

affection which his goodness will produce in the human heart.

Here, then, are two facts growing out of the constitution of human nature—First, the soul must feel its evil and lost estate, as the pre-requisite condition, upon which alone it can love a deliverer—Second, the degree of kindness and self-denial in a benefactor, temporal or spiritual, graduates the degree of affection and gratitude that will be awakened for him.

Now, in view of these necessary conditions, mark the means which God has used, and the manifestations which he has made of Himself, in order to secure the supreme love of the human soul.

*In the first place the soul is brought to see and feel its evil and lost condition, and its need of deliverance.*

At the advent of Jesus, the Roman world was in precisely the condition which was necessary to prepare it for his doctrines. The Jews had the moral law written in their scriptures, and recognised it as the will of Jehovah; and the Gentiles had its requirements, concerning their duty to each other, and their duty to worship, written upon their hearts. Both the doctors among the Jews, and the schools of philosophy among the Gentiles, especially those of the Stoics, taught the obligatory nature of many of the important moral duties which man owes to man. No period in the history of the heathen mind ever existed before or since, when man's relations to man were so clearly perceived.\* The Jews, however, had these advantages, that while the few intelligent Gentiles received the instruction of the philosophers in relation to morals, as truth, it was truth without any higher sanction than that of having been spoken by wise men, and therefore it contained in itself no authority or weight of obligation to bind the conscience; while they had the Moral Law, as a rule of duty, sanctioned by the authority and infinite justice of Jehovah. Thus the moral virtues assumed the sanction of religious duties; and they had not only the moral precepts thus sanctioned, but having been taught the true character of God, their religious duties were likewise united in the same sacred decalogue.

There was, however, in the application of the law one most important and vital mistake, in relation to what constituted human guilt. The moral law was generally applied as the civil law, not to the acts of the spirit, but to the acts of the body. It was applied to the external conduct of men, not to the internal life. If there was conformity to the letter of the law in external manners, there was a fulfilment, in the eyes of the Jew and the Gentile, of the highest claims that God or man held upon the spirit. No matter how dark or damning were the exercises of the soul; if it only kept its sin in its own habitation, and did not develop it in action, the penalty of the law was not laid to his charge. The character of the spirit itself might be criminal, and all its exercises of thought and feeling sensual and selfish, yet if it added hypocrisy to its guilt, and maintained an outward conformity to the law—a conformity itself produced by selfishness, man judged himself, and others adjudged him, guiltless. Man could not, therefore, understand his own guilt, as a spiritual being, nor feel his condemned and lost condition, until the requirements of the holy law were applied to the exercises of his soul.

Now, Jesus applied the Divine law directly to the soul, and laid his obligations upon the movements of the will, and the desires. He taught that all wrong thoughts and feelings were acts of transgression against God, and as such would be visited with the penalty of the Divine law. Thus he made the law

spiritual and its penalty spiritual, and appealing to the authority of the supreme God, he laid its claims upon the naked soul—he entered the secret recesses of the spirit's tabernacle—he flashed the light of the Divine law upon the awful secrets known only to the soul itself; and, with the voice of a God, he spoke to the "I" of the mind—Thou shalt not *will*, nor *desire*, nor *feel* wickedly!

While he had thus shown that all the wrong exercises of the soul were sin against God, and that the soul was in a guilty condition, under the condemnation of the Divine law, he then directs the attention to the spiritual consequences of this guilt. These he declared to be exclusion from the kingdom and presence of God, and penalty which involved either endless spiritual suffering, or destruction of the soul itself. The punishment which he declared to be impending over the unbelieving and impenitent spirit, he portrayed by using all those figures which would lead men to apprehend the most fearful and unmitigated spiritual misery.

Before the impenitent and pardoned sinner there was the destruction of the soul and body in hell—assignment to a state of darkness where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched—cursed and banished from God into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels—a agonizing in flame, and refused a drop of water to mitigate the agony. Now, these figures to the minds both of Jews and Gentiles, must have conveyed a most appalling impression of the misery that was impending over the soul, unless it was relieved from sin, and the consequent curse of the law—Jesus knew that the Jews, especially, would understand these figures as implying fearful future punishment; he therefore designed to do, what was undoubtedly accomplished, in the mind of every one that believed his instruction, which was, to produce a conviction of sin in the soul, by applying to it the requirements of the spiritual law of God, and by showing that the penalty consequent upon sin was fearful and everlasting destruction. We say, then, what every one who has followed these thoughts must perceive to be true, that the instruction of Jesus would, necessarily, produce in the mind of every one that *believed*, a conviction that he was a guilty and condemned creature, and that an awful doom awaited his soul, unless he received pardon and spiritual deliverance.

Thus, then, by the instruction of Jesus Christ, showing the spirituality and holiness of the divine law, and applying it, with its infinite sanctions, to the exercises of the soul, that condition of mind was produced which alone could prepare man to love a spiritual deliverer; and there is no other way in which the soul could have been prepared in accordance with truth and the constitution of its own nature, to appreciate the spiritual mercies of God, and love him as a spiritual Saviour.

The Law and the Truth being exhibited by Christ in the manner adapted to produce the condition of soul pre-requisite to the exercise of affection for spiritual deliverance—now, as God was the author of the law, and as he is the only proper object both of supreme love and obedience; and, as man could not be happy in obeying the law without loving its author; it follows, that the thing now necessary, in order that man's affections might be fixed upon the proper object of love and obedience, was, that the supreme God should, by self-denying kindness, manifest spiritual mercy to those who felt their spiritual wants, and thus draw to Himself the love and worship of mankind. If any other being should supply the *need*, that being would receive the *love*; it was therefore necessary that *God HIMSELF* should do it, in order that the affection of believers might centre upon the proper object.

But, notice, that in order to the accomplishment of this end, without violating the moral constitution of the universe, it would be essentially necessary that the holiness of God's law should be maintained. This

\* For the views of the different schools of Grecian and Roman philosophy at this period, and the amount of their indebtedness to the Jewish Scriptures, see Enfield's *His. Phil.*