

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW,

VOL. XXXII.—NO. 2.

APRIL, MDCCCLXXXI.

ARTICLE I.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BE UNIVERSALLY CONFESED.*

The pure and unsullied righteousness of God lies at the foundation of all right conceptions of his nature, his word, and his works. God is himself absolute moral perfection. Whatever he speaks is absolute truth; whatever he does is absolute righteousness. It must be so. The God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom and power, must be so no less in his holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. You can more reasonably deny the existence of God altogether, than deny that. An infinite devil is a moral impossibility; our reason revolts at it, no less than our conscience. The heathen, with all their devil-worship, have never imagined, much less believed in, such a monster. The advocates of Dualism never held to such an absurdity; for even in their view, the eternal principle of evil is eternally limited and checked by the eternal principle of good. Consciously or unconsciously, the mind refuses to ascribe infinite attributes to a being even tainted with moral imperfection. Jupiter with all his magnificence

*Some peculiarities of this paper render it proper to state that it embodies the substance of a sermon preached before the late Synod of South Carolina, which has been reduced to writing and prepared for publication in this form, at the particular request of one of the Editors of this REVIEW.

and awful majesty, was stained with too many crimes to be regarded as infinite and eternal even by his own worshippers. In Christian lands, the men who deny in theory the righteousness of God's administration, deny also his being or personality, as if in sheer consistency; so that even by their implied confession, if there be a God who is infinite and eternal, he must be a God of infinite righteousness. The only hope of lost men is based on this great necessary truth. Were there "none righteous, no, not one," in heaven above any more than in earth beneath, whither, ah, whither should we flee!

In theory, or in the way of vague general statement, it is easy to secure the ready admission of all this; but in practice, the righteousness of God in his dealings with us, and with a world of sinners, is precisely what the heart of fallen man (whatever his mind may say) is slow to admit. It is the old complaint of man against his Maker, as much so now as in the days of the Hebrew prophet: "The ways of the Lord are not equal"—equitable.

But the truly pious heart delights to acknowledge that "the Lord is holy in all his ways, and righteous (or, "merciful") in all his works." To all his regenerate people, that perfect transcript of his moral nature, "the law, is (and must be) holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." In all true conviction of sin there is the same absolute and unqualified confession. Job, who, while contending with sinners like himself, was resolved (and not without good cause) to maintain his integrity till he died, no sooner heard the voice of God himself, than he cried: "Behold I am vile! what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth!" And yet once more, and more expressly: "I have uttered that which I understood not! * * * I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" Isaiah, the man whose lips were touched with seraphic fire, cried in dismay: "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" "But we are all as an unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are as

filthy rags ; and we all do fade as a leaf ; and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away !” So Daniel exclaims : “ O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee ; but unto us confusion of faces as at this day !” To which Ezra adds this solemn and affecting testimony : “ O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face unto thee, my God ; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.”

As these are the touching confessions of sin spoken by eminent saints of God, so the same is true of all really convicted sinners. Watts well expresses the inmost consciousness of every truly convicted sinner, in these familiar lines :—

“ My lips with shame my sins confess
Against thy law, against thy grace :
Lord, should thy judgments grow severe,
I am condemned, but thou art clear !”

The conviction of sin which does not reach to this—and it is to be feared that much of what passes under that name is of this character—is a contradiction in terms, and wholly unworthy of the name ; it may be a vague or a vivid conviction of *danger*, but not of *sin*. In theory we may be sound enough ; there may be no room to complain of our orthodoxy ; but till the heart is really broken under an intelligent and thorough conviction that God is wholly right, and we are wholly wrong, there is neither health nor healing for us. By nature our guilt is only equalled by our insensibility. Thus it happens that while sunk in spiritual unconsciousness, we may please ourselves with our self-complaisant judgments of God, his ways and word and works ; but let one ray of his glory break upon us, and, like Job, we are dumb !

Now what is true of his people, and of convicted sinners, God intends shall be true, deeply, thoroughly, experimentally true, of all men without distinction. “ What things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law ; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.” Rom. iii. 19. It is not that all sinners shall acknowledge God’s righteousness in theory, or in the abstract, or in general terms, but most practically, and in respect of their own personal guilt ; they shall own his righteousness as regards his whole procedure towards

sinner, and particularly in the matter of their eternal condemnation. Sublime, grand, soul-moving truth!—it is God's purpose to save his elect, believing, obedient people, and to destroy his stubborn, proud, and unbelieving foes; but to do it in such a way as that the one shall have nothing to glory of, and the other nothing of which to complain. His righteousness is to be so signally manifest therein, that "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." The apostle of course does not mean that men will become guilty then who were not guilty before; but that, conscience-stricken, sinners will find no excuse or palliation to plead, nor any complaint or protest to offer; but becoming at last profoundly conscious of their sins, they will own themselves to be guilty and inexcusable before God.

This appears to be in some respects the most wonderful declaration in the Bible; and at first sight it would seem to be the most impossible thing God could undertake to accomplish. The guilt of men is, indeed, a thing most undeniably true. The whole gospel is based upon that fact. There is no such thing as "the grace of God," if all men are not, as the apostle says, "without excuse" for their wilful and persistent apostasy from him. Yet the guilt of men is one thing, and their unqualified confession of that guilt is quite another. That the saved should confess their own deep unworthiness, and God's sovereign and unmerited mercy, seems reasonable enough; though by far the greater part of the nominally Christian world deny it: but that the lost should own God's righteousness in their own condemnation, that they should plead *guilty* at his bar, and have nothing to allege in their own defence, is the most amazing of wonders. The more we revolve this thought in our minds, the more amazing does it grow. When we reflect how men are born into the world with a corrupt nature; when we remember under what various, and for the most part pernicious, systems of government, morals, and social life they are trained up to adult age; when we take into view the absolute moral impossibility of three-fourths of earth's teeming millions, when arrived at adult age, attaining even in this nineteenth century of grace to an intelligent conception of the way of salvation; when we consider what multitudes are born in infamy,

baptized into vice, and schooled in wickedness by those who exercise parental authority over them; when we call up and pass in review the millions of the living and of the dead, who have been taught, persuaded, seduced, commanded, persecuted, compelled to do wickedly, to forsake the counsel of the Almighty, to worship false and abominable deities, or to worship the true God in ways and to a purpose which he has expressly and most severely forbidden—we stand bewildered in the presence of this awful declaration, that “every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God!”

Now men in general have no idea that it will be so. They believe that the reverse will be exactly true. They think it possible that God may conquer because he is mighty; that he may bind puny mortals because they are weak: they suppose that the finally lost, if such there be, may submit to a hard lot, because they cannot help themselves: but they imagine that there will at least remain to them the right of protest—solemn protest against the arbitrary and irresponsible use of almighty power. Now there can be no doubt that God could bind us hand and foot and cast us, the strong and the weak together, into the outer darkness, with as much ease and expedition as we can manage a spider or a fly: but what glory would that be to him, what honor, if righteousness remained, even partly, with the vanquished, or at least a righteous protest against God’s procedure as faulty, rash, hasty, irascible, unjust, tyrannical, cruel, oppressive, or even excessively severe? However impossible of performance it may seem to us, the honor of God and the spotlessness of his throne demand that his righteousness be confessed as well as his power; or as the apostle expresses it, “that every mouth be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.”

We go forth among men and listen to their self-conceited judgments about God and divine things; their proud and vain glorious thoughts of themselves; their coolly expressed opinions about sin and salvation; the fall, the atonement, and regeneration; the trinity, the incarnation, miracles, inspiration, hell, heaven—of what they will, and what they won’t believe; of what God may, and what he cannot, do:—but amid this Babel of vain opinions

and conceits, let God but signally manifest, in any one of a thousand ways, his presence and his power, and all this profane babbling is hushed in an instant! Even so natural, or ordinary, an occurrence as the falling of a thunderbolt at their feet, is enough to fill them, for the moment, with a painful sense of their impertinence or impiety. How ought this to teach us sobriety and modesty in all our judgments upon the word, works, and ways of God!*

Many there are of God's professed and believing servants who are at times greatly perplexed and troubled upon this very point. They are harassed with a secret dread lest God should become

*Above all men of commanding talents who have lived since the times of the apostles and prophets, John Calvin, perhaps, was possessed of this spirit in the most eminent degree. He had his faults, and he committed his errors; he would not have been human had it been otherwise: one of his last acts, upon his dying bed, was to ask pardon of his associates for his personal failings, and particularly for his infirmities of temper, which occasionally manifested itself in outbursts of irrepressible indignation. But his few recorded errors were committed out of zeal for God's glory, and for the repression of wickedness. It is precisely this characteristic trait of his—to maintain God's righteousness, however severe the condemnation of sinners—which has procured for him the obloquy and maledictions of multitudes who owe to him, directly or indirectly, their richest temporal and spiritual blessings. Calvin holds his heart in his hand, and moves the scorn and hatred of unrenowned men, while he stirs to their depths the hearts of all who fear before the one only and eternal God of righteousness and truth, with these awful words: "But the folly of being afraid that too much cruelty is attributed to God, if the reprobate are doomed to eternal destruction, is evident even to the blind. * * * But their sins are temporary. This I grant; but the majesty of God, as well as his justice, which their sins have violated, is eternal. Their iniquity, therefore, is justly remembered. Then the punishment is alleged to be excessive, being disproportioned to the crime. *But this is intolerable blasphemy, when the majesty of God is so little valued, and when the contempt of it is considered of no more consequence than the destruction of one soul!* But let us pass by these triflers, lest, contrary to what we have before said, we should appear to consider their reveries worthy of refutation." Institutes, B. III. Ch. xxv. end of Sec. 5.

In Christ's coming kingdom of righteousness and eternal life, it will be a privilege to look upon the face of the man whose God-fearing soul was capable of conceiving, and his honest lips of uttering, a sentiment like that, which causes men's hearts to quake like a call to judgment.

guilty of injustice, or cruelty, or at least of a culpable degree of rigor, if he does just what his word declares, and executes the solemn threatenings of his law. The fear that in the end it may not turn out that the throne of God is guiltless forever, haunts them day and night, and puts their invention upon the rack to devise some theory or scheme by which the glory of God's righteousness may be saved from the turpitude of an endless dishonor. It will be sufficient to refer to the Bible doctrines of the fall of man, the imputation of Adam's sin, the election of grace, the free agency of men and their consequent responsibility for their opinions and beliefs as well as their corresponding deportment, the eternal and irreversible decrees, or purposes, of God, the hopeless perdition of all "who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," and other such like Bible doctrines, in order to explain the allusion. And yet a moment's reflection is enough to convince any man who is in his right spiritual senses, that the short line of our feeble and darkened understandings cannot reach half way down to the bottom of these deep matters, where doubtless the minds of angels are put upon the strain, if not quite overtasked. We may, in any case, spare ourselves all such needless concern on God's account, and rest our hearts upon the divine assurance that in that sublime hour of destiny, when eternal life and everlasting damnation shall stand unveiled, stretching forth in interminable vistas of glory, honor, and peace, or of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, before our amazed and astonished vision, "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." The lost shall confess his righteousness as unequivocally as the saved! God has declared it must and shall be so.

It were a small matter with the Infinite One to tread down Satan with all his agents, abettors, and followers, angelic or human, beneath his feet; and doubtless he would long since have done so, long since he would have verified all that is comprised in "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness," wiping away tears from off all faces, swallowing up death in victory and taking away the rebuke of his people from off all the earth, had not considerations of the highest importance called

for this long and dreadful reign of error, sin and death. Here as elsewhere, faith in God is our only recourse. The infinite Reason cannot act arbitrarily: with him there must be an infinitely wise and an infinitely immaculate reason for his whole course of dealing with sin and sinners, angelic and human, from first to last. Infinite Love can never "afflict willingly." Infinite Wisdom can never err, either in counsel or execution. Infinite Power can never be limited or checked in its resistless operation, except by infinite holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Lost and confounded, then, in this labyrinth of difficulties, in which so many harass or finally destroy themselves, making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, the believing soul exclaims: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good!" And he himself quiets our apprehensions the while, with the assurance, not only that "the Judge of all the earth will do right," not only that he will "judge the world in righteousness," but that he will "openly manifest his righteousness in the sight of all nations," and his throne shall be universally confessed as guiltless forever. "His judgments are righteous and true;" "he will be justified in his sayings, and will overcome when he is judged."

While then we are bewildered and amazed in the contemplation of this wonderful thing which the Lord has made known unto us in his word, let us notice with due particularity and emphasis THE GROUND of this universal self-condemnation. It is THE LAW (to which heaven, earth, and hell are subject), whether written on tables of stone, or on the fleshly tables of the heart. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." In nothing has Satan so signally failed, as in the attempt to blot out from his own and from the mind of sinners a sense of personal accountability.* During the six thousand years of the reign of

*The Day of Judgment, that mysterious and wonderful day of which the Bible is so full, is as far in the future to the devil as it is to us. Matt. viii. 29 and James ii. 19 furnish no sufficient ground for the common notion that wicked angels accept as certain the fact of their responsibility and of God's coming judgment, any more than wicked men. They know more, indeed, of God's power than men do, and have reason to tremble at it;

sin and death in this lost world, there is nothing men have so earnestly essayed to do as to rid themselves of the consciousness of their responsibility to God; or in other words, of the fact that they must answer to him for the deeds done in the body. But they have utterly failed. Success in this matter would be self-destruction. Blot out the fact of man's accountability, and you destroy the grand distinction between men and brutes; blot out the consciousness of that accountability, and the race of man sinks at once to a lower level than the devil and his angels. How it will be when the account has once for all been rendered, when man is no longer properly *account-able*, when there no longer "remains a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries," but the more fearful realisation of it instead, we dare not divine: that eternal reign of *lawlessness* is too densely dark for us as yet to comprehend it: but thus far, through the long reign of sin and death, there lies deep down in the inmost soul of every child of Adam, a secret, ineradicable consciousness that he is THE SUBJECT OF LAW; and inseparably joined with this, is the twin consciousness that systematically, persistently, not by accident, inadvertence, or compulsion, but of deliberate choice and fixed purpose, he has violated that law and disregarded his moral obligations, by sins of omission and commission, times and ways beyond all his power to compute them. It may slumber ordinarily; but it slumbers *there*, deep down in his heart, imperishable as the soul of man, and ready at any moment to be

but sin would not be that *folly* which the word of God everywhere represents it to be, if Satan accepted in advance God's judgment and his own accountability, any more than God's commands. Fallen spirits, like fallen men, no doubt hope to "escape the judgment of God." There is every reason to believe that the cry of raging sinners, and raging nations of sinners, "Let us break his bands asunder and cast away his cords from us!" is but an echo of the same cry on the part of the devil and his angels. The most plausible and consistent, unquestionably, of all the conflicting interpretations of Rev. xx. 7-10, is that it represents, in symbolical speech, the last and supreme effort of Satan and his adherents to rebel against and overthrow the authority of "the Judge of the quick and the dead," of angels and of men; who is to "rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

awakened into the most distressing activity and power. During the two hundred generations of the past, parents have taught their children, superiors their inferiors, both by precept and example, the adoption of excuses, pretences, subterfuges, maxims, false systems of morals, and corrupt or corrupted systems of religion, all tending to break down this sense of *responsibility to God**, or to provide some more or less plausible evasion of the stern and solemn obligations it imposes; and yet the conviction, in utter defiance of the will of men and demons, lies as deeply imbedded in the heart of Adam's race this day, as in the dim and distant age when the spirit of error first began "to do his pleasure in the hearts of the children of disobedience." It may be smothered, it may be choked down, it may be, and often is, perverted; but no human or Satanic power or art can eradicate it. It is indestructible as the being of man, or as the throne of God.

If we pass successively through the infinite gradations of belief and practice which are to be found among Protestants, Romanists, Orientals, Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists, Brahmans, Confucians, till we get down into the deepest darknesses of paganism, we shall find the same to be true in every case. Wherever we find the power of reflection, there do we find this twin consciousness of obligation due and obligation disregarded. From the palace to the hovel, from the halls of science to the coal-pit, from pole to pole, from shore to shore, we find this universal consciousness of violated moral obligation—a knowing to do good, and a deliberate choosing to do evil! We peer into the darkest corners of Africa, and we find it there, as everywhere else, to be true, that however little the light men possess, it is more than they wish to improve; however limited their apprehension of holiness and righteousness and truth, it is more

*The most deadly of all the errors of Romanism, that one in which the whole system is summarily comprehended, consists in the substitution of *responsibility to the priest* (or as they say, "the Church," that is the Romish clergy), for *responsibility to God*. By the denial of the right of private judgment and of the unfettered freedom of the Scriptures, God is made to speak intelligibly and authoritatively only through the lips of the "teaching Church;" and "judgment to come" is converted into the great argument for enforcing this dreadful *idolatry of man*.

than they desire to retain in their hearts and their minds; however little the knowledge of God which remains to them, it is always *far in advance of their will to perform it*. Everywhere we find men, women, and children, kings and peasants, sages and simpletons, busy in extinguishing the much or little light they possess, making the worse appear the better way, calling evil good and good evil, putting darkness for light and light for darkness. O Sin, Sin, what error and desolation hast thou wrought upon the earth! "This," says he whom God hath appointed Judge of quick and dead, "this is THE CONDEMNATION—the one condemnation which reaches to every child of Adam, of every race, religion, age and clime, of high and low degree, old and young alike—that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." John iii. 19. To a like purpose God everywhere charges upon men the *inexcusableness* and wilfulness of their perverse and obstinate way: "They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer, when I spake, they did not hear, but they did evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not." Isa. lxvi. 3, 4. "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, any that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one!" Ps. liii. 2, 3. The condemnation is not that all have had and have rejected the gospel; but rather that "they did not (and do not) like to retain God in their knowledge;" their souls are so set against the true light, in whatever degree it reaches to them, that even when without the gospel, they are virtual rejectors of it; for such is their misuse of the light they possess that there exists an antecedent and absolute certainty that (left to their own free will) they will reject Christ just as soon and as persistently as he is offered to them. "The Macedonian cry," in the sense usually attached to the expression, is purely a figment of the imagination. Romancers may tell of men far removed from the reach of gospel influences, who clamor for

the light, and are only too glad to receive it; but he who is himself "the Truth" has declared as the natural condition of all sinners, that they "hate the light;" while that most merciful One who commissioned and sent him forth to seek and save that which was lost, when *he* looked down from heaven to *see if there were any* that did understand, any that did seek God, emphatically declared that there was "none, no, not one!" Long, patient, and persistent are the instructions, persuasions, entreaties, and endless the admonitions (in addition to the promises) that are needed, to say nothing of the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit—and all is none too much to persuade and enable a few, whether in Christian or pagan lands, to embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely in the gospel, and having received him to *walk in him*. Verily has the word of God declared of all alike that "they are without excuse," and that the day is coming when all, without any exception, shall know and shall own themselves to be "without excuse;" when "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."*

*The only conceivable ground, in the nature of things, for God's sovereign election and effectual calling, is this, (and it relieves the subject of one half its difficulties), viz., that GOD ELECTS TO LIFE BECAUSE MAN WILL NOT ELECT. If men would choose, God would be spared the necessity of choice. Nothing sets the stupendous folly and sinfulness of sin in so terribly condemnatory a light as this—that only God's free, sovereign, unconditioned election of some to eternal life has prevented the whole race of man from willingly precipitating itself into the abyss of ruin—grateful to God and man alike for the privilege of being left to do as they please! It is no stern decree of election and reprobation which cries "Hands off!" when sinking shipwrecked souls would clamber into the ark of salvation; it is the sinner himself who cries "Hands off!" when, with a holy violence, believing friends and the convicting Spirit would constrain him no longer to refuse, or delay, but flee at once to the only refuge from the wrath to come.

But the question is perpetually recurring: "If God could eternally decree or purpose, (and effect that purpose in time), to save some, why not then to save all?" Matt. xi. 26 furnishes the only completely satisfactory reply; yet some light may be shed upon this painfully dark subject by the following considerations. In spite of the plainest teachings of Scripture, attested and confirmed by all human observation and experience during the past six thousand years of this world's sad history,

Exceedingly instructive it is to notice once more how little is needed to wake up men from their vain conceits, and fill them with an unendurable sense of their guilt and shame. Nothing more is needed than a little *light from God's throne*. Anything whatever which brings the sinner into a clear consciousness of the presence and power of God, will do it. How unutterably awful is this reflection! and yet nothing is more undeniably certain. The most stout-hearted transgressor, the most hardened unbeliever, at any hour of his existence, and when he least expects it, may be made instantaneously to cry out: "I am undone!"

nine-tenths of the nominally Christian world believe that the election of grace has nothing to do with it, but that the will of every man is alone as decisive of his salvation as of his perdition. How, then, would it be—we beg pardon for the form in which the proposition must unavoidably be put—if God should propose, as the objector would express it, to elect none, but effectually call and save all alike? In that case, so far as reason enlightened by Scripture can guide us to a right conclusion, these consequences would necessarily result: the "second birth" would come to be as natural an event as the first; the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart could not be even suspected; our guilt and danger would seem as unreal as fiction itself; sin, as Paul expresses it, could never "appear (or, "be seen as") sin"; the grace of Christ would be, or would seem to be, as unreal as our guilt and danger; the love of God in bestowing salvation would be no more manifest than in giving rain from heaven; and each man would appear to be, and would inevitably believe himself to be, the author of his own eternal welfare, as truly as the artificer of his own worldly estate. This mass of contradictions brings us back to the point from which we started; and Adam's lost and godless race, profoundly ignorant of its malady, guilt, and misery, on the one hand, and of "the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man," on the other, would, at the end, be as far from salvation as he was at the beginning!

It is a common but an utter mistake to imagine that in the almightiness of his power it is as easy for God to remove sin as to remove mountains; or to heal the souls as the bodies of men; or that he could save the whole race just as readily as an elected people. Heaven is not farther removed from earth than is the moral from the physical universe; and derangements in either require a treatment no less widely different. Our standards do not teach that it was a question of God's "mere good pleasure" whether he would save a part of the race, or save the whole; but rather whether he would save a part, or allow the whole to perish.

It may be proper to remark in passing that if there be force in the above

by the simple discovery of the perpetually existing fact, that he is in the hands of a justly angered God. Every minister of large experience has known men to whom it happened as suddenly, and far more terribly, than to the holy Job; proud, hardened men, perhaps, and not always (nor usually, if the writer's experience may serve as a guide,) resulting in their saving conversion. They waked up for a few days, or weeks, to a terrible and intolerable consciousness of guilt and ill-desert; they felt and confessed, like Saul, that they had "played the fool and erred exceedingly;" and then, without having accomplished anything for their security, they deliberately relapsed into their former and normal condition of spiritual insensibility, with the certainty before their minds that, the distant vision whose dreadful aspect had so terrified their souls, will soon become a present, an ever present reality, to which they will one day wake up, and sleep no more!

reasoning, then "the Millennium," when it is imagined that just the state of things supposed is to be inaugurated and to continue for a thousand years or more—thirty generations at least—is shown to be a moral impossibility. The belief that all men, absolutely or relatively, will be saved during the expected "Millennium," takes for granted that the same might have been true from the beginning, if it had pleased God, in the exercise of his sovereign pleasure and almighty power, to *bind Satan* six thousand years ago, rather than in the predicted thousand years yet to come. But this is as abhorrent to all right feeling, as it is utterly unsustained by Scripture; *which nowhere teaches that anybody will be converted while Satan is shut up in prison.*

Without irreverence it may be said (and the doctrine of Election furnishes the most convincing evidence of it), that sin is a deadly, malignant, incurable, unmanageable, and infinite evil, which taxes the resources of the infinite God to deal with it. Under such circumstances and with respect to the treatment of such an evil, to discard the correlative doctrines of election and effectual calling, as even many Presbyterians incline now to do, and fall to devising ways and means of imparting to the gospel sufficient efficacy to "convert all the world" and "regenerate society," is only to repeat the ruinous experiment made in the days of Constantine and his successors, and reduce the Church to the low level of a *Modern Christian Civilisation Society*. The only real efficacy we can impart to the gospel must ever consist in believing it, obeying it, and preaching and teaching it, *just as God has revealed it.*

The panic terror which often seizes on pagan nations, the superstitious fears (they scarcely know of what) that from the most ancient times have rendered unnumbered millions "all their lifetime subject to bondage," are but examples of this slumbering consciousness of sin, any half-waking movement of which within is enough to fill the soul with vague, but most distressing apprehensions. To his people, who know his power and providence, God says: "Be not ye dismayed at the signs of the heavens, at which the heathen are dismayed." Why is it that any extraordinary portent in the heavens fills the pagan nations, ignorant as they are of God and of his coming judgment, with consternation? It is because these silent remembrancers of the great Unseen awaken their dormant consciousness of guilt and danger. In nations not pagan the same thing has often been witnessed. About the year 1000 the whole of Europe was convulsed, for the space of several years, with the belief, which grew in intensity as that epoch approached, that the last day was at hand. On the 18th day of May, 1875, the busy, enterprising, and prosperous city of San José de Cúcuta, in Colombia, S. A., a place of 8,000 or 10,000 inhabitants, was, in five seconds' time, buried by an earthquake shock beneath its own ruins. The disaster occurred at a quarter past 11 a. m.; the sun was shining in cloudless brilliancy, when in one instant every house was a ruinous heap, and about three thousand souls perished. A dense and stifling cloud of dust went up that darkened the sun in heaven; and when the astonished survivors arose to their feet and looked around them, it was black as midnight. The writer conversed with many who escaped in that dreadful catastrophe, and it appears that with wonderful uniformity the thought assailed every man's soul at the same instant, that the day of judgment had come. The day of judgment! Oh wonderful transformation; and how instantaneous! One moment it was coffee; tobacco; merchandise; buying; selling; getting gain: and then, with the swiftness of the lightning's flash, all these thoughts had vanished, and in every man's heart "*The day of judgment*" was the one absorbing thought! Nor need any ask, Why so? Should some blazing comet pass through these skies to-night, casting a lurid, ominous glare upon the puny

and sinning inhabitants of the earth, more solemn and affecting thoughts of God's eternal judgment would occupy men's minds in one hour's time than all our sermons have been able to produce in a score of years. And why? Because there slumbers in every bosom, Christian, Mohammedan, Jewish, Pagan, A PRE-SAGE OF COMING EVIL, a dumb prophecy of judgment to come, (caused not so much by an external and supernatural revelation, as by an inward conviction that every man is answerable to a Higher Power for violated moral obligations, past all reckoning), a deep and ineradicable conviction of personal guilt, ready to start into distinct and agonizing consciousness upon any and every occasion when God seems to obtrude his unwelcome presence upon the scene of the business, and pleasures, and follies of men. What a thought is this for Christless souls, and how awakening to all who will consider at all their ways and their doings—that the God whose presence they shun, and yet in whose reconciled presence alone they can be blessed, has it in his power, at any instant, and by any one of a thousand different means, to sink them down at his feet in abject self-condemnation and hopeless despair!

Oh then, how will it be in that so wilfully forgotten day, the day of days, as God is perpetually sounding it in our ears, when the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness; when every secret thing shall be known; when even the heart of man, so carefully cloaked, shall be unveiled, and God shall make manifest the counsels of all hearts; when of every idle word that men have spoken they shall give account; when the whole inward and outward life shall stand uncovered and revealed; when every disguise shall be torn aside, and the clearest light from the face and throne of God shall be shed directly down upon the guilty and darkened course and character of the sinner! When we fix our minds attentively on the dread solemnities of that tribunal where each of us shall appear and give account of ourselves to God, so little room does there seem to be, on the one hand, for querulous complaint or impertinent excuses, that we find ourselves repeating unconsciously the inspired declaration: "Every mouth shall be

stopped, and all the world become guilty before God;" and on the other, so little room is there seen to be on the part of the best of us for boasting and self-commendation, that the exclamation leaps involuntarily to our lips: "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?" "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not!"

Since, then, our guilt and inexcusableness is a thing so undeniable, and so certain to be confessed eventually by none more than by ourselves, how earnestly and how persistently should we abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good, resolutely taking up our cross and following him whom God hath constituted the eternal life of men; whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and who having once died for our sins and risen again for our justification, and is now seated at God's right hand, in our own nature and on our behalf, is able to save eternally all that come unto God by him!

Among the deceits which in this age of superficial religiousness many would practise on their souls, and by which the adversary of God and man would destroy the salutary influence these great truths were intended to produce on our minds and characters, few are more false or pernicious than this, that as they expect to give account of themselves when they die, the day of judgment is nothing to them; or this, that if they have ever been "converted," and had "a gospel hope in Christ," the righteous Judge will not be ashamed to screen their habitual and wilful violations of known duty with the spotless robe of his own righteousness, and, as his friends and *favorites*, will not allow them to be presented in judgment at all; or this, that since believers are *raised up in glory*, and come forth from their graves in power, incorruption, and immortality, a thousand years at least (so some of them will have it) before the judgment of the dead begins, that very fact will anticipate and forestall *their* individual judgment, and renders *their* solemn account, and the inquest of *their* hearts and lives, a nullity or a farce. Nothing contributes more powerfully to foment the light, superficial, forward, presuming, and unsanctifying religiousness so common in our day, than the schemes and theories by which men contrive to attenuate to the unsub-

stantiality of a shadow the tremendous realities of Christ's great day.

It is plain that the believer who is really a believer, has nothing to dread, but everything to hope for, in that great day of the coming and kingdom, the glory and power of Jesus Christ our Lord; but that does not consist in the fact of his being delivered from it, but rather in his being "openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment," as one of whom God is witness, and men also, that in simplicity and godly sincerity he has believed in, and therefore followed, our only Redeemer and Lord, doing the will of God from the heart. If our gospel salt *have not this much savor*, "it is good for nothing but to be cast forth and trodden under foot of men."

The only Lawgiver and Judge sweeps away all our fine theories, and stamps with the seal of fatuity all our delusive, unscriptural, or anti-scriptural, and dangerous conceits, when with reference to that day which was always on his lips and in his thoughts, "he said TO HIS DISCIPLES FIRST OF ALL, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy: *for there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed, neither hidden that shall not be known.*" Luke xii. 1, 2. "Every tree (whether planted in the Church or the world) that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire." Matt. vii. 19. In all this (*if we truly believe God*, and do not prostitute the terms "faith in Jesus Christ" to mean a spurious acceptance of his blood and righteousness, and a real rejection of his solemn testimony on every other point,) there is more than enough to make us each resolve with Paul, "WHEREFORE WE LABOR, that whether (at the time of his coming) we be present (in the body), or absent (from the body), *we may be accepted of him.* For we must all—the present and the absent, the waking and the sleeping, the living and the dead, the faithful and the unfaithful, the believing and the unbelieving, the righteous and the wicked—we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that (Greek, "IN ORDER THAT") every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. v. 9, 10.

NOTE.—In view of the intrinsic importance of this subject, about which many hurtful errors are current, while certain parties preach it as a point of high gospel doctrine that the believer “*does not come into judgment at all,*” but is exempted from it, as part of his gospel prerogative, it will not be amiss to append the following note:

“Some men’s sins (says the Apostle) are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after. Likewise the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.” 1 Tim. v. 24, 25. David’s most shameful sins, with all their aggravating circumstances, are related in Scripture with a minuteness of detail which would seem to leave nothing further to be revealed in the day of trial. Nor is David’s case a singular one. We are fully warranted in saying that the Bible lays bare the worst failings of the most eminent saints, as if for the express purpose of teaching that God’s favor is poles apart from favoritism; and that his forgiving love will never, can never, screen his dearest servants against the most honest, open, and searching scrutiny of their real outward and inward life in the last great day. “Righteous judgment” demands nothing less than this. Those who hold that sins are not more than half forgiven unless they are absolutely forgotten—who claim that the figurative promises that God will cast the sins of his people behind his back, cover them, cast them into the depths of the sea, never mention them again, nor remember them any more, are to be understood of the sins themselves as well as of their guilt and punishment, what would they say to the *expunging from David’s history*, and Peter’s, and Jacob’s, of the sins which the Holy Ghost has left so faithfully on record? Do they not see that a man’s sins and unfaithfulnesses, together with their immediate and remoter consequences, are as much a part of his personal history as the place of his birth and the time of his conversion? David is no longer David, if you blot out from the book of remembrance the names of Bathsheba, Uriah the Hittite, Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom. And further still, a man’s sins, whether persisted in or abhorred and forsaken, go to form traits of his character, as well as his history, which are as distinctively part of himself as are his bodily form, or the features of his face; so that to affirm that a believer’s sins will be *suppressed* in the day of judgment, is the same as to insist that God will present his children there *under a fictitious character!* Such persons seem also to forget that there is an infinite difference between the exhibition of sins as repented of, abhorred, detested, forsaken, forgiven, blotted out, cancelled forever; and sins as revealing a man’s real character and chosen way, which neither God’s mercy nor his wrath could induce him to forsake.

What is most important and most practical in the Scripture presentation of the subject seems to be this: that “there is no respect of per-

sons with God"—no partiality or favoritism in judgment—because he "will render to every man according to his deeds" "in the day when he shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel." See the whole matter discussed in Rom. ii. 3-16. He will therefore conceal nothing, but reveal everything; and if on an honest inspection of a man's true character and life it cannot be made evident that he was an unfeigned believer in, and therefore an obedient follower of, the only Redeemer of lost men, Christ will plainly declare that he is none of his. This he expressly asserts, not once, but a score of times. It is the height of madness to hope that "the righteous Judge" will in our own case pronounce the "wicked and slothful servant," to have been a "good and faithful servant," or use his skirts (or allow them to be used) to cover up unrepented and unforsaken sin. He offers no harbor for any but penitent and believing sinners. When, therefore, "he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," he would cover himself with everlasting dishonor if it should be brought to light in the discoveries of that day that he was admitting to the glories of his heavenly kingdom such as took things seen and temporal as their portion, and would not deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, nor take up their cross and follow him. This is the error which numberless thousands seem to be committing.

It is folly to insist that *κρίσις* in John v. 24, (and elsewhere,) does not mean "condemnation," but "judgment," and so teaches that the believer "shall not come into judgment;" for in that case we should be obliged to read in Matt. xxiii. 33, "how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" in Mark iii. 29, "is in danger of eternal judgment;" in John iii. 19, "this is the judgment that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light;" and in Rom. xiv. 22, "Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that thing which he alloweth!"

That Paul had no idea of escaping the judgment day himself, he expressly states in 1 Cor. iv. 3-5. That he had no desire to do so, is no less expressly implied in the statement that "the crown of righteousness" on which his heart was set, he expected to receive from "the Lord, the righteous Judge"—"in that day." 2 Tim. iv. 8.

H. B. PRATT.