

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

as he lay dying at Abbotsford. "What shall I read?" inquired Lockhart. "How can you ask? There is but one book for me now." Then his son-in-law took down the New Testament and read the fourteenth chapter of John. "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." And when he had read that, the dying man lifted himself up in his couch and said, "Well, this is a great comfort. I have followed you distinctly and I *feel* as if I were yet to be myself again." It is a fine thing to have this assuring word from so great and so good a man as Sir Walter Scott; but what the New Testament did for him, it can do for us. The instinct for immortality will thrive and grow and flourish, if that influence of Jesus be upon us. And when it is not green pastures that we walk through, but when we have to descend into the vale of deep darkness, we will fear no evil because Jesus has gone this way before us and His voice through the darkness says that there is light beyond and all is well.

FRANK Y. LEGGATT.

### SIN AS A PROBLEM OF TO-DAY.

#### IX. SIN AS GUILT—THE DIVINE JUDGMENT.

HITHERTO, though constantly implied in what has preceded, the character of "guilt" in sin has not received any independent investigation. The feeling of guilt, indeed, in weaker or stronger degree, is an element in the consciousness of every moral being who knows himself as a wrong-doer. It is there naturally and spontaneously, a spring of disquiet and remorse, neither waiting on theoretical considerations for its justification, nor capable of being

got rid of by theoretical reasonings the most subtle and plausible. All serious literature treats it as a terrible fact, and finds its weirdest interest in depicting the agonies of the guilt-afflicted conscience, and in tracking the Nemesis that surely awaits the transgressor.<sup>1</sup>

Still, the idea of guilt depends, for its proper apprehension, on presuppositions in the general doctrine of sin, which had first to be made good before the nature and bearings of this idea could be intelligently approached. If guilt is a reality, and not simply a deceptive play of consciousness with itself—an illusion, disease, or figment of the mind—it seems self-evident that certain things about it must be postulated. There must be assumed the existence and freedom of the moral agent, the reality of moral law, with its intrinsic distinctions of right and wrong, some authority, be it only in society, to which the wrong-doer is accountable for infringements of that law—in religion, the existence of God as Moral Ruler and Holy Judge of men. Suppose, on the other hand, the view taken—as it is taken by some—that man has not real freedom, that, in words of Mr. Spencer before quoted, freedom is “an inveterate illusion”<sup>2</sup>—suppose, again, it is held that sin, or what is called such, is a natural and necessary stage in man’s development—a step to the good,—which seems the implication in most metaphysical and evolutionary theories,—suppose it is thought, as by many, that good and evil are but relative to the finite standpoint, and have no existence for the Absolute or for the universe as a whole, or, as by naturalism, that morality is only a social convention, and moral ideas the product of casual association and education (“homo mensura”),—suppose, finally, the Per-

<sup>1</sup> “Raro antecedentem scelestum

Deseruit pede poena claudo.”—Horace, *Odes*, iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. his *Psychology*, i. pp. 500 ff.

sonality, Holiness, or Moral Government of God is denied, or the idea of "law" is held to be inapplicable to the relations of God to men,—it seems plain that the logical ground is taken from the conception of "guilt" in any serious sense. The term either ceases to have meaning, or is weakened down to the expression of an affrighted state of the individual feeling, without any objective reality to correspond. There is "guilt-consciousness," as a subjective experience, but not a "guilt" of which God and the universe must take account.

Is "guilt," then, a reality, and in what does its nature consist? How is it related to the divine order of the world, and to that "judgment of God" which, St. Paul assures us, "is according to truth against them that practise" evil? <sup>1</sup>

1. In asking, first, what "guilt" is, we may start, with Mr. Bradley, in his older book, *Ethical Studies*, with the idea of "answerableness"—*imputability*.<sup>2</sup> The sense of guilt arises, primarily, in connexion with the acts which a man imputes to himself as proceeding from his own will in the exercise of his freedom.<sup>3</sup> These, if wrong, i.e., involving the transgression of some principle of duty, he attributes to himself as their cause, feels that he is "answerable" for them, takes blame to himself on their account, and is conscious that he deserves blame from others. As conditions of such self-reprobatation, certain things, as already hinted, are implied—the agent's consciousness of his self-identity and freedom, some knowledge of moral distinctions,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 3 ff. What is it to be morally responsible? "We see in it at once the idea of a man's appearing to answer. He answers for what he has done, or has neglected and left undone. And the tribunal is a moral tribunal; it is the court of conscience, imagined as a judge, divine or human, external or internal" (p. 3).

<sup>3</sup> Hence the use of *arbitra* for guilt, in such phrases as "to hold one guilty," "to acquit of guilt."

the awareness that he *ought* to have acted otherwise than he has done, a perception of demerit in the act he has performed.<sup>1</sup> The sense of guilt, therefore, originates in a *moral judgment* of a condemnatory kind passed by the agent upon himself for acts which he knows to be wrong.

Attention must now be fixed more particularly on this idea of *demerit*, or *ill-desert*, attaching to the wrong act and to its doer. Hitherto<sup>2</sup> we have been dealing with sin as something in its nature intrinsically evil—opposed in principle to the good, a source of disorder and impurity, hateful in its manifestations, ruinous in its spiritual results. In this light sin bears the aspect of a *disease*; is something foul, malignant, repulsive, the cause of disturbance, misery, and death. Thus also it appears in Scripture. It is uncleanness, impurity: the abominable thing which God hates.<sup>3</sup> To this aspect of sin some, in their inquiries, would almost entirely confine themselves, ignoring everything which involves what they regard as a *legal* or *juristic* element. But there is another aspect of sin which accompanies all these internal phases of it. Besides possessing the character now described—because, indeed, of its possession of this character—sin has the quality of *evil desert*—of *punishableness*.<sup>3</sup> Sin is not simply a hateful, it is likewise a

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bradley puts the matter thus: "The first condition of the possibility of my guiltiness, or of my becoming a subject for moral imputation, is my self-sameness; I must be throughout one identical person. . . . In the first place, then, I must be the very same person to whom the deed belonged; and, in the second place, it must have belonged to me—it must have been mine. . . . The deed must issue from my will; in Aristotle's language, the *αρχή* must be in myself. . . . Thirdly, responsibility implies a *moral agent*. No one is accountable who is not capable of knowing (not, who *does* not know) the moral quality of his acts" (*op. cit.*, pp. 5-7).

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Ps. xiv. 3; Is. vi. 5; Jer. xliv. 4; Ezek. xxxvi. 29; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Eph. iv. 19; v. 4; Jas. i. 2; Rev. xxii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kant, *Crit. of Pract. Reason* (Abbott's trans., *Theory of Ethics*, pp. 127 ff. "Finally, there is something further in the idea of our practical reason, which accompanies the transgression of a moral law—namely, its *ill-desert*" (p. 127).

*condemnable* thing ; not something only that *may* be punished, but something that *deserves* to be punished<sup>1</sup>—that could not emerge in a morally-constituted universe and be lawfully passed over as indifferent. This character of the evil desert of sin asserts itself instinctively in every conscience ; as conscience develops and grows more sensitive it asserts itself only the more unconditionally. Our feeling regarding a wrong act is, not only that it is something which we blame ourselves for, and are perhaps ashamed of, but something, further, for which we may justly be called to account, and made to *suffer*.

The distinction here made between sin as disease, and sin as entailing evil desert, is one which, as earlier noted, presents itself likewise in ordinary ethical theory. Some schools, it is well known, prefer to look on virtue on the *æsthetic* rather than on what is sometimes called the *juristic* side. Virtue is, in this view, the beautiful (*τὸ καλόν*), the harmonious, the lovable in character ; vice, by contrast, is the inharmonious, the turbulent, the irregular, the morally ugly and repulsive. Thus, e.g., in Plato and Shaftesbury. Other moralists, as Kant, start from the side of law, and, emphasising the judicial function of conscience, dwell on the evil desert and punishableness of transgression. One view has regard more to the quality of character ; the other to the acts in which character is expressed. Both aspects, however, have their rightful place in a complete view of the facts. The prejudice against a "forensic" view of morality may easily be carried too far. Universal

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bradley says : " What is really true for the ordinary consciousness ; what it clings to, and will not let go ; what marks unmistakably, by its absence, a ' philosophical ' or a ' debauched ' morality, is the necessary connexion between responsibility and liability to punishment, between punishment and desert, or the finding of guiltiness before the law of the moral tribunal. For practical purposes we need make no distinction between responsibility, accountability, and liability to punishment" (*op. cit.*, p. 4).

speech endorses the conception of conscience as a court of arraignment for the evil-doer ;<sup>1</sup> and heavy and unrelenting, often, are the sentences which this court pronounces.

The relation of guilt and punishment waits closer examination, but one current misconception may here be guarded against. One reason why the term "juristic" is an unfortunate one in this connexion is, that it conveys, or is apt to convey, the impression that ill-desert belongs to, and takes its origin from, statutory law ; that it is enough, therefore, to brand the *legal* standpoint in religion as low and imperfect to get rid of the notion of a judicial dealing with sin altogether. Ritschl, e.g., in denying punitive justice to God, proceeds on this idea.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, however, it is a mistaken one. The presence of law is, indeed, presupposed in ill-desert ; but ill-desert itself, as an inherent quality of the sinful act or disposition, cleaves, by an intuitive "value-judgment," to the consciousness of wrongdoing prior to any recognition of it by prescriptive law. If it were not already there, law could not make it. It would be there, were that conceivable, even were there no power or authority to call to account for it. Statute law itself, with its imperfect justice, is not an arbitrary thing, but rests, or professes to rest, on principles of right which depend on conscience for their sanction. It would be truer to say that the inner tribunal of conscience is the model on which courts of law are founded, than that it is they which furnish the pattern, and give sanctity to the decisions, of conscience.

Even to the natural consciousness, therefore, guilt is a terrible and woeful reality—not a feeling or alarm of the transgressor's own heart merely (a *guilt-consciousness*),

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> In this theory of Ritschl's, see below. In criticism, cf. Dorner, *Syst. of Doct.*, E.T. iv., pp. 60-3.

but a guilt that is objectively *there*, and has to be taken account of by the wrong-doer himself and by others. Thus it is regarded in the secret judgments of the soul; thus it is treated in the moral estimates of men by their fellows; thus, when it takes the form of "crime" against society, it is judged by human law.<sup>1</sup>

This, however, still leaves us far outside the full *Christian* estimate of guilt. If guilt has this serious character even in ordinary ethics, infinitely more is its ill-desert apparent when transgression is lifted up into the *religious* sphere, and judged of in its proper character as *sin*. Sin, we have already seen, is much more than simple breach of moral law; it concerns the whole spiritual relation to God. In this higher relation, its demerit is measured not only by the law of conscience<sup>2</sup>—at best a weak and pale reflection of the divine judgment,—but by the majesty of the Holiness against which the offence is committed, the absoluteness of the divine claim on our obedience, and the potency of evil perceived to be involved in sin's principle, trivial as may seem, on our lower scale of judging, its immediate manifestation. For here, again, is a fallacy to be avoided. In measuring the evil of sin, we are too apt to be misled by what, in our levity, we call the insignificance of the act (untruth, selfishness, unforgivingness, displays of anger, etc.<sup>3</sup>); our judgments are unhappily out of proportion

<sup>1</sup> Cf. T. H. Green, *Works*, ii., pp. 489 ff. Mr. Green perhaps errs in seeking the ground of punishment too exclusively in the harm done to society, but he insists strongly on the punishment being a *just* one—one truly *deserved*. "It demands retribution in the sense of demanding that the criminal should have his due, should be dealt with according to his deserts, should be punished justly. . . . When the specified conditions of just punishment are fulfilled, the person punished himself recognises it as just, as his due or desert, and it is so recognised by the onlooker who thinks himself into the situation" (pp. 491-2).

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Christ's estimate of these things (Matt. v. 22; vi. 15; xii. 36, etc.).



because our own standpoint is habitually so far below the level of a true spirituality. It seems to us dreadful, no doubt, that a man should commit forgery, or betray a trust ; but the fact that any one's (or our own) heart is alienated from God, and insensible to His goodness ; that the spiritual balance of the nature is upset—the flesh strong, the spirit weak ; that things below, not things above, enchain the affections,—in brief, that the *centre* of life is a wrong one, and that, judged by the standard of *holiness*, almost every thought and act invite condemnation,—this appears to us not so very evil, and occasions comparatively little concern. It is precisely these standards of judgment, however, which religion inverts, and which we, too, must invert, if we are to see things with God's eyes. It will hardly be denied, at least, that, in the Christian Gospel, the demerit, turpitude, ill-desert of sin throughout assume this more awful aspect. The sin of a world turned aside from God is there judged, not by human, but by divine, standards. Guilt is a reality not to be gainsaid. " All the world " is " brought under the judgment of God." <sup>1</sup> A condemnation rests upon it, which no effort of man's own can remove.<sup>2</sup> This, however, introduces us to a further circle of conceptions, the nature and legitimacy of which must now be considered.

2. Sin is *punishable* ; this belongs to its essence. But what is the ground of this connexion between sin and punishment ? How is punishment itself to be regarded in its nature and end ? And what place has this conception in a religion like the Christian, which proceeds on a principle of *love* ?

Eliminating from punishment, as one must do, the idea of personal vengeance—the simple requiting of injury with injury—the question comes to be : Is punishment *retributive*,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 19, *ὑπόδικος*.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 19, 20, 23, etc.

i.e., due to sin on its own account ? or is it only *disciplinary* or *deterrent*—a “ chastisement ” inflicted from a motive of benevolence, or a means to the prevention of wrong-doing in others ? The latter is the “ eudaemonistic ” or “ utilitarian ” view of punishment so severely criticised by Kant.<sup>1</sup> As, however, no one denies that punishment may be used, and in God’s providence largely is used, for disciplinary ends,<sup>2</sup> the question really turns on the other point of the acknowledgement or denial of its *retributive* aspect. This, on various grounds, is contested. Dr. Moberly, in his interesting discussion of the subject in his *Atonement and Personality*, takes what may be regarded as a mediating view. He grants that punishment *may* be retributive, but holds that its primary purpose is disciplinary, and that only as it fails in its object of producing inward penitence does it acquire the retributive character.<sup>3</sup> But this is a difficult position to maintain. To be productive of any good, disciplinary suffering must always, in the first instance, be recognised as *just*, as *deserved*—one’s *due*, and in reasonable proportion to the offence. That is to say, it must include the retributive element.<sup>4</sup> Neither is it easy to understand how a punishment *not* at first due on its own account, can afterwards become retributive simply through its failure to effect a moral change. *Solely* retributive, in contrast with previous moral uses, or more *severely* retributive, with increased hardening in sin, it possibly may become ; but

<sup>1</sup> Cf. passage above cited.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. ii. of the Book of Hosea is a fine example of how God’s severest judgments on Israel had an end of discipline and mercy.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, ch. i. “ This purpose of beneficent love is, we may venture to suggest, the proper character and purpose of punishment ” (p. 14 ; cf. p. 24). It is allowed that in human justice the retributive aspect is primary ; but this, it is said, belongs to it “ not as it is justice, but as it is human . . . to the necessary imperfectness of such corporate and social justice as is possible on earth ” (p. 9).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the remarks in W. F. Lofthouse’s *Ethics and Atonement*, p. 102.

essentially the retributive character must have inhered in it from the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

Objection is taken to the retributive aspect of punishment on the ground that God, in Christ's revelation, is no longer looked on as Judge, but as *Father*. Ritschl, going deeper, would deny punitive justice to God as contradictory of His character as love.<sup>2</sup> Neither objection can be readily sustained. St. Paul also, while upholding retribution,<sup>3</sup> knew well that God was Father; <sup>4</sup> Jesus, revealing the Father, gave sternest expression to the truth that God is likewise Judge.<sup>5</sup> God is indeed Father: Fatherhood is expressive of His inmost heart in relation to a world of beings made originally in His own image. But Fatherhood is not the whole truth of God's relation to the world. There is another relation which He sustains than that of Father—the relation of Moral Ruler and Holy Judge—Founder, Upholder, Vindicator, of that moral order to which our own consciences and the whole constitution of things bear witness,—and it is this relation which, once sin has entered, comes into view, and claims to have its rights accorded to it.<sup>6</sup> It was not as Father that St. Paul wrote of God, "Then how shall God judge the world?"<sup>7</sup> "The wrath of God is

<sup>1</sup> This is partially conceded in the use of the word "latent" (on p. 14). Another difficulty for Dr. Moberly is that, as he rightly holds, the "penitence" he desiderates is "impossible" apart from the saving interposition of Christ (pp. 44-5). But an aspect of punishment (the disciplinary) which is dependent on redemption cannot be thought of as primary; unless, indeed, it is contended that there would have been no punishment of sin, had grace not entered.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the writer's *Ritschlian Theology*, pp. 110, 146-9.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. ii. 3-11.

<sup>4</sup> God is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. i. 3; Eph. i. 3), "our Father" (Eph. i. 2), "the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 14), etc. In a wider regard all are His "offspring" (Acts xvii. 28).

<sup>5</sup> Matt. x. 28; xi. 22, 24; xii. 36-7; xxi. 44; xxiv. 35, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. on this T. G. Selby, *Theology in Modern Fiction*, on Geo. Macdonald, pp. 151 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. iii. 5.

revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." <sup>1</sup>

What, then is the ground of the punishment of sin? It would lead us too far afield to enter into what may be termed the metaphysics of this difficult question. May it not be enough at present to say, what the foregoing has sought to make clear, that transgression, as in principle a break with that moral order of the world on conformity which all claim on life and its blessings depends, carries in itself the forfeiture of right to these blessings, and the desert of their opposite, loss and pain? Thus Kant would put it; <sup>2</sup> religion goes deeper in seeing in God's will the last principle of that order, and in sin the turning of the creature will from God in violation of the fundamental demand of moral law, unison of will with God. How then shall it be that a divine Holiness shall not react against transgression?

One thing certain is that the presence and working of a retributive justice in men's lives and in the history of the world have ever had a place among the deepest and most solemn convictions of the noblest portions of our race. The Bible need not be appealed to: its testimony is beyond dispute. <sup>3</sup> It is ever, indeed, to be remembered that in this world retribution never acts alone,—that it is crossed, restrained, on all hands, by an abundant mercy, <sup>4</sup>—is counteracted by remedial and redemptive forces,—is changed even where grace prevails (here is the truth of Dr. Moberly's

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 18. It is interesting to observe how St. Peter combines and yet distinguishes the two notions: "If ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work" (1 Pet. i. 17).

<sup>2</sup> Cf., e.g., the Fragment of a "Moral Catechism" in Kant's *Methodology of Ethics* (Semple's trans., Ed. 1869, p. 290 ff.).

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah: "Say ye of the righteous, that it shall be well with him. . . . Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him," etc. (ii. 10, 11); Jesus and Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 32-9); St. Paul has been already cited.

<sup>4</sup> "His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering" (Rom. iii. 4);

contention), as far as it continues, into the discipline of a loving Father.<sup>1</sup> But retribution, nevertheless, stern and terrible, there is, interweaving itself with every strain of sinful existence; this universal conscience testifies. It is the underlying idea in the Hindu solution of the inequalities of life—the doctrine of transmigration; it is the meaning of the Buddhist doctrine of “Karma”—that invisible law of moral causation infallibly binding act to consequence, even in the production of a new being, when the original agent has ceased to be at death;<sup>2</sup> it is the dread background to the sunny gaiety of ordinary Greek life (Erinnys, Nemesis, Atē), and lends their atmosphere of terror and abiding power over mind and conscience to the great creations of Greek Tragedy (Oedipus, Antigone, Orestes, etc., not, as will be seen after, without their softer note of mediation and forgiveness<sup>3</sup>); it is equally the informing soul of modern tragedy (Macbeth, Hamlet; in Ibsen), and of a great part of our nobler fiction (e.g., Geo. Eliot, Hawthorne<sup>4</sup>), even of fiction that is less noble (Dumas, Zola, Balzac, etc.). It is the implication of Schiller’s “The history of the world is the judgment of the world”; of Matthew Arnold’s all too impersonal “Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness.” All this, falling though it does below the height of the Christian conception, with its Personal Holy Ruler of the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 5 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics* (Works, ix. pp. 61–2), connects the idea of “Karma” with heredity. It is really very different—an abstract, impersonal law, which has no relation to biological transmission. Its persistence past death Huxley speaks of as transmission “from one phenomenal association to another by a sort of induction” (p. 67).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plumptre, *Sophocles*, Intro., p. lxxxiii.

<sup>4</sup> This part of the subject is well illustrated in the book above named, T. G. Selby’s *Theology in Modern Fiction* (Fernley Lects., 1896). One thinks here of the teaching of George Eliot’s *Silas Marner*, *Adam Bede*, *Felix Holt*, *Romola*, and of Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* and *Twice Told Tales*. Mr. Selby says of George Eliot: “Working through all her plots is a stern, intelligent, unforgetting principle of retribution which brings even the secret things of darkness into judgment” (p. 9).

world, and its law of righteousness, stretching in its effects into the life beyond, is a witness, impossible to be explained away, to the reality of a law of moral retribution, inbuilt inexorably into the very structure of our universe.<sup>1</sup>

3. Sin, it has been seen, in its very nature, cuts the bond of fellowship with God, but, further, as entailing guilt, creates in man a feeling of alienation and distrust, and calls forth a reaction of the divine Holiness against itself—what Scripture speaks of as the “wrath” (ὀργή) of God—which expresses itself in “judgment” (κρίμα; “condemnation,” *κατάκριμα*), or punishment. The punishment of sin is no mere “fate,” or “destiny,” or impersonal, self-acting “law,” without connexion with a moral Will, as in popular writing it is often represented, but has in it and behind it the intensity of a divine righteousness. The thing to be firmly grasped here is, that this is no arbitrary relation of God to the sin of the world. It is grounded in His very nature, and cannot be laid aside by any act of will, any more than the moral law itself can be reversed or annulled. Sin is that against which the Holy One and Upholder of the moral order of the universe, *must* eternally declare Himself in judgment. To do otherwise would be to deny that He is God. This, however, again gives rise to important questions as to the *manner* and *forms* in which the divine judgment takes effect, and on this point, in view of certain one-sided tendencies in current thought, a little must now be said.

It is a true, if not a complete, thought, that a large part of the punishment of sin—therefore, one form of the judgment of God—lies in the *immanent action* of God in the laws He has established in the worlds of nature and of mind. The first and often least bearable part of the punishment

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Huxley's strong words on the punishment of at least “certain actions” were quoted in the previous paper.

of sin is *internal*,—in greater offences in the miseries of conscience, the pangs of regret, the horror, shame, and self-loathing, that make the guilt-laden soul a hell,—but always in the moral and spiritual degradation, discord, and bondage that sin inevitably brings with it. Illustrations might be endlessly multiplied—the class of works already mentioned abound in them—of the mental torture which the consciousness of guilt can inflict.<sup>1</sup> Not in the inner life of the soul only, however, but *objectively*, in nature and society, the transgressor encounters the punishment of his misdoings. Law is at work here also. Wrong-doing puts the transgressor out of harmony with his environment, as well as with himself, and plunges him into countless troubles. Nature, as Butler said, is constituted for virtue, not for vice, and transgression brings the wrong-doer into collision with its order. Witness, e.g., the effects on health of the indulgence in sinful passions (envy, malice, etc.), or of a life of vice. Society is in arms against the man who violates its laws, or even its proprieties. Everywhere, despite apparent exceptions,<sup>2</sup> the saying is verified, “the way of transgressors is hard.”<sup>3</sup>

It is therefore an important truth that God judges sin through the operation of spiritual and natural laws. But this truth, as already suggested, is in danger of becoming a

<sup>1</sup> Two examples may be taken from antiquity:—

Juvenal, in his 13th Sat. (191-8), asks: “Yet why suppose that those have escaped punishment whom conscience holds in constant fear and under the noiseless lash—the mind her own tormentor? Sore punishment it is—heavier far than those of stern Caedicius or Rhadamanthus—night and day to carry one’s own accuser in the breast.”

Tacitus in his *Annals* (vi. 6) depicts the guilty agonies of Tiberius. In a letter to the Senate the emperor writes: “What to write you, conscript fathers, or how to write, or what *not* to write, may all the gods and goddesses destroy me worse than I feel they are daily destroying me, if I know.” “With such retribution,” adds the historian, “had his crimes and atrocities recoiled upon himself.”

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 35-6; lxxiii. 12-20.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. xiii. 15.

serious error when it is turned round to mean that laws, automatically acting, *take the place of God* in His judgment of sin, and exclude His personal, volitional action in connexion with it. This idea of inherent, "self-acting" laws, which take the punishment of sin, as it were, out of God's hands into their own, needs to be protested against as an undue exaggeration of the truth of God's immanence.<sup>1</sup> Laws are, after all, but God's ministers, and God remains the supreme, personal Power, acting above as well as within spirit and nature, omnipresently governing and directing both. Even in the internal punishment of sin, it is not always remembered, when self-acting laws are spoken of, how largely a personal element enters into such experience in the sinner's consciousness of the hostile judgment passed on him by others. It is this personal element of the disesteem of his fellows which, not infrequently, enters most deeply and with most withering effect into his soul, drying up its springs of happiness and rest. More terrible is it, in relation to God, to realise that it is not self-acting laws the sinner has to do with, but a Holy Judge, whose searching glance no transgression can escape, and who "will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."<sup>2</sup>

In nature, again, it is not simply self-acting laws which the transgressor has to deal with. We fail of a complete view if, with Martineau and others, we think of nature as a system of physical agencies which moves on its unbending

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dale in his work on *the Atonement* (Lect. viii.) criticises this theory of "self-acting" moral laws in its relation to forgiveness as expounded by an older writer, Dr. John Young, in his *Life and Light of Men*. "God simply looks on. The vast machine of the moral universe is self-acting." Cf. Mr. Selby's remarks on recent views in his *Theol. of Modern Fiction*, pp. 168 ff. He justly says: "A God who has put a huge body of inviolable natural or moral laws between Himself and His creatures is imperfectly personal" (p. 168).

<sup>2</sup> Eccl. xii. 14.



way without any regard to moral character.<sup>1</sup> Nature, equally with mind, is the sphere of a divine providence. It is not simply that the sinner suffers through his collision with the established natural order; but nature, under the direction of God, takes up a hostile attitude towards the sinner. This, which is undoubtedly the teaching of Scripture,<sup>2</sup> is surely the truer view philosophically as well as religiously. Laws alone do not explain nature. To explain the actual course of nature there is needed, besides, what J. S. Mill, borrowing from Dr. Chalmers, called the "collocation" of laws—the manner in which laws are combined and made to work together.<sup>3</sup> To this is due the fine threadings and conjunctions in life which, with other factors, make up what we rightly speak of as its providential meaning for us.<sup>4</sup> Things, in other words, do not fall out by hap-hazard; they are part of a divine ordering that takes all the conditions—natural and moral—into account. The agencies of nature, therefore, can well be used, and are used, of God, as His instruments in the punishment of sin.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Martineau, *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 105: "The physical agency of God . . . can take no separate notice of human life and character, nor of the differences which distinguish us from each other in our lot and in our mind . . . An administration which, still intellectual, is *unmoral*, and carries its inexorable order through, and never turns aside, though it crushes life and hope, and even gives occasion to guilt and abasement.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxviii. 15 ff.; Is. i. 4 ff.;<sup>3</sup>Hos. ii.; Amos iv.; Rev. viii., etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Syst. of Logic*, Bk. iii. 12. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. McCosh, *Method of Div. Govt.*, Bk. ii. ch. 2. "The inquiring mind will discover designed combinations, many and wonderful, between the various events of divine providence. . . . What singular unions of two streams at the proper place to help on the exertions of the great and good! What curious intersections of cords to catch the wicked as in a net, when they are prowling as wild beasts! By strange, but most apposite correspondences, human strength, when set against the will of God, is made to waste away under His indignation, as, in heathen story, Meleager wasted away as the stick burned which his mother held in the fire" (p. 198).

Mr. Selby, illustrating from George Eliot, says: "The gathering up of all these tangled threads after years of oblivion implies an over-watching providence of judgment in human life" (*op. cit.*, p. 52).

4. The word in which Scripture sums up, comprehensively, the penalty of sin is "death." "The wages of sin is death."<sup>1</sup> Death, in this relation, certainly includes a moral element; it has sin behind it as its cause.<sup>2</sup> The intimacy of spiritual and physical is maintained here also. The real dying is *inward*,—the result of disobedience, severing from fellowship with God, and issuing, save as grace prevents, in corruption and subjection to evil powers.<sup>3</sup> Death is not, therefore, simply physical dissolution. On the other hand, it seems impossible to deny that physical dissolution,—the separation of soul and body, in contradiction of man's true destiny<sup>4</sup>—is, in the Scriptural idea,<sup>5</sup> included in it. The meaning of death for man, in its scientific relations, was considered in a previous paper, and need not be further dwelt upon. With death, however, in its universal prevalence,<sup>6</sup> and, as involved in this, the whole question of hereditary evil, is connected another dark and difficult problem, the possibility of a *hereditary or racial*, as distinct from a purely individual, *guilt*. From what has been said in elucidation of guilt, it would seem as if the very nature of guilt lay in its being individual. I cannot be guilty of another's sin. On the other side, the fact has to be faced that, because of the organic connexion—the *solidarity*—of the race, the penalties of transgression rarely are confined to the individual transgressor, but overflow on all connected with him. They descend from generation to generation,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. ii. 17; iii. 19; Rom. v. 12.

<sup>3</sup> On death as spiritual, cf. John v. 24; Rom. viii. 6; Eph. ii. 1, 5; v. 14; 1 Tim. v. 16; 1 John iii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the writer's *God's Image in Man*, pp. 53, 251 ff.

<sup>5</sup> This is contested by many, e.g., by Principal E. Griffith-Jones, in his *Ascent Through Christ*, pp. 174 ff. But fair exegesis cannot get rid of this idea of Paul's teaching (Rom. v. [12; 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, etc.]). Ritschl grants that Paul taught the doctrine, but holds that Paul's thought is no rule for us (*Justif. and Recon.*, E.T., p. 359).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Rom. v. 12-15.

<sup>7</sup> Exod. xx. 5.

even to the extent of the inheritance of a polluted nature, and, on the above showing, of universal subjection to death.

How is this antinomy to be solved? It plainly cannot be on the ground of pure individualism. It was before seen, however, that the individual point of view is not the only one; the *social* and *racial* aspects of man's existence have likewise to be regarded, and these entail responsibilities.

(1) It is to be recalled that, while personal guilt, obviously, there can be none for the acts of another, this does not preclude even the innocent from the suffering of *painful consequences* which are truly the penalties of that other's transgression.

(2) Next, it cannot be denied that, while purely personal action entails only individual responsibility, there are *public* and *corporate responsibilities*, in which all concerned must take their share, though the acts by which they are affected are not their own. A firm is responsible for the defalcations of a clerk or of one of its own members; an employer is responsible for his servant's carelessness; a nation may be involved in prolonged war through a rash word spoken or a blow struck. There is not here, indeed, a sharing of the guilt, but there is of the *liabilities* which the wrong act entails—a fruit of the common responsibility.

(3) A deeper case is where, besides outward association, there is *kindredship in disposition* with the transgressors—participation in, and heirship of, the *spirit* that prompted the evil deeds. Jesus held the Pharisees responsible for the deeds of their fathers, of whose spirit they were part-takers. He spoke of the blood of all the prophets coming on Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> The French Revolution, as depicted by Carlyle, is a modern illustration of the same avenging law.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 29-39. On the same principle we speak of the sin of *the world* as crucifying Christ Himself. The Jews cried: "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25).

Guilt, accumulating for centuries, discharges its terrible load upon a later generation. In these cases continuity of spirit knits the generations together into one guilty whole.

All these principles, it may be held, meet in their application to the *race*. Guilt, as well as sin, has a racial aspect. The race is not innocent. Sprung from a sinful root, itself gone far astray,<sup>1</sup> it shares in the disabilities which sin entails. Without prejudice to individual responsibility, we can speak of a common "guilt" of humanity.

5. The great, the solemn, inquiry yet remains—Does sin's penalty exhaust itself in this life? Or is it carried over into *the Beyond*, and with what issues? Does death end all? The question must here be reserved, but it is that on which everything depends for a satisfying solution of the moral problems of the world. There is, it has been seen, a divine moral administration in this life,—a judgment of sin, inward and outward, continually going on,—but the mind is easily contented which can regard this temporal dispensation of God's justice as either perfect or final. The manifest incompleteness of the earthly system of things, in relation both to the good and to the evil, is, in fact, the loudest plea for a Hereafter, and one of the strongest reasons for believing in its existence. The present, too, it is needful again to remind ourselves, is a Day of Grace even more than a scene of Judgment. A remedial system is in operation, the bearings of which on sin are manifold and far-reaching. Rarely, if ever, is sin permitted to work out its full effects; never, in this life is it visited with its full penalty. This, manifestly, is not final. A day is awaited when the veil will fall, when everything will be revealed in its true light, and meet with its due reward. Gospel as it is of all-embracing love, Christianity joins with conscience in announcing "judgment to come."<sup>2</sup> JAMES ORR.

<sup>1</sup> Is. liii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxiv. 25; Rom. ii. 5, 16; 2 Cor. v. 10; Heb. vi. 1. 2, etc.