

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY TOWARDS HIS ENEMIES.

IT may be surmised that this is a duty whose "metes and bounds" are ill understood by many of the people of God, and that, consequently, the minds of many of them are harassed with doubts and temptations concerning it. On the one hand, many, perhaps, excuse to themselves criminal emotions under the name of virtuous indignation, and on the other some of them afflict themselves with compunctions for and vain endeavors against feelings which are both proper and natural to us as rational beings.

The embarrassment is increased by the current opinion that there is inconsistency between the teachings and examples of the Old Testament and the New upon this subject. Men read in the former the stern language of the imprecatory Psalms, for instance, of the thirty-fifth, the thirty-ninth, the one hundred and ninth, the one hundred and thirty-seventh, and the one hundred and thirty-ninth, where the inspired man prays: "Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul. . . . Let them be as chaff before the wind, and let the angel of the Lord chase them"; or describes the persecuted church as crying to her oppressors: "Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us"; or protests: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred." They then turn to the Sermon on the Mount and read the words of our Lord: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." They thereupon imagine a discrepancy, if not a contradiction, between them, and adopt the mischievous conclusion that the two Testaments contain different codes of Christian ethics. This notion, it is to be feared, has a general prevalency. What is more common than to hear Christians, who should be well informed, and who profess full reverence for the inspiration of the whole Scrip-

tures, speak of the morality of the Old Testament, of the Hebrew saint, of the prophet, as harsh, austere, and forbidding, while that of the New Testament, of Jesus, and of the Christian is sweet and forgiving?

All these notions are of Socinian or rationalistic origin, and are incompatible with an honest belief in the actual inspiration of the Scriptures. If inspiration is but an "elevation of the consciousness," a quickening of the intuitions of the transcendental reason, an exaltation of the soul, of the same generic kind with the other impulses of genius, only of a higher grade, then it can be understood how prophets and apostles may contradict each other; although yet they may teach us noble lessons, and such as common men would never have found out of themselves. But if "all Scripture [the apostle means the Old Testament] is theopneustic," if "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and the apostles, in their turn, had the promise of the Holy Ghost to "lead them into all truth," then a real discrepancy between them is impossible; for all truths must be harmonious among themselves. The honest believer can admit, of course, that the partial revelation of the Old Testament, although absolute truth as far as it goes, and as perfect in its principles as the God who gave it, stops short of that fulness of detail to which the New Testament afterwards proceeded. But while there is a difference in degrees of fulness, there can be no contrariety.

The same view commends itself irresistibly to the plain mind from this fact, that Jesus Christ, not to add the apostles, suspended the truth of his mission and doctrines on the infallibility and holiness of the Old Testament. His appeal is ever to them. He cites Moses and the prophets as though he thought their testimony must be the end of strife. Now, if they are not inspired and true, it follows irresistibly that Jesus Christ was either mistaken or he was dishonest. *Absit impietas*. In either case, he is no Redeemer for us. And, indeed, the former alternative of this dilemma is inadmissible for one who claimed, as he did, an infallible knowledge for himself, a preëxistence of the era of Abraham and the prophets and the authority of the Messiah by whose Spirit those prophets spoke. So that, if the Old Testament were imperfect, Jesus of Nazareth would stand convicted of criminal attempts of imposture!

There is a second reason why such an explanation cannot be applied to the supposed vindictiveness of Old Testament morals: that the same sentiments are expressed in the New Testament, and the same maxims of forbearance which are cited as so lovely in the latter are set forth, both by precept and example, in the former; so that, if a discrepancy is asserted, it must not be between David and Christ, Hebrew and Christian, but both Testaments must be charged with contradicting themselves, as well as each other. Thus, in Acts viii. 20, Peter exclaims to Simon Magus, "Thy money perish with thee!" In Acts xxiii. 3, Paul sternly denounces the persecuting chief priest, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!" and in 2 Tim. iv. 14 distinctly expresses a prayer for retribution upon Alexander, the copper-smith of Ephesus: He "did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works." In 2 Thess. i. 7-10, Christ's coming "in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God," is subject of admiration in all them that believe. In the Apocalypse vi. 10, the souls of the martyrs under the altar are heard crying with a loud voice: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And in Matt. xi. 20, and xxiii. 13, Jesus of Nazareth is heard denouncing awful woes upon the enemies of truth.

On the other hand, the Old Testament contains substantially the same precepts of forgiveness, and examples of forbearance, which are so much admired in the New. First, the great truth, which lies at the root of all this subject, that retribution is the exclusive function of the Lord, was first published in the Old Testament, and it is thence Paul quotes it, in Rom. xii. 10, "*It is written*, Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." It is written a thousand years before (Deut. xxxii. 35; Lev. xix. 18), "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense;" recognized by David as a rule for him (1 Sam. xxiv. 12) towards his deadly enemy, Saul,—“the Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee; but my hand shall not be upon thee;” repeated in Psalm xciv. 1, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth;" and cited against evil men, as a rule which they had violated, twice in Ezek. xxv. 12, 15, "Edom and the Philistines have taken vengeance, and have greatly offended." The lovely precept for rendering good for evil is enjoined upon the Israelites in a form most perspicuous and impressive to a pas-

toral people: "If thou meet thine enemy's ass or his ox going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again." (Exod. xxiii. 4.) Israel was enjoined to practice tenderness towards foreigners, a duty ignored then by the pagan world, and especially towards Egyptians, their late ruthless oppressors. (Exod. xxii. 21; Deut. xxiii. 7.) Job, the oldest of the patriarchs whose creed has been handed down to us, recognizes malice, even when limited to the secret wishes, as an iniquity: "If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him; neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul." (Job xxxi. 29.) David, the author of nearly all the imprecatory Psalms, repudiates malice with holy abhorrence: "If I have rewarded evil to him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy,) let the enemy persecute my soul and take it," etc. (Ps. vii. 4.) And in Psalm xxxv. 13, he describes his deportment towards his enemies, as in contrast with theirs towards him, and in strict accordance with Christ's command: "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting," etc. That all this was not mere profession, we have splendid evidence in the sacred history, where he displayed such astonishing forbearance and magnanimity towards Saul, after the most vehement provocation; twice delivering his life from the indignation of his followers, and singing his dirge with the honorable affection of a loyal follower.

This age has witnessed a whole spawn of religionists, very rife and rampant in some sections of the church, who pretentiously declared themselves the apostles of a lovelier Christianity than that of the sweet Psalmist of Israel. His ethics were entirely too vindictive and barbarous for them, forsooth; and they, with their Peace Societies, and new lights, would teach the world a milder and more beneficent code! How impertinent does this folly appear, coming from the petted favorites of fortune, whose wilfulness and conceit had hitherto been pampered by a rare concurrence of privileges, so that they had hardly experienced the call for the Christian virtue of forgiveness; and who, as soon as they are crossed (not in their rights, but) in their most arrogant caprices, show themselves incapable of one throb of David's magnanimity, and break out into a vin-

dictiveness set on fire of hell! He who knows his own heart and human nature will humbly avow, instead of accusing the Psalms of unchristian malice, that he will do well if he never goes beyond their temper, under bitter wrong, and if, while swelling with righteous sense of injury, he can always remit the retribution, in wish, as in act, to God alone.

The consequence of this erroneous admission of actual discrepancy between the morality of the Old Testament and the New is, that expositors have fatigued themselves with many vain inventions to explain away the imprecatory language of the Psalms. The generality of this feeling is betrayed by the frequency of these attempts. A curious betrayal of this skeptical impression exists to this day, in the book of Psalms, in the hands of our own Presbyterian people. Instead of a metrical version of Psalm cix., as it stands in the inspired lyrics, there is a human composition upon the beauty of forgiveness. In the psalm books in use for a whole age among the Presbyterians of England and this country, this hymn was formerly prefaced with the words (Psalm cix.), "Christian forgiveness after the example of Christ." This title the last editors of our psalm book be thought themselves to omit. Any one who compared the human poem with the actual hundred and ninth Psalm could hardly fail to overlook the suggestion of a contrast, that while the uninspired psalmist of our modern Israel gave utterance to Christian forgiveness after the example of Christ, the actual ode of inspiration expressed unchristian revenge after the example of David. How could the feeling be more clearly betrayed that the sentiments of the psalmist were indefensible?

Hence ingenious expedients have been sought to explain them away. Of these, the most current is the following: that where our version says, for instance, "Let his days be few, and let another take his office," the verbs are improperly rendered as imperatives. It is asserted that they may as fairly be rendered as simple futures, "His days will be few," etc., and then all these passages are converted from imprecations to predictions. The psalmist only foretells the divine retributions. Waiving the insuperable difficulty, that it is only to a part of these texts the explanation even plausibly applies, we perceive this general objection: that if they be all understood as pre-

dictions only, yet they are predictions to the accomplishment of which the inspired men evidently looked forward with moral satisfaction. Thus they reveal precisely the same sentiments towards evildoers as though we understood them as appealing to God with requests for their righteous retribution, while they at the same time recognize his sole title to avenge, and the sinfulness of their taking their retaliation into their own hands.

All these inventions, then, must be relinquished; the admission must be squarely and honestly made, that the inspired men of both Testaments felt and expressed moral indignation against wrong-doers, and a desire for their proper retribution at the hand of God. This admission must also be successfully defended, which, it is believed, can be done in perfect consistency with that spirit of merciful forbearance and love for the persons of enemies which both Testaments alike inculcate.

Simple resentment is an instinctive emotion, immediately arising from the experience of personal injury. It can scarcely be called a rational sentiment, for it is felt by men and animals in common, and in human breasts is often aimed against irrational assailants. It does not arise in view of the moral quality of the act, but immediately in view of the hurtfulness of the act to the person who feels the resentment. Its final cause is, to energize man for his needful self-defence. Hence resentment obviously has no necessary moral character, more than hunger, thirst, or pain; its moral character only arises when it is regulated or directed amiss. Resentment may be innocently felt, or may be criminal, according as it is properly limited, or is permitted to become inordinate. This is the sentiment concerning which Paul says: "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Last, the emotion is strictly personal; its immediate cause is injury aimed at one's self.

Moral indignation, or moral disapprobation, in its warmer and more emotional type, is an affection often coexisting with simple resentment, and often confounded with it. But the two feelings are essentially distinct. The moral sentiment is impersonal; it is not directed merely to self-defence, but disapproves of our neighbor's unrighteous injury as of our own. It is awakened, not by mere hurt, but by injustice; that is, it arises in view of the moral wrong of the injurious act. It is strictly a

rational emotion, taking its rise in that highest and noblest form of the intuitions of the reason, the judgment of moral distinctions, and being thus the function only of rational spirits. Hence this sentiment can never be indifferent or negative as to its moral quality, as simple resentment may be ; but wherever it is not righteous, it must be wicked. And whereas the final cause of resentment, the subject's self-defence, requires it to be temporary, the final cause of moral disapprobation requires it to be permanent up to certain limits, which will be defined. No inspired man has said of this sentiment, as a general rule, "Let not the sun go down upon it."

This moral sentiment, as was remarked, often coëxists with resentment. When we are ourselves made the objects of assaults which include both hurt and injustice, the mixture of the two feelings is unavoidable. When we behold such an attack upon a fellow-creature, the impersonal sentiment of moral reprobation may be mixed with a reflex resentment received by the law of sympathy. In both cases the effect is to give a warmer and more passionate aspect to the moral sentiment.

The next truth to be considered is, that the judgment of demerit intuitively accompanies every act of moral disapprobation. The wisest Christian philosophers teach that the idea of obligation is inseparable from the idea of moral rightness in acts. In other words, to say that an act is obligatory is the same thing with saying it is right. Now, obligation implies an obligator. This judgment of the conscience is but an intuitive recognition of a relation between the personal moral agent and a personal moral ruler, God, whose will is the rule of the obligation to him. The judgment of moral disapprobation is, therefore, in its very nature, a judgment of wrong relation between the sinning agent and the personal will of the divine Ruler; it recognizes that holy will as outraged by the sin. Hence, by a necessary law of the human reason, our judgment of the sinfulness of every wrong act includes the decision that the agent has therein demerit; that is to say, it is now right that he should receive suffering for his sin, physical evil for his moral wrong, in a just ratio, as its proper moral equivalent. This judgment, we repeat, is unavoidably included in our judgment of the wrongness of his act. And this relation between sin and deserved penal suffering, the reason apprehends as morally obliga-

tory. Its preservation is necessary to satisfy righteousness; its rupture is necessarily wrong.

It appears, therefore, evident that if the reason is impelled to this judgment of demerit by the very law of its moral action, and this demand for penal equivalent to sin is a valid part of its moral verdict, the mere entertaining of it as a sentiment cannot be morally wrong. To assert that it can be, would be to assert that the soul may act immorally in the very acts which are immediately directed by the law of its nature as a moral agent. Moreover, as the judgment of moral disapprobation involves a judgment of demerit, affirming the righteousness of the requital of suffering for the sin, it is inevitable that the soul should find a pleasure in the satisfaction of this sentiment; and if the sentiment is moral, the pleasure cannot be immoral. For it is absurd to say that a rational creature is criminal for its satisfaction in the rightful actings of the laws of its own reason. How can the lawful happiness of the creature be more justly defined than as that pleasure which is found in satisfying the righteous and reasonable promptings of its own native powers? "*Happiness*," said the most profound of the Greeks, "*is virtuous energy*."

It thus appears that the impersonal sentiment of moral reprobation is lawful, yea more, that it is positively virtuous; and that the rational desire for the satisfaction of it cannot be sinful *per se*. But lest some mistrust of this conclusion should be felt, from the abstract nature of the analysis, it will be confirmed by these further considerations.

1. Every one easily recognizes this sentiment of moral reprobation as the counterpart to that of moral approbation. In the latter, the mind has, as its root, a similar judgment, in the reason, of the virtuousness of the act; it thereby recognizes the agent as meritorious for the act, that is, as righteously entitled to his suitable well-being as its moral equivalent; and the mind finds virtuous pleasure in the satisfaction of this, its verdict, by the actual enjoyment which the meritorious agent has of his reward. That a soul should be capable of witnessing a virtuous act and its reward, and remain wholly devoid of this sentiment and this satisfaction, would of itself argue a criminal defect. The man who is capable of being spectator of some splendid and lovely instance of filial gratitude and fidelity, and of its reward in the benediction of the happy father, and the well-earned

honor and prosperity of the pious son, and who can feel no pleasing judgment of approval in his own soul, and no virtuous satisfaction in witnessing the reward of merit, is thereby shown to be a cold villain, capable himself of any ingratitude or treachery to his parents.

But add to this that, in morals, wrong is the necessary counterpart of right, as every moralist admits. As absence of caloric is cold, or absence of light is itself darkness, so, in moral actions, lack of right is wrong. There is, hence, no such thing as a moral neutrality in a case involving positive moral elements. It appears, therefore, very plain that the susceptibility of moral approbation implies necessarily that of moral reprobation; that to be insensible to the latter would involve insensibility to the former. But this, as all admit, would characterize the man as positively evil. Hence it appears that these active sentiments of moral reprobation for wrong doing, so far are they from being unholy, are positively necessary to right character. The reader may find this conclusion confirmed by numerous scriptural testimonies, among which these two, from the New and Old Testaments respectively, may be cited: Prov. xvii. 15: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord"; Rom. i. 32: Paul condemns sinners as those who "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

2. When flagrant crimes are committed against the law of the land, and the "gallows is cheated," the most virtuous citizens feel the craving of their moral nature for the retribution of justice upon the criminal and the grief of its disappointment. This feeling cannot be accused of selfishness, but is wholly impersonal, for it is vividly felt by virtuous persons who have no connection with the object of the outrage, and who suffer no special wrong by it. It is found most often in the most disinterested and noble natures. It is impossible for the subject of it to rebuke himself for entertaining it; for he feels that to lack this feeling would be to lack virtuous regard for the law which has been dishonored and the innocent victim who has been wronged. Sympathy with the right implies reprobation of the wrong.

3. The Scriptures, beyond a doubt, describe the saints in glory as participating in the judicial triumphs of the Redeemer,

when he shall pour out his final retributions on the wicked; and the satisfaction of this intuitive sentiment which craves just penalty for demerit is one of the elements of the bliss of the redeemed. Psalm cxlix. 5-9 says: "Let the saints be joyful in glory. . . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen," etc. The yearning of the martyrs in heaven for a righteous vindication has been already seen in Rev. vi. 10; and in Rev. xix. 1-3 heaven is heard in jubilee over the judgment of the persecuting Babylon of the Apocalypse. Now, it will scarcely be doubted that it is right for Christians to feel here as they will feel when perfectly sanctified in heaven.

Lastly. Righteous retribution is one of the glories of the divine character. If it is right that God should desire to exercise it, then it cannot be wrong for his people to desire him to exercise it. It may be objected that, while he claims retribution for himself, he forbids it to them, and that he has thereby forbidden all satisfaction in it to them. The fact is true; the inference does not follow. Inasmuch as retribution inflicted by a creature is forbidden, the desire for its infliction by a creature, or pleasure therein, is also forbidden; but inasmuch as it is righteously inflicted by God, it must be right in him, and must therefore be, when in his hand, a proper subject of satisfaction to the godly.

Now, if the feeling of moral reprobation, when thus impersonal or disinterested, is righteous, its propriety cannot be wholly destroyed by the circumstance that he who feels it was object of and suffered by the crime reprobated. The crime is still the same in principle, and is properly the object of the same moral emotions. The only difference is that the temptation of the sufferer to inordinate and sinful resentment is thereby rendered much greater, and he is thereby called to strict watchfulness and self-control, lest the personal feeling, which is mixed with the impersonal, assume the ascendancy, and thus malice usurp the place of righteous zeal; but otherwise no reason appears why it is not as righteous to approve and desire the just penal recompense of the enemy who has assailed the right in attacking one's self as of the party who has injured our neighbor.

But, it cannot be too often repeated, the righteous desire for

recompense never craves to take its vindication into its own hands. The godly man always prefers to remit the penal settlement to a perfect God, and arrests his own forcible agency as soon as the purposes of mere self-defence are secured. It is the declared principle of both Testaments, that God reserves retribution to himself as his exclusive function. He has, indeed, delegated a limited portion of this authority to the civil magistrate, to wield it, as his representative, for a specific purpose. But this is no exception, for when civil society punishes crimes, it is as much a part of God's providential ordering, and of his providential act, as when he punishes them by sickness or dearth. The principle stands absolute: a limited resentment, purely defensive and temporary, may be man's; but vengeance is God's. This is proper, because the injured man is himself a sinner, as well as the injurer; and so rigorous a function is not appropriately wielded by one who is himself exposed to it, and who is seeking to escape it by the door of mercy. It is proper, because man is ignorant of those spiritual conditions of crimes, on which the aggravation or palliation of their demerit so much depends. It is proper, because the impersonal moral sentiment demanding retribution is, in man's breast, so seldom unmingled with the personal passion of direct or sympathetic resentment; so that it is doubtful whether a human being is ever in a condition to judge a wrong act with perfect equity. It is proper, because God is not only an omniscient and perfect being, devoid of all passion, but is the supreme proprietor and ruler of men, and his will is the source of the obligation which they violate, as well as its infallible rule. Hence, the state of feeling to which the Christian should strive, is, not insensibility to wrong, not indifference to the craving of our moral nature for its just penal recompense, but a hearty willingness to leave that retribution in God's righteous and unerring hand.

A stage has now been reached in this discussion, at which it is necessary to introduce a few plain distinctions. One is the well-known distinction of divines between the love of complacency and the love of benevolence. The former is founded on moral approbation for the character of its object, and implies moral excellence in it. The other does not, and may exist notwithstanding moral disapprobation of its object. Of the former kind is the love of God the Father for God the Son. Of the latter

kind is the love of the Trinity for sinners. Obviously the love of complacency is directed towards its object's character, while the love of benevolence is directed to the person of its object, and exists in spite of his obnoxious character. And it is thus possible that love may hate the character and compassionate the person of the same man. Such, in fact, was Christ's love to us "while we were yet sinners." The adjustment between the New Testament and the Old is partly to be found in this distinction. When Jesus Christ commands us to love our enemies, it is with the love of benevolence and compassion. When David declared that he hated God's enemies with a perfect hatred, he meant that he did not entertain for them the love of moral complacency, but, as was proper, the reverse. This love of benevolence for the person of a bad man ought to be, in the Christian, the finite reflexion of what it is in God, limited only by the higher attribute of righteousness.

Next: To understand the relations of godliness between us and our enemies, the elements involved in their injurious acts must also be distinguished. The sin of a wrong-doer against his fellow involves three elements of offence. One is the personal loss and natural evil inflicted, and is expressed by the Latin divines by the word *damnum*. The second is the guilt (*reatus*) or relation of debt to the law, by which the wrong-doer is bound to pay for his act in punishment. The third is the moral defilement or depravity of character (*pravitas vel macula*), which is both expressed and increased by specific acts of sin. Now, when the Christian is made the object of an unrighteous act, the element of loss, or *damnum*, is the only one which is personal to him, and therefore the only one which it is competent to him to remit. And since nothing but self-interest is concerned in this element, the great law of love requires the Christian to remit it without price or compensation, provided the moral conditions of the case do not forbid it. And to pursue the aggressor with evil, directly for the sake of this element of his offence, is sinful malice. The second element, that of guilt, is not personal to the injured Christian. It is not his business to pursue the satisfaction for guilt, but God's. He is to leave this element wholly to God, only taking care that his moral sentiments touching it are conformed to those of the divine Judge. But practically he has no outward duty to perform with reference to it, in any circumstances what-

ever, unless he is providentially called to fill the office of magistrate in the commonwealth; and then he is bound to execute upon the guilty that portion of the retributive penalty committed to his charge by the laws of God and his country, without either favor or malice; feeling that where guilt is duly affixed, he has no more option to remit any of its penalty than he has to give away another man's property intrusted to his charge.

The third element, that of the inward defilement represented and fostered in the wrong act, is also impersonal to the injured party. He has no option or license to disregard it, and the love of complacency has no relevancy to a prompting to overlook it. By the very reason that it is his bounden duty to love holiness, it is his duty to be opposed to impurity. He who should argue that his compassion and Christian kindness ought to, or could, lawfully prompt him to overlook this defilement, and restore his approbation and fellowship to the transgressor while still defiled in character, would be as preposterous as he who should say that his compassion justified him in agreeing with the liar that falsehood is truth and truth is falsehood. Kindness and compassion have no application to the case; but our judgment and treatment of the evil must be according to the eternal principles of truth and right. Now, for this third element of moral impurity the only remedy is true repentance, prompted by the renewing and sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit, and manifesting and fostering itself in outward reform. For the second element, that of guilt, the appointed remedy is the atonement of Calvary, embraced by faith. For the first element, that of *damnum*, the remedy is reparation.

The light which these distinctions throw upon the Christian treatment of enemies may be displayed by applying them to a concrete instance. Let it be supposed that the crime is a robbery committed upon the goods of a private Christian. There is an element of *damnum* which consists in the privation of the use and value of the property taken. There is an element of guilt by which the robber is made debtor to the laws of the commonwealth and of God in certain penalties; and there is an element of moral defilement or taint attaching, through the theft, to the robber's character. Let it be supposed, first, that the offender provides no appropriate remedy for either; that he neither makes reparation of the stolen property nor makes sat-

isfaction to human and divine law, nor exhibits any purification of character by repentance. How ought the injured Christian to treat him? The answer is, that the law of love does not bind him to extend moral fellowship and approbation to a defiled character, nor to intervene between the guilty party and the penal claims of law; for these consequences of the sin are not personal to the injured party. But the law of love may bind him to remit the claim for restoration of the value stolen "without money and without price"; as, for instance, if the thief have become unable to repay; and in any case it binds him to succor the thief when suffering, if he is able, and to perform to him any other duty of humanity, as though he were no aggressor.

Let us suppose, again, that the thief has, from some motive implying no virtue, made exact reparation, but that his guilt is not atoned for and there is no purification of character by repentance. How ought the injured party now to treat him? The answer is, precisely as in the first case. The *damnum* is repaired indeed, but that element of offence was personal to the injured party, and it was right that he should waive it without reparation at the prompting of Christian kindness.

Let us suppose, again, that the thief has made no reparation of property because he is really unable, but that, having made full atonement to human law, he has by faith embraced the righteousness of Christ for the remission of his guilt towards God and has evinced by a true repentance the cleansing of his soul from depravity. How shall he be treated by the Christian whom he has injured? The answer is, precisely as though he had never injured him. The guilt and defilement of the sin have now received their appropriate remedy. The element which remains uncompensated is the *damnum*; and it is the Christian's duty to remit this freely and joyfully, seeing it is personal to himself, at the prompting of love.

Now, it is asserted that, if the imprecatory passages in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments be compared with these conclusions, they will be found to contain nothing inconsistent with them. And if the Christian precept of forgiveness (Eph. iv. 32), "Forgive one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you," be examined, it will be found to express the same thing. God is "kind to the unthankful and to the evil" so long as the claims of his justice are suspended; but

he does not remit their guilt, nor relax his righteous disapprobation and fixed purpose to punish, without satisfaction to law. Nor does he compromise his purity by adopting the sinner who remains impenitent and depraved. What he does is this: he extends to them, in the midst of their sin, all the compassion which his wisdom, justice, and holiness permit; and as soon as guilt is satisfied by an interest in Christ, and personal defilement purged by regeneration, he graciously overlooks every outrage of his honor and person, and adopts them into his favor as fully as though they had never sinned.

The sum of the matter, then, appears to be this: the law of love does not require the injured Christian to approve or countenance the evil character manifested in the wrong done him, or to withhold the verdict of truth and justice against it when righteous ends are gained by pronouncing it. The law of love does not require him to intervene for delivering the aggressor from the just claims of either human or divine law for penal retribution; nor does it forbid his feeling a righteous satisfaction when that retribution is executed by the appropriate authorities; but the law of love does forbid his taking retribution into his own hands, and it requires him still to extend the sentiments of humanity and the love of compassion to the enemy's person so long as he continues to partake the forbearance of God, which love of compassion will prompt the injured party to stand ready to forgive the element of personal *damnum* to his enemy, and to perform the offices of benevolence to his person, in spite of his obnoxious character.

Such a discussion should not be closed without repeating the wholesome caution against the confusion of personal resentment with moral reprobation. The intermixture of the two in the breast of the injured Christian is perhaps unavoidable for imperfect man. The temptation to sanctify the inordinate indulgence of the one under the holy name of the other is dangerous. Hence every child of God under wrong is called to watchfulness, prayer, and jealousy of himself.

But it should not be concealed that there is also a subtle danger in the opposite direction. The sentiments of righteous resentment and moral reprobation are the great supports intended by God for the rectitude, nobleness, and independence of the soul. But when injuries are enormous, and often re-

peated, there is a terrible danger lest the very frequency and violence of the impressions made upon this moral susceptibility shall blunt it. Familiarity with wickedness, even when it is wickedness aimed against ourselves, ever tends to stain the purity of the soul. When the capacity of virtuous indignation is thus depraved by violent and frequent frictions, aggression comes gradually to excite the mere emotion of abject fear, instead of the nobler moral emotions; and the wretched victim gradually grows as base and servile and unprincipled as he is miserable. Both domestic and public history teem with fearful examples of this degradation by submission to wrong; and there can be no more supreme and sacred duty which is owed to God and to himself by the good man than that of protecting his own moral sentiments from this corruption. To resist wrong within the lawful limits, or to evade the power of the oppressor when resistance is no longer feasible, may be the first obligation which man owes to his own virtue.