

CHAPTER III.

Objections Examined.

1. **I**T is objected that the unrighteousness of penal substitution is strongly shown by the fact that God expressly prohibited it to human magistrates (Deut. xxiv. 16), and that in Ezekiel xviii. 4, he disclaims it as a principle of his own moral government, declaring that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." The first assertion is correct; the second misconceives the text. But the sophism of the first is contained in the false assumption that because a given moral prerogative is improper for men, it must, therefore, be improper for God. I shall not take the harsh position that because God is sovereign and omnipotent, therefore his will is not regulated by, or responsible to, those fundamental principles of morality which he has enjoined on his creatures. I shall never argue that God's "might makes his right," as our opponents charge strict Calvinists with arguing. But it is a very different thing, and a perfectly plain and reasonable thing, to say that the infinite sovereignty, wisdom, and holiness of God may condition, and may limit his moral rights in a manner very different from what is proper for us men. The principles of right-

ousness for the two rulers, God and a human magistrate, are the same ; the details of prerogative for the two may differ greatly, while directed by the same holy principles. How simple is this! How ready and facile the instances! Thus, a father entrusts his boy to a distant teacher, and tells him to consider himself as *in loco parentis* to the urchin. Does this authorize the pedagogue to inflict any kind of punishment for the boy's faults which would be righteous for the father, as, for instance, disinheritance? By no means. This plain view makes the inference of our opponents worthless, that because God has told his servants they must not do a certain thing, therefore it is immoral for him to do it.

And the reasons limiting the two cases differently are plain and strong. The first is: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The prerogative of retribution is God's alone; magistrates only possess a small fraction of it by delegation from him. Hence, they are properly bound by such restrictions as he chooses to impose upon their judicial functions. Next, men lack the wisdom and infinite serenity of moral judgment which are requisite for these exalted and far-reaching acts of retribution. Third, they cannot possibly find subjects suitable for holy penal substitution. One of the conditions necessary for righteous substitution is the free consent of the substitute, that is, where he

himself is innocent. No human being is thus innocent before God, but each is guilty for himself. Now, a guilty life forfeited to the law cannot possibly buy off another guilty life also forfeited to law. One bankrupt cannot release the obligations of another bankrupt by becoming surety for him. The surety must personally be innocent, righteous, and owing nothing for himself to penal law. This principle governed in the establishment of the representative relation between both Adam and Christ and their two federal bodies. Adam was personally innocent when thus chosen, and must have continued so in order to benefit his federal body; and Christ was and continued absolutely innocent, and was thus able to justify his federal body by his imputed merit. Here, then, is one insuperable obstacle to any human ruler's punishing through a substitute. Not to dwell upon this difficulty, that a good man would rarely be found willing to die under human law for a wicked neighbor, we meet another still more fatal. No subject of human government has that ownership or autocracy of his own faculties and being which are strictly necessary for a penal substitution; these belong to his maker; they are but a loan to the creature. Now, no citizen, however generous, can pay his neighbor's debt with propriety, nor his own, by robbing another in order to get the wherewithal. Besides this, every man in society owes moral obligations

to other fellow-creatures who have a rightful interest in his being and faculties. Let us suppose that a good Damon were found generous enough to propose dying for a bad Pythias; Damon's wife would very certainly protest, saying, may it please the court, I have a legal right to object utterly to that arrangement; for our matrimonial contract has invested me with a previous right in Damon's life and faculties, for the protection and subsistence of me and my children. If the judge knew anything of law, he would be obliged to reply, that the wife was right; that Damon, however generous, had no right to dispose of his life in this substitution, and that the court could not accept his proposal, being clothed with only a limited and delegated power, and strictly forbidden by the sovereign to accept such an arrangement. Another obstacle would arise; the civil magistrate has no power to convert Pythias from the evil of his way. And as he is equally unable to raise Damon from death, the practical results of the substitution would only be to deprive society of a good citizen in order to preserve for it one who had been wicked and mischievous, and who would, probably, continue so. When we add to this that the human judge might wickedly pervert the power of substitution to wreak his malice upon some innocent person, or to gratify a general rage for slaughter, we have the true reason which prompted God to prohibit the power

summarily to the magistrate. But how worthless is the inference that he will never exercise it himself under conditions which he knows to be wise, just, and beneficial?

Now, we find every condition which was lacking to the human substitute beautifully fulfilled in the case of Christ. He was innocent, owing for himself no debt of guilt. He gave his own free consent, a consent which his Godhead and autocracy of his own being entitled him to give or to withhold. (See John x. 17, 18.) He could not be holden by death; but, after paying the penal debt of the world, he resumed a life more glorious, happy, and beneficent than before. He has power to work, and does work, true repentance and sanctity in every transgressor whom he justifies. The founding of this objection upon the inhibition of Deuteronomy xxiv. 16 well illustrates the superficial haste and silliness of our opponents. Had they read a few chapters further, they would have found (in Joshua vii. 6-26) what absolutely refutes their inference. They say that, because the civil magistrate may not make any penal substitution, therefore God himself cannot. But in the latter place, in the case of the thief Achan and his children, God did this very thing. The sinning children were punished along with the guilty father. This sentence was not found by Joshua, the human chief magistrate of Israel, but was dictated to him by

Jehovah. This case utterly ruins the objectors. The Almighty took it out of Joshua's hands, as it was one of critical importance, and judged it himself in his own sovereignty. But what shall we say of the audacity of our opponents' assertion, when we find the same God asserting his purpose to visit the guilt of sinful parents on sinful children in the very Decalogue (Exod. xx. 5), a law of perpetual obligation for all ages and dispensations, and in his own most solemn declaration of his own principles to Moses (Exod. xxxiv. 7)? And what shall we say when we all have before our eyes indisputable instances in God's providence of the penal results incurred by parents descending to children, while those children may be exempt from their particular vices? And, last, what shall we say when we hear the meek and lowly Jesus declaring with such emphasis (Luke xi. 51, 52) that this law of imputation was still in full force under the Christian dispensation, and was to be terribly executed upon that generation of Jews? But does Ezekiel (xviii. 4) contradict both Moses and Christ as to this principle? If he does, the squarely honest mind has no resort except to give up the inspiration of Ezekiel. He who has a fair understanding of God's theocratic covenant with Israel and of its history has no difficulty at all. Ezekiel heard the captive Jewish nobles in Chaldea insolently perverting truth by wresting the old adage;

it was "the fathers who ate the sour grapes, but it is the children's teeth which are set on edge." This is the clear line of the debate between the pastor and his backslidden charge: Ezekiel—Your present, urgent duty is repentance. Jews—Why so, Ezekiel? Ezekiel—Because you are great sinners. Jews—What evidence have you, Ezekiel, that we are great sinners? Ezekiel—The proof is the great secular calamities that you are now suffering: captivity, exile, and pagan despotism. Jews—This proof is not conclusive, because it may be that we are only suffering the inherited guilt of our fathers' great sins. Now, it is to meet this evasion that Ezekiel introduces, with powerful emphasis, the correct statement of the theocratic covenant between God and Israel. It was precisely this: that God was to hold to his chosen people the relation of a *political king*. This was to be to Israel a great mark of favor, grace, and blessing, chiefly in that the strict principle of God's government over pagan peoples, by which God visits the guilt of parents also in part upon their guilty children, was by this covenant *suspended as to Israel*, in special mercy; just as, in the covenant of grace with believing sinners of all races and ages, these are to be delivered from all guilt, imputed or personal, when they receive Christ, and by his gracious merits and intercession.

The political compact between God and Israel

was this: that he would chastise political transgressions with secular calamities, but that the favored people should be exempt from the fathers' imputed guilt, and from that awful substitution under which God is still governing all pagan and wicked races. Whence it would follow, that just as soon as a generation of Hebrews, suffering for their sins, should turn from them by repentance, God would promptly lift off their secular miseries. This was the special bargain between God and the Hebrews. Moses explained it thus to them in detail at the end of his ministry. (See Deuteronomy, last chapters.) This compact finds illustration throughout the Book of Judges (chapter iii. 9, 15, *et passim*), and the prophets. Here is just the explanation of a very remarkable fact in history, that for two thousand five hundred years this little commonwealth of Hebrews escaped that doom which befell all pagan commonwealths. The political and religious transgressions of Israel doubtless often became, if not as gross, at least as aggravated as those of any pagan race of Mizraim or Amalek. But these people were all destroyed as nations by God's providence in punishment of their race transgressions. Where is Mizraim? Where is Amalek? Where are the Amorite commonwealths, and the Hittite, and Edom? Where is Assyria, Chaldea, Tyre, Elam, Carthage? These have ceased forever to have any distinct racial or

political existence. The political life of Israel persisted through all his crimes and calamities because he was under the special covenant. Among Israelites, therefore, the old adage could not be true as to political guilt. Therefore, Ezekiel's argument against his backslidden charge was logically and historically perfect. The heavy woes of that generation did prove them backslidden sinners, and, therefore, repentance and reformation were their prime duty. True, Ezekiel then proceeds to do what all the prophets delight in doing, he proceeds to deduce from the terms of God's theocratic secular covenant with Israel as a type, the blessed spiritual reality of which it was the standing emblem, the merciful rule of Messiah's gospel kingdom over believing men of all races, that all penitent and obedient souls are by that gospel mercy released eternally from all guilt, whether original and imputed, or personal. He says under Messiah's spiritual kingdom no soul incurs eternal death save by his own personal impenitence. Each soul which perishes is the architect of its own ruin. There is, therefore, no suggestion in this famous passage of any disclaimer or repeal of God's providential law of vicarious secular punishments upon Gentile families and tribes.

Now, let us see just what the extent of that law is. God never said that the guilt of wicked parents could be justly visited upon an innocent de-

scendant, nor that the rights of perfect immunity secured by such perfect innocence could ever be invaded, even by the Almighty Sovereign, without the voluntary consent of the substitute. If Adam ever had another son as truly pure as Jesus, the son of Mary, I know, as surely as I know that God is God, that holy son never tasted any punishment, either in this world or the next, for the guilt of the wicked ancestor ; and the only reason why the son of Mary was an exception was this, that his superior nature was uncreated, independent, and divine ; that this eternal Word clothed himself with humanity for the very purpose of bearing this peculiar substitution, and that in the God-man, Christ, both natures and both wills, the human and divine, consented with perfect freedom to this wondrous arrangement for the glory of God's moral perfections and for the infinite good of an innumerable company of redeemed men. As to the guilty posterity of guilty parents, these are the principles taught by enlightened conscience and God's word : That the sovereign Judge may righteously punish any guilty person with adequate sufferings, both secular and eternal, after the death of the body ; that the wicked children of wicked parents do primarily incur this personal responsibility by their own sins ; that having thus made themselves guilty of death, they are justly liable to be punished in any times and modes, not excessive,

which seem wisest and best to the Omniscient; and that God does see fit, for wise and righteous administrative reasons, to put upon these wicked children a part of the earthly sufferings entailed upon them as natural results of parental sins; and this is the extent of that providential law published by God in both Testaments, and administered before our eyes in every generation.

I now beg the reader to pause and ask himself this question, whether any other moral dispensation would be possible towards responsible moral agents, connected with each other by racial, parental, and social ties, as we men are; towards creatures whose existence is begun through parentage, qualified by heredity, and closely bound up in social relations which, whatever responsibilities they may bring, are absolutely essential to man's rational development and welfare? I can see how the young of the human species could be exempted from this principle of imputation, provided God conditioned their existence and growth like those of young monkeys or pigs, namely, without any inheritance of property rights; without any moral or intellectual influences, forming their spiritual natures for better or for worse; without any permanent parental or filial affection; without any spiritual heredity; without any such attributes or social relation as unite rational men; not otherwise. But since man must be the opposite of all these in

order to be better than a monkey or a pig, I see not how the principle of social imputation could be eliminated. Let us see some human infidel perfectionists construct a rational and moral social state without it.

To save time and space we have completed the argument by analogy from this providential imputation of the guilt of sinful parents to sinful children, to the imputation of the guilt of sinners unto their divine Substitute and Redeemer. We do not claim that the parallel is complete in all its details. It is enough that in both instances we have the principle of imputation, although its applications are conditioned differently in some particulars. And this is all that is required to rebut the objection that the very principle is itself so irrational and contra-ethical, that a wise and holy God cannot have adopted it all. For he does adopt it to a certain extent in a multitude of cases which are continually occurring before our eyes. We must stultify ourselves in order to avoid admitting the facts that sinful children do share the penal consequences of their father's sins. Bishop Butler well remarks that the argument from these cases to the propriety of the redemptive imputation to Christ is *à fortiori*, whether or not we may apprehend all of God's thoughts and purposes in the two cases. For if this imputation of the parents' punishment to their sinning children is justifiable, though

made without asking the children's consent, the imputation of our sins to Christ must be more justifiable, seeing it is only made after Christ's free consent. From this reasoning there is absolutely no evasion except by denying God's providence totally in any of the natural calamities which follow men's sins, or by denying that such calamities are penal or have any moral significance of God's displeasure with men's sins. As I have pointed out, the former denial is practical atheism; and the latter utterly obliterates all evidence from natural theology whether God (if there is any God) possesses any moral attributes or exercises any moral regimen over his rational creatures. Such is the deadly abyss to which this rationalistic line of thought will lead, if it be consistently followed.

The second class of objections is thus stated: That this usage of penal substitution is of pagan origin, and is prompted by a barbaric vengeance and hatred, not by sentiments of justice; that the proof is, as Christianity and civilization have educated the nations of christendom, they have abolished the barbaric usage in all its forms; and that we no longer hear of hostages being put to death, in retribution for the breach of treaties, as *antipsychoi*. Of course we do not deny that barbaric races and ruthless tyrants have mingled feelings of revenge and cruelty with their execution of their ancient laws.

We have already explained in full the sufficient reasons which make penal substitution improper in the retributive actions of civil rulers. But, unfortunately for the objectors, their assertions concerning the usages of modern Christian civilized nations are expressly erroneous. There is not one of them that does not retain and employ the principle of penal imputation in certain cases. A common and familiar instance is the law which compels sureties to pay the debts of insolvent debtors and of delinquent officials. We have already used the instances to illustrate the distinction between the guilt, *reatus*, or obligation to penalty, and the personal attribute of badness or evilness qualifying the evil agent, and expressed in his sin. We grant that the surety's motive in joining the bond, now forfeited, may have been generous and honorable. We do not impute to him any shade of the meanness of character exhibited by the delinquent debtor. Yet we judge that this surety is righteously held to make good that debtor's obligation, inasmuch as he voluntarily assumed it. There is not a sane man upon earth who thinks such cases of imputation unjust. But it is replied that the obligation thus enforced by imputation is not ethical, but merely pecuniary; that the principal was bound only to the payment of so much money, and that the thing exacted from his surety by imputation is only money and not punishment. This

evasion is false in both statements. The debtor's broken contract to pay money for value received was both moral and pecuniary. Its breach was an immorality, except where necessitated by some dispensation of Providence. The common law of England was founded upon this judgment, that the breach of contract was a moral delinquency, a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment at the will of the injured creditor, until atoned for by full reparation. This form of penalty was harsh, but the judgment which grounded it is just. And our laws still hold that there is criminality in all debts arising out of official embezzlement and the obtaining of money under false pretences; yea, criminality amounting to felony. It is equally untrue that the enforcement of the debt against the surety involves no punishment. It is to him an infliction of suffering, as practically a fine or mulct as any imposed by a criminal court in punishment of a misdemeanor. It is often a ruinous fine, inflicting upon the surety the miseries of lifelong destitution.

Still another instance of penal imputation is found in the law of reprisal; and this is still asserted by all Christian nations. One commonwealth commits sin by breaking its treaty-obligations to another. Thereupon the injured commonwealth seeks retribution by issuing letters of marque and reprisal against the property of any citizen of the sinning commonwealth found upon

the high seas. Let the aggressive commonwealth have a representative government; let the citizen whose goods are seized upon the sea for reprisal plead that he voted against the aggressive actions of his own commonwealth, and, therefore, is not morally and personally responsible therefor; there is not an admiralty court in christendom which would yield to this plea. This merchant must bear his part of the retribution due to his sinning commonwealth, because he is a member of it. The military laws of every civilized nation provide for cases of penal imputation, and of none is this more true, both in theory and practice, than of those of the United States. Let an officer who has surrendered in battle or by capitulation be slain by the enemy while an unresisting prisoner of war, then a captive officer of equal rank among the enemies will be condemned and shot, although, personally, he had never broken any rule of civilized warfare, or, perhaps, had never yet drawn his weapon against any adversary.

In view of these legalized usages, it is a mere contention of ignorance or reckless assertion for an opponent to say that these penal substitutions are antiquated and barbaric. These laws are in full force to-day; and they no more offend the moral sentiments of civilized men than they did those of the ancients. What mere insolence is it, then, in these rationalists to claim that man's primary and

necessary moral intentions condemn all penal substitution, when we see that nearly all men of all races, religions and civilizations justify it in some cases. The valid tests of such an intuition are these: "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus, creditur.*" These different legalized instances of imputation may be conditioned by circumstances differing from each other and different from those which condition the imputation of our guilt to Christ. But there is the principle. And my point is, that it is a principle recognized and employed as just by all nations in all ages. This may not be enough to prove it right; for in some cases nearly the whole world has gone wrong. But it is a complete answer to the historical assumption, and to the false inference drawn from it.

A sophistical appeal is made by our opponents to men's moral intuitions in another form. They ask: would not all spectators feel outraged if they now saw a court punish an innocent man, upon some fiction of imputation, in place of the guilty one? And they exclaim, was the innocent victim one of these Calvinists, they presume none of his theologies would reconcile him to the burning wrong by their antiquated logic. Our reply is: that their intuitions would condemn the injustice, *provided the imputations were made without their free consent.* In the case of Christ this was given. That is the all-important point. Common sense

affirms that when reasonable spectators were informed of the substitute's free assent, this would be the verdict of their intuition: *he* cannot complain, for he gets what he freely chose to bargain for.

The other and more philosophic objections will be dealt with under the appropriate heads of our argument.