

far as external matters go, yet they hardened their hearts, and were glad to forget and become ignorant of his ways. This was indeed rebelling against the light, and every one shall be rewarded according to his works. This position of man accounts for the meaning of many scriptures which, without this principle of individual responsibility, are ambiguous. It is on this principle that we get at the nature and design of the Saviour's expostulation with the Jews; for the way in which he spoke to his disciples, and the way in which he spoke to the people at large were very different. He called some by omnipotent power, and spoke to them of the kingdom prepared for them; but to the people at large he speaketh on this wise, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of *God* is at hand." Here is the beginning of the New Testament dispensation; "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel;" turn from the now useless ceremonies, and regard your Maker; act according to the light that is now come unto you; listen to the voice of conscience and of God. But did they do this? If some of them did, it was only for a little while; and thus of some it is written, that although he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; of others it is written, that they went back, and walked no more with him. As they thus acted contrary to the light which they had, the Saviour's

expostulation with them consisted chiefly in bearing testimony *against them*. But with his sheep he dealt very differently. These were treated as objects of eternal salvation; the others were treated as rational, accountable beings; and, wilfully acting contrary to the light they had, they came under his cutting reproofs. If he had not visibly demonstrated the divinity of his mission, they could not be justly blamed for not hearkening to him; but as he did among them works which no other man did, they had no cloak for their sin. Their sin did not consist in not being regenerated, but in not regarding that supremacy of their Maker which so conspicuously shone forth in the ministry and miracles of Christ. Here the question may be put, How were they to regard this the supremacy of their Maker? The answer is clear; namely, by *continuing* to do that which some did do for a time, that is, to admit the truth of that which was made clear, namely, that Christ was of God; and, therefore, cease to reproach him, cease to oppose him, to have listened to his word, and to have acted up to it as far as they could; and thus they would have known the day of their visitation, and the things that belonged to their moral and social peace. They would have been gathered together under the wings of his ministry; but "they would not come unto him that they might have life," but chose those paths that led to their destruc-

tion. Hence the ancient interrogation, "O house of Israel! why will ye die?" We have before observed, that divine supremacy is to bring about present reformation, and mitigation of future punishment.

Being thus far advanced with our subject, let us again look about, and see where we are, at what we have been aiming, and what has been proved. Let us again repeat the principles which we are endeavouring to make clear. Well, then, it is hoped that the following points are obvious: 1st. That the spirit and import of the law are unalterable; "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" "He remaineth God over all, blessed for evermore." 2nd. That the law of God has a twofold relation to man, having passed judgment upon all men as fallen in Adam, and then, in addition to this, holding every man responsible for his personal works. 3rd. That this responsibility branches out into all the relations and associations of human life. 4th. That man being thus responsible, it is his duty to supremely regard his Maker, so far as light is given him so to do. 5th. That the object of the voice of divine supremacy, whether coming by creation or the written word, is not regeneration, but reformation. Man possesses reason, and a sense, morally, of right and wrong; but his ability to use these powers is a point that belongs to another part of our subject.

The next point we come to is the doctrine of

different degrees of punishment. The very declaration, "Every one shall be judged according to his works," carries with it the fact that there are degrees in punishment; and when we find much is required—that the heathen cities had more excuse for their wrong doings than those that had the written word, we are again constrained to acknowledge that there are degrees of punishment; and so it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for some than for others. I see no room to question that there are degrees of punishment. Each will feel the burning and penetrating power of the sins he has committed, together with a dreadful sense of divine disapprobation. They will suffer *with* one another, but not *for* one another.

These different degrees of punishment by no means involve the idea of degrees in glory; because, those who are saved are saved by *one* work, *one* salvation; are one in Christ, and one with Christ. They are all to come to the fulness of the stature of a man in Christ. There is to be no difference; they are all to be like him here. The infant shall overtake the ancient; the people shall overtake the pastors. All shall be kings and priests to God. Different degrees of punishment, but *not* different degrees of glory. The parable of the talents belongs to the old covenant, and not to the new; therefore, one possessing ten cities, and another five, and another none at all, are expressive

of the old covenant promises, which were conditional. The people of God, being all conformed to one likeness, all brought to know even as they are known, leave no room for the doctrine of degrees in glory; but those who are lost being judged each according to his own works, clearly shows that there will be degrees of punishment. If it were possible for mortals to know who shall be lost, or for those who shall be lost to know their own destiny, the amount of punishment which they are to all eternity to undergo would outweigh, in their minds, all other things with which they stand connected, and thus unfit them for the present life. It would indeed be their greatest wisdom to hearken to the voice of God and conscience. But it is clear some will be lost; yet we know not the identical persons who shall be lost; therefore, men are to be judged according to the position in which they manifestatively stand. Promises, exhortations, and commands, to those who are born of God, are special; promises, exhortations, and commands to men at large, are general and conditional. God giving *space* for repentance, and the voice of divine supremacy commanding all men to repent, are one thing; but Christ being exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to *give* repentance *unto Israel*, is another thing. The duty of men, as creatures, and the privileges of believers, as Christians, are everlastingly distinct. The real Christian is approved in Christ, where all the

promises are yea and amen; but to the unregenerate the Lord saith, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" that is, approved in that well doing. The reward of their well doing cannot amount to anything supernatural, for their well doing is only natural, and cannot entitle them to anything spiritual.

We have yet farther to illustrate the principle, that unregenerate men are commanded to depart from evil, not on the ground of their being in a salvable state, but on the ground of individual responsibility; we have yet farther to confirm this principle, yet it may perhaps be as well, in this place, to show that one part of the human race must be lost. The certainty of their being lost originates not in their *personal works*; the amount of their punishment will be determined by their personal works. The certainty of their being lost originates in their indissoluble union to Adam. In him they have lost their all; and, independent of any personal work of their own, they are in a state of eternal destitution. Their names are not in the book of life; they have no new covenant relation to God; for them there is no atonement in Christ, he laid down his life for the sheep only, his children, and his children alone, are to be savingly taught of God; the others are in a state of destitution; there is nothing by which their union to Adam can be dissolved, while Jehovah, in his supremacy and sovereignty, will still remain

over them. They are thus held as fallen in Adam, the judgment in this relation having already been passed upon them. Here they are for ever fixed ; the Lord has no salvation for them. He never intended to save them, therefore he nowhere calls upon them to accept salvation ; for “ he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.” They could not avoid being children of Adam ; they could not avoid falling in Adam ; therefore it is that the Lord does not blame them for falling in Adam. He does not blame them for being lost ; nor is it their fault that they are lost ; they were ordained to this end by the judgment that came upon them in Adam, thus, independent of their personal works, becoming vessels of dishonour. Every man being rewarded according to his works is a doctrine which easily falls in with our sense of right and wrong. It is clear, comprehensive justice that each should be treated as he deserves to be treated. Every man being judged according to his personal works, is the law of God’s moral government—a law somewhat comprehensive, and which accords with the conscience of every man. This law gives scope for the use of those natural powers with which men are endued ; but when we are told, that although in this moral government of God every man will be judged according to his works while matters stand thus in this *moral* government, yet that in his *sovereign* dominion he will have mercy on whom he will ;

when this solemn truth is brought before us, we are ready to say, Is not this *unjust*? Now, how is this momentous matter to be settled? Indeed, there is no way, suited to the sentiments and feelings of men. To settle this matter, the Bible decides it by bringing in the infinite disproportion which exists between the Creator and the creature. It comes with, "Nay, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" By what law (and where there is no law there is no transgression) can it be proved that God was not at liberty to permit the existence of evil—that he was not at liberty to choose some to salvation, and leave others in their fallen state? To whom is he to be responsible? who shall call him to account, or who shall stand with him in judgment? For "his counsel must stand, and he will do all his pleasure." Thus the Scriptures draw a line of distinction between his natural dominion and moral government. He is self-existent, infinite, omnipotent, and the Creator of all worlds. Beings are not their own; they are the property of God; and he has ordained some things to one end and some to another end, just as he pleased. This may very well be called his natural dominion; that is to say, a dominion which he has by virtue of what he is by nature; and, as none is like him, none can share with him in this dominion. He has determined the



bounds of all things, yet he has left room for the working of his moral government—for the working of that principle of individual responsibility in which every man stands; and each shall be judged according to his personal works. To blame the non-elect for being lost would be to blame God for placing them in that natural and federal union to Adam, by virtue of which, independent of their own personal works, they are in a state of eternal destitution. To blame them for not being saved would be to blame God for not saving them; yet not to blame them for their personal works, as far as they wilfully do wrong, would be to deny the natural powers they possess to avoid (as far as natural right and wrong go) the evil and follow the good. Not to blame them for an ill use of these powers would be to deny the moral government of God, and justify all the atrocities that have ever been committed. Of course, there is no power independent of God. Hence Pilate spoke of his magisterial power, saying to the Saviour, “Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and power to crucify thee?” But the Saviour reminded him that it was by the providence of God he possessed that magisterial power of which he had spoken. Pilate knew that he ought to use this power as a terror to evil doers, and as a praise to those that did well. But, instead of using this power as he knew he ought to have used it, he abused

this power in using it to forward the perpetration of the most awful deed ever committed, the putting to death the spotless Son of God.

Men under Jehovah's natural dominion—men, considered in this position, can neither be praised nor blamed. No blame can be attached to the non-elect for being the offspring of Adam, or for being involved in the natural consequences of the fall and left in a state of eternal destitution. No one can justly bring a railing accusation against them because of their destiny. If God leave them *in* this state, none can take them out; and is it not, to say the least of it, both unjust and ridiculous to blame them for that which came to pass independent of any works of theirs? as, on the other hand, would it not be unscriptural to praise the people who are saved—when they were chosen and blessed with all spiritual blessings from the foundation of the world—in a word, saved entirely by grace? Is any praise due to these because of their destiny, which destiny was fixed independent of any works of theirs? Thus we see, that there is in the natural dominion of Jehovah no room to blame or praise the creature. But when we come into the moral government of God, we find room for blame and praise. The language of this moral government is; “If thou doest well, shalt not thou be accepted (approved)? and if not, sin lieth at the door.” God, in his moral government, approves of moral consistency, as far as it

goes; and although many of those who have acted as well as they could, and are, upon the whole, what we, in the mere natural sense, call upright men; although many of these have suffered in this world because of their integrity—supposing such to be lost, yet they will have a less amount of punishment. Every man shall be rewarded according to his works; but when men expect their works to help them to a place in heaven, they look for what never was, nor ever will be; for none can enter there but those whose names are in the book of life.

We see then, in Jehovah's *natural* dominion there is no room either to praise or blame the creature; but in his moral government, in which each creature acts with the powers with which he is endued, here it is that the conscience accuses or excuses—here it is that God approves or disapproves, praises or blames. The Ninevites were approved in humbling themselves, and so were the third fifty that came to Elijah, while the former two fifties were destroyed for their haughtiness; and those who escape in this world will meet their due in the next.

In addition to Jehovah's natural dominion and moral government, there is what may be called his new covenant kingdom. In this department is found the atonement of Christ, by which all evil is for ever banished, the people perfected for ever, and grace reigns through righteousness unto

eternal life. God alone can bring a man into this kingdom; no man can enter without being born from above. In this kingdom the people's needs—the needs of poor broken-hearted sinners are freely supplied, and the name of the Lord eternally praised.

Here, then, we see these three departments, viz., Jehovah's natural dominion, his moral government, and his new covenant kingdom. In the language of his natural dominion he speaketh thus; "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." In the language of his moral government he speaketh thus; "Every man shall be rewarded according to his works." In the new covenant kingdom he speaketh thus; "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." Founded, therefore, in his moral government, is that praise or blame to which men, according to their works, are entitled. While the Bible does not call upon men to do that which they are not capacitated to do, it does not call upon natural men to do anything spiritual. Where spiritual acts are called for, spiritual life and enablings are bestowed. The law does not require a perfect obedience of the non-elect. It holds them, in their fallen state, as its prisoners; yet these prisoners are not left lawless; for while they are held as fallen in Adam; while they are held here as fallen creatures in

eternal life. God alone can bring a man into this kingdom; no man can enter without being born from above. In this kingdom the people's needs—the needs of poor broken-hearted sinners are freely supplied, and the name of the Lord eternally praised.

Here, then, we see these three departments, viz., Jehovah's natural dominion, his moral government, and his new covenant kingdom. In the language of his natural dominion he speaketh thus; "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." In the language of his moral government he speaketh thus; "Every man shall be rewarded according to his works." In the new covenant kingdom he speaketh thus; "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." Founded, therefore, in his moral government, is that praise or blame to which men, according to their works, are entitled. While the Bible does not call upon men to do that which they are not capacitated to do, it does not call upon natural men to do anything spiritual. Where spiritual acts are called for, spiritual life and enablings are bestowed. The law does not require a perfect obedience of the non-elect. It holds them, in their fallen state, as its prisoners; yet these prisoners are not left lawless; for while they are held as fallen in Adam; while they are held here as fallen creatures in

their federal union to Adam, yet it is required of them that they use the natural powers which they have in accordance with the dictates of conscience. Here, perhaps, the question may be put, whether or not men really have power to avoid everything morally wrong, and follow that which is morally right. This question may be settled in a few words. 1st, That while many are carried away by temptation, worldly interests, and vile affections, and are thus, as it were, hurled into these things, yet, if their natural powers had been *rightly* employed, they might have avoided all this. They did not begin to do these things because they did not *then* possess power to avoid them, but because they did not *use* that power. Hence, as we have before observed, the heathen, when they knew God, glorified him not *as God*; therefore, because they did not do that which they had power to do, God gave them up to vile affections. We shall presently show what it is that the ungenerate are called upon to do. Suffice it here to observe, that whatever difficulties may appear to stand against the truth here stated, viz., that men possess power to avoid the wrong and follow the right; whatever difficulties may seem to stand against this doctrine, yet God, in his moral government, deals with men after this order, and every man will be condemned for acting contrary to the light which he has, while they are called upon to do nothing spiritual, but only that which

is merely natural. Let us illustrate this doctrine thus: If a master engage a servant, he will tell him the rules he is to follow; he is to be attentive, diligent, honest, and sober. The servant replies that he feels that he ought to be all this, but somehow or other he must get intoxicated now and then, must rob his master now and then, and sometimes be very idle. What would the master say to such a man? Would he not feel justified in refusing to take such a man into his service? Would he write a petition for him, and present him to the world as an object of pity and of charity? Would not the people feel justified in abiding by the law laid down by the apostle, that if any man *will not*, (*not* if he cannot,) but if any man *will not* work, neither shall he eat? But if the man were required to do impossibilities, and severely punished for his helplessness, he would at once become an object of just compassion and pity.

God foreknew all the evils which men would commit, while he has those evils under such restraint that his counsels cannot be disturbed. Christ was ordained to bear the sin of his people. God foreknew the way in which the Jews and Gentiles would treat the Saviour; consequently they fulfilled the Scriptures in doing what they did. Therefore, without multiplying words upon the question as to whether man may so use his natural powers as to avoid the evil and follow the good,

it will be enough here to observe, that the Bible everywhere blames men for wilfully doing that which they know to be wrong. They are thus dealt with as being each responsible for his own works.

Let us now see what men, while in a state of nature, are called upon to do. On looking into this matter, we shall find that they are called upon to believe in God, to repent, to love and fear God. But the faith, repentance, love, and fear, exercised by the powers of nature, are very different from that faith, repentance, love, and godly fear, which are from on high. Thus it is one thing for God to give men a space to repent, and another thing for him to give repentance itself.

When Moses was sent to the children of Israel, he was vested with power to demonstrate that he was sent of God. This being made clear to the Israelites, they could have no excuse in not obeying him. He did not call upon them to regenerate their souls, or to exercise a living faith in Christ. Everything they were called upon to do was *natural*, and merely moral, not supernatural, or spiritual. They were to believe in the coming of "the great Prophet of which Moses spake;" they were to abstain from certain kinds of food, wear certain kinds of clothes, bring certain sacrifices, reject the gods of the nations around, trust in the God of Israel, revere his name, love his



ways, seek instruction from him, cleave to him, &c. &c. Their temporal prosperity depended in a great measure on their thus obeying the commandments of the Lord. To this obedience they were exhorted, and of this obedience they were capable, because it consisted in nothing beyond the light which was given them ; therefore they were blamed for so constantly going back from that which they were commanded to do. They knew that changing away the service of the God of heaven and earth for the service of the gods of the nations was doing wrong ; and for doing this wrong they were condemned. This was their condemnation, that “they loved darkness rather than light.” They were not called upon to do that which cannot be done without possessing the Spirit of the Lord. No one, for instance, can *feel* his lost state in the first Adam, but by the Holy Spirit ; for in this sense he alone can convince of sin ; he alone can thoroughly wound, so as to make a man feel his need of the perfect atonement of Christ ; he alone can give a true thirst for those blessings treasured up in Christ before the world began ; he alone can take of the things of Christ, and bring them savingly into the soul. These are things the natural man is not commanded to do. These things are given to those for whom they are prepared. With these spiritual things the natural man has nothing to do. This new wine is not put into old bottles. To those who are called by

*grace* is given a new heart, and God dwelleth in them, and they in God. Here, then, again, we see the importance of distinguishing between the moral government of God and his new covenant kingdom. Without admitting the doctrine of his moral government including the idea that men are endued with power to render that service which this moral government demands—a service which is natural and merely moral ; a service not accepted as a condition of salvation, but accepted as that which it is their duty to render ; and in proportion as they act contrary to this their duty will they be punished ; without admitting this doctrine, how are we to account for the general exhortations and denunciations found in the Bible ? Look, for instance, at the first chapter of Proverbs, from verse 24th, and following ; “ I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.” Admit the principle we have laid down, and the matter becomes plain, which is this, that men wilfully disregard the voice of divine supremacy, which voice soundeth throughout creation, the written word calling upon them to act according to the light and dictates of conscience. They are called upon to do nothing supernatural. It does not say, I have offered salvation, and they refused it ; I have tried to quicken their souls, but they regarded not. This would be quite another language. This language would suit neither the moral government