

Vindictory Justice Essential to God

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1881

Discussions, vol. 1: *Theological & Evangelical*, ed. C.R. Vaughan
(Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1890), pp. 466-481.

Originally published in *Southern Pulpit* (April, 1881)

Transcribed by Paul Barth

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“Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality: eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness: indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the gentile, but glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God.”

Romans 2:6-11

In the first revelation which God ever made to man, that of Paradise, justice was declared as clearly as grace. Was the garden adorned for man's occupancy by the lavish hand of divine benevolence, and was eternal and assured blessedness offered him on the easy terms of refraining from the fruit of one tree? Yet justice added the threat: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." As soon as innocent man fell, and it became necessary to reveal a religion for sinners, the foremost point of this creed was the necessity that sin must be punished for the satisfaction of the divine perfections.

The chief aim of God, in every institution of Old Testament religion, was obviously to make this prime truth stand out to the apprehension of sinners. "What was the prominent addition made to the worship of Paradise? Bloody sacrifice, and that undoubtedly ordained by God, since Abel's faith in offering it must have had such a warrant. And this remained the grand characteristic of the religion for sinners until the Lamb of God came, who taketh away the sin of the world. Wherever the patriarchs approached the throne of grace, there the altar must be reared: before the gates of the lost Eden; on the steaming soil of the earth, just yielded up by the avenging waters; on the plains of Mamre; at Horeb, and through all the centuries of the sanctuary, the orisons of faith and penitence must be accompanied with the streaming blood of a victim and the avenging fire of the altar. They could only rise to heaven when attended by the smoke of sacrifice. God was thus teaching all ages this foundation truth of the theology of redemption, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The guilt

of sin must be avenged by the just penalty, for the satisfaction of God's perfections, before the sinner can be forgiven.

But this principle, which God so obviously places in the forefront of his gospel, is one to which the carnal mind is most obtuse. This strange and obstinate forgetfulness is manifested at once by the crude notions of the people, and the speculations of the scholar. Investigate the alarmed conscience, not yet taught of the Spirit, and you will usually find an utter unconsciousness of the necessity for satisfaction for guilt, and of the true object of Christ's sacrificial sufferings. Ask the distressed sinner how he hopes to be forgiven. He will tell you, "For the sake of my repentance;" or "of my prayers;" or "of my new obedience;" or "of my penances." Anything rather than the one Bible answer, " For the merit of the penal sufferings and death of my divine substitute." And when you have swept away those refuges of lies, and even left the cowering soul desperate of all other resort, you may hold up this, the only source of pardon, to his despairing eyes, and he will turn away unsatisfied and stolid. The cross is "unto him foolishness," unless He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shine into his mind to teach him its glory.

So the speculations of carnal science betray a similar incompetency of the fallen mind of sinners for this fundamental truth. Let philosophy, falsely so called, set itself to devise a theory accounting for the infliction of punishment on sin, or for the necessity of Christ's sacrifice, and you shall hear any inconsequent scheme whatsoever, rather than the true one. One dreamer will tell us that punishment is not the decree of God's special providence at all, but the regular and unavoidable effect of the system of nature, as though that system were aught else than the expression of God's almighty will. Another will teach that God's vindicatory justice is nothing but "benevolence guided by wisdom;" that love is the only essential attribute of God's moral nature; that the true end of punishment is the reformation of the offender, or, at most, the politic and benevolent expedient to deter men, free agents, from sin, and thus save them from its unavoidable miseries. When they come to explain the sacrifice of Calvary, they are, accordingly, ready to give any other than the true account of it. "It was designed to attest the divine benevolence offered us in the promises." "It was to

instruct us by a splendid example of disinterestedness." "It was to melt our hearts by the spectacle of dying love." "It was to exhibit a dramatic spectacle of the evil of sin." Truly, saith the sacred Scriptures, it was incidentally all this; but because it was chiefly and primarily intended to satisfy God's holy perfections by paying the penalty of sin.

In order, then, to lay a foundation for your understanding of this way of salvation, I ask you to consider the scriptural account of God's punitive justice. I have chosen, for this purpose, one of the fullest and most solemn declarations of the whole Bible:

"But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God."

The passage is too clear to require critical exposition. It declares that God, at the revelation of his righteous judgment, will render to every man according to his deeds. This is the inspired definition of distributive justice. That justice has two correlative branches, the one as inevitable as the other; the one requires the reward of eternal life for righteousness; the other requires the penalty of eternal anguish for evil doing. In the impartial distribution of these sanctions no boast of name, or race, or profession, or privilege, will avail anything; the guilty Jew will meet the same doom with the equally guilty Gentile; and the righteous Gentile will reap the same reward with the righteous Jew; "for there is no respect of persons with God." It is the divine equity and impartiality which cause these awards. Here we have, then, the simple account of God's distributive justice, in his own words. He rewards and punishes, not mainly to reform the offender for his good, nor mainly out of a benevolent expediency, but mainly because his rectitude requires it. Sin is punished because of its desert of punishment in the estimate of the divine equity. God's fundamental motive to punish is the honor of his own principles, as a holy sovereign and impartial ruler. I have thus repeated the proposition

of the text in several equivalent forms, that no one may mistake its intent. All that I assert is summed up in this: that God's punishments are primarily designed to satisfy his own rectitude by giving sin its desert.

In exposing the erroneous theories, which will be my first attempt I would admonish you against the delusion, which has deceived many minds, from likening God's penalties to those of secular government. Thus, the jurist Grotius, seeing that the penal legislation of the commonwealth is, properly, designed in large degree as an expedient to repress crime, imputed no higher purpose to God's justice. He forgot that God has reserved to himself the supreme function of vengeance (Rom. 12:19), and assigned to the magistrate the lower and temporary purposes of law. He forgot, also, that if the penalties of the magistrate ever lose sight of their true ground, in the evil desert of the crimes punished, they at once sink from the rank of a benevolent and righteous expediency to the grade of odious iniquities. I pray you, beware of this mistake.

But to proceed: It may be quickly decided whether God's penalties on sin can be explained as means designed for the benefit of the sinner. Many of his most notable punishments summarily destroyed the culprits; the flood; the doom of Sodom; the extermination of the Amorites, when their "iniquities were full"; the final and endless punishments of hell. At the simple mention of these instances this part of the false theory dissolves like a thin cloud.

But it may be argued, the amendment of these sinners had become hopeless and their continued existence incompatible with the welfare of the more numerous and more righteous fellow creatures. Let love, say they, be God's sole and consummate moral attribute. Let all virtue be defined as benevolence. Then the moral ground for inflicting the misery of penalties on sinners will be found solely in this fact, that such sufferings are the necessary expedients of wise benevolence to curb the evils of sin within the narrowest possible limits. God punishes the incorrigible sinner only because by this means he secures "the greater good of the greater number." "His seeming vengeance is but love." Thus, these theorists, placing a

fragment of the truth in place of the whole truth, turn upon us and arrogantly contrast what they claim to be the mildness and sweetness of their creed, with the vengeful severity of ours. Our God, say they, is the God of love. Yours is the brutal theology of ancient barbarians, who sanctified their malicious revenge under the name of vindicatory justice, and represented to themselves a God, like themselves, pleased with the fumes of his enemies' blood. It is "the theology of the shambles." Our God has no emotion towards any of his creatures but benevolence; he desires no retribution of the sinner for "its own sake!"

Let us see how this will stand the test of reason and sacred Scriptures. Does God love a good man any more than he loves a wicked one? You are compelled to say yes. Then, for what does God love the good man most? For his righteousness. Then God loves righteousness? Yes. If he did not he would be himself unrighteous. But righteousness and sin are the opposite poles of character; to love the one is to hate the other, just as necessarily as the attraction of the North Pole for one end of the magnet implies its repulsion of the other end.

This pretended resolution of punitive justice into benevolent expediency is, in its result, impious towards God, and practically identical with the ethics of supreme selfishness. The sacred Scriptures teach that "man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." The humanitarian scheme proposes as our most virtuous end, not God's glory (this would be, say they, to make God the infinite egotist), but advantage to man. To man in general, not self. This, they claim, is true disinterestedness. But by what logic can it be denied that whatever is made our highest ultimate end is practically made our God? It is nothing to the purpose that names and titles are decently exchanged, and man is still called the creature, and Jehovah the God. Virtually, the aggregate of humanity is made our true divinity by being made our moral end, and Jehovah is only retained, if retained at all, as a sort of omnipotent conveniency and servitor of this creature-God. Further: this result is also involved, that inasmuch as the benevolent man is himself a part of this aggregate humanity, which is his moral end, he is a part of his own God. He himself is, in part at least, his own supreme end! Here begins to crop out the tendency of this scheme of pretended benevolence towards supreme selfishness.

The completion of the process is easy and short. If the advantage of aggregate humanity is my proper moral end, and I am one of the integers thereof, "by nature equal to any other," what so reasonable as that I should recognize the humanity embodied in myself as my own nearest and most attainable end? Does not nature herself seem to sanction this conclusion by the instinct of self-love? Man's powers are very narrow; hence, were he to direct the efforts of his benevolence equally to the whole aggregate, they would be wholly nugatory. He can only serve the mass by serving a few individuals in it. Nature has given me more direct means to benefit my own destiny than any other man's. Hence, obviously, the best mode for me to seek the advantage of aggregate humanity is to make my own advantage my supreme end! Such is the abominable conclusion of the process; and the process is, from these principles, perfectly valid.

In proof of this, let me cite to you a few words from the "system" of Dr. Samuel Hopkins. This divine had embraced with enthusiasm the speculation which resolves all morality into disinterested benevolence. In unfolding it, he carries the principle out to its selfish result with an unconscious simplicity and candor, which strangely illustrates the force of the logic; it led him, against his will, and without his seeing it, to the opposite point from that he intended to reach. Hear him:

"And as every person is nearest to himself, and is most in his own view; has opportunity to be better acquainted with his own circumstances, and to know his own wants, his mercies and enjoyments, etc., and has a more particular care of his own interest than of that of others, and is under greater advantage to promote his own happiness than others, his disinterested, universal benevolence will attend more to his own interest, and he will have more and stronger exercises of it, respecting his own circumstances and happiness, than those of others, all other things being equal; not because it is his own interest, but for the reason just given."

That is to say, he may practice supreme selfishness, provided he is not selfish in doing so. Thus, this boasted scheme of disinterestedness resolves itself into a most odious one of selfish expediency.

This conclusion suggests the following refutation: If punishment of sin is only a benevolent expedient to reform the transgressor and repress crime, then the expedient which is most effectual is most just. Let us suppose any case in which the criminal, and others who are disposed to imitate him, would be more deterred by the punishment of an innocent victim than by the chastisement of the offender himself, then it would be more just to take vengeance of the innocent in that case than of the guilty. Nor is it at all impossible that such instances may arise. Here is an outlaw, hardened and desperate in crime, callous to shame, and weary even of his life, whom you propose to curb by penal inflictions. But what cares he for your threats? His name has been too long synonymous with infamy to be blackened any farther by your sentence. Your jail is rather a refuge, with all its hardships, when compared with the miseries of his vagrant life. That life has no value in his eyes. He defies your threats, and mocks your fiercest severities. Your penal expediency has lost its whole power with him. But now steps forward one of your police agents and informs you that there is one green spot in that seated and arid heart; that this desperado has a child whom he loves, an only child, a tender daughter, whose purity has strangely exempted her from the contamination of her father's character. Punish her with stripes; let him look on and see her tender flesh torn with the scourge, and hear her screams; and this rugged heart will relent, which else would look the cruelest death in the face and refuse to quail. The success of the result justifies its righteousness, does it not? "Punitive justice is but a benevolent and necessary expediency to repress crime." That is the doctrine! In this case, the scourging of tender innocence is most expedient — yea, the only expedient — and therefore the most righteous. Can any human heart consent to this? No! You repel the monstrous iniquity with just abhorrence. Then you must reject the plausible, but hateful error, from which it flows as a necessary consequence.

But there is another difference between human authority and divine, which has been overlooked by this false theory. "Expedients" are the resort only of the weak. Omnipotence has no need of expedients, for it can march straight to its desired ends, and command success in their attainment by whatever road it prefers. All Christians hold that God is omniscient in knowledge and omnipotent in power; that his understanding is infinite, and his power

competent to every effect. Now, if benevolence is his exclusive moral attribute, constituting his whole moral nature, God must be infinitely benevolent. His omnipotence makes it as easy for him to prevent transgression by some other system, not involving penal sufferings, as by this expedient. Hence, his infinite benevolence must prompt him to prefer that other system, for thereby there would be a clear gain of the aggregate of happiness to creatures. And if benevolence constitutes God's whole moral nature, then that aggregate happiness, the largest possible, must be his chief end as to them. Why did he not convert Judas, instead of punishing him? "Had he not the residue of the Spirit?" Here is a father, whose heart is nothing but kindness, as this theory represents. Many of his children are scourged by virulent ulcers; and the pitying father amputates their limbs or burns out the sores with cauteries, lest they should terminate in the worse evil of death, and infect also the other children. But suppose it should appear that this father is able to cure these ulcers radically by a healing word, without more than a momentary pang. Then, if kindness is the only consideration, why did it not decide this father to adopt the latter means for arresting the misery among his children? Why all this gratuitous resort to the knife and cautery? Truly, it would rather seem as though this parent, instead of having a nature made up exclusively of kindness, must be possessed by an unmitigated malignity, which took pleasure in inflicting agony for its own sake.

But especially is it impossible on this theory of expediency to account for everlasting punishments under the government of an almighty God. Here the plea that the penal pain is for the good of the sufferer, is utterly inapplicable, for he is to sin and suffer forever, without amendment or advantage. Nor will the other plea avail, that penalties are for the prevention of crime in others, for the Scriptures represent the awful infliction as continuing on and on through everlasting ages, after all the penitent shall have been perfected, and all the perfect securely enclosed in the protecting walls of heaven. Why has God adopted this system of just rewards and punishments, resulting, as he must have foreseen, in this measureless aggregate of woe, when his wisdom and power might have provided some other plan which did not include this terrible incident? To this utilitarian philosophy there is no answer. He who holds it consistently should either go consistently to Universalism, and assert that there is no hell,

or he must deny the omnipotence of God and contradict the sacred Scriptures, and insult its author by saying that he punishes a Judas because he is unable to convert him.

The scheme, my brethren, will not do. "God is love," and "God is also a consuming fire." He is infinitely benevolent in all ways consistent with his honor, and also infinitely just. Sin is punished by him, not mainly out of a benevolent expediency, but because its ill-desert requires punishment; because the honor of God's impartial justice, as the infinite sovereign for whose glory all creatures exist, and as the Chief Magistrate of his vast republic, necessitates his dealing with every moral act as it deserves. (Text)

The affirmative argument of this truth will, briefly, compose the second part of this discourse. My first appeal is to your own consciences. Every man who believes in a God recognizes the justice of God, and that imprinted on the conscience of the creature, as the same in principles or rudimental nature. For two reasons we must believe this, because our souls were created in the spiritual image of God (of which conscience is the chief lineament which is not obliterated), and because government and governed must vouch and live by the same code of justice, in order that the government may be honored. Let any man, then, dispassionately examine his own conscience, and ask himself why he approves of the punishment of sin. The simple answer of the mind is, because sin deserves to be punished. The discrimination which the reason of man intuitively makes between the right and the wrong act, and the righteous and the wicked agent, awakens necessarily the feeling of approbation and disapprobation. We judge and feel that the righteous agent deserves well; the wicked agent deserves ill. Desert or ill-desert is inseparable from moral agency. Is not this so? But desert of what? When you said the one deserved well and the other ill you had already answered the question. The right agent deserves reward and the wicked deserves penalty, and the one title is the counterpart of the other. The connection between transgression and punishment, by its ill-desert, is immediate, and morally necessary.

Let me remind you, in a few familiar instances, of the fact that this is the intuition by which your own mind unavoidably judges in every moral problem. Why is there so much

sorrow and pain in this world of our heavenly Father? Every thoughtful mind which cherishes any reverence for him answers: Because this world is so full of sin. It is the creature's sin which accounts for and justifies all this suffering under the providence of an Almighty Being. But this solution is made by assuming the ill-desert of sin making the guilty creature worthy of the suffering.

Again, why does every unpardoned soul, Christian or heathen, regard it as so "fearful a thing to fall into the hand of the living God?" Why is death formidable? Why does its approach usually awaken so powerfully the conscience of ill-desert? When the solemnity of that hour has swept away the disturbing illusions of sense and worldliness, every rational soul returns from its chase of vanities to the thought of its sins and their dread punishment, as naturally as the needle reverts to the pole. Why is this association so inevitable? It is because reason then speaks the fundamental truth that sin intrinsically deserves, and must receive its due penalty.

Let me take an instance from the more familiar transactions of human justice. Whenever a secular crime has been committed, flagrant enough to arrest your attention, you feel a certain desire that just punishment shall follow. And when, as too often happens through the arts of unscrupulous counsel, or the incompetency of juries, the criminal escapes his just deserts, you feel as though you had been wronged. You feel that you have a right to complain, and with a certain indignation you cry that "the gallows has been cheated." Let us suppose now that the discharged criminal turned upon you and asked, "Why this grief in you at my good fortune? Why this heat and sense of wrong? Were you thirsting to gratify your malignity with my blood? Would the sight of my death agony and of the anguish of my bereaved and dishonored family have been so sweet to you that you coveted to gloat upon it, and begrudge this disappointment of your barbarity?" You, my hearer, would have indignantly repelled such an interpretation of your feelings as an outrage against the truth and yourself. You would have warmly replied: "No, my sentiments were not those of cruelty, but of justice. The sufferings which you deserved would have been in themselves, no joy to me, but a pain. I complain only that justice is robbed of her dues, and every righteous man is

wronged along Another. My heat is not that of cruelty, but of generous justice." Thus your reason would teach you to distinguish in your own case between malice and justice, and you would instinctively feel that while the sentiment of cruelty and revenge is criminal and odious, that of justice is praiseworthy. Here, again, you find your reason proceeding without hesitation upon the intuitive judgment that punishment is what sin intrinsically deserves.

I remarked that when justice is robbed of her dues by the escape of the guilty, every righteous man properly feels that he has been wronged along with her. But let us suppose the case of one who felt himself honestly entitled to reward by his righteous conduct, and who was deprived of his just recompense. He would feel it more strongly that he was the victim of inexcusable wrong. Now let us suppose that it were pointed out to him how some benevolent expediency required the Ruler to deprive him of the recompense which he had earned, in order to bestow it on one who had earned nothing. Let us suppose a glowing picture of the beneficent results, the politic advantages of that disposition of affairs, to be placed before him, in order to reconcile him to his loss. He is reminded that distributive justice is but "benevolence guided by wisdom," and as, in this case, the benevolence had directed his well earned recompense away from him to his fellow, he must acquiesce in the justice of the award. Would he be thus reconciled? Nay, verily. His reason and heart would both rise up in irreconcilable resistance against such a conclusion. They would declare that his duly earned reward was his by a bond too sacred to be ruptured by any plea of expediency or advantage. And never until reason was dethroned would that man cease to believe that he was the victim of an unmixed iniquity. We may not "do evil that good may come." "The damnation of those who teach thus is just." But now you are to be reminded that right and wrong are the two opposite poles of this one moral magnet, the conscience; that the same intuitive principle of reason which attracts us to the right, repels us from the wrong; that the title of the transgressor to his penalty is the same title with that of the righteous man to his reward. Such is the doctrine of our text:

"Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of

persons with God." (Rom. 2:9-11)

"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." (Prov. 12:15)

Thus it appears from this new point of view that God can no more fail to punish sin justly than to reward holiness faithfully. The divine impartiality, then, must prompt God with an everlasting certainty to render to everyone according to his works.

There is one more thought which deserves to be added to this demonstration. The divine Judge has made incomplete and unequal inflictions upon men for their sins in this world. He has made a beginning of this retributive work. Then he must complete it. He has chastised some of the less guilty more heavily than he has smitten some of the more guilty. It behooves Him then — with awful reverence we say it — to go on until he has made his judicial work equal. Inferior rulers may defend the equity of their intentions amidst the imperfections and inequalities of their administration, by pleading the limitation of their powers. They may claim that they have done the best their circumstances and their nature permitted. But God's infinite perfections stop him from the use of this plea, as they remove both the occasion and the desire to use it. "With Him all things are possible." Infinite wisdom and power, and absolute sovereignty, leave no obstacles between his will and its effectuation. Therefore the actual results of his administration will be a reflection perfectly exact of the preference of the divine mind. If there were imperfections in the result, it could only be because there was injustice in the almighty will. A perfect God must exhibit at last a perfect government. The final adjustment may be long suspended at the prompting of the divine compassion and wisdom, but when God finally declares his judicial work complete, its equity will be in all its multitudinous particulars as absolute as the perfection of the Judge. (Text, verse 11)

The conclusion, then, is that under God's government the punishment of every sin is inevitable. "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." (Ex. 34:7) "That

be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25) " Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." (Ps. 1:5) "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." (Ps. 5:5) " For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 4:23)

The conclusion, then, is that under God's government the punishment of every sin is inevitable. Is then the punishment of every sin inevitable? "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:24-26) Here, then, is the fundamental design of Christ's obedience and sacrifice, to make satisfaction to the justice of God, so that He may be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly which believeth in Jesus. It is this for which chiefly Christ suffered, that the sin might be righteously punished (in our substitute) and the sinner forgiven. Do men tell us that Christ's sacrifice was designed to be an example to us; that it was made to be an attestation of the divine pity; that it is God's expedient to draw us to him by the con straining love of the cross? All this is true. But if any of these objects is advanced as the prime design, the incidental is thrust into the place of the essential. All these statements are subordinately true, but they are true because, and only because, Christ's sacrifice has satisfied the divine perfection outraged by our sins, and thus enabled our God to instruct and melt and allure us by the example of Calvary without dishonoring his eternal justice.

So, men tell us, that executed penalty is God's expedient to repress the mischiefs of transgression, and that he is, therefore, benevolent even in punishing. This also is true as a subordinate truth. God's rectoral justice and the interests of his holy creatures who, under a covenant of works or of grace, have confidingly entrusted themselves to his guardianship, are secondary motives for the regular administrations of these sanctions of his beneficent law.

But God gives this expression of his benevolence even in his justice, only because his justice punishes for the intrinsic deserts of sin. To act on any other foundation would leave neither justice nor benevolence. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." (Ps. 89:14)

Let me beseech every soul, then, who is conscious of sin, to pay this tribute to the rights and honor of the divine justice, namely, to accept Christ's vicarious, penal satisfaction as the necessary provision for the remission of the guilt which he confesses. To go to God for pardon with any other plea, to urge before him the atoning merit of your repentance, or reform, or alms, or works, to appeal to an indiscriminate pity without this propitiatory satisfaction for your guilt in the forefront of your petition is but an insult to God. It is as though the confessing and convicted felon should impudently require the judge to forswear himself and drag his judicial ermine in the mire of iniquity, in order to procure for him, him deserving only of execration and doom, the impunity which his ruthless self-love craved. It is worse, as much worse as the honor, the holiness, the majesty of God are above all human dignities.

On like grounds, I assert that such a salvation as is imagined by this humanitarian theology would be as corrupting to men as dishonoring to God. It is easy to retort on the advocates of that scheme, with crushing effect, the charges which they fling upon the moral effects of our gospel. They flout the idea of an intrinsic obligation to penalty in every sin. They say the pretended justice which demands it is but barbarian revenge cloaked under the veil of equity, and the creed which symbolized this necessity of just retribution by the perpetual stream of sacrificial blood, was but "a theology of the shambles." They declare substitution and imputation immoral. But I forewarn you, when you hear one of these advocates of "advanced thought" babbling this shallow creed, if he be not only babbling in the idleness of his conceit, you had best regard him as a man not to be trusted. He is shamelessly confessing his insensibility to moral obligation. The obligation of ill-desert to penalty is as original as the right of well-desert to its reward. He who boasts his indifference to the one will not be slow to betray his indifference to the other. He who is ready so flippantly to strip his

God of his judicial rights will not stickle to plunder a fellowman of his rights. In this theory of sin, punishment and atonement, he has adopted the creed of expediency, as distinguished from that of just principle. Will he not act on a similar one in his own affairs? Worse than all, he has fashioned to himself a God of expediency. Nothing on earth can be so corrupting to the soul as to have an imperfect or corrupt model exalted upon its throne as the object of its adoration, the standard of its imitation, the regulator of its principles and conduct. It is of the inventors of idols that the Psalmist says (115:8), "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." As the arrow is ever prone to sink somewhat beneath the mark, so will human imitation degrade itself always below the level of the God whom it has proposed to itself; men will ever allow themselves more license than they impute to their divinities.

Nor can any preceptive stringency in the law of God repair this corrupting effect. God has, indeed, spoken plainly enough to us as to the code of ethics on which he requires us to act. He tells us that we are in no case to sacrifice principle to policy or simple justice to kindness. "Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause." (Ex. 23:3.) "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." (Prov. 17:15.)

If life itself comes into competition with truth or right, life must be sacrificed rather than they. Such is the high and holy standard he has enjoined upon us. But this God has also told us that our holiness is to consist in the imitation of him. Can He, then, adopt a standard of expediency for himself which he has so sternly prohibited to us? But if he could, what effect could his prohibition have on us, save to make us mean and truckling eye servants? A father prohibits his sons, under the severest penalty, from ever postponing principle to policy, even under the enticement of the greatest advantage. But the sons see their father do the very thing as often as plausible occasion arises. Such, a family government as this may make them skulking hypocrites; it can never make them honest men. I repeat, then, that this "school of advanced thought," which is as old, stale, and trite as Pelagianism, is only an advancement backwards, towards unprincipled morals, and is, therefore, dishonorable to

God. Let this, then, be the conclusion of the matter: that God stakes his own glory, which is the supreme ultimate end of all his action, upon rendering to every work according to its desert. Guilt, once incurred, is irremissible before Him. God's attributes of impartial justice, of truth, of holiness; yea, of benevolence also, O sinner! with every right and interest of his vast commonwealth of holy creatures, rise up in adamant array to forbid your escape from guilt until it is removed by the penal satisfaction of the cross. (Isaiah 53:5) But if you will honor God by pleading this satisfaction, then "He will turn again; He will have compassion upon you; He will subdue your iniquities; He will cast all your sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19).