Twiss and Magee—are not strictly applicable to Divine Institutions. They have represented satisfaction as demanded, not so much by the *justice* of God, as the *wisdom* of the measure, and have made it a matter rather of *expediency* than imperative *necessity*.\*

\* The following extract from Hill's Lectures, who has professedly followed Grotius, may be taken as a fair specimen of the sentiments of all those Divines who are mentioned in the text :

“The first principle upon which a fair statement of the Doctrine of the Atonement proceeds is this, that sin is a violation of law, and that the Almighty, in requiring an atonement in order to the pardon of sin, acts as the supreme lawgiver. \* \* \* \* If the Almighty, then, is to be regarded as a lawgiver, we must endeavour to rise to the most exalted conceptions which we are able to form of the plan of his moral government ; and for this purpose it is necessary that we should abstract from every kind of weakness which is incident to the administration of human governments, and lay hold of those principles and maxims which reason and experience teach us to consider as essential to a good government, and without which, it does not appear to us, that that expression has any meaning.— Now, it is the first principle of every good government, that laws are enacted for

They tacitly assume, if they do not positively assert, as the basis of their argument, the cardinal principle of modern politics, that the ultimate end of government is the good of the governed, and that the primary object of punishment is to inspire a salutary fear in the breasts of the subjects. It is, in other words, a moral

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the benefit of the community. The happiness of the whole body depends upon their being observed, for they would not have been enacted, if the observance of them had been a matter of indifference to the public. Hence every person who violates the laws, besides the disrespect which he shows to that authority by which they were enacted, besides the hurt which individuals may sustain by his action, does an injury to the public, because he disturbs that order and security which the laws establish. It is therefore essential to the excellence of government that there succeeds immediately after disobedience, what is called guilt, (i. e.) the desert of punishment, an obligation to suffer that which the law prescribes. Accordingly, in the code of laws of many northern nations, who were accustomed to estimate all crimes at certain rates, a murderer not only paid a sum to the relations of the deceased, as a compensation for their loss, but he paid a sum to the King for the breach of the peace. And in all countries, that which is properly called punishment, does not mean the putting the rights of a private party, who may have been immediately injured, in the same state in which they were before the trespass was committed, but it means the reparation made to the public for the suffering of the criminal, for the disorder arising from his breach of the laws. The law generally defines what the measure of this suffering shall be, and it is applied to particular cases by criminal judges, who, being only interpreters of the law, have no power to remit the punishment. It is true that, in most human governments, a power is lodged somewhere of granting pardon, because, from the imperfection which necessarily adheres to them, it may often be inexpedient or even unjust, that a person who has been legally condemned should suffer; and there are times when the legislature sees meet to pass acts of indemnity. But it is only in very particular circumstances that the safety of the state admits the escape of a criminal; and in most cases the supreme authority proceeds, not with wrath, but from a calm and fixed regard to the essential interests of the community, to deter other subjects from violating the laws, by exhibiting to their view punishment as the consequence of transgression. If we apply these maxims and principles, which appear to us implied in the very nature of good government, we shall find it impossible to conceive of God as a lawgiver, without thinking it essential to his character to punish transgression; and the perfection of his government, far from superseding this exercise of that character, seems to render it the more becoming and the more indispensable."—*Lectures Vol. 2, p. 51—53.*

expedient to save the law from contempt. To pardon the guilty upon a profession of repentance, however sincere, would be to destroy the dignity of government, to weaken the bands of authority and afford a premium to crime. As a measure of impolicy, therefore, likely to be dangerous to the interests of virtue, no wise ruler would resort to it. The efficacy of law depends so much upon the certainty of its sanctions, that no considerations, which *can* occur in the Government of God, should be permitted to arrest its operation. Severity to individuals is a public benefit. The character of the Ruler, too, might suffer in the eyes of his subjects from the appearance of vacillation, inconsistency and weakness, which a neglect to execute his threatenings, would perhaps, present. To maintain, therefore, the stability of government, to prevent rebellion, and to preserve respect for the person of the Lawgiver, it is highly proper that unconditional pardons should never be admitted. This is an outline of the argument by which vicarious satisfaction has been commonly defended.

To say nothing here of what will afterwards appear, that every single proposition in this chain of reasoning is false, it is evident that if the whole *were true*, the atonement is placed upon a basis too feeble to support so solid a fabric. Its *necessity* is not made out by showing that it is conducive to the ends of government. Government itself may be contingent and arbitrary; susceptible of change, relaxation or amendment. Unless the *law* be *immutable* and *necessary*, unconditional pardon, however inexpedient, would conflict with no principle of moral rectitude—it might

be *unwise*, but would not be *unjust*; *unsafe*, but not essentially *wrong*. There are, besides, serious objections to resting the atonement on the basis of expediency.

If it is to be resolved into reasons of state and treated as an expedient to prevent the evils of absolute forgiveness, then it produces no *direct* effect upon the mind of God, but reaches the Ruler through the medium of the subject. If its leading object is to render it possible to pardon with safety, then its operation is *primarily* upon the *objects* of favour and not upon the *author*. Though it is a *satisfaction*, yet its value depends, *not immediately upon its relation to the law*, but upon its tendency to deter from disobedience and to check the contagion of evil example. Just in proportion as it creates the conviction that transgression is dangerous and obedience safe, does it answer its *primary end*. Its being a *satisfaction to justice* is not necessary on the score of justice itself, but on account of the moral impression which, *as a satisfaction*, it is suited to stamp. Now if the production of such an impression were the grand result which God intended to achieve by the sufferings and death of His Son, the question naturally arises, whether it could not have been compassed by a less expensive and imposing arrangement. Expediency opens a boundless field of possibilities from which the wisdom of God might have chosen other contrivances, suited to signalize His hatred of sin and to deter from rebellion, without subjecting the innocent to the shame and agony of an awful crucifixion. It might, indeed, be a question, if the government of God depends upon no higher principles than those of expedi-

ency, whether *any* considerations of policy, could justify an act so extraordinary in its character, as the humiliation and death of God's Eternal Son? The obvious impression, under such circumstances, would seem to be, that the happiness of man was a more important object than the glory and blessedness of the Second Person in the adorable Godhead. Expediency holds the scales—it is settled that the law cannot be sacrificed—and the real question is, whether, on the score of public advantage, it is better that the guilty should suffer or that the Son should die. Accordingly we find that those, who have been most deeply imbued with utilitarian views of the Divine government, have not scrupled to deny the reality of the penal sufferings of our Lord.†

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† “Thus far we have been examining and attempting to ascertain, precisely, the nature of the difficulty which it was the business of the atonement to remove.—The difficulty, it appears, consists wholly in the second ground of punishment; that is, in the necessity of distributive justice to the well-being of the universe. To remove this difficulty; or to enable God righteously to pardon the repenting sinner; the atonement must give the same support to law, or must display as impressively the perfect holiness and justice of God, as the execution of the law on transgressors would. It must be something different from the execution of the law itself; because it is to be a substitute for it, something which will render it safe and proper to suspend the regular course of distributive justice. If such an expedient can be found, then an adequate atonement is possible: otherwise it is not. Now such an expedient, the text represents the sacrifice of Christ to be.—It is “a declaration of the righteousness of God; so that he might be just,”—might secure the objects of distributive justice, as it becomes a righteous moral governor to do; “and yet might justify,” or acquit and exempt from punishment, him that believeth in Jesus. It was, in the nature of it, an exhibition or proof of the righteousness of God. It did not consist in an execution of the law on any being whatever; for it was a substitute for an execution of it. It did not annihilate the guilt of transgressors, or cause them to be either really or apparently innocent; for this was impossible; it rather proclaimed the atrocity of the guilt. It did not fulfil the law, or satisfy its demands on transgressors; for then their acquittal would have been an act of justice, not of grace; and the atonement would have been but another mode of executing the law itself, not a substitute for it. Its immedi-

They deny that He made a satisfaction to justice, since the moral impression which, according to this scheme,

ate influence was not on the characters and relations of men as transgressors, nor on the claims of the law upon them. Its direct operation was on the feelings and the apprehensions of the beings at large, who are under the moral government of God. In two respects, it coincided precisely with a public execution of the law itself: its immediate influence was on the same persons; and that influence was produced in the same way,—by means of a public exhibition. For what is a public execution of the law on culprits; but a public exhibition? and an exhibition which is intended to affect the feelings and the apprehensions of the community;—to impress them all with high respect and reverence for the law, that stern guardian of the public weal? The atonement to be a proper substitute for the execution of the law, ought to be a public exhibition; and such an exhibition as would impress all the creatures of God with a deep and awful sense of the majesty and sanctity of his law, of the criminality of disobedience to it, and of the holy, unbending rectitude of God as a moral governor. And such, according to the text, the atonement really was. It was an exhibition or manifestation of the righteousness of God; and an exhibition of such a nature, as must strike every intelligent beholder with astonishment. It was a transaction, without a parallel in the history of the divine government. The Son of God, the Lord of Glory, himself descended to this lower world. He veiled his godhead in a human body, and humbled himself to dwell with men. He toiled and bore reproach, and suffered from pain and weariness and hunger. He condescended to instruct men, to be their physician, their friend, their very servant; he washed his disciples' feet. He was obedient to every ordinance of God and man, he fulfilled all righteousness. He suffered himself to be reviled and persecuted, to be arraigned, condemned and crucified. He expired amidst the mockery of Jews and the insults of a Roman soldiery. That this was an astonishing exhibition, an exhibition calculated to fill the mind with wonder and amazement, every one feels instantly. The only difficulty is to understand how this exhibition was a display of the righteousness of God.—To solve it, some have resorted to the supposition that the Son of God became our sponsor, and satisfied the demands of the law on us, by suffering in our stead. But to this hypothesis there are strong objections. To suppose that Christ was really and truly our sponsor, and that he suffered in this character, would involve such a transfer of legal obligations and liabilities and merits, as is inadmissible: and to suppose any thing short of this, will not explain the difficulty. For if, while we call him a sponsor, we deny that he was legally holden or responsible for us, and liable in equity to suffer in our stead; we assign no intelligible reason, why his sufferings should avail any thing for our benefit, or display at all the righteousness of God. Besides, this hypothesis,—like all the others which suppose the Son of God to have first entered into a close, legal connexion with sinful men, and afterwards to have redeemed them,—would make the atonement to be a legal satisfaction for

constitutes the end of the atonement, could be as easily effected by a symbolical display. The sentiments of Murdock and those of Grotius diverge at this point. The Hopkinsian Divine discards satisfaction, because he supposes that the objects of government could be accomplished without it, the Semi-Socinian admits satisfaction, because he felt that vicarious suffering was the only basis for the desired impression. They reason upon the same general principle, although their conclusions are flatly contradictory. The Hopkinsian, to my mind, has the advantage in the argument. We can evidently see no wisdom in an arrangement in which

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sin; and then the acquittal of the sinner would be no pardon at all, but would follow in the regular course of law. We must, therefore, resort to some other solution. And what is more simple and at the same time satisfactory than that which is suggested by the text? The atonement was an exhibition or display. That is, it was a symbolical transaction. It was a transaction, in which God and His Son were the actors; and they acted in perfect harmony, though performing different parts in the august drama. The Son in particular passed voluntarily through various scenes of humiliation and sorrow and suffering; while the Father looked on with all that tenderness and deep concern, which he—and none but he—could feel. The object of both in this affecting tragedy, was to make an impression on the minds of rational beings every where, and to the end of time. And the impression to be made was, that God is a holy and righteous God; that while inclined to mercy, he cannot forget the demands of justice, and the danger to his kingdom from the pardon of the guilty, that he must show his feelings on this subject, and show them so clearly and fully, that all his rational creatures shall feel that he honours his law while suspending its operation, as much as he would by the execution of it. But how, it may be asked, are these things expressed or represented by this transaction. The answer is symbolically. The Son of God came down to our world, to do and to suffer what he did; not merely for the sake of doing those acts and enduring those sorrows, but for the sake of the impression to be made on the minds of all beholders, by his labouring and suffering in this manner. In this sense, it was a symbolical transaction. And the import or meaning of it, as of every other symbol, is to be learned either from the circumstances and occasion of it, or from the explanation that accompanies it.”—*Murdock's Sermon on Nature of the Atonement*, p. 20, 24.

the means are vastly disproportioned to the end. Even to finite creatures like ourselves, it is possible to conceive of *other* plans beside the penal death of the Redeemer, by which sin might have been rebuked and the government of God maintained, if the only object had been to devise a scheme for dispensing mercy with safety. The strong language of the Apostle, however, which represents this as the *only* means by which God could accomplish the end He had in view, is utterly inexplicable, if the atonement were nothing but a stroke of policy; and those who adopt this view, it deserves to be remarked, are not willing to assert that the mediation of Christ was, in such a sense, necessary as that God *could* not, consistently with His glory, pardon without it. They speak of it as *wise*, *fit* and *proper*, but not as *absolutely* necessary.† The difficulty of

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† “When, therefore, Grotius, Stillingfleet, and Clarke, are charged (as they are in H. Taylor’s B. Mord. Let. 5) with contending for “the necessity of a vindication of God’s honour, either by the suffering of the offenders, or by that of Christ in their room,” they are by no means to be considered as contending, that it was impossible for God to have established such a dispensation as might enable him to forgive the sinner without some satisfaction to his justice, (which is the sense forcibly put upon their words :) but that, according to the method and dispensation which God’s wisdom *has* chosen, there results a *moral necessity* of such vindication, founded in the *wisdom* and *prudence* of a Being, who has announced himself to mankind, as an upright Governor, resolved to maintain the observance of his laws. That by the *necessity* spoken of, is meant but a *moral necessity*, or, in other words, a *fitness* and propriety, Dr. Clarke himself informs us: for he tells us (Sermon 137, vol. 2. p. 142. fol. ed.) that, “when the honour of God’s laws had been diminished by sin, it was *reasonable* and *necessary* in respect of God’s *wisdom in governing* the world, that there should be a vindication,” &c. And again, (Sermon 138, vol. 2, p. 150,) in answer to the question, “Could not God, if he had pleased, absolutely, and of his supreme authority, without any sufferings at all, have pardoned the sins of those, whose repentance he thought fit to accept?” he says, “It becomes not us to presume to say he had not *power* so to do:” but that there seems a *fitness*, in his testifying his indignation against sin; and “the

pardon, according to their view, does not spring from the essential attributes of God, but from the views of His Government likely to be taken by His subjects—and the result of the Saviour's sacrifice has been, not that God might be *just*, though that is true, but that He might be *safe* in justifying those who believe on Jesus. The fundamental error of this whole scheme is an inadequate conception of the origin and nature of the Divine government and of the principal end of Divine punishments. Correct apprehensions upon these points will furnish a triumphant vindication of the indispensable necessity of vicarious satisfaction in order to the exercise of grace.

Plausible and common as the doctrine is, it seems

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death of Christ was *necessary*, to make the pardon of sin reconcilable, not perhaps, absolutely, with *strict justice*, (for we cannot presume to say that God might not, consistently with mere *justice*, have remitted as much of his own right as he pleased,)—but it is *necessary*, at least in *this* respect, to make the pardon of sin consistent with the *wisdom* of God, in his good government of the world, and to be a *proper attestation* of his irreconcilable hatred against all unrighteousness.”—That the word *necessary* is imprudently used by Dr. Clarke and others, I readily admit, as it is liable to be misunderstood, and furnishes matter of evil to those who would misrepresent the whole of the doctrine. But it is evident from the passages I have cited, that, so far from considering the sacrifice of Christ as a *debt* paid to, because rigorously exacted by, the divine *justice*, it is represented by Dr. Clarke, and generally understood, merely as a fit expedient, demanded by the *wisdom* of God, whereby mercy might be safely administered to sinful man. Now, it is curious to remark, that H. Taylor, who so warmly objects to this notion of a necessity of vindicating God's honour, as maintained by Dr. Clarke, &c, when he comes to reply to the Deist, in defence of the scheme of Christ's mediation, uses a mode of reasoning that seems exactly similar: “God (B. Morde. Let 5.) was not *made* placable by intercession, but was ready and willing to forgive, before, as well as after, and only waited to do it *in such a manner as might best show his regard to righteousness*.”—Is not this in other words saying, there was a *fitness* and consequently a *moral necessity*, that God should forgive sins through the intercession and meritorious obedience of Christ, for the purpose of *vindicating his glory as a righteous Governor*?—*Magee's Discourses, Vol. 1, p. 187.*

to me to be unquestionably false, that the primary object of the Divine government is the good of the subjects. This is to confound the ultimate end with an incidental advantage ; the final cause with a collateral effect. Happiness, having no separate and independent existence of its own, can never be made a separate and independent object of pursuit—it is a state of mind resulting from the possession of that which is suited to extinguish pain and to gratify desire. As there is no philosopher's stone for transmuting vulgar materials into gold, and for supplying men with wealth without diligence, activity and industry in the lucrative pursuits of life, so there are no means of imparting to them happiness, without imparting to them the objects which, from their relations to the state and affections of the heart, are usually denominated good. The highest felicity, it is true, accrues to the creature from uniform obedience to the law of God—but the law was not established on account of its *tendencies* to promote the enjoyment of the subject ; these tendencies, on the other hand, result from the *adaptation* of the *subject* to the law. The government of God was not adjusted with reference to man, but man was constituted with reference to it. To make the creature an *end* to the Creator, and not the Creator an *end* to the creature, is to reverse the natural order, making that supreme which is only subordinate, and that subordinate which is truly supreme. From the nice and beautiful proportions which exist, in an unfallen state, between the moral capacities of the creature, and the circumstances in which he is placed, he finds with the Psalmist, that the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, and that per-

fect peace is the inheritance of those who love the testimonies of God. The affections of the subject, while yet a stranger to sin, move in such perfect harmony with the wheels of Government, that the rarest beatitude is the inseparable fruit of obedience. Still the production of happiness was not *the* end which God proposed in the promulgation of His law; it was contemplated as an effect, a subordinate and incidental effect, which would infallibly take place upon the accomplishment of the nobler purposes which determined the decisions of His will. The true end of the Divine Government, as of all the institutions of the Almighty, must be sought, not in the good of the creature, however certainly promoted, but in the GLORY OF GOD.— This is the only object which is worth the attention of the Eternal Mind, and as it includes in itself all that is exalted in excellence, illustrious in truth, charming in beauty and delightful in goodness, the steady prosecution of it is an unfailing pledge of the ultimate prosperity and triumph of whatever can adorn, dignify or please. No danger can be apprehended to the Universe while He who sits supreme at its head, is the Father of truth, the fountain of purity and the patron of right. It is His glory to be what He is. The possession of infinite perfections and the enjoyment within Himself of unchanging blessedness, independence and self-sufficiency, are characteristics of the Deity which render it impossible that His manifold works should spring from any other motive but the counsel of His Own will. To reveal Himself, to declare what He is; to make known the properties of His Being; to manifest His glory by inscribing His character upon the

achievements of His hand, is the great design with which He spread the Heavens above us, adorned the earth beneath us and peopled it with plants, animals and men. What are called the natural or physical attributes of God, are displayed by His works as passive recipients of the impressions of knowledge, power and wisdom, which He has enstamped upon them. The Heavens declare God's glory and the firmament showeth His handiwork, not because they are conscious themselves of the High destiny they fulfil, but because the intelligent beholder traces the Divine Providence, wisdom, and power in their being, harmony and motions.

The moral perfections of God, which constitute pre-eminently His glory, cannot be *passively* displayed. Traces of justice, fidelity and truth cannot be detected in inanimate objects, nor impressed upon involuntary agents. If the Deity should blot from existence every moral creature and suffer every other portion of His works to stand, there would not, in all the compass of the Universe, be a single object to reflect the beauty of His Holiness! Nature would be dumb in reference to the very characteristics of the Godhead which render it supremely and ineffably blessed. It is hard to conceive that a creation destitute of moral intelligencies, incapable of love, gratitude or truth, could be an object of complacent contemplation to God. His own blessedness is unquestionably derived from the moral perfections of His being. Wisdom, knowledge and power possess no inherent and essential glory apart from their subserviency to the interests of holiness.—Invest a being with unlimited might, sagacity and

knowledge, and deprive Him, at the same time, of integrity of character, and you make him an object of detestation to others, and a burden to Himself. Severed from goodness, knowledge is craft, power is violence and sagacity is fraud. Taking *life* as a compendious expression for all the elements which constitute felicity, it may be truly said that the *life* of God is His HOLINESS.

We are accustomed to take quite too limited a view of the material Universe of God. In its relations to us, it may, perhaps, be true that it rises no higher in the scale of dignity than to reveal the natural perfections of its author. But the complacency with which He beholds it, the ground on which He pronounced it very good, is probably the part which it is appointed to play, in that grand and comprehensive economy of things, whose final scope is to manifest His glory as a Being of eternal rectitude. No doubt, unity of purpose pervades all the works of the Almighty. The scheme of His government is one—and though there be wheels within wheels, plans within plans, all move on in unbroken harmony, and tend to a common result. There is a subordination of parts—the inanimate to the living—the material to the spiritual—the spiritual to the moral, and all to the glory of God, and when He casts the eye of His omniscience upon any portion of His works, He delights not in it as an isolated fragment, however perfect in its kind, or however clearly displaying any single perfection of His nature—but as a means tending, in its proper place, to the developement of the great result, which the *whole* was designed to accomplish. The columns, arches and

canopy of the temple are not admired upon their own account, but on account of their relations to the magnificent structure which they support, cement and adorn.

Such being the pre-eminence of moral distinctions; it is evidently no extravagance to assert, that the subordination of its parts to a *moral end* is the probable cause of the creation of the universe and the measure of God's complacency in it. But as His moral perfections cannot be passively displayed—as they are essentially active and require active elements to receive the impressions of them, there must be creatures endowed with understanding, conscience, affections and will, capable of bearing the image of His holiness, of appreciating the distinctions of right and wrong and feeling the supremacy of moral truth. While the habitations to which they are assigned display the natural perfections of Deity, they themselves, in their moral constitution, are mirrors to reflect His rectitude. Such creatures God can not only contemplate with pleasure, as He does every other portion of His works; He can even enter into communion with them—a foundation is laid for sympathy of affection and reciprocity of love.

To such beings, God *must* sustain the relation of a Ruler. It is through His law that a permanent and faithful exhibition is made of the eternal principles of holiness which belong to the essence of the Godhead. That government is not a matter of expediency—it is indispensably necessary—springs spontaneously from the bosom of God and can only cease with the cessation of His Being.

Where the elements, which constitute the adequate

idea of government, competent authority, a rule of action and a suitable sanction, all arise from necessary relations, it cannot be a question whether the regiment itself is a contingent result, due to the dictates of benevolence and policy, or a natural event, the offspring of unchanging truth and morality.

In the present case, the *authority* which prescribes the law is an inalienable right. The relation in which the Creator stands to His creatures makes them, in the strictest sense, His *property*. It is a settled principle of political philosophy that labour, in some form, either intellectual or physical, producing new combinations, or changing existing materials, is the ultimate foundation among men of the right to appropriate. The product of one's own industry and skill sustains a relation to himself which it bears to no other being; and as *they* are *his own*, part and parcel of his own existence, that on which they have been expended, becomes, in some sense, a portion of himself and subject to the control of his will. But the production of value by the application of labor is a feeble image of the power of creation: and if society instinctively recognizes the claims of its members to the operations of their hands, how much higher and more absolute is the right of the Almighty to appropriate, control and govern, the offspring of His own omnipotence and will? "In Him we live and move and have our being." "It is He that hath made us and not we, ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." The Psalmist accordingly traces the supremacy of God to the dependence of all things upon Him for their original existence.— "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above

all Gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth, the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His and He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." But if creation invests in the Almighty an absolute right to the disposal of His creatures, His constant preservation of man and beast is a continual augmentation of His title. To keep in being is no less a stretch of power than to create out of nothing. To God as a *creator*, we are all indebted for *original existence*—to God as a *preserver*, we are equally indebted for *present existence*, and, therefore, preservation, from its uniformity and constancy, gives a perfect title to each successive moment in the history of every individual. It is indeed, a question, whether preservation be any thing distinct from a continued creation; whether the *tendency* to nothing which the one resists does not require the exercise of the same power, in the same degree, as the original nihility which the other destroys.

If then, upon the solid basis of creation and preservation, God possesses an unquestionable propriety in all His creatures, *they* are under a corresponding *obligation* to acknowledge His dominion. Their dependence upon Him for past, present and continued existence, makes it a matter of imperative duty to submit to *His authority*. The very confession that they are *His property* is a confession that His *will* is their law—Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? The *right* to govern,

therefore, is not a contingent and accidental privilege; but a *necessary result* of the mutual relations of Creature and Creator.

The dependence of the creature and the independence of God give rise to a radical and important difference in the sources respectively of their moral actions. God's holiness, justice, fidelity and truth spring from *necessity of nature*. He is under no *obligation* to do right, because He acknowledges no superior, whose will can be law to Him—still He can *never fail* to do right, because the perfections of His nature are more certain and necessary in producing unchanging rectitude of conduct than the operation of a law. He does right, in other words, because such is His nature that He *cannot do wrong*—not because He is *bound* to give account of any of His matters to any tribunal above Him. Now the authority of God stands to the actions of a creature in the same relation which *necessity of nature* sustains to His Own. Hence a moral creature is *necessarily* the subject of *obligation*. It must seek the *law* of its being beyond itself—the reasons—the ultimate standard of its conduct must be found in a superior *will* to which it is responsible.—The fundamental principle in the moral code of all created intelligences is, and must be, that the authority of their Creator is absolute, final and complete.—Hence the *will of God*, in whatever way expressed, is to them *the sole standard* of moral obligation. To deny this principle would be to make the creature *independent*. The confirmation in holiness, which is a large ingredient in the blessedness of angels and of saints, does not imply holiness by absolute necessity of

nature—but such a continued communication of the grace of God as cherishes in their hearts an uniform conviction of dependence and an uniform regard to the glory and will of the Creator. The perfection of the just is, in no proper sense, a law to them—it does not constitute their standard of conduct—they cannot make it the measure of their actions. It is the prerogative of God alone to be a law of rectitude to Himself; and the most exalted spirits must ever continue to venerate His will as the source of their duty, the fountain of their blessedness and the medium of sympathy with His goodness.

As the relationship which subsists between God and His creatures is such as to invest Him with an absolute right to exact obedience from them, the question, upon which the *necessity* of government must turn, is whether or not it is a matter of arbitrary discretion to prescribe a law. It would seem to be impossible but that a *rule* of some sort, either formally or virtually expressed, must be imparted. As dependence is the very condition of its being, the creature would possess no authority to move, to exert a single faculty or to love a single quality, without some manifestation of the Divine pleasure. There must be some indication, direct or indirect, negative or positive, of the *will of God*, or the powers of a moral agent could be no more employed, nor its susceptibilities developed, than a stock or a stone be set into motion without the impression of an external force. The creature is the *absolute property* of its Maker and has no right to think its own thoughts or indulge its own inclinations. To say that the constitution of its nature would *ne-*

*cessarily impel* it to some form of action, is only to assert that the *will of God*, to which the peculiar tendencies of its constitution must be ultimately traced, has been indirectly communicated. *Any* expression of the Divine will is law. It is not the *mode* of expressing it that determines the obligation of the creature; it is the *reality* of the fact. That mode may be by extraordinary signs; by written communications; by an authorized ambassador, or by the constitution of the mind. But the will of the Creator, *once known*, is, *law* to the creature. When, therefore, we inquire into the *necessity* of government, the single question is whether or not God possesses *any will* at all in regard to the conduct of intelligent agents. If He possesses *any*, be it of what character it may, that *will* is their rule and *necessarily* places them under a government. To assert that He is totally destitute of any will in relation to their conduct, involves a palpable contradiction.—To express *no will by external signs*, is to leave them to their own discretion; making it right for them to do what, under other circumstances, would be grossly censurable. To mark out no particular line of conduct by positive commandment, is to commit them to the desires, affections and impulses of their own nature—it is indirectly to declare that the *will* of their Maker accords with the propensities and bias of their own minds. According to the very terms of the hypothesis, they are *agents*, they must *act*; now if the will of God is indifferent to the course of conduct to be pursued, that is equivalent to saying that it is *His will* that they should act precisely as they pleased. To follow nature—the old stoical maxim—would be, under such

circumstances, as truly the *law* of their being as it was the expression of the Divine will in the original constitution of their minds. It is true that in such a condition they could do no wrong—because the *will* of *God* is supposed to tolerate every thing without distinction of qualities. Government then, in some form or other, *must exist*. A creature has no more right to *act* than it has power to *be*, without the consent of the Almighty. Dependence, absolute, complete, inalienable, is the law of its existence. Whatever it performs must be in the way of *obedience*; there can be no *obedience* without an indication of the will of a *ruler*; and no such indication without a *government*. It is, therefore, undeniably necessary that to justify a creature in *acting at all*, there must be some expression more or less distinct, direct or indirect, of the will of its Creator. As then the Almighty, from the very necessity of the case, must *will* to establish *some* rule, we are prepared to inquire what *kind* of government the perfections of His nature would impel Him to institute.

It should not be forgotten that the great end in all His works, and especially the creation and support of intelligent agents, is to declare the glory of His name; to manifest, particularly, the moral attributes which adorn and exalt His character. The specific end for which conscience, understanding and will were imparted to them was, that they might love, venerate and praise the ineffable holiness of their Maker and exemplify, in the state of their own minds, the moral perfections of the Deity. It was the purpose of their being that they might be “imitators of God as dear chil-

dren." To suppose, that the object of their existence should be disregarded by Himself; that He would abandon the end which he proposed to achieve in the noblest specimens of His power; or adopt no efficient measures to secure it, is to attribute an inconsistency, weakness and folly to the Supreme Disposer of events, which would disgrace the humblest subject of His law. The immutability of His counsel is a firm guarantee that He would institute a government and prescribe a rule which should stand as a memorial to all generations of those eternal principles of rectitude, which spring from His essence and regulate all the decisions of His will. The nature of the Divine Being as imperatively demands that the law of His dominions should be *moral*, as the dependence of the creature requires that a law should exist. That the distinctions between right and wrong are not the arbitrary creatures of the Divine will, but essential emanations from the holiness of God, is a proposition which lies at the basis of immutable morality. To say that God is, in such a sense, the author of virtue as to deny to it a standard, apart from the decisions of the Divine will, is virtually to affirm that His own perfections are the contingent acquisitions of choice and not the unchangeable properties of His Being. How God could be pre-eminently glorious on account of His holiness, when holiness itself was only an accidental accomplishment, and no essential element of a just definition of the Deity, it is impossible for me to comprehend.

That moral distinctions are eternal, necessary and immutable, results, beyond a possibility of doubt, from what we are taught in the Scriptures concerning the Divine

Existence. If the unity of God implied unity of Person, it would be hard, perhaps impossible, to conceive, how He could have been a *moral being* when as yet there existed no object but Himself on which His affections might be placed. The terms which, in every language, are expressive of moral perfections seem to point us to the existence of society as the only theatre in which they can be developed or expand. Truth, justice, benevolence, fidelity and love, are as obviously social affections as they are moral accomplishments; and if there was ever a period when God was a solitary Being in the depths of eternity, how could benevolence, fidelity or love have existed in Him except as susceptibilities dormant in His nature, ready to be unfolded, whenever an opportunity should offer? Where was the field for the unceasing activity of His high and glorious perfections? I confess that to my mind absolute solitude of Being is wholly incompatible with the actual exercise of moral qualities. Society is the element of virtue; and hence, I turn with delight to those representations of the Scriptures in which it is implied that God is necessarily *social* as well as holy; that such is the nature of His Essence, that while absolutely *one*, it exists eternally in a threefold distinction of *Persons*. The social relations of the Trinity—the mysterious intercourse of the Father, the Son and the Spirit—springing from the inscrutable nature of the Godhead—involve the existence of moral accomplishments on a magnificent and splendid scale. Whether, however, the personal distinctions of the Godhead are the *foundation* of its moral perfections or not, it is certain that its social relations must have been the source

of eternal confusion and disorder, unless they had been marked by the strictest integrity, fidelity and truth.

If we are not permitted to assert that God is holy, *because* He is social, and *necessarily* holy, *because necessarily* social, we may yet with confidence maintain—that being social, He *must* be holy; since to deny to Him moral distinctions would be to attribute to His nature elements *destructive* of *society*. It may be disputed whether moral relations pre-suppose social relations as the necessary condition of their existence, but it cannot be denied that *social* relations imperatively demand the exercise of moral perfections in order to harmony, perpetuity and peace. If then, as the Scriptures assert, God is, by necessity of nature, a *social* Being, the conclusion inevitably follows that He is, by the same necessity, a *moral* Being. The expressions of His will must, therefore, be in conformity with the holiness of His Essence. The law which he prescribes as the standard of duty to His creatures must be a transcript of those perfections which He cannot disregard without ceasing to be God. The necessity of His nature determines the decisions of His will—and as He Himself is holy, the law must be holy, just and good.

The confusion of the *grounds* of obligation and the *nature* of virtue has involved the discussion of the immutability of moral distinctions in no little perplexity. There is no doubt, from the necessary dependence of its being, that the creature is *bound* to be holy because its Creator *commands* it. The Divine will is the only standard of moral obligation. But there must be *rea-*

*sons* for the command itself. To attribute a self-determining power to the will of the Almighty, when it is acknowledged to be an imperfection among men; to suppose that His approbation of virtue is the result of choice, and that He might be indifferent, or even opposed to it, would contradict our most exalted conceptions of His character. The motives, whatever they are, which operate on the mind of the Eternal in prescribing the command, determine the *nature* of virtue. The *reasons* of *His-making* it a duty, define its *essence*. Still that it *is* a duty, is owing exclusively to the expression of His will. Our obligation does not depend upon abstract speculations on its origin, qualities or fitness; be its nature what it may, it is law to us, because the Creator, who possesses an absolute propriety in us, has marked it out as the rule of our conduct. Hence we by no means, as some have supposed, derogate from the authority of the Divine will as the standard of *obligation*, when we go beyond it and attempt to discover in the essential perfections of the Deity the grounds of it. These, in a modified sense, are a *law* to Himself; the standard of His own decrees; the ultimate source of His purposes and acts.

Two principal elements of government, competent authority on the part of the Governor, and a rule of life for the guidance of the governed, having been shown to spring necessarily from the mutual relations of God and the creature; the character of the law as moral, reflecting the beauty of the Divine perfections, in opposition to a system of arbitrary precepts, having been also evinced, it remains to be inquired whether the third and last

element, the penal sanction, is likewise necessary, or is merely the dictate of public policy.

If the most important object of punishment, as civilians generally assert, is the *prevention of crime*, the question is settled. It becomes, then, a choice of expedients, and no reasons exist in the nature of things, why this particular method should be adopted in preference to any other scheme promising equal success. If it be nothing but a *means to an end*, it falls within the province of wisdom, to be settled by considerations of fitness and expediency, and is, therefore, not to be discussed upon those eternal principles of rectitude which constitute the glory of God. According to this view punishment is the demand, not of *justice*, but of *public good*, was instituted by *policy* and not by *right*, a conclusion so abhorrent to the instinctive sentiments of man that the premises, however plausible, *must* be false, from which it is deduced.

Even in human governments, which contemplate the *injury* rather than the *wickedness* of actions, penal laws cannot be sustained upon the *sole* basis of expediency. Nothing can be punished as *hurtful* which is not felt to be *vicious*. The moral sympathies of the people must be in harmony with the considerations of policy which determine the objects and severity of punishment, or the government will come to be regarded as an odious and intolerable tyranny. It is a strong proof of God's disapprobation of sin that it carries stamped upon its face a character of mischief to the State, which leagues society against it as a common nuisance, and makes its expulsion or restraint a public benefit as well as the satisfaction of a moral impulse.

Such is the inseparable connection of social and moral order, that whatever is hurtful to the one is prejudicial to the other; and as it is the purpose of God that men should live in a condition of society, He has made interest exactly to coincide with duty; so that the patronage of virtue is the surest safeguard of public prosperity; and as nothing can be really pernicious, which is not also morally wrong, He has so tempered the social constitution, that all punishments must be founded in moral principles. It is the *viciousness* of actions, that renders them *punishable*. Expediency may regulate the measure and extent of the punishment; but something higher must settle the preliminary question whether they shall be punished at all or not.

The principle, therefore, is not true, even in reference to human institutions, that the penalty of the law is the mere creature of expediency. Punishment, in the State, always pre-supposes *crime*, as well as *injury*, and though the State chiefly aims to *prevent* the *injury*, yet it is the *crime* which justifies the remedy to the moral sense of the community. Hence the origin of penal laws, must ultimately be traced to *convictions* of *justice*, and not to *calculations* of *policy*.

That this is pre-eminently true of the Divine administration is obvious from the fact, that punishments are inflicted, and that with the intensest severity, when no motives of expediency could be conceived to operate. Where will be the need, when the just shall be exempt from the contingency of rebellion; when angels shall be confirmed in holiness and when both together, united under a common Head, shall enjoy the security of grace, where will be the need of stimulating diligence

by the terrors of example; of torturing the guilty for the good of the innocent? What are the motives of expediency that shall then doom the disobedient to the regions of despair and expose them a prey to the undying worm and the fire that shall never be quenched?

The perpetuity of its torments, long after it has ceased to inspire a salutary fear, the *continuance* of its horrors when none are in danger of transgression; when absolute security prevails in every loyal province of God's empire; when the grace of the Redeemer has forever placed angels and just men beyond the possibility of temptation and of sin, is a conclusive proof that the fires of hell were never kindled by the breath of expediency; that its shame and agony, and anguish are owing to principles eternal as its own darkness; immutable as its own despair. That the eternity of future punishment, by operating as a perpetual motive upon the minds of the saints, is subservient to their stability, may possibly be true; but to say that this is the *only* account which can be given of it, or that the only reason of the second death, is to preserve the living from its woe is to shock every generous impulse of humanity. That would indeed be a *terrible* administration, which purchased an incidental good at so transcendent a sacrifice of individual felicity. It would be an awful exhibition of benevolence to promote happiness by the spectacle of miseries which human language is incompetent to express, and the human understanding unable to conceive; a strange doctrine, that hell was reared to display God's mercy, and that the groans of the damned and the wailings of the pit are songs of praise to the *goodness* of God.

It is no trivial objection to the doctrine, that the primary end of punishment is the public good; that upon the supposition of the existence of only a single moral agent, no provision is made for punishment as distinct from discipline. The *eternal* banishment of such an individual from God would be wholly inexplicable; and yet the Scriptures unquestionably inculcate the doctrine, that *all* unrighteousness of *every* transgressor, apart from his relations to other moral creatures, is the object of God's abhorrence and the everlasting visitations of His wrath. Extreme cases, however improbable, are a test of the accuracy of principles.

As the government of God is founded in His right to exact obedience from His creatures, and as His law expresses the eternal rectitude of His nature, the characteristic end of punishment must evidently be, not the promotion of the public good—this, though a *certain*, is only an *incidental result*—but to enforce the authority of the Ruler and to illustrate the estimate He puts upon His law, or the light in which He regards disobedience. As the primary design of all His institutions is to glorify Himself, we must seek for the object of each of the elements which characterize His law in its relations to the peculiar *perfections of His Own* nature, and not to the interests of man.—Taking our departure from this point it is easy to show, that, in the government of God, penal sanctions are indispensably necessary. Without them a sense of *obligation* cannot be produced, and God's hatred of sin cannot be expressed. The moral conduct of a creature must be regulated with a specific reference to the

*authority* of its Maker; there must be a distinct recognition of His right to command. Whatever may be the matter of its actions, their form must be derived from a sense of obligation, corresponding to the right which exists to rule. They must be done specifically as something *due*. Now there can be no such sense of obligation when a law is not enforced by a penal sanction. In that case, the obedience of the creature must be the result, not of authority, but of persuasion. A precept without a penalty, is only advice, or in the strongest view, is simply a *request*; rewards without punishments are nothing but inducements; and a dispensation conducted upon such principles, is evidently a system of *persuasion* and not of *authoritative government*. Obedience is compliance with the impulse of *our own* minds, and not submission to the rightful demands of another; we act right to *please ourselves*, and not to *please the Almighty*. We recognize, not *His will*, but *our own* gratification. Such absolute sovereignty, even in doing what is materially right, is inconsistent with the dependence of a creature. The essential principle of all its morality must be compliance with the *will of God*, not because it is grateful to our nature or adapted to our impulses, but because it is *His will*. It belongs to the Deity alone to follow nature—all the creatures of His power are creatures of *obligation*. The constitution of our minds may be a medium through which the will of the Almighty is revealed, but we are required to yield to its propensities, not because we are so constituted, but because our Creator demands it. In all instances in which the frame and temper of our minds are inconsistent with

the precepts of His mouth, we are to crucify nature and follow God. His will, however communicated, is *our only law*. Now in order that it may be felt *as law* and produce a corresponding sense of obligation, it *must* be enforced by a *penal sanction*. This upholds and supports the authority of the Creator; it keeps prominently in view the dependence of the creature; and contrasts the just supremacy of the one with the proper subordination of the other. It is remarkable that in all languages the term which expresses a conviction of duty is drawn from the analogy of physical violence; showing the universal sentiment of the race, that moral obligation is a species of force; a sort of bondage or constraint; a necessity laid upon the subject which he dares not resist. If I may be allowed to repeat what I have formerly uttered from this desk: the least attention to our moral emotions and the language by which the universal consent of the race has uniformly described them, must convince us that conscience is a prospective principle—that its decisions are by no means final, but only the preludes of a higher sentence to be pronounced by a higher court. It derives all its authority from anticipations of the future. It brings before us the dread tribunal of eternal justice and almighty power,—it summons us to the awful presence of God—it wields His thunder, and wears His smiles. When a man of principle braves calumny, reproach and persecution—when he stands unshaken in the discharge of duty, amid public opposition and private treachery—when no machinations of malice or seductions of flattery can cause him to bend from the path of integrity, that must be a powerful support

through which he can bid defiance to the "storms of fate." He must feel that a strong arm is underneath him, and though the eye of sense can perceive nothing in his circumstances but terror, confusion and dismay, he sees his mountain surrounded by "chariots of fire and horses of fire," which sustain his soul in unbroken tranquillity. In the approbation of his conscience, the light of the Divine countenance is lifted up upon him, and he feels the strongest assurance that all things shall work together for his ultimate good. Conscience anticipates the rewards of the just; and in the conviction which it inspires of Divine protection, lays the foundation of heroic fortitude. When, on the contrary, the remembrance of some fatal crime rankles in the breast, the sinner's dreams are disturbed by invisible ministers of vengeance—the fall of a leaf can strike him with horror—in every shadow he sees a ghost—in every tread he hears an avenger of blood, and in every sound the trump of doom. What is it that invests his conscience with such terrible power to torment? Is there nothing here but the natural operation of a simple and original instinct? Who does not see that "wickedness condemned by her own witness and being pressed with conscience, always forecasteth greivous things;" that the alarm and agitation and fearful forebodings of the sinner arise from the terrors of an offended Judge and insulted lawgiver? An approving conscience is the consciousness of right, of having done what has been commanded, and of being now entitled to the favour of the Judge. Remorse is the sense of ill-desert. The criminal does not feel that his present pangs are his punishment, it is the future, the unknown

and portentous future that fills him with consternation. He deserves ill and the dread of receiving it makes him tremble.

To remove the penalty from the Divine law, is to arrest the sceptre from the hands of the Deity; to pluck from His brow the crown which adorns it; to deprive Him of the essential dignity of His character, and to present Him before His creatures in the debasing posture of a suppliant at their feet. He ceases to be the august and glorious Monarch of the skies, doing His pleasure among the armies of Heaven and the inhabitants of earth; disrobed of His majesty, He no longer thunders with a voice at which nature shakes and the guilty tremble; but dwindles down into a feeble petitioner, whose prayers and entreaties may be despised with impunity. Such degradation of the Supreme Being cannot be tolerated even in thought. He *must* be able to enforce His will, or He ceases to be God. He must speak with a voice of authority; resistless power must stand ready to support His commands. They must be uttered in a tone which impresses the conviction that they *must* be obeyed; that disobedience is certain and infallible destruction. They must, in other words, *oblige*.

But whether a penal sanction be necessary to create a sense of obligation or not, it is the inevitable result of the Divine disapprobation of sin. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Such is the transcendent purity of His nature, that even the Heavens are not clean in His sight, and He chargeth His angels with folly. The unutterable blessedness which accrues to the Persons of the Trinity from their mysterious communion with each other, is to be ascribed to the confi-

dence, harmony and love, the immaculate holiness and truth, which belong essentially to the nature of the Godhead. As the essential beatitude of the Deity is the result, the necessary result of His moral perfections; as it is the prerogative of holiness alone to be surrounded with light and to be the parent of joy, an indissoluble connection must subsist between wretchedness and guilt. The favour of God is the only source of enjoyment to the creature. Whatever is beautiful or attractive in subordinate objects; whatever can adorn, dignify, or please; the embellishments of life and the charms of friendship, are but feeble emanations from Him who concentrates in Himself all these scattered perfections and without whose permission they would in vain be sought to administer comfort to the heart. God has reserved it to Himself, as His distinguishing privilege, to be the satisfying portion of the soul—and, apart from Him, all sublunary materials will prove as dust and ashes to the wretch who is famishing for food. Now, if the essential holiness of God is such that He cannot tolerate iniquity nor look upon transgression without the utmost abhorrence, it is evident that the “ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” The least taint of impurity must debar its victim from communion with Him—expel it from the source of all joy and felicity, and doom it, consequently, to solitude and sorrow, as the ancient leper was banished from the society of men. To be driven from the presence of God, is to be rendered miserable. The negation of delight in an active creature is, in its effects, a positive and bitter calamity. It is a *penal evil*,

the legitimate consequence of transgression. Hence a penalty is *necessarily* connected with a violation of the law. Every step in this reasoning is intuitively evident. God is essentially holy—communion with Him is the fountain of happiness—none can enjoy it but those who are holy—therefore the disobedient cannot be happy—and as to an active being there is no condition of absolute indifference—the negation of happiness is equivalent to the infliction of misery.

There is another view of the subject which shows that something more awful than negative ills ought to be expected as the wages of sin. The light in which God looks upon rebellion, it is exceedingly proper, for the glory of His name, to make known unto His creatures. His *holiness* is declared by banishing the guilty from His presence. His *hatred* of *sin* by pouring out upon them the vials of His wrath. The extent to which He disapproves of transgression cannot be revealed by *negative* penalties. It is not enough to *dry up* the fountain of felicity—to say to the rebel that he shall have no more to do with peace—the waters of bitterness and death must also be let loose to desolate his soul; Tophet must be ordained; the pile thereof juniper and much wood, while the breath of the Lord as a stream of brimstone doth kindle it forever and ever. In the penal fires of hell we contemplate the inextinguishable hatred of God to all the forms of iniquity. They result from the purity of infinite holiness in terrible collision with guilt. §

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§ The same view of the subject is taken by Owen, in his *Treatise of Divine Justice*, and in his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews. The following extract may serve as a specimen of his reasoning.

This brief discussion of the elements of government has been sufficient, I apprehend, to establish its neces-

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“It will be granted by some, that there is such a natural property in God as that which we contend for, but it doth not thence follow, they say, that it is necessary that God should punish all sin; but he doth it, and may do it, by an absolute and free act of his will. There is therefore no cogent argument to be taken from the consideration hereof, for the necessity of the suffering of Christ. The heads of some few arguments to the contrary, shall put a close to this whole discourse. First, God hateth sin, he hateth every sin: he cannot otherwise do.—Let any man assert the contrary; namely, that God doth not hate sin; or, that it is not necessary to him, on the account of his own nature, that he should hate sin, and the consequence thereof will quickly be discerned. For to say that God may not hate sin, is at once to take away all natural and necessary difference between moral good and evil. For if he may not hate it, he may love it. The mere acts of God’s will, which are not regulated by any thing in his nature, but only wisdom and liberty, are not determined to this or that object, but he may so will any thing, or the contrary. And then if God may love sin, he may approve it; and if he approve sin, it is not a sin, which is a plain contradiction. That God hateth sin, see Ps. v. 4, 5, xi. 5, xiv. 1, liii. 2; Lev. xxvi. 30; Dent. xvi. 22; 1 Kings, xxi. 26; Prov. xv. 5; Hab. 1. 13. And this hatred of sin in God can be nothing but the displicency in, or contrariety of his nature to it, with an immutable will of punishing it, thence arising. For to have a natural displicency against sin, and not an immutable will of punishing it, is unworthy of God, for it must arise from impotency. To punish sin therefore according to its demerit, is necessary to him. Secondly, God with respect unto sin and sinners is called a consuming fire, Heb. xii. ult; Dent. iv. 24; Isa. xxxiii. 15; and v. 24, and xiii. 14. Something we are taught by the allusion in this expression. This is not the manner of God’s operation. God worketh freely, the fire burns necessarily, God, I say, always worketh freely, with a freedom accompanying his operation, though in some cases, on some suppositions, it is necessary that he should work as he doth. It is free to him to speak unto us or not, but on supposition that he will do so, it is necessary that he speak truly, for God cannot lie. Fire therefore acts by brute inclination, according to its form and principle; God acts by his understanding and will, with a freedom accompanying all his operations. This, therefore, we are not taught by this allusion. The comparison therefore must hold with respect unto the event, or we are deceived, not instructed by it. As therefore the fire necessarily burneth and consumeth all combustible things whereunto it is applied, in its way of operation, which is natural, so doth God necessarily punish sin, when it lies before him in judgment, in his way of operation, which is free and intellectual. Thirdly, It is necessary that God should do every thing that is requisite unto his own glory. This the perfection of his nature and existence do require. So he doth all things for himself. It is necessary, therefore, that nothing fall out in the universe, which

sity and to correct prevailing errors in relation to its origin. While it is true that the highest felicity accrues to the creature from uniform obedience to the

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should absolutely impeach the glory of God, or contradict his design of its manifestation. Now suppose that God would and should let sin go unpunished, where would be the glory of his righteousness as he is the supreme ruler over all? For to omit what justice requireth, is no less a disparagement unto it than to do what it forbids. Prov. xvii. 15. And where would be the glory of his holiness, supposing the description given of it, Hab. i. 13? Where would be that fear and reverence which is due unto him? Where that sense of his terribleness? Where that secret awe of him which ought to be in the hearts and thoughts of men, if once he were looked on as such a God, as such a governor, as unto whom it is a matter of mere freedom, choice, and liberty, whether he will punish sin or not, as being not concerned in point of righteousness or holiness so to do? Nothing can tend more than such a persuasion to ingenerate an apprehension in men, that God is such an one as themselves; and that he is so little concerned in their sins, that they need not themselves be much concerned in them.

Such thoughts they are apt to conceive, if he do but hold his peace for a season, and not reprove them in their sins, Psalm l. 21. And if their hearts are fully set in them to do evil, because in some signal instances judgment is not speedily executed, Eccles. viii. 11, how much more will such pernicious consequents ensue, if they are persuaded that it may be, God will never punish them for their sins, seeing it is absolutely at his pleasure whether he will do so or not; neither his righteousness nor his holiness, nor his glory require any such thing at his hands. This is not the language of the law, no, nor yet of the consciences of men, unless they are debauched. Is it not with most Christians certain, that eventually God lets no sinner go unpunished? Do they not believe, that all who are not interested by faith in the sufferings of Christ, or at least that are not saved on the account of his undergoing the punishment due to sin, must perish eternally? And if this be the absolute rule of God's proceeding towards sinners; if he never went out of the way of it in any one instance; whence should it proceed, but from what his nature doth require? Lastly, God is, as we have shown, the righteous Judge of all the world. What law is unto another judge who is to proceed by it, that is the infinite rectitude of his own nature unto him. And it is necessary to a judge to punish where the law requires him so to do; and if he do not, he is not just. And because God is righteous by an essential righteousness, it is necessary for him to punish sin as it is contrary thereunto, and not to acquit the guilty. And what is sin, cannot but be sin; neither can God order it otherwise. For what is contrary to his nature cannot by any act of his will be rendered otherwise. And if sin be sin necessarily because of its contrariety to the nature of God, on the supposition of the order of all things by himself created, the punishment of it is on the same ground necessary also."--Hebrews, vol. 1. p. 504, *Tegg's Edition*.

law of its Creator, it is in no sense true, that the *design* of government, in reference to God, is to secure the happiness of its subjects. It is intended, as we have seen, to express His supremacy and springs from the relations He sustains to His creatures. Punishment, in the Divine administration, is not an expedient to prevent the progress of rebellion, but a *necessary emanation* from the Holiness of God and a just expression of His hatred to iniquity; the inflexibility of the law does not result from a desire to promote the *safety* of the governed, but *from its own essential character*—as founded in the immutable distinctions of morality—as arising from the essential perfections of the Godhead—as holy and just and good. The glory of God is the ultimate end; the perfections of God, the primary source of all the arrangements of His government—they rest upon principles grand as His nature, enduring as truth and immutable as holiness. He is the great centre at which, wherever they begin, all our inquiries must terminate. “For of Him, and through Him and to Him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

If then the government of God is founded in principles of immutable necessity, it is perfectly preposterous to dream of the unconditional pardon of sin. Its punishment is fixed as immoveably as the law, and the law is as permanent as those perfections of the Deity of which it is a transcript. Until the Deity can be subject to change, or holiness made a contingent acquisition, the wages of sin, must, in every instance, be death.

There is no principle on which unconditional remis-

sion can be justified. If the Deity should yield to the impulse of compassion and retract the penalty of His Own law, He would evidently manifest a higher regard for the interests of a sinner than for the glory of His Own name. He would receive a being into favour from whom His holiness precluded communion, and would, consequently, veil His moral perfections to compass a subordinate end. It would be to debase the dignity of moral distinctions—to degrade the majesty of virtue—to cast a reproach upon the goodness of law, in order to save the guilty from a doom to which justice consigned them. It would be, in short, to resolve government into motives of expediency, and to deny its *necessity* as an enduring memorial of the moral character of God.

When the punishment of sin is affirmed to be necessary and, therefore, inevitable, it is not intended to inculcate the idea, that it takes place according to the analogy of physical laws. While the essential holiness of God renders it absolutely certain that it *must* take place, there is yet a liberty in God as to the mode, time and measure of its infliction. He is not restrained to a single method or a single period. He is free to regulate severity by the dictates of wisdom—to administer justice according to the counsel of His will. All that is fixed and immutable is, that He should not forego the glory of His character; disregard His right to the allegiance of the creature and suffer the rebel to escape from His hands. He cannot change the law any more than He can change His perfections, nor remit its penalty any more than He can relax His opposition to sin. The principles of His government are fixed, immutable and

eternal; the details of its administration belong to His sovereign discretion and are to be settled by the decisions of His will. In the selection, adjustment and arrangement of them there is full liberty—but all else is founded in His nature and is certain, uniform, unvarying as fate.

The incongruity is so obvious between the character of God and communion with a sinner, that the most extravagant advocates of the right to pardon without a satisfaction, have not scrupled to insist upon the need of repentance as an essential condition for procuring absolution. By repentance they maintain that the moral qualities of the transgressor are changed, and though he is *substantially* the same being, yet in regard to the *condition* of his heart, for which alone he was deserving of punishment, he is essentially different from what he was, when he drank in iniquity like water. It has been usual to reply to reasoning of this sort by arguments drawn from the analogy of nature or considerations of expediency,|| but the true answer is, that *repentance is impossible*. If the government of God be necessary, the first act of transgression effects a separation between God and the creature; the spiritual life of the sinner is destroyed, and he can no more restore himself to his original position than the dead can return from the darkness of the tomb. The union of the creature with God, which, in an unfallen state, depends upon uniform obedience to the Law, is the source of its purity, happiness and strength.—

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|| For specimens of such reasoning see Butler's Analogy, Pt. 2 c 5.—Magee's 1st Discourse, p. 5.

The very moment in which it fails to recognize its absolute dependence and the consequent supremacy of the Divine will, it breaks the tie which binds it to its Maker—is treated at once as an alien and an outcast—passes under the condemnation of the law and becomes, forever, estranged from good. The slightest sin, like a puncture of the heart, is attended with death. The penalty is incurred by the *first* act of disobedience. Now that penalty, in its mildest and lowest form, implies banishment from God. But repentance involves a restoration to holiness and communion with God, from which the transgressor is debarred. Repentance and the curse are consequently contradictory—and hence to suppose that a condemned sinner can repent is to suppose that, at the same time, he can be and not be under the curse. The condemnation of the sinner, therefore, forever precludes the possibility of repentance; it places him beyond the pale of communion with his Maker and consigns him to everlasting despair. The one transgression of the one man undid the race. To suppose that apostasy from God is a result accomplished by a *course* of disobedience, is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. *The separation from God is instantaneous*; the entire disruption of the moral constitution; the total desolation of the character may, however, be slow and progressive. Life may be *suddenly* extinguished, but the *decay* of the lifeless body may be the work of years.

Repentance, consequently, without a satisfaction, would involve the same difficulties with absolute remission. It would be to the same extent an impeachment of the essential perfections of God; it implies

pardon as its basis, and can never take place where a satisfaction has not been previously rendered. It is an inseparable element of the curse that the sinner cannot repent. All the affections and moral exercises which it includes pre-suppose, that the exile is recalled from banishment; that the anger of God is removed; that a re-union with his Maker has taken place, and that the curse of the law is revoked.

By repentance is intended a thorough and radical change of the moral character of the sinner—all that is involved in the Christian doctrines of the new birth and sanctification. Remorse, shame, anguish and despair, the agony and horror of great darkness, which were experienced by such men as Cain and Judas, are not the ingredients of true repentance—these terrors of conscience reign with unbroken dominion in hell—they are the constant companions of devils and lost men, and are rather the belchings of guilt than expressions of sorrow for sin. They who are most keenly tortured by them, so far from reforming or even attempting to reform, blaspheme the God of Heaven with increased malignity and cherish a deeper hate to all that is holy, pure and good. Such repentance is, indeed, possible to the most abandoned fiend, but it is as worthless as it is easy.

As the true amendment of the heart and life is beyond the capacity of the sinner, so it is equally above his strength to render a full satisfaction to the violated law. The penalty must necessarily be *infinite*. It is the measure of God's authority, the holiness of His nature and His hatred to sin; it is designed to show the *wrath* of the Deity and to make His *power* known.—

It is a conspicuous exhibition of the *extent* to which the Divine nature is opposed to transgression.

It is a ruinous mistake, that the malignity of guilt is determined by a standard drawn from the resources and capacities of the rebel. Though finite himself, he may yet perpetrate an evil of such desperate enormity as to involve, upon the strictest principles of justice, everlasting consequences—a feeble impulse may set a ball in motion, which the hand that impressed the original force shall find it impossible to resist. The true view of the subject is, that, as the perfections of God are the ultimate standard of rectitude, and His will, supported by His power, the ultimate standard of obligation, so the discrepancy between Him and sin, is the exact measure of its demerit, and the resources of His might the only limit to the actual severity of punishment. *His glory* is the true criterion of all that is good, venerable or lovely—and a just definition of virtue fixes necessarily an accurate conception of vice.—We know the one by its repugnance to the other.—Hence every sin—God being infinitely holy and cherishing an infinite detestation of all that is wrong—*every* sin entails after it, the terrible necessity of eternal punishment—it fastens upon its victim a worm which can *never die*—kindles around him a *fire* which can *never be quenched*.\*

Annihilation, at any period of his woe, would be as grossly inconsistent with the claims of justice, as to as-

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\* The following reasoning of that great man, President Edwards, deserves to be seriously pondered by those who are disposed to make a mock of sin.

“ I shall briefly show, that it is not inconsistent with the justice of God to inflict an eternal punishment. To evince this, I shall use only one argument, viz: that

sist a culprit in escaping from his prison, in order to screen him from the shame of the gibbet. It is a vio-

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sin is heinous enough to deserve such a punishment, and such a punishment is no more than proportionable to the evil or demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the sin punished, and is no more than sin deserves. And if the obligation to love, honor, and obey God be infinite, then sin, which is the violation of this obligation, is a violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil.—Again, if God be infinitely worthy of love, honour and obedience, then our obligation to love, honour and obey him, is infinitely great. So that God being infinitely glorious, or infinitely worthy of our love, honour and obedience, our obligation, to love, honor and obey him, and so to avoid all sin, is infinitely great. Again, our obligation, to love, honor and obey God, being infinitely great, sin is the violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Once more, sin being an infinite evil, deserves an infinite punishment, an infinite punishment is no more than it deserves: Therefore such punishment is just, which was the thing to be proved. There is no evading the force of this reasoning, but by denying that God, the Sovereign of the Universe, is infinitely glorious, which I presume none of my hearers will venture to do.”

“This appears, as it is not only not unsuitable that sin should be thus punished; but it is positively suitable, decent and proper. If this be made to appear, that it is positively suitable that sin should be thus punished, then it will follow, that the perfections of God require it, for certainly the perfections of God require what is proper to be done. The perfection and excellency of God require that to take place which is perfect, excellent, and proper in its own nature. But that sin should be punished eternally is such a thing; which appears by the following considerations. 1. It is suitable that God should infinitely hate sin, and be an infinite enemy to it. Sin, as I have before shown, is an infinite evil, and therefore is infinitely odious and detestable. It is proper that God should hate every evil, and hate it according to its odious and detestable nature. And sin being infinitely evil and odious, it is proper that God should hate it infinitely. 2. If infinite hatred of sin be suitable to the divine character, then the *expressions* of such hatred are also suitable to his character. Because that which is suitable to be, is suitable to be expressed: that which is lovely in itself, is lovely when it appears. If it be suitable that God should be an infinite enemy to sin, or that he should hate it infinitely, then it is suitable that he should *act* as such an enemy. If it be suitable that he should hate and have enmity against sin, then it is suitable for him to express that hatred and enmity in that, to which hatred and enmity by its own nature tends. But certainly hatred in its own nature tends to opposition, and to set itself against that which is hated, and to procure its evil and not its good; and that in proportion to the hatred—Great hatred naturally tends to the great evil, and infinite hatred to the infinite evil of its object.”—*Sermon on the Eternity of Hell Torments, Works Vol. 7. p. 467, 470.*

lent arresting of the course of the law. Justice could as much tolerate that the sinner should be taken to heaven, as that he should be totally destroyed—in either case, it loses its victim. An *infinite* penalty can only be inflicted upon a *finite* creature by *eternity* of torment. Whatever freedom there may be in the Supreme Ruler to delay, modify or adjust the ingredients of anguish, which constitute the cup of trembling administered to the lips of the damned, the unchanging principles of rectitude imperatively demand, that eternity should be the measure of their woe—that the darkness to which they are consigned, should be the blackness of darkness forever—that the smoke of their torment should ascend forever and ever. The severest penances—the most painful privations—the costliest oblations and the richest sacrifices are incompetent to remove the sentence, or to cancel the hand-writing of ordinances against them? What proportions can the tortures of the body—the keenest agonies of which it is susceptible, inflicted and endured in this sublunary state, bear to the infinite load of wretchedness, which is due to the smallest sin? What can hair-cloth and rags avail—laceration of the flesh—penury and want—voluntary exile from home and friends—needless exposure to scorching suns or withering cold—what signify all the devices of superstition and fear, when the *real* doom incurred is the *wrath* of *God*, and the just measure of its severity the *omnipotence* of His arm? Vain here is the help of man. To come before the Lord with thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil—to bring to His altar the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul—to mourn in bitterness and

weep tears of blood, will be but a poor substitute for that eternity of horror—that endless night of despair—that hopeless banishment from God, which is the legitimate consequence of sin. The insulted *justice* of God is terrible beyond the power of mortal expression or of mortal thought. The collision of eternal rectitude with human guilt—the conflict of boundless power with an object of inextinguishable hate, it belongs to eternity alone to disclose, since eternity alone is the theatre of the strife. But to dream of satisfying by tears, penances and mortal blood, the awful justice of such an immaculately holy Being as God, is to suppose that eternity can be swallowed up in time—the infinite lost in the finite.

Is there, then, no hope? Must the whole race of man perish beneath the frown of the Almighty? Shall none be found to ransom or to save?

To answer this question apart from Revelation, is beyond the compass of created wisdom. The essential rectitude of God precludes the possibility of unconditional pardon—the principles of His government, springing necessarily from the perfections of His nature and His relations to the creature, are fixed, immutable, eternal. The glory of His Own great name is deeply and critically involved in the vindication of His justice, holiness and truth. He can, by no means, clear the guilty. The analogy of nature might, indeed, suggest the *possibility* of deliverance, as we find in the ordinary dispensations of Providence, that the consequences of folly are not unfrequently averted by the agency of others. But where shall a fit mediator be found? It is certain as the immutability of

God, that no substitute could achieve our redemption, who was not competent to bear the load of our guilt; to *satisfy* the insulted justice of our Ruler; to drain the cup of trembling to its dregs. The doctrine of substitution is unquestionably an ultimate principle in the moral government of God. Mediation pervades the arrangements of Providence as well as the economy of grace. But the grand difficulty is to find a representative who, without the entire destruction of himself, could exhaust the curse of the law.

Whatever glimmering of hope the doctrine of substitution might impart, it would seem, must be instantly extinguished, when we call to mind the severe and arduous conditions, under which alone it could be rendered available to sinners. The justice of God is too formidable to be encountered by created strength—it hangs like a dark cloud over the prospects of man and mocks his most anxious efforts to secure a Redeemer. Whither shall the sinner turn for help? Shall he look to his own brethren, the descendants of Adam's race? As each successive generation comes into being, it passes under the curse—every man has iniquities of his own to bear; and none can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for his soul.— Shall he invoke the assistance of the angels above?— The law might fitly turn aside from their proffered substitution—as it was *man* who had sinned and *man* who must die. Even if this difficulty were vanquished and an angel should become incarnate, where is its power to contend with the justice of God? What created arm could meet the thunder of insulted holiness and endure the storm of eternal wrath? Who can stand

when Omnipotence wields the sword and sin provokes the blow? From the single element of substitution to work out the problem of human redemption, is beyond the depth of angels and arch-angels, Cherubim and Seraphim. We might climb the loftiest heights and explore the utmost bounds of this wide-spread Universe—every creature might be summoned in review before us—Heaven, earth and hell laid under tribute, and still not a single being could be found *able* to endure the curse of the law—and yet this is the only conceivable condition on which salvation could be given. God *cannot absolutely* pardon. He can only *transfer* the punishment. He cannot set aside the sanction of His law. He can only give it a different direction. Who, then, can save from going down to the pit? It was reserved for the wisdom of the Eternal to answer this solemn question. The sublime idea of the incarnation and death of the Son, could only have originated in the mind of Him who is wonderful in counsel and unsearchable in His judgments. In Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, we behold a kinsman, who, through the Eternal Spirit, is able to endure the wrath of God—a *man* who can satisfy justice and yet recover from the stroke; a being who could *die*, and, in dying, conquer death. Great indeed is the mystery of godliness; but it is no less glorious than great. Through the infinite wisdom of God a suitable substitute is found who takes the place of the guilty, assumes their burden, and bears it away to a land uninhabited. In the scheme of redemption God visits the transgressions of the sinners in the person of the Son; the law is executed in its utmost rigors, and

God is *just*, perfectly and gloriously *just*, in justifying those who believe. Their sins have been as *truly* punished as if they themselves had been consigned to the darkness of hell.

Delightful and interesting as it might be to prosecute an inquiry into the precise nature of the atonement, and to define the limitations and restrictions under which substitution is admissible, my limits warn me that such a discussion cannot be undertaken now. It is enough for my present purpose to have indicated the ground upon which, as I conceive, the necessity of the atonement should be made to depend. If I have succeeded in proving that the Government of God is not the dictate of policy, nor a creature of contingency, but a *necessary* emanation from the Divine perfections and the relations which He sustains to His creatures—that *some* rule must, from the nature of the case, be prescribed, and that none can possibly proceed from God but one which is holy and just and good, and that a penal sanction is an essential element of moral law—if I have succeeded in establishing these propositions, it certainly follows, as an inevitable consequence, that God cannot, without denying Himself, any more dispense with the penalty than He can with the precept itself. The unconditional pardon of sin is morally wrong—in open and flagrant collision with the eternal principles of right. Punitive justice is as truly essential to God as veracity or honor, and He can no more remit the punishment of the guilty without a satisfaction, than He can utter a falsehood or break a promise.

Upon the broad basis, therefore of the inviolable

sanctity which attaches to the penalty of the Divine law, I place the necessity of vicarious atonement. It is not merely fit, proper, and highly expedient—a stroke of infinite policy—a masterly evolution of Divine tactics—it is absolutely indispensable upon the supposition of mercy. Without it, remission could not exist, and as it is the burden of the Gospel, it is therefore the POWER of God unto salvation—the alternative and the only alternative being, ATONEMENT OR ETERNAL DEATH.

It would be easy to show that this is the only hypothesis, upon which the scriptural account of a satisfaction to justice can be consistently maintained; and that the majority of those who adopt utilitarian views of government, while they profess to believe in the penal sufferings of our Lord, do, in reality, make them a substitute for the proper curse of the law. They represent the death of the Redeemer as a grand moral expedient by which the *same impression* is produced in regard to the character of God as would have been produced by the everlasting ruin of the guilty. It is something in place of the literal infliction of the penalty of the law, which secures the same ultimate result. Such perversions of the truth will be effectually prevented by just conceptions of the moral government of God—its origin, nature and ends; and such views I have chosen to exhibit rather than combat systems of error in detail.

At the close† of my ministerial labors among you, as members of this Institution, I have brought this sub-

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† This address was delivered to the class—the members of which were graduated the next day.

ject before you on account of its immense importance in relation to the glory of God, and its vital connection with the dearest interests of our race. The cross of Christ is the centre of the Christian system. From it we are instructed in the character of our Judge—the malignity of sin—our present condition, and the prospects which await us beyond the grave. The scheme of redemption is a bright and glorious page in the history of God's administrations—a new book sealed with seven seals, containing lessons of surpassing interest; treating of Jehovah in loftier strains than the Seraph's heart had ever reached, or the Seraph's tongue had ever uttered, until the Lion of the Tribe of Judah prevailed to unloose the seals, to reveal the mysteries and invited the nations to behold their God. His glory is here displayed with a lustre, in comparison with which all other manifestations of His name are as the feeble light of the stars. Creation proclaimed His power, Providence His goodness, Conscience His justice, and Hell His vengeance. These were so many stars, differing from each other in glory, in which we might see all that could be known of God—but when Jesus came, the Sun of Righteousness arose; darkness was scattered, and the light of God's glory, reflected from the face of His Son, darted its rays through Heaven, Earth and Hell; the cross became the centre of universal attraction, displayed the perfections of Deity in singular and rare combination, and was the source, at once, of rapture to angels, of terror to the lost, and of hope to men. The death of Christ is, without doubt, the sublimest event in the annals of time or the records of Eternity. And in what a light does it present the

malignity of sin? What a commentary upon its intrinsic demerit and turpitude are furnished in the groans, agony and anguish of the Son of God! In the Cross it is proclaimed, in living characters, to be the *abominable thing which God hates*; and if God spared not His Own dear Son, holy, harmless and undefiled as he was, when he occupied the legal position of the guilty, we may be as fully assured, as if it were written in letters of fire upon the blue vault of heaven, that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. In the blood of the lamb, my brethren, and not in the deceitful reasonings of a corrupt heart, learn the estimate to be put upon sin. There, stripped of its blandishments, unmasked in its treachery, exposed in its seductions, it stands revealed in the hideous deformity of its nature, odious to God and deadly to man. Her steps lead down to death and her feet take hold on hell.

You are soon, my Friends, to enter upon the active duties of life—the responsibilities of manhood are gathering around you and you will shortly go forth, no longer subject to the authority of tutors and guardians, but your own masters.

Let me impress it upon you that the first indispensable element of success in your future career must be sought in the favor of God. If there is a Being who presides over the destinies of men and accomplishes His pleasure among the armies of Heaven and the inhabitants of earth; whose favor is life and whose loving kindness is better than life; whose indignation none can withstand; the fierceness of whose anger none can abide; who compasses us behind and before and understands all our ways; upon whom we are ab-

solutely dependent for all that we have or are, it is surely the consummation of folly to look for prosperity in His dominions without His favor. Can you expect enduring happiness, when the curse of the Almighty hangs over you—when the awful leprosy of sin is wasting the soul and the edict has gone forth dooming you to solitude and banishment from God? What prospect is before you, when, at every step, you are surrounded by a power which you cannot resist, provoked to vengeance by your negligence and contempt? No doubt, my brethren, your bosoms are bounding with hope—the future is full of promise; and you are eager to enter upon the scenes of manly life. But be assured that the first care which should demand your attention is the *salvation of the soul*. What you first need, most pressingly need, is to have your conscience purged from dead works by the blood of Him who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God.

It is no time to settle the subordinate concerns of this life, when your souls are in jeopardy every hour; when the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against you—a burning hell is beneath you, and a terrible eternity before you. Be exhorted to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Secure your immortal interests and your mortal will not be disregarded. The great subject of solicitude with me is the salvation of your souls. I am fully assured that if you begin your career under the favour of God, His blessing will attend you at every step; and though His way may often be in the whirlwind of adversity, or the deep waters of affliction, He will eventually

make all things work together for your good. I shall feel that you are committed to the guidance of a friend, who will never leave you nor forsake you, who knows your interests and is able to provide for them. But my feelings will be very different in regard to those who know not God and obey not the Gospel of His Son. To you there is no safety. At home or abroad, awake or asleep, in sickness or in health, poverty or affluence, the curse of God attends you—from His hands there is no escape, and, earnestly as I could wish that all may be well with you, I must constantly feel that nothing is well; that nothing *can* be well, until you are sprinkled with the blood of atonement. I am afraid to trust you in the world—for the Prince of darkness has a fearful ascendancy in it, and may make it the instrument of rendering you still more obdurate in sin. I shall dread to hear of your death, lest your dying hours should fill your friends with gloom and be too sad an earnest of the awful destiny which follows; and above all, my feelings are insupportable, when I remember that I must meet you at the bar of God and be a swift witness against you.

Suffer, therefore, the word of exhortation while I embrace this last opportunity of urging upon you with affection, earnestness and solemnity, to seek the Lord while He may be found; to call upon Him while He is near.

The point at which you have arrived is eminently critical. You are now forming your plans for life, and if religion is excluded, it is but too likely that you will never find the convenient season for attending to its claims. If, at this solemn period, when you so much

need the blessing of the Almighty—this important juncture of your lives, which is to give shape and character to your subsequent pursuits, you rely upon your own wisdom and trust to your own understandings, there is too much ground to fear that you may be left to yourselves—abandoned to your self-sufficiency and folly. Can there be a more favorable period than the present for attending to the interests of the soul?—You are young; and special promises are made to youth. You have reached a critical position. One step now may determine your destiny forever. How important that you should act wisely and take that step in the fear of God! The cares of life will soon leave little time for the claims of religion; and if you find a strong reluctance to consider them now, that reluctance will increase with the growing power of a worldly spirit and the increasing dominion of inbred depravity. You are now free from those outward annoyances and petty vexations which the business of life always entails upon us, and which just as effectually close the heart against the calls of God as the heavier calamities of our lot. In every respect, then, your present situation is favorable; more so, perhaps, than it will ever be again. Do you mean to let this golden opportunity pass unimproved? Do you mean that gray hairs shall find you veteran sinners against God? Have you any excuse, any plausible pretext, which even your consciences will receive, for refusing at once, to attend to the one thing needful? You cannot surely deny that if Christianity be any thing, it must be every thing—if true at all, it is, as Leslie expresses it, “tremendously true.” All other matters dwindle into

nothing, in comparison with the interests of the soul. What signify the applause of the world, the distinctions of society, the force of genius, and the charm of letters, if after all your short-lived honors, you are doomed at last to lie down in hell?

Finally, brethren, my ministry now closes with you; the result of my labours and of your attention will not be known till the day of final accounts. Whatever may have been my imperfections—and I feel that they have been both numerous and great—I have always cherished, and shall always continue to cherish, the liveliest interest in your welfare. I have endeavored to lead you to the fountain of life; I have preached the Gospel with whatever ability God has given me, and if any of you have been brought to serious reflection on the subject of salvation, it is a matter of devout thanksgiving to God. But it oppresses me to think that some of you, at least, will leave these walls as careless as you entered them. If now, at the eleventh hour, I could break your carnal slumber and rouse your attention to the things that belong to your peace, I would gladly employ any lawful expedient to do so. But no voice but the voice of God can reach you. I tremble to see you entering upon life unprepared for its close; but I have faithfully warned you—I call Heaven and earth to record against you this day—and if you perish in your sins, your own consciences will tell you that life and death were before you. You have died wilfully. Would that I could utter with as much hope as affection the only word which remains to be pronounced, **FAREWELL.**