

"Human Responsibility, as Independent Circumstances"
Oxford University Sermons sermon 8
St. John Henry Newman
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1 "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Gen. iii. 13.

2 THE original temptation set before our first parents, was that of proving their freedom,
3 by using it without regard to the will of Him who gave it. The original excuse offered by
4 them after sinning was, that they were not really free, that they had acted under a
5 constraining influence, the subtilty of the tempter. They committed sin that they might be
6 independent of their Maker; they defended it on the ground that they were dependent
7 upon Him. And this has been the course of lawless pride and lust ever since; to lead us,
8 first, to exult in our uncontrollable liberty of will and conduct; then, when we have ruined
9 ourselves, to plead that we are the slaves of necessity.

10 2. Accordingly, it has been always the office of Religion to protest against the sophistry
11 of Satan, and to preserve the memory of those truths which the unbelieving heart
12 corrupts, both the freedom and the responsibility of man;—the sovereignty of the
13 Creator, the supremacy of the law of conscience as His representative within us, and
14 the irrelevancy of external circumstances in the judgment which is ultimately to be made
15 upon our conduct and character.

16 3. That we are accountable for what we do and what we are,—that, in spite of all aids or
17 hindrances from without, each soul is the cause of its own happiness or misery,—is a
18 truth certified to us both by Nature and Revelation. Nature conveys it to us in the feeling
19 of guilt and remorse, which implies *self*-condemnation. In the Scriptures, on the other
20 hand, it is the great prevailing principle throughout, in every age of the world, and
21 through every Dispensation. The change of times, the varieties of religious knowledge,
22 the gifts of grace, interfere not with the integrity of this momentous truth. Praise to the
23 obedient, punishment on the transgressor, is the revealed rule of God's government
24 from the beginning to the consummation of all things. The fall of Adam did not abolish,
25 nor do the provisions of Gospel-mercy supersede it.

26 4. At the creation it was declared, "In the day that thou eatest ... thou shalt surely die."
27 On the calling of the Israelites, the Lord God was proclaimed in sight of their lawgiver as
28 "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping
29 mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no
30 means clear the guilty." And when Moses interceded for the people, with an
31 earnestness which tended to the infringement of the Divine Rule, he was reminded that
32 he could not himself be really responsible for others. "Whosoever hath sinned against
33 Me, him will I blot out of My book." The prophetic Dispensation enforced the same
34 truth still more clearly. "With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure, and with the froward
35 Thou wilt show Thyself froward." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die; make you a new
36 heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die?" And after Christ had come, the most explicit
37 of the inspired expounders of the New Covenant is as explicit in his recognition of the

38 original rule. "Every man shall bear his own burden ... Be not deceived: God is not
39 mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Even in his Epistle to
40 the Romans, where he is directly engaged in declaring another, and at first sight
41 opposite doctrine, he finds opportunity for confessing the principle of accountableness.
42 Though exalting the sovereign power and inscrutable purposes of God, and apparently
43 referring man's agency altogether to Him as the vessel of His good pleasure, still he
44 forgets not, in the very opening of his exposition, to declare the real independence and
45 responsibility of the human will. "He will render to every man according to his deeds; ...
46 tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil ... but glory, honour, and
47 peace, to every man that worketh good; ... for there is no respect of persons with
48 God;"—declarations, which I will not say are utterly irreconcilable in their very structure
49 with (what is called) the Calvinistic creed, but which it is certain would never have been
50 written by an assertor of it in a formal exposition of his views for the benefit of his fellow-
51 believers. Lastly, we have the testimony of the book which completes and seals up for
52 ever the divine communications. "My reward is with Me; to give every man according as
53 his work shall be. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have
54 right to the tree of life." [Gen. ii. 17. Exod. xxxiv. 7; xxxii. 33. Ps. xviii. 26. Ez. xviii. 4, 31.
55 Gal. vi. 5-7. Rom. ii. 6-11. Rev. xxii. 12, 13.]

56 5. Moreover, we have the limits of external aids and hindrances distinctly stated to us,
57 so as to guarantee to us, in spite of existing influences of whatever kind, even of our
58 original corrupt nature, the essential freedom and accountableness of our will. As
59 regards external circumstances: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted
60 above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye
61 may be able to bear it." As regards the corrupt nature in which we are born: "Let no man
62 say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; but every man is tempted, when he is
63 drawn away of his own lust, and enticed; then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth
64 forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." And as regards divine
65 assistances: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened ... if they fall away, to
66 renew them again unto repentance." [1 Cor. x. 13. James i. 13-15. Heb. vi. 4-6.]

67 6. Far be it from any one to rehearse triumphantly, and in the way of controversy, these
68 declarations of our privilege as moral agents; rather, so fearful and burdensome is this
69 almost divine attribute of our nature, that, when we consider it attentively, it requires a
70 strong faith in the wisdom and love of our Maker, not to start sinfully from His gift; and at
71 the mere prospect, not the memory of our weakness, to attempt to transfer it from
72 ourselves to the agents, animate and inanimate, by which we are surrounded, and to
73 lose our immortality under the shadows of the visible world. And much more, when the
74 sense of guilt comes upon us, do we feel the temptation of ridding ourselves of our
75 conviction of our own responsibility; and, instead of betaking ourselves to Him who can
76 reverse what we cannot disclaim, to shelter ourselves under the original unbelief of our
77 first parents, as if the serpent gave it to us and we did eat.

78 7. It is my wish now to give some illustrations of the operation of this sophistry in the
79 affairs of life; not that it is a subject which admits of novelty in the discussion, but with

80 the hope of directing attention to a mode of deceiving our consciences, common in all
81 ages since the original transgression, and not least successful in our own.

82 8. To find fault with the circumstances in which we find ourselves, is our ready and
83 familiar excuse when our conduct is arraigned in any particular. Yet even the heathen
84 moralist saw that all those actions are voluntary, in which we ourselves are in any way
85 ultimately the principle of action; and that praise and blame are awarded, not according
86 to the mode in which we should have behaved, had circumstances been different, but
87 according as we actually conduct ourselves, things being as they are. Commenting on
88 goods thrown overboard in a storm, he remarks "that such acts must be considered
89 voluntary, as being the objects of our choice *at the time* when they are done, for our
90 conduct is determined according to the emergency." [Note 1] In truth, nothing is more
91 easy to the imagination than duty in the abstract, that is, duty in name and not in reality.
92 It is when it assumes a definite and actual shape, when it comes upon us under
93 circumstances (and it is obvious it can come in no other way), then it is difficult and
94 troublesome. Circumstances are the very trial of obedience. Yet, plain as this is, it is
95 very common to fancy our particular condition peculiarly hard, and that we should be
96 better and happier men in any other.

97 9. Thus, for instance, opportunity, which is the means of temptation in the case of
98 various sins, is converted into an excuse for them. Perhaps it is very plain that, except
99 for some unusual combination of circumstances, we could never have been tempted at
100 all; yet, when we fall on such an occasion, we are ready to excuse our weakness, as if
101 our trial were extraordinary.

102 10. Again, the want of education is an excuse common with the lower classes for a
103 careless and irreligious life.

104 11. Again, it is scarcely possible to resist the imagination, that we should have been
105 altogether other men than we are, had we lived in an age of miracles, or in the visible
106 presence of our Lord; that is, we cannot {142} persuade ourselves that, whatever be the
107 force of things external to us in modifying our condition, it is we, and not our
108 circumstances, that are, after all, the main causes of what we do and what we are.

109 12. Or, again, to take a particular instance, which will perhaps come home to some who
110 hear me, when a young man is in prospect of ordination, he has a conceit that his mind
111 will be more fully his own, when he is actually engaged in the sacred duties of his new
112 calling, than at present; and, in the event he is perhaps amazed and frightened, to find
113 how little influence the change of circumstances has had in sobering and regulating his
114 thoughts, whatever greater decency his outward conduct may exhibit.

115 13. Further, it is the common excuse of wilful sinners, that there are peculiarities in their
116 present engagements, connexions, plans, or professions, incompatible with immediate
117 repentance; according to the memorable words of Felix, "When I have a convenient
118 season, I will send for thee."

119 14. The operation of the same deceit discovers itself in our mode of judging the conduct
120 of others; whether, in the boldness with which we blame in them what, under other
121 circumstances, we allow in ourselves; or, again, in the false charity which we exercise
122 towards them. For instance, the vices of the young are often regarded by beholders with
123 an irrational indulgence, on the ground (as it is said) that youth ever will be wanton and
124 impetuous; which is only saying, if put into plain language, that there are temptations
125 which are not intended as trials of our obedience. Or when, as lately, the lower orders
126 rise up against the powers that be, in direct opposition to the word of Scripture, they are
127 excused on the ground of their rulers being bigoted and themselves enlightened; or
128 because they feel themselves capable of exercising more power; or because they have
129 the example of other nations to incite them to do so; or simply (the more common
130 excuse) because they have the means of doing so: as if loyalty could be called a virtue
131 when men cannot be disloyal, or obedience had any praise when it became a
132 constraint. In like manner, there is a false charity, which, on principle, takes the cause of
133 heresy under its protection; and, instead of condemning it, as such, busies itself in
134 fancying the possible circumstances which may, in this or that particular instance,
135 excuse it; as if outward fortunes could change the nature of truth or of moral excellence,
136 or as if, admitting the existence of unavoidable misbelief to be conceivable, yet it were
137 not the duty of the Christian to take things as they are given us in Scripture, as they are
138 in themselves, and as they are on the whole, instead of fastening upon exceptions to
139 the rule, or attempting to ascertain that combination and balance of circumstances, in
140 favour of individuals, which is only known to the Omniscient Judge.

141 15. The following apology for the early profligacy of the notorious French infidel of the
142 last century is found in even the respectable literature of the present day, and is an
143 illustration of the kind of fatalism now under consideration. "It is certain," the apologist
144 says, "that a brilliant, highly-gifted, and more than commonly vivacious young man, like
145 Voltaire, who moved in the high tide of Parisian society, must *necessarily* be imbued
146 with the levity and laxity that on every side surrounded him, and which has rendered the
147 period in question proverbial for profligacy and debauchery ... This is not observed in
148 defence of his moral defects, or of any one else, but in answer to those who expect the
149 virtues of a sage from the education of an Alcibiades. His youthful career seems to have
150 been precisely that of other young men of his age and station, neither better nor worse.
151 It is scarcely necessary to prove the tinge which such a state of society must bestow
152 upon every character, however intellectually gifted, which is formed in the midst of it."
153 No one can say that the doctrine contained in this extract is extravagant, as opinions go,
154 and unfair as a specimen of what is commonly received in the world, however boldly it is
155 expressed. Yet it will be observed, that vice is here pronounced to be the necessary
156 effect of a certain state of society, and, as being such, not extenuated merely, as
157 regards the individual (as it may well be), but exculpated; so that, while the actions
158 resulting from it are allowed to be intrinsically bad, yet the agent himself is acquitted of
159 the responsibility of committing them.

160 16. The sophistry in question sometimes has assumed a bolder form, and has displayed
161 itself in the shape of system. Let us, then, now direct our attention to it in some of those

162 fortified positions, which at various times it has taken up against the plain declarations
163 of Scripture and Conscience.

164 17. (1.) Fatalism is the refuge of a conscience-stricken mind, maddened at the sight of
165 evils which it has brought upon itself, and cannot remove. To believe and tremble is the
166 most miserable of dooms for an immortal spirit; and bad men, whose reason has been
167 awakened by education, resolved not to be "tormented before their time," seek in its
168 intoxication a present oblivion of their woe. It is wretched enough to suffer, but self-
169 reproach is the worm which destroys the inward power of resistance. Submission alone
170 makes pain tolerable in any case; and they who refuse the Divine yoke are driven to
171 seek a sedative in the notion of an eternal necessity. They deny that they ever could
172 have been other than they are. "What heaven has made me, I must be," is the
173 sentiment which hardens them into hopeless pride and rebellion.

174 18. And it must be confessed, so great is the force of passion and of habit, when once
175 allowed to take possession of the heart, that these men seem to have in their actual
176 state, nay in their past experience, long before the time of their present obduracy, an
177 infallible witness in behalf of their doctrine. In subduing our evil nature, the first steps
178 alone are in our own power; a few combats seem to decide the solemn question, to
179 decide whether the sovereignty is with the spirit or the flesh; *nisi paret, imperat*, is
180 become a proverb. When once the enemy of our souls "comes in like a flood," what
181 hope is there that he ever will be expelled? And what servitude can be compared to the
182 bondage which follows, when we wish to do right, yet are utterly powerless to do it?
183 whether we be slaves to some imperious passion, hushed indeed in its victim's ordinary
184 mood, and allowing the recurrence of better thoughts and purposes, but rising suddenly
185 and sternly, in his evil hour, to its easy and insulting triumph; or, on the other hand, to
186 some cold sin which overhangs and deadens the mind, sloth, for instance, or cowardice,
187 binding it down with ten thousand subtle fastenings to the earth, nor suffering it such
188 motion as might suffice it for a renewal of the contest. Such, in its worst forms, is the
189 condition of the obdurate sinner; who, feeling his weakness, but forgetting that he ever
190 had strength, and the promise of aid from above, at length learns to acquiesce in his
191 misery as if the lot of his nature, and resolves neither to regret nor to hope. Next he
192 amuses his reason with the melancholy employment of reducing his impressions into
193 system; and proves, as he thinks, from the confessed influence of external events, and
194 the analogy of the physical world, that all moral phenomena proceed according to a
195 fixed law, and that we are not more to blame when we sin than when we die.

196 19. (2.) The Calvinistic doctrine, if not the result, is at least the forerunner of a similar
197 neglect of the doctrine of human responsibility. Whatever be the fallacies of its
198 argumentative basis, viewed as a character of mind, it miscalculates the power of the
199 affections, as fatalism does that of the passions. Its practical error is that of supposing
200 that certain motives and views, presented to the heart and conscience, produce certain
201 effects as their necessary consequence, no room being left for the resistance of the will,
202 or for self-discipline, as the medium by which faith and holiness are connected together.
203 It is the opinion of a large class of religious people, that faith being granted, works follow
204 as a matter of course, without our own trouble; and they are confirmed in their opinion

205 by a misconception of our Church's 12th Article, as if to assert that works "spring out
206 necessarily of a true and lively faith" could only mean that they follow by a kind of
207 physical law. When this notion is once entertained, it follows that nothing remains to be
208 done but to bring these sovereign principles before the mind, as a medicine which must
209 work a cure, or as sights which suddenly enlighten and win the imagination. To care for
210 little duties, to set men right in the details of life, to instruct and refine their conscience,
211 to tutor them in self-denial,—the Scripture methods of working onwards towards higher
212 knowledge and obedience,—become superfluous, nay, despicable, while these master
213 visions are withheld. A system such as this will of course bring with it full evidence of its
214 truth to such debilitated minds as have already so given way to the imagination, that
215 they find themselves unable to resist its impressions as they recur. Nor is there among
216 the theories of the world any more congenial to the sated and remorseful sensualist,
217 who, having lost the command of his will, feels that if he is to be converted, it must be
218 by some sudden and violent excitement. On the other hand, it will always have its
219 advocates among the young and earnest-minded, who, not having that insight into their
220 hearts which experience gives, think that to know is to obey, and that their habitual love
221 of the Truth may be measured by their momentary admiration of it. And it is welcomed
222 by the indolent, who care not for the Scripture warnings of the narrowness of the way of
223 life, provided they can but assure themselves that it is easy to those who are in it; and
224 who readily ascribe the fewness of those who find it, not to the difficulty of connecting
225 faith and works, but to a Divine frugality in the dispensation of the gifts of grace.

226 20. Such are some of the elements of that state of mind which, when scientifically
227 developed, assumes the shape of Calvinism; the characteristic error, both of the system
228 and of the state of mind, consisting in the assumption that there are things external to
229 the mind, whether doctrines or influences, such, that when once presented to it, they
230 suspend its independence and involve certain results, as if by way of physical
231 consequence; whereas, on studying the New Testament, we shall find, that amid all that
232 is said concerning the inscrutable decrees of God, and His mysterious interposition in
233 the workings of the human mind, still every where the practical truths with which
234 Revelation started are assumed and recognized; that we shall be judged by our good or
235 evil doings, and that a principle within us is ultimately the cause of the one and the
236 other. So that it is preposterous in us to attempt to direct our course by the distant
237 landmarks of the Divine counsels, which are but dimly revealed to us, overlooking the
238 clear track close before our eyes provided for our need. This perverse substitution in
239 matters of conduct of a subtle argumentative rule for one that is plain and practical, is
240 set before us, by way of warning, in the parable of the talents. "Lord, I knew Thee that
241 Thou art a hard man ... and I was afraid, and went and hid Thy talent in the earth."

242 21. (3.) Another illustration may be given of the systematic disparagement of human
243 responsibility, and the consequent substitution of outward events for the inward rule of
244 conscience in judging of conduct.

245 The influence of the world, viewed as the enemy of our souls, consists in its hold upon
246 our imagination. It seems to us incredible that any thing that is said every where and
247 always can be false. And our faith is shown in preferring the testimony of our hearts and

248 of Scripture to the world's declarations, and our obedience in acting against them. It is
249 the very function of the Christian to be moving against the world, and to be protesting
250 against the majority of voices. And though a doctrine such as this may be perverted into
251 a contempt of authority, a neglect of the Church, and an arrogant reliance on self, yet
252 there is a sense in which it is true, as every part of Scripture teaches. "Thou shalt not
253 follow a multitude to do evil," is its uniform injunction. Yet so irksome is this duty, that it
254 is not wonderful that the wayward mind seeks a release from it; and, looking off from
255 what is within to what is without, it gradually becomes perplexed and unsettled. And,
256 should it so happen that the face of society assumes a consistent appearance, and
257 urges the claims of the world upon the Conscience as if on the ground of principle and
258 system, then still greater is the difficulty in which it has entangled itself. Then it is that
259 acts which, exhibited in individual instances, would have been condemned as crimes,
260 acquire a dignity from the number of the delinquents, or their assumption of authority,
261 and venture to claim our acquiescence as a matter of right. What would be
262 insubordination, or robbery, or murder, when done by one man, is hallowed by the
263 combination of the great or the many.

264 22. Thus, for instance, what is more common at the present day than for philosophers to
265 represent society as moving by a certain law through different stages, and its various
266 elements as coming into operation at different periods; and then, not content with
267 stating the fact (which is undeniable), to go on to speak as if what has been, and is,
268 ought to be; and as if because at certain eras this or that class of society gains the
269 ascendancy, therefore it lawfully gains it? whereas in truth the usurpation of an invader,
270 and the development (as it is called) of the popular power, are alike facts, and alike
271 sins, in the sight of Him who forbids us to oppose constituted authority. And yet the
272 credulous mind hangs upon the words of the world, and falls a victim to its sophistry; as
273 if, forsooth, Satan could not work his work upon a law, and oppose God's will upon
274 system. But the Christian, rejecting this pretentious guide of conduct, acts on Faith, and
275 far from being perplexed to find the world consistent in its disobedience, recollects the
276 declarations of Scripture which foretell it.

277 23. Yet so contrary to common sense is it thus to assert that our conduct ought to be
278 determined merely by what is done by a mixed multitude, that it was to be expected that
279 the ingenious and eager minds who practically acknowledge the principle, should wish
280 to place it on some more argumentative basis. Accordingly, attempts have been made
281 by foreign writers to show that society moves on a law which is independent of the
282 conduct of its individual members, who cannot materially retard its progress, nor are
283 answerable for it,—a law which in consequence is referable only to the will of the
284 Creator. "Historical causes and their effects being viewed, at one glance, through a long
285 course of years, seem," it has been said, "from their steady progression, to be above
286 any human control; an impulse is given, which beats down resistance, and sweeps
287 away all means of opposition; century succeeds to century, and the philosopher sees
288 the same influence still potent, still undeviating and regular; to him, considering these
289 ages at once, following with rapid thought the slow pace of time, a century appears to
290 dwindle to a point; and the individual obstructions and accelerations, which within that

291 period have occurred to impede or advance the march of events, are eliminated and
292 forgotten."

293 24. This is the theory; and hence it is argued that it is our wisdom to submit to a power
294 which is greater than ourselves, and which can neither be circumvented nor persuaded;
295 as if the Christian dare take any guide of conscience except the rule of duty, or might
296 prefer expediency (if it be such) to principle. Nothing, for instance, is more common than
297 to hear men speak of the growing intelligence of the present age, and to insist upon the
298 Church's supplying its wants; the previous question being entirely left out of view,
299 whether those wants are healthy and legitimate, or unreasonable,—whether real or
300 imaginary,—whether they ought to be gratified or repressed; and it is urged upon us,
301 that unless we take the lead in the advance of mind ourselves, we must be content to
302 fall behind. But, surely our first duty is, not to resolve on satisfying a demand at any
303 price, but to determine whether it be innocent. If so, well; but if not, let what will happen.
304 Even though the march of society be conducted on a superhuman law, yet, while it
305 moves against Scripture Truth, it is not God's ordinance,—it is but the creature of Satan;
306 and, though it shiver all earthly obstacles to its progress, the gods of Sepharvaim and
307 Arphad, fall it must, and perish it must, before the glorious fifth kingdom of the Most
308 High, when He visits the earth, who is called Faithful and True, whose eyes are as a
309 flame of fire, and on His head many crowns, who smites the nations with a rod of iron,
310 and treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

311 My object in the foregoing remarks has been to illustrate, in various ways, the operation
312 of an all-important truth; that circumstances are but the subject-matter, and not the rule
313 of our conduct, nor in any true sense the cause of it. Let me conclude with one more
314 exemplification of it, which I address to the junior part of my audience.

315 25. (4.) In this place, where the stated devotional services of the Church are required of
316 all of us, it is very common with our younger members to slight them, while they attend
317 on them, on the ground of their being forced upon them. A like excuse is sometimes
318 urged in behalf of an unworthy participation of the Lord's Supper, as if that communion
319 could not reasonably be considered real, or dangerous to the impenitent, which was
320 performed under constraint [[Note 2](#)].

321 26. Now, let such an apologist be taken on his own ground. Let it be granted to him, for
322 argument's sake, though in no other way, that this general exaction of religious duties is
323 unwise; let him be allowed the full force of his objections to a system, which he has not
324 yet experience to understand. Yet do these outward circumstances change the nature
325 of the case in any practical respect, or relieve him of his responsibility? Rather, is it not
326 his plain duty to take things as he finds them, since he has not the power of changing
327 them; and, leaving to his superiors what pertains to them, the task of deciding on the
328 system to be pursued, to inquire how he ought to act under it, and to reflect what his
329 guilt will be in the day of account, if week after week he has come into the presence of
330 God with a deliberate profanation in his right hand, or at least with irreverence of
331 manner, and an idle mind?

332 27. And, again, as regards the Holy Communion, how do the outward circumstances
333 which bring us thither affect the real purpose of God respecting it? Can we in earthly
334 matters remove what we dislike, by wishing it away?—and shall we hope, by mere
335 unbelief, to remove the Presence of God from His ordinance? As well may we think of
336 removing thereby the visible emblems of bread and wine, or of withdrawing ourselves
337 altogether from the Omnipresent Eye of God itself. Though Christ is savingly revealed in
338 the Sacrament only to those who receive Him in faith, yet we have the express word of
339 Scripture for saying, that the thoughtless communicant, far from remaining as if he did
340 not receive it, is guilty of the actual Body and Blood of Christ,—guilty of the crime of
341 crucifying Him anew, as not discerning that which lies hid in the rite. This does not
342 apply, of course, to any one who communicates with a doubt merely about his own
343 state—far from it!—nor to those who resolve heartily, yet in the event fail to perform, as
344 is the case with the young; nor to those even who may happen to sin both before and
345 after the reception of the Sacrament. Where there is earnestness, there is no
346 condemnation; but it applies fearfully to such as view the Blessed Ordinance as a thing
347 of course, from a notion that they are passive subjects of a regulation which others
348 enforce; and, perhaps, the number of these is not small. Let such persons seriously
349 consider that, were their argument correct, they need not be considered in a state of
350 trial at all, and might escape the future judgment altogether. They would have only to
351 protest (as we may speak) against their creation, and they would no longer have any
352 duties to bind them. But what says the word of God? "That which cometh into your
353 mind, shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the
354 countries, to serve wood and stone." And then follows the threat, addressed to those
355 who rebel:—"As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a
356 stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you ... And I will cause you
357 to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."

358 28. And these words apply to the whole subject which has engaged us. We may amuse
359 ourselves, for a time, with such excuses for sin as a perverted ingenuity furnishes; but
360 there is One who is justified in His sayings, and clear when He judgeth. Our worldly
361 philosophy and our well-devised pleadings will profit nothing at a day when the heaven
362 shall depart as a scroll is rolled together, and all who are not clad in the wedding-
363 garment of faith and love will be speechless. Surely it is high time for us to wake out of
364 sleep, to chase from us the shadows of the night, and to realize our individuality, and
365 the coming of our Judge. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand,"—"let us be sober,
366 and watch unto prayer."

367 (Preached on Sunday afternoon, November 4, 1832, in his turn as Select Preacher.)

368 Notes

369 1. Arist. Eth. Nicom. iii. 17.

370

371 2. [Here I ought to remark that, from the time I became public Tutor, I was always
372 opposed to the compulsory communion of Undergraduates, and testified my opposition
373 to it whenever I had the opportunity.]

374

