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### ARTICLE I.

#### PAUL'S PREACHING AT ATHENS.

The first public conflict, as Milman properly remarks,\* betwixt Christianity and Paganism, took place at Athens. The champion on the one side was Paul, the distinguished Apostle of the Gentiles, who had himself been a relentless persecutor of the Gospel, and who had been graciously honoured with supernatural evidence of its truth. He was prepared to speak what he knew, and to testify what he had seen. On the other side were certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoicks, impelled partly by curiosity and partly by vanity of contest, to encounter one whom their philosophic pride prompted them to stigmatize as a babbler; and their settled indifference to truth, to receive as a setter forth of strange Gods.

The loss of Athenian independence had removed the checks, which, in ancient times, political considerations had arbitrarily imposed upon freedom of debate and liberty of discussion in regard to the popular religion, and though this renowned city was still the head-quarters of the reigning superstitions of the world, no philosopher was likely, for the sake of his opinions, however apparently licentious or heretical, to be exposed to the fate of Socrates, Stilpo or Diagoras. In the Schools of Athens, no subjects were too sacred for discussion—too profound for inquiry—or too sublime and mysterious to awe the efforts of vain curiosity. The stubborn doctrines of the Stoicks—the polite, accommodating principles of the Epicureans—

\* History of Christianity, Book II., Chap. III., p, 178. Amer. Ed.  
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the sentimental refinements of Plato, and the practical methods of the illustrious Stagyrte—the claims of the popular worship—the superstitions of the mass, and the hidden mysteries disclosed to a chosen few, were matters of free, open, unrebuked debate. In such a city, the long chosen abode of philosophy, science and the arts—the literary metropolis of the world, rendered holy to a freeman by the mute memorials of Independence eloquent in ruins—in such a city, and among such a people, the Apostle of the Gentiles appears, the champion of the Gospel, against philosophy, science, idolatry, superstition—all the wisdom of this world, arrayed in enmity to God. To the eye of sense, the odds were fearfully against him. His name and country were identified among the Pagan nations around him, with all that was little, contracted and mean. A Jew by birth, exclusive in his religion, and a reputed bigot in his opinions, he presented, in his national associations, those features of disgust which provoked the satire of Juvenal—the contempt of Gallio, and the raillery of Martial. It is true Paul was a scholar, skilled in Grecian models,—but all his pretensions to refinement and elegance were sunk in the fact that he was a *Jew*—as the valour and courtly influence of Naaman were nothing to the damning consideration that after all he was a leper. But curiosity was too strong for either prejudice or contempt. His disputes in the synagogue with his own brethren—his instructions to those whom he found seriously intent upon the duties of religion—and his public discussions in the market place with all whom the Providence of God threw in his way, had made him the object of attention to the leading sects of Philosophy. *Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoicks encountered him.\**

We may here pause to contemplate the contrast in their motives and aims, and those of the servant Jesus. He had come to Athens as a stranger. Driven from Thessalonica by a popular tumult excited by religious bigotry, he sought safety and quiet in this mart of learning, elegance and paganism—while tarrying for his brethren, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. He looked not upon its statues and temples, its altars and sacrifices, with the eye of poetry or taste.

\* Acts xvii, 18.

These ornaments of art—these imposing monuments of genius and skill, however they might adorn the names and perpetuate the memories of Phidias and Praxiteles, were an insult to God—and, like Elijah, the prophet of another dispensation, he was very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts. His imagination could not expatiate in rapture, upon scenes which proclaimed too plainly to the ear of faith, that the curse of the Almighty was there. What signified the beauty of the work when the end was death? While he mused and saw, the fire burned—the love of Christ, an emotion felt for the first time, perhaps, upon that classic soul—zeal for the glory of God—intense desires for the salvation of the lost—the terrific sanctions of the law—all pressed upon him, and roused his noble spirit to lift up his voice like a trumpet, to cry aloud and spare not. He was a man of God—and the word of the Lord was like fire in his bones. His position was indeed sublime—and though the object of contempt, ridicule, or idle curiosity to others, he was raised by the grandeur of his mission and a tenant in his heart, whom the world knew not yet, above all the petty desires which vanity, pride or ambition could suggest; and like his Divine Master, prayed in spirit for those who despised him. He had no doubtful disputations to propose—but a message to proclaim in the name of God. He was no dialectician from the Schools, but an ambassador of the skies—he preached not the wisdom of men, but the wisdom of God in a mystery. He spake with the confidence of one whose feet rested upon the rock of eternal truth, and with the persuasiveness of one who was not a lord of the faith, but a helper of the joy of his hearers. The zeal, devotion and deep conviction which glowed in his soul, made him earnest, but neither an enthusiast nor fanatic. His discourse is managed with consummate skill; and while the word of the Lord is plainly declared, it is studiously framed with a reference to the state, prejudices and opinions of the assembly. Paul had seen among the monuments of Athens, an altar to the unknown God. This furnishes the Apostle with a text. He begins with the statement of a general fact, true of all men, but preëminently true of the Athenians, that the interests of religion, in some form or other, must and will exact atten-

tion. Man is essentially a religious animal. His nature calls for religious worship. He must have a God to pray to, as well as a God to swear by; and while the true God is unknown, the heart will be filled with idols in His place. All idolatry consists essentially in the false worship of the true, or a superstitious worship of the unknown God.—Having paved his way to the favorable attention of his hearers, Paul proceeds to recapitulate the leading doctrines of Natural religion, to some of which, with more or less modification, the Stoics might assent, and to others the Epicureans\*. The doctrine of Providence—of human responsibility—of a moral government—are not only announced, but are pressed as formal arguments against a false worship, and urged as motives for seeking to be ascertained of the truth. The obvious dictates of nature, if properly heeded, are sufficient to condemn idolatry. The fall of man—his present depravity, and the necessity of repentance are briefly and compendiously stated; and then the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel are summarily discussed under the heads of Jesus and the resurrection.

The effects of this sermon are briefly detailed by the Historian†. Some of them treated the matter with downright scorn, others were afraid that it might be true, but were not prepared to make the sacrifices which a full assent would obviously require. Still there were a few, a select and noble band, consisting alike of plebeians and philosophers, who clave to the Apostle, and believed his doctrines. It is remarkable that these effects were produced, not by Paul's dissertations upon natural religion—upon the Being and Providence of God—the accountability of man, and the strict moral government which has been established in the world. He seems to have been heard with patience as long as he insisted upon these and kindred topics. Even his denunciations of idolatry, though a direct rebuke of their practice and a tacit imputation upon their understandings or integrity, awakened no visible displeasure. But the very moment that the Apostle entered upon the territory of Grace, and proceeded to expound those mysteries of the Gospel, which eye had not seen nor ear heard, neither

\* Milman's History of Christ. Book II., Chap. III., p. 179. Am. Ed.

† Acts, xvii., 32-34.

had entered into the heart of man to conceive; the effect was striking and characteristic; some mocked, others said we will hear thee again of this matter; and only here and there an auditor received the engrafted word and lived.

This sermon of Paul at Athens deserves our serious attention, as it sets forth in brief and pregnant heads, the whole contents of Revelation, and the essential doctrines, in particular, of what is properly and exclusively Christianity. Revelation and Christianity are not convertible terms. Every thing that even the Bible contains is not a part of Christianity. There have been at least three dispensations of this religion, distinguished from each other by outward form, and accidental circumstances, and each of these is described in the Bible, and the peculiarities of each throw light upon the general scheme to which they all pertain.

Every thing in Revelation is subsidiary to Christianity, but is not, necessarily, part and parcel of its being. Some things are presupposed in it, their truth is essential to its arrangements, and other things belong to the age, people, and country of its first introduction. All these subsidiary and incidental circumstances are to us the subjects of Revelation, and therefore to be received with undoubting faith; but much may be received, and the Gospel in its essence not be embraced, and many revealed facts may be unknown, and yet the salvation of the Gospel imparted. It is, therefore, a profoundly interesting question—what is Christianity? What are the essential features of that system which Jesus introduced into the world, and which, without His interposition, would not only have been unknown, but would not, and could not have been true? What are those peculiarities which, wherever they have been proclaimed, whether on the Areopagus of Athens—in the seats of modern learning—the halls of science—the church—the market place, or meeting-house, have uniformly made some mock, and staggered others, until God, by His spirit, gave them a lodgment in the heart. The solution of this question is of fundamental importance. Our lives depend upon it. True, the Gospel is a simple system, but notwithstanding its simplicity, multitudes perish with a lie in their right hands, fondly dreaming that they are in the ark, when they are only sheltered by bulrushes. Thousands mistake what Christianity

is, and die; they kindle a fire and walk in its light, and receive the punishment at God's hand, that they shall lie down in sorrow. Let us, therefore, address ourselves to this question with the solemnity and earnestness the nature of the subject demands.

The course of thought pursued by the Apostle in this celebrated sermon, the disposition and arrangement of his topics, and the obvious relations which they sustain to each other, will correct many prevalent errors, and conduct us by an easy process, to the precise views which ought to be entertained. Paul first insists upon the *necessity* of the Gospel, and then announces its doctrines in their adaptations to the wants they were designed to relieve.

I. First, then, what is the *necessity* of Christianity? What is the call for it in the circumstances of our race? And what end, consequently, was it designed to answer? The necessity of *revelation* is a point upon which Christian apologists are accustomed to insist as establishing the antecedent credibility of the fact, and though their arguments are, for the most part, conclusive, as showing the likelihood of some interposition to mitigate our ignorance, they fail to present the peculiar need of such a dispensation as that of the Gospel. It is too frequently taken for granted that "the supposition of sin does not bring in any new religion, but only makes new circumstances, and names of old things, and requires new helps and advantages to improve our powers, and to encourage our endeavors; and thus the law of grace is nothing but a restitution of the law of nature."\* The ground ordinarily assumed, is the ignorance of man and the goodness of God; and this ignorance, which seems to be regarded as the principal injury of the fall, has reference to the great facts of Natural Religion, which, if known, would have sufficient efficacy to secure amendment of life and everlasting happiness. The controversy has been, in many instances, so conducted with the Deists as to convey the impression that the doctrines of nature were sufficient to constitute the complete religion of a sinner, the sole point in dispute being the competency of reason to discover

\* This extraordinary statement is quoted by Halyburton from one who, he says, "wore a mitre."—*Nat. Rel. Insuf.* chap. 1, p. 279—Works in one volume.

these doctrines without supernatural aid.\* We are represented as creatures destined for another life, and needing information in reference to its character and its connection with the present, which cannot be derived from the light of nature. In this view, Christianity is no new religion; it is only a new publication of that which subsisted from the beginning of our race. It is a *revelation*, strictly and properly so called, and nothing more; and its whole relation to us is exhausted when we receive and submit to it as a Divine teacher.† We are ignorant, for example, of a future life; or if we have, from the operations of conscience, or the spontaneous desires of the soul, vague convictions, or indistinct impressions of continued existence in another state, or among other scenes,—the evidence is too feeble and shadowy to furnish the grounds of a steady belief. Christianity accordingly relieves our blindness, and brings life and immortality to light. The apprehensions of nature, it reduces to realities; its vague impressions to the certainty of facts. So, again, without revelation we are represented as uncertain, whether our conduct here shall effect our destinies hereafter, or what is the nature of the connection which subsists between the present and the future. Christianity comes to our assistance, and teaches us that this present world is a school for eternity; and that according to our characters and conduct here, will be our destiny hereafter. This is the method in which the apologists for Christianity have too often conducted the argument with the Deists. There has been no dispute between them, as to *what* religion is sufficient to secure the happiness of a sinner. They are, for the most part, agreed in its nature

\* This is the impression left by Paley—and it is clearly the doctrine of Mr. Locke. His Christianity is nothing but *Revealed Deism*.

† It is very unfortunate that the distinctions between Christianity and natural religion have been expressed by the terms, natural and revealed religion. The idea obviously suggested by this phraseology is, that their difference lies in the sources whence we derive our knowledge of them. Nothing, however, has been more clearly proved by Christian writers—among whom, we may especially refer to Halyburton, and to Norris—than that we are as much indebted to revelation for any adequate knowledge of natural religion, as for the mysteries of the Gospel. They are both *revealed*. The difference between them is radical and essential, and not accidental or contingent. They are different *religions*. One is the religion of our nature before the fall; the other the religion of grace after the fall. The one contemplates God, simply as a moral Governor—the other as a Saviour and Redeemer.

and principles; but it has been keenly debated, whether reason, since the fall, is capable of discovering this religion without supernatural assistance, or of authenticating it with sufficient evidence to make it of practical importance. We may admit that the argument is conclusive, as conducted by the friends of revelation. Natural religion is certainly not the offspring of natural light. In the present condition of our race, whatever may be the evidences which exist within us and around us of the being, perfection, and character of God—of the condition of man, and the relation he sustains to his Creator—his darkened faculties are incompetent to gather from them the conceptions which make up the fabric of natural religion; however, he may prove its truth from these sources, after the ideas have been suggested to the mind. We confidently believe that if natural religion were the *sole* religion of a sinner, revelation would still be necessary to teach us what it is—to re-publish it with light and power—to free it from corruption, superstition, and abuse, and present it in the symmetry of its parts, and the integrity of its combination. But then, this, although a *revelation*, would not be Christianity. It might remove the veil from the eye of ignorance, and unfold realities of tremendous power to alarm the guilty, and stimulate the righteous. But all its truths would be independent of the mission of the Saviour, except in so far as he was the instrument in the hands of Providence to unfold them. That this whole theory is fundamentally wrong—though sustained by the splendid names of Locke and Paley—though the favorite and cherished hypothesis, during the dynasty of the Stuarts—defended alike by mitred Prelates and humble Curates, that Christianity is something more, immeasurably more than a *revelation* of truths, which in themselves were independent of the mission of Christ, may be inferred from the order and connection in which Paul has here introduced the mysteries of the Gospel. It is not a little remarkable that every solitary element of the system which those, who take this view of the subject, make it the object of Jesus to communicate, was insisted on by the Apostle before he gets to the Gospel. The great doctrines of natural religion which constituted the faith and the worship of man before the fall, are treated as preliminary to the distinctive peculiarities of Christianity. The creed of Herbert—the most

liberal of the Deists—as good a Christian as many who have defended miracles and prophecy—so far as this creed is natural religion—is recapitulated by the Apostle as introductory to the Gospel. The unity of God—His absolute independence and universal sovereignty—the relation in which He stands to men—the necessity of religious worship, and the guilt and folly of idolatry—the perfection of His moral government, and the essential, unchangeable distinctions of right and wrong; these are all eloquently enforced, but these are not the Gospel. We do not say that they are not revealed truths—we do not say that any religion is the offspring of mere natural light; but we do say, and the method of the Apostle justifies us in saying it, that although these are truths of revelation, and truths which must be recognized, in order to understand the Gospel, yet they are not Christianity. We will go a step farther and assert, that the natural religion which Paul preached on Mars Hill, contained propositions which unassisted reason is utterly, under any circumstances, incompetent to discover; and which, yet, from the beginning, must have been parts of the primitive religion of the race. He insists upon the federal headship of Adam. This is the fundamental truth in nature's system. We are of *one* blood. There is a mysterious unity in our race, indicated by a common descent, and a common nature, in consequence of which, we sustain different relations to each other, from what we would have sustained, if we had been separate, independent, isolated beings. In our world there is not only *society*, but *kindred*—not only similarity, but identity of nature, and our religion proceeds upon a principle which recognizes this unity, and in its great charter of hope, treated with the race in one man. So, also, the doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of natural religion. But there might have been imparted to us a knowledge of the object of worship—the great federal dispensation under which our race was created, and the consequent condemnation and ruin of mankind in the first man, who was of the earth, earthy—and yet not a single doctrine of the Gospel, as connected with the mission of Jesus, be known. Nay, all these things, whether known or not, would have been true, had Jesus never been born, or never died. Paul's Christianity therefore was something more than a re-publication of natural religion, even in its

true form and perfect proportions, as adoring the Trinity, and binding the race in a federal compact with a common head. The Apostle virtually admits, that in our present state, we cannot discover the true system under which we were born, and which attaches to our natures as moral and as human. There was a season of ignorance in which all who had no revelation were permitted to walk. But the removal of this ignorance is not all that the Gospel proposes; it is a new dispensation, out of which new duties and new relations to God spontaneously grow. God *now* commandeth all men every where to repent, because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained—whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead. It is plain that Paul regarded Jesus as introducing a religion whose distinctive law, so far as it respected human conduct and obedience, was the law of repentance. We shall not stop to inquire whether repentance is a duty of nature; but as here unfolded by the Apostle, it depends upon principles supernatural and divine. But the argument which we would frame from this passage, against the supposition that the prime necessity of our nature arises from our ignorance, and is therefore to be relieved simply by revelation, is drawn from the importance, which the Apostle attaches to the resurrection of Jesus, and the consequent resurrection of the dead. The religion which Paul preached at Athens, and which the necessities of all men require, is a religion in which this fact must enter. We must bear in mind that the resurrection, neither of Jesus nor His followers, is ever treated in the Christian Scripture as a *proof* of Christianity; it is always made a *part* of it—an essential, indispensable element of the scheme. It is not presented to us simply as a *miracle*, authenticating the Divine mission of Christ, though of course this must be an incidental result. But it is treated as being as really, and truly, and necessarily a component part of the Gospel, as the death or incarnation of the Saviour. Paul\* sums up the whole of Christianity in Jesus and the resurrection:—For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received; how that Christ died for our

\* Acts, xvii: 18—I Cor. xv: 3.

sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. The death, burial, resurrection of Christ—these were the facts upon which the Gospel depended, that Paul preached at Athens and Corinth. To represent the resurrection as a mere proof of Christianity, resting upon the same footing with the other miracles of the New Testament, and authenticating Christ's supernatural commission in the same way, is without sanction from the Scriptures. It is never treated simply as a credential—a motive to belief, but not the thing to be believed. On the contrary, Paul affirms, that if Jesus be not risen, our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain—the Gospel is absolutely worthless. This cannot be said of any single miracle of the Saviour, or His Apostles. They might have wrought more—they might have wrought fewer—the Gospel would have been the same. But if Jesus had not *risen*, there would have been no Gospel, and we should *have been in our sins*.

The passage in Romans, which seems to make the resurrection a proof of the sonship of Christ, has a much wider sweep than interpreters have been accustomed to give to it. The ordinary view is, that as Christ before His death had declared Himself to be the son of God, and as He was condemned by the Jewish Courts upon the ground of His supernatural pretensions to a Divine generation alone, His resurrection from the dead was the endorsement of the Father of the veracity of His own testimony. But, according to this view, any other miracle would have answered the same purpose. The darkened Heavens—the yawning earth—the cleaving rocks and the rising dead, had already proclaimed His sonship as truly as the resurrection—proclaimed it so loudly and powerfully that the centurion confessed the stupendous truth, while all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.\* The impressions of that scene were as awful and convincing as any mere miracles could possibly be made. Every previous miracle had as much authenticated the Divine mission of Jesus, and of course, the Divine truth of all that He had uttered, as this final one of His resurrection from the dead. And that God never

\* Luke, xxiii, 47-49.

intended it as a *mere proof* is evident, from the fact that He did not shew Himself openly to all the people, but to witnesses chosen beforehand.

The whole reasoning of the Apostle goes upon the supposition that his resurrection *directly* declared his sonship; it did not simply declare that he spoke the truth when he affirmed it, but it attested the fact independently of any such connection. The Psalmist, looking to this great event, represents the Almighty as proclaiming by it, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee;\*' and when He ascended into Heaven the joyful acclamation was heard, God is gone up with a shout. Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet.†

It is, therefore, evident that both the Old Testament and the New represent the resurrection, not only as an integral part of Christianity, but, as a pregnant proof of the eternal sonship of Christ, and consequently every scheme must be false in which this great fact is not obviously possessed of this distinction. Whatever the Gospel is, it must be something into which the resurrection essentially enters, and so enters, as to establish the sonship of Jesus; and, as neither the one nor the other can be affirmed of His office as a prophet, it is very certain that the necessity which Paul contemplated must lie much deeper than the natural ignorance of man, in regard to truths which are independent of the mission of Jesus. It is obvious that whatever the Gospel is, its truths must have been *created* by the mission of Jesus. They would not have existed at all, if he had not been born, crucified, buried and rose.

Enough has been said to show that Paul contemplated Christianity as something more than a *revelation*. This proposition may strike our readers as hardly worth the labour we have expended upon it; but those who have been brought most in contact with the educated minds of the country must be sensible that the difficulties which they experience in Christianity are largely owing to this low view.

The principles of natural religion seem so reasonable, when once they are fairly proposed, that it is hard to get quit of the conviction, that what so obviously commends itself to the understandings and consciences of men, might

\*Ps. ii, 7. Acts xiii, 33.

†Ps. xlvii, 5.

have been discovered without supernatural light. The presumption against *revelation* is increased by confining its scope to a department of truths which were certainly the original furniture of reason, and which when once they are announced, reason, apart from the influence of prejudice and passion, does not hesitate to recognize. To tell us that nature and Christianity embrace exactly the same religion, that Christianity is distinguished by nothing but the source from which it springs, that its sole object is to publish with clearness and enforce with authority the doctrines of nature, is to put its necessity on a footing which, however successfully it may be maintained, will seldom produce that deep and earnest conviction of need, which hails the Gospel with joy, and detects, in its provisions; an adequate reason for the interposition of God. This low view of the subject has not only to encounter the supposed presumption against revelation in general, but an additional presumption against that species of revelation which, with an immense apparatus of means, does little more than enlarge the territory of knowledge, and dispel a few floating clouds from the atmosphere of truth. The great bell of the universe is rung to preach a sermon of which nature was previously in possession of the heads.

Lord Herbert's difficulties with Christianity arose, for the most part, from an utter misconception of its principal design. The question could never be raised concerning the sufficiency of reason if the proper end of the Gospel were kept steadily in view. Deism was comparatively unknown in England, until a style of preaching was adopted, which confounded morality with holiness, habits with the Spirit of God, and faith with a general conviction of truth, which, discarding all its distinctive doctrines, reduced Christianity to a frozen system of heathenism, and made the ministers of Jesus little better than the "miserable apes of Epictetus." When the prelate and the curate were equally anxious to have the world believe, that their Gospel had exploded the antiquated notions of spirituality and grace; that such uncouth phrases as justification, adoption, regeneration and redemption, were stripped of their repulsiveness, and adjusted, as well to the notions as the dialect of fashionable life; it is not to be wondered at, that men should stare at

the pomp of preparation with which *such* a religion had been announced to the world. The affluence of means and the poverty of result were so conspicuously in contrast that the question seems to have been naturally suggested; whether, if *this* were all, reason might not have been left to itself. We can sympathize with such difficulties; and though we are far from asserting, for we by no means believe, that unassisted reason, since the fall, would ever have discovered the whole system of natural religion; yet we are as far from asserting that Christianity is the form in which a revelation, designed chiefly to assist reason, would have been given. To this inadequate conception of its office, as a mere handmaid to nature, is owing, in some degree, the fact that the whole current of modern philosophy, under the pretext of great veneration for religion, is fatal, in its tendencies, to the claim of inspiration. The sufficiency of reason has been defended, not on historical, but psychological grounds, and the excellency of Christianity is represented as consisting in the distinctness and fulness with which it echoes the voice of nature. This is to betray the Saviour with a kiss. These insidious assaults may indeed be repelled by direct arguments, but we can only reach the source of the evil by placing the necessity of the Gospel on its true basis. The change which sin has introduced in the relations of our race to God, and the glorious provisions of the new Covenant, must be set in the light in which the Scriptures uniformly put them, if we would not judge of Divine revelation by a false standard. To show that ignorance is not the great evil which Christ came to dispel; that the scheme of redemption is a vast and mighty dispensation of grace, a stupendous work which our exigencies demanded and God was glorious in doing, is to remove one of the leading difficulties which press upon educated men, when they first turn their attention to the subject. They often hesitate because they do not understand the case.

II. Others, unable to escape from the pervading testimony of Scripture, that the mission of Jesus contemplated a work to be done, as well as truths to be revealed; that Christianity is a grand dispensation of Providence and Grace, involving a series of supernatural acts, directed to the salvation of the sinner; whose history, in their origin,

relations, and results, is the principal instruction it imparts, while they discard the low conceptions of an earthborn philosophy, which can detect in the Gospel nothing but a republication of Natural Religion, fail yet to rise to an adequate apprehension of the real nature of Christ's mediation. Whether it be owing to a fastidious modesty which perverts a just dread of presumption and a becoming sense of ignorance into a refusal to be wise up to what is written; or whether there be a lurking dislike of the principle upon which a consistent explanation can be given of the method of redemption; whatever be the cause; there are men who admit an apparent necessity of the interposition of the mediator, and yet fail to present, in their account of His work, any correspondence, discoverable by us, to the necessity they acknowledge. They very justly represent Natural Religion as unsuited to the condition of a sinner; it makes no provision for the pardon of the guilty; it knows nothing of mercy; nothing of reconciliation to the favour of God. Conducted upon the principle of distributive justice, it promises life to the obedient; denounces death to transgressors; but opens no door of hope to the wretch who has incurred its curse. It *must* render to every man according to his works,—“to them, who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but 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.” With these representations, not so strongly and emphatically made, we confess, as the nature of the case seems to us to warrant, of the necessity of justification to the salvation of a sinner and the hopelessness of any justification by personal obedience, it is not a little remarkable, that the persons we have in view should miss of the precise nature of redemption in its relations to man, and make it the great object of the Saviour to introduce a new principle of government, or a new method of administration, which has the effect of mitigating the severity of law, putting the guilty in a capacity of salvation, and furnishing them with facilities for turning to account the advantages of their new condition. This principle is the pardon of sin upon repent-

ance. Jesus has made it possible that God should receive penitent transgressors into favour, and has rendered penitence itself less difficult and arduous than it is found to be under the regular and ordinary course of nature. How this capacity of salvation has been introduced by him the advocates of the system do not pretend to explain: it is due, in some way mysterious to us, and unrevealed in the Scriptures, to His humiliation, sufferings and death. It is enough for us to know the fact that repentance has the efficacy ascribed to it without presuming to inquire how it came to be possessed of it.\*

None can censure more severely than ourselves that arrogance of understanding which refuses to recognize any dispensation as Divine which cannot be adjusted to the measures of human probability. We are too sensible of the ignorance of man and the greatness of God to dream, for a moment, of making our finite reason the standard of the counsels of infinite wisdom; and we sympathize profoundly with the humility of mind, always characteristic of exalted attainments, that shrinks in reverence from the clouds and darkness which surround the throne of the Eternal. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; and where He has drawn a veil over the operations of His hand it is presumption in us to pry into His secrets or speculate with confidence on the mysteries He has not thought fit to reveal. But it is neither piety nor modesty; it is unbelief, however speciously disguised, which makes darkness where God has given light; mystery, where all things are plain. To say

\* "Some have endeavoured to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what the Scripture hath authorized; others, probably because they could not explain it, have been for taking it away, and confining his office as Redeemer of the world, to his instruction, example and government of the Church; whereas, the doctrine of the Gospel appears to be, not only that he taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what he did and suffered for us: that He obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life; not only that he revealed to sinners, that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it; but, moreover, that he put them in this capacity of salvation, by what he did and suffered for them; put us into a capacity of escaping future punishments and obtaining future happiness. And it is our wisdom thankfully to accept the benefit, by performing the conditions upon which it is offered on our part, without disputing how it was procured on his."—Butler's Analogy, Pt. 2, Cap. 5, § 6.

that we are left in ignorance, as to the method by which the mediation of Christ achieves the salvation of a sinner, is to contradict all those passages of Scripture, which directly teach, as well as indirectly imply, that the wisdom of God is conspicuously displayed in the scheme of redemption, and it is made the duty of the saints to admire it. "We preach Christ crucified," says the Apostle; "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." "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." The lowest conception of wisdom involves the idea that the means should be adapted to the end, and it is displayed only in so far as the correspondence betwixt them is capable of being discerned. Where the adaptation of means to an end is not perceived, wisdom may indeed exist, but it is absurd to say that it can either be admired or displayed. That emotion can be elicited only by an actual contemplation of the fitness upon which the wisdom depends. It is, accordingly, impossible that believers should be expected to glorify that attribute of God, to which, as much as to His power and grace, we are indebted for the economy of redemption, if they are not permitted to see how the mediation of Christ is adapted to effect their salvation. They can no more be filled with admiration at the contemplation of a wisdom which is concealed from their understandings, than they can be filled with love at the contemplation of a beauty which is hidden from their eyes. We are very far from asserting that we, or any other finite intelligence, can comprehend the whole mystery of Godliness: there are facts in redemption, such as the incarnation, and the subsistence of two natures in one person, and there may be designs in reference to other worlds and perhaps also in relation to our own, proposed by it, in the infinite counsels of God, which shall for ever transcend the capacities of creatures. We do not pretend to know the whole case. We hardly presume that we ever shall know it. Throughout the countless cycles of eternity we expect to occupy the anxious position of the Angels who, previous to the advent, are represented as earnestly inquiring into these things. The glories of redemption are as boundless, the depths of its wisdom as

fathomless, as the infinite perfections of the Godhead. But, though there be heights, which the loftiest genius cannot climb, and depths which no finite line can sound, still we maintain that there is a wisdom which we can discover and a wisdom we are required to adore. In so far as our own personal acceptance is involved, we can see the fitness of Jesus for His work and the fitness of His work to the necessities of man. If we cannot comprehend all the fullness of meaning in which Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, we can, at least, receive that portion of light which irradiates our own *salvation*; and we dare not brand as delusion all that joy in Him which flows not simply from the faith that He is a Saviour, but from the felt conviction that He is a Saviour peculiarly adapted to our wants. We must therefore protest against any hypothesis which discards as presumptuous all efforts to explain how the sacrifice of Christ contributes to our pardon. Whatever other mysteries surround the cross, this point is not left to the hazard of conjecture or the uncertainty of speculation. It is *revealed*, or words have lost their meaning, and the Bible is a book of riddles.

But the most serious objection to the theory in question is, that it represents Christ as introducing by His work, a new principle in the moral government of God, or a new method of administration, which cannot be conceived without confusion of ideas nor expressed without a contradiction in terms. The patrons of the scheme, studious to put, in its true light, the inadequacy of natural religion, are not wanting in proofs, that whatever intimations the facts of experience may give of the possibility of mercy under the general government of God, they all point to mediation, as the channel of compassion, and furnish no ground to suppose that any arbitrary purpose on the part of our Judge, or any penitence or amendment on our part, could have arrested the execution of the curse. Between penitence and pardon, they are unable to trace any natural or necessary connection; but a mediator may cause to be instituted, and in the case of Christ, has caused to be instituted, a dispensation of leniency under which repentance may be followed by forgiveness. The defect of Natural Religion to which Christianity is a remedy is, not that nature admits of no repentance, but that repentance is incapable of

securing pardon. The design of mediation is to establish a connection between them. Not to make one or the other possible or certain, but supposing them to exist, or capable of existing; to bind them in a new relation unknown to nature.

Now we take leave to say that Christianity has instituted no connection between penitence and pardon which is not founded in the very nature of things. Their relation to each other is not contingent but necessary; not derived from the interposition of a mediator, but from their essential relations to God. There never was a case, and there never will be a case in all the history of the universe in which a penitent sinner has been damned. What is repentance, in its full developement, but a restoration to that state of integrity and holiness, of knowledge, righteousness and communion with God, from which Adam by transgression fell? and can we entertain the thought, without horror, that He whose nature is in sympathy with the righteous, should banish into outer darkness those who are devoted to His law, who love His name and rejoice in His glory? A penitent sinner is one who has been a transgressor but is now just: the laws of God are now put within his mind and written on his heart, and his moral condition is evidently one which renders the supposition of punishment incongruous and contradictory. Such a man is as unfit for the atmosphere of hell as an impenitent transgressor is unfit for the atmosphere of Heaven. There is obviously, therefore, no principle of reason or nature, as there is unquestionably none of revelation, which teaches that a man may be penitent and perish, that he may be driven into final banishment with the love of God in his heart and the praise of God upon his tongue. On the contrary, we are expressly taught, that "if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die; all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him, in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live." This seems to be the dictate of right reason. The incongruity is so palpable and revolting of dooming to destruction, one who, at the time, is possessed of every element of character, that puts it in harmony with the

perfections of God that writers\* are, by no means, wanting, who are as confident in asserting a natural, as those whom we have more immediately in view, an instituted connection betwixt penitence and pardon. The difficulty of Natural Religion is, not that it excludes the penitent from hope, but that it precludes the possibility of repentance itself. Upon the hypothesis that the thorough and radical change of heart and character, implied in the Scripture doctrine of sanctification, could take place under its administration; that a man could be delivered from his moral degradation and reinstated into that condition of righteousness to which its promises of life are directed; we see no harm in asserting that in his righteousness he hath done, he shall live. The question under the law of nature, in regard to such a case, is precisely analogous to the question under the law of grace, whether an apostate saint shall be damned. The true answer is that the case can never occur. Nature shuts us up in despair because it shuts us up in *impenitence*. The least transgression contracts guilt, guilt calls for punishment, and this punishment consists in that banishment from God which is attended, in every dependent being, with spiritual death and the unbroken dominion of sin. To be a sinner, therefore, once, is to be a sinner forever, unless some agency should be interposed to arrest the natural and ordinary course of justice and law. Hence the office of a mediator must be, not to make repentance efficacious of pardon, but to make repentance possible. It is accordingly the great blessing which is promised, as well as the paramount duty enjoined, under the dispensation of the Gospel. In other words, it is the great end of Christianity, to restore and secure to man the holiness he has lost.

The first step, it is obvious, which must be taken in this work of renovation is the removal of guilt. In the only

\* Locke and Warburton may be particularly mentioned. Of course, however, what they mean by *repentance* is no real repentance at all. That is a change of heart effected by the power which originally formed it, and a man thus renewed is evidently in a state of salvation already. Holiness is salvation or there is nothing which deserves the name. But the case is very different in relation to those changes which are wrought in our characters by the law of habit under the influence of convictions and of fear. Such repentance is no preparation for heaven, and such penitents are worthy of death.

sense in which it can be conceived that repentance is likely to be acceptable to God, all its appropriate exercises are the results of His favour and of the communications of His grace. If the least degree of sin entails spiritual death—if death must continue as long as guilt abides, and repentance is a resurrection from this state; the guilt, in some way or other, must be effaced, before life can be imparted. There must be pardon, before there can be that union with God, which is the foundation of all holiness, as contradistinguished from morality. It is guilt which seals the soul in impotence, and that guilt must cease to be imputed before a renovation of the nature can be effected. To say that an unpardoned sinner can repent, is to affirm that he may be under the curse and in the favour of God at one and the same time; that he is both dead and alive—active and senseless—free and a slave, at the same moment and in the same relations. There is no method of escaping from these palpable contradictions, but by making pardon prior in the order of nature to repentance, and resolving both into a state of reconciliation, for which we are indebted to the gracious interference of a mediator. The same work, whatever it may be, which removes our guilt and propitiates the favour of the Father of our spirits, entitles us to those communications of love which render us meet to enjoy the blessedness of His smile. We must be pardoned that we may live; and we must live in order to repent; so that repentance and pardon are indeed indissolubly connected; not however as cause and effect, nor in the order in which they are too commonly presented, but as the joint results of a common grace, arranged in the relation of means to an end, pardon being in order to repentance.\*

\* In what we have said about the priority of pardon to repentance, we do not mean that the sense of pardon is experienced or that the thing itself formally takes place antecedently to regeneration. In the actual communication of grace, the heart must be changed before faith can exist, and faith must be exerted before justification can be had. But the *grounds* of pardon in the work and intercession of Christ are presupposed in any provisions for the renewal and the sanctification of the sinner, and the mission of the spirit through which he is made a partaker of Christ is in consequence of that mediation which could effect nothing if it did not remove guilt. We mean nothing more in what we have said than the absolution in heaven and the imputation of Christ, of which

That these were the doctrines which Paul preached on the Areopagus at Athens, cannot, of course, be directly collected from the brief record of his sermon, which has come down to us; but that he could not have taught any different theory, seems to us plain, from the nature of the arguments he employed. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained: whereof, He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead." The Apostle here makes it the great object of the Gospel, in contradistinction from the law of nature, to inculcate the duty of repentance. As long as men were left to the light of their own eyes, without any adequate revelations of the method of redemption, the doctrine of repentance was not promulgated, because the grace of it was not yet to be imparted. The dead were not commanded to live, because He had not arrived, whose voice could penetrate their graves, and quicken the pulse of immortality. It is only in connection with the kingdom of heaven that the Scriptures ever insist upon repentance, because it is in that kingdom alone that repentance can possibly exist. Had not Jesus appeared, no eye would ever have wept a tear—no heart ever heaved a sigh of Godly sorrow for sin. When we attend to the steps by which Paul reaches the conclusion, that God now commandeth all men every where to repent—that the generation of holiness, and the destruction of sin are the characteristic ends of the Gospel, the inference is inevitable, that his views of repentance must have been very different from that which makes it the condition of pardon. It will be recollected, that the general judgment is not presented as a *motive* to amendment, but as a proof that it is commanded. He does not say that men *ought* to repent because they will be judged, but that they are *commanded* to do it. He first collects the command from a general judgment in righteousness, and then proves, not that there will be a judgment, but that it will

Owen speaks in his *Death of Christ and Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*. See also Witsius, *Dessert Ireni* and Halyburton's *Inquiry into the nature of Regeneration, &c.* But see particularly chaps. xi. and xii. of Owen on the *Death of Christ*.

be in righteousness, because Jesus has been raised from the dead. The sum of his reasoning is briefly this: Men are required to be holy, because God will hereafter deal with them upon the principle of distributive justice; and that this is the method of His government, is put beyond doubt by the resurrection of His Son from the dead.

There are two aspects in which this inspired argument is inconsistent with the doctrines we have been combating. In the first place, if we are ignorant of the nature of the Saviour's mediation, and know not the principles on which it contributes to our pardon, it is impossible to detect any logical connection betwixt His resurrection and ascension, and the final judgment of the world in righteousness. If we know not what relations to the law He sustained in His death, we must be incompetent to perceive how His resurrection secures its supremacy. Paul does not adduce the resurrection as a proof of His divine mission, and through it, a proof of what He had asserted in regard to the proceedings of the last day, but he appeals to it as a fact, which, in itself, contained an infallible assurance from God, that the world should be judged in righteousness. It is a fact which, as soon as it is understood, proclaims this awful truth.

In the next place, if repentance is the appointed precursor of pardon, then it is either a principle of natural justice that the penitent should be pardoned, or, under the mediation of Christ, the government of God is not one of distributive justice. To assert that repentance and pardon are connected as antecedent and consequent, under the dispensation of nature, is to set aside all those arguments by which the Divines of this school, are accustomed to establish the necessity of mediation. To say, that under the mediation of Christ the government of God is not strictly and properly just, is to contradict the Apostle, who affirms a general judgment in righteousness, of which this very mediation is the clearest and most convincing proof. Hence, they must be either inconsistent with themselves, or inconsistent with the Apostle, in making it the object of Christianity to put men in a capacity of salvation, by dissolving, through the work of Christ, the natural connection between guilt and punishment, when a moral change has taken place in ourselves.

III. There is another class of Divines, possessing many points of resemblance to the one whose opinions we have just been considering. They differ, however, in the circumstance that they profess to understand the principle on which the efficacy of what they denominate atonement, depends. They are unwilling to assert the absolute necessity of the death of Christ; not from the modesty which shrinks from the presumption of pronouncing, with confidence, upon what the Almighty might or might not do, but from the principle, plainly avowed and elaborately defended, that Public Policy is the only necessity to be admitted. Those very considerations of expediency by which others have been accustomed to repel objections, and which are in felt disproportion to the importance and magnitude of the event, are received by them as a complete explanation of the case. The great problem to be solved by the death of the Redeemer was the consistency of Pardon with the honour of the Divine reputation, and the dignity of the Divine administration, and the general prosperity of the universe. It was a terrible tragedy enacted before the eyes of all creatures, to display the holiness of God and illustrate the transcendent enormity of sin. It was intended to give emphasis and depth of impression to truths which might have been obscured or undervalued, if sin had been absolutely pardoned, or pardoned upon mere repentance. The Divines of this school do not hesitate to assert that, according to their scheme, the method of salvation involves an inversion of the principles of strict retribution. "Neither Christ nor the sinner," we use the very words of Dr. Wardlaw, "neither Christ nor the sinner has his own due. The guilty, who, according to these principles, should suffer, escapes; and the innocent, who should escape, suffers. In no strict and proper sense, then, can distributive justice be *satisfied* by substitution, when its demands, instead of being adhered to and fulfilled, are, for a special purpose, and by an act of Divine sovereignty, suspended, superseded, over-ruled." These men, whatever they may affirm to the contrary, regard the distinctions betwixt right and wrong, not as final and ultimate, but as means to an end. The great purpose of God, in the government of His creatures, is the production of the largest amount of happiness, and His laws are nothing but the expedients of His prudence

and wisdom, to accomplish the ends of His benevolence: When, accordingly, the public good can be promoted without these laws, there is nothing in the nature of rectitude; the perfections of the Deity, or the relations of man to his Creator, which prevents them from being suspended, superseded, over-ruled. They are binding because they are necessary to the well-being of the universe; and, when a larger amount of happiness can be produced without them; the same reason which induced the Deity to prescribe them; induces Him to set them aside. Policy is superior to right, or rather right is nothing but policy under another name. Experience, however, and the obvious fitness of things concur to demonstrate that the principles of morality are; for the most part, the highest expediency; that truth; justice, benevolence, are the surest means of private felicity and public prosperity, and that the interests of the universe; accordingly, require that all the Divine proceedings should be distinguished by the tendency to impress an awful sense of them upon the minds of intelligent creatures. When, therefore, the Divine administration in any degree departs from them, the general result should be, a stronger commendation of them than if they had been faithfully and punctiliously observed. Whenever God, in other words; breaks His own law, the design should be, to make that law more sacredly and solemnly impressive upon the minds of His subjects. It is seen to be "more honoured in the breach than in the observance."

That we have not misrepresented the theory in question; nor the reasoning by which it is supported, however inconsistent that reasoning appears in our account of it, will be obvious to any one who will take the trouble to analyse and compare the following statements, from a work of confessed ability. "*Distributive*, or, as others designate it, *retributive* justice, according to its strict requirements, admits not of substitution. It issues a righteous law, with a righteous sanction. It passes its sentence of condemnation against the transgressor of that law. It makes no mention of any possible satisfaction but the punishment of the guilty themselves,—the endurance by them of the penal sanction in their own persons. It is only by the death of the sinner himself that the proper demand of the law can be fulfilled; that the principles of distributive justice can have their due applica-

tion; and that, under this aspect of it, consequently, Justice can be satisfied. According to the requisition of justice, in its distributive sense, every man, personally, must have *his own due*. But in substitution it is otherwise. There is an inversion of the principles of strict retribution. Neither Christ nor the sinner has his own due. The guilty, who, according to those principles, should suffer, escapes; and the innocent, who should escape, suffers. In no strict and proper sense, then, can distributive justice be *satisfied* by substitution, when its demands, instead of being adhered to and fulfilled, are, for a special purpose, and by an act of divine sovereignty, suspended, superseded, overruled.—It is well to remark, however, that, in another sense, it was satisfied; all its ends being virtually, and to the full, effected by other means. And this leads me to the true end of atonement. It is to *public justice*, as we have before defined it, that, in substitution and propitiation, the satisfaction is made. The grand design is, “to preserve unsullied the glory of the great principles of eternal rectitude: to shew the impossibility of the claims of equity, founded in these principles and essential to the government of the universe, being dispensed with; to settle in the minds of God’s intelligent creatures, as the subjects of his moral administration, the paramount obligation and immutable permanence of their claims; to give such a manifestation of the divine regard to these elements of his immaculate administration, as to preclude the possibility of any the remotest surmise that in the pardon of sin they have been at all overlooked or placed in abeyance; and thus to render it consistent with divine propriety, or, in other words, honourable to the whole character, as well as to the law and the government of Jehovah, to extend pardoning mercy to the guilty, and to reinstate them in his favour, according to the provisions of the gospel. It is thus that, in so pardoning, his regard to righteousness is as conspicuous as his delight in mercy; and, in the minds of the pardoned, the impression of the claims of the one as deep as that of their obligations to the other.—In this view of it, the scheme possesses a divine grandeur. The glory of God, and the good of his universal empire,—the two great ends of *public justice*, are with “all wisdom and prudence,” admirably combined in it. It is as essential

to the latter of these ends, as it is to the former—(they can never, indeed, be separated)—that the authority of the divine government be maintained in its awful and inviolable sacredness; that the demands of the law be upheld, without one jot or tittle of abatement; that no sin appear as venial; and that, if any sinner is pardoned, the mercy shown to the offender be shown in such a way,—on such a ground,—through such a medium,—as shall at once manifest the divine reprobation of his offences, and, at the same time, secure the restitution of the guilty perpetrator of them to the principles, affections, and practice of holy allegiance.—Such are the purposes, and such the effects, of the Christian atonement.”\*

The plain meaning of all this smooth and beautiful declamation is, that God may do evil that good may come. He may do a thing which confessedly is not just. He may invert the principles of strict retribution, — suspend, supersede, overrule the operation of His own law, provided in, so doing, He makes His creatures feel the paramount obligation and immutable permanence of the claims that are set aside. Rectitude is essentially eternal and unchangeable,† but God need not observe it; if, by occasional departures from its rules, He can make the universe more scrupulous and punctilious. The death of Christ was, accordingly, a grand expedient by which the Deity, in all wisdom and prudence, has successfully contrived to impress, with commanding emphasis, the eternal principles of truth and justice upon the minds of every other intelligent being, while He Himself, in this awful dispensation, confessedly disregards them. Such is the theory as expounded by one of its ablest advocates.

Our business, at present, is not with the merits of it, but simply with the question, whether the Historian has not furnished reasons for believing that, whether true or false, this was not the scheme of atonement which Paul preached in the metropolis of Paganism. Paul's Gospel is compendiously expressed in Jesus and the *resurrection*. But so far as we can discover, the resurrection is no necessary part of the Gospel, which resolves the death of Christ into considerations of

\* Wardlaw on Atonement, pp. 58—60.

† Upon this subject Dr. Wardlaw has expressed himself very strongly, both in his *Christian Ethicks* and his work on *Atonement*.

expediency, and explains its efficacy by the moral impression against sin it is suited to produce. The two great ends of Public Justice, we are told in the passage just quoted, are the glory of God and the good of His universal empire, and these ends, according to the patrons of the scheme, are adequately secured by a dispensation which shows that God *hates*, while He pardons iniquity. All that would seem to be essential, therefore, is the sufferings and death of the Redeemer. The resurrection is not an element of the work of redemption, it is simply a necessary fact, springing from the Divinity of the sufferer, and no more conducive to the expiation of our guilt than the eating and drinking which pertained to his humanity, or the alternations of activity and repose, which were inseparable from his sublunary state. As Jesus was God, it was certain that He could not be holden of the bands of death. He had power to lay down His life,—He had power to take it up again: but if we could conceive the possibility of his permanent subjection to the dominion of the grave, the impression for ought that appears, of the transcendent enormity of sin, would have been more awful than is likely to be produced by temporary suffering followed by unutterable glory. To say that such a doom would have been a revolting exhibition of cruelty is either to deny that the principle on which his sufferings were inflicted was just, and then any degree of them would have been a measure of cruelty; or to affirm that there is a point beyond which justice cannot push the punishment of sin, and then it ceases to be the mighty evil they represent it. Upon any view of the case, therefore, the resurrection is an immaterial circumstance in this scheme of redemption. Suffering,—the visible and palpable endurance of it,—this is what is required to the manifestation of the righteousness of God,—this is what is needed for the purpose of salutary impression.\*

\*“ Meanwhile it is enough to remind you, how the idea of *manifestation* is associated with the atonement. There is not only a provision for the exercise of the Divine righteousness in man's salvation; but there is the *declaration* of that righteousness. Now, in order to this, there is required not suffering merely, but the palpable and visible endurance of it. It would not otherwise have the necessary impression and effect.  
\* \* \* And without vain and presumptuous speculations, we are,

It deserves further to be remarked that, according to this scheme, the resurrection of Christ furnishes no proof that God will judge the world in righteousness. If by righteousness we are to understand the principle of distributive justice; and such, in all similar connections, seems to be its meaning—that, according to this hypothesis, is inverted. Neither man nor the Saviour receives his due. If we are to understand the public justice to which so much importance is attached, that may be illustrated by the *death*, but we cannot perceive its relation to the *resurrection* of Christ, which becomes, upon this hypothesis, a necessary adjunct of the *person*, but no part of the *work* of the Redeemer.

There is another objection to this theory, suggested by the sermon at Athens, which, if we can make it as clear to our readers, as it is to ourselves, will, we apprehend, be conclusive against it. The whole discourse seems to have been conducted on the principle, that the Gospel is its own witness—that the facts of redemption authenticate themselves—that we can reason from its phenomena as effects to their origin in the mind of God as we ascend from nature up to nature's cause. Paul has evidently taken it for granted, for there is no allusion to any external proofs of the Divine mission of Jesus, and no intimation that he himself wrought any miracles at Athens; that as the heavens proclaim the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork; so the death and resurrection of Jesus, when properly apprehended, are their own proofs that He is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth. The work itself proves its Divinity. That work cannot be acknowledged, without prompting the confession of Peter,—thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. Now there is one branch of this a posteriori argument which is absolutely impossible upon the theory of Public Justice. The resurrection furnishes no direct proof of the Deity and Sonship of Christ. There is nothing in the

every one of us, sensible that the spectacle of a Saviour *thus* dignified *thus* suffering is enough for the purpose of salutary impression: impression deep, solemn, awful of the Divine righteousness,—and impression amply and delightfully encouraging, of the Divine mercy." Wardlaw on Atonement, p. 45-6, Dis. 2nd.

nature of the sufferings which He underwent, which requires that the sufferer should be a Divine Person. As to their amount, for aught that appears, they might have been endured by a creature; and as to their design we could not have pronounced beforehand that a very solemn and awful display of the holiness of God and the malignity of sin, fitted to inspire a salutary fear into the minds of the guilty, might not have been made by one who was less than Jehovah's fellow.\* Hence the mere fact that he died the death which he did, and triumphed over it in his resurrection from the grave, is no necessary proof of what Paul affirms it to demonstrate with power, that He was the true and proper son of God. He died.—He rose. These are the facts. Now if there be not something in the nature of His death, which imperatively demanded that the sufferer should be Divine, there can be nothing in the nature of the resurrection to declare his Deity. If we knew beforehand that he was God, we can account for His resurrection upon that hypothesis, but there is nothing in the circumstance itself, which independently of any other proofs, demonstrates His eternal worship as well as His kindred to man. It deserves further to be remarked that, according to this hypothesis, the connection between the death of Christ and the salvation of His people is a matter\* of arbitrary appointment, and the entire efficacy of His work is resolved into the dignity of His person. In the Epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle teaches us, that there is a species of death which, if *any one* endures in the name and for the sake of others, they shall be acquitted, renewed and sanctified. Because we thus judge, says he, that if one died for all, then all died. The death of the substitute is, in law and justice, the death of the principal; it delivers him from guilt. The effect depends not upon the *person* dying, but upon the nature and relations of the death itself. If any other being could have been found who was capable of dying the death which Christ died, the same glorious results would have followed. His Deity was essential,—not to

\* Dr. Wardlaw admits as much in attempting to prove the necessity of Christ's death from the fact that He *did* die, which, no doubt, is very sound reasoning from cause to effect, but it cannot be reversed,—p. 14. Cf. p. 46.

establish the connection between His death and the salvation of His people,—but to create the possibility of the death itself. There was a peculiarity about it which absolutely demanded the strength of omnipotence to undergo it. None but God could have shed the blood which Jesus poured out. When it is said that the value of Christ's sufferings depends upon His person, it is not intended that a fictitious importance is to be attached to something inherently and essentially worthless, in consequence of its association with a Divine being—which is the only sense of the terms consistent with the theory of Public Justice—the meaning is, that they were fully and completely the *death* which the exigencies of the case required, and which they could not possibly have been, if the sufferer had been less than Divine. Redemption is glorious; not because God achieves it, but because none but God *could* achieve it. The death of Jesus was glorious; not because it was His death, but because it *could* be the death of no other. A creature might as well have undertaken to *create* as to *save* a world. The work itself demands the interposition of God; and any theory which fails to represent the death of Christ as an event which, in its own nature, as clearly proclaims His Divinity as His superintending care and preservation of all things, cannot be the Gospel which Paul preached at Rome, at Corinth, at Athens, and which extorted from Thomas, upon beholding the risen Saviour, the memorable confession,—My Lord, and my God.

IV. If the necessity of the Gospel is not founded in the ignorance of man, nor the want of a natural connection between penitence and pardon, nor the policy of government, the question recurs, what is the nature of it and what peculiarities must distinguish the provisions that are intended to relieve it. It is obvious that Paul, in his recapitulation of the great principles of Natural Religion, designed to produce in the minds of his hearers, a deep and pungent conviction, that sin had occasioned an emergency in the government of God, which rendered salvation, independently of Jesus and the resurrection, hopelessly impossible. These very principles created the difficulty, They represent God as a just judge and a righteous governor; dispensing rewards and punishments according to the rule of

distributive justice; dealing with every man according to his works. The first great necessity of man, therefore, as a sinner, arises from his guilt; an obligation to punishment which, according to the eternal principles of rectitude, cannot be set aside. The government of the world is not prudential, but moral; and under a strict and proper moral government the wicked cannot be received into favour; they *must* be punished. There can consequently be no hope to a sinner until the problem is solved, how God can be *just*; not simply wise, discreet or prudent, this is not the difficulty which a sense of guilt presses upon the conscience of a sinner, but how God can be *just*; can maintain the principle upon which His administration is conducted, and yet receive transgressors into favour. There appears to be an impossibility in the pardon of sin under the law of nature. This first and paramount necessity, springing from guilt under a righteous government, it is the object of Christianity to relieve. It is accordingly an amazing Dispensation of Providence and Grace which proposes to reconcile the pardon of the guilty with the strictest principles of justice; which, while it opens a door of hope to the guilty and removes the apprehensions which conscience awakens in the breast of transgressors, demonstrates, at the same time, in the clearest and brightest light, that God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained. The more clearly the doctrines of Natural Religion are understood, the more hopeless becomes the condition of a sinner. The imperfect knowledge of them which can be gathered from the dictates of our own consciousness; the crude and mouldering remains which may yet be detected of the law originally written on the heart, are enough to arouse our fears and fill the mind with anxiety and suspense, as to the possibility of final acceptance upon any terms. As the light increases and revelation pours in upon us, its discoveries of our former state—our present ruin—of God's immutable holiness and inflexible justice, despair thickens upon us. Our hearts condemn us, and God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things. The anxious question is wrung from us,—“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offer-

ings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Now guilt is only another name for a conviction of *ill-desert*. It is the response of the human soul to the justice of punishment, and is utterly independent, as all human experience testifies, of all calculations of expediency. The burden upon the conscience is,—not simply that we shall suffer, for suffering may be a calamity as well as a punishment—not that the interests of the universe and the safety of God's throne demand our misery; these are considerations which never enter into the bitterness of remorse—the burden which presses with intolerable weight upon the soul—is the terrible conviction, wrung from the depths of our moral nature,—that we have done wrong and *deserve* to die. It is this feeling that we *deserve* our doom, which kindles the hell within us. If we could strip ourselves of the burning consciousness of this fact, no amount of evil could ever be regarded in the light of punishment. Whatever was inflicted for the general good, we might nerve ourselves to bear, from lofty considerations of benevolence and self-sacrifice; and to whatever was inevitable, we might bow with patience, if not with resignation. But energy and resolution avail nothing against a sense of guilt; the feeling of *ill-desert* drinks up the spirits, and conscience makes cowards of us all. This, then, is the peculiarity which distinguishes guilt; it is a conviction that punishment is due—that it ought to be inflicted, and that under a righteous government, sooner or later, it *will* be inflicted; and it is precisely this sense of guilt which the truths of Natural Religion are adapted to produce within us. It is the echo of our own hearts to the fearful condemnation of a holy God.

If guilt is the response of the soul to the justice of punishment, the only way in which its sting can be extracted is by an arrangement, which shall make the punishment cease to be just, and give the sinner a right to escape from the evils which conscience forecasts. By no other conceivable method can peace and tranquillity, in conformity with the principles of eternal rectitude, be imparted to the mind.

The source of all its fear is the conviction that it *ought* to die, and unless a contrary conviction can be produced, that the same justice which doomed to death now exempts from the curse, guilt will continue to agitate the heart with dismal forebodings, which cannot be dismissed as phantoms, because they are founded in the very nature of the soul. This *obligation* to punishment—this *righteousness* of condemnation, must cease to press, or the need which guilt creates cannot be relieved. The sinner feels, in other words, that the justice which calls for his blood must be satisfied, or that blood must be yielded to its demand. It is, accordingly, the glory of the Gospel, that the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purges the conscience, dispels all its distracting fears, and imparts peace and serenity where despair and guilt had held their troubled reign. Availing itself of a principle, which, in every dispensation of religion, has been fundamental in the Divine dealings with our race, which belongs to natural as well as supernatural religion, and which, in some form or other, has always commended itself to the moral judgments of mankind, it reveals to us a work, in consequence of which, the pardon of sin on the part of God, becomes not merely a dictate of mercy, but a matter of right. Jesus, in the name of His people, and as their federal head and representative, has endured the curse, and the justice of God is now solemnly pledged to Him, to exempt them from personal subjection to its woes. He has died the death of the law, and upon an obvious principle of justice, from the relations in which they stand to Him, His death is their death. If one died for all, then all died. We are baptized into His death. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

No scheme of atonement that fails to represent Christ as submitting to the proper penalty of the law, which the sins of His people had provoked, and in such relations to them that His sufferings can be justly charged as their own,— can be regarded as adapted to the exigencies of *guilt*. It does not relieve that condition of the conscience which apprehends punishment as a matter of right. It does not meet the prime necessity of the sinner. He is still left *guilty*.\*

\* This is admitted by Dr. Wardlaw and the Divines of the same school.

under *obligation* to punishment, and if his iniquities are pardoned, law and justice are defrauded of their due. Hence, if the principles of Natural Religion are immutable, there can be no peace to the transgressor, until he is placed in a position, in which it is no longer *right* to remember his offences against him. When God can be just and faithful in blotting out his transgressions, then and not till then, is conscience sprinkled with clean water and purged from dead works. Christianity must take away our *guilt*, or it leaves us under the curse of nature. This, we maintain, is precisely what the Gospel achieves. The Lamb of God bore away our guilt. He became a curse for us—sin for us, though He himself knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He was wounded for our transgressions—He was bruised for our iniquities—the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all. It is in reference to this aspect of the work of Christ as expiating guilt, that the eternal covenant which He came to ratify and seal is styled the counsel of peace; the kingdom which He came to establish consists in joy and peace, and the great blessing which He communicates to all who are sprinkled with His blood is that peace which passeth all understanding, and which abides unshaken amid the agitations and tumults, the glooms and convulsions of the world. Through Him God becomes the God of peace, the Gospel the message of peace, Preachers of righteousness the heralds of peace; and the two great results of His work, according to the rapturous song of the angels, are Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth. We see no alternative, but an open denial that the Gospel is the religion of a sinner, adapted to those moral necessities of his nature which spring from the immutable principles of natural religion, or a cordial admission of the fact that Christ, by His suffering and death, completely satisfied the justice of God in regard to the sins of His people. They, through Him, either cease to be guilty, or they must die; their consciences are either purged by His blood, or they have no peace. They are still under the law and its curse, or they are delivered from its condemnation. It is idle to speak of the ends of punishment

being answered by anything but punishment itself; of costly and imposing expedients by which a salutary impression is made on the universe, and the righteousness of God illustriously displayed and the malignity of sin unfolded; this may be true, but all this does not reach the malady within, the plague of the sinner's conscience—that is seized by the strong hand of justice, and until its iron grasp is relaxed—until right as well as policy ceases to demand his blood, he cannot be at ease. Hence it is, and must be, an indispensable element, in anything which deserves the name of atonement, that it satisfies the justice of God, or lays the foundation of a claim of right to exemption from punishment.\*

But guilt is not the only need, a sense of which is awakened by those truths of nature which Paul proclaimed at Athens. To be delivered from guilt is to be put in the moral position of the innocent, without obstructions to the free communications of Divine favour and without a right to any good but the exemption from ill.† Such persons might be made alive to God, but they could have no claims to His favour and no security for whatever integrity might be graciously imparted. It is only to the *just* that the confirmed state of blessedness which the Scriptures mean by life, is infallibly promised. Obedience to the law, *righteousness*, is the indispensable condition of God's everlasting favour. If, therefore, the scheme of redemption had done

\* "Even the commender and publisher of Grotius' Book of "Satisfaction," the learned Vossinu himself affirmeth, that Christ, by His death, purchased for us a double right: First, a right of escaping punishment and then a right of obtaining the reward." Owen's Death of Christ, chap. x.

† "The satisfaction of Christ tends in all that it is, to the honour and reparation of the justice of God. This, then, in its utmost extent and efficacy, cannot give ground to build such a right upon. The ultimate effect of satisfaction may be accomplished, and yet not the least right to any good thing communicated to them, for whom this satisfaction is made. The good things attending the death of Christ may be referred unto two heads; the amotion of evil and the collation of good. For the first, the amotion of evil, the taking that from us that it may not grieve us, and subducting us from the power and presence thereof, it is immediately aimed at by satisfaction. That the curse of the law be not executed, that the wrath to come be not poured out, is the utmost reach of the death of Christ, considered as satisfactory. \* \* \* For positive good things in grace and glory by satisfaction alone, they are not at all respected."—Owen—Death of Christ, chap. xi.

nothing more than deliver us from the curse of the law, though it would have conferred an incalculable benefit upon us—an utterably great salvation—it would not have done all, that the necessities of the case required, to secure the perfection and blessedness of our nature. If it had gone so far as to remove spiritual death and reestablish the communion of the soul with God, the life which it imparted would still have been contingent. It might be forfeited by disobedience, and in the actual circumstances of our race, surrounded with temptations, encompassed with infirmities, ensnared alike by the world and the Devil; if our first father under much greater advantages failed when left to himself, it is morally certain that all of us would have come short of the glory of God. A contingent life would have been a cruel mockery of our hopes. Hence the Gospel proposes not merely to deliver us from the condemnation of sin, to put us into a state in which it is no longer right to damn us, but to introduce us into a state in which it is right to *bless* us. It proposes to give us a title to life, a title founded on the same eternal principle of rectitude which would have confirmed Adam in holiness and bliss forever, if he had fulfilled the condition of his trial. The Gospel, in other words, proposes to justify, and upon the broad principle of righteousness, to open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. This righteousness secures our holiness—secures life—because it secures God's favour and gives a right, under the constitution of His own government, to the enjoyment of Him, as the supreme portion of the soul. They who are justified must be glorified. The very end of justification is to take away the contingency of holiness. If Adam had maintained his integrity during the term of his probation, his justification would have imparted to him no element of character which he did not previously possess; the image of God was not half drawn upon him—but it would have put him in a *state* in which he could never lose his holiness, nor be exposed to the risk of condemnation. And so the justification of a sinner introduces him into a state in which he can no more be left to the dominion of sin and the possibility of the curse than Christan close his glory, or God be unfaithful to His promises and oath. For whom He did foreknow He

also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; moreover, whom He did predestinate them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

Such, we apprehend, is the substance of that doctrine which Paul preached in his first open conflict with Paganism. The religion he proclaimed was preëminently that of a sinner—adapted, in all its provisions, to the spiritual necessities of a fallen being, under the righteous government of God. The altars around him were dumb, yet pregnant witnesses, that the wants, which the Gospel undertook to relieve, were not the fictions of fancy, nor the creatures of superstition, but the urgent demands of the soul. Under the imperfect light of heathenism there were still cases, in which conscience asserted its supremacy, and summoned the guilty to the tribunal of the unknown God. The uncertainty which invested the doctrine of a future life was suited to quicken the apprehensions of guilt, while the utter darkness into which the spirit seemed to retire, invited a disturbed imagination to people its shades, with ministers of vengeance and executioners of justice. Amid all the ignorance of God, and vagueness of conjecture which pertained to the condition of a thoughtful pagan, the terrible impression would cleave to him, that he was under a curse. It would haunt his dreams like the ghost of the murdered, embitter his waking hours, turn life itself into a burden, and make him long yet dread to die. He might endeavour to lay the flattering unction to his soul, that the great unknown, in whose hands he was, and to whom he was responsible, was good and kind, and would be tender to his infirmities and failures; but the scenes of wretchedness around him—the frightful ravages of disease, pestilence and death; the stern and relentless judgments which scourge entire generations and sweep away nations in their progress; the cry of weeping, lamentation and woe, which bursts from the smitten bosoms of the whole family of man; the portentous fact, written in blazing characters around him; stamped upon the cheek of the dying, the brow of the living, and even upon inanimate nature itself, that God has a controversy with men, and that, if He is good, He yet deals out to the trembling tribes of

earth, the vials of a fierce indignation — considerations like these, would thicken the blackness with which conscience had covered the future, and shroud the soul in the deepest night of despair. If the syren voice of hope should attempt to whisper, that there yet might be peace, the monitor of God within would proclaim, in tones of thunder, there is no peace to the wicked. If there should still be an effort to prop the sinking spirit upon the mercy of its author, nature would cry aloud, from her thousand chambers of suffering and anguish, woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of earth! Where could comfort be found? Where could peace be sought, except in that desperate hardihood of spirit, which would sternly banish thought, and like the beasts that perish, catch only the passing moment as it flies? And what is the religion, which such a sinner, grappling with despair — burdened with life and afraid to die — what is the religion, which the necessities of his soul demand? Is it more of light in relation to God, His law, His justice, and the stern retributions of eternity — when what he knows already, presses on his conscience like a night-mare, and peoples the land of darkness with all that is awful in mysterious power, with all that is dreadful in insulted justice? Ah, no! He needs not light, but life, not philosophy and science, not new discoveries in heaven and earth, but a Saviour, — a Saviour who can pluck him from the wrath to come, arrest the avenger of blood, seize the sword of justice, put it up into its scabbard, bid it rest and be still. The glory of Christianity is its Saviour, and His power to save is in the blood by which he extinguished the fires of the curse, and the righteousness by which He bought life for all His followers. Jesus made our curse — Jesus made our righteousness; this, this is the Gospel. All else is philosophy and vain deceit. This it is which gives Christianity its power. By this, and this alone, it subdues the ferocity of passion — disarms temptation of its violence — disrobes the world of its charms — changes the tiger into the lamb, and makes the lion eat straw like the ox. This constitutes the grand difference between the religion of Mahomet and the religion of Jesus, between the Koran and the Bible.

Upon this scheme, and this scheme alone, as it seems to us, the preaching of Paul, at Athens, can be reduced to

consistency and method. It accounts for the importance which he attached to the doctrines of nature. He would acquaint the patient with his malady before he explained the nature and application of the remedy, especially when it was likely to be sought, just in the degree in which it was felt to be needed.

In the next place, it makes the resurrection an integral part of Christianity. That resurrection was the justification of Jesus as the Head of the Church, the discharge of the prisoner upon the satisfaction of the debt, as well as the passage of our great High Priest into the Holiest of all. If Christ had remained under the power of death, the curse of the law could not have been removed from us; we should have died in our sins. He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Upon this view, we may add further, that the resurrection of Christ becomes, what Paul affirms it to be — a signal proof of His eternal sonship; if by His eternal sonship, we understand that spirit of holiness, according to which He is truly and properly God. None but Jehovah's fellow could have received the stroke of Jehovah's justice in His bosom and survived the blow. The penalty of the law was no vulgar ill, to be appeased by a few groans and tears — by agony, sweat and blood. It was the wrath of the infinite God, which, when it falls upon a creature, crushes him under the burden of eternal death. It is a blackness of darkness through which no ray of light or hope can ever penetrate the soul of a finite being; to all such it is the blackness of darkness *forever*. But Jesus endured it — Jesus satisfied it — Jesus bowed beneath that death which the law demanded, and which sinks angels and men to everlasting ruin, and came victorious from the conflict. If He had been a creature, He would have been crushed, sunk, lost, — if He had been less than God, the bitterness of death could not have been passed; never, never could He have emerged from that thick darkness into which He entered, when He made His soul an offering for sin. The morning of the third day — and a more glorious morn never dawned upon our earth — forever settled, to all who understood the event, the Deity of Jesus; it was the crisis of all human hope. When our great substitute had given up the Ghost for us —

descended into hell—the possibility of His return to us, depended on His ability to meet the infinite wrath of the Infinite God. When the terrific cup was administered and He drank it and died, His slumbers in Joseph's tomb could never have been broken, unless He could thunder with a voice like God, and bear the burden of infinite woe. The third day which proclaimed His triumph, declared Him to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of Holiness, by His resurrection from the dead. He had died a death, which none could die, but one who was Almighty.

But Paul teaches us that the resurrection is not only a proof of the Deity of Christ, but a proof, at the same time, that God will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained; that His government, in other words, is conducted on the principle of distributive justice. This is an obvious inference from that representation of Christianity, which makes the sufferings of Jesus a full and perfect satisfaction of the penalty of the law, and His life of spotless obedience, the ground to all claim of everlasting bliss. No other scheme harmonizes the salvation of a sinner with the immutable principles of natural religion. This is its characteristic excellence; it rears the fabric of grace—not upon the ruins, but the fulfilment of the law. God is never seen to be more gloriously just, nor the law more awfully sacred, than when He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. The impression which this event makes is indeed solemn, awful, sublime. It was a wonder in heaven, a terror in hell, and is the grand instrument through which the rebellion of earth is subdued, and the stout-hearted made to melt at the remembrance of sin. Upon the cross it is written in characters of blood, that none can ever be pardoned who have not died, in their substitute, the death of the law; that none can ever be admitted into Heaven, who cannot present that obedience to which life is promised. Justice has its full demands upon the representative of the sinner, while grace abounds to the sinner himself. It may be said, however, that the admission of a substitute is itself a compromise of the strictness of justice. Without entering into the abstract question, it is sufficient for our present

purpose to observe, that God never contemplated any other justification of our race but through the obedience of a federal head. This was the fundamental principle of the covenant which contains the substance of natural religion. If Adam had stood, we should all have been justified by his obedience; as having fallen, we sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression. No promise of life has ever been made to man upon any other basis than that of imputed righteousness. It is nature's method, as well as the method of grace; and as natural law is admitted to be just, there is no concession, nor compromise of the eternal principles of right, in laying upon Christ, the iniquities of us all.

From the exposition which has been given of this noble monument of eloquence which inspiration has transmitted to us, it may be seen what constitutes the essence of the Gospel. Jesus and the resurrection. Jesus dying for our sins, and raised again for our justification. Where these elements are wanting, — whatever else may be found, — there is no Christianity. A penal death and a perfect righteousness, imputed, the one for pardon and the other for acceptance; these are the things which make the Gospel glad tidings of great joy. To deny these is to deny Christ.

We may here see also that the most successful method of preaching is that which aims at thorough and radical *convictions* of sin. The law must be applied with power to the conscience, or the preciousness of grace will be very inadequately known. The superficial piety of the present day is owing, in a large degree, to feeble impressions of the malignity of sin. That thorough breaking up of the fallow ground of the heart, that groaning under bondage, that full experiment of our weakness and nothingness which characterized the experience of the past generation, are unsuited to the haste and bustle of this stirring age. The transition from absolute indifference to cordial reliance upon Christ must be made in an instant. One gush of sorrow, one leap of joy, and the work is done. Such converts must know little of the law, little of Christ, and less of themselves. Men must be soundly instructed by Moses, if they would know the sweetness of the liberty in Christ.