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and fruit offering and burnt offering and fat and incense offering as a sweet savour, that it may be acceptable. 14. And every man and woman in Israel who defiles the sanctuary shall be thus. 15. And on account of this I have commanded thee, saying: "Testify this testimony over Israel: see how it happened to the Shechemites and their sons, how they were given into the hands of the two sons of Jacob, and they slew them in torments, and it was justice to them, and it is written down for justice concerning them."

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ARTICLE VIII.

THE SANCTION OF THE DECALOGUE.

BY THE REV. TALBOT W. CHAMBERS, D.D., NEW YORK CITY.

LAW is usually defined as a rule of action prescribed by competent authority and enforced by a penalty. The last mentioned feature is indispensable, for without it any statute, however weighty in itself or in the source from which it proceeds, is merely the expression of an opinion. It may have great moral dignity and worth but it has no legal force. Whereas the essence of law is that it commands obedience and cannot be disregarded with impunity.

What now is the sanction of the law contained in the Ten Words? Something in the nature of reward and punishment is found in the third precept and in the fifth.

In the former the prohibition of the profane use of Jehovah's name is fortified by the assurance that such use contracts guilt, an assurance that is needed because the general tendency of men is to doubt whether profaneness

be a sin at all, or at least to consider it a trivial and insignificant transgression.' In the latter due respect to one's parents is strengthened by the implied promise that this will secure length of days. The quotation of this promise by the Apostle Paul (Ephes. vi. 3), with the omission of the words "which the Lord thy God giveth thee," shows that no part of the precept is local or national but that the whole is applicable to children of all nations and in all ages. It is true that some obedient children die early and others are not particularly prosperous; but as a general rule of the divine administration it is the members of well-ordered households who succeed in life. Filial piety brings a reward in the present world, quite as truly as "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." Now in both of these cases the sanction is specific and limited to the precept in connection with which it is given. The fact is otherwise with the reason annexed to the Second Commandment. "For I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." (Revised Version). The closest scrutiny of these words detects in them nothing that limits them to the prohibition of idolatry, but on the contrary they would be perfectly suitable to be placed at

<sup>1</sup> Thus Lord Macaulay, insisting that Bunyan exaggerated the misdeeds of his youth, says that he "was at eighteen, what, in any but the most austere puritanical circles, would have been considered as a young man of singular gravity and excellence." Yet some considerable time after Bunyan was married, he was, as we read in *Grace Abounding*, standing at a neighbor's shop window, and there cursing and swearing after his wonted manner, when the woman of the house heard him. She, he says, "though she was a very loose and ungodly wretch, yet protested that I swore and cursed at that most fearful rate that she was made to tremble to hear me; and told me further that I was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that she ever heard in all her life." Evidently Lord Macaulay did not regard profane speech as the Third Commandment does.

the close of the decalogue as a sanction of the entire series of precepts.

We may therefore rightly regard them as such. It may be added that this course has the example of Luther. In his small catechism, after reciting the ten precepts, he adds, "What does God say about all these commandments?" To which the answer is, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, &c." Then comes the question, "What does this mean?" Answer: "God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments; we should therefore fear his anger and do nothing against such commands. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them; we should therefore love and trust in him and gladly obey his commandments."

To the question why the sanction was placed here and not elsewhere we are not bound to furnish an answer. This may be one of those peculiarities of Scripture which every earnest student has noticed, peculiarities by which it is distinguished from all merely human books, in that it takes on a form which the wisest of men if left to themselves would never have suggested, yet which when carefully considered challenges their admiration.

To cite one example, the great variety of the book of divine revelation, history, memoirs, poems, songs, proverbs, epistles, arguments, and prophecies. No man, no set of men, however acute or far-seeing, would ever have dreamed of setting forth a norm of faith and duty in such a fashion, yet the experience of centuries has shown that the book is exactly adapted to its purpose. But, besides this, it may be said that if there is one of the Ten Words which needed to be emphasized by attaching to it the sanction of the whole, it is the second command. Of all sins against God, idolatry is the most wide-spread and lasting. Atheists have always been comparatively few, but worshippers of idols almost innumerable. There has never been a period within historic time when they did not constitute a decided, and sometimes overwhelming, ma-

jority of the human race. To this day they prevail throughout almost the whole heathen world, and what inroads the veneration of images and pictures has made in a large part of Christendom it is not necessary to detail. Nor is the evil a slight one. Sentimental theologians of our day sometimes apologize for it, as for instance when they convert Malachi's brilliant prophecy (i. 2), that "in every place incense and a pure offering shall be presented to Jehovah's name," into an assertion that such service was actually rendered among the heathen in the prophet's day, and by consequence is so rendered everywhere now. But the sacred writers with one consent repudiate such a monstrous confusion of right and wrong. In his epistle to the Romans the Apostle Paul distinctly attributes the gross immorality of the Pagan world to their impiety, the impiety shown in exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, etc. Having by this fearful apostasy become estranged from the true conception of God men fell a prey to the powers of nature and human life, and ran into the wildest excesses. If men will leave the spiritual they must sink into the sensual. There are those now who seek to construct an ethics without religion, but in so doing they shut their eyes to all the teachings of philosophy and history as well as to those of the divine word. If this be the case we can see the reason why the sanction of the decalogue was put where it is. It was annexed to that precept which men are most generally tempted to violate, and which when violated most surely and speedily draws with it the violation of all other obligations.

What now is the sanction? The first element is its description of the divine nature. *I, Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God.* This of course is an anthropopathic expression, but it is not therefore to be considered merely figurative. It expresses a real and abiding fact in the nature of the Most High. Jealousy is the strongest of human

passions. Hence we read in the Proverbs (xxvii. 4), "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before jealousy?" And again in the song of Solomon:—

"Jealousy is cruel as the grave;  
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,  
A very flame of the Lord."

And this is very properly applied to Jehovah, for he stands in the most intimate relation to the soul, just as the husband stands in the most intimate earthly relation to his wife. The violation of the latter relation is a true and lively image of the violation of the former. Man owes everything to his Maker and depends upon Him for all he is or hopes to be. His highest duty therefore is to him. And when he withholds the obedience that is due he awakens a feeling of injury and outrage which cannot be exceeded. But of course this does not mean, as is sometimes said, a sense of personal wrong on the part of God, as in the human passion of anger. It is rather the energy of the divine holiness, as appears in the words of Joshua (xxiv. 19), "He is a holy God, he is a jealous God." Holiness in Him is not derived, as it is in all other beings, but is original and essential. The magnificat of Hannah expressed the exact truth when it said, "There is none holy as Jehovah." In no other being is moral excellence absolutely pure and free from all limitation. Hence the cry of the Seraphim as they bow day and night around the throne is, "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of Hosts;" and they who standing by the glassy sea sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, exclaim, "Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy." Now this supreme and regnant perfection cannot but manifest itself against whatever sets itself in opposition to it. And the manifestation is most intense. "Jehovah thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God" (Deut. iv. 24). The fire of his wrath burns down to the depths of Sheol. The holy will of God, roused into

vehement activity by the sinful self-determination of the creature, displays itself in awful forms, but never are these due to a capricious divine humor or to natural malignity, as the gods of the heathen fall into a passion, but simply to the ill-desert of the wrong-doer. God would cease to be God were he not "of purer eyes than to behold evil." His jealousy is but the expression of his immaculate holiness.

The ten words of the decalogue then are not statements of opinion or pieces of advice, but are LAW. They come with authority. They bind the conscience. They bring the human will into immediate contact with the will of the supreme and rightful lawgiver. They tell man what he ought to do, and what he must do if he would secure his own well-being. They are not only right in themselves, but have a Power behind them which enforces obedience. This is done in a way suited to man as made in the image of God and endowed with a self-determining will. He is left master of his own acts, but is accountable for those acts. And these, however multiform and varied they may be, are all traced back to the one primal affection from which they proceed. The subjects of reward and penalty are on the one hand they that love God and therefore keep his commandments, and on the other they that hate him and therefore commit sin. The decalogue by its own terms is just as much a law of love as the wonderful summary of its contents given by the Master (Matthew xxii. 34-40). It is not outward, nor formal, nor partial, nor limited, but pierces at once to the essence of things. It lays hold upon the heart and demands its governing affection as the spring of all true obedience, while it passes beyond all specific forms of transgression and denounces them in their root, the mournful aversion of the soul from God. This is wholly overlooked by those who heap contumely upon the moral law of Exodus as a mere series of external prohibitions suited to and suggested by a barbarous age. In fact the hard dry mechanical

formalism of the Pharisees which our Lord so severely rebuked was as much opposed to their own law as it was to his teachings. The code written upon tables and lodged in the ark of the covenant as the core of the entire economy, was anything but an unspiritual yoke, subversive of moral freedom. What it requires is indeed obedience, but not the submission of a slave. The submission is to be unhesitating, unreluctant and joyous, such as arises from a clear preception of the intrinsic reasonableness of the command and the claims of its gracious and beneficent author. Men obey because they love. They delight in the law of God after the inward man. They make its statutes songs of rejoicing in the house of their pilgrimage.

When any withhold obedience and especially when they deliberately transgress the precepts it is because they hate the lawgiver. Hence the subjects of the penalty are described as "them that hate me." This is the doctrine of the New Testament as well as of the Old. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7). Many object to the statement as extravagant and unreasonable. But it is neither. The law is the expression of the divine nature, and opposition to it is opposition to its author. Men are not conscious of the fact, because they put out of view the claims of God and his law, just as no one has bitter feelings towards one whom he considers his worst enemy, so long as that enemy is out of sight and out of mind. Many years ago two young men in the City of New York set out for a pleasure drive on Sunday morning, feeling no sort of trouble from the fact that God had made that day one of rest and worship. But soon they came to a street across which chains were stretched (in pursuance of a municipal ordinance to that effect) to ensure quiet during the hours of worship. Then they broke out into violent oaths and curses. Why? The law was just the same as it had been. The difference was that



they were distinctly reminded of its existence, and this brought out the latent animosity of their hearts. This is the root of all sin, the aversion of the soul from the infinitely holy God. And however dormant this may at any time seem to be, all that is needed is to bring the thought of God as he is before the mind, and the sinner feels the risings of a deep and passionate hatred. He is an enemy of God, and he would dethrone him if he could. To many this seems a harsh and unreasonable charge, but it is the plain statement of Scripture, and enforced by the repeated utterances of our Lord who himself experienced this hatred and declared that it was without a cause (John xv. 25). There is no neutral ground. If any do not love God they fall of necessity into the number of those that hate him.

What now is the penalty pronounced upon such? It is simply punishment, with one significant specification. "Visiting the iniquities" means, according to the well defined usage of Scripture, visiting with retribution, i. e., punishing. The precise nature and degree and duration of the punishment upon the sinners themselves is not stated, perhaps because it could be inferred from other parts of the divine revelation or from the character of Him against whom sin is committed, or perhaps because it was enough to make a general statement like that appended to the third commandment (Jehovah will not hold him guiltless), leaving the transgressor confronted with the general assurance that there would be retribution, without entering into any details. But one feature is added of very great significance, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me." The natural meaning of these words, that which occurs to every reader when he first sees or hears them, is that the penal suffering incurred by the parents is prolonged to their descendants even to the fourth generation. This has frequently been objected to, and sometimes in very

violent terms, as a gross violation of natural justice in making the innocent suffer what is due the guilty. An obvious way of escape is found by supposing that the menace is directed only against those children who tread in their fathers' footsteps. The earliest occurrence of this evasion is found in the Chaldee Paraphrase of Onkelos, the oldest of the Targumists, who adds to the text, *Quando filii sequuntur peccata patrum*. This has been followed by most of the modern expositors (Gerhard, Stendel, Hengstenberg, *et al.*), and by Oehler<sup>2</sup> is claimed as the fair interpretation of the original, which, he says, requires the phrase "them that hate me" to be considered as *referring to fathers and sons together*. But it is far more natural to view that phrase as co-ordinate with "fathers," so that the whole clause simply states how far the punishment of the haters of God extends (*viz.*, to the fourth generation), just as the next clause shows how far his loving kindness extends to those that love him (*viz.*, to the thousandth generation. Cf. Deut. vii. 9). And this may fairly be deduced from the nature of the case. If, on one hand, the threatening to the descendants of the wicked means only that they if wicked themselves shall be punished, there can be no meaning in the limitation to the third and fourth generation, for the statement is equally true of all generations, and the words are mere surplusage. If, on the other hand, it means that wicked children shall be punished both for their own sins and those of their fathers, this leaves the original objection in all its force, *viz.*, that one man bears the punishment of another's sin.

Again, reference is made to the passage Deut. xxiv. 16. "The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." But this is a rule for the administration of criminal justice by man. Among ancient oriental nations the family of a criminal was commonly involved in his punishment, as in

<sup>2</sup> Old Testament Theology. Amer. Ed. p. 163.

the case of Haman's sons recorded in Esther (ix. 13, 14), but the superior humanity of the Mosaic institute is shown by the prohibition here recorded. And that the statute was not without effect is seen in the proceeding of Amaziah (2 Kings xiv. 6), who slew the murderers of his father, but not their children. But this wise rule in regard to earthly judges has no application to Him who is Sovereign over all mankind, and deals with them not only as individuals but as members of a race and sharers of a common responsibility. God as God may do what man as man may not do. This is seen in the case of human sacrifices. Such sacrifices were forbidden and denounced in the law, yet the Lord commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac, and though he was not suffered to do the act, his readiness to do it showed that the command was not inherently wrong.

Reference again is made to the assertions made by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In the former (xxx. 29, 30) we read, "In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity." In the latter (xviii. 1-4) the same proverb is quoted, and set aside with the assertion, "Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die." Now what both prophets mean to deny is the shifting of responsibility from the contemporary race to their ancestors. In one real and important sense the proverb was exactly true. The people were suffering the natural consequences of their father's sins, so that as a matter of fact their teeth were set on edge by the sour grapes their fathers had eaten. But they were walking in the footsteps of those fathers, and hence overlooked their own spiritual accountability as if the case were foreclosed against them. Hence the repeated assurance of Ezekiel that if they turned away from their wickedness iniquity should not be their ruin. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord

God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live." No entail of guilt, however ancient, did or could cut the penitent sinner off from the hope of restoration. Nor can any one justly charge upon God his own criminality. He may suffer indeed from the misdoings of former generations, as in fact was the case with Ezekiel's contemporaries, but this does not interfere with his responsibility for his present course of feeling and action, nor prevent the consciousness of guilt in view of his own shortcomings.

What then is the conclusion? That the penal consequences of sin are visited in this life upon the third generation and the fourth of those who commit the sin. Thus understood the words simply take up and repeat the common experience of the race, and show that the author of nature and the author of revelation are one and the same. As a matter of fact children and remote descendants inherit the results of their fathers' transgressions in many ways, e. g., in specific disease, a shattered constitution, a dishonored name, abject poverty, or a weakened intellect, together with all the influences of bad example and evil communications. Such things are matters of common, of universal observation, and need not to be illustrated by example. Now the command informs us that this is not the result of accident or caprice, but of a judicial determination. It is the solemn appointment of the supreme ruler. Witness the case of ancient Israel. In Leviticus (xxvi. 39) God said to his people in case they were disobedient, "They that are left of you shall pine away in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them." And accordingly in Lam. v. 7, the cry of the captive exiles is,

" Our fathers have sinned, and are not ;  
And we have borne their iniquities."

That this truth forced itself on the minds of the thoughtful heathen is well known. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, the *Phenissae* of Euripides and in the *Septem*

*contra Thebas* of Aeschylus it is constantly assumed that an act of wilful disobedience to the divine command involves not only the first guilty individual, but also his offspring to the third generation, together with his kindred and his country, in a train of the most calamitous consequences, sin ever begetting sin, and that nothing can stay the plague but the direct interposition of heaven. Sometimes the inherited curse seems to fall most heavily upon the least guilty persons, as it still does. Yet in such cases the sufferer is free from the sting of conscience, for that belongs only to personal guilt. The pain, the privation, the loss of advantages, may be severe, but they do not involve remorse.

The consolation of the sufferer is, first, that he suffers under a great law of universal and immemorial prevalence, one that is inseparably bound up with the constitution of our nature. We are not like the angels, each of whom is a distinct and independent creation of God, but are a race springing from a common ancestor, and hence are linked together in a variety of ways. The human family is a living organism, every part of which is in vital connection with every other. Each angel, so far as we know, stands for himself, nor is there any necessary bond between his conduct and the condition of his fellows. But among men there is a continuity of existence and of interest, so that it is true in many ways that no man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself. The principle of representation runs through all human society, in the family, the church, the state. Men may object to the federal theology, but even if they succeed in convincing themselves or others that the Scripture covenants do not mean what they are commonly understood to mean, the underlying principle of those covenants remains unaffected, viz., that men are powerfully affected for good or evil by the acts of other men over whom they have no control. Now the peculiarity of the sanction of the second commandment is that it seizes this feature of the human constitution in its

most direct and obvious form and converts it into a motive for obedience to the divine law. It says to every man, "You do not stand alone. Your posterity is sure to be affected by your course. You will transmit to them an entail of evil or of good according to the course you pursue. If you open your eyes you can see this law in operation all around you, and I tell you that it is not because of blind fate or any irresistible and unaccountable necessity, but the definite decree of a just and holy God who has thus constituted human society, and who puts this barrier before men to hinder them from the commission of sin." If, however, men do not heed the caution, and by transgression bring sore evil upon their children's children, there is a further relief open to sufferers in the thought that the entail is not everlasting nor total. It extends only to the present life. As to the future world we know that decisions there are based upon man's own deeds done in the body, and not upon those of his forefathers. But while a man both by nature and by God's appointment may enter upon life handicapped by the results of what took place before he was born, still he has encouragement to carry on the struggle against his disadvantages with the assurance that his efforts shall not be in vain. To him are open all the inducements and provisions and promises that are contained in the divine word. No bond of fate hems him in. He has a harder lot than others, but he may achieve a victory over his drawbacks, or even turn them into a means of self-discipline and progress. His self-conscious freedom remains unimpaired, and if he refuse the evil and choose the good he may regain the forfeited blessing and see good days in the land of the living. His embarrassments in mind or body or estate or reputation or connections are serious, and it is of no use to deny this; but they are not irrevocable. They do not bind him over to failure, but they do make success harder to be won. At the same time they are a perpetual stimulus to him to make all possible effort to

stop the entail with himself, and not send it down in an aggravated form to those who come after him.

But the sanction contains not only penalty but reward. This is "mercy unto thousands." The first word is not properly rendered, for neither by etymology nor usage does it mean favor shown to the ill-deserving as such, which is what is meant by *mercy*; but it rather means goodness or favor shown to any creatures without reference to the question of merit or demerit. It therefore points to the tender love of the Most High in providing for the needs of his intelligent creatures in all their relations. Hence it is well expressed in the old-fashioned word *loving-kindness*. God shows this in relation to those that love him not simply to thousands, but, as the word undoubtedly means, to a thousand generations. This is fully given in the parallel passage (Deut. vii. 9), "The faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy [*loving-kindness*] with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." And so grace rejoices over judgment. God visits iniquity to the fourth generation; he shows favor to the thousandth. Thus early in the Scripture, in the law of commandments, under the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, appears the blessed truth that "not as the trespass so also is the free gift." God by no means clears the guilty, yet is he a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in *loving-kindness* and truth. For as high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is his *loving-kindness* toward them that fear him. Time and again the descendants of the man after God's own heart sinned grossly and incurred the forfeiture of their royal prerogatives, yet were they spared for the same reason as the wicked Jehoram, of whom it is said that "Jehovah would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant he had made with David" (2. Chron. xxi. 7). So when the rich publican climbed up a sycamore tree to see the Lord and was graciously bidden to come down and entertain the Saviour, it

was said to him, "To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Twenty centuries after Abraham was laid in his tomb in Macpelah the promise to his seed after him was fulfilled in the person of a despised publican. Such is the goodness of the Lord.

The loving-kindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children. And this was shown even to the heathen world, as the Apostle reminded the men of Lystra, saying, "And yet he left not himself without witness in that he did good, and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness." The promise like the menace is general, and as some would say vague, but it is rather comprehensive. In one case the Lord says he will punish, leaving the nature of that punishment to be deduced from his lofty perfections, and in the other he assures us of loving kindness, which in like manner is to be interpreted according to his boundless riches in glory. The disobedient has everything to fear, the obedient has everything to hope. No man can set a limit in either direction.

In contemplating the sanction of the decalogue and the terms in which it is stated one is irresistibly reminded of the words of the Apostle in view of the divine treatment of ancient Israel. *Behold the goodness and severity of God.* Both are displayed here in their fullness. The goodness of Jehovah appears not only in the natural results of obedience, every command being adapted to insure the highest well-being of those who obey it, but in its central principle and in its temporal rewards. That principle is love. The enactment does not come like a harsh taskmaster. The words of the poet are true:

"Stern lawgiver! Yet thou dost wear  
The Godhead's most benignant grace;  
Nor know we anything so fair  
As is the smile upon thy face;  
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,



And fragrance in thy footing treads,  
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,  
And the most ancient heavens through thee  
are fresh and strong."

What is required is the willing, grateful service of true affection, nor will anything else be accepted in place of this. The intelligent scribe whom our Lord commended, said the simple truth when he declared that supreme love to God and to love one's neighbor as himself was more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices (Mark xii. 33). Thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil are of less worth than a single gracious affection. Empty forms are of no account. Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart. It is vain to cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter, so long as that within is untouched. The text runs, "them that love me and keep my commandments." The two things go together, and are inseparable. A love which does not issue in obedience and an obedience which does not spring from love, are alike worthless. But true love is always realized in speech and act. It cannot lie dormant and inactive any more than the north wind can hide itself.

Nor is the requisition unreasonable, for God is the most lovable of all beings. Whatever can properly attract the affection of man exists in him in the highest degree. His own nature, his perfections and his relations to men concur to give him the strongest claim upon human desire. The utterance of the devout Psalmist, "I have no good beyond thee," is as reasonable as it is pious. If men do not see this, that is their fault. The masterpieces of painting and sculpture do not sink in excellence because they who have no eye for form or color see no beauty in them. When Bunyan abandoned his evil courses and commenced an outward reformation he was satisfied with himself, but happening to hear some poor women holding godly talk together he became undeceived. They told how God had visited their souls with his love in the Lord Jesus,

and with what words and promises they had been refreshed. They "spake as if joy did make them speak," with "such pleasantness of Scripture language and with such appearance of grace in all they said," that they seemed to have found a world to which he was altogether a stranger. He was humbled yet fascinated, and though he had many struggles and fierce temptations, he was led into such an apprehension of the glory of the grace of God that long years of bonds and imprisonment could not shake his steadfast faith, and even in jail with a heart almost broken in anxiety for his poor blind child, he yet had such experience of God's goodness as he was persuaded he would never in this world be able to express. So the great President Edwards once said that even in converse with outward nature, when looking upon the sky and clouds, "there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God as I know not how to express." And again, the holiness of God, he says, "appeared to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature, which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness and rapture to the soul."

Now men may complain that any such experience is impossible for them as being sold under sin and having a carnal mind which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, but this fact, solemn and painful as it is, does not subvert the truth that the revealed God of the Scriptures is worthy of all admiration and regard. He rightfully demands the adoring love of his creatures, not only because of his manifold relations to them, but also and chiefly because of his inherent and unchanging excellence. That excellence has no element of harshness and none of weakness. It commands respect and at the same time wins confidence. It fills, nay it surpasses, the ideal of the best human thought. The study of it never wearies, the enjoyment of it never palls. Indeed what has been poetically said of the stirrings of our nature in relation to a human and earthly affection, may be truly said of the

varied experiences of the soul in its communion with God:—

“All are but ministers of love,  
And feed his sacred flame.”

What has been said may be summed up in the following: 1. God himself in the perfections of his being is the fountain and standard of all truth and duty. 2. As such he is entitled to the complete and cheerful obedience of all his intelligent creatures. 3. The normal condition of those to whom his word comes is determined by the state of their affections toward him. 4. If they love him they will obey him, and so will attain his favor; if on the other hand they hate him, they will disobey his precepts and receive a just recompense for their misdeeds. 5. In the nature of the case there can be no third or intermediate class—all men being either the friends or the enemies of God. 6. Men's conduct does not terminate with themselves, but its consequences pass on to their children; if evil, to the fourth generation, if good, to an indefinite posterity. 7. The precise nature of the recompense in either case is not stated, nor is mention made of a future state, reticence upon this point being a feature of the Mosaic Economy. 8. But the essence of the recompense, viz., the loving-kindness or the wrath of the Most High, is such that it may and must apply to all worlds and to all stages of being.