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ART. I.—*The Inspired Theory of Prayer.*

As one of the evidences that Christianity, even when most purely conceived as a supernatural power, is preëminently rational, we may reckon the freedom of Christ and the apostles, especially the apostle Paul, in speaking of the manner of its operation. It thus appears that our rational exercises are usefully employed, not only under the influence of saving grace, but upon the work of grace itself. Accordingly, the church has presumed that a just speculative view of the doctrine of justification by faith will promote the saving exercise of faith; and that a definite and rational doctrine drawn out from what the Scriptures teach concerning the atonement of Christ, will be used by the Holy Spirit to help us in receiving and applying the atonement itself. The benefit of the sacraments is undoubtedly increased by a just and reasonable view of the manner of their operation. From the apostle's great pains to give, in 1 Cor. xv., the theory of the resurrection, we might presume that a well-formed philosophical doctrine on that subject, adjusted to the apostle's outline, would help the practical influence of the scriptural view on the mind and heart of the church. In like manner, we may hope that a rational expansion of the suggestions of the Scriptures, and particularly

ART. IV.—*The True Tone in Preaching, and the True Temper in Hearing.*

PREACHING the revelation of God, and hearing it, are the two functions upon which the whole temporal and eternal welfare of mankind is made to depend. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee"; "take heed how ye hear,"—these are the two messages of God to the herald and the congregation. Both parties must hear the message, and endeavour in God's strength to come into right relations to each other, if they would receive the divine blessing. "For," says Richard Baxter, "we bring not sermons to church, as we do a corpse for a burial. If there be *life* in them, and *life in the hearers*, the connaturality will cause such an amicable closure, that through the reception, retention, and operation of the soul, they will be the immortal seed of a life everlasting."\* This passage from one of the most fervid and effective of preachers, gives the clue to Christian eloquence. Life in the preacher, and life in the hearer,—vitality upon both sides,—this, under God, is the open secret of successful speech.

For the relation which properly exists between the Christian preacher, and the Christian hearer, is a reciprocal one, or that of action and reaction. Yet it is too commonly supposed that eloquence depends solely upon the speaker; that the hearer is only a passive subject, and as such, is merely to absorb into himself a mighty and powerful influence that flows out from the soul of the orator, who alone is the active and passionate agent in the process. It will be found, however, upon closer examination, that eloquence in its highest forms and effects is a joint product of two factors; of an eloquent speaker and an eloquent hearer. Burning words presuppose some fuel in the souls to whom they are addressed. The thrill of the orator, however exquisite, cannot traverse a torpid or paralyzed nerve in the auditor. It is necessary, therefore, as all the rhetoricians have told us, in order to the highest effect of human speech, that the auditor be in a state of preparation and reciprocity; that

\* Baxter's sermon on Christ's absolute dominion. (Preface.)

there be an answering chord in the mass of minds before whom the single solitary individual comes forth, with words of warning or of consolation, of terror or of joy.

It follows consequently, that if there be a true *tone* in preaching, there is also a true *temper* in hearing. If it is incumbent upon the sacred ministry to train itself to a certain style of thinking and utterance, it is equally incumbent upon the sacred auditory to school itself into the corresponding mood, so that its mental attitudes, its pre-judgments, its intellectual convictions, its well-weighed fears and forebodings, shall all be, as it were, a fluid sea, along which the surging mind of the public teacher shall roll its billows. What then is the true tone in preaching, and what is the true temper in hearing, religious truth?

The divine interrogatory, "Is not my word like as a fire?" \* suggests, it is believed, the true tone which should at all times characterize public religious address to the natural man; and the decided utterance of the psalmist, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness,"† on the other hand, indicates the temper which the public mind should maintain in reference to such a species of address. From the voice of God, speaking through the most shrinking yet the most impassioned of his prophets; from the voice of God, emitted from the deepest, clearest, widest religious experience under the old economy, we would get our answer.

The purpose, then, of this article, will be to specify, in the first place, some distinctively biblical views of truth, that are exceedingly intense in their quality, and penetrating in their influence, and should therefore enter as constituent elements into preaching; and in the second place, to indicate the proper attitude of the popular mind towards such preaching.

I. The prophet Jeremiah, in the well-known interrogatory to which we have alluded, directs attention to those elements in revelation, which are adapted to produce a keen and pungent sensation, like fire, whenever they are brought into contact with the individual or the general mind. Just in proportion, consequently, as public address upon religious themes emits this

\* Jeremiah xxiii. 29.

† Psalm cxli. 5.

subtle and penetrating radiance, because the preacher has inhaled the vehement and fiery temper of the Scriptures respecting a certain class of subjects, will it speak to men with an emphasis that will startle them, and hinder them from sleep.

1. Commencing the analysis, then, we find these elements of force and of fire, of which we are speaking, in *the Biblical representation of God as an emotional Person*, or, in Scripture phrase, the "*living God*."

And here we shall pass by all those more general aspects of the Divine personality which have been abundantly brought to view in the recent and still existing contest between theism and pantheism, and confine ourselves to a notice of those more specific qualities, which have been somewhat overlooked in this controversy, and which constitute the core and life of the personal character of God. For the Biblical representation of the Deity not merely excludes all those conceptions of him, which convert him into a Gnostic abyss, and place him in such unrevealed depths that he ceases to be an object of either love or fear, but it clothes him with what may be called *individuality of emotion, or feeling*. Revelation is not content with that inadequate and frigid form of theism, that deism, which merely asserts the Divine existence and unity with the fewest predicates possible, but it enunciates the whole plenitude of the Divine Nature upon the side of the *affections*, as well as of the understanding. When the Bible denominates the Supreme Being the "*living God*," it has in view that blending of thought with emotion, that fusion of intellect with feeling, which renders the Divine Essence a throbbing centre of self-consciousness. For subtract emotion from the Godhead, and there remains merely an abstract system of laws and truths. Subtract the intellect, and there remains the mystic and dreamy deity of sentimentalism. In the Scriptures we find the union of both elements. According to the Bible, God possesses emotions. He loves and he abhors. The Old and New Testaments are vivid as lightning with the *feelings* of the Deity. And these feelings flash out in the direct unambiguous statement of the psalmist—"God *loveth* the righteous; God is *angry* with the wicked every day;" in the winning words of St. John, "God is love," and in the terrible accents of St. Paul, "Our



God is a consuming fire." Complacency and displeasure, then, are the two specific characteristics in which reside all the vitality of the doctrine that God is personal. These are the most purely individual qualities that can be conceived of. They are continually attributed to the Supreme Being in the Scriptures, and every rational spirit is represented as destined to for ever feel the impression of the one or the other of them, according as its own inward appetences and adaptations shall be. While, therefore, the other truths that enter into Christian theism are to be stated and defended in the great debate, the philosopher and theologian must look with a lynx's eye at these emotional elements in the Essence of God. For these, so to speak, are the living points of contact between the Infinite and Finite; and that theory of the Godhead which rejects them, or omits them, or blunts them, will, in the end, itself succumb to naturalism and pantheism.

There are no two positions in Revelation more unqualified and categorical, than that "God is love," and "God is a consuming fire." Either one of these affirmations is as true as the other; and therefore the complete un mutilated idea of the Deity must comprehend both the love and the displeasure in their harmony and reciprocal relations. Both of these feelings are equally necessary to personality. A being who cannot love is impersonal; and so is a being who cannot abhor. Torpor in one direction implies torpor in the other. "He who loves the good," argued Lactantius fifteen centuries ago, "by that very fact hates the evil; and he who does not hate the evil, does not love the good; because the love of goodness flows directly out of the hatred of evil, and the hatred of evil springs directly out of the love of goodness. There is no one who can love life without abhorring death; no one who has an appetency for light without an antipathy to darkness."\* He who is able to love that which is lovely, cannot but hate that which is hateful. One class of emotions towards moral good implies an opposite class towards moral evil. Every ethical feeling necessitates its counterpart; and therefore God's personal love

\* *Lactantius*, De ira Dei, c. 5. Compare also *Tertullian*, De testimonio animæ, c. 2.

towards the seraph necessitates God's personal wrath towards the fiend. There is, therefore, no true middle position between the full scriptural conception of God, and the deistical conception of him. We must either, with some of the English deists, deny both love and indignation to the Deity, or else we must, with the prophets and apostles, attribute both love and indignation to him. Self-consistency drives us to one side or the other. We may hold that God is mere intellect, without heart, without feeling of any kind; that he is as impassive and unemotional as the law of gravitation, or a geometrical axiom; that he neither loves the holy, nor hates the wicked; that feeling, in short, stands in no sort of relation to an infinite Nature and Essence; or we may believe that the Divine Nature is no more destitute of emotional than it is of intellectual qualities, and that all forms of righteous and legitimate feeling enter into the Divine self-consciousness,—we may take one side or the other, and we shall be self-consistent. But it is in the highest degree illogical and inconsistent, to attribute one class of emotions to God, and deny the other; to attribute the love of goodness, and repudiate the indignation at sin. What reason is there in attributing the feeling of complacency to the nature of the Infinite and Eternal, and denying the existence of the feeling of indignation, as so many do in this and every age? Is it said that emotion is always, and of necessity, beneath the Divine Nature? Then why insist and emphasize that “God is *love*?” Is it said that wrath is an unworthy feeling? But this, like love itself, depends upon the nature of the object upon which it is expended? What species of feeling ought to possess the Holy One when he looks down upon the orgies of Tiberius? when he sees John Baptist's head in the charger? Is it a mere illicit and unworthy passion, when the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those sins mentioned in the first chapter of Romans, and continually practised by mankind? And may not love be an unworthy feeling? Is not this emotion as capable of degenerating into a blind appetite, into a mere passion, as any other one? Which is most august and venerable, the pure and spiritual abhorrence of the seraphim, awakened by the sight of the sin and uncleanness of fallen Babylon, or the selfish fondness,

and guilty weakness of some of the unprincipled affection of earth? Which is most permeated with eternal truth and reason, and so most worthy of entering into the consciousness of a Divine and Supreme Mind, the wrath of law, or the love of lust?

So the Scriptures represent the matter; and upon the preacher's thorough belief in the strict metaphysical truth of this biblical idea of God, and his solemn reception of it into his mind, in all its scope and elements, with all its implications and applications, depends his power and energy as a religious thinker and speaker. He must see for himself, and make his hearers see, that God is just that intensely immaculate Spirit, both in his complacency and his displeasure, in all his personal qualities, and on both sides of his character, which revelation represents him to be. No other energy can make up for the lack of this. With this, though his tongue may stammer, and his heart often fail him, the preacher will go out before his accountable, guilty, dying fellow-men, with a spiritual power that cannot be resisted.

For man's mind is startled when the Divine individuality thus flashes into it, with these distinct and definite emotions. "I thought of God, and was troubled." The human spirit thrills to its inmost fibre, when God's *personal character* darts its dazzling rays into its darkness. When one realizes, in some solemn moment, that no blind force or fate, no law of nature, no course and constitution of things, but a Being as distinctly self-conscious as himself, and with a personality as vivid in his feelings and emotions towards right and wrong as his own identity, has made him, and made him responsible, and will call him to account; when a man, in some startling and most salutary passage in his experience, becomes aware that the intelligent and the emotional I AM is penetrating his inmost soul, he is, if ever upon this earth, a roused man, an earnest, energized creature. All men know how wonderfully the faculties of the soul are quickened, when it comes to the consciousness of guilt; what a profound and central activity is started in all the mental powers by what is technically termed "conviction." But this conviction is the simple consciousness that God is one person, and man is another. Here are two

beings met together—a holy One, with infinite and judicial attributes, and a guilty one, with finite and responsible attributes—the two are in direct communication, as in the garden of Eden, and hence the shame, the fear, and the attempt to hide.

If, however, it is supposed that there must be some abatement and qualification in order to bring the biblical representation of the Deity into harmony with some theory in the head, or some wish in the heart, it loses its incisive and truthful power over the human mind. If the full-orbed idea be so mutilated that nothing but the feeling of love is allowed to enter into the nature of God, the mind softens and melts away into moral imbecility. If nothing but the emotion of displeasure makes up the character of the Deity, as was the case, to a very great extent, with the sombre and terrible Pagan religions, the mind of the worshipper is first overwhelmed with terror and consternation, and finally paralyzed and made callous by fear. But if both feelings are seen necessarily to coexist in one and the same eternal nature, and each exercised towards its appropriate and deserving object, then the rational spirit adores and burns like the seraph, and bows and veils the face like the archangel.

2. In close connection with the doctrine of the living God, the Bible teaches the doctrine of *the guilt of man*; and this is the second element of force and fire, alluded to by the prophet in his interrogatory.

We have already spoken of the close affinity that exists between a vivid impression of the Divine character, and the conviction of sin. When that comparatively pure and holy man, the prophet Isaiah, saw the Lord, high and lifted up, he cried, "I am a man of unclean lips." And just in proportion as the distinct features of that Divine countenance fade from human view, does the guilt of man disappear. But here, again, as in the preceding instance of the Divine emotions, the difficulty does not relate so much to the bare recognition of the fact, as to the degree and thoroughness of the recognition. We have noticed that there is a natural proneness to look more at the complacent, than the judicial side of the Divine nature; to literalize and emphasize the love, but convert the wrath into



metaphor and hyperbole. In like manner, there is a tendency to extenuate and diminish the degree of human guilt, even when the general doctrine is acknowledged. To apprehend and confess our sin to be our pure self-will and *crime*, is very difficult. We much more readily acknowledge it to be our disease and misfortune. Between the full denial, on the one hand, that there is any guilt in man, and the full hearty confession on the other, that man is nothing but guilt before the Searcher of the heart and Eternal Justice, there are many degrees of truth and error; and it is with regard to these intermediates that the preacher especially needs the representations of the Bible. It is by the dalliance with the shallows of the subject, that public religious address is shorn of its strength.

The Scriptures, upon the subject of human guilt, never halt between two opinions. They are blood-red. The God of the Bible is intensely immaculate, and man in the Bible is intensely guilty. The inspired mind is a rational and logical one. It either acquits absolutely and eternally, or condemns absolutely and eternally. It either pronounces an entire innocence and holiness, such as will enable the possessor of it to stand with angelic tranquillity amidst the lightnings and splendours of that countenance from which the heavens and the earth flee away; or else it pronounces an entire guiltiness in that Presence, of such scarlet and crimson dye, that nothing but the blood of incarnate God can wash it away. The Old Testament, especially, to which the preacher must go for knowledge upon these themes, because the old dispensation was the educational dispensation of law, is full, firm, and distinct in its representations. Its history is the history of an economy designed by its rites, symbols, and doctrines, to awaken a poignant and constant consciousness of guilt. Its prophecy looks with eager straining eye, and points with tremulous and thrilling finger to an Atoner and his atonement for guilt. Its poetry is either the irrepressible mourning and wail of a heart gnawed by guilt, or the exuberant and glad overflow of a heart experiencing the joy of expiated and pardoned guilt.

And to this is owing the intense vitality of the Old Testament. To this element and influence is owing the vividness

and energy of the Hebrew mind,—so different in these respects from the Oriental mind generally. The Hebrews were a part of that same great Shemitic race which peopled Asia and the east, and possessed the same general constitutional characteristics. But why did the Hebrew mind become so vivid, so intense, so dynamic, while the Persian and the Hindoo became so dreamy, so sluggish and lethargic? Why is the religion of Moses so vivific in its spirit, and particularly in its influence upon the conscience, while the religions of Zoroaster and Boodh exert precisely the same influence upon the conscience of the Persian and the Hindoo, that poppy and mandragora do upon his body? It is because God subjected the Hebrew mind to this theistic, this guilt-eliciting education. From the very beginning, this knowledge of God's unity and personality, of God's emotions towards holiness and sin, was kept alive in the chosen race. The people of Israel were separated purposely, and with a carefulness that was exclusive, from the great masses of the Oriental world. Either by a direct intercourse, as in their exodus from Egypt, with that personal Jehovah who had chosen them in distinction from all other nations; or else by the inspiration of their legislators and prophets, the truth that God is a Sovereign and a Judge, "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and that will by no means clear the guilty," was made more and more distinct and vivid in the Hebrew intuition, while it grew dimmer and dimmer, and finally died out of the rest of the Oriental populations. This education, this *Biblical* education of the Hebrews, was the source of that energy and vitality which so strikes us in their way of thinking, and modes of expression, and the absence of which is so noticable in the literatures of Persia and India.

And here it is obvious to remark upon the importance of a close investigation of those parts of the Old and New Testaments which treat of the subject of atonement, as antithetic to that of sin and guilt. For this doctrine of expiation, in the Christian system, is like a ganglion in the human frame; it is a knot of nerves; it is the oscillating centre where several primal and vital truths meet in unity. This single doctrine of sacrificial oblation is a vast involution. It implies the personality of

God, with all its elements of power. It involves the absolute self-will and responsibility of the creature in the origin of sin. It implies the necessary, inexorable nature of Justice. And if we analyze these again, we shall find them full of the "seeds of things;" full of the substance and staple of both ethics and evangelism. Those portions of the Bible, therefore, which treat of this central truth of Christianity, either directly or indirectly, should receive the most serious and studious investigation. The Mosaic system of sacrifices should be studied until its real meaning and intent is understood. The *idea* of guilt—and we employ the word in the Platonic sense—and the *idea* of expiation, as they stand out pure and simple, yet vivid and bright, in the Prophets and Psalms, and in their inspired commentary, the Epistle to the Hebrews, should be pondered until their intrinsic and necessary quality is apprehended. For there is danger lest the very ideas themselves should fade and disappear, in an age of the world, and under a dispensation, in which there is no daily sacrifice, and frequent bleeding victim, to remind men of their debt to eternal Justice. The Christian religion, by furnishing the one great sacrifice to which all other sacrifices look and point, has of course done away with all those typical sacrifices which cannot themselves take away guilt, but can remind of it.\* And now that the daily remembrancers of the ritual and ceremonial are gone, the human mind needs more than ever to ponder the teachings, and breathe in the spirit of the legal dispensation, in order to keep the conscience quick and active, and the moral sense healthy and sound, in respect to the two great fundamental ideas of guilt and retribution.

It has been an error, more common since the days of Gro-tius, than it was in the time of the Protestant Reformation, that the doctrine of the atonement has been explained and illustrated too much by a reference to the attribute of benevolence and the interests of creation, and too little by a reference to the attribute of justice and the remorseful workings of conscience. There is hazard, it is conceived, upon this method, that the simple, uncomplex ideas of guilt and atonement, as

\* "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." Heb. x. 3.

they operate in the very moral being of the individual sinner, and as they have their ground in the very nature of God, should be lost sight of, and the whole transaction of reconciliation be transferred into a region with which he ought ultimately, indeed, to be familiar, but which, during the first exercises of an awakened soul, is too distant for a vivid apprehension and impression. Man must in the end, indeed, come to understand the bearings of the sacrifice of the Son of God, upon what Chalmers calls "the distant places of God's creation;" but he will be more likely to attain this understanding, if he first comes to apprehend its bearings upon his own personal guilt and remorse, and how the blood of the Lamb expiates crime within his own burning self-consciousness. For guilt and expiation are philosophical correlates, genuine correspondencies, set over against each other, like hunger and food, like thirst and water. "My flesh," saith the Atoner, "is meat *indeed*; my blood is drink *with emphasis*." He who knows, with a vivid and vital self-consciousness, what guilt means, knows what atonement means as soon as presented; and he who does not experimentally apprehend the one, *cannot* apprehend the other. If, therefore, any man would see the significance and necessity of sacrificial expiation, let him first see the significance and reality of crime in his own personal character and direct relationships to God. The doctrine grasped and held *here* presents little difficulty. For the remorse now felt, necessitates and craves the expiation; and the expiation now welcomed, explains and extinguishes the remorse.

Now, it is the peculiarity of the Biblical representation of this whole subject, that it handles it in the very closest connection with the personal sense of sin; that is to say, in its relation to the conscience of man on the one side, and the moral indignation of God on the other. In the Scriptures, the atonement is a "*propitiation*;" and by betaking himself to it, and making it his own spontaneous mode of thinking and speaking upon this fundamental doctrine, the preacher will arm his mind with a preternatural power and energy. Look at the preaching of those who, like Luther and Chalmers, have been distinguished by an uncommon freedom and saliency in their manner



of exhibiting the priestly office and work of Christ, and see how remarkably the Old Testament atonement vitalizes the conception and the phraseology. There is no circumlocution nor mechanical explanation. The *remorse* of man is addressed. The simple and terrible fact of guilt is presupposed, the consciousness of it elicited, and then the ample pacifying satisfaction of Christ is offered. The rationality of the atonement is thus seen in its inward necessity; and its inward necessity is seen in the very nature of crime; and the nature of crime is seen in the nature of God's justice, and felt in the workings of man's conscience. In this way, preaching becomes intensely personal, in the proper sense of the word. It is made up of personal elements, recognises personal relationships, breathes the living spirit of personality, and reaches the heart and conscience of personal and accountable creatures.

Is not, then, the word of God as a fire, in respect to this class of truths, and its mode of presenting them? As we pass in review the representations of God's personal emotions, and man's culpability, which are made in those lively oracles from which the clergyman is to draw the subject-matter of his discourses, and the layman is to derive all his certain and infallible knowledge respecting his future prospects and destiny, is it not plain, that if there be lethargy and torpor on the part of either the preacher or the hearer, if there be a lack of eloquence, it will not be the fault of the written revelation? As we look abroad over Christendom, do we not perceive the great need of a more incisive impression from those particular truths which relate to these personal qualities, these moral feelings of the Deity, which cut sharply into the conscience, probe and cleanse the corrupt heart, and induce that salutary fear of God which the highest authority assures us is the beginning of wisdom? Is there in nominal Christendom such a clear and poignant insight into the nature of sin and guilt, such reverential views of the divine holiness and majesty, and such a cordial welcoming of the atonement of God, as have characterized all the earnest eras in church history—the Pentecostal era in the Primitive Church, the Protestant Church in the age of the Reformation, and the American churches in the Great Awakening of 1740? Is there not a leaven of legality, even in the

Christian experience of the day, that interferes greatly with that buoyant, evangelic spirit which ought always to distinguish what Luther calls a "justified" man? And if we contemplate the mental state and condition of the multitude who make no profession of godliness, and in whom the naturalism of the age has very greatly undermined the old ancestral belief in a sin-hating and a sin-pardoning Deity, do we not find still greater need of the fire and the hammer of the word of the Lord?

II. How, then, can we more appropriately conclude the discussion of this subject, than by directing attention, in the second place, to that sort of understanding, with regard to this mode of preaching, which ought to exist between the preacher and the hearer; that intellectual temper which the popular mind should adopt and maintain towards this style of homiletics. For if, as we remarked in the outset, the effectiveness of the orator is dependent, to some extent, upon the receptivity of the auditor, then there is no point of more importance to the Christian ministry, than the general attitude of the public mind towards the stricter truths and doctrines of revelation. What, then, is the proper temper in hearing, which is to stand over against this proper tone in preaching?

In order to answer this question, we must in the outset notice the relation that exists between divine truth and an *apostate* mind like that of man, and the call which it makes for moral earnestness and resoluteness. For we are not treating of public religious address for the seraphim, but for the sinful children of men; and we shall commit a grave error, if we assume that the eternal and righteous truth of God, as a matter of course, must fall like blessed genial sun-light into the corrupt human heart, and make none but pleasant impressions at first. It is therefore necessary, first of all, to know precisely what are the affinities, and also what are the *antagonisms*, between the guilty soul of man, and the holy word of God.

It is plain that such an antagonism is implied in the prophet's interrogatory. For, if the word of God is "as a fire," the human mind, in relation to it, must be as a fuel. For why does fire exist except to burn? When therefore the message from God breathes that startling and illuminating spirit which thrilled through the Hebrew prophets, and at times fell from

the lips of Incarnate Mercy itself, still and swift as lightning from the soft summer cloud, it must cause

“Anguish, and doubt, and fear, and sorrow, and pain,  
In mortal minds.”

The posture, consequently, which the “mortal mind” shall take and keep in reference to such a painful message and proclamation from the heavens, is a point of the utmost importance. Many a human soul is lost, because at a certain critical juncture in its history, it yielded to its fear of mental suffering. The word of God had begun to be “a fire” unto it, and foreseeing (oh with how quick an instinct!) a painful process of self-scrutiny and self-knowledge coming on, it wilfully broke away from all such messages and influences, flung itself into occupations and enjoyments, and quenched a pure and good flame that would have only burnt out its dross and its sin; a merely temporary flame that would have superseded the necessity of the eternal one that is now to come. For there is an instinctive and overmastering shrinking in every man from suffering, which it requires much resolution to overcome. The prospect of impending danger rouses his utmost energy to escape from it, and his soul does not recover its wonted tranquillity, until the threatening calamity is overpast. In this lies all the power of the drama in its higher forms. The exciting impression made by a tragedy springs from the steadily increasing danger of suffering which thickens about the career of principal characters in the plot. The liability to undergo pain, which increases as the catastrophe approaches, united with the struggles of the endangered person to escape from it, waken a sympathy and an excitement in the reader or the spectator, stronger than that produced by any other species of literature. And whenever the winding-up of any passage in human history lifts off the burden of apprehension from a human being, and exhibits him in the enjoyment of the ordinary, happy lot of humanity, instead of crushed to earth by a tragic issue of life, we draw a breath so long and free as to convince that we share a common nature, one of whose deepest and most spontaneous feelings is the dread of suffering and pain.

And yet, when we have said this, we have not said the whole.

Deep as is this instinctive shrinking from distress, there are powers and motives which, when in action, will carry the human soul and body through scenes and experiences at which human nature, in its quiet moods and its indolent states, stands aghast. There are times when the mind, the rational judgment, is set in opposition to the body, and compels its earth-born companion to undergo a travail and a woe from which its own constitutional love of ease, and dread of suffering, shrink back with a shuddering recoil.

This antagonism between the sense and the mind is seen in its most impressive forms within the sphere of ethics and religion. Even upon the low position of the stoic, we sometimes see a severe dealing with luxurious tendencies, and a lofty heroism in trampling down the flesh, which, were it not utterly vitiated by pride and vainglorying, would be worthy of the martyr and the confessor. But when we rise up into the region of entire self-abnegation for the glory of God, we see the opposition between the flesh and the spirit in its sublimer form, and know something of the terrible conflict between mind and matter in a fallen creature, and still more of the glorious triumph in a redeemed being, of truth and righteousness over pain and fear. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee," is a command that has actually been obeyed by thousands of believers—by the little child, and by the tender and delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground, for delicateness and tenderness—not in stoical pride and self-reliance, not with self-consciousness and self-gratulation, but in meekness and fear, and in much trembling, and also in the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind.

There is call, therefore, on the part of the hearer of religious truth, for that sort of temper which is expressed in the words of the Psalmist, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness." In this resolute utterance, suffering is not deprecated, as it would be if these instincts and impulses of human nature had their way and their will, but is actually courted and asked for. That in the Psalmist which needs the smiting of the righteous and of righteousness, and which, for this reason, shrinks from it, is rigorously kept under, in order that the



infliction may be administered for the honour of the truth, and the health of the soul.

And such, it is contended, should be the general attitude of the public mind towards that particular form and aspect of divine revelation which has been delineated in the first part of this article. Every human being, the natural as well as the spiritual man, ought to say, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; let the truth and law of God seize with their strongest grasp, and bite, upon my reason and conscience, it shall be an eternal blessing to me." We do not suppose that the natural man, as such, can make these words his own in the high and full sense in which they were uttered by the regenerate and inspired mind of David. But we do suppose that every auditor can control his impatience, and repress his impulses to flee away from the hammer and the fire, and conquer his prejudices, and compel his ear to hear doctrinal statements that pain his soul, and force his understanding to take in truths and arguments that weigh like night upon his feelings, and that say to him, as did the voice that cried in the tortured soul of Macbeth, "Sleep no more; rest and peace for thee in thy present state are gone for ever." Has not the Christian ministry a right to expect a tacit purpose, and a resolute self-promise, upon the part of every attendant upon public worship, to hold the mind close up to all logical and self-consistent exhibitions of revealed truth, and take the mental, the inward consequences, be they what they may? One of the early fathers speaks of the "ire of truth." Ought not every thinking, every reasoning man, be willing to resist his instinctive and his effeminate dread of suffering, and expose his sinful soul to this "ire," because it is the ire of law and righteousness?

Let us, then, for a moment, look at the argument for this sort of resolute temper in the public mind towards the strict and cogent representations of the pulpit.

1. In the first place, upon the general principles of propriety and fitness, ought not the sacred audience, the assembly that has collected upon the Sabbath day, and in the sanctuary of God, to expect and prepare for such distinctively Biblical representations of God and themselves as have been spoken of?

The secular week has been filled up with the avocations of business, or the pursuits of science and literature, and now when the distinctively religious day and duties begin, is it not the part of consistency to desire that the eternal world should throw in upon the soul its most solemn influences, and that religious truth should assail the judgment and the conscience with its strongest energy? Plainly, if the religious interests of man are worth attending to at all, they are worth the most serious and thorough attention. This Sabbatical segment of human life, these religious hours, should be let alone by that which is merely secular or literary, in order that while they do last, the purest and most strictly religious influences may be experienced. A man's salvation does not depend so much upon the length of his religious experience and exercises, as upon their thoroughness. A single thoroughly penitent sigh wafts the soul to the skies, and the angels, and the bosom of God. A single hearty ejaculation, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," not only lifts the soul high above the region of agony, but irradiates the countenance with the light of angelic faces. But such exhaustive thoroughness in the experience, is the fruit only of thoroughness in the previous indoctrination. He, therefore, who is willing to place himself under the religious influences of the Sabbath and the sanctuary, should be willing to experience the very choicest of these influences. He who takes pains to present himself in the house of God, should expect and prepare himself for the most truthful and solemn of all messages. Professing to devote himself to the subject of religion, and no other, and to listen to the ministration of God's word, and no other, his utterance should be that of the Psalmist: "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness." Seating himself in the house of God, it should be with an expectation of plain dealing with his understanding, and with the feeling of that stern, yet docile auditor, whose uniform utterance before the preacher was: "Now let the word of God come." We lay it down, then, as a maxim of fitness and self-consistency, that the public mind ought ever to expect and require from the public religious teacher, the most distinctively religious, and strictly Biblical exhibitions of truth upon the Sabbath day, and in the house of God. Other days, and other convocations, may expect and de-

mand other themes, and other trains of thought, but the great religious day of Christendom, and the great religious congregation, insists upon an impression bold and distinct from the world to come. "He has done his duty, now let us do ours," was the reply of Louis XIV. to the complaint of a fawning and dissolute courtier, that the sermon of Bourdaloue had been too pungent and severe. There was manliness and reason in the reply. The pulpit had discharged its legitimate function, and irreligious as was the grand monarch of the French nation, his head was clear and his judgment correct.

If, now, the auditor himself, of his own free will, adopts this maxim, and resolutely holds his mind to the themes and trains of thought that issue from the word of God, a blessing and not a curse will come upon him. Like the patient smitten with leprosy, or struck with gangrene, who resolutely holds out the diseased limb for the knife and the cautery, this man shall find that good comes from taking sides with the divine law, and subjecting the intellect (for we are now pleading merely for the human understanding,) to the searching sword of the truth. There is such a thing as common grace, and that hearer who is enabled by it, Sabbath after Sabbath, to overcome his instinctive fear of suffering, and to exercise a salutary rigour with his mind respecting the style and type of its religious indoctrination, may hope that common and prevenient grace shall become renewing and sanctifying grace.

Probably no symptom of the feeling and tendency of the popular mind would be witnessed and watched with more interest, by the Christian philosopher or the Christian orator, than a growing disposition on the part of the masses to listen to the strict truths, the systematic doctrines of Christianity, and to ponder upon them. And why should there not be this disposition at all times? That which is strictly true is *entirely* true; is thoroughly true; true without abatements or qualifications. Why then shall a thinking creature shrink back from the exactitudes of theology, the severities of righteousness? Why should not the human mind follow out everything within the province of religion, to its last results, without reference to the immediate painful effect upon the feelings? If a thing be true, why confer with flesh and blood about it? If certain distinctly

revealed doctrines of revelation, accurately stated, and logically followed out, do cut down all the cherished hopes of a sinful man, with respect to his future destiny, why not let them cut them down? Why not, with the unsparing self-consistence of the mathematician, either take them as legitimate and inevitable conclusions, from admitted sources and premises, in all their strictness and fearful meaning, or else throw sources, premises, and conclusions all away? How is it possible for a thinking man to maintain a middle and a neutral ground in doctrinal religion, any more than in science?

2. But leaving this mainly intellectual argument for the Psalmist's temper towards the stern side of revelation, we pass, in the second place, to the yet stronger moral argument drawn from the nature of that great spiritual change, which the Founder of Christianity asserts must pass upon every human being, in order to entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Man, though self-ruined, is helplessly, hopelessly ruined. Loaded with guilt, which he cannot expiate, and in bondage to a sin from which he can never deliver himself, he cannot now be saved except by the most powerful methods, and the most thorough processes. What has been done outside, in the counsels of eternity and in the depths of the Triune God, to bring about human redemption, evinces the magnitude and the difficulty of the work undertaken. But of this we do not propose to speak. We speak only of what is to be done *inside*, in the mind and heart of the individual man, as evincing conclusively that this salvation of the human soul cannot be brought about by imperfect and slender exhibitions of truth, or by an irresolute and timorous posture of the auditor's mind. No man is compelled to suffer salvation. Pardon of all sin from the eternal God, and purity for eternal ages, are offered to him, not as a cheap thing to be forced upon an unwilling recipient, but as a priceless boon. Our Lord himself, therefore, bids every man count the cost, and make up the comparative estimate, before he commences the search for eternal life. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else *make the tree corrupt*, and his fruit corrupt." Be *thorough* in one direction or the other. Either be a saint or a sinner. The Redeemer virtually advises a man not to begin the search at all, unless he begin it in earnest.



The entire Scripture representation is, that as man's salvation cost much on high and in the heavens, so it must cost much below, and in the soul of man. If, then, religion be not rejected altogether, and the hearer still expects and hopes to derive an everlasting benefit from it, he should take it precisely as he finds it, and allow its truths to wound first, that they may heal afterwards; to slay in the beginning, that they may make alive in the end.

For such is the method of Christianity. Conviction is the necessary antecedent to conversion. But how is this great process to be carried through, if the public mind shrinks away from all convicting truth, as the sensitive plant does from the touch? How is man to be conducted down into the depths of an humbling and abasing self-knowledge, if he does not allow the flashing and fiery illumination of the law and the prophets to drive out the black darkness of self-deception? It is impossible, as we have already observed, that divine truth should pour its first rays into the soul of alienated man, without producing pain. The unfallen seraph can hear the law proclaimed amidst thunders and lightnings with a serene spirit and an adoring frame, because he has perfectly obeyed it from the beginning. But Moses, and the children of Israel, and all the posterity of Adam, must hear law, when first proclaimed, with exceeding fear and quaking, because they have broken it. It is a fact too often overlooked, that divine truth, when accurately stated and closely applied, cannot leave the mind of a sinful being as quiet and happy as it leaves that of a holy being. In the case of man, therefore, the truth must in the outset cause foreboding and alarm. In the history of the human religious experience, soothing, consolation, and joy, from the truth are the subsequents, and not the antecedents. The plain and full proclamation of that word of God which is "as a fire," must, at first, awaken misgivings and fears, and, until man has passed through this stage of experience, must leave his sinful and lost soul with a sense of danger and insecurity. There is, consequently, no true option for man, but either not to hear at all, or else to hear first in the poignant and anxious style. The choice that is left him is either that of the Pharisee, or the Magdalen; that of the self-righteous, or the self-condemned; either to hate the

light, and not come to the light, lest painful disclosures of character and conduct be made, or else to come resolutely out into the light, that the deeds may be reprovèd.

For this work of reproof is the first and indispensable function of religious truth, in the instance of the natural man. If there be self-satisfaction, and a sense of safety, in the unrenewed human soul, it is certain that as yet there is no contact between it and the Divine word. For it is as true of every man, as it was of the apostle Paul, that when the law shall "come" with plainness and power to his mind, he will "die." His hope of heaven will die; his hope of a quiet death-bed will die; his hope of acquittal and safety in the day of judgment and at the bar of God, will die. That apostolic experience was legitimate and normal, and no natural man must expect that the truth and law of God, when applied with distinctness and power to his reason and conscience, will leave him with any different experience in the outset, from that which has initiated and heralded the passage from darkness to light, and from sin to holiness, in every instance of a soul's redemption. There is no royal road across the chasm that separates the renewed from the unrenewed man. In order to salvation, every human creature must tread that strait and narrow path of self-examination, self-condemnation, and self-renunciation, which was trodden by the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, and the noble army of the martyrs.

In subjecting the mind and conscience to the poignant influence of keen and pure truth, and doing everything in his power to have the stern and preparatory doctrines of the legal dispensation become a schoolmaster, to lead him to the mercy and the pity that is in the blood of Christ, any man is simply acting over the conduct of every soul that, in the past, has crossed from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. He is merely travelling the King's highway to the celestial city; and whoever would climb up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. Even the thoughtful pagan acknowledged the necessity of painful processes in the human mind, in order to any moral improvement. Over the Delphic portal was inscribed the words, "Without the descent into the hell of self-knowledge, there is no ascent into heaven." We do not sup-

pose that this remarkable saying exhibits its full meaning within the province of the pagan religions, or of natural religion. The heathen sage often uttered a truth whose pregnant significance is understood only in the light of a higher and supernatural dispensation. But if the agony of self-knowledge is postulated by paganism, in order to the origin of virtue within the human soul, much more then is it by Christianity. If the heathen moralist, with his low view of virtue, and his very indistinct apprehension of the spirituality of the moral law, and his utterly inadequate conception of a holy and happy state beyond the grave, could yet tell us that there is a hell of self-knowledge to be travelled through, a painful process of self-scrutiny and self-condemnation to be endured, before moral improvement can begin here, or the elysiums of the hereafter be attained—if this be the judgment of the heathen moralist, from his low point of view, and in the mere twilights of natural religion, what must be the judgment of the human mind, when under the Christian dispensation the moral law flashes out its nimble and forked lightnings upon sin and pollution, with a fierceness of heat like that which consumed the stones and dust, and licked up the water in the trench about the prophet's altar; when Divine truth is made quick and powerful by the super-added agency of the Holy Ghost, so as to discern the very thoughts and intents of the heart; when the pattern-image of an absolute excellence is seen in him who is the brightness of the Father's eternal glory; and when the heaven to be sought for, and what is yet more, to be prepared for, is a state of spotless and sinless perfection in the light of the Divine countenance! Plainly, self-knowledge within the Christian sphere implies and involves a searching and sifting examination into character, motive, thought, feeling, and conduct, such as no man can undergo without shame, and humiliation, and self-condemnation, and remorse, and, without the blood of Christ, everlasting despair.

The same course of reasoning respecting each and all the remaining processes that enter into the change from sin to holiness, and the formation of a heavenly character, would in each instance help to strengthen the argument we are urging in favour of the plainest preaching, and the most resolute hear-

ing, of religious truth. The more a man knows of sin and of holiness, of the immense gulf between them, and of the difficulty of the passage from one to the other, the more heartily will he believe that the methods and the processes by which the transition is effected must each and all of them be of the most energetic and thorough character. And the deeper this conviction, the more hearty and energetic will be his adoption of the Psalmist's utterance, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness."

We have thus considered the mutual relations of the Sacred Orator and the Christian Auditor. In doing this, we have passed rapidly over a very wide field, and have touched upon some of the most momentous themes that can engage the human mind. What, and how, we are to conceive of God; and particularly how we are to represent Him as affected in his own essential Being, towards the holiness or the sin of his creatures, is of all subjects the most serious and important. In closing the discussion, we are more than ever impressed with the importance of a bold and biblical theism in the Christian pulpit. Whenever the preacher asserts that God loves the righteous, let him assert it with energy, and warmth, and momentum. Let him make his hearers see and know that the great God is personal in this emotion; that He pours out upon those who are in filial sympathy with him and his law the infinite wealth of his pure and stainless affection, and that it permeates the whole being of the object so beloved with warm currents of light and life eternal. And whenever he asserts that God hates sin, and is angry with the sinner, let him assert it without any abatement or qualification. Let him cause the impenitent and sin-loving man to see and know, that upon him, as taken and held in that sinful character and condition, the eternal and holy Deity is pouring out the infinite intensity of his moral displeasure, and that, out of Christ, and irrespective of the awful passion of Gethsemane and Calvary, that immaculate and stainless emotion of the Divine essence is now revealed from heaven against his unrighteousness, and is only awaiting his passage into the eternal world, to become the monotonous and everlasting consciousness of the soul.

Amidst the high and increasing civilization and over-refine-



ment that is coming in upon Christendom, and especially amidst the naturalism that threatens the Scriptures and the Church, the Christian ministry must themselves realize, as did the Hebrew prophets, that God is the *living* God, and by God's own help and grace, evoke this same consciousness in the souls of their hearers. Let, then, these two specific personal qualities—the divine wrath and the divine love—be smitten, driven, hurled, like javelins, into the consciousness of the nations. Then will there be the piercing wail of contrition, preceding and heralding the bounding joy of conscious pardon.

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#### ART. V.—*The General Assembly.*

THE General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America met at Peoria, Illinois, May 1863. The opening sermon was preached by the Moderator of the last Assembly, Charles C. Beatty, D.D., from Eph. iv. 7. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The Rev. J. H. Morrison, of Lodiana, Northern India, was chosen Moderator, and J. H. M. Knox, D.D., of the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, was elected Temporary Clerk.

After the appointment of the several standing committees, and the despatch of several items of routine business, the correspondence between the Moderator of the last Assembly and the Moderator of the Assembly of the Presbyterian church, was submitted, and is as follows:

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO, June 6, 1862.

REV. DR. GEORGE DUFFIELD, *Moderator*:

*Rev. and Dear Brother*—I have the great pleasure of communicating to you, as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church recently met in Cincinnati, the accompanying document, being a minute adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church which met in Columbus.

The expressions of all the members with regard to a correspondence with your branch of the Presbyterian family were