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PURE GOLD,

OR,

Truth in its Native Loveliness.

BY
REV. D^{avid} HOLMES, A.M.

Born at Newburgh, N.Y., March 10, 1810

Died at Battle Ground, Indiana, Nov. 14, 1873.

*Member of North-west Indiana Conference of the
Methodist Episcopal Church*

“What is truth?”—PILATE.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”—JESUS.

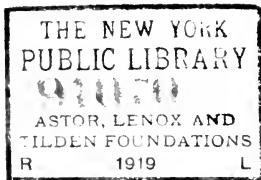
“When I speak of Christian theology as a science, it should not be deemed as involving any unholy blending of things sacred and profane together: . . . I de-ign by it to express the deep conviction, that the truths of revelation have a harmonious connection and inter-dependency with each other, and that it is competent to bring them all into one intelligent system, possessing complete philosophical unity.”

DR. HICKOK

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WILLIAM J. MOSES.

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Preface.

THE character of the following work is so fully revealed in the table of "Contents," that little need be added by way of preface. The leading design of the author has been to separate truth from error, and present it in so clear and convincing a light, that the honest inquirer will at once perceive that it *is* truth, and that whatever conflicts with it must be false.

There is little danger that false systems, or theories of religion will be adopted, if the mind have a clear perception of first principles. Where honest minds are conducted to erroneous conclusions, it is from indefinite views of first truths, or inability to perceive the relations of things, and accurately calculate moral results.

Some of the subjects discussed in the following pages are in their nature metaphysical and abstruse. It has been the aim of the writer to simplify these, and bring

them even within the apprehension of the common reader, and also to show how they combine and harmonize with other truths with which the common mind is more familiar.

Should this humble effort contribute in any degree to overthrow error, and establish truth in any mind sincerely inquiring for it, the writer will have received his reward.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

“MAN PRIMEVAL.”—WHAT HE WAS, WHAT HE IS, AND MUST BE.—
GENERAL UNHAPPINESS.—TRUE RELIGION THE GREAT WANT OF
THE WORLD.—DESIGN OF THE SUBSEQUENT CHAPTERS.

“ETERNAL SPIRIT! God of truth! to whom
All things seem as they are; thou who of old
The prophet's eye unscaled, * * * *

* * * *

My eye unscale; me what is substance teach,
And shadow what, while I of things to come,
As past rehearsing, sing the course of time,
The second birth, and final doom of man.”—POLLOK.

“AND God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” It was the glory of “man primeval” that he was created in the likeness of God. This consisted in spirituality, intellect, knowledge, purity, and power. There was also such a moral relation between the Creator and creature, that the former became of right the supreme object of worship, and the latter possessed a constitution exactly suited to his condition,—adapted to feel the force of moral obligation—and

capable of responding to the high claims of Divinity.

Being created under moral law and government, all the posterity of Adam have their existence under the same condition and arrangement, and, by virtue of their nature and relations, possess a moral character from and after the first moment of earthly being. But the stamp which Divinity placed on humanity was not ineffaceable; nor was it so stereotyped and changeless, as to be susceptible of no increase, or higher degree of perfection. It was held contingently: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."

As the mind of man unfolds its powers and advances in knowledge, his perception of God, and of what is true and right in respect to him, and his consciousness of moral character, good or bad, attain to a corresponding precision and maturity. If the facilities are perfect, and perfectly improved, there will be perfection in his knowledge of God, his conformity to the divine law, and in his moral and religious character. Under such conditions, and with such facilities and capacities, our race was first created, and with proper attention to the dictates of God and

duty, an uninterrupted and ever-increasing perfection, would have been the condition and inheritance of humanity. But our present business is not so much with man as he *was*, and would have been, had sin never disarranged his relations, perverted and misdirected his powers, and corrupted his character, as with man as he *is*, as he may be, and must be, if he would harmonize with God, and possess the endless and felicitous destiny allotted to holy beings.

What he is by constitution we need not particularly inquire. There is little room for dispute or speculation here. It is generally conceded that he possesses a threefold constitution, physical, intellectual, and moral; and thus marked and distinguished, he is the highest and most perfect link in that chain of being, whose existence is adapted to this world, while beyond him, and as allied to a higher life, the chain reaches onward still, until lost in the infinite nature of God.

What he is in his moral and religious character as distinguished from the holiness and rectitude with which he came from the hand of God, will be particularly and thoroughly discussed in a subsequent chapter. For the present, we need only say, it is obvious, the race of man as a whole,

has fallen far below the original standard,—has removed itself to a position morally distant from God—and is in a state of depravity, and alienation from the life of heaven. It is also obvious, that there is a natural and constant tendency to fly off still farther from the fountain of holiness, and source of true bliss. Dispossessed of holiness and love, there is no admiration of these elements of moral character in God. The power of mutual attraction is lost, and like moving bodies deprived of the centripetal force, they are ever removing to a greater distance from the centre.

What men may be, fallen as they are, is foreshadowed by their aspirations and hopes. A constitution, which, amid prevailing ignorance and depravity, desires, hopes for something better, is susceptible of improvement, and if fallen, may be restored. There may be no power in itself to retrieve misfortune, remove guilt, or atone for sin; but the fact that there is a consciousness of moral imperfection and unhappiness,—a desire for such a change as will forgive guilt, relieve conscience and better the condition, is proof of capacity to enjoy an improved state, could such state be acquired.

What men must be, that union with God

may be restored and maintained, and their nature be fed with the bliss for which they were formed, is plainly inferable from the character of God, the perfection of his law, and the exalted objects of his government. The first is holy, the second like its author, and the third designed to confer the highest good upon intelligent beings.

Though God created all men for happiness, (and he cannot be impeached either in creation or government,) yet it is a fact that all are not happy; indeed there is felt to be a general lack of true, satisfying enjoyment. We see much of what claims to be happiness; but if it be analyzed it will be found undeserving the name. The most of it may be resolved into a sprightliness or vivacity, worn upon the surface for sinister ends, or to conceal from public view, a sad and bleeding heart. The smile that appears upon the face of society is no proof that its heart is at ease, or that it rests upon a solid substratum of happiness.

This vacuum, this desideratum, cannot be filled, or supplied, by human devices or conventional arrangements. Men may succeed for a while in killing time, and driving away dull care, but in the end the disease is neither cured nor mitigated. The artifices resorted to have no power to expel

the demon—the unsubstantial pleasures indulged in soon pall upon the taste, and a feeling of deep disgust fills the mind with horrible sensations.

“Vanity of vanities,—all is vanity.”

To a mind not at rest upon the true moral basis, the largest gifts of the world betray their own emptiness,

————— “as the vapor flies,
Dispersed by lightest blasts, so fleet these joys,
And leave no trace behind.”

For this sad, unhappy condition of humanity, there is a remedy ; it is found in the knowledge and enjoyment of God. As God is the sum of all possible perfection, he is the only source of real, imperishable good to his creatures. To seek this good elsewhere, is the sure road to disappointment and misery. Moreover, the deficiency, the vacuity, does not relate so much to the physical and intellectual nature, as to the moral ; and this is that department of the man, most intimately allied to the Deity. The natural world supplies the physical wants of men, with little or no regard to moral principle or character ; and though God be the highest subject of thought, yet the intellect

finds in the physical and intelligent universe, many lofty themes exclusive of Jehovah. But without God, the moral nature is an anomaly. Its wants are unsupplied: its susceptibilities exist without a sphere of action, without the power of susception. We conclude, then, that the great want of the world, the want of society, the want of individual man, is, TRUE RELIGION.

In the following pages, we shall aim to present a correct portraiture of true religion, in its relations to God, its adaptation to men, and its self-harmony and unity. We shall also show how it is distinguished by infallible tests from that which is false and counterfeit.

“So artists melt the sullen ore of lead,
By heaping coals of fire upon its head;
In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow,
And pure from dross, the silver runs below.”

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD RELIGION—DEFINITION,—FALSE RELIGION.—ERROR.—
FUNDAMENTAL AND HARMLESS.—HOW DISTINGUISHED.—FUNDA-
MENTAL ERROR ONLY, MAY CREATE A BREACH OF CHRISTIAN
FELLOWSHIP.

“True religion
Is always mild, propitious, and humble,
Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood;
Nor bears destruction on her chariot-wheels;
But stoops to polish, succor, and redress,
And builds her grandeur on the public good.”

MILLER'S MAHOMET.

“Religious lustre is, by native innocence,
Divinely pure, and simple from all arts.”

ROWE'S TAMERLANE.

No word is more common than religion,—no ideas more familiar than those which imply moral obligation. This term, religion, and the ideas suggested by it, belong exclusively to no age or country, are peculiar to no nation or tribe of humanity, and depend for their existence, upon no particular stage of civilization or refinement.

A conception of the mysterious, spiritual, divine and infinite, more or less true, consistent, and perfect, is coextensive with the human race, and

doubtless forms an element of thought and feeling with all intelligent beings. And yet the views of most men relative to this subject, are so vague and indeterminate, so irrelevant to any common centre, so destitute of point or aim, that the great design of religion is lost,—the heart and life remain unimproved, or seem formed on the principles of atheism. All men acknowledge religion, yet few seem prepared to say what it is, describe the relations they sustain to it, or understand how its exalted purposes relative to men are to be achieved, and the objects of its faith and hope made blissful and eternal realities.

No moral advantages of high value, do, or can flow from belief in God, unless the ideas formed of him be true and just. And in like manner, religion is little better than none, often worse, unless it be genuine in its source, correct and concentrative in its aims, and unless its elements are clearly perceived and rightly applied. In the department of religion, the questions most important are these:—What is true religion? Do I embrace it, in its doctrines, experience, and practice? The first question being correctly answered, it will be easy to determine our relation to the second.

The term religion, is from the Latin word "*religio*," for which various etymologies have been proposed. The most probable appears to be "*religando*," from "*religo*," a verb which signifies to bind, to make fast. The moral idea conveyed is that of obligation to some power, or being above us, and to whom we are responsible ; and this is the ruling principle of all true religion. Any word selected to express just views of religion, must be adapted to describe the obligations involved in the subject, and which bind the whole intelligent creation to God, and man to man. Neither the word religion, nor the thoughts expressed or suggested by it, are the fruit of Christianity, except in the sense that Christianity is "as old as the creation."

Since intelligent moral beings were first produced by the power of God, the idea of moral obligation has been present to the mind ; nor will it ever be wholly lost while the mind is capable of retaining a conception of a divine creator and governor. And since language has been employed as the signs of ideas, the term religion, and others equivalent to it, have been used to indicate the nature of the subject, and convey from mind to mind its glowing thoughts.

Religion, as in common usage, and in the general sense in which we now employ the term, acknowledges God, describes his character and relations to his creatures, expresses our bond or obligation to the Creator, and prescribes to us the path of obedience and duty. It also enjoins piety, holiness, reverence, and a strict attention to our relative engagements, as fellow-creatures, or creatures of the same God. To be more systematic, as well as more specific, we may define religion—

First, as to its theology. This includes generally, all moral truth; but especially whatever is essential as a doctrinal basis,—the being and perfections of God,—the revelation of his will to men,—human responsibility,—a future state—and future retribution. Considered in respect to a fallen race, it would also include depravity, and redemption.

Secondly, as to its morality and devotion. It implies moral rectitude and union with God; piety and purity of heart; an assimilation of character to the moral likeness of God, and the exhibition of godliness and benevolence in the life.

Thirdly, the term religion is also sometimes

applied to the rites and ceremonies of religious worship. In this use of it, it designates the manner and form in which men outwardly express their religious feelings, and claim the recognition of the Deity.

As there is only one true God, and religion is founded on the being and nature of God, there can be only one true religion as derived from him. But as there are many false gods, and false views of the true God, so, there may be, and are, many false religions, and false views of true religion. We do not say that every misconception of God changes him into a false God, or deprives us of the salutary moral influence arising from faith in his existence and an acknowledgment of his authority; nor is it true that every error in respect to religion, necessarily vitiates the whole system, and renders it to us, no better than a false religion.

Though all error has the same intrinsic character, in the sense of being opposed to truth, yet all kinds and degrees of error are not the same in their power to counteract and subvert truth, and vitiate the mind and heart. Some errors are simply mistakes of honest minds; while others are imbibed through pride of intellect or opinion,

or hostility to the truth. In some cases the mind fails to perceive and grasp the truth through involuntary defect; but in others, and not a few, the heresy is chargeable to a vicious heart, and a mind which is "enmity against God." Sometimes the error is of a trifling character,—is merely an excrescence, or ill-sorted and unnecessary appendage, and does not materially mar the perfection of that system of truth with which it has an unnatural connection. But in numerous instances the heresy is of so fundamental a nature, as to paralyze the influence of all truths with which it is associated, and send its poisonous leaven through every part.

These distinctions, and others of a similar description, should be made. No views presented in the following chapters must be so construed or understood, as to imply a want of charity for those who have *mistaken* their way, so as not to have embraced the exact truth in every respect. And yet, we must repeat the remark already made, that there is only one true religion: that is, one system of religious doctrine derived from God, and entitled to be called true; and all true religious influence and power, must flow from that system. When the system of truth becomes so

incorporated with error, that the truth takes a subordinate place, and yields to heresy the leading controlling influence, it ceases to be truth as a system, and becomes a system of falsehood, and no elements of truth embraced in it, can redeem it from the charge. For example, Mohammedanism embraces the fundamental truth, "there is one God," and with this there are other truths of less importance; but there is so much error—gross and corrupting error, as effectually to pervert the truth it contains, and stamp the system with the unmistakable marks of falsehood and imposture.

As examples of the opposite character, erroneous views may be formed respecting the possibility of apostasy after true conversion, or in regard to the validity of particular forms of baptism; or in respect to church ordinances and forms of government, and several other things of this nature, without material injury. Though it is the duty of all to make the best possible use of the advantages they possess for discovering and embracing exact truth on these, as on other points of Christian doctrine, yet when errors of this class are admitted they do not necessarily subvert true religion, and should not create a breach of Christian fellowship. They are not wholly indifferent, or unimportant

in their bearings and fruits, yet they have comparatively little power to modify or give character to the system of religious truth; and in most instances, other things being right, they are not taken into account in Christian experience, and the religious life.

The preceding remarks are only preliminary to our main design, upon which we shall enter more directly in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

GOD.—HIS EXISTENCE NECESSARY, AND ETERNAL.—PROOF.—TRUE RELIGION REVEALED.—NECESSITY OF REVELATION.—THE BOOK OF NATURE IN THREE VOLUMES.—“NATURAL UNIVERSE.”—“NATURAL REASON.”—“NATURAL CONSCIENCE.”—ALL DEFICIENT, OR NOT RELIABLE.—THE BIBLE.—WESLEY.

“—For me,
I ask no higher office than to fling
My spirit at thy feet and cry thy name,
God! through eternity.”—BAILEY’S FESTUS.

IN delineating the nature of true religion, we must commence with that which is fundamental. It has been intimated already, that all religion whether true or false is founded on the doctrine and fact of divine existence. There can be no religion where there is no God, or no knowledge of God, since all religion refers directly or indirectly to God, as its divine source. All true religion must be based upon true views of the divine existence, and must harmonize with what he has been pleased to reveal of his infinite character and perfections. In so far as there is a

contrariety between the nature of our religion and the character of God, in the same degree is our religion false.

As to the being of God, not only does true religion recognize it, but also that his existence is necessary and eternal. The periodical decay and renovation of gods, as well as men, and the physical universe—a notion entertained by some portions of the heathen world, is repudiated as well by reason as revelation. Indeed all views of God which make him less than infinite in his relations to duration, necessarily refute themselves. If God be not eternal he is not infinite, and if he be not infinite he is not God. To be infinite is to be eternal. To suppose him infinite and not eternal, is to suppose infinitude without eternity, which is absurd, and also that an infinite being may arise out of nothing, or be produced by a finite cause.

Again, if God be infinite and eternal, then is his existence necessary. If his existence be not necessary, then must there have been a period in duration when he was not, or might not have been. But if we suppose a period in duration when he was not, we are again reduced to the absurdity before stated, of admitting that he arose

out of nothing, or was produced by a finite cause ; and to suppose a point in his existence when he might not have been, is to admit the possibility of a future period when he will cease to exist. Thus there is no choice between embracing God as infinite in his character, and necessary and eternal in his existence, and wrecking the hopes of all holy intelligences by supposing a time, or period in duration, when there may be no God in being. If the foundation be removed, what shall the righteous do ?

Moreover, an argument for an eternal, uncaused cause, of simple construction and convincing force, may be derived from the self-evident fact of material and intellectual existence. We *are*, therefore, God *is*, always has been, and always must be. The fact that anything now exists is proof positive that something must always have been. This argument rests upon that self-evident truth which forms an axiom in all philosophy, physical, intellectual and moral—“every effect must have a cause.”

If we suppose a time when nothing existed, we must also suppose a time when something first began to be, since something now exists ; but if we suppose a time when something first began to

be, we must admit that something arose out of nothing, or that nothing produced something. This is absurd, because it supposes an effect without a cause. Since then, we must admit that some thing, or being, has always existed, we have only to inquire further as to the nature of that existence. It cannot be matter, unintelligent and unorganized matter, because there is that in existence which is superior to matter. There is intelligence in existence, and matter cannot produce intelligence. There are various forms of organized matter that could not be produced by matter in its elementary state. Matter is also found in motion, and variously and mysteriously connected with intelligence, and with the marks of contrivance and design. Mere matter is incapable of producing these phenomena. Intelligence now exists, and as a stream cannot of its own force rise higher than its fountain, and every effect must have a cause, there is no other alternative than to conclude that intelligence has always existed. In admitting the eternity of intelligence, we are also bound to admit it in its highest and most perfect form. To allow intelligence in an inferior and imperfect form will not meet the demands of the case, since we find it in existence in forms

higher and more perfect. An admission of inferior grades of being and intelligence *only*, would still leave the superior without an adequate cause for its production, and force us upon the absurdity already referred to, of supposing that nothing produced something. Not only must every effect have a causè, but also a cause adequate to its production. From these reasonings, the irresistible corollary, is, an infinite intelligence, whose existence is necessary and eternal—the eternal, uncaused cause of all things—the “I AM.”

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.” From this one God, who is in his essence and attributes, the sum of all possible perfection, true religion derives its existence, and on this rock it rests without the slightest misgiving. Any religion which allows more than one God, or that he is less than infinite in duration and perfection, is necessarily and palpably false.

Again, true religion is *revealed religion*. By this we mean that intelligent moral beings know nothing of God, or of themselves as related to him, or of his laws, or the consequences of obedience or disobedience, or of the life to come and

the destiny awaiting them there, but by revelation. Revelation of some kind. It may, or may not, be written revelation ; or it may be partly written, partly oral, and partly deductive from nature and providence. But in either case it is revealed religion ; a religion which God has taken special pains to reveal to, and impress upon the minds of men.

Such is the religion of the highest order of angelic beings, unfallen as they are ; such was the religion of Adam in Paradise, in his innocence and holiness, while he walked and talked with God ; and such, if it be true, is the religion of his posterity.

For revealed religion there are two necessities ; one human, the other divine. By the human, we mean, that intelligent moral beings are not religious by intuition,—the knowledge and motives of religion do not arise necessarily out of their constitution. True, it is often said that men are naturally religious beings, and to this aphorism we do not demur. It may be readily admitted as implying that the Creator has given man a constitution adapted to recognize the relation he sustains to something higher than himself—to perceive the connection between cause and effect, and to feel

the force of religious truth and moral obligation when disclosed to his mind by revelation. It may also imply religious aspirations of some sort, and that God's arrangements in nature and providence are such as constantly to impress moral truth upon his mind. A being thus constituted does, and must, feel that without religion the wants of his nature remain unsupplied. After all, there is a vast difference between saying man's constitution is adapted to the subject of religion, and saying that it embraces all the elements of religion. This last proposition is not true, and hence arises a necessity for a revelation that he may know what these elements are, and form his religious character and life under their influence. It may be difficult to find a man without religious ideas of some kind, but these are not innate, but result from the application to his nature of that religious truth which God has taken good care to reveal to his intelligence.

By the second necessity referred to above, the divine, we mean that God's character is such, and such his relations to an intelligent universe, and by consequence to the human race, that he is bound by the law of his nature, and the designs of creation to reveal himself to his creatures, and

make known to them whatever else is necessary for their guidance and happiness: so much has been admitted by infidels,—that is, by those who reject the written revelation.

When the point is once conceded that God is our creator and governor, it appears a most reasonable deduction that he should give us a revelation of his will; nay, for this there is evidently a moral necessity. That God has a will concerning us needs no other proof than that he has created us, and placed us under government. To suppose God would create a universe of intelligent beings without any object in view, would be such an impeachment of his wisdom as cannot be for a moment entertained. The marks of contrivance and design everywhere observable in creation, in the adaptation of means to the attainment of ends, in the relations established between man and the natural world, and between man and his fellow-men, are all in proof that God did not create without a definite purpose.

Without drawing out a lengthy argument, we will state what must appear quite obvious to all who believe God is infinitely good—viz. that the leading design of creation must have been the happiness of those created. The contrary sup-

position would make him a malevolent being, creating intelligences that he might make them miserable, or so careless as to the results of his creative acts that he produces intelligences without adequate provision for their happiness. Moreover, God is our governor as well as creator; and as in creation, so also in government, his object must be the happiness of his subjects.

In every government two things are necessary to the happiness of the governed—

First, that the government be just and benevolent.

Secondly, that its laws be obeyed by its subjects.

If the government be not just, it will not secure the happiness of the governed though its laws are obeyed. If it be just and benevolent in its laws and designs, still obedience to its requirements is essential to the happiness of its subjects. In the government of God there can be no doubt as to the equitable and holy character of its laws,—they partake of that infinite perfection which belongs to the nature of God. This point being settled, only one thing remains to secure the happiness of his creatures, and that is, that they obey the requirements of the government. But how can this be done unless these requirements are known?

and how can they be known without a revelation?

The case stands thus: man having no independent existence, or source of happiness, cannot be happy without a conformity to the will of God, and that constitution of things which God has established; but this conformity cannot be either sought or obtained without a knowledge of what the will of God is; hence arise both the reasonableness of the supposition and the moral necessity that a revelation should be given. As God designs the happiness of his creatures, he must will that they should possess all the information necessary to promote their happiness; and as they do not naturally possess this information, and have no natural advantages which of themselves will suffice to acquire it, hence the great author of their being is bound by the law of his nature, which is the law of infinite goodness and love, to supply the deficiency by such supernatural means as in his wisdom will meet the case.

If he have the power and wisdom necessary, and yet do not give a revelation, there must, as appears to us, be a defect in his goodness. If he have the requisite wisdom and goodness, and yet do not give his creatures adequate knowledge,

there must be a lack of power. But if there be no defect in power or goodness, there must then be a deficiency in his wisdom if he do not communicate to man the laws and duties which lead to a happy destiny. But there being nothing wanting in these attributes—God being infinite in goodness, wisdom, and power, we see not how to avoid the conclusion that a revelation must be given. And true religion rests upon the assurance that it *has been* given. At this point it becomes an important inquiry, how has God revealed himself? and where may this revelation be found? The advocates of natural religion, including the deist and those who sympathized with him, assert that nature is a sufficient guide to man in all matters relating to his religious character and life. They refer us to the book of nature, and tell us this is God's revelation; and they dwell with much apparent complacency upon what they regard as the force, and perspicuous clearness of its announcements.

The book of nature is "three volumed," and may be labelled as follows:—the "natural universe"—"natural reason"—and "natural conscience." Let us open it, and for a moment contemplate its revelations. We cheerfully admit

there are some important truths announced here, but the power by which we discover their nature and importance is derived not from any self-interpreting faculty of the book containing them, but from another production whose light is repudiated by those who are so extravagant in their eulogies of the book of nature. It is difficult to say precisely what amount of information we should gain from the book of nature, were we entirely shut up to this source of instruction. We may safely say, however, it would be very limited and unsatisfactory.

For instance, look into that department denominated "natural universe," and what do we see? It affords us some light, but it speaks to us of few subjects, and of these, for the most part, in an obscure and ambiguous manner. It announces God, but gives very limited views of his attributes, except his wisdom and power. It intimates that he is creator and governor, but gives no particular or even general instruction respecting his laws, or our duties to him. It may teach us that a future state is credible, and probable, but it gives no *assurance*; and concerning the nature of that state and the preparation we need for entering upon it, it is entirely silent. It may be admitted

also, that nature affords some evidence that God is benevolent ; but it likewise proves him a being of great severity and terrible majesty. And though we may feel conscience oppressed with a sense of guilt, we have no pledge that God is disposed to forgive sin ; we may take the question, “ What shall I do to be saved ? ” to every sun that shines, and every star that glows in the vast temple of nature, and there is no voice and none to answer.

Does “ natural reason ” supply this deficiency ? Let us see. Reason is but the faculty of thinking upon subjects presented to the mind, with the power to distinguish truth from falsehood where both are clearly defined. Were reason perfect in itself it would not be infallible, since its decisions depend upon the nature and force of evidence external to itself. Were man as perfect as when first created, he would still be finite and his reason fallible. But even this perfection cannot now be claimed for him, or his reasoning powers. The same imperfection which attaches itself to the present condition of man, and inheres in his constitution, also characterizes his mental operations, and marks the deductions of reason with weakness and fallibility. Were men

free from defect of every kind—were they perfectly honest in all their searches after truth, yet would not reason be a sufficient guide, because finite, and incapable of reaching to the lofty height of many of those subjects involved in the nature of a divine religion. But as this elevated place in the scale of perfection cannot be truthfully claimed for men, reason is not merely insufficient, but *unsafe* as a guide in matters of religion. To be convinced of this, we need only look at the sage conclusions at which reason has arrived upon some of the highest subjects of true religion. The “natural reason” of the heathen world has led them to change the image of the incorruptible God into a great variety of corruptible images. Their reason not being able to rise to the lofty conception of an infinite being whose essence is spiritual, and whose existence is eternal, has degraded him to a character finite—a nature corporeal. It has multiplied gods by thousands, and governs them by passions, principles and motives which are the disgrace of humanity.

The mind of man is a subject upon which the strength of reason has been tried sufficiently to prove its imbecility. And what is the result of the trial? So far as the light of supernatural

revelation has been excluded from the subject, nothing definite has been arrived at. There have been as many opinions as reasons, and man has had assigned to him every variety of place in the scale of existence between a brute and a god. And if human reason be incompetent to give man his own proper place in the chain of being, much less is it prepared to answer the momentous questions which arise respecting his future existence and destiny.

And what of "natural conscience?" Does this supply the desideratum? Few subjects in mental or moral philosophy present greater difficulties than conscience. Hardly any two of all who have speculated on the subject, have agreed as to what conscience is. Some make it a distinct faculty of the soul; others will not allow it this dignity; others still call it our moral sense, and yet others, God's vice-gerent in the soul; while another class insist that it is only the judgment the mind forms of the relations and moral character of a subject or act, after surveying it in the exercise of all its faculties.

All agree, however, that the design of conscience is, to impress the mind with a conviction of what is morally right and wrong. The most

important question relates to the decisions of conscience. Are they always right? Is it a safe and sufficient guide? All we know of the operations of natural conscience compels us to answer these questions in the negative.

The conscience of the savage permits him to destroy the life of his aged and decrepit parent because he is no longer able to support himself by hunting. The conscience of the heathen wife permits, if not impels, her to sacrifice herself upon the funeral pyre of her departed husband—permits the heathen mother to cast her tender infant to the crocodile of the Ganges, and has impelled thousands to throw themselves to be crushed under the rolling wheels of the car of Jugger-naut. Without spending time to illustrate the subject further by the history of conscience in Christian lands, we think it must be obvious that natural conscience is not reliable. It must be enlightened and educated before we can safely follow its dictates. But how can this be, without a divine revelation?

Thus we are again conducted to the conclusion we have several times reached already—the necessity of a direct revelation of the will of God to man. The book of nature is little better than a

blank, until the supernatural rays of God's revealed word illumine its pages, and assist the mind of man to interpret its language, and understand its facts and phenomena. As we have now reached a point where it appears morally certain that God has placed in the hands of men a book which has truth without mixture of error for its contents, and the instruction and salvation of men for its object, we simply inquire where may this book be found? Shall we search for it amongst the various forms of heathen mythology? Shall we expect to find it in the leaves of the Roman Sybil? In the Shaster, or in the Gitagovinda of the Hindoo? Or shall we find it in the Koran of Mohammed? No well-informed mind will expect to find God's revelation in any of these. There is no proof of their divinity, internal or external. They are not connected with a single evidence necessary to authenticate a revelation. It is conceded on all hands that the BIBLE is the only book to which this high character can be given. Such is the unqualified decision and faith of true religion. A religion professedly founded on any other authority, or which does not acknowledge the Bible as God's book,—the perfection and completion of revela-

tion—the *only*, and the *sufficient* rule of faith and practice, is, and must be false.

We close this chapter with the language of the great and venerable Wesley. “I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the gulf; till a few moments hence, I am no more seen! I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came down from heaven. He hath written it down in a book! O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be ‘*homo unius libri.*’”*

Most wondrous book! Bright candle of the Lord!
 Star of eternity! the only star
 By which the bark of man *can* navigate
 The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
 Securely; only star which rose on time
 And on its dark and troubled billows, still,
 As generation drifting swiftly by
 Succeeds generation, *throws* a ray
 Of heaven's own light, and to the hills of God,
 The eternal hills, *points* the sinner's eye.—POLLOCK.

* A man of one book.

CHAPTER IV.

TRUE RELIGION IN HARMONY WITH THE DIVINE NATURE.—IT IS
INFINITE—INTELLIGENT—BENEVOLENT—LOVE—JUST—HOLY—UN-
CHANGEABLE—SPIRITUAL.—ITS RELATION TO THE TRINITY.—CUI-
BONO OF THE TRINITY.—TAYLOR.—NEANDER.

“The hand of God
Has written legibly that man may know
The glory of the Maker.”—WARE.

“The depth
Of glory in the attributes of God,
Will measure the capacities of mind :
And as the angels differ, will the ken
Of gifted spirits glorify Him more.”—WILLIS.

As true religion is founded on the doctrine of divine existence, and by special arrangement is revealed to the world, and sustains a necessary relation to revelation as it does to God, so it must also harmonize with the revealed nature of God. There must be no incongruity here : religion must be a true exponent of the character of its author.

God is an infinite being. A religion arising from his nature and revealed by him must partake of the infinity of its source. Being divine in its

origin, divine in its nature, and intended to display his glory under an infinite and eternal administration, it must embrace propositions, motives and influences which share the grandeur and mystery of infinity. Were it not so, it would not be worthy of God, nor adapted to the constitution of immortal beings made in the image of God. Religion is not a created existence ; creation had a beginning and may have an end ; but religion, springing from the very essence of Jehovah, is like its glorious author, infinite and eternal. Without this trait, it would not, nay, could not, be what it is designed to be by the Deity, and what it is expected to be by his creatures,—an infinite good to holy and immortal intelligences. Without this trait, it must eventually cease to interest the exalted, and still improving intellects who shall dwell in God's presence and forever circle his throne. The minds of men, even, are adapted to the investigation of infinite and eternal subjects. To answer its declared purposes, religion must furnish the minds it is intended to make blissful with themes of eternal thought and contemplation. God reveals himself as the highest source of interest and happiness in the whole universe. It is religion that binds moral beings

to God, and derives from him to them the bliss for which they were created. God is the fountain, religion is the stream. As the fountain is infinite, so must be the stream that flows from it. As the happiness of God's moral subjects will consist with no abatement of interest in the religion he has given them, there is a necessity that its elements be divine, and that in their combination they form an infinite whole.

Again, God is an *intelligent being*, and in this respect also religion is conformed to the divine nature. It has an intellect as well as a heart. The character which some people seem fond of giving to religion is a degradation of the subject. They resolve it all into sympathy, or a sickly sentimentalism which can see little or no difference between vice and virtue. In the estimation of such the most wilful and incorrigible offenders are only "erring children," and the greatest crimes are regarded in the light of mere misfortunes, which may excite pity, but must call into exercise no sterner virtue. True, religion has a heart, but it is not all heart. It is benevolent, but not blindly so; a benevolence without eyes or ears, without sense or reason, is unworthy of religion as it is of God. Were such the chief character-

istic of religion, it would indeed be, as is unjustly supposed by certain who are inflated with intellectual pride, only fit to occupy the attention of children and old women.

We insist upon it, there is no less of the intellectual than the emotional in this great subject. God is the highest and most perfect intelligence. He reveals himself to the intelligence of the universe. His laws are highly intellectual, embodying in a few well-selected words the most consummate wisdom,—they are “the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom—the visible beauty of the Most High.”* The motives of his word are addressed to the intellect. True, they aim to excite our love and awaken our fears, but this is done only through our intellectual perceptions of their nature and force. Love and fear without an intellectual basis, are no part of true religion. They are rather the incipient states of two false systems, one of superstition, the other of fanaticism. Fears and feelings, joys and ecstasies, sympathy and love, accompany religion, and as elements or fruits sustain important relations to it, but the foundation of the whole is intelligence and principle. Where there is a corresponding

* Wesley.

improvement of the heart, the most consistent uniform, and perfectly balanced religious character, is always found in connection with the strongest mind, and most perfect intelligence.

God is infinitely good : and here also does true religion symbolize the Deity. It is the very soul of goodness. The goodness of God leads him to employ his omnipotence in diffusing happiness throughout his universe under the direction of his most perfect wisdom. "Like his great emblem, the sun, who nourishes and enlightens the whole creation without being diminished in splendor, so he imparts without being himself exhausted, and ever giving has yet infinitely more to give."* He cannot put forth a creative act, or form and execute a purpose, which will bring intelligent beings into existence without the power to acquire and enjoy happiness. As he sustains the same relations as Creator to every human being, he has given no proofs of partiality, nor made any distinctions which interfere with moral happiness and destiny. So far as such distinctions now exist, they have arisen under causes which have operated subsequent to creation, and involve a

* Watson.

voluntary and criminal perversion of the powers and blessings of men.

But not only is God good in the general sense of righteousness and benevolence, but also in that particular sense denominated love. Love is not an attribute, but an emotion, an affection. In God it is the highest exercise of the affections of his great heart, and is therefore a fruit of his goodness. It is not a blind emotion or passion, which lavishes its ever-burning fire upon all objects indiscriminately. It is under the direction of the highest wisdom and reason, and therefore has a specific application, and acts by the nicest rules of discrimination. Moreover, as the principles of moral philosophy have their foundation in the divine nature, there is philosophy in divine love as well as that which is human. But on the principles of philosophy, that which is loved by a holy being must be lovely in itself; must have some quality adapted to call forth love, and must be morally assimilated to the character of the being who loves. This is certainly true of the love of approbation and complacency. There may be a love of pity, or compassion, without complacency, and it is in this sense that God loves a wicked world, and places the highest good with-

in their reach. But only that which is morally lovely can be loved with complacency and delight.

“ Saints are lovely in his sight,
He views his *children* with delight;
He sees their hopes, he knows their fears,
He looks and loves *his image* there.”

Divine love, though not an attribute, yet by its spirit and disposition presides over all the attributes of God. Every design and act of God is in perfect concord with love. Creation and redemption from first to last move in the atmosphere of love, and whatever the final result to man may be, love will justify and approve it. With a high sense of justice, a well-balanced intellect, and a heart of sympathy for sinful and suffering men, divine love moves angel-like among the wretched and fallen,—seeks to raise up, redeem and purify, and change their woe into bliss, and when the depraved and degraded respond as they may, to the benign interference, then, love stamps the image of God, infuses its own nature, and rests with supreme approbation and delight.

Such in all respects is *true religion*. It is the *soul* of goodness, the *essence* of love. It is good in its nature, being the offspring of the divine

mind,—it is good in its aims and purposes. Its designs harmonize with those of God. To give true and permanent happiness to men is the purpose of God, and religion comes as the heavenly agent to fulfil this intention. It renews the depraved, restores the fallen, substitutes hope for despair, gladdens the heart surcharged with sorrow, and fixes the expectant eye upon the visions of a happy eternity. Love is essential to happiness. Without it, there can be no bliss to moral beings; religion is love, it breathes the spirit of that divine affection, and on this account, is indeed the soul of happiness to man. He who dwells in religion dwells in love, and “he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

God is a just being, and there can be no true religion without justice. Justice is a branch of the divine holiness, and implies the infinite rectitude of the divine character. The Deity is exactly right in all his feelings, relations and works. He must ever adhere to what is right, and be inflexibly opposed to every degree of wrong. It is impossible that he should ever do the least injustice to any living being. Nor is it possible that he should ever compromit any claim of his law or government, to relieve the guilty of

deserved retribution. His justice can have no claims that are not perfectly equitable ; it must, therefore, be infinitely right that its claims should be met. They are as distant from undue severity on the one hand, as from laxity and partiality on the other. God never acts from goodness to the exclusion of justice, nor from justice to the injury of goodness and benevolence. His justice never interferes with the province of any one of his attributes, for all the divine attributes are interested in the maintenance of equity. Justice may be said to harmonize the whole,—to collect and express their united voice in an infinite opposition to evil. “An act of God may appear to us in one case to be the result of power alone ; in another, of goodness alone ; in a third, of justice alone ; yet in respect to the divine nature itself, all these effects are the joint product of all his perfections, neither of which is exerted more or less than another.”* The ways of God are equal. True religion is eminently just. It mirrors forth the exact image of a just God. It is right in itself, and its claims evenly balanced on every hand. It makes no demands upon its subjects which do not accord with their relations and

* Clark.

responsibilities, and for meeting which they have not ample power ; nor does it ever allow obliquity or delinquency, without a corresponding accumulation of guilt and condemnation. It condemns every kind and degree of dishonesty, fraud, and wrong towards God and towards man. It requires neither too little nor too much. It is like God, exactly right. "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

From these remarks in relation to justice, it will appear obvious that true religion is the "express image" of God in relation to *holiness*. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" There are no terms in our language sufficiently expressive and forcible, to convey a full view of the divine holiness. His holiness is both negative and positive. He is at an infinite distance from moral evil, and the highest essence and perfection of holiness and moral purity. It is said in his word, "the heavens are not pure in his sight ;" he "charges his angels with folly," and cannot "look upon sin with the least degree of allowance." The religion he has revealed, and by which he aims to make the sinful pure, and the holy more perfect in holiness, is essentially holy in its nature,

doctrines, precepts, and influences. Its command is "be holy;" its threatening "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is the appropriate business of this religion to reveal the tremendous majesty and immaculate purity of God, and impress the minds of intelligent beings with the necessity of being in their sphere, like God, morally pure and holy. Under the influence of true religion, the most devout and pious mind feels a humbling sense of unworthiness, arising from the vast disparity between its own moral attainments, and the spotless and boundless holiness of God. Cherubim and Seraphim veil their faces before his throne, and the holiest soul cries out—

"I loathe myself when God I see,
And into nothing fall."

To minds thus affected, it is not wonderful that the scriptures teach that sin is an infinite evil, and that the opposition in the divine mind to that evil, is infinite and eternal.

God is unchangeable. With him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." What he was in the boundless and eternal past, he is, and will be, in the boundless and eternal future. It is impossible that God should change without ceas-

ing to be God. As God is perfect, should he change it must be from perfect to imperfect. As he is infinite, should he change he must become finite, that is, cease to be God. There is the same necessity that his character should be changeless, that there is that he should exist, and be eternal. The two facts, *eternity* and *infinity*, which mark the divine existence, do of themselves establish a third fact, that God must be immutable. And what he is in his character and perfections, such he is also in his laws and the relations he sustains to his moral subjects. There may be, and doubtless are, many grades and ranks of moral beings, who, in intellectual and moral perfection, differ in their relative approaches to the perfection of Jehovah, and according to the measure of their moral resemblance to God, are more or less conscious of his favor; yet, the nature of their relations and moral obligations is the same, graduated of course, by the extent of their intelligence and moral ability. And the same law that governs one, governs all. God has but one law, and that is extended over all moral beings and worlds. It may be under varied circumstances, revealed in different degrees of perfection, and adapted to different grades of in-

telleet, and different stages of moral improvement ; but it is the same in requirement, unchangeable in its nature, and eternal in its obligations ; it binds the whole intelligent universe to God as the sum of all perfection and the highest source of bliss, and commands every being to seek the highest good of every other. “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Whether we live on earth in a state of probation, forming a character for eternity, or in heaven under the light and glory of its eternal sun, or are doomed to “ blackness of darkness forever,” for incorrigible guilt and sinfulness, the law remains the same ; it is God’s law to us, and according to the measure of ability conferred in our creation, we are held to the fulfilment of its high demands.

No objection can be sustained against these views on the ground that he sometimes frowns and sometimes smiles, sometimes punishes and again rewards ; or that his law acts in dissimilar ways upon the same individual ; now justifying, and anon visiting with condemnation ; these apparent mutations, really imply no change in God. He is the unchangeable lover of holiness, and hat r of sin ; and his administration is uniform

in respect to both sin and virtue. The instability is in the creature; the subject changes his moral position from obedience to rebellion, and *vice versâ*, and is therefore the object of placency or displacency, according to his disposition and conduct. "O house of Israel! are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?"

The same changeless character here described as inseparable from God and his law, also belongs to, and inheres in, all the essential elements of true religion. Its doctrines, duties, spirit, influence, and aims, are always, and everywhere the same. And the moral character formed under its influence, and by its moulding power, is identical in every age and nation. The holiness, love, reverence, and obedience of true religion, as also its humility, and zeal for God and his glory, are the same whether breaking forth from the high born sons of glory in songs and shouts of joy, or moulding the character and directing the life of Enoch who walked with God three hundred years—or inspiring the confidence and faith of Abraham the "Friend of God"—or burning in the heart and shining in the life of the intrepid Peter—or exulting on the lips of Paul "ready to be offered"—or imparting peace to the mind, and

usefulness to the life, of the humblest Christian down to the end of time. Men may change from holiness to sin, from happiness to woe; like the angels who "kept not their first estate," they may forfeit the blessings of God's government, and be "reserved" to a future and hopeless destiny,—but true religion, in time and eternity, is always and everywhere, a changeless, boundless good to its votaries.

"God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

This passage announces two important truths, which human reason, unaided, can hardly be thought competent to discover, viz., that *God is a spiritual essence, or substance*, and that, corresponding with his nature, his *religion is eminently spiritual*.

Spirit is defined, "an un compounded, immaterial substance." The word substance in this connection need not mislead us. It is simply that which *subsists*, whether material or immaterial. As that which subsists, spirit is an immaterial substance, and consequently un compounded and indivisible. Such is God, without parts, illimitable, incorruptible, eternal. "He cannot be seen by the eye; but he may be perceived by

the mind. He is not palpable to the hand : but he may be felt by the soul. By his mighty working the most powerful and salutary changes may be wrought in the mind, which it at once perceives to be supernatural, and which, from the holiness of the effects, it knows to be the work of God."*

Those who have learned from the Bible, or from experience, what true religion is, will perceive at once how exactly it resembles God in these particulars. It is neither material nor created. It is an emanation from the Deity. Its doctrinal basis is spiritual, embracing propositions respecting God, man, holiness, love, futurity, and immortality, which are only subjects of thought and faith, established by moral evidence, and not tangible to any process of demonstration known to the physical sciences. It does not operate upon matter, but upon mind—upon the mental and moral nature : it is therefore directly adapted to the spiritual constitution of man. It is not intended to change, or in any way affect the body, only so far as the condition of the body may depend on that of the soul. Its object is to cultivate and perpetuate spiritual life where it exists,

* Clark.

and restore it where it has been lost: and the efficient agent employed in effecting this moral change is also spiritual. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts.” To the same effect is the teaching of Jesus: “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit”—“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the SPIRIT.” To enjoy the full advantage of this religion here, is to be a subject of Divine pardon, witnessed by “the spirit of adoption”—to be “pure in heart”—“spiritually minded, which is life and peace”—to have the kingdom of God established in the soul, which is “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”—to be filled with all pure and spiritual affections, and fully prepared to participate the spiritual bliss of an endless heaven.

Before closing this chapter, it may be expected that we should say something of the relation of true religion to that great mystery of religious faith, denominated in theological language the TRINITY. Our plan does not embrace, and will not admit anything like a thorough discussion of this lofty subject. All we can do is to remark upon it briefly as a

revealed fact, and show how revealed religion agrees with this peculiar mode of the Divine existence.

Though types and symbols of the mystery of the Trinity are found in various departments of creation—such as the union of two natures of man in one person—the trinity of primary intellectual faculties in the soul, *power*, *intellect*, and *will*,—and motion, light, and heat in the sun. Yet it is generally conceded, even by the advocates of the doctrine, that no proofs, perfectly conclusive and satisfactory, of a trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead, can be derived from nature. The distinctness with which we see an object, and trace its outlines, or become acquainted with its beauties or deformities, depends much upon the power of vision, and the nature and perfection of the medium through which the object is beheld. If it be intellectual, it depends upon the strength of our perceptive faculties.

We have already seen that nature can conduct us but a short distance in forming a critical acquaintance with Jehovah. In contemplating him through this medium he is but dimly seen: we are obliged to look through a darkened screen, aided only by twilight, and content ourselves with an indistinct view of the object behind it.

In all matters vital to religious knowledge, faith, and morals, God has given us a more sure word of prophecy, the Bible. To this we shall do well to give heed, in respect to this great subject, as unto "a light that shineth in a dark place." That which appears but dimly where nature is the medium of vision, may, as seen in the perfect mirror of divine truth, be clearly and distinctly reflected. Revelation abbreviates the distance between us and our object: it brings us into the presence-chamber of the King of kings, and allows us, as far as minds like ours can comprehend them, to become conversant with the majesty and mystery of his nature.

Our limits will only allow us to give, in few words, the scriptural grounds upon which this doctrine rests.

First. The scriptures announce, in the most solemn and unequivocal manner, the unity of God; a fact which the opponents of trinitarian views fancy, though very erroneously, to be inconsistent with the doctrine in question.

Secondly. "The very first name in scripture, (says Watson), under which the divine being is introduced to us as the Creator of heaven and earth, is a plural one, *Aleim*: and to connect in

a singular manner—plurality with unity, it is the nominative case to a verb singular. ‘In the beginning, Gods created the heavens and the earth.’ Of this form innumerable instances occur in the Old Testament. That the word is plural, is made certain by its being often joined with adjectives, pronouns, and verbs plural; and yet when it can mean nothing else than the true God, it is generally joined in its plural form with verbs singular.”

Thirdly. God speaks of himself as existing in a sense that admits of the idea of plurality, in connection with his works. “And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” Gen. i. 26. Of this mode of expression, there are several other instances.

Fourthly. This plurality is never represented as being more nor less than three, and these three are, in numerous places in the scriptures, designated by divine titles, as, God, the Word, the Spirit; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Also the personal pronouns, *I, thou, he*, are often applied to each in proof of their personality.

Fifthly. All the attributes and works, which in the Bible are ascribed to and claimed by the supreme Jehovah, are also claimed by, and ascribed to each of these personalities: so that we have

the same proof of the supreme divinity of each and all, that we have of any one of them.

Sixthly, They receive the same honors and worship—being often joined in the form of benediction and baptism, and being the objects of worship without any intimation that the worship is inferior, or the object not entitled to supreme adoration. And yet through the whole Bible the idea is kept up, and supported fully to the last, that while these three are equal in divinity and eternity, they are so intimately and inseparably connected with each other, as to be but one in the unity and perfection of the Godhead.

It will not do to object to the above views on the ground that they involve a great mystery: the same objection may be urged by the atheist, with equal force, against acknowledging a God at all. God is no less mysterious in the *fact* of his existence, and in his omniscience and omnipresence, than in his *tri-unity*. It is the triumph of this doctrine that it maintains its place as fundamental in the system of Christian theology, in spite of the learning, philosophy, and metaphysical skill united against it: and that its opponents with all their perseverance, and unwearied painstaking, have only been able to present ob-

jections so few and feeble. All classes of unitarians have ever felt it to be their most difficult task to dispose of the scriptural basis of the Trinity; and in their efforts to do so, they have defeated their object by adopting principles of interpretation so loose and eccentric, as to shock those who have a becoming reverence for the word of God.

But the inquiry may be made, "*cui bono*," what is the practical utility of the doctrine? what has the trinity to do with morality and religion? We answer, "much, every way." If true religion be a true exponent of the character of its author, then must it bear the stamp, and be adjusted to the character of God as a Triune Deity. And such is the fact. In looking at the system of religion as revealed to us, it exhibits the marks of its paternity, the proofs of being the offspring of the divine Trinity. It has its sacred triad. Its theory embraces Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or divinity, merit, and influence. As a practical system, it is developed and made operative by a Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Its connection with religious experience is described by St. Paul, Eph. ii. 18, "Through him (Christ) we both have access by one SPIRIT unto the Father

We can only have "access" to God through Christ, and Christ becomes the "way" to the Father, only to those who are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the SPIRIT of the Lord." Indeed this doctrine is eminently practical. It is inseparably connected with a truly religious life. It imparts deep spirituality to religion, and is the very soul of experimental and practical piety. It brings the truly regenerated into fellowship with the FATHER and the SON, while "the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the HOLY GHOST given to us."

Upon the mere theorist, or speculative believer, the doctrine in question may exert no practical influence. "He who goes about to speak of the mystery of the Trinity, and does it by words and names of mens invention, talking of essences and existences, hypostases and personalities, priorities, in co-equalities, &c., and unity in pluralities, may amuse himself and build a tabernacle in his head, and talk of something he knows not what; but the good man that feels the power of the FATHER, and to whom the SON is become wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and in whose heart the love of the SPIRIT of God is shed abroad—this man, though he understands nothing of what is

unintelligible, yet he alone truly understands the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.”*

We close this chapter in the language of the very learned and distinguished Neander. “It is this doctrine (the Trinity) by which God becomes known as the original fountain of all existence, as he by whom the rational creation that had become estranged from him, is brought back to the fellowship with him : and as he in the fellowship with whom it thenceforth subsists : the three-fold relation in which God stands to mankind, as primal ground, mediator and end :—Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier,—in which three-fold relation the whole Christian knowledge of God is completely announced.”

* Jeremy Taylor.

CHAPTER V.

TRUE RELIGION AS RELATED TO THE SOUL.—ESSENCE OF THE SOUL.—ITS EXISTENCE PROVED BY SENSATION—INTELLIGENCE.—MATERIALISM DOES NOT ACCOUNT FOR INTELLIGENCE.—MIND INDEPENDENT OF MATTER.—SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY.—THE SOUL IMMORTAL.—PROVED BY DIVINE GOVERNMENT—DEATH.—ANALOGY.—ITS POWERS.—INNATE DESIRE OF LIFE.—REVELATION.—PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF THE DOCTRINE.—ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF IMMORTALITY STATED, AND REFUTED.

“Immortality o’ersweeps

All pains, all tears, all time, all fears—and peals
Like the eternal thunders of the deep
Into my ears this truth—Thou livest forever.”—ANON.

“Cold in the dust this perished heart may lie,
But that which warmed it once shall never die.”—CAMPBELL.

WE have thus far considered *true religion* as divine, as revealed, and as symbolizing the character of God. We now proceed to show its adaptation to the nature, moral condition, and destiny of man. As religion has its necessary relations with God, so must it have with man. Its connection with man is not an accident, any more than its derivation from God. As its divine paternity is necessary to its existence and efficacy, so its

agreement with the constitution and relations of its subject is essential to its utility and obligations. A religion not suited to the condition and aspirations of intelligent beings, which does not address its motives to their hopes and fears, and demonstrate a parallel between their susceptibilities and its own power to bless, can present no valid claims to their consideration. It must reveal the mysteries of man as well as those of God, or considered with respect to the human race, it is not the true religion.

As they relate to man, the principal subjects unfolded and dwelt upon by revealed religion, are his immortality—his moral condition—the means adopted for restoring him to divine favor,—the ground of obligation, and the rule of retribution. Each of these points will receive a share of our attention in the ensuing pages, but this chapter will be devoted to the subject of immortality. Religion is eternal. It must be so, or it is not divine. Man is immortal; he must be so, or there is no proper agreement between him and religion—there is an incongruity between that which blesses and those who are blessed. We lay it down, then, as a "*sine qua non*" of true religion, that it *believes without doubt or wavering*, and

teaches without equivocation or reservation, the immortality of the human soul. For what we know of this important truth, we are not so exclusively indebted to a written revelation, as for our information on some other vital elements of religious faith. The conclusion that the soul is immortal may be rendered very plausible by a course of analogical and inductive reasoning: yet the mind does not reach the point of assurance until it obtains the authority of revealed religion.

The doctrine of man's spiritual nature adds greatly to the dignity of his character, makes him capable of a boundless existence and connects the most overwhelming considerations with his destiny. As there is a degree of knowledge, more or less, relative to this subject, prevalent among all nations and tribes of men, it must, we think, be conceded, that originally the human mind possessed full and correct information of the immateriality and immortality of the human soul. But the causes associated with his apostasy, which produced ignorance and corruption in other respects, also led the mind of man astray upon this point, until he wandered in the mazes of unfounded speculation, under an entire misapprehension of his spiritual nature and exalted being. And for the most part,

the world remained in this state to the time of the Advent of Christ. To this, however, the Jews were an exception. To them were committed the oracles of God: the incipient state of that revelation, which to us is perfectly unfolded. And so far as they exerted a religious influence upon others, and others became acquainted with their sacred writings, darkness receded, and the true light advanced. This may account, in part at least, for the near approach made by some heathen writers to the true idea of the soul, and its immortality. The light of heathenism on this point is either the "*reliquem*" of an ancient revelation preserved by tradition, though variously corrupted; or it is a partial recovery of lost knowledge, by the indirect agency of more recent divine communications. But whether it be the one or the other, it leaves them a prey to doubt and uncertainty, to endure the misery of a fruitless struggle between hope and fear. But true religion raises the mind above the influence of doubt by furnishing us with arguments which amount to a moral demonstration. Not only does revelation speak out upon this point with a voice clear and authoritative, but reason, freed from her darkness and disabilities by divine influence, approaches the

work of collecting and arranging arguments with superior wisdom and force.

In considering the immortality of man, it seems proper that we should give some attention to the nature, or essence of the soul. The first position of true religion, is, that “there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.” That is, man possesses a spiritual nature,—his soul is an immaterial essence or substance; and though mysteriously connected with a material body, yet differing entirely from it in nature, and not subject to the laws by which matter is governed. The works of nature in all their vastness and variety, may be reduced to two grand divisions—matter and mind; and these two elements enter into the composition of man. *Substance*, is that which exists, or subsists by itself, whether material or immaterial, though it may have accidental connections and relations, which are not necessary to its own existence.

“These two substances (matter and mind) have their beings independent of each other, having properties which are totally distinct, and which they cannot partake in common with one another.”* We have as much evidence of the ex-

istence of matter and mind as of our own being, and no proof can exceed this. And the proof that mind exists is as convincing as that for the existence of matter. Indeed, if there be any difference, it is in favor of mind. The fact that we recognize the existence of matter, is itself proof of the reality of mind, since it is only by the operations of mind, that any ideas of matter can be formed. Though we cannot explain the nature or essence of either matter or mind, and can only describe them by enumerating their sensible qualities, we are not on that account any the less sure of their being.

The spiritual nature of man may be argued from the fact that he is a living, sensitive, self-moving being. The bare fact that man lives may not be a valid proof of his immateriality, in the sense in which we now use the term; but that he lives, a being of passion and volition, can only be accounted for by supposing the presence and influence of an immaterial soul. And the reason is, that these phenomena are never exhibited by mere matter. We are acquainted with various forms of material substance, but we know of no form which of its own nature possesses the powers belonging to living and active beings.

We behold around us various forms of matter in motion, but no one supposes material bodies move themselves ; and the fact of their being in motion, is proof to all except the atheistic madman, of the existence of some power or influence superior to, and independent of matter. But when we add to motion, sensation and volition, we have not only evidence of the *existence* of something superior to matter, but that the same something is mysteriously connected with it, and makes it capable of its varied phenomena. If the movements of the heavenly bodies, and the order of the various parts of the material universe, are evidence of the existence of an all-wise and almighty Being, by whose agency and skill, all their complicated machinery is directed and managed ; we argue, in like manner, that the ease with which man can manage the powers and parts of his body, and direct and control the whole physical frame, is no less an evidence of the existence, in mysterious union with the human body, of an immaterial nature, without which, though he might possess organic life and mechanical motion, yet he could not be a sensitive, *self*-moving being. Though matter may be acted upon or moved, yet it cannot move itself ; but man can move himself :

therefore, man is not wholly material. Again : matter is incapable of sensation ; but man is a sensitive being : therefore, there is something besides matter which enters into the composition of man ; and philosophy and religion have agreed to call it an immaterial soul.

The fact that man is an *intelligent* being is also in proof of his spiritual nature. There has been a strong effort on the part of a vain and skeptical philosophy to account for human intelligence without acknowledging an immaterial nature, but the failure has been as signal as the effort. The usual course pursued by materialists, is to make intelligence the product of organization. Though they concede the point, that unorganized matter has no power of thought, yet by a strange inconsistency, they contend, when organized in a certain form it becomes intelligent, and exhibits the varied phenomena of thought and feeling. But this notion is both unphilosophical and absurd. It is an axiom in philosophy that organized bodies do not, and cannot, possess any powers or tendencies which do not belong to the elements of which they are composed. If unorganized matter be destitute of the quality of thought, then is it absurd to suppose any possible combinations of

the particles of matter should create such quality. However we may vary the forms and combinations of matter, it is matter still, and nothing more—we can embrace no new circumstance in its description. And as the elements of which combined material bodies are composed, are perfectly unintelligent, they must remain so in their compound state, however complicated and wonderful the combination may be. Hence the idea that intelligence is the product of organization is a chimera.

Nor does it obviate the difficulty to suppose, as some have done, that a faculty of thinking has been appended to some material bodies. For, this faculty, or power to think, is something, or it is nothing: if it be nothing, it can do nothing, and is entitled to no consideration; but if it be something, there must be some substance in which it inheres, and on which it depends for its existence; for it would be a great absurdity to suppose it depends upon no substance at all; and as we have already seen it does not inhere in, and depend upon a material substance, hence it must depend on an immaterial substance, there being no other alternative. And this is exactly what

true religion claims; this is what we mean by man's spiritual nature.

Moreover, intelligence, though usually connected with the perfectly organized human body, is not a necessary concomitant. Proofs of this may be found in a consideration of the creation of the first man. God formed him of the dust of the earth; and we must suppose him to have been perfectly organized before the inspiration of the Almighty gave him understanding. All parts of the system, including the brain, which all acknowledge to be the material organ of the outward manifestation of mind, were as perfectly arranged and fitted for their several uses, as at anytime afterward—he had all the attributes of the man so far as relates to the material system, and yet was utterly destitute of life and motion, to say nothing of intelligence: and he remained so until God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul.” Here, then, is a clear case of a perfectly organized body without life or intelligence.

The independence of thought and mind over matter may also be concluded from the phenomena of dreaming, of suspended animation, and of death. Intelligence does not always continue with the

perpetuity of the physical organization, nor while continued is it always exhibited in the same degree of perfection. It may, and often does, cease, while the strictest examination cannot detect any disarrangement of the brain or any other part of the system. And this takes place when no external physical cause has acted upon the body—when the only agency to which the phenomenon can be referred is the action of intelligence on intelligence, or the independent action of thought. On the other hand, the body may be reduced by the action of disease to a mere skeleton; the physical powers are all prostrated; not one can be called into action; but the mind does not decay; the pulse ceases, the extremities become cold, the death rattle is in the throat: but reason holds her empire, and marked and clear is the manifestation of thought and intelligence. That which “triumphs within the jaws of mortality” must be independent of matter, must be immaterial, and “is doubtless immortal.”

In addition to the above considerations, drawn from reason and suggested by the nature of the subject, we adduce the authority of revelation, which clearly establishes the immateriality of the human soul. The passage already

quoted establishes this point : " God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." From this it appears that man is not a " living soul " by virtue of his physical organization, but through that nature imparted to him when God " breathed into him the breath of life." Then first he received his spiritual nature, his soul ; then first he stood up and walked forth into the world created to receive him, an intelligent being, capable of holding communion with his Maker, and dominion over the works of his hands. The declaration that God made man " in his own image " is also decisive of the same fact. The corporeal nature of man could not have been made in the image of God—God possesses no such nature or image ; the allusion therefore must be to the spiritual nature of man, including his moral likeness. God is a spirit, an intelligent spirit, and he made man in his own image : that is, he gave him an intelligent spiritual nature. The language of Christ, (Luke xii. 4) makes a clear distinction between the body and soul ; the former he declares may be killed, while the latter remains unhurt. Also the passage in Job xxxii. 8, " There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." If

there is a "spirit in man" he is not wholly material; and if the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding, it follows, his understanding, his intelligence, is not the result of any combination of the particles of matter, but of that spiritual nature given him of God, when he "breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul."

As any farther multiplication of Scripture testimonies seems unnecessary, we close the argument upon this point by simply repeating the remark, that in the composition of man we have as much proof of an immaterial soul as of a material body: though we cannot explain the nature or essence of either, yet we know they exist by the best of evidence, consciousness and our senses. We know matter exists, whether in our own composition or elsewhere, by an enumeration of its sensible qualities: and in like manner we prove the existence of mind by a consideration of mental phenomena. We know we possess a body by the evidence of our senses: and we are equally sure that we possess a soul or mind, of a substance differing from the body, because we think, feel, remember, compare, reason, judge, will, etc. No

proof can exceed this, and it is as conclusive in the one case as in the other.

The reasons adduced in proof of the spiritual essence of the human soul, also have great weight in the argument for its immortality: yet this great truth does not rest on these alone; there is another class of arguments which bear distinctly and conclusively on this point. To some of these we will now attend.

First.—It seems necessary to allow a conscious existence in another and future state to justify the ways of God to man. God is a universal governor, and as he is an infinitely good and just being, he must be a righteous governor. But if we confine our views of his administration to the present life, his government cannot be justified. God being infinitely perfect, his laws must be perfect: his laws being perfect, they must have an equal bearing upon his subjects; but if his administration be confined to the narrow precincts of this world, his laws and government bear most unequally, and there is no remedy. In this world, for the most part, the wicked bear rule. They are proud, self-sufficient, lofty in their claims, and unjust, and oppressive in their measures, virtue is persecuted, down-trodden, and often receives the punishment

due to crime. Where is the remedy, if the empire of God extends not beyond this life? We must change our views of the goodness of God, and the equity and impartiality of his proceedings, or enlarge the field of his operations, and give his government a broader sweep, that it may embrace both time and eternity. And if the government of God must pass over from this to another state that its perfect results may be unfolded, the existence of man must be perpetuated beyond the tomb, that he may reap the benefit of a perfect administration.

Secondly.—The credibility of man's future existence is supported by the analogy of nature. Almost every department of animated nature furnishes examples of a transition from one state of existence to another, as remarkable, and before experience has established its certainty, as incredible, as any that can be supposed necessary to man, that he may live in eternity. Not to dwell upon the examples usually employed, we will refer only to a single illustration—man himself. That man in the embryo or infantile state, should pass into a new world, or rise from helpless infancy to the active business man, the warrior, the statesman, the philosopher, the orator, would be as incredible

before the demonstration of experience, as that man, as he now is, should make his transit from this to a conscious future state. And the change he experiences in passing from the embryo or infantile state to the condition of perfect manhood, is as *great* as that which we can suppose necessary that he may inhabit another world. But the change first mentioned, however incredible before experience, is a common and obvious fact, and hence excites no surprise. It follows therefore, as man is in this life, the subject of a change as great as may be necessary to introduce him to another life, it can never be incredible that he should pass through that other change, live in another world, and move in a higher and better sphere.

Thirdly.—The supposition of man's conscious existence in a future state is further strengthened by the fact, that the soul cannot be affected by the power of death. We cannot argue against the immortality of the soul from the nature of death, because we know nothing of its nature. Nor can we conclude anything against immortality from the effects of death, unless we can prove the soul to be a compounded substance. We see the effect of death upon the body. It is decomposed, dissolved into its original elements.

We are sure the body is dead ; but we cannot say this of the soul. It is true, we lose sensible communion with the mind that once animated the body ; but it is not because the mind has ceased to exist, or has lost any of its original powers, but because of the dissolution of the material organ through which it made itself known to the external world. Moreover, the soul being a simple, indivisible essence, or substance, not subject to the laws which govern matter, and hence indissoluble, cannot be destroyed by the power of death. If the soul perishes through death, it must perish by *dissolution* : but this cannot possibly be, because the soul is not composed of parts.

“ To suppose any substance capable of being dissolved which has no parts, is a contradiction : it supposes a separation of parts in a being which has no parts to be separated. * * * An exclusion of all parts is necessary to the existence of an immaterial substance : and to suppose a being dissolved, from the very nature of whose existence a capacity of dissolution is necessarily excluded, is a flat contradiction : it is supposing a being capable and incapable of dissolution at the same time. Whatever has parts cannot be immaterial ; and whatever has no parts can never

lose them. To suppose an immaterial substance to have parts, destroys its immateriality : for it is a contradiction to suppose that to be immaterial, which, by its parts, is demonstrated to be otherwise : and if the soul be immaterial, which has been already proved, it necessarily follows that it cannot perish by dissolution.”*

The conclusion to which we must come is, that the soul bears a strict resemblance to what is divine, immortal, intellectual, simple, indivisible, indissoluble ; and in its essence and entity is always the same. For all that death can do, then, the soul may live forever. Indeed, as our first introduction to this world was the vacation of our first sphere, or the incipient state of our being, that we might enjoy another more ample : so it seems to accord well with philosophy and reason, that death should be to us a sort of second birth, a vacation of our present sphere, for one still more ample in means and opportunities for developing the capacities of our natures.

Fourthly.—This high destiny of the soul may be still further supported by a consideration of the nature and adaptation of its powers. It is capable of memory, reflection, imagination, contem-

plation, volition, reason, and of being moved with religious veneration. Most, if not all these modes of the manifestation of mind, are, in their proper sense, peculiar to man. And another peculiarity is, that improvement of which the powers of the soul are susceptible. Brutes soon reach their zenith. There is with them no commencement to learn, and indefinite progression in knowledge and mechanical skill.

“Their little all flows in at once.”

Not so with man. God has never said, in reference to the expansibility and improvement of the human mind, “hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;” but has evidently possessed it with capabilities of indefinite enlargement. “There is not a voluntary muscular movement, from that of the infant holding a spoon, to the most skilful use of the hands and fingers in the nicest and most curious arts, where there is not a beginning of skill, and then a gradual growth toward perfection, induced by intense and persevering efforts on the part of the will, to work according to some purpose or aim of the intelligence.”*

Under favorable circumstances, “the patriarch

* Tappan on the Will.

pupil" goes on improving the powers of his mind, and enlarging the boundaries of mental vision, even to the sunset of human life, and for aught we know may continue to do so world without end.

Also, the mind is adapted to the contemplation of subjects of an eternal nature. For instance, the idea of eternal duration. We have no evidence that any being made to inhabit this world, except man, can take in this idea, or pursue it a single step. To this we may add the moral government of God, and the infinite attributes of his nature. These are boundless subjects, involving considerations which pass beyond the present sphere of human activity, and afford eternal employment for immortal minds. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that minds fitted by original constitution for the investigation and contemplation of such subjects should be immortal; otherwise there is no adequate opportunity for a full development of their powers, or to move in that elevated sphere for which their capabilities have prepared them.

The mind is formed to contemplate the attributes, works, and government of God, and to be religiously affected by the survey. And is it

reasonable to suppose, that just as we begin to open our eyes upon the wonderful works of God, and to appreciate the evidences of his "eternal power and Godhead," they will be closed to these subjects forever? That the emotions of veneration and gratitude we feel rising within us toward the author of our being, in view of his glorious perfections and bountiful goodness, will be checked and annihilated before they came to maturity? That just as we begin to develop the lofty attributes of mind in laudable pursuits, the coruscating fires of genius will be quenched in eternal night? That the aspiring soul, animated with the desire of immortality, will be suddenly arrested in its ascending course, and fall into nothingness? Is this reasonable? Is it not rather reasonable that we do but throw aside the old dress to assume a new one, and change our place of residence, to pursue the objects of our being under circumstances of a more auspicious character?

Fifthly.—That the soul will live in immortality may be argued from its innate, and indomitable desire for such destiny. By indulgence man may possess himself of many artificial, unnatural appetites and desires, which are in no important

respect necessary to his happiness; but so far as his desires are innate he cannot be happy without their gratification. Among his natural desires, we may reckon his aspiration for immortality. This is universal. It exists in all nations, and is a concomitant of every degree of civilization. It has its form of expression, as well in the gloom of heathenism, as under the cheerful light of Christianity. The magnificent Pyramids, and rock-hewn tombs of Egypt are the outward embodiment of this "longing after immortality." The mind may be in darkness and doubt as to the fact, but the desire still lingers, even after depravity has perverted the nature, and our crimes make us afraid to live. Fear of future retribution may overrule, or suppress, though it cannot annihilate, the desire for immortality. This desire being inherent, God is its Author; and God being its author, he must have intended its gratification. For it is not supposable that God would give us a constitution, out of which arises naturally, and necessarily, the desire,—the prospect of perpetual life, and provide no corresponding reality. The indulgence of such a thought would be a reflection upon the divine character. The bare fact that God has given us this ambition to live, should

be received as a sure pledge of endless being. If not, why this irrepressible love of life ?

—— “ Whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
 This longing after immortality ?
 Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror
 Of falling into naught ? Why shrinks the soul
 Back on herself, and startles at destruction ?
 'Tis the divinity that stirs within us ;
 'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
 And intimates eternity to man.”—ADDISON'S CATO.

Such are the leading proofs which reason, rectified and strengthened by true religion, adduces in support of human immortality. We have given no more than a brief synopsis of the argument from reason, yet our limits oblige us to check this train of thought here, and introduce the testimony of divine revelation. This, indeed, would be conclusive without any other ; but supported as it is by the foregoing facts and arguments, it has peculiar force. The subject is placed beyond the reach of doubt. The voice of God's revealed word is clear and distinct in announcing the momentous truth discussed in this chapter.

“ Man dieth and wasteth away,
 And where is he ? Hark ! from the skies,
 I hear a voice answer and say,
 The spirit of man never dies !”

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.”

First.—The Bible reveals the existence of spirit unconnected with matter. This is a fact which now commends itself to our reason; but whether reason would have been able to discover it without divine aid is very questionable. “God is a spirit,” is the language of the sacred oracles: a spirit, who exists “from everlasting to everlasting;” whose influence is diffused through infinite space, and whose intelligence is seen in the formation and government of the universe. We have another example in the revelation given us of angels, who are denominated “ministering spirits,” and whose employment, and proximity to the throne of the uncreated God, prove they cannot be invested with corporeal natures like our own. But if intelligent spirits do exist unconnected with matter, we need not suppose the intelligent spirit of man in any sense dependent upon matter for its existence.

Secondly.—The Bible reveals the *conscious* existence of man in a future state. “The Fathers, where are they?” Where are Enoch and Elijah, who went to heaven in a supernatural way?

Where are faithful Abraham, pious Isaac, and wrestling Jacob? Our Lord tells us, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and yet he announces himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The bodies of these ancient patriarchs crumbled to dust more than three thousand years ago; and yet they live—pure and spotless they dwell in the presence of a holy God. In regard to the future condition of infants, the Saviour remarks, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." To the thief upon the cross, he said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." But enough on this point; man lives in a future state.

"His body which came from the earth
Must mingle again with the sod;
His soul, which in heaven had birth,
Returns to the bosom of God."

Thirdly.—The Scriptures declare the *eternity* of man's future state. This we learn emphatically from the manner in which they speak of the rewards and punishments of men in another world. These are described in language which indicates being without end. The following phraseology, "eternal weight of glory," "eternal damnation," "everlasting punishment," "everlasting life,"

“eternal life,” &c.—establishes with a clearness and authority indisputable, the immortality of man as a subject of future retribution. Indeed, the whole gospel scheme proceeds upon the supposition that man is destined to a future and endless existence, without which, much of it would be entirely unmeaning; and it is this fact that gives such tremendous weight to the sanctions by which obedience to its claims is enforced.

A just appreciation of this interesting truth, the immortality of the soul, cannot fail to impress the mind with high views of the dignity, accountability and destiny of man. It sheds a light upon the world which relieves the darkness of its dispensations; places it in fearful relation to another and endless state; and as a probation for the future, invests it with an awful and unmeasured interest. Indeed, God has fixed the idea in the mind, and religion reveals it with its relative facts, that it may become the source of motives and influence of immense practical importance. This is the use of the doctrine. That is, this is the design of God in revealing it to us. It is of no consequence whether we have any knowledge of our immortality or not, unless such knowledge is adapted to improve our character,

and fit us for our momentous destiny. All truth is from God, and is intended to lead the minds to whom it is revealed, to an acquaintance with its great source and centre. To the human mind no truth can be more important than the one discussed in this chapter. It is not more important to know there is a God, or that he has given us a revelation, or that Christ has redeemed the world. It is from this doctrine that all other revealed truths derive their moral force and sanction. The doctrine of divine government, and human responsibility appear to involve interests of fearful magnitude, only, as the mind grasps strongly and clearly the immortality of man. And in the same ratio that this truth is doubted, corrupted or allowed to fade from the view, do those other facts to which it stands related, lose their controlling moral influence. As there is in man in his present moral condition, a distaste for the pursuits of religion—the carnal mind being “enmity against God,”—the strongest motives that can arise out of his endless existence and relations, are needed to induce attention to his moral condition and prospects; and often do these fail to arrest the mind, affect the heart, and produce the desired reformation. What then would be the

result, were the doctrine of immortality abstracted from the catalogue of religious truths? We answer,

First.—The mind would soon lose all distinct and consistent views of religion as a system of truth. Let the idea be obtained and believed, no matter how, that the soul is mortal, that human existence at most is bounded by the extent of earthly being, and that within this limited sphere there are many uncertainties as to its continuance another day—that the death of the body which may take place any hour, will also destroy every moral and intellectual faculty, and annihilate the soul forever, and at once, it becomes a matter of trifling moment whether we believe in one God, or a dozen, or whether there be any God at all in being. If there be a God, and he is pleased with us, his approbation for a few days is of no great consequence: if he be displeased, his anger need not alarm us, since we are so soon beyond his reach: and should his retributions become too severe, the power of escape is in our own hands. Amid the exciting scenes of human life, under the strong sensual tendencies of our natures, it is obvious that no motives of sufficient strength would exist to induce attention to religious sub-

jects. Inquiries after religious truth in view of moral benefit would be deemed too trifling to attract notice, unless by way of ridicule. Religious doctrines and motives would disappear from the field of human thought and feeling, and the general practical maxim would be, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Secondly.—The doctrine of immortality is necessary to the existence of that fortitude which must support us, if we meet with firmness, and endure with cheerfulness the varied and numerous afflictions and calamities incident to our *present* state, unconnected with the influence it may have on the future. Life in this world is only desirable as it is filled with happiness. Destroy the connection of this world with the future—terminate the existence of the soul at death, and there exists no adequate motive for wishing to live where the aggregate of misery greatly exceeds the sum of happiness.

“ For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The aggressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?”

But when this life is viewed in its relation to another—as but the vestibule of eternity—and it is remembered that the future will, in a moral sense, be shaped and determined by the present, happiness in this life sinks into comparative insignificance, and eternity—eternity, is invested with an unmeasured interest.

“Ay, there is the rub:”

It is this “dread of something after death”—this fear of entering an immortal state under unpropitious circumstances—this hope that our future being will make amends for earth’s adversities and toils, that imparts nerve and vigor to our purpose to cultivate a virtuous character—to “endure as seeing him who is invisible,”

“And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.”

Thirdly.—The influence of faith in the immortality of the soul is of great moment, considered in respect to this life. It is an important fact, that where this faith is lost, or so corrupted as to lose its moral power, man sinks to the condition of an intellectual brute: there seems nothing of sufficient strength to bind him to God or to man. Selfishness, and that of the grossest kind, becomes

the ruling principle, and divine and human laws are equally powerless, and equally despised, when they stand in opposition to his cherished designs. Faith in the doctrine of immortality and a responsible future, is the ground of faith in human integrity. It is essential to the exercise of mutual confidence. A community of atheists could not possibly confide in each other; and the condition of things would be little or no better in a community of materialists. With such principles society must ever exist in an unsettled and insecure state. There is nothing in the constitution of man, in his powers, principles, tendencies, tastes, or feelings, of sufficient intrinsic value to form the basis of confidence and security, if his existence be confined to the present life—if he be not considered as related to a responsible future. He can give to his fellow-man no sufficient pledge that he will be governed by those principles of justice, humanity, and benevolence, essential to the well-being of society, if not to its existence. If society might possibly hold together, cut loose from all the moral influence arising from the doctrine in question, it is evident, that beyond the mere fact of existence, no improvement would be secured, no good or useful object or end would be

reached by it; and, so far as we can now see, the inevitable tendency would be to barbarism.

Fourthly.—If such be the important bearing faith in the immortality of the soul has upon the condition of men, considered as intelligent and social beings, what shall we say of their character as moral and religious beings? There may be religion where this doctrine is repudiated: but it is not, cannot be, *true religion*. Founded on false views of man, nothing just and true can be reached in relation to moral character and practical results. No virtuous character could be formed on a religious basis, because no motives would exist except such as commence and terminate in the present life. There would be no restraining motive arising from the consequences of sin in the future—no exciting, encouraging motive, arising from the prospect of future and endless rewards. The influence of hope and fear, in their religious aspects, is lost, only so far as it may act upon the limited basis of a few years of earthly being. The retributive administration of Jehovah being confined to so brief a space, would be necessarily deficient in the character and power of its restraints and persuasives. The power to stay the progress of injustice, corruption, and

gross sensuality would not exist—vice would become the rule, and virtue, even in her fainter outlines, the rare exception.

As all these fearful consequences, and much more than we can here portray, inevitably connect themselves with that grovelling view of man which excludes his immortality, and bounds his existence by the tomb; so the same results must stand related to any departure from the true notion of immortality, in the ratio that such departure obscures and corrupts this doctrine, and weakens its moral force. There is but one true doctrine as relates to the soul. This we have now given. If this be false, the idea of immortality is a chimera. This being true, all other theories must be false, and they approximate the degrading and infidel doctrine of materialism, in the precise degree that they depart from this elevated standard of human nature, sustained as well by reason as revelation.

Besides the true scriptural idea of immortality as given above, there are two other views, neither true nor scriptural: one a heathen speculation—the other a corruption of Christianity. The first teaches that the soul is a part of God, inhabiting and animating the while, a material form, and having run its career in the discerpted state, im-

mediately at death, or mediately through a series of transmigrations, is carried back to its original source and resorbed into the Deity.

It is difficult to conceive of anything more absurd than this. It supposes God to exist in an infinite number of parts, and that he is therefore divisible—to be always giving out parts of himself in the formation of intelligent beings, and receiving back into himself other parts given out ages before, and therefore changeable,—He “never continues in one stay.” It supposes part of God may be placed under law as a finite being, that it may become morally contaminated, and subjected to discipline and punishment as a transgressor. Moreover, making God divisible and changeable, it robs him of his spirituality, and places him and all other beings in subjection to the laws which govern matter. But if these consequences did not follow, this dogma could not be true, since it is destructive of immortality. That which is to lose its separate existence and individuality, no matter how, at any time, no matter when, cannot be immortal.

The erroneous view of this subject to which we have referred as a corruption of Christianity, is that which makes the soul pass into an uncon-

scious state, or sleep between death and the resurrection. The advocates of this theory usually have some special object to serve by it; it is adopted in most cases, either to give plausibility to the annihilation of the wicked, or to prevent the consequences of sin committed in this life from affecting the condition and happiness of the soul in its immortal state. The supposition entertained seems to be this—that if the soul can be made to lose its existence, at least so far as to lose consciousness between death and the resurrection, it will wake to consciousness with an improved moral character, the effects of sin being left in the tomb. On this point we remark three things.

First.—There is no scriptural warrant for the notion that the soul passes into an unconscious state at death. The term sleep is never used in connection with death in reference to a loss of mental consciousness: and it probably would never have received such an application, had it not been supposed to give credibility to other dogmas, remarkably deficient in direct scriptural proof.

Secondly.—The whole tenor of inspired teaching is against the idea of a sleeping and unconscious soul after death, and the declarations of

Christ and his apostles are singularly clear and plain in proof of the contrary doctrine. "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," said Christ to the thief. Did this mean that they would sleep unconsciously in the tomb? "For to me (says Paul) to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Then, to "live in the flesh," and to "abide in the flesh," are descriptive of the present life in contradistinction to life subsequent to death: which though not "in the flesh," is, nevertheless, a conscious state—a state to be desired in preference to any condition of this mortal life; the Apostle therefore expresses a "desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Did he mean to say an unconscious sleep of the soul was "far better" than existence and active employment in the service of God? Would this be *departing* and being with Christ? But leaving the Scripture, we assert,

Thirdly.—That the notion that the soul sleeps at death, is unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. It can only be sustained on supposition that the

soul is material. If, as we have already proved, the soul be immaterial, it cannot enter into an unconscious state at death. To become unconscious, is to lose the power of thought, which a spiritual intelligence can never do. To lose that which is possessed by spirit, supposes something to be taken away from the nature of spirit; but the idea that anything can be subtracted from the nature of spirit, is a contradiction. Only that which is material can be separated into parts and dissolved. The soul not being material cannot be thus separated and dissolved; and as intelligence and consciousness inhere in the very nature and essence of the soul, and the soul can lose nothing from its nature or essence by abstraction; hence the soul can never become unconscious. The conclusion, then, is inevitable, that the dogma we here oppose, is essentially and necessarily materialism: and there is no choice between the scriptural and philosophical doctrine of immortality, as advanced in this chapter, and a dissolution of both body and soul at death. There can therefore be no true religion which does not embrace the doctrine of the perpetual consciousness and essential immortality of the soul.

CHAPTER VI.

TRUE RELIGION REQUIRES MORAL GOVERNMENT.—ANY OTHER WOULD DISAGREE WITH THE DIVINE CHARACTER—WOULD NOT DISPLAY HIS ATTRIBUTES—WOULD EXCLUDE MORAL CHARACTER—MORAL HAPPINESS—MORAL DESTINY, AND THE ENDS OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.—ABSURD CONCLUSIONS.—THEORY OF A PATERNAL GOVERNMENT REFUTED.—THE WHOLE SUMMED UP IN SIX PROPOSITIONS.

“Our voluntary service he requires,
Not our necessitated; such with him
Finds no acceptance, nor can find; for how
Can hearts, not free, be tried whether they serve
Willing or no, who will but what they must
By destiny, and can no other choose?”—MILTON.

ANOTHER infallible test of true religion, is its exact agreement with the nature and principles of the divine government. It is conceded by all who believe in God, that he has established a government of some kind; that it is extended over all his creatures, and that its ruling principles are equity on the part of the governor, and obligation on the part of the governed. There may be, and are dissimilar ideas of this government entertained and taught by those who have

speculated in regard to it, as there are indeed in respect to every subject of a religious nature: but with those who start right, and reason correctly, there must be substantial agreement in affirming that the government of God is *moral*, as distinguished from any form of administration which would exclude this element, and leave out of view a just estimate of moral character and desert. The Deity governs physical nature by physical laws, and intellectual nature by the laws of mind; but these departments are both subordinate to the moral. This is the most prominent feature of the universe, as it is pre-eminent in the character of God. The government of God must be moral, or it is not suited to the nature of God, or the character of his universe. We cannot conceive it possible that any other than a moral government should be brought into being by the agency of God, because he cannot act against his own nature. He must have wise ends to promote: his nature is wisdom and goodness, and whatever his revealed principles, or established creations may be, they must in the nature of things be in perfect concord with each other, and with their divine author.

God is a moral being, having moral attributes

that must be displayed under any form of rule he may see fit to adopt. He is underived in his existence, and absolutely independent of all other beings, hence has a right to introduce and establish a government based on his own character. It would be one of the greatest absurdities of which we can form an idea, to suppose an infinitely wise and perfect God to bring into existence a government without direct reference to his moral character and attributes.

A government suited to the moral character of God, must afford opportunity for a united and harmonious display of his moral attributes, goodness, wisdom, and holiness. No other than a moral government can do this. We can form an idea of a government not moral—a mechanical government, made up of a concatenation of un-deviating cause and effect, every link of the chain moving every other link, and God moving the whole: or, like a train of well-arranged machinery, every part acting on every other part with irresistible power. But such an arrangement for ruling his subjects could not be denominated moral, for the following reasons:—

First.—There could be no display of the moral attributes of God. There could be no goodness.

The governmental machine might be perfect in itself—might work to admiration as a machine every part maintaining an exact correspondence with every other part; but there could be no active manifestation of divine goodness towards those whose free and intelligent choice of virtue had made them objects of approbation and moral desert. The same remarks will also apply to justice as a branch of holiness. Could anything like vice exist under such an administration it could not originate in the subject, and hence there could be no ill-desert, and no exercise of penal justice, or displeasure against sin. And in what way could holiness be exhibited under such a rule. Though God be infinitely holy, yet there is no principle of his government which develops that holiness—no point in his administration where he can make an intelligent, active, and effective display of it. As the subjects of the government we are considering, can be neither better nor worse than they are, under those governmental arrangements by which they are necessarily controlled, they can neither admire holiness nor detest its contrary, on account of the consequences connected with either, nor can they be incited to the cultivation of virtue by

any possible view of the divine perfections. As to wisdom, it might require this to construct such a government as above described; but being constructed, nothing but power would be needed to keep it in motion. The power of God must sit at the head of this great piece of mechanism, turning the great iron wheel, whose resistless cogs set the whole in motion, and impart an impulse to the least and most distant part of the machinery, while every other divine attribute is left entirely unprovided for in its operations. In this case fate, irresistible fate, would alone preside over the destinies of all beings, and all worlds. This would not be a moral government, because,

Secondly.—There could be no such thing as moral character pertaining to the subjects of it. There would be no moral freedom, and where this is wanting there can be no power to acquire and establish a moral character. Under such an arrangement every thought, word, and deed would be necessitated. Hence the subject would be neither rewardable nor punishable. Blame and praiseworthiness could have no existence. There could be neither obedience nor rebellion, neither love nor hatred. All actions being mechanical,

virtue and vice, were any such thing possible, would be but the product of an irresponsible machine. All responsibility would commence and terminate in God. The subjects of such a rule or government could give no proof

“Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love,
Where only what they needs *must* do appears.”

Thirdly.—The power of moral choice being impossible under such government, there could be no such thing as moral happiness: and herein is another proof that the form of divine government described above, did it exist, would not be moral, and could lead to no moral results. Indeed, we do not see how anything entitled to be called happiness, even of a physical or intellectual character, could have being under such a governmental control. So far as we can see, to deprive man of the power of choice in regard to physical and intellectual pursuits, is to rob him of happiness arising from the susceptibilities and powers of these departments of his nature. Be this as it may, it is quite plain this result would follow in respect to his moral nature. For, everything else being favorable, there are yet two things essential to moral happiness. There must be a power of choice, and a consciousness of having

made a right choice. That which we may not choose, either in its reception or continuance, is not properly a source of happiness to an intelligent moral being. Hence, under a government in which irresistible fate presides, and determines all actions, there can be no moral happiness. Nor can there be any consciousness of having done right, which is also an indispensable element of moral happiness. When the actions of men, or the results at which they arrive, are all necessitated, such consciousness cannot possess the mind, or form an element of thought or feeling. In such relations to a higher power it would be impossible to say truthfully, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence."

Fourthly.—The question of human agency will be discussed in another place, but we remark here, that from the government described above as mechanical, and necessitating the actions of its subjects, no moral destiny could flow. The following elements must be recognized as inseparably united in a moral destiny, viz. : a moral character which determines the relation of the subject to the law and government, as loyal or disloyal, obedient or rebellious—a consciousness of having had an

unnecessitated agency in the formation of such character—a sense of the favor or disfavor of God, the law-maker and governor, on account of the moral attitude sustained—and positive happiness or unhappiness springing from the concurrence of all these circumstances, and increased as to intensity by self-approval or condemnation. Neither of these mental or moral states or feelings can be separated from the rest without destroying the proper idea of moral destiny. And yet not one of them can have any existence, if the government of God be not strictly moral. Whatever the final issue might be to the subject, it would, it must, be destitute of every feature essentially belonging to moral destiny. The mechanical products of such an administration, would not be suited to any future state or condition of being, as yet revealed to us. In winding up the affairs of a course of absolute sway, in which God has been the only responsible agent, the judge would not be able to say with either truth or consistency, “Thou hast been faithful over a few things,” or, “Take ye the unprofitable servant, and cast him into outer darkness.”

Fifthly.—No other than a moral government can promote and sustain the only justifiable ends

of government—the glory of God, and highest good of intelligent creatures. There may be subordinate designs and ends of creation and government, great in number and variety, but they are all necessarily embraced in these two leading purposes. If God is not glorified in the operations of his government, it must be because it is not suited to his nature, or adapted to promote the objects which must ever be dear to him. In a government like that described as mechanical, excluding moral freedom, moral character as formed in the exercise of moral freedom, moral happiness as springing from both, and moral destiny as resulting from the whole, there does not appear any possible chance to proclaim or exhibit the glory of God as a moral being. Could we abstract the intellect and physical power of God, from all else embraced in his infinitely perfect character, and look at their creations alone, leaving out of view all moral considerations, we should doubtless find even then much to admire in the specimens of mechanism and stupendous power furnished us. But were this all, our admiration must have corresponding limits: there would be nothing to excite gratitude, love, or devotion, or strongly impress the mind, and fill it with reli-

gious emotions. The mechanical skill and unlimited power of Jehovah might astonish us, but beholding no glorious display of moral attributes, there would be no religious element in that astonishment. As God is a moral being, he has other attributes than those which find employment in the construction and conduct of an unintelligent machine—attributes which would not be honored by a mechanical government; whose sphere of action is above and beyond the possibilities of such an arrangement. To establish a perfect congruity between God and his government, we must degrade the divine character, govern him by absolute fate, and thus make him a subordinate to fate or identical with it, or, we must repudiate the idea of a government of necessity, and raise the plan of divine administration into harmony with God, as a wise, holy, and benevolent being. This being done, the field is open; and it is sufficiently extensive to admit moral law and its application, moral government and its operations and results to any extent required to display the moral perfections of Deity.

The second end or design of creation and government, the highest good of intelligent beings, is also inseparable from moral government, unless

we deprive man of his moral constitution. If man be allowed to have a moral nature, the laws and government of God must be adapted to that nature, or, we find intelligent beings in existence with powers and susceptibilities that have been overlooked in the divine arrangement. If we take away the moral nature of the subject, provision may be made, perhaps, for a mechanical development of mental and physical nature without moral government ; but as such development could not be marked by good or ill desert, the idea of morality would be excluded, and moral obligation, and moral retribution, could have no existence.

It comes, then, just to this : if we make the government of God absolute as to all the events embraced in it, so that all actions done by men or angels are so many resistless sequents of its uniform and harmonious motion, we must suppose its subjects have no moral nature ; or, if they have God is under no obligation to provide for it, or disregards that obligation, and hence either God is unjust, or the highest good of his subjects is expressed in the mechanical unfolding and use of physical and intellectual powers—or, which is the only rational conception of the subject, the nature of God, the character of his government, and the

constitution of man are in perfect correspondence as to their moral elements, and the highest good of intelligent beings is reached, when under equitable moral laws, in the exercise of moral freedom, and by the power of the intellectual and moral faculties, excited and brought into action by moral motives, God is recognized as creator and governor—is worshipped as the only being worthy of supreme affection—and, when his laws are obeyed, his favor sought and found, and the subject lives, and moves, and has his being, in time and eternity, under the blissful influence of divine approbation.

We have now reached a point, when, as appears to us, the conclusion must, to all intelligent minds, be resistless, that God has established a moral government over his intelligent subjects; that he holds them to a strict accountability as moral beings, and in the final issue will judge and reward or punish them, according to their works, or moral desert. This conclusion being undoubtedly true, it must also follow that all forms, or modifications of government which conflict with this, are to the same extent false; and nothing can be more plain than the falsity of a government which excludes moral freedom and moral

destiny. Such is that plan of administration which we have denominated mechanical and absolute. A religion suited to such a government, so far from being true, would be no religion at all, unless there can be a mechanical religion; a religion without a soul, without the action of motives and moral principle, and where there is no just estimate of moral character and desert. There is another form of government, denominated *paternal*, of which many very pretty things have been spoken and written, but which is also proved to be false by the foregoing reasoning. This theory (the paternal rule of God) bases the government of God on his character as Father, and forms and interprets his laws, and all the acts of his administration in harmony with this one idea. It admits no element, principle, motive, remedy or design, beyond, or different from what a good earthly father would introduce and apply in the government of his family. It requires us to form our ideas of the divine government from human institutions. Instead of arguing from divine to human, it reverses the process, and requires us to argue from human to divine—to conclude from human analogies what God ought to do in the government of the universe. To

those who think soberly and correctly, this method of determining what is or is not truth, in reference to God and his government, stands out before the mind as simply absurd. We do not say that God is not a Father, or that his paternal character and relation have no influence in forming the character, and dictating the policy of his government. We admit as much in this direction, as either reason or Scripture requires, and yet the idea that the paternity of God is the basis of all his laws and governmental regulations, is an unsupported and gratuitous assumption.

We cannot now consider this subject in all its numerous phases, but the conclusion just stated will be sufficiently sustained in the estimation of impartial reasoners by referring to two circumstances.

First.—Paternity is not a divine attribute. It is only a relative term, expressive of a relation which is not necessary to the divine existence. And is it reasonable that the infinite God whose character is formed of an assemblage of glorious and unlimited attributes, would leave them all out of view in so important a matter as his government, and proceed to establish it upon a mere relation? Moreover, the divine government is

distinguished by two important principles, benevolence and justice. Whence are these principles derived? are they original and eternal? or, are they accidental and limited? If original and eternal, then do they inhere in the character of God as an infinite being, and not in a mere relation which he has assumed to finite creatures. But if the government of God be based on his paternity—be strictly and entirely paternal, then does it follow that the principles of justice and benevolence which lead and distinguish his administration, have no existence, only as displayed through his paternity; that is, the Deity is neither just nor benevolent as God, but only as Father. This conclusion cannot be refuted by saying God is a just Father, a benevolent Father, a wise and holy Father—and so on; for, this would be to give up the point against which our argument is directed—to remove the divine government from the paternity of God, and place it, where it must stand if it exist at all, on his attributes; leaving his character as Father where it should be left, to hold a subordinate relation, and exert a corresponding influence.

Secondly.—The other circumstance to which we have alluded as proving the falsity of this

theory of government, is, that it excludes moral retribution as governed by an infallible and inflexible standard of moral rectitude: it violates, and annihilates, that fundamental rule of God's government, requiring every man to be punished according to his deeds. As the paternal government is strictly one of discipline, and in regard to the wayward and rebellious, its only aim is to reform them; with their free consent if practicable, without their consent if necessary; it is self-evident that no rule of retribution can exist, which in its action shall graduate favor or disfavor toward the subject according to *moral desert*. Under such a government, the turpitude of the offender is not determined by the character of God, and the purity of his law; not by his knowledge, motives, or relations; nor by all of these together; nor by any other standard that will charge upon him a definite amount of moral turpitude. The question is not, What does the sinner *deserve*? but, What will be necessary to reform him? The rule of such an administration does not require the offender to be punished according to his deeds, or moral desert, but according to that amount of punishment requisite to bring him to repentance. It is, inferred, not from the infinitudes

and perfections of God's character, law and government, as they are adjusted to the constitution and powers of men, but from the finitudes of men ; that is, from their dispositions, tastes and feelings, without regard to moral desert, or the claims of moral justice. In such government, the rule of retribution depends not on anything infinite, fixed and stable, but upon that which is finite, and variable as the mutations of the human character. To sum up all in few words, the theory of divine government denominated paternal, teaches that the sinner *deserves* no punishment—no proof of divine displeasure, unless he can be reformed by it ; that the punishment is in every case a blessing, and it is injustice and cruelty if this be not its result—that the *only* design of punishment is to produce repentance—that the sinner deserves to be punished until he repents, and when he repents he *has been* punished to the full extent of his deserts. How incongruous all this is, with correct notions of a moral government, is, we trust, made sufficiently obvious by the foregoing explanations and arguments. We will conclude this chapter with a brief summary of what true religion teaches relative to divine government.

First.—God as a moral being, has established

a government, based on his character and attributes, and adapted to display his moral perfections to an intelligent universe.

Secondly.—The laws of the moral universe being derived from the nature of God, are, like himself, absolutely perfect, and express to his subjects the holiness, goodness, wisdom, and justice of the Creator and governor, and under the operation of these laws the prominent features of the divine reign are equity and benevolence.

Thirdly.—The laws and government of God being moral, present to intelligent beings an infallible standard of moral rectitude, by which good or ill desert is determined, the turpitude of sin is ascertained, and retribution must be governed; hence the subjects of this government must have a moral nature, moral powers, a capacity to understand the law and the claims of government, and ample ability to render the required obedience.

Fourthly.—The subjects of the divine government being moral, and responsible in their character and relations, do, and must, possess moral *freedom*: without which there would be no harmony between them and the government to which they stand related, no ability in their constitution to respond to the claims of government, and inas-

much as moral desert depends on moral freedom, they would be incapable of either virtue or vice, without character, entitled to no reward, and exposed to no punishment.

Fifthly.—As God governs by the principles of moral law, and holds his subjects amenable for the use they make of their freedom and other powers as moral beings, his providence furnishes the means of information, respecting the nature and claims of his law, the extent of obligation, and the consequences of loyalty or rebellion. While, therefore, his subjects act freely, they also act understandingly, and not without feeling the force of motives; and will not be able in the issue to plead ignorance in bar of just retribution.

Sixthly.—As God is immutable, his government changeless, and his laws fixed and unalterable, so, he has given man a fixed character as to freedom and accountability: and no part of the divine plan, or constitution of things, will ever be changed to accommodate transgressors, or arrest the irreparable consequences of violating the laws and conditions of their being. God will not punish the sinner *more* than he deserves, even for the laudable purpose of reforming him; and he will

not punish him *less* in disregard of justice, to save him from any results, however ruinous. It is an undeviating rule in the divine government, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The subject being bound to the extent of his powers, during his entire being, cannot by possibility satisfy for obliquity or delinquency; and the law being exactly right, requiring neither too much nor too little, allows no lenity, or hope, that displeasure once incurred, can, through human agency alone, ever be removed.

A religion that harmonizes these principles is in concord with Deity, agrees with his word, and must be true; but a system which subverts even one of them, thereby renders the whole plan inharmonious, and must be false.

CHAPTER VII.

MAN A MORAL AGENT.—IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE.—MORAL AGENCY EXPLAINED.—PROOF.—THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.—CONSCIENCE.—CONSCIOUSNESS.—MORAL FREEDOM ESSENTIAL TO HAPPINESS.—COMMON CONSENT.—REVELATION.—“MOTIVE THEORY.”—DISPROVED BY ITS CONSEQUENCES.—ANOTHER ERROR STATED AND REFUTED.

“Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
Of true allegiance, constant faith, and love,
When only what they needs must do appeared?
I found them free, and free they must remain
Till they enthral themselves; I else must change
Their nature, and revoke the high decree
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
Their freedom; they themselves ordained their fall.”

MILTON.

It is worthy of particular consideration, that a religion, to be true, must agree as well with the moral constitution of man, as with that of the divine government. It must embrace a distinct recognition of the moral agency, and freedom of the creature. As without moral freedom the subjects of divine law and rule cannot be accountable, nor possess moral character as formed by

their conduct, so a system of religion which does not address itself to men as free, is wholly incongruous, and out of joint with the character, relations, and powers they sustain. A theology which coerces human conduct, or chains the will to the strongest motive, places mind upon the same level with matter under the laws of the physical world: nor would there be any more intelligence and virtue in the conduct of mind than of matter, under such an arrangement. It is the object of true religion to exalt man, but such a theory degrades him, and robs him of every noble and godlike feature of his character. In the expressive language of Neander, it is "the degradation of a moral being, and of virtue, making it mechanical."

The moral agency of man was incidentally and briefly considered in the chapter on divine government; but the importance of the subject will justify, and indeed calls for, a more extended and critical notice. Very much depends upon correct views of human agency in all ethical discussions, as well as in determining the extent of accountability. The adoption of a theory essentially erroneous, changes the structure of virtue, and unsettles the foundations of morality. A religion which does not embrace, practically, the doc-

trine of moral freedom, is false in the ruling principle of moral character ; and this error will act negatively and perniciously upon the influence of the truth with which it stands connected.

In regard to this, as other fundamentals of religion, there is only one true doctrine. It is desirable that the exact truth should be clearly perceived and heartily embraced in every case, but pre-eminently so in this : since, as relates to man, it is the point at which we must start in estimating his moral character, and calculating the nature of his destiny. If he be a mere machine, and moves only when acted upon by a power above him, which he neither can nor desires to resist, we may dismiss our anxieties at once in respect to any consequences that may follow, either here or hereafter. And if his agency and freedom be of such a description that the fruits of misdoing do not, and cannot, follow him beyond the tomb, then, though we may labor for his improvement and happiness here, we may, and should, relinquish our fears in respect to the future. But, if neither of these be the true view, or embrace the whole truth ; if man be a moral agent under the government of God in the highest and fullest sense of the word ; if his moral re-

sponsibility is confined to no limited sphere, like that of his earthly being, but the results of moral choice will live in eternity, and endure commensurate with an immortal existence, the subject becomes invested at once with an unmeasured interest, and should receive corresponding attention.

To our mind, this is the true state of the case :—having provided all the advantages requisite to the maturest character and highest bliss, God devolves on us the fearful responsibility of determining what the issue shall be—whether we will reach the goal of moral perfection and changeless happiness which his goodness and wisdom have placed within our reach, or, whether we will fall below this high resolve, and forfeit the endless boon.

If the question be asked, what is moral agency, our answer is, that it is responsibility ; and if the inquiry be repeated respecting responsibility, our reply must be, that it is answerableness, or accountability. The leading idea is, that as subjects of government, we are capable of giving an answer—*responsus* from *respondeo*—as to the reasons, inducements, or motives of our conduct. And not only *capable*, but *liable*, and conscious of this liability, and that we are worthy of praise or blame

according to our motives and conduct. This consciousness supposes intelligence sufficient to perceive and comprehend the laws under which we are placed, including the laws of conscience, which according to the moral light enjoyed anticipates the decision of the law given, and the retribution that must follow. "There is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart as well as his external actions, which passes judgment upon himself and them: pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, and good—others to be in themselves evil, wrong, and unjust: which without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him: and which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always, of course, goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own."*

However, the meaning of the terms *moral* and *agency* are so well understood, that an elaborate and critical definition is not needed—the whole of what might be said by way of defining terms, may be simplified thus:—

* Butler.

He is a moral agent who is capable of moral actions: and an action is rendered moral by two circumstances—that it is voluntary, and that it has respect to some rule or law which determines it to be good or evil. Moral agency therefore supposes that the divine law is revealed to the moral subject, and that he has power to obey or disobey, with a full knowledge of the consequences, as to good or evil, that will follow. Hence says Locke, “Moral good, and evil, is the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law, whereby good or evil is brought upon us from the will or power of the law-maker.”

The results of this moral freedom to man, may be thus stated. The legal moral constitution under which they are placed, secures life to the obedient, but dooms offenders to die. It is the office of distributive justice to execute this penalty, as well as to bestow the rewards of obedience. In being rewarded, they experience the appointed results of their voluntary obedience. In being punished with death, they receive the appointed end of their voluntary disobedience, and are bound as well by their own nature and relations, as by the natural force and effect of moral law, and the na-

ture of its penalty, to abide the consequences of their own acts.

The way being prepared by these statements and explanations of the nature of moral freedom, and the legitimate and necessary issues to which it conducts the moral subject, we will now attend to the arguments, direct and indirect, by which the doctrine is established.

First.—Its truth is a necessary inference from the moral government of God. We shall not repeat the proofs already adduced to sustain moral government; it is assumed in this investigation that such is the nature of divine control over his creatures. The object now is, to show the relation between that established fact, and the doctrine in question. This is an argument *a priori*, in which we reason from what is known to what is not known: between that which is fixed and undoubted, and that which is undefined and doubtful, we perceive such a connection and correspondence, that the latter becomes as clear and unquestionable as the former. The same process enables us to determine the nature of divine government by considering the character of God. The argument *a priori*, determines that as the attributes of Jehovah are moral, and must be dis-

played in his works and ways, they must therefore give form and character to his administration. Equally clear is it, that the government of God being moral, it requires a corresponding character on the part of its subjects. Could we ascertain without direct reference to divine government, (which is possible) that man is blessed with moral freedom, from this stand point we might reason back to the nature of the government under which he is placed. This would be an argument *a posteriori*, by which we conclude from effect to cause. If moral freedom in the subject presupposes moral government, most certainly, moral government requires moral freedom; the two stand so related to each other, that one cannot be true and the other false. Either moral government is false, or moral agency must be true. But as moral government has both the character of God and the accountability of man to sustain it, so all these point unerringly to moral freedom in the subject.

All government supposes subjects suited to its nature. Physical laws and government act only on physical substances; intellectual laws govern the action of mind. Absolute law and government do not require intelligence, and will admit

no responsibility or power of choice. In these cases, there is a perfect fitness in the relations subsisting between the subject and object, and the governing rule and authority under which they exist and act. But in the case under consideration, this fitness in the relation and adaptation of the subject to the government, is not only perfect, but must have been particularly designed by the Supreme Ruler, inasmuch as it is that department of his works in which his glory is specially involved. Consistency and wisdom demand that harmony be preserved in the unintelligent and irresponsible departments of his universe; but in the moral department the additional influence of justice and benevolence requires that all discord should be avoided—that he should not “reap where he has not sown, nor gather up where he has not strewed.”

From these remarks it will be seen that the steps by which we reach our corollary, are few and simple. The attributes of God must be displayed, if at all, through a moral government—such government implies responsibility in the subject—and responsibility in the subject implies unrestrained freedom, or moral agency. “Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Secondly.—We derive another argument for moral agency from that attribute or faculty of our nature, denominated *conscience*. “Conscience and consciousness, by etymology and in their general scope, are synonymous. They express self-knowledge. They have, however, a technical distinction. Conscience, by this distinction, embraces self-knowledge relatively to responsibility; consciousness expresses self-knowledge in general, without referring particularly to responsibility. Thus conscience is the knowledge of a volition or affection, as right or wrong; consciousness is the knowledge of any mental phenomena whatever. Consciousness is the generical term; conscience is a specific and limited form of consciousness.”* From this statement (which seems just) it appears that conscience covers much less ground than consciousness—that its office does not extend beyond the department of morality, or that when it extends beyond that department it ceases to be conscience, and resolves itself into mere consciousness, because it does not compare the knowledge of self with any moral standard of right and wrong. It is not so important to obtain an exact definition of conscience, as to know what

* Tappan on the Will.

it does, and under what laws and conditions it acts. Writers on moral science differ widely as to the former, but as to the latter there is a substantial agreement. The existence of the thing is certain to all reflecting men, as also, that it refers particularly to morals, and moral responsibility. It acts under, and in reference to the moral laws and conditions of man as a moral being. Its sphere is within that of mental activity in the moral universe. It is embraced in the reason, and its authority does not fall below, nor transcend that of reason itself.

Conscience then supposes moral law, and recognizes the distinction between right and wrong. Even before the standard which determines what is right and what is wrong is clearly perceived, this distinction is recognized as a necessary and eternal distinction. While the mind has only a confused and indistinct view of the infallible standard, the decisions of conscience will, in reference to specific cases, be similarly indeterminate; but as mind acquires more perfect knowledge of the standard, or law, conscience becomes more clear and precise, more authoritative, and brings home to the heart, or moral sense, with greater force, the ascertained qualities of moral action.

Now, as without moral freedom there can be no law binding us in a moral sense, it is equally clear, there can be no conscience, or consciousness of right or wrong as pertaining to our actions, unless the will have a self-determining power. If we have no power independent of motive, or outward circumstances, and external influence to determine our course of action under the law and government of God, it is obvious there can be no self-condemning power—there can be no faculty of the man that can act as umpire, and impress the moral sense with a conviction of guilt. It is therefore just as certain that the will is free, that is, that we are moral agents, as that we possess this faculty, or conscience.

We go another step, and say, conscience does more than merely determine the morality of our actions, and disquiet us with feelings of self-condemnation. It impresses the offender that he stands related to a retribution—a retribution that is not comprised in the self-inflictions of conscience; which does not terminate with the recoiling sting of the viper sin :

“O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven.”

A law has been violated infinitely higher than

that of the human constitution—the law of God. Its sentences proceed upon the assumption that we are bound to obey, and in default thereof must meet the inflictions of divine justice. It performs the office both of a monitor, reminding us of our duty, and exciting us to attend to it, and of a subordinate judge, summoning us before its tribunal, and pronouncing us innocent or guilty. The decisions of conscience anticipate, and forewarn us of the certainty and nature of that retribution, which the future will reveal through a display of God's righteous justice. As God has proclaimed in his word, so he declares by human conscience—*men are free.*

———“Each must answer for himself,
And as his own peculiar work shall be
Done by his proper self, shall live, or die.”—POLLOCK.

Thirdly.—Consciousness furnishes an unanswerable proof of moral agency. Consciousness, as already stated, covers more ground than conscience. The latter is confined to questions of morality, but the former embraces all relations and subjects, in reference to which the mind perceives, and the will acts. “Consciousness is the necessary knowledge which the mind has of its own operations. In knowing, it knows that

it knows. In experiencing emotions and sensations, it knows it experiences them. In willing or exercising acts of causality, it knows it wills, or exercises such acts. This is the common, universal, and spontaneous consciousness."*

This being a true description of consciousness it necessarily embraces the following particulars, viz. : knowledge of existence—knowledge of action—and knowledge of freedom in acting. In respect to each of these, the mind needs no proof except that which it possesses by intuition. Our existence is not to ourselves susceptible of proof: it does not need to be proved. To say our existence needs proof, is to admit there are grounds of doubt in respect to it, which every man's consciousness denies. Moreover, that which is proved must be considered in relation to something else more certain than itself, or which the mind perceives to be so. But as the mind can perceive nothing more certain than its own existence, there is no possible chance for proof, and no need of it. If the mind could prove its own existence, it would not be so certain of existence as it now is. The fact of existence rests upon pure, perfect, and independent knowledge, or con-

* Tappan.

sciousness. The same is true in respect to action. There can be nothing more certain to the mind than its own action. Whether by memory, imagination, contemplation, or the more solid and difficult employment of reasoning, and investigation, the fact, or reality of the mental activity is full and perfect in the consciousness. The conclusion we draw from these indisputable positions respecting the knowledge implied, or embraced in consciousness, will, I know, be received by a class of minds with hesitation. And yet I see not how it can, in any fairness, be avoided. If consciousness be competent to decide the question of personal existence and mental action, it is equally capable of determining whether action be free. By what law of mind or rule of logic consciousness is allowed to give valid testimony in one case and not in the other, remains to be explained. The knowledge of existence, action and freedom are alike within the sphere of the mind. Collateral evidence may be obtained from other sources, but nothing that is primary, except from and within the mind itself. Here is the first and strongest proof—consciousness; the knowledge the mind has of itself, and of its own operations. Without this all else would be unsatisfactory;

with this the freedom of the will is established. To use the language of Dr. Johnson, "we know the will is free, and that is enough."

Fourthly.—Man is a moral agent because such a constitution is necessary to his happiness. That he was created for happiness is admitted by all whose opinions are entitled to respect, and hence need not be proved. But we must also remember he was created for moral and religious happiness; his intellectual and moral powers and susceptibilities are the marks which distinguish humanity from the brute creation. In creating man for happiness, reasoning *a priori*, we must conclude God would so adjust his relations to divine law and government, and to the intellectual and physical world around him, as best to secure the end he had in view. If moral freedom be in any important sense necessary to human happiness, we must suppose God has given him that noble endowment.

We have remarked elsewhere, that what is not an object of choice, either in its reception or continuance, is not properly a source of happiness to an intellectual moral being. Possibly there might be no positive misery were the power of choice denied; but certain it is, there could be no ra-

tional exalted happiness. True happiness depends on three circumstances: it must be rational—it must arise from the approbation of God—it must be connected with a consciousness of rectitude. But neither of these circumstances can be realized without moral agency. Where there is no power of choice there can be no practical comparison, or application of judgment and reason, and hence no rational happiness. There can be no self-approval, because no choice of virtue rather than vice, where either is possible; hence no consciousness of rectitude. And as to the approbation of God, how can this exist when there is no virtue in man to approve, or if there be, it is not there as a matter of choice, but of necessity?

Now, as these elements of true happiness cannot exist without moral agency, one of two conclusions must be adopted—God has withheld the power of true happiness—or, he has endowed men with moral freedom. As the first, for obvious reasons cannot be admitted, the last must be true.

Fifthly.—The doctrine of moral agency is confirmed as true by the common consent of mankind, as illustrated in the governments, laws, and

customs of all nations, in all ages ; by the standards of right and wrong, by which moral character is tested ; by the approbation or disapprobation which public opinion and law visits upon men, according to the vicious or virtuous character of their conduct. These governments, laws, and regulations are based on truth or falsehood. If on falsehood, then all government must be founded in a lie, and falsehood, not truth, is the bond of human society, and should be sought as the highest theoretic good of man. But if on truth, what is that truth ? It is human freedom and responsibility ! A conviction of this truth, arising from universal consciousness, pervades society, and forms the ruling principle of all conventional arrangements and governmental enactments. And it is this conviction that man is, and of right ought to be, free, to think, speak, and act under suitable responsibilities to God and to government, which gives the world its intellectual and moral force and enterprise. This has been at the bottom of every contest for an improved state of society in church and state. This is that revolutionary spirit which has swept away with resistless force so many bulwarks of despotism. This is the progressive spirit of the age in which

we live, which aims at, and will be satisfied with nothing less, than just laws and equal rights for the whole family of man. Were man not endowed with moral freedom, he would be incapable of these high and sacred aspirations; but conscious of his dignity—his freedom under the divine rule, he will never submit, unresistingly, to a yoke of bondage. Indeed, those who in theory deny the freedom of the will, do nevertheless, in practice, contradict their own theory. They are ever ready to condemn the guilty, and heap censures upon those who violate the rules of honesty and propriety. This proves that the voice of spontaneous consciousness cannot be suppressed, or overruled by any metaphysical reasoning.

Sixthly.—We have only room to add further, that the doctrine of moral agency is clearly established by revelation. As there is a correspondence between the nature of government and the constitution of the subject, so that the image of one is reflected by that of the other, we find also that the general scope, as well as particular teachings of the Bible, are properly understood, and appear consistent, only, when applied to moral agents. Men being free, we should expect them to be addressed in that character, in any

communications God might condescend to make to them; and the Bible addressing men as free and responsible, is, *a priori*, a proof of moral agency.

In this light we must understand the motives of revelation; these are intended to awaken attention, excite the mind, and induce *right* action. A machine may be induced to act, but not to choose between two or more possible directions. The motives of the Bible are inducements to choose the right, and reject the wrong. They are addressed to the human mind, and presented in every variety of form, in the encouragements attendant upon a course of fidelity to truth and righteousness, and the darkness and gloom inseparable from guilt and sin—in the terrible threatenings, and “exceeding great and precious promises” with which the word of God abounds. In this light also must we understand the commands of the Bible. A command always supposes the thing commanded may, or may not be done, and that the power of choice is lodged in the subject. It were absurd to view the subject in any other light. When necessity presides over the actions of men, and to do, or not to do, depends not on the power or will of the creature,

to command, or prohibit, is alike useless and trifling. And yet God does command us. How often has he said to the children of men, "Do not this abominable thing which I hate," and yet they did it. But if men may do what God hates, then he has not decreed their conduct; and if God has not decreed their conduct, they act freely; and acting freely, are moral agents. Thus are we again conducted to the same conclusion, at which we have arrived several times already, by other and different processes—the freedom of the will, the moral agency of man. This noble gift, this godlike endowment makes us, in a high and fearful sense, the arbiters of our own destiny—a fact that should be well and solemnly considered.

"Think not too meanly of thy low estate;
Thou hast a choice; to choose *is to create!*
Remember whose the sacred lips that tell,
Angels approve thee when thy choice is well:
Use well the freedom which thy master gave."

Though the subject is by no means exhausted, yet the arguments already adduced are sufficient to settle the question under discussion, with all unprejudiced, reflecting minds. We have presented above, the proper and full idea of moral agency, connected with the consequences which

legitimately flow from a right or wrong use of it. Most men incorporate with their views of religion, the general idea of moral agency; and yet they sometimes find, in the conclusions to which it conducts them, or their committal to peculiar notions in philosophy or theology, motives for wishing to abate somewhat from human freedom, or so restrict and coerce the will, that it may harmonize with what they believe to be true in other respects. In this way what is sometimes distinguished as the "motive theory" was introduced, and still, to some extent, maintains an influence in the religious world. This theory deprives the will of a self-determining power, by making it necessarily assume a direction in harmony with existing circumstances and influences: that is, by making the will as the strongest motive, or as "the greatest apparent good." It is not our intention to discuss this theory any further than to state a few consequences inseparable from it, and by which it is proved to be erroneous.

If the will have not an independent, self-determining power, then the power that directs and controls it resides in something external to the will. But if the will be *necessarily* determined by that which is out of it, or external to it, there

can then be no such thing as a perverse will, a rebellious will, or an unresigned will. It moves as uniformly, and necessarily, as matter obeys the laws of the physical universe. The power which moves the will, being external to it, must be the direct influence of God, or it must arise from the connections and circumstances which God has created and arranged. If the former, there is properly only one will in the universe—the will of God. If the latter, then, as no circumstances are created or arranged by human volition—as God is the author of that constitution of things, which, being connected with man, exerts upon him an absolute control—it still follows that the responsibility of all volitions rests with the Deity—that he absolutely controls and directs all acts of human will, and all acts which follow the will, though it be done by secondary causes, or through the mediate agency of external, though divinely appointed arrangements. As relates to men, liberty is only a name, responsibility a chimera, and retribution a combination of injustice and absurdity. As every man wills just as he must, and the power, direct or indirect, which imposes this necessity is of God, all things are as God wills; and what God wills absolutely, must

be right. Whatever metaphysicians or theologians may say to the contrary,

“One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.”

All things are bound in the chains of fate. This chain binds the past to the present, the present to the future, and the future to eternity. “That wisdom which has ordained the existence of this chain, has doubtless willed that of every link of which it is composed. A Galigula is one of these links; and this link is of iron. A Marcus Aurelius is another link; and this link is of gold. Both are necessary parts of one whole which could not but exist. Shall God then be angry at the sight of the iron link? What absurdity! God esteems this link at its proper value. He sees it in its cause, and approves this cause, for it is good. God beholds moral monsters as he beholds physical monsters. Happy is the link of gold! Still more happy if he know that he is *only fortunate*. He has attained the highest degree of moral perfection, and is nevertheless without pride, knowing that what he is, is the necessary result of the place he must occupy in the chain. The gospel is the allegorical

exposition of this system : the simile of the potter is its summary.”*

“He might have added,” (says Tappan,) “Happy is the link of iron, if he know that he is not guilty, but at worst only *unfortunate* : and really not unfortunate, because holding a necessary place in the chain, which, both as a whole and in its parts, is the result of infinite wisdom.” These blasphemous sequents cannot be avoided, if the starting point be correct ; and though the “motive theory” may be shown to be unsound in various ways, considered philosophically and theologically, yet we rest here—it is sufficiently disproved by the consequences above stated.

Another view of moral agency, adopted for a special purpose, admits the general fact of human freedom, but proceeds at once to reason inconsistently with such admission. It allows men to act freely within a limited sphere of being : it may be confined to this life, or it may embrace a portion of the next life ; but it is limited, and the results of such freedom, whether happy or otherwise, are confined to the same sphere of existence. Passing beyond this circle in which they have moved as free, men not only cease to be moral

* Bonnet.

agents, but also escape the influence of their deeds while free, and become necessarily determined to a particular destiny. This theory, which is identified with several popular errors of the day, is open to a great variety of objections, logical and theological, but we have only room now to state the following :—

First.—It contradicts the doctrine of probation ; not merely probation in this life for a better condition in another, but probation of every kind and degree. The idea of probation, (which will be more largely considered in a future chapter,) is embodied in most of the arrangements of human society. Practically it requires certain conditions to be complied with, certain tests to be endured or proofs given of qualifications for an advanced future state. These tests, or proofs, are required and given with direct reference to their influence upon future existence. This is the fundamental principle of probation, and the only principle that need be considered. As the theory to which we here refer contemplates a time when the actions of men performed within the sphere of moral agency, will not exert an influence upon them : it is clearly inconsistent with the doctrine and fact of probation. This is true,

not only in the highest and strongest view of probation, but also in that which is most limited and insignificant. If the results of actions, performed within a large, though limited sphere of human agency, do not pass beyond the circle of that agency, and have no power to determine or modify the character of human destiny, to be consistent, we must apply the same principle to the more limited spheres of human agency, and even to each individual action. The unavoidable logical conclusion to which such a premise leads, is, that our moral state and happiness, is, at no point in our existence, conditioned upon anything preceding, and the moral influence of every individual act is limited to the moment of time in which it is performed.

Secondly.—As another objection we state, that the theory in question requires a change in the governmental arrangements of God, to suit the new circumstances that will arise when men shall have passed beyond the sphere of their moral agency. At a given point men cease to be moral agents, and if the harmony of their relations be preserved, the government must be adjusted to this new condition of the subject, or there must ever remain a discrepancy between the nature of the

government and the powers of the governed. God must have one form of government for men as morally free, and another suited to their condition of mechanical and irresponsible action ; or, as a third alternative, men are no longer subjects of government, and become an anomaly in the chain of intelligent existence.

Thirdly.—It deprives men of final moral destiny. While they are moral agents, and therefore accountable, they possess moral character, and to the same extent that character is changeless, moral destiny also ; but passing from the sphere of their moral agency, they also escape from the character they formed while within that sphere, and likewise from the destiny identified with it. Let it be remembered, the theory in question asserts that the final destiny of man is not within the sphere of his moral agency, nor in any manner depending upon it. But if not within, it must be out of, or beyond the sphere of moral agency, and hence independent of moral conduct, character, and desert. What kind of destiny that is, which excludes the influence of moral agency in the formation of character, and therefore excludes all moral desert, we leave for others to determine. Whatever else it may be, it cannot be moral des-

tiny—it cannot be a state of moral happiness or unhappiness, since there is neither virtue to reward, nor vice to punish. Unless there be some future place and state, peculiar, anomalous, not yet revealed to the human mind, it is difficult to say how such beings will be situated. There being in the Bible no intimation of any such future change in the responsible character of man, or the least hint of a destiny like that which must flow from it, those who take the word of God for their guide, and wish to maintain consistency in their philosophy and logic, will regard this theory of moral agency as it is—an instance of special pleading to avoid results which are only feared by those who neither love nor obey the truth.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRUE RELIGION REVEALS THE MORAL STATE OF MAN.—DOCTRINE OF DEPRAVITY STATED.—SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURE PROOF.—PROOF FROM EXPERIENCE.—FROM HISTORY AND OBSERVATION.—SEVERAL FACTS ILLUSTRATIVE AND CONVINCING.—THE SUBJECT SUMMED UP IN FIVE PROPOSITIONS.

“Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That all was lost.”—MILTON.

“O sin, what hast thou done to this fair earth !

* * * * *

Sin hath broke the world's sweet peace—unstrung
Th' harmonious chords to which the angels sung.”—DANA.

ANOTHER point to which true religion must give a distinct recognition, is, the moral *state* of man. As God is its author, and it must therefore, in its essence and principles, harmonize with the divine character, it is equally clear, as it is its object to promote virtue and happiness—to instruct and save men, its revealed facts must agree with the condition of the race, and give a correct exposition of their moral state. Religion is conversant with the moral character and relations of the

creature, more than with any other thing. It defines these relations, presents the standard of moral purity, and is designed to assist in maintaining the required rectitude and holiness, or if these have been lost, it is its object to restore the lost inheritance. If it be *true*, there can be no discrepancy between its teachings and the actual moral state of the human race.

The question may properly arise here, What (the teachings of true religion being allowed to decide) is the natural moral state and condition of the human family? In settling this question, proofs may be drawn from three sources: revelation, experience, and history. Each of these yield testimony clear, authoritative, and decisive. The true answer to the above question, we suppose to be found in the following proposition, viz. :—

The natural, moral condition of the world is that of *defection from original righteousness, and alienation from God*. That is, the race as a whole has lost the righteousness and holiness which distinguished Adam and Eve when first created, and every member of the human family now possesses a natural tendency in opposition to the holiness of God. In the fact here set forth, the great majority of the Christian world are sub-

stantially agreed. There are slight differences, arising partly from principle, and partly from an unfortunate use of terms; yet a real agreement in the thing intended—"the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually." In giving a summary of Scripture proof in support of this doctrine, we cannot do it better than by quoting an able and popular divine.

"In every religion there is a principle of truth or error, which, like the first link of a chain, necessarily draws after it all the parts with which it is essentially connected. This leading principle in Christianity, distinguished from Deism, is the doctrine of our corrupt and lost estate. For if man is not at variance with his Creator, what need of a Mediator between God and him? If he is not a depraved, undone creature, what necessity of so wonderful a Restorer and Saviour as the Son of God? If he is not enslaved to sin, why is he redeemed by Jesus Christ? If he is not polluted, why must he be washed in the blood of the immaculate Lamb? If his soul is not disordered, what occasion is there for such a Divine Physi-

cian? If he is not helpless and miserable, why is he perpetually invited to secure the assistance and consolations of the Holy Spirit? And, in a word, if he is not 'born in sin,' why is a new birth so absolutely necessary, that Christ declares, with the most solemn asseverations, without it, no man 'can see the kingdom of God.'

"This doctrine then being of such importance that genuine Christianity stands or falls with it, it may be proper to state it at large. And as this cannot be done in stronger and plainer words than those of the sacred writers, I beg leave to collect them and present the reader with a picture of our natural estate drawn at full length by those ancient and masterly hands.

"Moses, who informs us that 'God created man in his own image, and after his likeness,' soon casts a shade upon his original dignity, by giving us a sad account of his fall. He represents him after his disobedience, as a criminal under sentence of death; a wretch filled with guilt, shame, dread and horror; and a vagabond turned out of a lost paradise into a *cursed* wilderness, where all bears the stamp of desolation for his sake. In consequence of this apostasy he died, and all die in him, who was all mankind seminally and fede-

rally collected in one individual. 'For by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'

"The sacred historian, having informed us how the first man was corrupted, observes, that 'he begot a son in his own image,' sinful and mortal like himself; that his first-born was a murderer; that Abel himself offered sacrifices to avert divine wrath, and that the violent temper of Cain soon broke out in all the human species. 'The earth,' says he, 'was filled with violence—all flesh had corrupted its way—and God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth; so great, that 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' *Only* evil, without any mixture of good; and *continually*, without any intermission of the evil.

"When the deluge was over, the Lord himself gave the same account of his obstinately rebellious creature. 'The imagination of man's heart,' said he to Noah, 'is evil from his youth.' Job's friends paint us with the same colors. One of them observes, that 'man is born like the wild ass's colt;' and another, that 'he is abominable and filthy, and drinketh iniquity like water.'

“David doth not alter the hideous portrait. ‘The Lord,’ says he, ‘looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there was any that did understand and seek God.’ And the result of the divine inspection is, ‘they are all gone aside ; they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.’ Solomon gives a finishing stroke to his father’s draught, by informing us that ‘foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child,’ and not of a child only ; for he adds, ‘the heart of the sons of men is full of evil ; and while they live, madness is in their heart.’ Isaiah corroborates the assertions of the royal prophets in the following mournful confessions : ‘All we like sheep have gone astray. We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.’ Jeremiah confirms the deplorable truth when he says, ‘The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond ; it is graven on the tables of their hearts. O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.’ For ‘the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it?’

“Thus the prophets delineate mankind in a natural, impenitent state. And do the Apostles

dip their pencil in brighter colors? Let them speak for themselves. The chief of them informs us that 'the natural,' unrenewed 'man receives not the things of the Spirit of God,' and that 'they are foolishness to him.' And he lays it down as a matter of fact, that 'the carnal mind,' the taste and disposition of every unregenerate person, is not only averse to goodness, but '*enmity* against God,' the adorable fountain of all excellence. A blacker line can hardly be drawn to describe a fallen, diabolical nature.

“ Various are the names which the apostle of the Gentiles gives to our original corruption ; which are all expressive of its pernicious nature and dreadful effects. He calls it emphatically '*sin* ;' a sin so full of activity and energy, that it is the life and spring of all others. 'Indwelling sin ;' a sin which is not like the leaves and fruits of a bad tree that appear for a time and then drop off ; but like the sap that dwells and works within, always ready to break out at every bud. 'The body of sin,' because it is an assemblage of all possible sins in embryo, as our body is an assemblage of all the members which constitute the human frame. 'The law of sin,' and the 'law in our members,' because it hath a constraining force, and rules in our mortal

bodies, as a mighty tyrant in the kingdom which he hath usurped. 'The old man,' because we have it from the first man Adam, and because it is as old as the first stamina of our frame, with which it is most closely interwoven. 'The flesh' as being propagated by carnal generation, and always opposing the spirit, the gracious principle which we have from Adam the second. And 'concupiscence,' that mystic Jezebel, who brings forth the infinite variety of fleshly, worldly, and mental lusts which 'war against the soul.'

"Nor are St. James and St. John less severe than St. Paul upon the unconverted man. The one observes that his wisdom, the best property naturally belonging to him, 'descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish; and the other positively declares, that 'the whole world lieth in wickedness.' Our Lord whose spirit inspired the prophets and apostles, confirms their lamentable testimony. To make us seriously consider sin, our mortal disease, he reminds us that 'the whole, have no need of a physician but they that are sick.' He declares, that 'men love darkness rather than light;' that 'the world hates' him and his disciples, and that 'its works are evil.' He directs all to pray for the 'pardon

of sin,' as 'being evil,' and 'owing ten thousand talents' to their heavenly creditor. And he assures us that 'the things which defile the man come from within,' and that 'out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness'—and in a word, all *moral evil*. 'Some, indeed, confine what the Scriptures say of the depravity of human hearts to the abandoned heathens and persecuting Jews; as if the professors of morality and Christianity were not concerned in the dreadful charge. But if the apostolic writings affirm that Christ 'came not to call the righteous, but sinners;' that 'he died for the ungodly,' and that he 'suffered, the just for the unjust,' it is plain that, unless he did not suffer and die for moral men and Christians, they are by *nature sinners, ungodly, and unjust, as the rest of mankind*.

"If this assertion seem severe, let some of the best men that ever lived decide the point: not by the experience of immoral persons, but by their own. 'I abhor myself,' says Job, 'and repent in dust and ashes.' 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity,' says David, 'and in sin did my mother conceive

me.' 'Woe is me, for I am undone,' says Isaiah, 'because I am a man of unclean lips.' 'I know,' says St. Paul, 'that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' 'We ourselves,' says he to Titus, 'were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.' And speaking of himself and the Christians at Ephesus, he leaves upon record this memorable sentence, 'We were *by nature* the children of wrath, even as others.' Such humbling thoughts have the best men entertained both of their natural estate and of themselves.

"But as no one is a more proper person to appeal to in this matter, than this learned apostle, who, by continually conversing with Jews, heathen and Christians in his travels, had such an opportunity of knowing mankind, let us hear him sum up the suffrages of his inspired brethren. 'What then,' says he, 'are we better than they?' Better than the immoral pagans and hypocritical Jews described in the two preceding chapters? 'No, in no wise.' And he proves it by observing, (1) The *universality* of human corruption: 'All are under sin, as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. (2) The *extent* of it in individuals

as it affects the whole man, especially his mind. 'There is none that understandeth' the things of God. His affections, 'There is none that seeketh after God:' and his actions, 'They are all gone out of the way' of duty, 'There is none that doeth good, no, not one,' for 'all have their conversation in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.'

(3) The *outbreakings* of this corruption through all the parts of the body: their throat, their lips, their mouth, their eyes, their feet, and all their members, are together become unprofitable, and instruments of unrighteousness. 'As for their tongue,' says St. James, 'it is a world of iniquity, it defileth the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.' And lastly, its *malignity* and *virulence*. It is loathsome as 'an open sepulchre,' terrible as one who runs 'to shed blood,' and mortal as 'the poison of asps.' 'From the whole, speaking of all mankind in their unregenerate state, he justly infers that, 'Destruction and misery are in their ways.' And lest the self-righteous should flatter themselves that this alarming declaration doth not regard them, he adds, that 'the Scripture concludes all under sin:' that 'there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:'

and that the 'moral law' denounces a general curse against its violators, 'that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God.'"*

Such is a brief compend of Bible testimony relative to the apostasy and moral corruption of mankind. And every declaration of holy writ quoted above, is confirmed as true by human experience. Here, as in topics considered in other chapters of this work, we may appeal to consciousness. As consciousness is self-knowledge, or the knowledge the mind has of its own operations, it must embrace an acquaintance with the moral states and feelings of the mind. And the testimony borne by consciousness in respect to these states and feelings may be relied upon as correct. Individuals may, through ignorance, or a morbid condition of mind, mistake respecting some particulars, but the uniform testimony of consciousness respecting any mental state or feeling, must be regarded as conclusive and decisive. No proof can go beyond this, or overthrow the facts it has established. Human experience embraces consciousness: indeed, the two terms are nearly synonymous. The facts of consciousness are

* Fletcher's Appeal.

those of experience. When we say experience confirms the reality of natural depravity, we mean that every man is conscious of a vicious tendency of mind and heart, a natural disinclination to things spiritual and holy, and an inclination to evil. Every man feels and knows that he is "of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually."

We admit that this inward tendency to evil does not show itself in the same way in every individual. While there is but one rule of moral duty, there are a thousand ways in which that rule may be violated. If there be a natural disposition, no matter in what way, to contravene the righteous requirements of heaven—if there be a tendency to break through the moral restraints God has imposed, and a consciousness that such is the fact, the point in discussion is made out.

Such we affirm to be the experience of every man who has given any attention to the state of his heart—the operations of his mind. There is no man living who has not been more or less troubled with evil propensities which have arisen in opposition to his virtuous resolves, and tend to defeat his efforts to reform. We would be glad to see the man, if he be supposed to have an ex-

istence, whose conscience has never been oppressed with a sense of guilt. It would be both gratifying and instructive to learn from his own lips the secret of his exalted freedom. But as such a specimen of humanity has never yet been found, it is fair to presume it never will.

Nor does memory in any case recall the time when the operation of this inward "law of sin" was not felt, "warring" against the interests of the soul, and bringing the mind and moral powers into captivity, and subjection to moral death. This consciousness of inward sin is coeval with our first conceptions and desires. It must therefore spring from our moral state—from the condition of the heart, which by the teaching of Christ, is in every man, a fountain of moral corruption.

The disposition to transgress the moral law, of which we are conscious, and from which no man is free, cannot be derived from any deficiency of reason, from error or want of knowledge. These may create a possibility of sinning: but a mere *possibility* of sinning, and an inclination to sin are very different things. And we feel this disposition even where there is no error or defect of knowledge, yea, even in those cases, in which we see most clearly, that obedience to the moral law

will conduce to our best advantage, and that by disobedience we shall render ourselves miserable. Nor can it be a mere fault of education. For then there would be, among all the multiplied and often opposite modes of education, some *one*, which would furnish us with men free from this disposition. Nor is it the effect merely of the bad examples which we witness in others. This notion is contradicted by the varied manner in which depravity is exhibited. "One man is either little, or not at all inclined to those things, for which another has a great propensity. All, however, are inclined to perform many actions, which they themselves acknowledge to be sinful and injurious. Since this disposition seeks out so many and so different deviations, it has a different aspect in different individuals: but in all alike, it appears as a strong disinclination to certain duties, and a vehement propensity to certain actions which are morally bad."*

We close the argument from experience in the emphatic language of St. Paul, "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not. For

* Knapp.

the good that I would I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Then if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man ; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”

The third, and last witness we interrogate on the subject of natural depravity, is history ; or, observations upon the actual condition of mankind. In this department we shall only set down a few decisive facts.

First.—This depravity shows itself in infant minds. The seeds of vice exist in the hearts of children in their earliest years. With the first proofs of intellectual development, we see connected an exhibition of selfishness, envy, pride, deceit, resentment, lying, and often cruelty ; affording abundant promise of the future, and more finished work of depravity. So prominent is this fact, so strongly does it impress the public mind

that it is acknowledged to be the chief business of moral education, in respect to the young, to restrain and correct these evil tendencies, before they acquire a strength and virulence which bids defiance to all correctives.

Secondly.—The strength of this depraved principle is in proof that it has its seat in the constitution itself, and is not acquired by example or education. The controlling power it exerts over the whole man is seen in the enormity of the crimes to which men abandon themselves, and the numerous legal and moral restraints and checks against which the tide of human corruption rushes onward.

In spite of the destructive influence of vice upon health and happiness—in opposition to the authority of God, whose government and law are in some degree revealed to all men—in disregard of the warnings of God's judgments upon distinguished transgressors, both nations and individuals—against the restraints of human laws, and the authority of human magistrates—and in spite of the reforming influences and powerful motives of revealed religion, presented in its most inviting form in the life and teachings of Jesus—
ill this tide rushes onward. When we consider

the number and power of the influences, motives, and checks through which, and in spite of which, human depravity presses on in pursuit of vicious indulgence, and in perpetrating the most horrid crimes: the conclusion that depravity is natural—that the mind of the unregenerate man is “carnal,” is “enmity against God”—is the only one that corresponds with the facts in the case.

Thirdly.—This depravity is universal. It is co-extensive with the human family. Universal corruption is at once both a consequence and proof of universal natural depravity. Were not the moral powers perverted—did not the heart contain a natural bias to sin, we should confidently expect at least a portion of the race would maintain an unbroken allegiance to God: nay, it would be a reasonable supposition that the majority would do so, since to minds not depraved virtue is more amiable than vice, and would be the natural choice. But this is so far from being accordant with fact that not a single one of the posterity of Adam is exempt from the charge of moral corruption: “they are all gone out of the way.” There is not a spot on this green earth inhabited by man which has not been scathed and blasted by sin—over which the curse of sin

has not passed like a burning sirocco. There is not a faculty of the human mind, but has been more or less trammelled and paralyzed by the depraved principle: not a holy aspiration but has been suppressed; not a virtuous affection but has felt its withering touch. The history of our race, from first to last, where it has not yielded to the redeeming, sanctifying power of gospel truth and influence, proves its universal defection and corruption—that a flood of general wickedness has broken in—that

“Virtue and truth have left the faithless race,
And fraud and wrong succeeded in their place;
And justice, last of the celestial train,
Spurns the earth drenched in blood, and flies to heaven again.”

Such is the natural moral state of the world since the sin of Adam. To be true in itself, and true to man, religion must keep this condition of humanity distinctly in view in its relations and provisions. As it is the professed object of religion to bless and save men, it will employ means adequate to secure the end: it will reveal to the mind the cause and nature of the disease, and provide and direct attention to the remedy.

In concluding this chapter, it will be proper to give the substance of what true religion reveals

touching the subject in question, in the following particulars :

First.—The primitive state of man was distinguished by moral rectitude. He was the effect of a holy cause. The Creator, being infinitely holy, cannot be the author of unholiness. The holiness of his nature must exert a controlling influence over the productions of his creative power, to an extent that excludes all necessity of vice, and provides for the practice and cultivation of every virtue. As it is impossible for God to sin, it is equally impossible that he should create sinners, or directly or indirectly compel holy beings to become sinners. As man came from the plastic hand of God, he possessed no bias of mind, no element of character inconsistent with perfect moral rectitude. “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.”

Secondly.—The whole race is *now* depraved and guilty. To this point what has been said in this chapter has been specially directed. And we think nothing is hazarded in saying the apostasy referred to is amply sustained by the testimony adduced. There is room here for one other remark, viz., the cause or causes which led to this apostasy operated subsequent to the creation, and

do not in the least involve the character or intention of Deity.

Thirdly.—Adam's defection from God was voluntary. It must be so. An involuntary apostasy is a contradiction in terms. There can be no such thing as apostasy from a state of moral rectitude without the consent of the will. Whatever circumstances may concur to induce sin, they leave to the will the power of choice, and successful resistance. Any other view would annihilate human responsibility. If the present moral condition of mankind be the direct, or indirect result of an arrangement established by God, with the design of reaching such an issue, then, however degraded the world may be, it is not in a state of apostasy: it is just where God would have it: man's will has moved in harmony with the divine will: he has never violated his allegiance to heaven, but thus far has worked out the sovereign purpose of Jehovah.

Fourthly.—The human family is in a state of apostasy and depravity *through Adam*. Hence the following declarations of Holy Writ:—"By one man's disobedience many were made sinners:"—"By one man's offence death reigned by one:"—"By the offence of one judgment came

upon all men to condemnation :”—“ By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ”—“ in Adam all die.”

“ Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts his race and taints us all.”

To this view of the subject there is no valid objection, either theological or philosophical. Adam was the federal head of the race. “ God entered into covenant with him, not for himself alone, but for all his offspring. Had he stood, they seminally would have stood with him. When he fell, they seminally fell with him. When he broke the covenant of works under which he was placed, and forfeited the blessings secured to his obedience, the forfeiture reached them also. Without this federal relation, the parallel between Adam and Christ, introduced by St. Paul in more places than one, would not exist. But he expressly asserts that Adam “ was the figure of him that was to come.” And that the Lord Jesus Christ sustained a federal relation to the human family none will deny or call in question, who acknowledge him as mediator.”*

Fifthly.—The moral condition of man since

* S. Comfort. Exposition of the Articles.

the fall is such that he cannot save himself; “ he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God : wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good-will, and working with us when we have that good-will.”

No one will be damned and finally lost because Adam sinned : yet no one can avoid guilt through *present* sin, or escape guilt thus incurred, without help from God. This help has been afforded in the person of Christ, and the revelation of his gospel. But more of this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTIANITY THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION.—NECESSITY OF A MEDIATOR.—CORRECT VIEWS OF CHRIST INDISPENSABLE.—THE BIBLE ALONE REVEALS CHRIST.—THE OFFICE OF REASON IN ITS INTERPRETATION.—BIBLE VIEW OF CHRIST AS THE MEDIATOR.—THE ONLY SAVIOUR.—VICARIOUS ATONEMENT.—NECESSITY FOR IT.—CHRIST ALONE COULD MAKE THE ATONEMENT.—PROOFS OF ITS VICARIOUS NATURE.—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.—THE SUBLIMITY AND GLORY OF THE THEME.

Sun! didst thou fly thy Maker's pain? or start
At that enormous load of human guilt,
Which bowed his blessed head; o'erwhelmed his cross;
Made groan the centre; burst earth's marble womb,
With pangs, strange pangs; delivered of her dead?
Hell howled; and heaven that hour let fall a tear,
Heaven wept that man might smile! Heaven bled, that man
Might never die!

THE qualifying word *Christian*, as connected with religion, is used to distinguish that form and application of the principle of religion, which was developed by Christ, and has obtained under his mediatorial reign. To our world in its fallen state, *the Christian religion is the only true religion.* There may be other worlds and moral beings to whom religion comes not, as to us, through the

intervention of a mediator, nor depends for its vitality and efficacy upon its connection with an atonement. And such would have been the religion of this world if man had not sinned. Had the human race maintained its original condition, communion with God would have been direct, not mediate ; religion would have been the same in its essence and objects ; it would have been divine, but we should have needed no redemption to effect our liberty from claims we could not pay—no propitiation—no atoning High Priest, to lead us to the mercy-seat, and conciliate the favor of heaven in our behalf. With man un-fallen, God could commune without a mediator ; there was no moral incongruity between the nature of God, and man created in his image. Until sin had defaced the likeness of his Creator, and infused corruption into his heart, man held unrestrained fellowship with the author of his being. But the case is now changed. God is the same, but man has become a sinner. He is condemned by the divine law, which makes no provision for reconciliation and mercy. A holy God cannot treat with an unholy creature relative to terms of restoration, except through a mediatorial medium. All original advantages are forfeited by sin. The

dispensation under which the race was first placed, has been substituted by another brought in by the incarnate Son of God, who has mercifully undertaken to effect a reconciliation between the variant parties, and confer eternal salvation on the believing and obedient.

Such being the present moral condition and relation of the world in respect to God, it is evident our religious hopes are placed on other grounds—our moral and religious characters must exist, and be matured under other influences. Being dependent entirely on divine goodness for the means of moral renovation and restoration, our power to repent, believe, and obey, and render ourselves acceptable to God, are derived from the Mediator. Original forms and modes of access to God, have, with us, become obsolete—we are “shut up” to this “new and living way,” and to us, the Christian system of doctrine and grace is the *only true religion*.

Again, the point being conceded that true religion is that which is revealed, and that under the dispensation of revelation, Christianity is the only true religion, there is yet room for the farther remark that true religion, or true Christianity, must be based on true views of the character of Christ :

that is, it must be a true exponent of the character of the great Redeemer. To embrace radically erroneous views of Christ, is to embrace a false Christ, and to embrace a false Christ, is to repudiate the true Christ. As to reject the true God, is to refuse that divine religion which comes from him, so, to reject the true Christ, is to refuse Christianity and the only true religion. Individuals may, perhaps, unconsciously, or unwittingly err in some things respecting Christ, without losing the saving virtue of his mediation, but a theory, or system of religion, professedly founded on views which subvert the true character and relations of Christ, must necessarily be false.

Christian revelation as distinguished from all other sources of divine knowledge, brings us acquainted with Christ, of whom as a saviour, we have no information elsewhere. He is revealed to us, that through him we may be introduced to his religion, and become the subjects of his salvation. In seeking to form a correct view of Christ then, it is obvious we have no other oracle to consult than the Bible: we are "shut up" to this source of instruction in forming our estimate of his character. And we are not at liberty to bring our prejudices to the Bible, and seek to conform

the record to them : or to allow our philosophy to modify, or give form and shape to the doctrines of the divine word on this subject : nor should we start back from the conclusions to which the Bible would conduct us, on account of any real or supposed mystery involved, or the incapacity of human reason to grasp the magnitude, or comprehend the divinity of the theme. If reason be unable to disclose a divine Saviour without revelation, it is equally incompetent to determine beforehand, what kind of a Saviour the Bible should make known to us. The only inquiry proper for us, is, what do the Scriptures teach ? and the only business which reason has with the subject, relates to the interpretation and correct exposition of the revelation given. In all other respects, reason is to sit like Mary, a learner at the Master's feet.

The most important features in the character of Christ, as taught by revelation, and on which, under the Christian dispensation true religion is founded, are as follows :—

First.—The divinity of his essence, and the eternity of his relation to the Godhead. “In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “All things that

the Father hath are mine." "I and my Father are one." "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

Secondly.—His proper humanity, by which he holds an intimate, though sinless connection, with that sinful race whom he came to redeem and save, and has become a High Priest, who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." To present these two points in one strong view, Christ is revealed to us as the incarnate Son of God: "Forasmuch then, as the children (those he came to redeem and save) are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Thus to accomplish a specific, and in its relation to us, a necessary object, he became our Mediator, combining in his person the highest form of divinity, and the most perfect specimen of humanity—"being in the *form of God*, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the *likeness of man*; and being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." By the mys-

try and condescension of his incarnation, God with God, became man with man. Such is the view which the Bible gives of Christ in his relation to true religion, and out of which arises the saving efficacy and power of his gospel. This exposition of the complex character of the Mediator is essential to the existence of the Christian system, and indispensable to true religious experience.

We are now prepared to advance another step. True religion recognizes, and receives Christ as the *only Saviour* of lost sinners, and his atonement as the *only*, and *meritorious* ground of pardon and salvation.

The redeeming work of Christ for an enthralled world, as also the effect of it upon penitent believers, is thus described by the Apostle Paul. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God; to declare I say at this time his righteousness; that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."*

* Rom. iii. 24-26.

This paragraph sets forth three important facts.

First.—The justification and salvation of the sinner are of grace. “Being justified freely by his grace.”

Secondly.—This gracious interposition is *harmonious with justice*. “That he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Pardon through the redemption of Christ is no infraction of the justice of God: It requires no abatement of the claims of law. The exercise of mercy is justified, “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”

Thirdly.—The blessings purchased through redemption are appropriated by faith—“through faith in his blood”—“him that believeth in Jesus.” Mercy finds the channel of divine favor open to the lost sinner through the redeeming blood of Christ. Justice points to the propitiatory sacrifice and blood of the Redeemer as of sufficient moral value to satisfy its demands, while the sword is sheathed, and a dispensation of mercy is granted to a guilty world. “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” O wonderful plan! “O the

depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

“Here the whole Deity is known,
Nor dares a creature guess
Which of the glories brightest shone,
The justice or the grace.”

The vicarious atonement of Christ, being the great central truth of Christianity, and the procuring, or meritorious cause of all saving gospel influence, may properly claim a more extended notice.

For a knowledge of the plan of salvation through Christ, we are wholly indebted to divine revelation. There is nothing in the actualities, or possibilities of human wisdom that could have provided to meet the exigencies of the case, much less anticipate the measures God would adopt for demonstrating his righteousness in extending pardon to the guilty.

The necessity for an atonement is found in the fact that the human race have voluntarily transgressed God's holy law and incurred its righteous penalty. Goodness may be inclined to show mercy, but holiness must maintain an opposition to sin by an active display of justice. Holiness as an attribute of God is not inferior to goodness,

hence justice is not subordinate to mercy. The condition of the race is hopeless, unless deliverance can be effected upon some principle that will harmonize goodness and holiness, justice and mercy. Men in their fallen state cannot save themselves, because in a state of moral death; and death cannot produce life. And should we allow the natural availableness of repentance, it would not relieve them; since both the disposition and power to repent are wanting. Nor can the law save them. By the law is the knowledge of sin—not the knowledge of salvation. Disconnected with atonement it knows nothing of mercy. It makes an exhibition of its claims that annihilates hope in the breast of the guilty, and leaves him nothing to expect but the full execution of its threatened penalty. Says Paul, “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died.” Hence “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified”—a declaration implying the impossibility of salvation to men in a fallen state, either by personal obedience to the law, or by suffering in their own persons the full extent of its penalty.

It follows, therefore, that there is no hope for a condemned world, without a divine interposition

wh. ch shall provide for extending pardon to the guilty and helpless. But how shall this be done? This is the great problem of Christianity, and as appears to us, it must be solved by one of the two following methods:—

First.—Pardon must be extended to sinners on mere clemency, or,

Secondly.—A satisfaction must be offered of such nature and value as will honor the law, and secure the ends of good government, while the sinner is released, and allowed, and even assisted, if he wills it, to return to his allegiance to God.

To the salvation of offenders on mere clemency there are inseparable obstacles, founded in the *essential* and *rectoral* justice of the Deity.

By his *essential* justice, we mean that manifestation of his righteous displeasure against sin, *as such*, which has its foundation in the holiness of the divine character. God is of “purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” It is an eternal and necessary opposition to sin arising out of the nature of holiness, and has its outward revelations in the personal enactments of the divine law. Its retributive voice can no more be hushed in the presence of sin, than holiness can be abstracted from the divine nature. Hence, should God

extend pardon on a principle that disregards the claims of his essential justice, he would contravene his own nature,—resist and suppress the tendencies of his holiness.

Rectoral justice, is that which awards to moral beings according to their deeds under a specified form of government. It has its foundation in the contrariety between sin and the best good of the moral world; and its maintenance is necessary to secure the ends of a holy and benevolent administration. It is the moral universe in arms against sin, because sin tends to defeat the happiness of the universe. To extend pardon to the guilty regardless of the claims of rectoral justice, would give impunity to sin, and resist and defeat the ends of good government.

To any scheme, therefore, that would pardon offenders without satisfaction, the essential holiness and justice of God must ever stand opposed. These constitute the *ground of necessity* for atonement, and present, as the only alternative, the second method stated above, viz., “a satisfaction must be offered of such nature and value as will honor the law, and secure the ends of the divine administration, while the sinner is released, and allowed, and

even assisted, if he wills it, to return to his allegiance to God.”

To this conclusion the convictions of the human mind and conscience conduct us. For centuries before the personal appearance of Christ, there was a felt necessity for some more perfect and assuring method of approach to God. To the Jew this deficiency was in part relieved; yet it was but in part: for the promulgations of Sinai did but impress the mind that man cannot be just with God. The condition of the heathen was still worse; they felt that they were under a divine curse: and after their best endeavors at propitiation there was an awful apprehension that the favor of God was not secured. Oppressed conscience and the ominous voice of nature spoke of guilt in man, and wrath in God: their superstitious rites, and self-inflicted penances were inefficacious to quiet their alarmed fears. Reason had spent her strength, philosophy exhausted her resources, yet the fearful gloom was not removed. They might hope for favor, but there could be no peace without assurance. Assurance has come; it is found in the Christian doctrine of atonement. The despairing mind is relieved by the announcement, that God has sent his Son to be the “pro-

pitation" for the sins of the world, and by the language of the great Propitiator himself—"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

The death of Christ for sinners is uniformly exhibited in Scripture, not as one expedient of many that might have been employed, but as the only hope of the guilty. Not only was there a necessity for a divine interposition for the benefit of man, but a real necessity for the death of Christ,—a necessity arising out of the moral condition and relation of man. And Christ was not only the *fittest*, but the *only* instrument by which this work could have been effected. How else can we understand the following passage:—"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Clark, Benson, Scott, Burkitt, Fletcher, Holden, and a host of others, understand our Lord to pray that the cup of suffering now presented to his lips might pass from him, if consistent with the divine purpose to redeem the world; and the fact that it did not pass from him, but he drank it in all its bitterness, is in proof that there was no other way of opening to the world the door of salvation. How else can we understand the words of Christ after his resurrection: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to

rise again the third day." The Greek verb "ἔδει," translated *behooved*, is from δεω, to bind, chain, or fetter together. It conveys the idea of *necessity*; that is, that the death of Christ was so necessary to redemption, that the latter event was bound, or chained to the former; and the former must take place, or the latter can never be effected. The same word in connection with παθειν, "*to suffer*," is used by the Saviour in the twenty-sixth verse of the same chapter; indicating a necessary connection between his work as Redeemer, and the salvation of lost men: or, as the Vulgate has it, *sic oportebat Christum pati*—literally, "it was needful that Christ should suffer."

And such is the uniform tenor of Scripture. "When we were yet *without strength*, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." "Neither is there salvation in any other." "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "He looked, and there was none to help him, and of the people there was none with him; therefore his own arm brought salvation, and his righteousness, it sustained him." There is not the least intimation in the word of God, that any other method than that adopted would have availed to open the channels of mercy, and avert the impendent

doom of a condemned world. Christ is the *only Saviour*. Any other view is fundamentally erroneous. His condemnation is our justification: his death is our life: had he not died, we must have borne the heavy load forever.

We close what we have to say on the subject of atonement, by presenting a few considerations showing it to be *vicarious*; that is, that Christ is the sinner's substitute in satisfying for transgression.

First.—On no other hypothesis can the sufferings of Christ be explained. Christ did not suffer and die on his own account. He had violated no law, and was obnoxious to no penalty. Being “undefiled,” “without spot,” one who “did always those things which pleased God,” it is plain, however we may explain his passion, we must not regard his sufferings as endured in his own behalf. Nor had he, being innocent, such connection with a guilty race as necessarily involved him in their calamities and sufferings. He had experienced no derangement of any department of his constitution. True, he possessed the nature of man, but not by natural generation; hence not man's fallen nature. The human nature of Christ was not involved in the penal con-

sequences of the fall: it was created and assumed by Christ for a specific purpose—"that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil." The celestial messenger announced to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Nor is suffering a necessary accompaniment of a work of benevolence, as performed by holy beings, excluding expiation for offences. But if Christ did not suffer for himself, nor as a consequence of being connected with a fallen race, nor yet because of a necessary union between a work of benevolence and suffering, only one conceivable alternative remains, viz., his sufferings were in behalf of sinners—*vicarious*. By this we mean all that is implied in saying he suffered in our room and stead, on account of our sins, and with a view of delivering us by his sufferings from the punishment due us as guilty sinners. The sufferings of Jesus must be admitted by those who deny his atonement; rejecting their vicarious character, they are bound to give some

either consistent explanation. This, however, will not be easily done.

Secondly.—We argue for a vicarious atonement from those passages which declare Christ died for us:—"He died, the just for the unjust." "He suffered for us,"—"he died for all,"—"he tasted death for every man,"—"he died for the ungodly,"—"he gave himself a ransom for all."

St. Paul illustrates the meaning of the preposition *αυτι*, and by consequence the sense in which Christ died for sinners, when he says, "Scarcely *for* a righteous man will one die, yet, peradventure, *for* a good man some would even dare to die." Here, "to die for a good man," says Doddridge, "is to lay down one life in order to save another." But God's love was commended toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died *for* us: that is, he laid down his life, in order to save the lives of sinners. This is singularly plain from Gal. iii. 13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." *Karaga* everywhere denotes punishment proceeding from the sanction of law—the "curse" rested upon the world by the sanction of law. Christ endured this curse *for* us, in our room and stead.

“When this phraseology is used in the New Testament in reference to Christ, it never means that he died to teach men, &c.—but always, *instead, in the place of men, to deliver them.* The meaning is this: since Christ suffered for our sins, we ourselves are freed from the necessity of enduring the punishment which they deserved.”*

Thirdly.—The Scriptures declare most plainly and positively, that the sufferings and death of Christ do operate a removal of the consequences of sin from the sinner. “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”—“he shall bear their iniquities.” “Who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” “It pleased the Lord to bruise him.” “He hath put him to grief.” “But 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.”

How well all this agrees with the declaration of the Apostle (Rom. viii. 32,) “God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,” it needs no argument to show. There is no way that we can conceive of, in which Christ can *bear*

* Knapp's Theology.

the sins of fallen creatures, "in his own body," except by the penal, substitutionary character of his sufferings and death. "To bear the sins, means to bear the punishment, that is, to suffer the punishment due to sins."*

Fourthly.—That the sufferings and death of Christ were penal and propitiatory, is conclusive from those passages which represent Christ as our propitiation, and his death as propitiatory.

"To propitiate is to appease, to atone, to turn away the wrath of an offended person. In the case before us, the wrath turned away is the wrath of God: the person making the propitiation is Christ; the propitiating offering or sacrifice is his blood." †

With this definition before us, the application of the following passages, is very plain and easy:—
 "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."—Rom. iii. 25. "And he is the propitiation for our sins."—1 John ii. 11. "God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—1 John iv. 10.

The Greek words *ἰλασμος* and *ἰλασθηριον* are both derived from *ἰλασχω*, which is often used by Greek writers to express the action of a person

* Stewart.

† Watson.

appointed to turn away the wrath of a Deity. God the righteous lawgiver and judge is justly displeased with man, on account of sin: yet not so displeased as to be implacable. This displeasure moves in harmony with the benevolence of his character and government; hence it opposes an insuperable barrier to the world's release from condemnation and punishment, except upon terms that will vindicate his authority, honor the law, and secure the ends of a righteous administration. So far from being implacable—actuated by a feeling of revenge—the scheme of redemption has its foundation in his benevolence; he gives his own Son, to execute the only plan that could effect the world's deliverance, in keeping with his attributes and the principles of eternal justice. Christ becomes the *propitiator*, and gives himself a *propitiation, atonement, expiation*—words which, used as they are in the Scriptures, in connection with the Saviour's work for sinners, must, we think, convey to every unsophisticated mind the idea of satisfaction rendered for the sins of men, by the personal sufferings of Jesus Christ. He who knew no sin “was made sin for us” (a sin offering) “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

A brief notice of a popular objection or two will form the conclusion of this chapter.

It is often said by way of objection, that "it would be unjust to *require* the innocent to suffer for the guilty." It is a sufficient answer to this, to say, that it is founded on a false view of the subject. The sufferings of Christ were *voluntary*. He acted under no constraint whatever, except the constraint of love. He so loved the world that "he *gave* himself a ransom for the world to be testified in due season." There is no law, human or divine, that can justly *require* the innocent to take the place of the guilty; yet when an individual, actuated by pure goodness, throws himself in the gap, and as far as possible relieves the guilty and suffering of the consequences of their evil deeds, even at great personal sacrifices; not only is there no law against it, but such a course will be applauded by the good, and the name of such an one will be heralded to succeeding generations as a benefactor of his race. Such, though in a higher sense, was the work of Christ. He voluntarily interposed his sufferings and death to relieve the world from ruin.

Another objection to a vicarious atonement is,

that "it involves the doctrine of imputed guilt to the innocent character of Christ."

This is a *non sequiter* ; it only involves a transfer of the *legal consequences* of guilt. And to suppose this impossible is to war with fact. A certain form of this transfer, (though not for the same end,) exists in the case of the infant world : who, being themselves innocent of any participation in crime, do, nevertheless, experience in part, the consequences of another's guilt.

It is a fact that persons may, and that some have, voluntarily assumed the consequences of the sins of others. This, to some extent, is done by every philanthropist, who in the benevolence of his heart, foregoes ease, and endures labor and suffering, and expends his temporal substance, to save the profligate from the effects of their evil deeds. This was done by the Locrian king, who by the voluntary loss of one of his own eyes, saved his son from the full infliction of the terrible penalty he had incurred : an act which has received universal commendation, and has been employed by many divines, as a singularly apt illustration of the subject of atonement. "If King Codrus loved his subjects so far as to disguise and offer himself to death, in order to procure them

certain temporal advantages; if the Deciiuses and Curtiuses felt so strong an interest in the welfare of their country, as to sacrifice their lives in order to save their fellow-citizens from a transient calamity; if a Swiss so generously devoted himself to death, by running to Sampach covered with the lances of conflicting hosts, to clear the way for his victorious companions; if mothers have sacrificed their own lives to preserve those of their children, is it not absurd to say that infinite bounty never could, and never would, perform an act of compassion equally glorious and efficacious, to deliver millions of souls from more dreadful miseries, and to procure to them the blessings of an infinite duration, and of an inestimable value.”*

We know that these are rare examples, and that none of them come up fully to the Bible view of the atonement, in connection with which there is a mystery, sublimity, and glory, found nowhere else: yet they all involve more or less the principle on which the mediation of Christ proceeds: and the fewness and imperfection of the examples should not be employed to invalidate the principle. But were it true that the experience and

* Fletcher.

Observation of men furnish no examples analogous to the proceeding against which this objection is urged, it would not follow that the subject involves the least incongruity or intrinsic difficulty. It is not safe to infer from the regulations men have established in this world, what would, or would not be proper, in a *divine* plan for the redemption of sinners. We may reason from the analogy of the divine government in this world, and here the argument is in our favor: but we must not regulate the divine proceedings by the analogy of human governments. It is the business of courts of justice to administer law, as it is established by the supreme power of the state; hence they have no right to require or accept a substitute in criminal cases. The subordinate judicatories of the Locrian kingdom had no right to adopt the expedient resorted to by the king—there was nothing in the laws delivered to them that would authorize it. But the king, being the source of all law and authority to his subjects, might adopt any expedient within his power, that would honor the law, support justice, and at the same time save his erring and criminal son.

If, therefore, we had no revelation on the subject, and if the government of God, in relation to

this world, furnished us with nothing illustrative of the principle, still it would be an assumption which no one has a right to make—to say that God may not allow a substitute to receive the legal consequences of sin in his own person, and thus let in light and hope upon a doomed world.

Such is the Bible view of Christ and his atonement for sinners: and on this foundation true religion must ever rest. Slight variations, which do not contravene and destroy the feature of substitution and satisfaction, may be tolerated; but true religion can have no fellowship with notions which rob Christ of the infinitude of his original nature, or destroy his mediatorial character by the denial of his proper humanity, or propose any other scheme of satisfaction, any other ground of justification than that found in his mediatorial work—his redemptive blood. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The exhibition we have here of Christ, and his work for sinners, is grand, sublime, and soul-thrilling. The field open for contemplation is boundless. What a variety of considerations to excite our gratitude and quicken our devotions! What an astonishing display of divine compas-

sion! What an infinite ocean of benevolence is open to our view in the bosom of the Deity!—When we associate all the lofty and mysterious characteristics of this great subject, the mind is overwhelmed with its moral grandeur. There is no language, no imagery, no eloquence, sufficient in expression and power, to reach its high divinity, and fully unfold its exhaustless glories. “God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.” Let us love the Redeemer, as he has loved us. Let us embrace the religion which he brings us, through his infinite sacrifice and atonement: and then, when all other comforts fail, this will be our solace—“like a kind angel whisper peace, and smooth the bed of death.”

CHAPTER X.

SALVATION CONDITIONAL.—NATURE OF A CONDITION.—CONTINGENCY IMPLIED IN IT.—FARTHER PROVED BY CONSTITUTION OF MAN.—ANALOGY OF NATURE.—DOCTRINE OF PROBATION.—REVELATION.—NATURE OF SALVATION.—BIBLE TESTIMONY.—SOLEMN ADMONITION.

“If then that *double death* should prove thy lot,
Blame not the bowels of the Deity;
Man shall be blessed as far as man permits.
Not man alone—all rationals, Heaven arms
With an illustrious, but tremendous power.
That power denied, men, angels, were no more
But passive engines, void of praise or blame.
* * * * *
And he that would be barred capacity
Of pain, *courts incapacity of bliss.*”—YOUNG.

IN the catalogue of doctrines which distinguish true religion from that which is false, we must not omit the *conditionality* of salvation. That men need salvation, and that Christ came into this world to save them, are points not often called in question. There are, however, some other things connected with salvation, which, through early prejudice, or hostility to truth, are not always admitted with the same cordiality and confidence. Among

these may be included the doctrine which is to form the subject of this chapter. If this be not properly fundamental to the system of religious truth, in a practical view its importance can scarcely be over-estimated. It is no less a question, than whether there is anything required of us as a pre-requisite to the future bliss we hope to enjoy. Whether we may safely dismiss all care and anxiety relative to the issue which awaits us, and consider ourselves perfectly sure of salvation and happiness in our final destiny, independent of any acts or agency of our own, or, whether our moral character and happiness, here and hereafter, and even in our final state, be contingent, or so *conditioned*, as to call for watchfulness, care, and diligence in securing them. In a word, whether there is anything at hazard, anything to be gained or lost in our ultimate condition by virtue or vice, obedience or disobedience in our present relations to God and his government. On this subject the teaching of true religion is clear and emphatic: it suspends our final happiness upon previous duties and acquisitions; that is, it makes salvation *conditional*.

The standard definition of a condition is as follows:—"a clause in a bond or other contract con-

taining terms: a stipulation that it is to be performed, and in case of *failure*, the penalty of the bond is to be *incurred*. Terms given, or provided as the *ground* of something else; that which is established, or to be done, or to happen, as *requisite* to another act." From this it is plain, that contingency is implied in the *nature* of a condition, and that the result thus conditioned in a bond or contract of any nature, depends on the decision and action of those on whom the condition is imposed.

The application of this principle to the subject of human salvation is perfectly easy and natural. The gospel comes to us in the form of a covenant. Its provisions are connected with specified terms. There are two parties to the covenant, and a Mediator, whose business it is to see that it is executed with fidelity: that a proper regard be had to the rights of each of the contracting parties. In this covenant God provides salvation for man, and pledges himself to confer it on terms that are stated. These terms form the condition on which men are to be saved; and while they may claim, nay, have a right to claim that Jehovah, the high contracting party, should redeem his pledge, it is equally obvious there may be, on their part, a

forfeiture of the promised boon. The conditions being disregarded by those who are to reap the benefit, neither justice, mercy, nor truth, require, or even allow the design of the covenant to be perfected. Motives are presented to induce care, and pious, diligent attention to the duties on which the desired issue is made dependent but moral freedom is not in the least impinged.

“Heaven *wills* our happiness, *allows* our doom,
Invites us ardently, but not *compels*.”

That such is the principle that governs, and will determine our claim to heaven and happiness, is proved by the following arguments.

First.—The original relations and constitution of man. The constitution of Adam was that of a moral agent; his relations those of a moral subject to the moral government of God. He was created upright, and placed under a law whose requirements were plainly revealed to him. By the will and power of the law-maker, he was, to be visited with favor, or disfavor, according to his integrity and obedience. His power to maintain his exalted position was ample, but at the same time he was made aware of his liability to lose innocence, forfeit happiness, and incur the penalty of disobedience. In a word, his continu-

ance in the possession and enjoyment of the holiness and happiness which were his by virtue of his creation, was *conditioned* on undeviating conformity to the divine law.

This view of man's original constitution, relations, and liabilities, cannot be disputed, or set aside, without first refuting all that has been advanced in the preceding chapters on moral government, moral agency, and human responsibility; and even then the work is not done, until the letter of God's word can be evaded, and the gospel, as to its nature and design, be explained away.

The constitution God has given to man, must ever remain the same. It is a dictate, as well of philosophy as of revelation, that what was at the first, true of man in this respect, is true now, and will remain so during God's gracious dispensations; and also, what may be affirmed of the first man, may, in like manner, be affirmed of all his posterity. There may be a time, when crime will bring upon him such tremendous consequences as to exclude him from the blessings of divine government, and hold him perpetually under the penalty of law; but until the mandate shall be issued, to arrest his career and fix his doom, not only does his constitution as a being

morally free, remain the same, but he is armed with the power of shaping and deciding his destiny.

To suppose man liable to forfeit the blessings derived through creation, yet not under the same liability in regard to those derived through redemption, is to suppose redemption operates a radical change in the powers of man, or in the nature of divine government, or both, either of which hypotheses is unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. Either man never possessed power to forfeit divine favor, and in respect to him, redemption was a farce, or he still retains that power, though under a system of restoring mercy. The administration of God must harmonize in all its acts. The first act must correspond with the last, and both with every intermediate step of government. Divine government is designed to maintain, develop, and improve the intellectual and moral character of the subject, and redemption has the same end in view. To secure this end they act in concert, and under the same controlling principle. What was conditioned under government before redemption, is conditioned still; to suppose otherwise, is to make redemption the degradation of a rational being, by depriving

him of the power of choice, and reducing him to the condition of a mere machine. The conditionality of human salvation is rendered credible,

Secondly.—By the analogy of nature. God's government is the same in its principles and bearings, as it extends over all its subjects, and all worlds. Here we see but a part of it,—the incipient stages of its operations: yet what is seen is an index of what is unseen. The revelation of principles and facts in this life furnishes data from which we may safely infer what will be the practical results of his administration under its more advanced stages.

Moral laws or causes produce their results as certainly as those that are physical, unless counteracted by supernatural power. When we see, under that arrangement which God has established in this life, certain moral causes producing certain moral effects, with uniformity and constancy, we are bound to infer such a relation between them as will always produce the same results. This I say we must infer, unless God informs us of a time when he intends to counteract the established order of things and produce a change.

The moral constitution of things under which

we are placed, which confers its rewards, and deals out its punishments to man in this life, is established by God himself, and in its bearings and issues, has the sanction of his authority. And it is a fact which cannot be successfully disputed, that under this arrangement, the happiness of man is contingent. This is a matter of constant experience and observation. Every man knows that his moral as well as temporal prosperity and happiness, depends in a great degree on himself—that his happiness to-morrow is in an important sense suspended on his conduct to-day, and his happiness next year on his conduct this year. This principle governs our whole earthly being. To squander the morning of life in idleness and vice, which should be employed in cultivating the mind and heart, and acquiring a useful education, is to lay a sure foundation for misery and wretchedness in manhood and old age. Education, respectability, wealth, and happiness, are so conditioned upon our own conduct, that without design, effort, and perseverance, we forfeit the whole.

Moreover, it often happens under the government of God in this life, that men are ruined without remedy. The consequences of their sins

follow them to the last moments of life, resulting in the forfeiture of life itself, or depriving them of the most desirable blessings while life continues. So far as this life is concerned, God's laws and government make one thing depend on another ; that is, establish a necessary relation between conduct and character, virtue and happiness. And thus do the voice of nature and the analogy of God's government in this world, confirm the important truth under discussion. For, as we have no intimation that salvation and happiness in the future can be had on any other condition than that which governs these acquisitions in this life, we have the full force of the argument from analogy to support the contingency of future and final salvation. The time may come when the opportunity to avert calamity and secure happiness will cease—when the buried talent must be restored to its owner : but while happiness is within human reach, it is conditioned ; and a disregard of the terms is equivalent to a rejection of the proffered boon.

“ Heaven but persuades, almighty man decrees ;
Man is the maker of immortal fates.
Man falls by man, if finally he falls ;
And fall he must who learns from death alone,
The dreadful secret that he lives forever.”

Thirdly.—That salvation, or that holiness and happiness which form the elements of a blissful destiny are conditioned, is further sustained by the doctrine of *human probation*. “Of the various views under which human life has been considered,” says Paley, “no one seems so reasonable as that which regards it as a state of probation.” Again: “It is our duty to consider this life throughout as a probationary state.”

Probation is from the Latin word “*probo*,” and the corresponding Greek, *δοκιμάζω*, and signifies, to examine into the goodness or fitness of anything, or person—to prove: and in the passive form is applied to those who have been tested as to their qualifications for entering upon some place or office of trust and distinction. The whole human family is now in a state of probation, or trial, for a better and higher state: that is, they are now upon a theatre of action from which there is more than one possible issue; and the particular nature of the issue will be determined by the conduct of the actors. This is the true idea of probation, and it applies to all useful subjects, and every department of society. The morning of life is a probation for the advanced and active period of earthly being. The youth

is a candidate for a place of distinction, a career of usefulness in subsequent life. His minority is a state of probation for this place and career. He will certainly leave his minority at the appointed time ; but whether he will be fitted to enter upon his high destination is not so certain—the event is contingent. Inattention to the requisite qualifications operate a forfeiture.

The student is on probation for a profession, or for a place and name among the literati of the age. To his career there is more than one possible issue. If he is diligent and persevering in application to study, he may crown his brow with professional and literary honors. But if he misimprove time and advantages, he will never reach the goal—never enjoy the prize. The husband and wife have entered upon a course of domestic life. To that state there is more than one possible event. It may be attended with happiness, and end in peace and honor, or with misery, and end in separation and disgrace. If they have children, they may be happy and useful, or vicious in principle and practice, and bring their parents in sorrow to the grave. The issue to this career is good or evil, prosperous or adverse, according to the course of action and conduct pursued by

the parties on whom devolve the responsibilities of the domestic circle: and herein is both an illustration and proof of the doctrine of probation.

The same principle governs the condition and happiness of all classes of men, proving that, in respect to this life, even, we are placed in a state of probation for a better state than that at first enjoyed, and an advanced condition of happiness; and that whether we reach and enjoy that state and condition, is a question to be determined by the use we make of our powers and blessings. This being true in respect to this life, the inference is not only fair, but unavoidable, that it is also true of the life to come.

This is confirmed by the fact, that men not only fail to secure the good for which they were candidates at the *time* specified, but often fail entirely, and forever; that is, they pass into a state which admits no alleviation—where attention to conditions, were it possible, is no longer available—the forfeiture being irretrievable. The force of this argument may be stated thus:—Probation supposes a time within which we are to be fitted for an advanced condition of being; a time when we are to enter upon this condition, or failing of the essential requisites forfeit it forever—

and hence a liability to reach a period in our existence when improvement and happiness will be no longer possible. The same facts and arguments which show this to be true, as applied to the inferior happiness of this life, are equally conclusive in sustaining its truth as applied to the future and higher life, and felicity of man. The principle, the arguments, and the conclusion, remain the same, whether we confine probation to this world or extend it into eternity—whether we allow men one probation only, or adopt the groundless theory of an indefinite number.

Fourthly.—That the happiness of men in their future and final state is conditioned, is, in one way or another, asserted on almost every page of revelation. We have proved that moral happiness in this life is contingent; and besides, this fact is generally admitted. Taking this admission as the starting-point, we argue on scriptural grounds, that this contingency exists in respect to final salvation.

Men are saved in this life, if at all, by the gospel of Christ. The gospel confers salvation on conditions. “He that believeth shall be saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The salvation conferred upon men

in their future state is gospel salvation : the very same enjoyed here, the essential elements of it being divine knowledge and holiness. If it be not gospel salvation, it is not properly salvation at all, since we know of no other ; and hence we must conclude whatever the final state of men may be, it is not one of salvation ; and however they may have acquired it, they were not saved by Christ, since his salvation is confined to the present life. But if the future and final state of man be one of salvation, conferred on them through the gospel, and by Christ, it follows they have received it by a process identical with that which forms the condition of its reception and enjoyment on earth : that is, they are saved on gospel terms. If it agrees with the constitution of the gospel to save men conditionally in this life, the same must be true of the life to come. If not, then the gospel has one constitution for one state, and another for another state ; is conditional for one class of men, and unconditional for another : and indeed, to the same man, salvation is contingent at one period of existence, and at another depends upon no condition whatever. If conditionality agrees with the nature of the gospel, unconditionality most assuredly contravenes its

nature. There is only one way to escape these difficulties, viz., by adopting the full and proper scriptural doctrine that salvation is conditional.

That this doctrine is scriptural is proved beyond all question by those passages in which the condition is expressed. Such are the following: "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned:"—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:"—"Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven:"—"He that hath the son nath life, and he that hath not the son, hath not life:"—"Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

There is another class of passages, addressed to those who have complied with the terms of salvation so far as to receive and enjoy it, but in which they are reminded that the liability to fail of eternal life still exists; that as salvation is conditional in its reception, it is so, also, in its continuance: as faith is required to commence the Christian life, the power of the same faith is indispensable to the maintenance of a virtuous

course, and the cultivation of holiness. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

The above passages, specimens of a great multitude not quoted, are sufficient in number and force to settle the point advocated in this chapter, beyond dispute in all honest and unsophisticated minds. Salvation is free for all—possible to all who prize it enough to receive it on gospel terms: but it is not possible to any who despise or disregard the specified conditions.

Such is the momentous doctrine which true religion impresses on the minds of sinners, and confirms and enforces by the united voice of nature, reason, conscience, and revelation. Every advantage which the sinner needs, and God can consistently give, is graciously furnished: none need be lost—all have ample power to comply with

every gospel condition, and secure to themselves the favor of God, and a title to endless bliss. Awfully hovering in the scale of probation which will raise them to heaven, or sink them to hell, they should not remain indifferent as to the result. By timely repentance and faith, they should make their "election sure." Whether they have done this or not, will, at the time appointed, be determined by the infallible "Judge of all the earth," "Who will render to every man according to his deeds : to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honor, 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:" * * * "For there is no respect of persons with God."

CHAPTER XI.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.—NATURE OF FAITH.—EMBRACES KNOWLEDGE.—ASSENT AND TRUST.—THE “GIFT OF GOD.”—FLETCHER.—THE ONLY CONDITION OF SALVATION.—WESLEY.—STANDS OPPOSED TO HUMAN MERIT, AND TO ALL METHODS OF EXPIATION, EXCEPT THAT BASED ON THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.—LUTHER.

“True faith and reason are the soul’s two eyes;
Faith evermore looks upward, and descries
Objects remote; but reason can discover
Things only near,—sees nothing that’s above her.”

QUARLES.

“Faith builds a bridge across the gulf of death,
To break the shock blind nature cannot shun,
And lands thought smoothly on the other shore.”

YOUNG.

“Faith lends its realizing light:
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
The invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye.”

C. WESLEY.

IN a preceding chapter we saw the necessary relation of true religion to Christ—that to the world in a fallen state, Christianity is the *only true* religious system. But though Christianity be the only true religion, and Christ the only Saviour, there is yet a question of much importance that

must not remain unsettled, viz. :—how does the sinner become personally interested in Christian salvation ?

There are two facts revealed by true religion relative to man, more important than any other : these are, that man, as a sinner, is lost without remedy if he is to depend on his own resources—and that Christ is the only, and a sufficient Saviour. But these facts do not stand so related to each other that salvation to the sinner is a necessary consequence. The sinner may remain lost, notwithstanding the freeness and fulness of mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. The sinner is guilty and needs pardon—is depraved and needs renewing—is morally defiled, and needs cleansing—but there is no such natural relation between him and Christ, as provides absolutely and independently for the bestowment of these blessings. These two facts—the sinner's inability, and Christ's power—the sinner's wretchedness, and Christ's blessed salvation must be brought into contact. The sinner must rely on Christ, and the virtue of Christ must be applied to the sinner. The sinner must be in Christ, and Christ must be in the sinner ; the guilt and wretchedness of the one, must depart

before the imparted mercy, and infused holiness and bliss of the other.

The conditionality of salvation, as a general fact, has been considered so fully already, that on this truth nothing more need be said ; our attention is now directed to that specific and only condition, which when performed, brings to the guilty and condemned, justifying grace, or pardoning mercy : that particular exercise, or act of the mind, which is so pre-eminent among all that men are required to do, that it may be denominated the "Golden key that opens the palace of eternity."

This is FAITH, so frequently introduced by Christ and his Apostles, and insisted on as indispensable to salvation. "The terms *faith*, the *faithful*, etc., frequently occur in the religious dialect, even of the Hebrews. They were originally taken from the language of common life, and transferred into the religious phraseology of the Jews, where they express various nearly related ideas. From this Jewish dialect Christ and the Apostles borrowed these terms. * * * In Hebrew, the word primarily signifies to be *firm*. and then, to be *certain, sure, confident.*"* The

* Knapp's Theology.

word faith, is often used in the Bible, in a general sense, with no direct reference to personal religion and salvation. It is employed thus, in reference to the certainty of divine commands and promises—to designate religion itself—to denote approbation of a religious teacher—and to express conviction of the truth and divinity of a doctrine. Out of this wide sense has arisen the particular Christian meaning of *saving faith*, which is so frequently stated and illustrated by Paul, particularly in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, where he corrects the mistake and refutes the error of those who supposed an observance of the Law meritorious.

Christian faith embraces these particulars:—*Knowledge, assent, and trust, or confidence.* Neither of these alone, nor any two of them, constitute faith; all are essential to its perfection.

First.—Knowledge. We must have knowledge of God before we can believe in him: we must have knowledge of Christ before we can confide in him as our Saviour; we must have knowledge of the Bible before we can receive it as the word of God. Hence, says Paul, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” * * *

“ So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God :” that is, knowledge of God, of Christ, and divine things, is essential to Christian faith, and this knowledge can only be secured through the medium of revelation, and its accompanying instrumentalities. We do not say that a thorough and systematic acquaintance with the whole series of Christian truths and facts is indispensable ; though the more we know the more perfect our faith may be, yet the faith that justifies and saves, may exist on a much narrower basis of knowledge and doctrine. There are some things, however, which must be known, or there can be no faith. The fact that we are sinners against God, and that Christ came to save us, and is able to save us, are among the truths we must know, in order to have faith. But though faith may consist with knowledge limited to the elementary truths of religion, yet it always implies *certainty* ; a *firm* conviction of the truth and reality of the things known ; otherwise there will be no such effect produced upon the mind as is essential to faith.

Secondly.—Assent. Assent is not a necessary concomitant of knowledge. Doctrines and facts may be known as true and real without receiving

our concurrence or approbation. The understanding of the professed atheist may be convinced that there is a God, and yet he does not yield his assent to the sublime truth; his heart rebels against it.

“And in the madness of his pride, he bids
His God farewell, and turns away to be
A God himself.”

The sinner may have both rational proof and inward conviction that the claims of God's law upon him are righteous, and should be acknowledged, and yet he refuses to admit the unwelcome truth, and even manifests direct hostility, illustrating the declaration of Paul, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.” The Jews could not deny the reality of Christ's miracles, yet they refused their assent to his Messiahship, and deliberately plotted his murder.

It should be further observed, that this assent which must accompany knowledge, that it may lead to faith, is not merely speculative or intellectual: it determines the will and affects the heart. The understanding and heart do not always move in the same direction, yet they must be agreed as touching one thing, or there can be no saving

faith. The faith which comes short of cordial approval and fellowship, is only a compelled conviction of the understanding in a case where the heart is committed to an opposite interest. As faith, it can have no higher character than that ascribed to devils, who, it is said, "believe and tremble." The basis of saving faith as formed by a cordial union of knowledge and assent, is happily expressed by Paul to the Romans: "For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Thirdly.—Trust, or Confidence. This is indispensable to the perfection of Christian faith; there may be an intellectual recognition and assent to the propositions of Christianity, and even an approval of them as well agreeing with the nature and fitness of things: or what is sometimes denominated an historical faith, without any such personal trust in the efficacy of the truths and facts revealed, as to produce the experience and practice of true religion.

For example, there may be a recognition of the existence and utility of Divine Providence, without any such trust in Providence as will create a feeling of security under providential protection

There may be a theoretic approval of the will of God as right, and yet no personal resignation to his will. The promises of God may be regarded as immutable in their nature, and certain in their fulfilment, and still, there may be in the mind, no consciousness of a personal interest in them, no individual trust which gives assurance of the blessings promised. In like manner, a theoretic acknowledgment of Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and an approval of him in this character, may be without saving effect, because unconnected with *personal* confidence in, and *reliance* on Christ as a present Saviour. This is the highest grade of Christian faith; it is the faith that *saves* the soul from guilt and sin. Though the sinner may have correct historical knowledge of Christ—may approve his character, and the benevolent design of his mission—may so appreciate his condition as a sinner as to cry out, “O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Yet, until he believes in Christ as his Saviour, with a *firm, personal reliance*, he is not an experimental Christian. Until this act of the mind which the Scriptures denominate faith, there is no union with Christ, no act of forgiveness, no justification of the ungodly, no regen-

eration, and no cleansing application of the blood of Christ.

“Christian faith is then,” says Mr. Wesley “not only an *assent* to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ: a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as *given for us* and *living in us*. It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God that through the merits of Christ, *his* sins are forgiven, and *he* reconciled to the favor of God; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, or, in one word, our salvation.”*

This is the faith described by Paul—Eph. ii. 8. “By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” The salvation conferred upon us through faith, as the condition, is of grace, in the same sense in which all spiritual advantages and blessings are of grace. All has been forfeited by sin, hence, their restoration is an act of pure, unmixed favor. This grace received its outward manifestation through the redemption of Christ, and to all personal sinners

* Sermon, Salvation by Faith.

this salvation thus procured, is offered on condition of faith. And there is no contrariety between faith and grace: salvation is of "faith, that it might be by grace." The sinner no more merits salvation by his faith, than the beggar merits the boon he seeks by asking. This is plain from the fact that faith is itself "the gift of God."

It is a question worth considering here, In what sense is faith the gift of God? There has been, and doubtless still is, some misapprehension at this point. As there is a natural disposition to avoid responsibility when it can be done on a plausible pretext, so in the present case, it is to many pleasing rather than otherwise, to have faith, as "the gift of God," explained in such a light as will excuse or mitigate, the sin of unbelief.

"Some persons think that faith is as much out of our power as the lightning that shoots from a distant cloud: they suppose that God drives sinners to the fountain of Christ's blood as irresistibly as the infernal legion drove the herd of swine into the sea of Galilee; and that a man is as passive in the first act of faith as Jonah was in the fish which cast him upon the shore. Hence the absurd plea of many who lay fast hold of the horns of the devil's altar, unbelief, and cry out,—

We can no more believe, than we can make a world." * * * * "Believing is the gift of the God of grace, as breathing, moving, and eating, are gifts of the God of nature. He gives me lungs and air that I may breathe: he gives me life and muscles that I may move: he bestows upon me food and a mouth that I may eat: and when I have no appetite, he gives me common sense to see I must die, or force myself to take some nourishment, or some medicine. But he neither breathes, moves, nor eats for me: nay, when I think proper, I can accelerate my breathing, motion, and eating: and if I please I can even fast, lie down, or hang myself, and by that means put an end to my eating, moving, and breathing.

"Once more;—Faith is the gift of God to believers, as sight is to you. The Parent of good freely gives you the light of the sun, and organs proper to receive it; he places you in a world where that light visits you daily: he apprizes you that sight is conducive to your safety, pleasure, and profit; and everything around you bids you use your eyes and see: nevertheless, you may not only drop your curtains, and extinguish your candle, but close your eyes also. This is exactly

the case with regard to faith. Free grace removes the total blindness which Adam's fall brought upon us: free grace gently sends us some beams of truth, which is the light of the 'sun of righteousness: it disposes the eyes of our understanding to see those beams; it excites us various ways to welcome them; it blesses with many, perhaps with all, the means of faith, such as opportunities to hear, read, inquire; and power to consider, assent, consent, resolve, and re-resolve to believe the truth.

“But after all, believing is as much our own act as seeing. We may, nay, in general do, suspend or omit the act of faith; especially when that act is not yet become habitual, and when the glaring light that sometimes accompanies the revelation of truth is abated. Nay, we may imitate Pharaoh, Judas, and all reprobates; we may do by the eye of faith what some report Democritus did by his bodily eyes. Being tired of seeing the follies of mankind to rid himself of that disagreeable sight, he put his eyes out. We may be so averse from the light which enlightens every man which comes into the world; we may so dread it because our works are evil, as to exemplify, like the Pharisees, such awful declarations as these:

‘Their eyes have they closed, lest they should see,’ &c. : ‘Wherefore God gave them up to a reprobate mind,’ and ‘they were blinded.’ Indeed, the very language of the great commission, under which the gospel is preached to sinners, indicates that faith, though the gift of God, is, as to its exercise, in the power of the creature: ‘He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.’”

The faith thus described, and which is in the power of every man who honestly desires to use it, is *the* condition of salvation. Though connected with many things inseparable from the Christian life—duties, and mental acts and exercises, which both precede and follow faith, yet nothing thus associated is, either in whole or in part, the condition of justification. This act of trust in Christ is *the* faith which justifies from past sin, or brings to the soul the assurance of pardoning mercy.

There can be no true, justifying faith without repentance; yet repentance is not faith. Though a man repent during his whole life, if he do not also believe in Christ, he cannot be saved. Repentance in itself neither saves from sin nor from sinning. As true faith cannot exist except in

connection with a firm resolve to act upon it in practical life, so, it cannot live after the first moment of being, unless this purpose be executed. And yet these fruits which follow faith, and flow from it, are not faith itself, nor do they have any share in the work of procuring salvation, or any honor as a condition on which divine favor is conferred. Salvation is procured by the atonement, and faith is the *only* condition on which the purchased benefits of atonement become available. Here we beg leave again to quote from Wesley, who on this, as on other nice points in theology, thought and wrote with remarkable clearness and precision.

“Surely the difficulty of assenting to the proposition, that faith is the *only condition* of justification, must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby thus much, that it is the only thing without which no one is justified: the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, and absolutely requisite in order to pardon. As, on the one hand, though a man should have everything else without faith, yet he cannot be justified, so on the other, though he be supposed to want everything else, yet if he have faith, he cannot but be justified. For suppose a sinner of any kind or degree,

in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute meetness for hellfire: suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, (which indeed he cannot do but by the grace of God,) who can doubt but he is forgiven in that moment? who will affirm that any more is *indispensably required* before that sinner can be justified?"

To the above, which sets forth with sufficient clearness what justification is, and how it is conditioned upon faith, we need only add, that though faith may be considered in the abstract as the condition of justification, yet in the mind and heart of the Christian it does not live and remain alone. As it is preceded by evangelical repentance, it is also followed by evangelical fruit. From the first moment of its existence it becomes a principle of spiritual vitality in the heart and life of the Christian. By exercising and cultivating faith, he cultivates and practises all the graces and virtues of the Christian character. True faith "works by love, and purifies the heart."

Having given this brief (though we hope satisfactory) view of saving faith, as to its nature, and as *the* condition of justification, we will devote

the remainder of this chapter to a review of certain forms of error related to the subject of justification, and to which gospel faith stands inflexibly opposed.

First.—It stands opposed to all merit except the merit of Christ. The idea that intelligent, moral beings can ever, by any possibility, perform a single act of righteousness, beyond what they are bound to do by virtue of their dependence on God and their relations to him, is condemned equally by reason and revelation. This is true of all those beings who have never in a single instance violated the divine command, or failed in their duty. Such can claim nothing on the score of merit. They are justified by the deeds of the law, but nothing more; they have at no point gone beyond the requirements of duty.

This being true of unfallen beings, it certainly cannot be less so of those who have directly transgressed, or otherwise failed to meet the righteous claims of Jehovah. If while holy and obedient they could in no case go beyond the demands of law, much less can they do so after becoming disobedient and guilty. And yet, unless they can, in their guilty and fallen state, perform meritorious deeds, they can never relieve

themselves, but must ever remain under the curse of God. And what the guilty cannot do for themselves, others cannot do for them. The combined efforts of all unfallen beings in the created universe, cannot avail to *merit* the salvation of one sinner.

Secondly.—It stands opposed to all schemes of satisfaction for sin, except that based on the atonement of Christ. Of these schemes we shall mention only two. First, that which claims satisfaction by repentance. The idea that repentance satisfies for crime, is so chimerical, that no one has ever ventured to make it the ruling principle in a human government, and it would be still more absurd and impracticable in the government of God. The sinner, *of himself*, has power to repent, or he has not. If he have, he would never fail to call it to his aid when necessary to avoid punishment; and this would be equivalent to an abrogation of all penal enactments, and would annihilate the force and authority of all law. But if he cannot repent *of himself*, then he has no security in repentance against the legal consequences of his sins, and repentance may not be a satisfaction for crime. If it be said that the power to repent is a gracious gift of God, we an-

swer: this gift is conditional, or it is unconditional and absolute. If conditional, then the condition may, or may not be performed, and satisfaction by repentance is not sure, since repentance itself is contingent. Repentance being contingent, the sinner has power *of himself* to perform the condition on which it depends, or he has not. If he have not, then he cannot have repentance as a satisfaction for his sins; if he *have* power to perform the condition on which repentance is suspended, he would never fail to use it when his sins placed him in peril, and this again would amount to an abrogation of law and an overthrow of Government. But if the gracious power to repent and thus make amends for transgression, be supposed unconditional and absolute, this would be equivalent to a Romish indulgence, with a pledge of absolute security against all punishment for crime. From this it is obvious, the scheme of satisfaction by repentance is false were it safe, and is unsafe and vicious were it true.

The second scheme of satisfaction to which justification by faith stands opposed, has for its ruling idea the efficacy of punishment to deliver from sin, and restore the offender to divine favor. This theory is open to the following objections:—

First.—It is unreasonable. It supposes men have capacities which are not at all times fully pledged to the Creator. For if they have not such independent and unpledged capacities, then there is an incapacity of receiving and enduring punishment to the extent demanded, and indeed to any extent without a corresponding failure to meet the demands of the law in the way of obedience. To say we have capacity to endure punishment in satisfaction for past sins, and at the same time obey the law to the full extent of its demands, is to say that sin and its punishment do not interfere in the least with the exercise of our faculties and the performance of duty, and are no hindrance to holiness. That is, the sinner may be just as obedient and holy while sinning and being punished for sin, as he can be in maintaining a perfect freedom from sin. But if this notion is an outrage upon common sense—if we have no surplus capacities, or susceptibilities, but owe all to God, then is satisfaction by punishment impossible. That which is absorbed in punishment is abstracted from obedience; and the result is the same whether we consider punishment strictly penal or only disciplinary. It is obvious, therefore, that guilt once incurred can never be

removed by the punishment of the offender. Could we suppose any power in punishment to remove guilt, we must always be met by this difficulty, viz., that punishment for past sin, and perfect *present* obedience, are incompatible; if punishment diminishes the guilt already incurred, it at the same time places the subject in such circumstances that obedience is impossible, and fresh guilt must be incurred. The very means supposed to be efficacious in removing sin, become the occasion of increased sinfulness.

Secondly.—It is unphilosophical. Should we admit the efficacy of punishment in satisfying for *past* transgression, (which we do not,) it does not meet the demands of the case, because the fountain or seeds of sin remain untouched: it does not, and cannot destroy sin. Though every act of sin should be atoned for, or expiated by punishment as soon as committed, still sin would continue to flow out from its uncleansed fountain, *ad infinitum*. So far as punishment arises out of a sinful course, it is the natural consequence or effect of sin. It sustains the same relation to sin that the effect does to the cause. To say that punishment can satisfy for sin, and put an end to sin, is to say an effect can react upon its cause

and destroy it. The same is true of positive inflictions, whether viewed as penal or only disciplinary. They cannot, neither is it their object, to reach the cause of sin and destroy it. Penal inflictions are administered by the hand of justice, in view of the ill-desert of sinners, and are intended only to sustain and honor the violated law. Disciplinary punishment does indeed contemplate the reformation of offenders, but it is only by acting as a motive, under a system of grace and mercy, which provides for pardoning sin through the virtue of an atonement.

Hence whether punishment be penal or disciplinary, it cannot in itself remove or destroy sin. It would be quite as philosophical to suppose power in the stream to react upon and destroy the fountain from whence it flows.

Thirdly.—It is unscriptural. It is identical with justification by the law, which is flatly contradictory to the letter and spirit of the Gospel. The following passages are so clear and unequivocal, that it is only necessary to quote them to refute the theory in question. “Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” “For what the law *could not do* in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending

his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." "For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law." "By grace are ye saved through faith." "Thy faith hath saved thee." "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith."

The following points are made so plain by this language, that they do not need to be argued, viz. :—That no law has been given which can give life, and therefore justification by the law is impossible—that Christ has been given to do for us, by his atonement and pardoning mercy, what the law cannot do,—and that he becomes available to us as a Saviour, only as we believe in him:—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here then, these schemes of satisfaction, and erroneous views of the plan of salvation being excluded, we are again conducted to the conclusion

before reached—that faith is *the only* condition of pardon and salvation. “To him that worketh not, (as a ground of pardon,) but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accounted to him for righteousness.” To this view of justification by faith in Christ, as the procuring and meritorious cause of human salvation, several objections have been stated : but there is only one we deem of sufficient importance to claim attention, viz. :—“That it encourages sin, and is therefore unfavorable to morality.” That some who believe the doctrine may abuse it by presuming upon the mercy of God is quite possible : but that any such tendency arises out of the nature of faith is not true. This is sufficiently obvious from the following facts.

First.—This faith is only possible to the awakened, penitent sinner : the man who feels his sins a burden, and wishes to renounce them forever.

Secondly.—As men can only receive faith in connection with an unwavering purpose to use the power it imparts in renouncing sin and cultivating holiness, so they can retain it no longer than they honestly endeavor to give practical effect to that purpose.

Thirdly.—The faith delineated above is *saving*

in its power. Though *alone* as the condition of justification, yet it is not alone as a Christian grace. Christ said to one who had believed, "Thy faith hath saved thee." That which saves from sin, cannot be the minister of sin.

Fourthly.—It "works by love and purifies the heart." It is the channel to convey divine love to the heart: and under its power, this love becomes active and diffusive; it purifies the heart of its possessor, and "worketh no ill to his neighbor." All abuses of this or any other true doctrine are chargeable only to depravity and self-deception; all the good there is in man, is of God, through the faith of Christ.

The exercise of this faith in such degree as suits it to the nature of the dispensation under which men live, is indispensable to salvation. To us, it is the central truth of the gospel. With it, we have true religion, true piety, and a valid hope of heaven; without it, our religion and hopes are false.

We close this chapter with a passage from the intrepid Luther. "I see," says he, in a time of severe trial and great opposition, "that the devil, by means of his teachers and doctors, is incessantly attacking this fundamental article, and that he cannot rest to cease from his object. Well

then, I, Doctor Martin Luther, an unworthy evangelist of our Lord Jesus Christ, do confess this article, 'that faith alone, without works, justifies in the sight of God:' and I declare, that in spite of the emperor of the Romans, the emperor of the Turks, the emperor of the Tartars, the emperor of the Persians, the pope, and all the cardinals, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, kings, princes, nobles, all the world, and all the devils, it shall stand unshaken forever! that if they will persist in opposing this truth, they will draw upon their heads the flames of hell. This is the true and holy gospel, and the declaration of me, Doctor Martin Luther: according to the light given to me by the Holy Spirit. There is no one who has died for our sins, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I repeat it once more: let all the evil spirits of earth and hell foam and rage as they will, this is nevertheless true. And if Christ alone take away sin, we cannot do so by all our works. But good works follow redemption, as surely as fruit follows on a living tree. This is our doctrine, this the Holy Spirit teacheth, together with all holy Christian people. We hold it in God's name. Amen."*

* History of the Reformation.

CHAPTER XII.

TRUE RELIGION IS EXPERIMENTAL.—DESIGN AND TENDENCY OF TRUTH.—HOW TO ESTIMATE ITS VALUE.—TRUE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IS DERIVED THROUGH THE APPLICATION AND OPERATION OF TRUTH.—REPENTANCE.—ASSURANCE OF PARDON.—REGENERATION.—“WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.”—PROGRESS IN KNOWLEDGE AND HOLINESS.—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

“The hand is raised, the pledge is given,
One monarch to obey, one creed to own,—
That monarch God; that creed, his word alone.”

SPRAGUE.

“All things that speak of heaven, speak of peace.”

BAILEY'S *Festus*.

“His Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God.”

C. WESLEY.

TRUE religion is experimental. It is not confined to an intellectual recognition of doctrines and facts, however true, important, and necessary. It does not stop with an observance of rites and ceremonials, however appropriate and beautiful. It seeks to rectify the heart—to purify and elevate the affections, and bring the whole man under its sanctifying and controlling power. It is not “meat and drink: but righteousness and

It is desirable to know and be familiar with truth of every description: yet mere knowledge is not necessarily beneficial. Its advantage to ourselves and others, depends upon the influence it exerts upon the mind and heart, and the service to which it is devoted.

It is the object and tendency of all truth to strengthen the understanding, and unfold the higher powers of our nature; all truth comes from God, and rightly employed, it leads to him as its great source and centre. But religious truth does more than this. It is a department by itself. Addressed, as it is, to beings of perverted natures, it is its design to transform as well as unfold and strengthen. It is the highest and purest kind of knowledge to sinless intelligences, and as they cherish it, leads them to still higher experience of the bliss of holy communion with God. But revealed to a fallen world, it has a special mission—to arrest depravity, renew the heart, and redirect the mind and affections to the right object of worship, and only source of true happiness.

Truth is in itself preferable to error under any circumstances. But the estimation in which it is held must ever be graduated by the relation it sustains to the true system, and the control it ex-

erts over the best interests of moral beings. As error is more or less detestable in the ratio that it darkens and poisons the mind, vitiates the heart, and weakens the sense of moral obligation so essential to a right course of action: in like manner, to all right-minded persons, the value of truth becomes greatly enhanced, as it is seen to lay at the foundation of morality and felicity. The principles and doctrines discussed and illustrated in the foregoing pages, are not merely true as distinguished from that which is false, but true also in their nice adjustment, and harmonious relations to each other, so as to form a beautiful and sublime system of truth; nor is this all: the system thus formed is the only true one—is the basis of true religion—leads to the only true experience in religious life—and is alone capable of an influence, renovating and sanctifying upon the hearts and lives of men. The value of these truths therefore cannot be estimated, except by an intellect capable of calculating the worth of the soul, and the measure of improvement and happiness of which it is susceptible.

The experimental department of true religion embraces those spiritual influences of which the mind of the Christian is conscious, or those moral

effects produced by the power of God upon the mind and heart. These effects rarely, if ever, exist to an extent that is practically useful, unless the mind have a perception, more or less true and clear, of that system of doctrine on which true religion is based, and of the individual obligations imposed. This system of truth reveals to the mind what God is, what man is, what God requires man to be, and to do, that he may be holy and happy forever. And when a case of true religious experience occurs, it is by the action of these truths upon the mind and heart, as the medium through which divine influence is imparted. Experimental religion includes the following particulars.

First.—Repentance.—This embraces two elements—*knowledge* of sin, and *sorrow* for sin. By knowledge of sin, we mean what is usually understood by religious conviction—an impression, direct and forcible, made upon the mind by the power of truth. Where there is no law there is no transgression, and where there is no transgression there can be no knowledge of sin, and no repentance. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” “I was alive without the law once,” says Paul, “but when the commandment came, sin revived,

and I died.” Repentance, then, necessarily implies previous knowledge of the law. It does more—it supposes knowledge of personal offence against the law, and that this violation of its righteous claims, is not the result of ignorance—or inability to keep the law: but designed and wilful—or at least, the consequence of carelessness and inattention to duty. These two facts being clearly understood, conviction must follow; that is, the sinner must be convinced that he is under sentence of divine condemnation. His own conscience corroborates the testimony of God’s word, that he is a sinner. But this is not repentance: before it is entitled to this name, knowledge of sin must ripen into *sorrow* for sin. These two states of mind do not always co-exist. We may be conscious of sin, and yet have no sorrow for sin, but on the contrary an inward love of it, and a disposition to continue its practice. Sorrow for sin, and abhorrence of it, are always founded on a previous knowledge of sin, but it is produced in different ways, and exists in different degrees. If it arise only from a view of the temporal calamities sin has brought upon us, it is nothing more than the “sorrow of the world” which “worketh death.” To be genuine, it must be that “godly sorrow”

which “worketh repentance not to be repented of:” an inward, heartfelt grief, arising from a just sense of the dreadful turpitude of sin: such a sense of our ingratitude and criminality, as will wring the soul with anguish. “O wretched man that I am,”—

“If sorrow would suffice
To pay the debt I owe,
Tears should, from both my weeping eyes,
In ceaseless currents flow.”

“But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” (Isaiah lxvi. 2.) “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

If the question be asked, How much of this sorrow must be possessed, and how long exercised, before it amounts to repentance, we can answer no otherwise, than by saying, when it produces in us an aversion to sin, a hatred and loathing of it, a vehement desire to escape it, a fixed purpose to renounce it forever—then it is true repentance, whatever the quantity of feeling, or the length of time the mind has been thus exercised.

Secondly.—The assurance of pardon or forgiveness. The ground of pardon is the atonement—the condition on which it becomes available to

the sinful is faith. Saving faith is only possible to the truly penitent. Repentance prepares the way for faith, and faith brings a consciousness of pardoning mercy. Pardon of sin, may be described as that act of God whereby he treats a guilty sinner as though he were innocent. This implies two things—the removal of the punishment of sin—and a joyful sense of divine favor. The terms pardon, forgiveness, remission, and justification, are often, and interchangeably used in the Scriptures to describe this change in the moral relations and feelings of the believing penitent. All these words imply the removal of punishment deserved on account of sin, and are used in such connections as make it apparent that they also include the bestowment of spiritual blessings.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” (Ps. xxxii. 1.) “O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me.” (Isaiah xii. 1.) Paul tells us, (Rom. iii. 25,) that God has set forth Jesus Christ to be a “propitiation through faith in his blood, * * * * for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” The moral effect of this remission is stated in the first verse of the fifth

chapter, "We have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is not possible to conceive of pardon for the guilty, apart from removal of punishment. If it do not imply this, it implies nothing, and should not be recorded among the blessings of redemption. But though the forgiveness of sins removes deserved punishment, and places the guilty in such relations to God that they become objects of divine complacency, yet it does not change guilt into innocence, or make sinful conduct other than it is. "The guilt of sin once committed can never be effaced. The conscience of the transgressor can never be made to pronounce him innocent, but will always regard him as having sinned. It is enough to compose his mind, to know and be convinced, that the punishment of sin has been remitted: * * * but God himself cannot remove the guilt of sin in its proper sense. For, God cannot err, and consider an action which is actually wrong, and consequently involves guilt, as *right* in itself. He, however, can forgive us, or remit the punishment which we deserve. He can regard and treat us on certain conditions, as if we were innocent."*

* Knapp.

Thirdly.—Inseparable from the assurance of pardoning mercy, and consciousness of divine favor is the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, denominated in theological language, regeneration. In Scripture language it is described as the “circumcision of the heart”—being “born again”—“a new creature,” &c. This gracious change is not included in the act of pardon. Pardon is a work performed for us in the court of heaven: regeneration is wrought in the soul. Pardon removes the condemnation and punishment of sin—regeneration removes its love and dominion. Pardon is a change of our relation, from that of a condemned culprit, to that of a justified or acquitted subject—regeneration is a change of heart, or, such a change of our moral nature as gives a new direction and application of the moral powers. Pardon takes our name from the record of death—regeneration writes it in the book of life.

Though these works are, in their nature, and in the order of time in which they occur, distinct from each other, yet they are always associated in the experience of the true Christian. The first removes divine displeasure, and the legal consequences of sin; the last restores divine life to the soul, and imparts power to love God, delight in his

service, and rejoice in abundant spiritual consolation. "It is that mighty change in man, wrought by the Holy Spirit, by which the dominion which sin has over him in his natural state, and which he deplures and struggles against in his penitent state, is broken and abolished, so that with full choice of will, and the energy of right affections, he serves God freely, and runs in the way of his commandments."*

Fourthly.—The assurance of this state of pardon and regeneration, is brought to the mind, and our adoption as children of God, is made a glorious reality by the "Witness of the Spirit." This is taught in the following passages: "For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."—(Rom. viii. 15, 16.) "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

That God should afford us the means of determining the validity of our hopes and claims as Christians, is a dictate of reason. Having made it impossible that we should escape conviction of

* Watson.

our depravity and guilt, it is a reasonable supposition that he would not leave us in painful uncertainty as to our acceptance with him, after having complied with the terms of salvation. So far as relates to this world, it would be better to remain in ignorance of our lost condition as sinners, than have a vivid conception of this, without the means of salvation, or the possibility of knowing we are saved. As Christian experience embraces a painful sense of guilt and apprehension of danger, it should also include a pleasing, joyful, and assuring knowledge of salvation. Such it does include according to the language above quoted. God has taken good care that the penitent believer in Christ shall have "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

It should be observed here, that the testimony upon which we receive a satisfactory and joyful assurance of our adoption as children of God is two-fold: derived from our own spirit, and from the Spirit of God. By the testimony of the Spirit of God, which is antecedent to that of our own, we mean "an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit, that they are the children of

God.” By the testimony of our own spirit, which is indirect, and arises out of the work of grace upon the heart, we mean self-knowledge, or a consciousness that we have experienced such a change in the dispositions and affections of the mind and heart, that we hate sin, and love God—delight and rejoice in him with a loving and obedient heart. “Christians bear in their own hearts the evidence that the divine life, which they receive, constitutes them children of God, for from the time of his becoming a believer, the Christian feels within him a tender filial love to his God, whereas the man who is still in bondage to the law, from a sense of the variance betwixt them, experiences apprehension and anxiety before God.”* By the concurrent testimony of these two witnesses, the Christian is enabled to realize in his experience all that is implied in 1 John v. 10, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”

Fifthly.—True religious experience admits, and requires, progress in knowledge and holiness. By this we mean no more than is implied in the language of 2 Pet. iii. 18—“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

* Tholuck.

Christ." Every person is bound to be religious as soon as the mind admits the idea, with its elementary bearings ; but it is not expected the subject will be fully understood at that early period. Indeed, neither the constitution of the mind nor the nature of the subject allows maturity at first. But as the mental powers are developed, and familiarity with the sources of information is acquired, knowledge of God and ourselves, as related to him, should increase correspondingly. As the theme is infinite, and the mind immortal, this progression in knowledge may be endless, while the obligation under which we exist makes it our imperative duty to devote every new acquisition to the glory of the Creator.

The same is true of holiness, or assimilation to the moral likeness of God. Adam was bound to advance in holiness from the first moment of his existence ; and being created free from sin, his condition was on that account the more favorable for such advancement. But we do not commence our religious life with the same advantage. Whatever our knowledge may be, we have sinful tendencies, and often an accumulation of guilt on account of personal transgression. In the experience and growth of every Christian, the disa-

bilities of sin are first to be removed. Condemnation must first be removed by pardon—the dominion of sin must be broken by regeneration; and from this vantage-ground we are to go on unto perfection—to that state of experience and power in divine things described as loving God “with all our heart,” as reckoning ourselves to be “indeed dead unto sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

After the sinner is saved, on his faith in Christ, from all outward and inward sin, there is still a growth in holiness. Indeed, progression from this point is the more easy from having acquired this state of perfection. The following remarks of a distinguished and popular writer are so judicious and convincing, that we beg leave to substitute them for our own:—

“That a thing may be perfect in its nature, and yet be susceptible of growth, or advancement in degree, is, I suppose, a matter of common observation. An oak, when it first rises above the surface of the ground, is so small and weak that it may be easily trodden under foot; and yet it is as really and truly an oak as when it subsequently stands forth in the strength and stature of a hundred years. A human being is, in his

nature, as much a human being in the period of infancy as in the subsequent expansion and growth of manhood. And so consider a man in relation to any intellectual power of the mind, or in relation to any appetite or affection of the mind, and the same view may very properly be taken. A person is a reasoner, for instance : he understands perfectly the principles and process of reasoning, and he may be able to apply the principles and process perfectly in a given case ; and yet under the favorable influence of the law of habit, he may much increase the promptness and facility, and consequent perfection, in the operations of this mental faculty. Again, an intemperate man may become perfectly temperate, and yet we all know the general fact, that one who is thus entirely reformed from intemperance is more likely to be overcome by temptation in the earlier periods of his reformation than when subsequently the temperate principle has acquired growth and strength.

“ And we may not only say, in general terms, that there may be a growth in perfection, but may assert further, that the thing which is most perfect, if it be susceptible of growth at all, will have the most sure and rapid growth. Which

grows most, and in the best manner, the flower which is whole and perfect in its incipient state, or that which has a canker in it, or is otherwise injured and defective in some of its parts? Which will grow the most rapidly and symmetrically, the child which is perfect in its infancy, or one which is afflicted with some malformation? Illustrations and facts of this kind seem to make it clear that the spiritually renovated state of mind, which is variously called holiness, perfect love, and sanctification, may be susceptible of growth and increase. It is not only evident that there is no natural or physical impossibility in it, but, as has been intimated, we may go further, and lay it down as a general truth, that perfection in the *nature* of a thing is requisite to perfection in *degree*. And accordingly, although it is possible for a person who is partially holy to grow in holiness, a person who is entirely holy, although he may be assailed by unfavorable influences outwardly, will grow much more. The obstacles to growth in holiness will not only be much less in the latter case than in the former, but that inward vitality, which is necessary to the greatest expansion and progress, will possess a positive and

effective power, unknown under other circumstances.

“These views not only commend themselves to common observation and the lights of human reason, but we remark, in the second place, that they are also fully in accordance with what we are taught in the Scriptures. * * * * The Scriptures everywhere speak of growth. They do not recognize the idea of standing still: and all those passages, which require growth of grace and religious knowledge, are as applicable after the experience of sanctification as before.”*

In this chapter, without exhausting the subject, or descending to a particularity unsuited to our plan, we have given, in brief, the scriptural, and only true view of religious experience. True religion, as to its spirit and essence, is the same, whether it burn in the heart and direct the powers of beings who have never sinned, increasing their happiness as it carries them forward to higher degrees of holiness, or, first purifies, and then fills the soul of the fallen and depraved. But with sinners like men, it has an office to perform to which it is not called in its relations to other beings. Impediments are to be removed; the

* Upham's Interior Life.

heart must be dispossessed of the love of sin: the prone nature of the vicious must be assisted to stand upright: in a word, man must be redeemed from sinful bondage, and cleansed from moral defilement, before religion can fully possess him, and lead him into the higher regions of spiritual life—to exalted holiness, and eternal union with God. With those who have incurred guilt, this work of restoration must commence with repentance. Nothing that may be denominated religious experience can be genuine, unless preceded by repentance, which produces hatred and abandonment of sin, and leads to vital faith in the atonement. An experience not strongly marked by these features is spurious, and can inspire no valid hopes of eternal life.

CHAPTER XIII.

PRACTICAL RELIGION.—RELATIONS AND DUTIES OF MAN.—HARMONY OF RELIGION AS TO DOCTRINES AND DUTIES.—PRACTICAL RELIGION INCLUDES DUTIES TO GOD ; DUTIES TO OURSELVES ; DUTIES TO MEN GENERALLY ; DUTIES TO THE STATE.—CIVIL GOVERNMENT FROM GOD.—TO WHAT EXTENT MEN ARE BOUND BY THE ENACTMENTS OF THE STATE.—DR. DICK.—CLOSING REMARKS.

“Angels are round the good man, to catch the ~~increase~~ of his prayers,
And they fly to minister kindness to those for whom he pleadeth.”

TUPPER.

“Man should dare all things that he knows are right,
And fear to do no act save what is wrong ;
But guided safely by the inward light,
And with a permanent belief, and strong,
In Him who is our Father and our Friend,
He should walk steadfastly unto the end.”

PHILIP JAREY.

TRUE religion is practical. It is active benevolence. As we have seen, the word implies obligation. This obligation supposes relations, and duties arising from these relations. Our relations to God are first, highest, and most sacred. We are bound to love and obey him, at all times, under all circumstances, and regardless of consequences. But as we are social beings, we sustain

other relations, and other obligations are imposed. Our secondary relations and obligations accord perfectly with those that are first and highest. As the principles and facts of religion are perfectly harmonious, so are its duties. Each duty agrees with the whole, and the whole is consistent with every part. In practice, as in principles and facts, religion is a unity.

As God is the highest form of goodness, and religion is the embodiment of his benevolence, like its glorious author it diffuses happiness wherever its claims are acknowledged. In revealing it to man he designs to confer upon him an infinite good. While man receives and enjoys the happiness imparted by this gift, under its inspirations and obligations he should actively engage in every work which will glorify God, and advance the happiness of his species. With this agrees the teaching of him who spoke as never man spoke. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Render therefore unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." These words of Christ comprehend all our obligations and duties as Christians, to God, to men as individuals, and to the state. The

whole of practical religion may be comprised in the following particulars.

First.—Duties we owe to God. These are a solemn and emphatic recognition of his existence and claims upon us, in appropriate outward acts of worship, as ordained by him—the cultivation of pious feelings towards him—an implicit and cordial obedience to his will in abstaining from all he has forbidden, and a cheerful performance of every requirement of his law. But the chief duty we owe to God is the cultivation of devout feelings, and a constant aim to be like him in the elements of our moral character. We call this the chief, because it is the source from whence all others flow. If we have pious, and devout feelings and affections, that is if we love God with supreme affection, we shall as a natural consequence seek to please him, to advance his glory in every way indicated by his will, and conscientiously perform every divine duty. But on the other hand, were we able to meet every other requirement of God upon us, and yet fail in the state of our feelings and affections, we should do nothing to purpose: we could not receive the approbation of God. “ Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels—and though I have the gift of prophecy, and under-

stand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, * * * and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”*

God should always be regarded as the most interesting and lovely being in the entire universe. There is no being so worthy, none to whom we are so deeply indebted—none from whom we have so much to expect. We may have a subordinate affection for other objects: we may love them in the proportion that they resemble God, and will assist us to glorify him, but in every case our supreme love should centre in Him. The following language of the poet, Watts, should be verified by constant experience:—

“Thou art the sea of love,
Where all my pleasures roll:
The circle where my passions move,
And centre of my soul.”

Secondly.—Duties we owe to ourselves. It is true, the man who reveres and loves God, and is careful to please him, will not be careless relative to his personal salvation. But it may be well as far as practicable, to consider our obligations to

* Paul.

ourselves, apart from all others. We are "fearfully and wonderfully made." God has given us a nature susceptible of the highest happiness, or of perpetual and untold misery. Were there no danger of incurring divine displeasure, it would yet be a very high and imperative duty to understand the powers and wants of our constitution, lest by disregarding its demands or infracting its laws we inflict upon ourselves an irreparable injury. But living as we do, under divine authority, it becomes a religious duty to enhance our own interest and happiness, by the best use we can possibly make of all the advantages God has given us. In this our interest is conjoined with duty. God enforces attention to duties which seem to relate wholly or principally to ourselves, by the most commanding motives, only that he may confer upon us a greater and more permanent good. A proper regard to physical health—a judicious disposition of time—and diligence in disciplining the mind, and improving it with varied and useful knowledge, are practical duties which must have a decided bearing upon our moral character and happiness. But beside this, we have a moral nature, which as religious beings we are specially bound to guard, develop, and culti-

vate. Great care and vigilance should mark our attention to the interests of the soul. We should seek that moral renovation which our sins and depravity have rendered necessary, and the merciful provisions of the gospel have placed within our reach. Our motto should be holiness in heart and in life. No duty or effort within our power, should be regarded in the light of a sacrifice if it be a mean to the attainment of this end. Nothing should be wanting on our part, (as nothing will be on the part of God,) that we may secure the highest grade of virtue—the greatest possible maturity in a well-balanced Christian character.

Thirdly.—Duties to our brother man. We are social beings, and must fulfil social obligations. God as Creator, is the common Parent of all. Besides, we are alike descended from the same great progenitor, Adam, who in another sense, is the common Father of all mankind. Our relations to each other are those which subsist between the members of a large family which has spread its branches extensively, though all tracing their genealogy to the same common source.

In an important sense, therefore, we are brethren; and though the multiplied branches of this great family are marked with that variety of cir-

cumstance and appearance which is a characteristic of all God's works, yet we possess substantially the same constitution : the same blood runs in our veins, we have the same natural rights, and the same natural interest in the improvement and happiness of the race. This relation by creation and common parentage, imposes on us the obligation of mutual sympathy, kindness, and benevolence. As every member of human society derives benefits from his social connections, he is bound to contribute his share towards promoting the health, happiness, and prosperity of the whole. He does not live without the aid of others, and he should cheerfully yield his aid in return. To this course true religion obliges him. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Our natural relations sanction these obligations, and require these mutual acts of sympathy and friendship : but, as Christians, there are special enactments binding us to these duties. They are enforced by our condition as redeemed subjects of his moral government. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits which are his."

This implies that we hold all our natural and acquired advantages entirely at the divine dis-

posal. Have we personal accomplishments? God gave them, and Christ redeemed them. They should not excite pride and vanity, but increase our gratitude and usefulness. Have we intellectual endowments? Our mental powers and intellectual acquirements are not our own, in any sense that will justify the use of them for purposes which exclude duty to God and benevolence to man. Have we wealth and influence? God has given them that we may be furnished with the means of extensive good to others. Such are expected and required to act the part of stewards in an exalted sense—to act a more noble and godlike part than falls to the common lot of men. They should be secondary suns in the moral heavens—having replenished their fires from the great central luminary, they should pour their light and heat upon the darkness and coldness of the world. They should form a centre of attraction whose most powerful magnet is their moral and practical likeness to the divine and benevolent Christ.

As members of social life, our intercourse with others should proceed upon the principle that man is man by the endowments of creation, and not by adventitious circumstances. True religion

recognizes the natural equality of all men. The measure of our own rights is the measure of the rights of others. "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Distinctions which operate a violation of natural rights, on whatever pretence set up, whether upon birth, wealth, or education, are unknown, alike to the laws of nature and the precepts of true religion, and in the highest degree impious and abominable. While we are unyielding in the maintenance of our God-given blessings, and in demanding that human nature should be duly honored in our own person, we should be as prompt and cordial in granting as in receiving the homage due to man. Indeed it should be one of the chief aims of life to remove the obstacles to human happiness, and as far as our ability will avail for such a purpose, to confer upon others the blessings we claim for ourselves, and which belong by the ordination of God to all mankind.

Fourthly.—The duties we owe to the state. Without doubt there are features in the organization of human society which would never have existed—never have been needed,—if the dispositions and powers of men had never been pervert-

ed and misdirected by sin. Whether any form of civil government would have been instituted had original innocence continued, is a question we need not now discuss. The fact of the present existence of civil organization and authority, and that it is "ordained of God," is of greater importance, and should elicit attention. How far God ordains and sanctions existing laws and forms of government, are inquiries which deserve sober thought, since it is only by correctly understanding the principles involved, that we can know the measure of our obligation and duty. As we look at the subject, it may be comprised in the following statements:—

1. God has authorized civil government. In this sense we understand Paul, when he says, "The powers that be are ordained of God." God has not made any particular form of government obligatory, either in church or state: he has given men the general principles of government, but has left them free to give such form and character to government as in their judgment will best suit their condition and circumstances, providing they enact nothing contrary to the higher laws of the divine government.

2. The objects of human government may be

embraced in three particulars: to secure to men their rights, liable to be invaded in this fallen and selfish world: to restrain impiety and crime: and to command attention to those personal and relative duties essential to the well-being of society, and the general happiness and improvement of the human race. It is therefore said, by the same inspired authority, that civil authority is ordained to be the "minister of God to (us) for good." Its legitimate aim is to benefit the whole, in harmony with the interests of each, and not to pamper the few at the expense of the many.

3 So long as civil government acknowledges divine control, and keeps to its appropriate office and work as the "minister of God for good" to all its subjects, it has divine sanction, and its enactments are clothed with divine authority. It is the duty of all who are blessed with such government and laws to be "subject unto the higher powers"—to honor and obey the laws, to contribute cheerfully of their substance, to maintain order and efficiency in the administration, and give practical effect to all its lawful and benevolent aims.

4. As civil government has no valid authority to enact, or enforce law, except as derived from

God, and as God, being infinitely righteous, cannot give his sanction to any form of unrighteousness, hence when government produces laws, or adopts measures subversive of morality, and destructive of those personal and inalienable rights, derived from God, and which it is the chief business of civil rule to guard and defend, it forfeits its divine charter, and is not entitled to respect or obedience from man. It is in a state of rebellion against the general administration of Jehovah, and to sanction it is to approve the act, and share the guilt of disloyalty to God.

5. All subjects of government, especially those blessed with a knowledge of true religion, are *morally bound* to be loyal and obedient: they should do more; they should be zealous and active in defending and sustaining rulers, who, acting within the sphere of their prerogatives, are aiming at wise and beneficent ends. But the same morality which binds them to this course in the circumstances here described, also demands a prompt refusal of obedience, and firm though temperate resistance to all acts of tyranny, particularly those which encourage impiety, and rob individuals guilty of no crime, of their dearest

personal rights, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

"The *jus divinum* of governments, (says Dr. Dick,) when rationally explained, can only mean that *lawful* governments have a right to demand the obedience of the subjects, and that it is the will of God that the subjects should submit to their authority. * * * * The duty of subjects is to obey 'every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,' to 'render to all their dues—tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.' The duty of civil rulers is to enact just laws, and to execute them impartially; to be the guardian of the rights of their subjects, to maintain order and peace, to patronize arts and sciences, to encourage virtue and discourage vice, so far as their lawful influence extends: to be the fathers of their people, and thus merit their respect and willing obedience. The obedience of subjects, like that of servants, is restrained by the law of God. When civil rulers presume to command what he has forbidden, or to forbid what he has commanded, they become rebels against the King of kings, and have no claim to our homage."*

* Dick's Theology.

We conclude this chapter with three remarks:—

First.—The morality and practice arising from true religion are distinguished from that cold, philosophic indifférence, with which the infidel, and the mere theorist in religion, looks upon the woes and wants of humanity. Such neither understand themselves nor others. They live to no purpose. They know nothing of the luxury of doing good.

“ Oh, there is need that on such hearts should fall,
A spirit that can sympathize with all.”

Secondly.—It stands at an equal distance from that strange combination of mysticism and monasticism, which has deluded many with the notion that temporal duties, and intercourse with society, are incompatible with communion with God and the cultivation of virtue. Controlled by this infatuation, thousands have fled to perpetual seclusion from the world, and lived

“ A strict monastic life, a saint alive and dead.”

Clothing themselves, by unnatural austerities and habitual melancholy, with a repulsive and ghostly sanctity, they are as unhappy in themselves as they are useless to their fellow-men.

Thirdly.—The practice of true religion is active Christian benevolence. It is Christianity expansive and diffusive. It is the true light, elevated and shining. It is Christ in the persons of his disciples, going about doing good. It is the good tree, green, flourishing, and bearing fruit every month, the leaves of which are “for the healing of the nations.”

CONCLUSION.

“When we have hoped, sought, striven, lost our aim,
Then the truth fronts us, beaming out of darkness,
Like a white brow through its o’ershadowing hair.”

BAILEY’S *Festus*.

WE have now conducted this discussion of principles and facts, fundamental to true religion, to a point where it may properly be brought to a close. Several topics more or less important, according to their relative position in the system of revealed truth, have been designedly omitted. The most of these, however, perhaps all, together with the reasons for them, will be readily inferred by the intelligent reader, from what has been considered and established. Greater particularity or detail would have been incompatible with the object of this work, which is to present a bold outline of the true religious system, as to its first and essential principles. A careful perusal of the foregoing chapters, will, we think, assist the candid reader in the following particulars:—

First.—In deciding the question, “What is truth?” That there is a God, of infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and holiness—that religion cannot be true unless derived from him—that being derived from him, it must reveal his character, and agree with his attributes—that as Creator and governor, the rectitude of his character and the good of his subjects require a revelation of his law, with the motives to obedience—are predicates in respect to which few will be found to differ. Thus far, depravity, selfishness, and pride of opinion have little room for play. But there are other truths not so obvious. The nature of the divine government—the inspiration of the Scriptures—the immortality of the soul, belong to a class which must be investigated as to the facts and arguments on which they rest, and as to their relative positions, before the mind can acquiesce in a satisfactory conclusion. Yet the mind may, by a proper collation of proofs, become as fully and entirely satisfied in respect to this class of truths, as that which has more that is obvious upon its first face. Every truth is connected with evidence sufficient to sustain its verity. This would always be seen by the honest mind, were enough of patience and intelligence employ-

ed to penetrate the subject until a clear perception of it is gained. When this is done, the fact or doctrine is not only seen to be true in itself, but to agree with all else that we know as true.

Secondly.—In discovering and admiring the harmony of the system of true religion. There is no discord in the domain of truth. There may be confusion and incongruity in our perceptions of principles and facts, but nothing of this inheres in the nature of truth. Many errors have arisen from considering facts and doctrines separately and disjoined from their proper relations. The beauty and force of some truths can only be rightly apprehended when they are viewed as parts of a system with which they harmonize. And there is no less agreement in the moral than in the natural world—“As truly in God’s revealed word, is there an intrinsic order and beauty, an inner law which combines the whole into systematic unity, as in the works of God which are thrown in such profusion over the heavens above, and upon the earth beneath us. It is the business of the philosopher of nature to find those laws by which all her facts are bound up into a system, and in which they can be expounded as rational and intelligible; nor is there any *science* until this

work is executed, and the isolated facts are thereby made to assume both consistency and unity. And it is no more a rash intrusion within the sacred enclosure of God's secret counsels, nor any more an unauthorized intermeddling with sacred things to go reverently into the field of divine revelation, and gather its separate truths, and combine them into system, according to their relations, than it is to go out and explore nature, and put the facts of God's work together in scientific order and unity."*

When religious doctrines are seen, not merely as true in themselves, but as agreeing with, and constituting essential parts of a system of truth, it is no longer admissible to deal with them as separate propositions: they cannot be rejected upon less testimony than would suffice for rejecting the whole system of which they are elements. In the preceding discussions, we have aimed to show that each doctrine considered is so united with every other one, and with the whole combined into a perfect system, as to be sustained by the entire body of proof by which the system itself is supported.

Thirdly.—This view of the nature, relations,

* Dr. Hickok.

and harmonies of true religion, as to its first and fundamental truths, will, if properly understood, assist to detect spurious facts, false principles, and counterfeit religion. When the mind clearly perceives that a given proposition is true, it perceives as clearly, that whatever conflicts with it must be false. Thus, if it be true that there is a God, the doctrine of atheism must be false—if it be true that God has established a moral government, it follows men are moral agents, and the doctrine of fatality is false—if it be true that the Scriptures contain a revelation of the will of God to man, it is clear that a religion which excludes the Bible, and is based entirely on the light of nature, is, though true in some of its principles, so defective, that as a system it must be false. So also, the true idea of the soul's immortality being established, the mind at once perceives and rejects the various forms of materialism. The vicarious atonement of Christ, and justification by faith, will at once suggest to the intelligent reader, the falsity of any system of religion which makes the natural righteousness of man, or repentance, or punishment, or a course of moral discipline, the ground of acceptance and salvation for sinners: while the necessity of regeneration arising from

the scriptural doctrine of depravity will demonstrate how untrue and dangerous is that religious scheme, the offspring of human pride, which maintains the natural perfectibility of man. We see not how the system of true religion can possibly exist upon a narrower doctrinal basis than that laid down in this work, or how any one of these main principles can be yielded without materially effecting, if not entirely subverting the gospel. The nature, relations, and mutual connections of these doctrines should be carefully studied and thoroughly understood. To minds familiar with these first principles, it is an easy task to detect error, however subtle, or however plausible the garb in which it may appear.

“Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers;
But error wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies among his worshippers.”

BRYANT'S *Poems*.

THE END.

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