

the penitent may become a Pharisee ; that when he is "converted" he may become as narrow and hard and bigoted as ever his brother was, and sit in judgment and condemn those who were "in Christ" long before he was, and who have done far more to serve Him ?

Yes, this Elder Brother's blood runs in all our veins no less than that of the Younger. And we may well rejoice, therefore, that our Father in heaven is good to both,—most tender to us when we confess our sins, and no less tender when we convert our very righteousness into a sin ; that when we return to Him, He has compassion on us ; and that even when we are angry with Him, and will not go in, He is not angry with us, but comes out and entreats us, rekindling a filial and fraternal spirit in us by his fatherly generosity and love.

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PARDON AND PUNISHMENT.

PSALM xcix. 8 ; ISAIAH xliii. 25—28.

THE idea of the forgiveness of sin, and the idea of the punishment of sin, are generally thought to be contradictory and inconsistent. The ordinary idea of forgiveness is, that it is a remission of the penalty of sin ; and if that be the true conception, it certainly makes the idea of punishment impossible. But there are many passages in the Old Testament, no less than the New, in which the two thoughts of Pardon and Punishment are closely conjoined. Such, for example, are the two passages cited above, in the latter of which, indeed, we have the most absolute declaration of forgiveness, and then, immediately following, a recital of the punishment which Jehovah had inflicted upon the Jews in their

exile and captivity in Babylon. How are we to reconcile the two things? Is not the blotting out of sin incompatible with the punishment of it? Or is there any way of reconciling the two statements, any way in which they can be brought together, so that we can say: God does most absolutely and truly blot out and forget our sins; and He does also most absolutely and truly punish us for our sins? Are forgiveness and punishment irreconcilable ideas? Is the love of God in eternal opposition to the justice of God, or are they different aspects of the same transcendent fact in the Divine Nature?

When an earthly child has sinned against his earthly father, and the father promises forgiveness, two things are included in the promise. One is, that the father will not continue to be angry, but will regard his son with the same tender feeling as he had towards him before the wrong was done: *i. e.*, he will forgive him in feeling, and forget the offence as if it had not been committed. The other is, that he will not punish him for his misdeed, but let him go free, as if he had not been guilty of wrong. These are the two elements of forgiveness as it is understood between two human beings. But does the son escape punishment altogether because his father has been generous enough to let him go free? Of course he escapes outward penalty, which the father has remitted: but he does not escape the inward penalty of shame and self-condemnation, if he has any conscience or right feeling; in fact, his self-reproach and self-judgment will be all the stronger for the very reason that he has escaped the outward infliction, for in that case he would have felt that he had made some expiation of his sin.

And this brings out the difference, deep and radical, between Divine and human forgiveness. God is not angry in the sense in which our earthly father is angry; and when it is said in Scripture that He is "angry every day," it does not mean the anger of passion or resentment; and when it is said that He is reconciled to us, it is not that there has been a rupture of good feeling between us on his part, and that the rupture is healed. As far as we can understand the mystery of the Divine Nature, God's feeling towards the worst and the wickedest of his children is an eternal unclouded affection; and when we have sinned our utmost and worst, his feeling towards us is pity, not anger in our sense of the word, a wounded sympathy, and a grieved, but not an alienated, affection. When God, therefore, forgives, there is no putting away, as in the case of an earthly father, of passionate angry feeling, and a return to the ordinary parental tenderness. This is one difference between forgiveness in man and forgiveness in God.

The other is, that, whereas the earthly father forbears to punish the offending child, the heavenly Father always and invariably inflicts the punishment. The punishment of transgression is not with God a matter that has been reserved for determination in each individual case, it is not a matter that has been reserved for choice, or will, or caprice: it has been provided for and settled in the very constitution of the universe, provided for by a law which has been written into the very constitution of our own nature, engraved on tablets more enduring than brass, the tablets of our imperishable spiritual consciousness. St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, while admitting that the

Gentiles have no written or outward Divine law, affirms that they are a law unto themselves; and that, if they do by nature the things contained in the outward law, this shews the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or excusing them. The law, the Divine law of right and wrong, is written therefore and published in each man's own bosom; and when the law of right has been broken, it avenges itself on the transgressor upon the spot, often immediately, and the penalties of the broken law are as certain as the existence of the law itself. This is God's method of punishment, one that He never interferes with, and one that he never suspends or abolishes. Let a man of ordinary conscience commit a morally unclean act, and misery more or less acute will certainly follow—the misery of self-reproach and self-condemnation. And more than misery. He has not only defiled, he has also weakened himself, and given future temptations of the same kind a strength which they had not in the past. The man who defrauds his neighbour in any transaction may make a profitable bargain for the moment; but if he have not already hardened his conscience against all pain or pleasure, he will both stain and corrupt his enjoyment of his gain, and make himself a worse and weaker man than he was before. The punishment of Judas began as soon as the act of betrayal was completed, and he would fain have cancelled the bargain had that been possible. The great master of human nature, Shakespeare, shews that the murderer, such as Clarence or Macbeth, suffers a more dreadful penalty than the block or the scaffold could inflict; he peoples the whole air with the spectres of his own horrified imagination;

and his dreams and his waking hours are alike tormented with the jibbering ghosts of his victims. Retribution is the law of existence; and we can no more burn our fingers without pain than we can transgress the law of the spirit without misery and degradation.

If, then, God always punishes transgression, what becomes of the doctrine of forgiveness? If He is a God of such justice, how can He also be a God of infinite mercy? The two things are put together in the passages I have cited, forgiveness and punishment, indicating that there is no opposition between them, but that they are only two aspects of what are substantially related, not opposite, facts. For the Bible never talks of taking away the consequences, the punishment, of sin, as something distinct from the sin itself, as we often talk in modern times. The Bible regards sin and its consequence—punishment—as so bound up together that they cannot be separated, as such an insoluble compound, that we cannot take one away and leave the other. It is impossible to abolish the penalty of sin, and leave the sin behind; if the penalty is remitted, the sin itself is destroyed: if one goes, the other goes too. “May one be pardoned and retain the offence?” asks the guilty king in “Hamlet,” his moral sense not altogether bewildered by his crimes. When the Prophet reports Jehovah as saying to the Jewish captives, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins,” there is nothing in this declaration about taking away merely the punishment of their sins; it is the blotting out of the transgressions themselves, the taking away the sins themselves, so that they should perish out of the Divine memory. If the sins had re-

mained, though the punishment had been in some way remitted, God could not have ceased to remember them, for they would have been ever before his eyes. The figure of the "blotting out" of sin is often used in the Bible, and is a very expressive one. It means the cleansing out of a stain so that it disappears, the obliterating of a mark so that it is seen no more, and passes out of the memory. When, therefore, God says that "he blotteth out the transgressions of his people, and will remember them no more," we must understand that He will cleanse them from the stain of their sins, so that they shall become things of the past, obliterated from consciousness and memory; because, when the sins have been taken away, then the consequences, or punishment, will pass away too.

In a similar manner Christ is said, in the New Testament, to bear our sins, to take away our sins, to cleanse us from our sins; not to bear, or take away, or cleanse us from, the penalties of our sins. He bore our sins in Gethsemane and on the cross—not the punishment, but the sins themselves. If the punishment of sin is the shame of self-reproach, the misery of self-condemnation, and the weakening and deterioration of the moral nature, these consequences of sin are all our own, and cannot for a moment be thought of in connection with Christ; except that He had and has an infinite sympathy with us when we have to suffer these consequences of our sins, and did, and still does, in that sense, bear them with us. The grandeur of his mission was that He came to save us from sin, and the efficiency of the shedding of his blood is that it cleanses us from all sin. As the Lamb of God, He taketh away the sin of the world; and He saves us from the pun-

ishment of sin by first saving us from the sin which is the cause of it. The apostle who is the great argumentative theologian of the New Testament puts this truth before us in many forms. He says that we are made alive unto God through Christ; that sin dies in virtue of our faith in Christ and our union with Him; that if a man is in Christ he is a new creature; that a man is justified, or made righteous, by a faith in Christ which gives him the power to obey his will. The Apostle John says, "He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous." There is no hint anywhere of a salvation from punishment while the sin remains. When the sin is removed, the punishment of sin vanishes with it. And because we are never completely free from sin in this life, we are never completely free from punishment. We suffer, more or less, for the past and the present, while we are in this world.

We are now able, I think, to see how God blots out sins and yet punishes them; how He can be a God of love and justice at the same time without any contradiction in his nature. *Punishment is a part of the means He employs to blot out our transgressions*; it is one of his instruments for bringing us to repentance. I say *one* of his means; not the only, nor the most effectual, but one of the necessary inevitable instruments in the working out of our salvation.

Punishment is the work of love as much as any other part of God's redemptive work. It is love inflicting pain, pain that is corrective and curative. It is love unveiling to us the hidden intrinsic qualities of evil, and compelling us to see and feel them in the light of an intense and bitter personal experience. We are mercifully made to feel the pangs of remorse and

shame and self-condemnation, because by no other means could we be brought to know for ourselves the exceeding sinfulness of sin. If we were only told by an outward law that sin, which is often so sweet and intoxicating at the time, was a rebellion against the Divine Will, an evil and bitter thing which we were to shun, which bore the stigma of the displeasure of God and did harm in the universe, we might listen, or we might give no heed, to the announcement ; but when God illustrates for us the evil nature of all wrong-doing by unfolding its consequences in our own bosom and to our own experience, He compels us to think, and perchance to repent. When it is made out with all the power of an overwhelming demonstration that sin against God or man racks the whole frame of the soul with pain and sorrow ; that it blinds and deadens our nobler nature ; that, if not stopped, it will lead on to an unutterable agony and the destruction of our spiritual senses and faculties ; an appeal is made to our thought and experience which is calculated to arrest, and which ought to arrest, the career of the most desperate profligate, and compel him to pause and consider his ways. If a man can but be brought to ponder on his evil courses, and to anticipate their full consequences ; if he can be brought by painful consideration face to face with the full display of his guilt and folly, and to realize the utter misery of his impenitent state, there is then some hope of his repentance and salvation. The Prodigal Son, we are told, "came to himself" in the far-off land ; and he came to himself when he began to realize the full consequences of his former recklessness, his degrading servitude, the hunger which the husks could not satisfy, his utter poverty and destitu-

tion which no one had pity on. His true and real self then came back to him, and brought with it the happy inspiration of repentance and return. From that moment his sin began to be blotted out and forgotten, because the spirit of the son had begun to supplant the spirit of the prodigal. When God declared to the captive Jews in Babylon that He blotted out their transgressions, He was doing more than remitting the punishment by restoring them to their own land. He was destroying that spirit of idolatry in them which had formerly been their great national sin; for from henceforth the Jews ceased from being an idolatrous people, and their exile had played the greatest part in shewing them the absurdity and guilt of idolatry. Call it justice, if you please, which joins punishment and sin; but the truer and more appropriate name is Love.

God forgives a man when He destroys his sin and blots out his transgression. But punishment is only a part of the agency He employs towards this end, and is not of itself sufficient to bring about a deep and lasting repentance. Men for the most part cannot see God's *love* in their sufferings and chastisements, although that doctrine is so emphatically set forth in Holy Writ; but only his anger. And hence, if the work of blotting out sin is to be wide and general, some grand agency of manifest undeniable Love must lead the way and occupy the foremost place. Men cannot be driven into goodness and righteousness, even by Divine law and the punishments it inflicts; but they can be drawn by the almighty attractions of Love revealed in the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ. How to overcome the power of sin in the human heart, and how to implant the spirit of a Divine freedom, so

as to drive out the spirit of license which brought in sin, was the problem which Divine Wisdom had to solve. And the Apostle Paul tells us how it has been solved. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, or on account of sin, condemning sin in the flesh"—"flesh" here meaning human nature. Christ is God's power for human recovery and salvation. Not our own sufferings for sin, however severe and protracted, are powerful enough to overthrow the dominion of sin, though they have a part to play; but the sufferings of Christ reflecting, as they do, the infinite compassion of God, can dissolve the fatal spell that is upon us. These shew to us that the path of repentance is wide open for him that has wandered farthest from home; that God will not only not refuse the returning penitent, but will go out to meet him while yet a great way off, and cast his embracing arms about him, in token of the welcome which He and all heaven will give.

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BRIEF NOTICES.

Professor Cremer has put every Biblical scholar under obligation by his well-known BIBLICO-THEOLOGICAL LEXICON OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK. By his new and enlarged edition he has more than doubled that obligation, for he has now given us a long and elaborate essay on each of the characteristic words of the New Testament, noting the changes it has undergone as it passed from Classical to Christian use, and the several senses in which it has been employed since it was pressed into the service of the Church. The new edition contains twice as much matter as the old, and if the matter is not twice as good, it is at least very much improved. Mr. Urwick has translated the new edition (he and Dr. Simon were the translators of