

splendors of the old covenant,¹ and that the god of this world exerts an influence on their minds to this end. Thus while the view above taken is demanded by the internal structure of the passage itself, it is found also to be in perfect harmony with the general object of the epistle, and with the scope of the writer in the immediate context.

ARTICLE III.

THE NATURE OF SIN.

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THE characteristic doctrines of the gospel — the atonement, regeneration, justification, and sanctification — all derive their form and meaning from the nature and tendency and ruin of sin. The great aim of gospel preaching, and of all the appliances of the church of God to the end of time, is man's redemption from the curse of sin. This has been the work of the ages past, and is to be of the ages to come; and the song of Moses and the Lamb will be the rehearsal of this great achievement.

Our views, then, of the nature of sin will greatly affect our understanding of the gospel, and our sense of its adaptations to the work it proposes to do. The question, What is sin? is not a mere problem of speculative theology, to be discussed in the schools as a matter of intellectual discipline. It enters into all our practical operations, is an element in all our conceptions of human character, and gives shape to all our endeavors to elevate and save mankind. Every one is interested in it who is himself a sinner, or who has to do with sinners. Sin is the great fact in human experience, and an intelligent apprehension of that experience is essential to a

¹ In *ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις* the old covenant is viewed distributively, in its variety of rites of worship; in *τὸ καταργούμενον* collectively, as constituting one institute.

knowledge of man's danger and his safety; his grounds of hope and fear.

The scriptures give us no philosophical definition of sin. They treat of it as a thing essentially understood by every one. There are certain primary ideas, as those of right and wrong, duty and obligation, sin and holiness, which every moral agent has by virtue of his nature, and without which a revelation to man would seem impossible. They are awakened in the mind as it reaches moral agency, but can never be imparted, like a historical fact, from one who has them to one who has them not. The Bible addresses those possessed of these ideas, speaks to men as understanding what sin is, but gives clearer conceptions by directing attention to its nature, and distinguishing it from all other things, and thus helps them to comprehend the contents of their own thought. This is all we need — all that in the nature of the case is possible.

There is one text which in form approaches a definition: "Sin is the transgression of the law." A careful study of the expression shows that it is a comparison of two synonymous terms; each comprehends the other. The use of the definite article with subject and with predicate indicates that the words are co-extensive in meaning; sin is the transgression of the law, and the transgression of the law is sin. There is no other sin than transgression, and there is no other transgression than sin.

The standard and test of sin is the law of God. That law is righteous, because God is righteous; and it covers all righteousness. There can be no duty which God's law does not enjoin, nor can it require anything that is not duty. It can neither go beyond nor fall behind absolute justice. The law embodies all obligation; it is satisfied when obligation is met. It requires of every man just what he ought to render, and when he fails to render that, he transgresses, is blameworthy, is a sinner. The law requiring of the sinner what he ought to render, must require of him what he can render. Ability to do is an essential element in the very thought of obliga-

tion ; and it is vain to distinguish between the faculties which constitute the moral agent, and the motive force necessary to their action. The ability upon which obligation rests involves both these, so that there shall be no shelter to the transgressor from the righteous claim of the law. What that claim is we are fully informed : " All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." " Love is the fulfilling of the law "; and lest we might mistake some natural affection or movement of complacency for the love which the law requires, we are taught that it is due to every moral being — to God as supreme, and to our neighbor, without reference to character or relationship: " Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." It involves complacency when God is its object, or any child of his. It involves displacency when directed towards the unworthy and the hateful ; but in all cases it is essentially the same, a voluntary regard for the well-being and interests of its object ; a hearty putting of every being in the place that belongs to him — God first and over all ; our neighbor by our side, according to his nature and value.

The thing directly required is a state of heart, a disposition ; not any fixed amount of outward performance. The outward action follows, as a stream flows from its fountain, according to the powers possessed, and the opportunities afforded. It can never fail except from a failure of the required disposition. Strictly speaking, the obligation extends only to our voluntary powers, requires only a right state of the will. Let this be right, and we have met our obligation ; all other exercises follow in their place — complacency toward the good and displacency toward the evil.

The degree in which these voluntary powers are to act is quite distinctly expressed in the law : " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and

with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." The language is adapted to every moral being, expresses the great law of heaven and of earth, meets every person just where he stands and as he stands, and requires just what he has to give. If it asked more, it would transcend obligation, duty; if it asked less, there would be duty beyond the law, and sin that was not the transgression of the law. This needs no proof. We know it as we know that a whole is equal to all its parts. It is an axiom which lies at the basis of all conception of duty and ill-desert. What we can give we ought to give, and beyond this, *ought* has no application and no meaning.

Sin, then, is the transgression of this law of God, the law of obligation, and the transgression of this law is sin, and there is no other sin. Sin is a unit—one thing, and nothing else; disobedience to the law (*ἀνομία*); a failure to present the required disposition of heart; a refusal to love, to yield to God his place, and to man; a coming short of what the law requires; a voluntary coming short where obligation actually exists, based on the power to be and to do. A coming short from want of power shows weakness, infirmity, not sin. A coming short of some ideal excellence beyond our power to attain, is no transgression of the law, because the law requires no such attainment. The power of which we speak includes natural power and all superadded help.

That the sin with which God deals in scripture is of this character, is clear from all the declarations in regard to it. It is the object of God's displeasure and condemnation, not mere dissatisfaction, such as might arise from viewing an imperfect work of art, but moral disapprobation and condemnation, involving blame: "To 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." Again, the sinner himself is represented as condemning it: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things; beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we

keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight." This passage proves, too, that God condemns only where there is occasion for man to condemn himself.

The sinner is everywhere spoken of as deserving punishment and needing forgiveness: "If we confess our sins he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Such language as this applies to one thing in human experience, and only one; and that is actual, voluntary transgression of the law; a failure in duty which could have been avoided, and which ought to have been. For this transgression sin is the proper name. For this transgression, too, we are taught the atonement was devised: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

The scriptures further represent this sin and guilt as personal, attached to the one who contracts it. The idea of blaming one man for another's sin is mentioned only to be reprehended: "What mean ye that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel; behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine. The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon

him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." All this accords with our intuitive knowledge of ill-desert or blameworthiness, that it is in no conceivable manner transferable, either by imputation or by natural descent. Our sin belongs to us, and the sin of our ancestors belongs to them. We may share in the evil consequences of the sin of others, but not in its guilt or ill-desert. Christ suffered for the sins of men, but no blame for this accumulated guilt ever attached to him in the estimation of God or man. God does indeed speak of "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation;" but they are the generations of those that hate him; and he again assures us that "if a son seeth all his father's sins that he hath committed, and considereth and doeth not such like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live."

From these and many similar representations of scripture, and from our own intuitive convictions of its nature, we gather that sin, which is the transgression of the law, must be distinguished from everything which can strictly be called ignorance, and from everything which necessarily results from ignorance. Ignorance often results from sin, and sin is often occasioned by ignorance, but the two are not to be confounded. Ignorance is an evil to be remedied if possible, not to be blamed or punished. The sin which caused the ignorance is blameworthy, so is the sin which is occasioned by the ignorance. So far as the ignorance goes it sets sin aside; and sin comes in only where ignorance ends and knowledge begins. If the ignorance be total, sin is impossible. That "ignorance of the law excuses no one," is not a maxim of divine jurisprudence. "The servant that knew not his lord's will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." "If ye were blind ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth." Paul condemns the heathen on the ground of their knowledge, implying that ignorance would excuse them. He represents himself as having obtained mercy for his own sin, because he "did it ignorantly in unbelief." His partial ignorance was

a mitigation of his guilt. So with the "sins of ignorance," which in the Old Testament are contrasted with presumptuous sins. Error, departure from the right way, with a knowledge of the right is sin; without that knowledge it is simply error, mistake, ignorance, not sin. The remedy for ignorance is knowledge; the cure of sin is repentance and forgiveness.

Sin, again, must be distinguished from any and every defect of constitution, pertaining either to the body or the soul. We cannot conceive God as blaming men for any abnormal condition of their faculties or susceptibilities coming to them by inheritance from ancestors, near or remote, or brought upon them by any force not under their control. Such derangement of constitution is misfortune, not sin; an occasion for pity, not blame. There was sin in the past where that derangement originated, not in the unfortunate inheritance of a perverted constitution. Whatever corruption of intellect or sensibility or will comes to us as the necessary or appointed effect of Adam's sin, is our misfortune, not our fault. As surely as God is good, he will look upon us with pity for this heritage of ill. He will blame us only when we fail to do the best we can with our poor constitution.

Hence, again, sin must be distinguished from any shortcoming which is a necessary result of such defect of constitution. If we have less of energy and power and fervor for the service of God by reason of our enfeebled and corrupted nature, in spite of our best endeavors, then that deficiency is not written against us as sin: "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not." That this is a principle of universal application in the government of God we know, because God is just, and all his ways are truth; and this is simple truth and justice. We may go even further, and say that if a man has injured his power by his own sin, so as to have only one talent where he had five before, if he turns to God and does works meet for repentance, using with all diligence the power that remains, he fulfils all present duty, and meets the claims of the law; for the law meets him where he stands: "Thou

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." The sin which brought this infirmity and degradation upon him still stands, and must be forgiven — a sin of the past. But in the present he meets obligation when he uses all his powers according to God's will.

But we are asked: If a man contracts a debt, and afterwards deprives himself of the power to pay, will not the debt still stand against him? The sinner owed to God all the power he ever had; and does not God's claim stand after he has destroyed that power? We answer: The analogy is apparent, not real. The claim against the debtor is a legal, technical claim, and it stands as such even after the power is gone; but we do not blame the man as to his present state if he does all in his power to pay the debt. If he ever recovers his power to pay, we blame him if he neglects to do it. The obligation then becomes a moral as well as legal one. But God's law lays its claims upon a man just where moral obligation lies, and not a hair's breadth beyond, and sin is a failure to meet this moral obligation. But is not this letting down the law? We answer, No: not one jot or tittle has passed away. It stands forever: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"; "and his commandments are not grievous."

But it is said we cannot trust our faculties to form judgments on such points. Then there is nothing we can trust. God in his word appeals to these faculties for his own justification: "Are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" All that we can know of righteousness in God's character or requirements must come through these same faculties, and there is no contradiction on these points between God's word and our necessary intuitive judgments.

In a similar manner we must distinguish between sin and any tendencies to sin which lie back of voluntary action. If that tendency be considered as lying in the susceptibilities and desires, then it is a part of our constitution, and can only be eradicated by suppressing the desires. It is the nature

of desire to fasten on its object, and ask for gratification. In this form desire existed in our mother Eve before she fell. She saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes and good for food, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. She yielded to the desire, and sinned. But the desire was not sin. All that was needed was to control it, in obedience to the will of God. Yielding to desire in opposition to duty is sin. If the desire be aggravated or overgrown by reason of the fall, still all that can be required of us is to control, according to God's will, this abnormal desire. We cannot blame the subject of it, except as under its power he falls into sin.

If the desire be an artificial or unnatural one, in the sense that it was not an element in human nature as it came from the hand of God, but is a legacy of evil from some sinning ancestor, like a hereditary love of strong drink, the same principle applies. We can only ask of the unfortunate man that he keep his desire under, and never allow it to betray him into an improper indulgence. Nay, if that desire has originated in the man's own sin, the product of a life of self-indulgence, he still meets the requirements of the law when he subjects the base passion to the control of duty, and allows it no license. We may comfort the converted inebriate with the assurance that God looks upon him with approbation, in his struggles with the passion which his life of sin has fostered. If it be said that all these perversions and corruptions must be removed before the man can enter heaven, we answer, so must his infirmities of body; but this does not prove either the one or the other to be sinful. We may leave all these things to him who said to the dying thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Or again, if the tendency to sin be thought to lie in a set of the will towards sin, before there has been any voluntary, responsible action, then the man must stand acquitted when he withstands that constitutional inclination of will, and acts as God requires. If he cannot resist this original set or tendency of will, then he is no longer a moral agent. This inability to obey carries with it the inability to transgress.

What belongs to our nature, original or derived, as distinguished from our voluntary action under the law, can never be a ground for moral praise or censure.

By a similar discrimination sin must be distinguished from every form of temptation. If the temptation be the instigation of Satan, the sin is his. Of course the faculties of the tempted soul must be, to a greater or less extent, occupied with the suggestions, as in the case of the Saviour's temptation; but while the vile proposals are rejected without parley, God is satisfied, and angels will come when Satan takes his leave. The same remark applies to our natural desires, appealed to and aroused by the objects on which they fasten. While clamoring for indulgence they are mere temptations. Sin begins when there is a movement to unlawful indulgence.

Nor should that inclination or tendency or facility which we call habit, in the direction of wrong-doing, be mistaken for sin. It is of the nature of temptation. It is the result of sinful action; but when the action itself is arrested, the residuum of habit, which may survive repentance, in the form of a tendency which must be constantly guarded, is not a ground of present condemnation. The condemnation pertains to the past course of sin which generated the habit.

And in general the consequences of sin, either to the sinner or to others, must be distinguished from the sin. It is true that the guilt of sin is aggravated by the consequences which may be reasonably apprehended; but, under the same circumstances of light and knowledge, the guilt must be the same whether the natural consequences follow or are providentially interrupted. The guilt of the assassin is not affected by the question whether the weapon which he uses reaches his victim or is turned aside. The guilt of refusing to love God and keep his commandments is involved in the act itself, aside from the consequences to the sinner and to the universe.

The sin of transgression of the law should never be confounded with what is vaguely called the violation of physical

law, or the laws of our being. There are principles of our constitution the observance of which tends to the preservation of life and health. In general the moral law, the law of God, requires conformity to these principles; and the sin of disregarding them lies in the violation of the law of God, the moral law, not physical law, or rather these principles of our constitution. It is not a rare occurrence that the law of duty sets aside entirely regard to physical law. Physical law would keep us nursing our own life; moral law asks us to lose it. Physical law would keep us from the fire; moral law led the ancient worthies and martyrs into it. Physical law would lead us to shun malaria and pestilence; moral law sends the gospel herald to climes where "death floats on every passing breeze, and lurks in every flower." Physical law might detain our patriot soldiers at home, out of harm's way; moral law takes them to the field of carnage, and buries their mangled forms in nameless graves. Physical law merely indicates a fact of more or less significance; moral law imposes a duty. By a strange perversion of ideas men talk of penalty for the violation of physical law. Then, is it punishment that the brave and the true encounter who love not their lives unto the death? No, these are merely hardships which lie along the path of duty, a part of the discipline of our mortal life. That only is penalty which is designed to express God's disapprobation of the deed. Penalty is the correlative of sin.

Such discriminations as these are necessary, because every just and successful presentation of God's law must carry the conscience. No progress can be made in any heart without this. If the impression be made on any mind that God's law extends at all beyond the sphere of voluntary, responsible action, to that extent the force of the law is broken. The sinner retires behind a rampart which nothing can penetrate but the solid bolt of truth. In the same way his sense of sin is relieved when the impression is conveyed that God blames him for anything that transpired in the indefinite past, before his moral agency began, or for any evil about his body or his soul which he did not originate, and which he cannot

remedy. Every such representation robs sin of its peculiar characteristic — its sinfulness, and puts it on a level with disease or natural infirmity. The deepest views of sin are those which present it in its true character as wickedness, unconstrained and inexcusable, justly condemned by every moral being, and incurring God's righteous wrath as expressed in his word: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

The law of God shows what duty, obedience, holiness is. Sin is a failure to render what the law requires — the transgression of the law; a refusal to love God with all the heart, and one's neighbor as himself. It may not be without profit to inquire further: What does the sinner propose to himself in refusing to love God and man? What scheme occupies his thought and purpose to the exclusion of God's righteous claim? His powers are employed; what account can he give of his activity? What work lies open to him who declines the pursuit which the law enjoins? He declines God's service; whom does he call master? The scriptures often represent the sinner as the servant of Satan. Thus the Saviour says to the Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Paul referring to the former sinful life of the Ephesians, speaks of them as walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." We do not gather from these passages that worldly men have consciously chosen Satan as their leader, or have espoused his cause intentionally. Satan has a bad reputation, even with the wicked. They are no admirers of his. He is their prompter to a life of sin, as of our first parents in the garden; but it is very rare that he distinctly and avowedly proposes his service to the tempted, as to our Saviour: "All this will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." His appeals are, in general, more skilfully adapted to the weaknesses of men.

Again, men are called the servants of sin. Paul says to the Romans: "When ye were the servants of sin ye were free from righteousness"; and it is a very natural figure to call

sinner's servants of sin, as the righteous are called servants of righteousness. But we are not to gather from it that men love sin, and pursue it on its own account. Men love a worldly life in spite of its sinfulness. If it were not sinful they would like it better. Sin is in itself distasteful, offensive; and sinners pursue their course for other reasons than because it is sinful. Indeed, so strong is this instinctive disapprobation of sin, that men in general rarely march up to their evil deeds with open face and embrace them in their true character. The thief flatters himself that the world owes him a living, and he has a right to get it. The forger merely proposes to use a little of some rich man's surplus wealth, often with the half-formed purpose of returning it presently. The rebel is a hater of tyranny and a lover of liberty, even when the tyranny he hates is good government, and the liberty he craves is license. So of the thousand forms of sin. Men consent to practise them, but the sinfulness of them they do not love. They are slaves of sin, not cheerful servants.

It is a very common apprehension that sinners are servants of themselves, that they are seeking their own interests or their own good, and thus refuse to obey God. Hence sin is often represented as selfishness, or living for one's self. I do not speak of this as a representation of scripture, for I do not find it there. A single passage in the Old Testament says: "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit to himself." A single passage in the New Testament, giving a catalogue of the different classes of sinners that shall appear in the last days, says: "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, proud, blasphemous," etc. Perhaps one other passage should be included; "If any man will come after me let him deny himself." But selfishness, in the sense of seeking their own good, is nowhere presented as the grand characteristic of sinners. If it were claimed that the scriptures represent sinners as neglecting their own interests, and bartering their real good for what is worthless, the claim would better correspond with the fact. It requires

no proof that the sinner is not seeking his true good. He turns away "from the fountain of living waters, and hews out broken cisterns, that can hold no water." The words of wisdom are: "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death." "As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death." But it will naturally be suggested that all that is intended is, that the sinner thinks he is pursuing his own good or is seeking his own happiness. But even this does not express his consciousness. What sinner does not know that the future world is vastly more important than this, and has a more important bearing on his welfare? But where do we find sinners living with reference to that future? Nay, it is rare that we find a worldly man who lives wisely, even in his own estimation, with reference to the present world. How few order their pursuits and regulate their indulgences so as to secure the greatest amount of worldly good, taking their own judgment as the standard. It is the way of sinners to sacrifice a known future good, pertaining to this world, to a present gratification, when in their own view the gratification is contemptible in the comparison. It is related of Demosthenes that when he had gone to a distant city to give a few hours to sinful pleasure, and learned the cost in money to which it would subject him, he denied himself the pleasure, and turned homeward, with the remark, that it was buying repentance too dear. Deep down in the consciousness of the sinner there is always the conviction that the course he is pursuing is an unprofitable and disastrous one, and that he shall one day look back upon it with regret. Hence sin is appropriately called folly in scripture, and sinners are called fools; not in the sense that they are totally ignorant of the better way, and therefore err; but that knowing the better course, they take the worse. As Bunyan represents it, an angel stoops over the sinner with a crown of glory, and asks him to look up and receive it. He hears the call and catches a dim reflection of the glory, but bends still to his muck-rake and the worthless offal. The folly of sin! there is nothing

like it in this world or in any other — folly that is self-conscious and self-condemned.

Not that there is not a sort of seeming good in the course which the sinner pursues. There is a dream of happiness to be secured in the object which he grasps ; but he knows that he is dreaming, and that he drops the substance while he clasps a shadow. The sinner is not pursuing his own interests or his own happiness as the great end of his life ; nor does he even think that he is doing it.

But it is suggested again that he is pursuing his own gratification, and that his aim or purpose is to secure the greatest amount of satisfaction possible through his susceptibilities and desires, and that this is the selfishness which constitutes sin. If this is his deliberate and chosen end he will pursue it wisely, according to the dictates of his own intelligence. For if he does not pursue it thus, then he does not pursue it as an end at all — an object which his intelligence has embraced, and which becomes the grand reason for all his action. If self-gratification is his supreme end, he will carefully compare the various sources of pleasure and deliberate upon probabilities and risks. He will defer a present gratification to a future and greater one. He will sacrifice a temporary pleasure to an enduring, permanent one. He will not by present excesses obliterate or put in peril his susceptibility of future enjoyment. He will so shape his life as to make it on the whole a life of the highest enjoyment of which he is capable. And if he has any reasonable evidence of a future state — a state which is permanent, everlasting, compared with which our present life is but the meteor's flash, he will "lay up his treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Such a course must come from a simple pursuit of pleasure as an end, guided by intelligence.

" Take all the pleasures of all the spheres,
And multiply each through endless years,
One minute of heaven is worth them all."

If the enjoyment of heaven is to the sinner's apprehension

so much more desirable in its character and so permanent, and if enjoyment, the satisfaction of his susceptibilities, is his deliberately chosen end, then he will shape all his life to the attainment of heaven — the very thing he never dreams of doing. More than this, he does not pursue the pleasures of this life with any proper judgment or discrimination. The world is full of men given up to some base passion, who know that in their own estimation, by the standard of mere worldly pleasure, they are bartering their birthright for a mess of pottage, and that in the light of mere worldly good they will “mourn at the last when their flesh and their body is consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof.” If sin be selfishness it is some other selfishness than that of seeking one’s own happiness, or even one’s own pleasure, the gratification of the desires as a deliberate end.

But we must not therefore conclude that desire is not the influence that determines the sinner’s action. It doubtless is desire, and nothing else, that prompts him to refuse obedience to God’s law — desire operating directly as a motive, not impelling him to seek pleasure as an end, but in its blind strength fastening upon its object, and soliciting indulgence in that specific form. The drunkard drains his cup, not because he has resolved to seek pleasure, and flatters himself that the highest pleasure lies in that direction; but he has surrendered himself to that terrible passion, and it drives him on with its scorpion whip in the way of indulgence. No one knows better than himself that in that deadly draught he swallows anguish and shame and death and deep damnation, with an infinitesimal admixture of pleasure; and yet he drinks. The desire controls him, and not any choice of pleasure as an end. The example is extreme, yet it displays the principle of action in every sinner’s heart. There are comparatively few in whom one consuming passion predominates over all other hope or fear or desire. The usual experience of sinners is to follow now one desire and now another, as circumstances change, or as the objects of desire present

themselves. With the mass of men under the influence of Christian civilization, the desires harmonize in general with outward decency and morality, often with the outward requirements of philanthropy and benevolence. Self-respect, the respect of others, the happiness of friends and neighbors, and the elevation of the degraded become objects of desire, and give form to the life of the sinner; and still he comes under the description given by Paul of the Ephesians in their unregenerate state: "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. . . . Among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." And again: "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; for to be carnally minded is death. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." In a similar manner James says: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." John calls this same state of mind the love of the world, contemplating the objects of desire as well as the desire itself: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." All such scriptures seem to teach that the sinner is given up to the control of his desires, and that these, as one or another prevails, give form to his life; that his general state is carnal-mindedness or regard to his desires, rather than selfishness or regard to his own happiness; that his life is a sort of instinctive, impulsive, animal life, yet sinful, as mere animal life is not, because he has before him, within his reach, the proper object and end of life, to serve God and to serve his generation, and refuses to accept it.

Human responsibility, then, exists under these conditions.

On one side is our conscience, our reason, our judgment, enlightened and quickened by God's Spirit, presenting the objects which should control our activity — God and his service, man and his well-being. On the other side are the desires of the flesh and of the mind, blind to all duty, to all real interests, and only alive to the objects which excite them, using the intelligence merely as a guide to gratification. It is our prerogative to choose between these principles of action. The good man yields to conscience and to God's Spirit, and pursues true good, holding desire subordinate to conviction. He is spiritually minded. The sinner gives the rein to desire, and follows where it leads. He is carnally minded; his life presents no definite, self-consistent aim, like that of the good man. The desires themselves are conflicting, and which shall be in the ascendant depends upon constitutional organization, education, and changing circumstances. A single predominant passion makes the ambitious man, the miser, or the sensualist. A happy constitution and the culture of well-ordered society furnishes the man of outward integrity and morality, the amiable friend, the good citizen, presenting the semblance of many of the Christian graces. Yet the principle of action is the same in all — “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.”

Sin, then, lies in this permanent state of mind, and is as constant as carnal-mindedness. It is the fountain from which flow the outward actions which we call sins; but sin, blameworthiness, is not all concentrated in these sins. The sinful state underlies all the activity, as well when the outward action is amiable and proper and right, as when it is mischievous and hateful. No phrenological manipulation, suppressing one desire and elevating another, can cure the sin. The disease lies deeper, and can only be cured by delivering the soul from the dominion of desire, and enthroning duty where passion has reigned. No mere intellectual view of the reasonableness of obedience and the unreasonableness of transgression will avail. The sinner always knows that his life is unreasonable, contemplated in the view of his pleas-

ure, his welfare, or his duty. The mystery of sin lies in its unreasonableness, not in its nature, nor in the motive which prompts it. The gospel of Christ and the forces which gather about it are the only efficient remedy: "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."

If the views of sin now presented be correct, then there must always be in the human consciousness grounds and reasons upon which to justify the ways of God to man. There is no occasion to resort to any mysterious principle in the divine administration by which he distributes praise and censure, rewards and punishments. He throws himself upon the consciences of men, and permits them to ask, in all boldness: "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" The mystery of his providence lies, not in any incomprehensible principle of action by which he is governed, but in our ignorance and short-sightedness in reference to the fit means to the great ends of goodness. If it be true, as a theological writer has recently said,¹ that "the finite moral conceptions of man furnish no adequate type of the rule of God's conduct, whose ways are not as our ways, in his eternal administration over the life of man," and that this is proved by "the perennial fact in human judgment that God's moral administration of this world has always seemed to human reason less perfect in justice than the moral standard which man sets up in each age as the criterion of moral conduct," then all inquiry on such subjects is hopeless, and all justification of the ways of God to man is but a dream. How cheering to turn from all such apologies for God to his own word, where he brings forth his righteousness as the light and his judgment as the noon-day.

¹ Princeton Review, Jan. 1862, p. 19.